

AUSIT in the Northern Territory

by Annamaria Arnall

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Background:

The Aboriginal Interpreting Service (AIS) in NT invited AUSIT to participate in a training planning meeting/workshop held in Darwin, on 14 July 2004. As no one from the SA/NT Branch nor the National President was available, I volunteered to go.

Of the more than 300 T&I colleagues living in the NT, only four are AUSIT members.

Key industry players in Darwin are the NTITS (Northern Territory Interpreting and Translating Service) and AIS. There is a NAATI office operating six hours a week, but no ASLIA presence, and only an answering machine for the Deafness Association, who didn't answer my email.

Day one:

On the morning of 13 July, I visited the NAATI office in Darwin. The Manager, Lynda Liping Cui, told me that the AUSIT Code of Ethics is the most requested item she sells to applicants. She also praised our newsletter and suggested that we consider making it available for non-members to purchase through her office. Lynda told me about the scarcity of resources she can offer to the applicants and said 'how-to' brochures, written guides, booklets on various aspects of translating and interpreting. and collections of sample translations and the like are in great demand. She asked if AUSIT might undertake publication of such material.

(continued on page 8)



Introducing AUSIT to our colleagues in Darwin at NTITS

From the President



One of AUSIT's most valuable functions is to provide a sense of community through our contacts, activities and services. Many say to me that the institute is a lifeline for them; AUSIT connections provide them with job referrals and pointers to new clients, as well as tips for completing tricky jobs, negotiating better conditions or addressing recalcitrant payers.

In order to establish these useful connections, AUSIT offers a wide range of services, provided mainly through membership fees and plenty of free labour.

AUSIT operates as a national entity managed by a National Council, comprising an elected representative from each of the six branches plus the five members of the executive. In accordance with the constitution, the National Council is collectively responsible for the orderly running of AUSIT, and in particular for its financial management.

Early in the year, the national treasurer asks the branches and the executive to submit their proposals for budget planning. As president, I make frequent contact with the branches to find out how we can help them develop the right activities for their members.

In recent years the centralisation of many necessary but thankless tasks has helped relieve branch committees of administrative work.

The management of our member services is one of these key tasks. Two part-time office managers administer the membership register, answer 20 to 40 daily telephone and email queries, run our 21 eForums, assist and inform dozens of members, promote AUSIT to non-members and direct a regular flow of job offers to the AUSIT directory or to the eBulletin.

The service we provide is now professional and consistent throughout the country, and has improved our profile within the T and I profession.

AUSIT also produces and finances on a centralised basis the following: five

annual issues of the AUSIT newsletter; marketing material (which increases our coverage with members, non-members, clients and interested parties); and our website www.ausit.org with its near-daily updates. Members will find plenty of useful professional tips and market news, including tax information, interpreters' issues in different states, local and specialised newsletters, professional development material, templates for personal documents, conversion tables, and details of local events.

As a result of these centralised functions, branch committees have more time and energy to organise and deliver many professional development, networking and promotional activities which provide information, skills and useful contacts to hundreds of participants around the country.

Similarly, office-bearers and other volunteers have more time to make representations on behalf of AUSIT members when liaising with industry stakeholders, such as the NAATI RACs, major employers and training institutions.

For the coming year, I'd like our budget to put further emphasis on professional development, with the appointment of a national coordinator to ensure more quality and consistency while developing on-line courses, providing industrial relations advice and advancing the position of isolated members in their dealings with major clients.

Increased market awareness will continue to be a priority. One of our plans is a national distribution campaign for the new AUSIT brochure 'Getting it Right', which has already received enthusiastic praise from clients and practitioners. Members will find it easier to negotiate better rates by explaining to their clients the value added by professional translation.

Do you want to get more out of your membership dollar? Take advantage of all the benefits available:

- Read our quarterly newsletter, in hard or in soft copy, for tips, news and ideas

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1800 284 181

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The editor reserves the right to edit or not to publish any item submitted for publication. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the editor or those of AUSIT and its executive.

- Staple a business card to a 'Getting it Right' brochure and send it with your next quote, so your client understands why paying a bit more might be worth a lot to them. Ask your branch or your administrator for a few copies.
- Join the free eBulletin and language forums, for a wealth of information, advice and professional discussions. They are available in several versions.
- Attend events held in your state at low (including discounts for members) or no cost;
- Check the website updates as many will apply to your practice;
- Contact your administrator on the national toll-free number, 1800 284 181, for any assistance you need;
- Talk to your branch committee or to any member of the executive on matters of importance to you.

Feel free to talk or write to me about any aspect of the management of AUSIT. I look forward to meeting many of you in Melbourne at the National Conference and at the National AGM on October 22-24.

Yveline Piller
President

Display your sticker with pride

After a lively exchange, the voting on the choice of a slogan for our new bumper-sticker is over. And the winner is:

'Interpreters & Translators: don't cross cultures without them' (from Maurite Foer, receiving 10 votes).

Second place was shared by 'Translators & Interpreters are never lost for words' and 'AUSIT—language matters' (both from Michael Grunwald, both receiving 7 votes). Third place was also shared: 'Translators & Interpreters: we mean what you say' (Dogan Sahin) and 'Translators & Interpreters: don't qtpzklqk without one!' (John Benton, 6 votes each). Fourth place: 'Translators & Interpreters—get your message across' (Sue Jollow, 5 votes). Fifth place: 'Interpreters & Translators: don't get lost for words' (Maurite Foer, 4 votes). Honourable mentions: 'Translators

& Interpreters—let us say what you mean' (Hania Geras); 'Translators & Interpreters—your language link' (Maria Gonzalez); 'Translators & Interpreters—make communicating easier' (Sue Jollow); 'Monolingualism is curable' (Jerzy Brodzki, 3 votes each).

So start advertising yourself and your profession. All five placegetting slogans have been printed in order to cater for individual tastes.

The five different versions will be delivered randomly with this issue of the newsletter. Members wishing to order stickers with a different slogan may do so through myself or through the newsletter editor, Bradley Dawson.

