

## Drisana Levitzke-Gray

### ***2015 Young Australian of the Year and deaf advocate***

Drisana Levitzke-Gray is a truly inspiring and determined young woman who received the 2015 Young Australian of the Year Award in recognition of her passion and dedication in advocating for the human rights of deaf people, raising awareness about Auslan (Australian Sign Language), and the right of deaf children in Australia to access Auslan from birth. Drisana was born deaf and is the fifth generation in her family to be born deaf.

She promotes the deaf community as one without borders and one of rich language, culture, history and traditions. A graduate of Shenton College in WA, and Frontrunners Deaf Youth Leadership program based in Scandinavia, Drisana has delivered community development and leadership workshops in many European countries, as well as in Samoa, NZ, and Australia.

Currently self-employed as a motivational speaker, consultant, she also works for Woolworths as a Workplace Advocate, as a columnist for PrimoLIFE Magazine, serves voluntarily on a number of committees and recently qualified as a Deaf Interpreter.

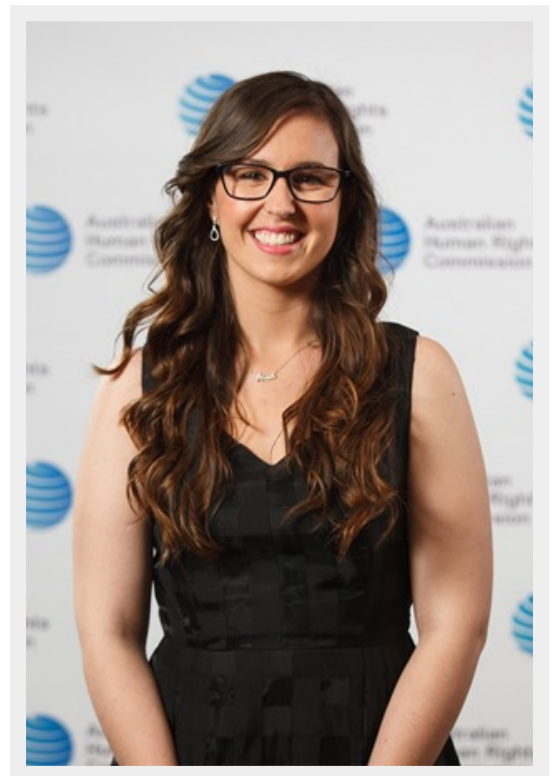
Drisana is the embodiment of the concept of 'deaf gain', not 'hearing loss', inspiring the Deaf community, and encouraging the wider community to accept diversity.

In 2014 Drisana was the first deaf Auslan user to fulfil her civic duty as a juror, and consistently promotes a positive image of deafness, which states loudly and proudly: "It's OK to be deaf".

In the words of Occupational Therapy Australia who engaged her as guest speaker for a professional development event in 2015, their early interactions with Drisana "... indicated not only a very intelligent and passionate speaker and advocate for the deaf community as a whole but also Drisana's intuitive ability to engage with an audience in an informative and thought provoking manner."

### ***Drisana Levitzke-Gray talks about:***

- What it means to be deaf



- The culture and identity within the deaf community
- Challenging assumptions and attitudes towards those in the deaf community
- Accepting diversity in the community
- Why it is so important for all Australians to be encouraged to learn the visual language Auslan
- Leadership
- Human Rights
- Young People

## Client testimonials

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“ Drisana is a young woman who lights up a room, any room: from a classroom to a boardroom. She is the embodiment of the concept of ‘deaf gain’ not ‘hearing loss’, inspiring the deaf community and encouraging others to accept diversity and Drisana promotes a positive image of deafness which says loudly and proudly: ‘it is ok to be deaf’

- *National Australia Day Council*

“ Drisana is a fun, candid and inspiring speaker, whose advocacy for Auslan and equality would rouse even the most complacent bystander into action. Armed with great humour, honesty and empathy (not to mention ferocity for her cause), she is one of our best Australians, in this or any year.

- *Student Edge*

“ I had the privilege of sharing the stage a number of times with Drisana, and it was an experience I won't forget. Drisana is an extremely passionate and enthusiastic advocate, but also bringing an element of fun to every situation that helped the audience engage in the meaningful messages she was sharing. While in some places across Tasmania she was treated like a rock star (signing autographs!), she was also extremely humble and valued the contribution of everyone who attended, which is a special skill. And I must say, I have never actively had a situation to engage with someone for whom Auslan is their first language, and the care and respect that was shown to me was something that I still cherish and value to today. As a speaker, Drisana is powerful communicator and one that can motivate and excite an audience. While her experience is one that many audiences have little in common with, she has an ability to share her story and convey key principles in a way that everyone feels connected to her and her incredible journey.”

- *illuminate Education*

“ Drisana is a young and inspirational deaf leader who put Auslan at front and centre. Deaf Australia is proud to have Drisana as our Ambassador as she continues to raise awareness of Auslan and its deaf community through her activities and to continue the legacy of her great-grandmother, who founded Deaf Australia.

**- Deaf Australia**

“ Drisana Levitzke-Gray was the keynote speaker at the Australian Network on Disability annual conference in 2015, delivering a powerful presentation about the importance of access to Auslan for Deaf children. Drisana is an animated and dynamic presenter, and had our audience of HR and Diversity professionals engaged from the moment she walked on stage. Drisana was one of the most popular presenters at our conference and received very positive feedback, including... Drisana was absolutely brilliant... a powerful and engaging speaker... loved Drisana’s talk... We were extremely pleased with Drisana’s presentation and would happily recommend her as a speaker.

**- Australian Network on Disability**

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