





HOW IS SIGN LANGUAGE?

Presented by **Professor Adam Schembri**

IAN GORDON FELLOW 2025

Professor Adam Schembri will reflect on his experience as a hearing sign language researcher and his research on Auslan and British Sign Language (BSL) that help answer the question ‘how is sign *language*?’. We have long recognised that sign languages are languages, but what kind of languages are they? Answering this question is not merely a theoretical undertaking—it is also the way to address some of the most important social justice issues in linguistics related to language documentation and the linguistic human rights of Deaf communities.

This lecture will be interpreted into NZSL and accessible in person or by Zoom.

 Thursday 12 June
 6–7 pm
 Hugh Mackenzie Lecture Theatre 104,
Kelburn Campus
 vuw.zoom.us/j/91096812364

This lecture is free to attend. Email lals@vuw.ac.nz to register your interest.



Dr Schembri is a professor of Linguistics in the Department of Linguistics and Communication at the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. Originally from Australia, he has published work on topics including the lexicon, morphosyntax, typology, and sociolinguistics of sign languages, and is currently principal investigator on the European Research Council *SignMorph* Project. This five-year project aims to investigate the role of grammaticalisation, iconicity, and social structure in shaping the linguistic structure of established and emerging sign languages.