Congratulations to the winners and thank you everyone for your participation and support.

Annamaria Arnall
Vice-President

AUSIT National Council Members October 2004

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From the editor

Thank you once again to all those members who contributed articles and images for this issue. Please note that all written work should be sent as Word documents and all images need to be of a reasonably high quality (at least 200 dpi). Remember, the deadline for contributions to the January issue is 10 December 2004.

If any major editing work is to be done on a submitted work, I will endeavour to send the edited copy to authors for approval prior to publication.

Special thanks for work on this issue go to: Yveline, Tineke, Moreno, Dick, Barbara, Niki and Kate.

Bradley Dawson

This newsletter is printed by Bounty Print and distributed by Mailing Advantage.

Professional Development survey

by Annamaria Arnall

For our PD survey, AUSIT identified areas of learning where a T&I practitioner's competencies should be continuously developed. These included: LOTE, English, techniques and technology, ethics, business skills, and advances in the profession; we then established point values for various development activities, allocating 1, 2 and 4 points for attendance at workshops, courses

as well as requests for details; for example: Did you attend a formal professional development seminar or conference on T&I, including linguistics? Several respondents answered with a simple yes, neglecting to provide details as to when and where, or for how long. Where this data was not provided, no points were awarded.

Table 1: A summary of values

ACTIVITY	Points	No. of people scoring	% of sample (+ ranking)	Total points value	% in total points
Language maintenance					
Subscriptions to LOTE resources + private study	1	65	74 (2)	65	6.40
Visiting country of LOTE	1(max 4)	41	46 (4)	133	13.10
Membership of cultural or other association	1(max 2)	26	30 (7)	28	2.75
Teaching LOTE privately	1	16	20 (12)	16	1.57
Non-T&I formal PD					
Short	1(max 3)	19	21 (11)	19	1.87
Long	2(max 6)	24	27 (8)	68	6.69
T&I formal PD					
Short	2(max 6)	80	90 (1)	160	15.76
Long	4	37	42 (6)	156	15.36
Presenting T&I at a workshop	2(max 4)	14	16 (14)	30	2.95
Teaching T&I in a course	2	12	13 (16)	24	2.36
Teaching T&I at tertiary level	4	8	9 (17)	36	3.55
Publishing in newsletter or LOTE medium	2	17	20 (12)	34	3.35
Publishing in industry journal	4	5	5.5 (18)	20	1.97
Presenting paper at conference	4	3	3.5 (19)	16	1.57
Completion of a T&I tertiary course	4	14	16 (14)	56	5.51
Advances in the profession					
AUSIT or other T&I Bulletin	1	40	45 (5)	40	3.94
AUSIT office bearer	1(max 2)	20	22 (10)	20	1.97
T&I Forum, Awareness Day	1(max 2)	21	23 (9)	21	2.06
Networking with no formal presentation	1(max 2)	53	60 (3)	53	5.22

or self-directed activities according to their length and academic level.

An open-field questionnaire was provided for respondents to complete all details of competency development activities attended, provide verification, and tally their total points themselves. Reports were scrutinised only for errors.

The survey comprised questions requiring yes-and-no type answers,

Summary

The activity in which most respondents were involved was a formal session or workshop dealing with T&I issues (80 out of 88 persons, or 90% of the sample). At the other end of the scale, the least number of individuals (3) had presented a T&I paper at a conference. No respondents recorded participation in activities to improve their English skills.

Most total points were earned through attendance at short T&I sessions, closely followed by attendance at longer T&I sessions. The very high proportion of total points allocated for a visit to the respondent's LOTE country (13.1 %) indicates a fault in the design of the survey.

Table 2: Scores

PD point range	Number of respondents
0-9	39
10-14	28
15-28	21

Conclusion

How many PD points should we expect from practitioners? Looking at the number of points collected by individual respondents gives us insight into current practices. We must keep in mind that this sample was not representative because only the institute's most active members (who attend more PD events) volunteered to take part and respondents recorded activities undertaken over the last 17, not 12 months.

The mean sample value was 11.53 (a total of 1015 PD points were achieved by 88 AUSIT members). The highest number of points achieved was 28 and the lowest 0, which puts the median at 14. However, 2/3rd of the sample (60 respondents) scored less than 14.

Adjusting for the number of months covered by the survey, my conclusion is that a request by AUSIT for members to demonstrate participation in continuous professional development by collecting a minimum of four points per calendar year would be well received.

Rules must be put in place to avoid the situation where someone could fully qualify through spending long periods in their LOTE country. Certified Practising Members would have to collect six PD points per year in the scheme, as I see it.

Opportunities to train as an Interpreter and Translator

RMIT University, located in the centre of Melbourne, Victoria, offers two programs for local and international students interested in training as interpreters and translators:

Diploma of Interpreting

Languages offered in 2005:

Amharic; Auslan; Dari; Dinka; Japanese; Korean; Mandarin; Nuer; Oromo; Pushto and Tigrinya.

Advanced Diploma of Interpreting and Translating

Languages offered in 2005:

Arabic; Auslan; Cantonese; Greek; Italian; Japanese; Khmer (Cambodian); Korean; Mandarin; Somali and Vietnamese.

Our professional training programs are accredited by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd (NAATI). NAATI is the national body for accrediting interpreters and translators in Australia and RMIT University is the only institution in Melbourne whose programs have NAATI approval.

The Diploma of Interpreting trains students in dialogue interpreting to the Paraprofessional level. The Advanced Diploma of Interpreting and Translating trains students in dialogue and consecutive interpreting, translating from English into LOTE and translating from LOTE into English to the Professional level.

Applications for Semester 1, 2005 can be lodged between 8 August 2004 and 7 January 2005.

For further information, contact the School of International and Community Studies on (03) 9925 2328 or visit the RMIT University website at: www.rmit.edu.au/ics and click on 'Academic Programs'.

