



## What is New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) Week about?

NZSL became an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand in 2006 when the NZSL Act passed into law.

In 2007 we celebrated NZSL Week for the first time.

The aim of NZSL Week is to raise awareness of NZSL and to encourage all New Zealanders to learn and use our language. The week is also an opportunity to learn about the New Zealand Deaf community and our Deaf culture.

NZSL Week adds to the rich and diverse identity of Aotearoa New Zealand.

**NZSL Week 2022 is during the week of 9th to 15th May.**

## What is the theme for NZSL Week 2022?

The theme for NZSL Week 2022 is **NZSL is Essential**.

- **NZSL is essential** in all aspects of a Deaf person's life - education, health, worklife, homelife.
- **NZSL is essential** for deaf children and their families
- **NZSL is essential** for Deaf people to participate equally in society

Our 2022 NZSL Week Hero, **Emmie Bensley**, is an Essential Worker and NZSL is essential to her. Essential workers is a phrase we are all very familiar with now and we will be putting a spotlight on this during NZSL Week this year.

## What happens during NZSL Week?

- **Free 45-minute NZSL Taster Classes** for groups such as schools, businesses, organisations to register and give NZSL a go!
- **Local events** involving NZSL all around the country. Everyone is welcome – it's for Deaf and hearing communities to come together.
- Biennial **NZSL Awards Night** to recognise and celebrate individuals and organisations/group who champion NZSL.
- A **national promotional campaign** via media, billboards, online engagement and printed materials.

Check out our website [www.nzslweek.org.nz](http://www.nzslweek.org.nz) and follow us on social media for updates.





## What is the impact of NZSL Week?

NZSL Week is a week where the NZ Deaf community stands together to celebrate our language and our culture.

NZSL Week brings NZSL into the homes and daily lives of Kiwis of all ages. Increasing the awareness and respect of NZSL in general society makes the daily interactions for Deaf people a little easier.

The free Taster Classes are an opportunity for workplaces, community groups and schools to begin to learn NZSL, gather some resources and learn where they can go to learn more!

The popularity of our taster classes has grown over the years, from 40 Taster Classes in 2007 to over 500 requests in 2021.



[NZSLWEEK.ORG.NZ](http://NZSLWEEK.ORG.NZ)

## What does Deaf Aotearoa do?

Deaf Aotearoa is a non-profit organisation, representing the 'voice' of Deaf people. It is a national service provider for Deaf people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Deaf Aotearoa works closely with Deaf communities, government agencies and other organisations to increase awareness of and promote NZSL, and strengthen the rights of Deaf people.

Deaf Aotearoa provides the following services:

- First Signs
- Youth
- Employment
- Hauora
- Translation
- iSign (NZSL Interpreter Booking Service)
- Adult Community Education
- NZSL and Deaf Awareness courses

Go to [www.deaf.org.nz](http://www.deaf.org.nz) for more information about these services.

**FOR MEDIA QUERIES OR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT NZSL WEEK, CONTACT US:**

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## Things to know about NZSL

There are over 200 different Sign Languages in the world. NZSL is one of them.

NZSL has its own grammatical structure and linguistic features, different from English. NZSL is not a version of English 'on the hands'.

NZ's last census showed that over 20,000 people use NZSL, with an estimated 4,500 Deaf users of NZSL.

NZSL is part of a language family which includes British Sign Language (BSL), and Australian Sign Language (Auslan). These three languages are still different from each other! However, American Sign Language (ASL) is very different from BSL, Auslan and NZSL.

You can read more facts about NZSL at the Online NZSL Dictionary website: [www.nzsl.nz/nzsl/](http://www.nzsl.nz/nzsl/) and <https://teara.govt.nz/en/new-zealand-sign-language>

## Where can I learn NZSL?

Learning NZSL is heaps of fun! It is just like learning any language. It requires interest and motivation to learn and practice.

There are lots of ways you can learn NZSL:

1. Visit Learn NZSL, a free learning portal at [www.learnnzsl.nz](http://www.learnnzsl.nz)
2. Check out the NZSL Dictionary online at [www.nzsl.nz](http://www.nzsl.nz) or free from your app store
3. Visit NZSL Teachers Association at [www.teachsign.org.nz](http://www.teachsign.org.nz) for information about classes in your area
4. Visit [www.deaf.org.nz](http://www.deaf.org.nz) to find out about Deaf Aotearoa's tailored Deaf Awareness and NZSL courses
5. Refresh what you learned in your Taster Class, with our resources available at [www.nzslweek.org.nz/resources](http://www.nzslweek.org.nz/resources)

## Notes on terminology

*New Zealand Sign Language is correctly abbreviated to NZSL, not "NZ Sign Language".*

*Deaf* – is capitalized when referring to the Deaf community. The Deaf community are a cultural linguistic minority community within NZ. We have our own Deaf culture and language – NZSL.

*Deaf culture* has its own traditions, history, art, humour and behaviours.

*NZSL Interpreters are not translators.* They are tertiary-qualified professionals who facilitate effective communication between Deaf and hearing people.



**Deaf**  
AOTEAROA  
TANGATA TURI