

# *Insights into Auslan*

## Established and Productive Signs.

*(Adapted by Anne Horton from "Australian Sign Language: An introduction to sign language linguistics" by Johnston and Schembri)*

### Established Signs.

- These signs are "frozen" and form the basis of the vocabulary listed in dictionaries of Auslan.
- These signs are frequently used and highly standardized.

### Productive Signs.

- Productive signs make use of a much larger and more varied selection of locations and movements than established signs.
- These signs are actively created by signers as they put together combinations of meaningful units. This explains why these are called "productive" signs.
- These "meaningful units" can be used to extend or modify the meaning of established signs.
- Examples of meaningful units are: handshape, hand orientation, sign location and movement, non-manual features, rate, stress, duration and repetition. (See "Structure of Signs in Auslan" Handout).
- Productive signs combine different meaningful units in different combinations as the need arises to produce signs that may have never been signed before but can be understood in a particular context.
- This productive aspect of Auslan is fully integrated into everyday interactions between signers, but most noticeable during creative story-telling. In any given signed conversation there is most probably a significant number of signs which have been created or re-created on the spot as required by the topic or context of the discussion.
- Some productive signs may become standardized over time eg: "MEET" (two individuals approaching one another).
- The number of locations, movements and spatial arrangements of signs is potentially unlimited.