Is your email address up-to-date?

Ten percent of emails from AUSIT are rejected. If you have not been receiving emails from AUSIT, it may be because your email address is obsolete. You are missing out, so contact your administrator.

Professions Australia and the professional standards scheme

by Mike Ovington

In May 2004 I attended the National Annual General Meeting of Professions Australia (PA). As it happened, I arrived in time for all the interesting and less formal business, including networking over lunch and the presentations after lunch.

The one thing that struck me throughout the day was how much AUSIT has to do to catch up with other professions in terms of: a) mechanisms for handling complaints from the public and, as a consequence of this, b) a grievance and disciplinary committee.

'...we will not be eligible to apply for the scheme until we can demonstrate that we have effective compliance and disciplinary mechanisms in place.'

(I would have added mandatory PD to this, but we have already started to make some real progress in this area).

The PA AGM was followed by a special presentation on the Professional Standards Scheme, or PSS, delivered by Bernie Marsden, Secretary of the NSW Professional Standards Council.

When I saw the title in pre-NAGM publicity, I innocently assumed that the scheme was aimed at ensuring member associations 'did the right thing' by keeping their expertise up to date. The scheme does this indirectly, but it actually goes much further and has a very precise, practical purpose: to limit, with State government assistance, the legal liability (and, consequently, levels of insurance premiums) of members who comply with a range of professional and service-delivery requirements.

With the implementation of professional standards legislation across Australia, the scheme is open to all professional associations interested in applying: members can receive a cap on their professional liability and thus obtain, inter alia, cheaper, more predictable insurance premiums. As is to be expected from a process involving big sums of money, government, insurance companies, lawyers and professional bodies, the emphasis is on detailed and comprehensive documentation; not only are statistical details of past claims, payouts and current litigation required, but also details of the professional association's own procedures, including disciplinary mechanisms and measures to ensure compliance with professional and ethical standards.

This last point brought home to me just how long we have to go before we can think of ourselves as a truly professional association. We may not be the only PA member lacking a proper system of self-

regulation in place, but we are certainly in the minority.

The PSS process occurs in two stages:

- meticulous checking and double-checking, by the Professional Standards Council and the relevant state government agency, of all the background material submitted by the professional association; and
- a negotiating phase with the courts etc. in order to fix an appropriate cap on claims.

I do not recall an average time being mentioned for the process but the presenter implied that it took at least several months. During questions, one group mentioned a process which to date had taken 18 months and was now bogged down in arguments over interpretation of some of the data provided.

The costs involved are not small either. The Council's fee for the initial checking, to see whether there is a prima facie case for capping, is around \$7,000 (apparently this does not come close to covering the council's actual costs—perhaps an indication of how much documentation and checking is involved). The professional association also has to pay a per capita amount to cover ongoing monitoring of the scheme's operation.

While I am sure this is a sensible approach to containing outrageous litigation claims, I reached the end of the presentation thinking how lucky we at AUSIT are not to have big problems in this area or to have to contemplate all the procedures outlined in the PSS process. However, as noted above, we will not be eligible to apply for the scheme until we can demonstrate that we have effective compliance and disciplinary mechanisms in place.



POWER TO THE PROFESSION



The Australian Institute of Translators and Interpreters (AUSIT)
and The Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association of Victoria (ASLIA Vic)
AUSIT/ASLIA VIC Biennial Conference 2004

- Get insights on trends, recent developments and policy imperatives in the industry
- Share ideas and participate in peer group discussions
- Meet representatives of government, language service providers and educational institutions

Conference Keynote Speaker
Cynthia B. Roy PhD. Assistant Professor, Department of Interpretation, Gallaudet University, Washington DC, USA

A prominent and highly accomplished sociolinguist, researcher and trainer and the author of numerous publications, Cynthia Roy has a special interest in interpreting as a discourse process and has developed a state-wide curriculum for training interpreters in Texas.

Jill Blewett Memorial Lecture
Hon Barry Jones, AO

Barry Jones has had an illustrious career spanning education, film, politics, civil liberties, constitutional change and the 'knowledge society'. In 1977 Barry was elected to Federal Parliament. In 1983 he was appointed Federal Minister for Science, a position he held until 1990. During the 1990s Barry became National President of the Labor Party.

About the Conference

Power to the Profession is about empowerment - the conference will provide a focal point for practitioners to become empowered through increased knowledge, an improved ability to promote themselves, the power to generate income commensurate with their value, and the power to influence policy development as members of an organised profession.

Power to the Profession is relevant to practitioners, students, organisations employing interpreters and translators, educators, policy makers and academics; this conference will look to the future as well as examine Australia's place in the global context. Workshops, panel discussions and presentations will appeal to interpreters in medical and legal contexts, technology buffs interested in new software and communications technologies as an integral part of their practice, and practitioners who focus on business and the highly competitive international market.

Take control of your profession, join your colleagues, contribute to the many and varied sessions in the action-packed program and become empowered!

Initial Sponsors:

Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs
Monash University, RMIT University,
Vicdeaf, Deaf Children Australia

Registration

To register, complete the form below and send with payment to:

**Power to the Profession
VOYAGER TRAVEL
PO Box 1041
Elwood 3184
VIC, AUSTRALIA**

Official hotel and special rates

Stay at the conference venue, Batman's Hill, located in the heart of Melbourne, a short walk from the shops, the casino and Spencer Street Station. The hotel features brand new apartments (1 and 2 bedroom) and hotel rooms to suit every budget.

Staying longer in Melbourne?

Our partners at Voyager Travel can assist with accommodation, flights, car hire, tours, transfers and more.

**Airfares and accommodation
Stephen Mattsson Voyager Travel
Ph: 03 9525 4900
Fax: 03 9525 4722
E: stephenm@voyagertravel.com.au**

Refreshments and lunch will be provided.
For more information visit our website at:
www.ausit.org

Power to the Profession Conference - Melbourne, 23-24 October 2004

REGISTRATION FORM

Name _____

Organisation _____

Address _____

City _____ Post Code _____ Country _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____

Email _____

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

AUSLAN Interpreter Dietary Requirements _____

FEES

Conference Registration - \$197

Discount Conference Registration - \$145 (AUSIT/ASLIA members)

Student Conference Registration - \$95 (places strictly limited)

Jill Blewett Memorial Lecture and Dinner - \$65 (members), \$85 (non-members)

I am an AUSIT/ASLIA member Send me info about AUSIT/ASLIA membership

CANCELLATIONS/REFUNDS

No refunds for cancellation after 1 October 2004.

PAYMENT METHOD*

Cheque/Money order enclosed (payable to VOYAGER TRAVEL)

MasterCard VISA AMEX DINERS

Number _____ Expiry date _____

Card Holder's name _____

Card Holder's Signature _____ * charge will appear as from Voyager Travel

AUSIT in the Northern Territory

continued from page one

I left a pile of our blue brochures and some AUSIT newsletters with her, and am confident that she will promote us by distributing this material amongst her clients. Looking around her office, I also realised that should we be able to produce a decent poster, it would be received and displayed gratefully. The NAATI office adjoins a colourful, well-decorated and busy meeting room where multicultural broadcasts are planned. An AUSIT poster on the wall there would be a constant reminder of our profession to many influential members in Darwin's diverse communities.

On the afternoon of 13 July, I met with about 20 Darwin practitioners. The meeting was kindly organised by Aurora Quinn, Language Services Manager with the Office of Ethnic Affairs, Community Engagement Division, within the Department of the Chief Minister. For about 20 years now she has run the NTITS (the main employer of T&Is in the Northern Territory). She has about 80 local practitioners on her books, most of whom are paraprofessional or recognised, with some still unaccredited. Aurora is very

already available to them through NTITS. We tactfully debated whether all of their professional needs were being taken care of by Aurora; the conclusion was a convivial 'yes'. We also discussed remuneration levels and the state of the private market, such as tour operators and the like, T&I education in general, and professional development (which attracted the most vivid exchanges, as our colleagues are acutely aware of the tyranny of distance). As soon as AUSIT begins offering recorded PD sessions on our website, we will gain several new members in the Northern Territory. For the time being, only a few membership applications were taken from the stock I had with me.

Day two

The next day I participated in a one-day meeting at the AIS where we discussed all issues pertaining to the delivery and development of training for AIS registered interpreters.

The following issues were on the agenda:

- The purpose of AIS funded training programs

'In addition to the practical details of training delivery, the meeting paid attention to the urgent need for raising the profile of the entire profession. AUSIT is expected to show leadership and initiative in this regard.'

active on the PD front, running workshops, seminars and other educational events.

During the meeting, I spoke about AUSIT and the profession and showed Moreno's Power Point Presentation that he put together for a Melbourne presentation not long ago. It was received with friendly interest. The participants, however, pointed out that they do not need a professional body, as every service AUSIT offers is

- Prioritising training needs
- The identification of core training competencies
- Accreditation of Interpreters
- Alternative training delivery models
- The role of mainstream training providers in the provision of interpreter training.

Participants included several Aboriginal language service coordinators and specialised training providers, such as Dr Michael Cook and Dominic McCormack, and mainstream providers such as NTITS.

Several participants pointed out that NAATI accreditation in indigenous languages is very costly. Unlike in other languages, AIS is forced to pay both for the test material and for the testing itself. Given dissatisfaction with the quality of testing as well, the choice of not obtaining NAATI accreditation at all was seriously considered.

In addition to the practical details of training delivery, the meeting paid attention to the urgent need for raising the profile of the entire profession. AUSIT is expected to show leadership and initiative in this regard.

Continuous professional development is another area where AUSIT, as the professional body, is expected to organise events and provide opportunities.

Whilst it has no direct link with AUSIT, I nevertheless want to draw attention to cultural considerations we all should think about when organising training events.

It seems obvious to have all professionals training together, regardless of their language, learning from a good presenter and from each other at any training session. Despite the logic in this thought, reality proves that it is not so. Aboriginal colleagues, for cultural reasons, would not voice their concerns at such a session, would not be active participants, and even with the best intentions, this sharing of resources would not lead to equitable outcomes.

Day three

In the morning, I revisited Aurora at NTITS and we viewed some of our training videos. She is very interested in gaining access to PD resources and intends to join AUSIT as an associate-

affiliate member.

In the afternoon, I called in on Colleen at AIS and together with her colleagues watched the AUSIT videos again. The 2002 Jill Blewett lecture tape was judged as being particularly useful for AIS purposes. We talked about the practice in one or two universities where students are becoming our members and how AIS might also sign up its interpreters, because, as individuals, they do not have the necessary income. However, to pay membership for well over 200 practitioners is not financially viable. AIS will continue to weigh up the benefits of signing up the busiest of our Aboriginal colleagues.

I also dropped in with the rest of the

blue brochures to the Arts Faculty at Charles Darwin University, where an Indonesian course is being taught. Staff at the department promised to display our promotional material.

Summary

In my view, the trip was successful in introducing AUSIT to a sizeable proportion of fellow practitioners who had very little previous awareness of the institute. It is up to AUSIT to prove the long-term benefits of AUSIT membership.

During our talks, it surfaced that our colleagues look at AUSIT to provide the following:

- Access to reduced-rate insurance

- Access to high quality PD events
- An increase in the profile of the profession.

My meeting with Dr Michael Cook and Dominic McCormack at the workshop led to very promising talks on developing further PD material about legal and ethical issues for AUSIT.

The NAATI Darwin office manager's suggestion about producing guides, booklets and so on is interesting and perhaps the new editor might want to investigate possibilities. *[I'm already looking into it—Bradley]*

Vice-President's report

Over the last year I concentrated on three areas of activity: professional development, website development and public relations.

I feel most strongly about the visibility of AUSIT and of our profession—this is the issue which motivated me to nominate for vice-president in the first place. By becoming a member of Professions Australia, the institute took its most significant step toward the better recognition of our profession by other professional organisations, while the release of our bumper stickers is bound to have an impact on our visibility amongst the public at large. New AUSIT brochures are being created and plans for posters and other display materials are taking shape.

The <www.ausit.org> website is becoming a true home for the organisation. The second stage of site development has been completed; now the site not only serves as a repository for all kinds of information and resources, it also contains fresh material, updated almost daily. Transparency within AUSIT is assisted through the storage of correspondence inside the members' login area, where members are able to see what the committees are doing. Site visitor statistics

are encouraging: 7779 hits were recorded in July 2004, up from 4651 in April. Professional development activities were conducted at widely differing levels of engagement and with differing levels of success within the branches. I spent most of my time and energy on laying the foundation for a future PD system. A national survey (following several smaller tests and trials) attracted 100 responses from the membership. Thanks to their participation, fair and equitable reward values for ongoing professional development activities can now be proposed as part of any membership reform. In addition, PD sessions in all branches will soon be recorded, with sound and image to be made available through the website to the entire membership.

I look back at my time spent as AUSIT Vice-President with pleasure. The discussions, feedback and encouragement received all lead me to believe that my work has been useful and helpful to others. I hope the membership will vote me in for another year so I can work on completing the projects mentioned above.

*Annamaria Arnall
Vice-President*

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VIC - Eva Hussain
ehussain@polaron.net

WA - Rita Pasqualini
pasqur@perth.training.wa.gov.au

The following resolution has been passed by the National Council since the last newsletter.

- that the following persons be admitted to AUSIT membership or associate membership:

Hayedah Taghdisi, NSW; Zoe Golder, QLD; Neel Kaur, QLD; Jieun Lee, NSW; Soledad Dobinson, QLD; Uyen Uyen Thi Nguyen, NSW; Thuc Huyen Nguyen, VIC; Aurora Quinn, NSW; Sachiko Kamio, SA/NT; Yolanda Strauss, WA.

Congratulations and welcome to all new members!

Legal Interpreting in South Australia:

Was it the recession we had to have?

by Adam Skuza

Ten years ago, South Australia was a leading state in terms of the quality and availability of legal interpreting services. Now, it is becoming more and more difficult to find interpreters willing to work in our courts and tribunals, and, arguably, the standard of legal interpreting and the quality of services is declining. If the current situation continues unabated, there may soon be no interpreting industry at all in the state. Many interpreters accept better paid jobs, including manual work, taxi driving or ironing (as one experienced professional level interpreter I know does) rather than continue to work as interpreters.

These difficulties are the product of two main factors: the abolition of the concept of 'legal interpreter', and the loss of many experienced legal interpreters due to changes in the industry in 1994. This has resulted in a lack of recognition for the specialist nature of legal interpreting and the difficult conditions under which it is conducted, a lack of financial incentives to work as a legal interpreter, less trainers, and less opportunities for training.

I believe there is a long term sustainable solution to these problems, but in order to provide some insight into the current situation, a brief historical perspective of legal interpreting in South Australia is necessary.

In 1975, the State Government established the Court Interpreting Service within the Attorney-General's Department. In 1977, the service was incorporated into the Ethnic Affairs Branch and in 1980 it became a part of the Ethnic Affairs Commission, employing three full-time interpreters and a number of casual contractors.

By the early eighties the newly established NAATI had begun to set professional standards and was achieving success in promoting its accreditation system. In recognition of its very technical nature, the concept of specialised legal interpreting

became widely accepted. The position of legal interpreter was distinct from the position of health interpreter, with legal interpreters classified at a higher level within the public service. Legal work is much more difficult and demanding; the interpreter's skills and abilities are constantly questioned. Practitioners need to thoroughly understand two, sometimes incompatible, legal systems. Despite this, court work is at the same time immensely stimulating, challenging and rewarding. It was only fair that it was accorded the highest professional status and the highest pay level. Unsurprisingly, legal interpreters are considered to be the QCs of their profession.

In 1986, the *Evidence Act 1929* was amended to ensure that any witness whose native language is not English and who is not reasonably fluent in English has the right to an interpreter. In addition, provisions of the *Summary Offences Act 1953* were amended to give witnesses the right to an interpreter during police investigations, as well as during questioning and searching following arrest. The need for a qualified interpreter to discharge his or her duties in a professional manner was understood and accepted as essential to the effective administration of justice.

In response to the growing demand for interpreters from the courts at this time, a number of full-time positions for legal interpreters covering major community languages were established within the Ethnic Affairs Commission. When not working in the field, legal interpreters would take part in seminars and training sessions specifically related to court work and the law. Full-time interpreters employed by the Ethnic Affairs Branch, which had now become the Interpreting and Translating Centre, or ITC, were responsible for the training and guidance of casual interpreters wishing to work in the legal area.

In 1989 the distinction between legal and health interpreter was lost, when the State Government amalgamated the two services. A new position of interpreter (general) was created, with these interpreters responsible for providing services across the board. Overnight, practitioners ceased specialising in the very technical legal field; there was no longer institutional recognition of the complexities in the technical language used, for example, during a two-week trial or the need for interpreters to be aware of legal procedures. The government had stopped considering the pressure one is placed under for long periods of time, the concentration needed to work efficiently and the mental toughness required to perform in front of an often critical and questioning audience.

The most significant factor in the long term was that the financial incentive to practise the demanding work of a legal interpreter was removed. All interpreters were paid at the same rate, and the newly created position of interpreter was classified at a lower level than the previous level of legal interpreter (fifteen years ago the minimum payment in absolute terms was nearly three times more than it is today). The only way that ITC can compete with private agencies, particularly in the health sector, is to charge very low fees, which in turn means low rates of pay for its contract staff. Health interpreting is the largest area of interpreting work; competition within the health area impacts heavily on the legal sector, with legal interpreters also being paid relatively low rates for the work they perform in courts. Interpreters are not keen to subject themselves to the rigours of court work if they can earn more money by carrying out less demanding jobs elsewhere.

The demise of legal interpreting was also furthered by the ITC's decision in 1994 to abolish most of its full-time interpreting positions. All the accumulated knowledge,

experience, skills and expertise of the staff were lost, and there were no longer experienced mentors to provide language-specific assistance for new interpreters. The ITC, like the other agencies, began relying on casual interpreters. Many experienced legal interpreters have still not returned to work as contractors for the ITC.

I believe that the ideal long-term solution to this problem is the establishment within the justice system of a Legal Interpreting Service jointly funded by the State and Commonwealth Governments, with the position of legal interpreter to be linked to some specific federal public service position. Both State and Federal jurisdictions should have ownership of, and be the recipients and beneficiaries of, this service. This solution would clarify the status of interpreters while halting the fragmentation of the interpreting industry, and produce cost benefits as well as positive practical and training outcomes.

Australia's democracy is underpinned by an independent judiciary and court system. Interpreters working in courts must be a part of that independent system and seen as such. If practitioners were employed by a Court Interpreting Service completely independent of other agencies, their status as interpreters would be clarified: they would, in effect, become officers of the court and would be responsible to it while continuing to work under judicial direction. Similar systems are in place in other states and countries; for example, Victoria, the United States and Germany.

Establishment of a unified legal interpreting service would also stop fragmentation. As it is now, different jurisdictions in South Australia are serviced by different agencies. Because the agencies have various rates of pay, interpreters, depending on the agency, are paid different rates for the same work (the same standard of interpreting is required regardless of the jurisdiction). In addition, there is no uniformity of standards and, because all the agencies are relatively small, there is little or no monitoring of performance. By making legal interpreting a part of the public service, pay levels and conditions could be maintained and protected. The salaries of judges and public servants are linked to each other; why should interpreters be left out of this arrangement?

The creation of a Court Interpreting Service would be cost neutral. In the long term it would save money as it would cost the government nothing to set up; savings achieved by eliminating provider agencies would offset initial expenses. Without any additional expenditure, the service could pay interpreters higher rates than any other state agencies, government or private.

Such a service could attract and recruit those people willing and able to work in courts, to establish, monitor and maintain standards, and to train with a focus on legal work. Expensive adjournments could be eliminated by ensuring that interpreters who are booked for long trials would not be objected to at the last minute by the Crown or the parties involved. Contacts

could be established between interstate legal interpreting services, so that when no interpreter is available in South Australia for a long trial (due, for example to the rarity of the language, or for other reasons) a replacement could be brought in from interstate. Such a service would be able to monitor the progress of an interpreter in stages: from simple consultation interpreting through to more difficult court work. Training courses for practitioners in the legal field could be run in cooperation with TAFE; not only would these courses be for new entrants to the profession, but refresher courses (for which there is a clear need) could be made available for experienced and practising interpreters.

The importance of a professional interpreting service and its impact on efficient court work cannot be underestimated. Interpreters work alongside judges and lawyers and are expected to understand and work within a specialised environment. The way they perform their job influences the outcome of a trial as much as any other participant in the justice system. Some vision and cooperation by the appropriate authorities would result in significant benefits to the community and the administration of justice.

[This article is an edited version of a longer article which is available upon request.]

Comparison of interpreters' rates of pay for court work in selected Australian states (by major providers of interpreting services)

	SA	NSW	VIC	WA
Minimum payment	\$44* / 35**	\$120 + mileage	\$110	\$70 + mileage
Booking period	2 hrs	3 hrs	3 hrs	2 hrs
Full day's payment (10am to 4pm less 1 hr for lunch)	\$104 / 90	\$200	\$170 (under review)	\$175

* NAATI Level 3

** NAATI Level 2

Adam Skuza is the Managing director of Multilingua Legal and Commercial Language Services. He started working as a contract interpreter in 1982 and was later employed by ITC as a full time legal interpreter and interpreter from 1984 to 1996. In 1997 he established Multilingua to service the legal and commercial sectors, with the legal sector gradually becoming the main focus of the company's interests. He was a consultant in 2000 to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Papua New Guinea, researching and presenting a proposal for enhancing the Legal Interpreting System there.

Negotiating with big stakeholders in the marketplace

by Dick Speekman

Negotiation with big stakeholders in the marketplace has been a topical and popular thread of late on the AUSIT e-bulletin. Here in South Australia, little—if anything—has been heard about the much vaunted *Enterprise Bargaining* process, announced as policy for this state's major T and I organisation, the Interpreting & Translating Centre, or ITC (an agency of the SA Attorney-General's Department). Negotiations on pay and conditions appear to have been dormant for more than half a year. I did not even receive the ballot paper (supposed to arrive by post around the end of July 2004) written by AUSIT SA's chief negotiator, who had delegated the entire process to the State Public Service Union, advising AUSIT SA members to vote 'no' to government proposals and to apply for membership of the public service union. The last I heard (via the television news), the enterprise bargaining process for all employees within the Attorney-General's Department, including the 300 or so casual permanent employees working for the ITC, had stalled.

Even if the enterprise bargaining process had been a roaring success, it would have failed translators and interpreters, especially the latter. They will be the losers, even if the public service union wins its case (as in time it probably will, perhaps even retrospectively).

Let's assume the bargain is eventually struck, and the SA public servants succeed in gaining their 'every just demand', including more flexitime, maternity leave, compassionate leave and every other kind of fringe benefit, as well as an improbably generous 5% pay increase. Casual interpreters might do even better than that, and receive a 6% raise, in consideration of their holiday loading and LSL entitlements. Not to mention the fact that they are not required to carry liability insurance. Since full-time public servants will always be in



the majority, they will eventually get their 5% increase. In the case of an interpreter, this would take his/her pay for two hours of work from \$43.74 to a dizzying \$45.20. One does not have to be Einstein to see that this rise of less than \$1 per hour will not even pay for the increased cost of petrol (also bearing in mind that there is no reimbursement for travel or parking, and that getting to the job and back again might take another hour). We might also mention that the ITC charges its customers \$85 for the same two hours. In all fairness, I should mention that the ITC does pay its translators reasonably well. This is why, long before leaving Adelaide, I stopped interpreting for the ITC, but continued to offer my services as a translator.

There are a number of privately-owned agencies operating in Adelaide. Over the years, they have managed to scratch out a little niche for themselves, again primarily in the interpreting, rather than translating, market. However, many state government agencies continue to only support their fellow government agency.

Before we ask whether government has any business competing with a private business which provides the same service and does so more than adequately, we need to ask why the ITC remains a government agency. Is it to keep the dozen or so public servants who are running the agency on the public payroll? Is it to keep the T and I industry under tight

government control and provide low-cost services to other government agencies? Or is it simply because we have always done it that way in South Australia? One might speculate that the aforementioned public servants might be easily deployed elsewhere. The \$85 that the ITC charges its clients (presumably including other government agencies) for two hours' worth of interpreting does not sound all that cheap. Yet the SA Government, through the ITC, continues to dominate the South Australian T/I market and will continue to do so, for as long as its interpreters allow it to happen. Interpreters should quit complaining to each other about low pay and shallow treatment by government. Apart from waiting until the ITC is inevitably privatised, the only option open to interpreters for now is to refuse work where rates on offer are clearly unsatisfactory. Instead, advertise your services as widely as possible, beginning with listings in the NAATI and AUSIT online directories. If you want to continue working for agencies, ensure that you are listed with them, letting them know in advance about your fees. To believe that you are in no position to negotiate your fees is negative thinking and leads you nowhere.

[Readers are reminded that the views expressed in this article are the author's alone and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the editor or those of AUSIT and its executive. Readers' responses to this article will happily be published in the next issue—Bradley.]

Beware A Conflict of Interest

T & I Practitioners Working in Other Businesses

by Sherrill Bell, CEO, NAATI

From time to time, NAATI is made aware of accredited practitioners who own or work in businesses unrelated to T or I, but who may have clients who require T & I services. These practitioners may include solicitors providing legal services who also provide translations of documents, or accountants and migration agents doing likewise. There are several accredited translators and interpreters who are also registered migration agents; in the course of their work as migration agents, some T & I accredited practitioners have undertaken translation or interpreting work for their clients.

Such action clearly falls into the category

of a conflict of interest under the AUSIT Code of Ethics. It also places the translator or interpreter's credibility at great risk. Due to the potential conflict of interest, government departments and other organisations have begun rejecting translations or interpreting services provided by T or I practitioners who are migration agents.

More specifically, the Migration Review Tribunal and the Refugee Review Tribunal have published policies stating they will not employ as an interpreter or translator any person who is also a registered migration agent. NAATI had a similar experience when a migration agent, who was also accredited as a translator, undertook the

translation of educational documents presented to NAATI for assessment. NAATI rejected this translation work due to the conflict of interest.

NAATI accredited interpreters and translators are expected to abide by the AUSIT Code of Ethics and in so doing, are required to decline any assignments involving potential conflicts of interest.

[This article originally appeared in the March edition of NAATI News.]

Did you know...?

AUSIT members have a total of over 1600 accreditations* in 67 languages between them. That is a higher average per person than the market at large. (2 vs. 1.6 accreditations).

Of these accreditations:

1102 are in translation skills

517 are in interpreting skills

Approximately 81% of translation accreditations and 62% of interpreting accreditations are at the Professional level.

The ten most popular languages in translation (66 % of the total) are:

1. German	124	accreditations of which 107 are at the Professional level
2. Spanish	124	99
3. French	111	89
4. Chinese	90	80
5. Italian	64	47
6. Japanese	57	50
7. Arabic	45	37
8. Serbian	44	40
9. Greek	40	34
10. Indonesian	38	33

Translation accreditations into English (54% of the total) are slightly ahead of those into LOTE.

The ten most popular languages in interpreting (62% of the total) are:

1. Spanish	59	accreditations (of which 39 are at the Professional level)
2. Mandarin	46	31
3. Italian	33	20
4. Serbian	29	23
5. Greek	29	21
6. German	28	15
7. Arabic	25	20
8. French	25	12
9. Cantonese	24	14
10. Japanese	24	11

* using the highest level of accreditation in a language and for a given direction per person.

An Australian interpreter's fast track to the Olympics

by Charles Qin

There I was at Athens airport in August when I observed a couple of familiar looking faces; 'I must have done interpreting for them', I thought. Later it dawned on me: I had just seen Roy and HG. And so began my Olympic dream.

The Olympic Games that dominated our lives during August have great significance for interpreters and translators and have generated considerable work over many years. Many of us were involved in the Sydney games, including a lot of volunteers, while in both the lead up to announcement of the 2008 venue and since Beijing got the nod, work for interpreters and translators has at times been frenetic; the Chinese are determined to stage a magnificent spectacle and Australia has been actively supporting Beijing in the realisation of the latter's Olympic dream.

So it came as a surprise to me to be invited by an Australian client to be part of the Athens experience. You might ask what a non-sporty, Australian-Chinese interpreter might contribute in a Greek-speaking country. A lot! Beijing looms large and the Chinese are soaking up as much knowledge and experience as they can, not to mention gold medals. Interpreters and translators play vital roles in the staging of an Olympic Games. Without us there would be no bids, no innovative designs, no media reports or press conferences, no publicity, signage, or reporting—no Games perhaps!

I am in the couch potato class when it comes to sport, but sporting prowess wasn't a prerequisite for my assignment in Athens. The Australian company I had been working for had supplied services to many of the recent summer and winter Olympics and hoped to continue doing so in Beijing. I was there to facilitate communication with their Chinese guests, observe operations and to hold training and negotiations about Beijing.

I recalled my impressions of Greece as a young student in China; no other country has benefited the world as much as Greece. As I prepared for the assignment I was somewhat surprised at the number of parallels between Greek and Chinese history. Ancient Greek civilization, with its philosophers, scientists, great artists and architecture, blossomed

During my two weeks in Athens I was privileged to visit a number of the historic sites and museums (all free to delegates like me) and to observe a further similarity: both countries are riddled with unearthed artefacts; many were discovered during the recent mass construction of numerous Greek Olympic venues. I was particularly struck by the media centre with its 600 or



Charles carrying the torch for interpreters in Athens

from 3000 BC, so its mythology and gods and goddesses must have Chinese counterparts: Alexander the Great reminded me of Genghis Khan.

Greece was also the birthplace of democracy, but, like China, was ruled by tyrants and kings during various periods of its long history. The Greeks were great seafarers, as were the Chinese (indeed recent evidence suggests that the Chinese visited Australia long before the Europeans). There are Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, versus China's Confucius, Mencius and Laozi; there are the Gate of Heavenly Peace and Hadrian's Arch. By 2008, Greece and China will have one more common possession—the Olympics.

more work stations ready to bombard our senses. We visited the main stadium both before and after the opening ceremony (unfortunately not during as at something like A\$1000-2000 a ticket, my employer was hardly going to give me a seat, despite my command of oohs and aahs in Chinese), but not before the secrecy shrouding the intellectual property of the staging company had been dismantled.

The city of Athens underwent enormous infrastructure development for the Games, including new freeways, extensions to the metro system, new rail lines and a tram system. These will leave the city with a legacy that will last for many years—one of the benefits of hosting an Olympics.

As much as my client appreciates the assistance I provide, like many monolinguals, they have little idea of the advanced skills, training and concentration required to do the job. They assured me that I would be ably assisted by a new employee who had just returned from study in China and by the Chinese interpreter accompanying the delegation, yet it turned out that not a word was interpreted by either of them. Furthermore, the client decided to use a conference format for imparting information to the Chinese visitors. Having previously advised them that we needed to provide a second conference interpreter to handle this expanded role, the plans changed, only to change again after my arrival in Greece; I was left to simultaneously interpret on my own for three days—of course an almost impossible challenge. I awarded myself the Herculean gold medal for interpreting!

Aside from watching some of the Olympic events, we met with many top officials from ATHOG and BOCOG as well as some Australian dignitaries. I also interpreted for Sports Minister, Rod Kemp, AOC President and Australian Chef de Mission, John Coates and the Australian Ambassador; the view from the Ambassador's residence over Athens was spectacular.

Perhaps the other challenging aspect to

'Interpreters and translators play vital roles in the staging of an Olympic Games. Without us there would be no bids, no innovative designs, no media reports or press conferences, no publicity, signage, or reporting—no Games perhaps!'

my work was getting my tongue around Greek names (just how many syllables was that and did I get them all back?). The heat certainly took its toll, but luckily informality was the order of the day and suits and ties were left in the suitcase. One Chinese journalist died from heatstroke, we heard. After so many years working in smoke-free Australia, it came as a shock to be bombarded everywhere with cigarette smoke: in supermarkets, restaurants, offices and in the interpreting booth as the technician puffed away. Another challenge was to diplomatically convey, in sign language, that they please stop.

It was a wonderful experience to be part of this major world event and to realise what an important contribution interpreters make. And, oh dear, how about a few basic rules on the pronunciation of athletes' names—surely this isn't too

much to ask of our broadcasters, after all, there is a wealth of talent in our profession to guide them. Let's start with *Beijing* not *Beizzzhhhhing*: I don't think I can stand four more years of hearing this pronounced wrongly!

Back from the international stage and the focus of world attention, to multilingual, multicultural Melbourne (the largest Greek city outside Greece), it was a humble Chinese interpreter and an unlucky Chinese visitor who were singled out by Customs and Immigration for examination. Sometimes it helps to be an interpreter who travels frequently and is a good talker. They let me off—but would I mind interpreting for this visitor who had already been trying to explain himself for an hour? Australia: multicultural, multilingual, welcoming, but with no interpreters on hand to offer language assistance. 'Of course!' I said.

Books available

The Discourse of Court Interpreting:

Discourse practices of the law, the witness and the interpreter.

Sandra Beatriz Hale

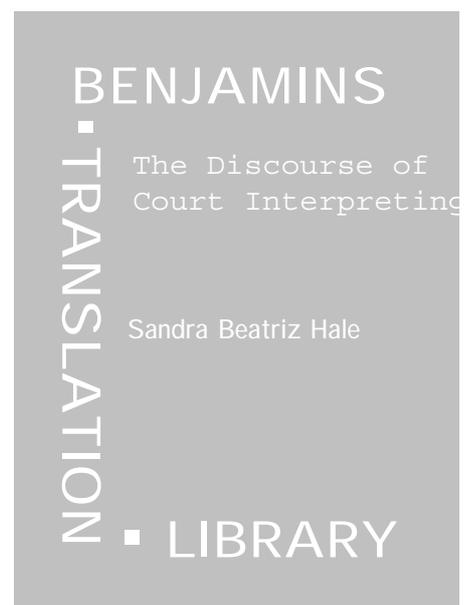
University of Western Sydney

This book explores the intricacies of court interpreting through analysis of the discourse between English-speaking participants, Spanish-speaking witnesses and interpreters. Dr Sandra Hale, herself a practitioner, educator and researcher (and regular contributor to AUSIT events), discusses real issues faced by most court interpreters and shows, through careful research, how interpreters' choices can have varying degrees of influence on the triadic exchange. The book highlights the complexities of court interpreting and argues for thorough training for practising interpreters in order to improve their performance as well as for better understanding of their work from the legal profession's perspective.

Although the data is drawn from Spanish-English cases, the conclusions can be extended to any language combination. The book is written in a clear, accessible language and is aimed at practising interpreters, students and educators of interpreting, linguists, and legal professionals.

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