

National

Newsletter

THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS INC.

Volume 14, number 2 - May 2006



Membership category reforms explained

Finding non-government customers

Community interpreting pay levels

Gaining PD points



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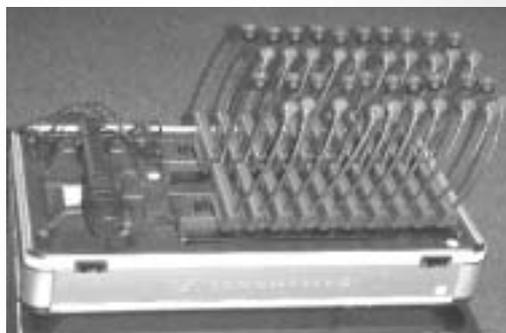
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From the President

Chris Poole discusses new membership fees and categories



Dear Members,
I've got bad news and good news.

After extensive consultation and deliberation, not

to mention calculation, AUSIT will be increasing membership fees on the first of July. The new fees will be Associate - \$99, Member \$176, and Senior Practitioner \$220. All of these figures include GST, as AUSIT has now grown to the point where we are legally obliged to collect tax on behalf of the government.

As all attentive members will know, the three categories listed here are new and are reflected in the Constitution as amended at the last AGM. The Associate category is intended for anyone with an interest in T&I but who may not have any sort of credential. The Member category is for people with NAATI accreditation who may or may not actually practice. The Senior Practitioner category is for those Members, who wish AUSIT to state publicly on their behalf that they practice T&I 'for a living'.

The definition of this last phrase, in other words the eligibility criteria for Senior Practising member category, has yet to be determined by National Council, but we hope to announce it at this year's AGM. There are some who favour a declaration of amount of work completed expressed as 'words translated' or 'hours spent interpreting', much like what NAATI are proposing as the basis for revalidation. I feel this will be what we lovingly call an 'administrative nightmare' and difficult if not impossible to implement fairly, given the enormous range of languages, settings, domains, subjects and client profiles that the profession enjoys. I favour a

simple declaration of percentage of household income as verification that the individual practices T&I 'for a living'.

So much more is read into the whole idea than is actually there. The intention behind the Senior Practitioner category is not to make any statement about the quality of the person's work, or their standing in the profession, or the standard of their ethical conduct. These things will have to be established by the practitioner per job, per client, even per sentence. (The ability to do this is part of being a professional.)

The intent behind the category is simply to say that the member does it for a living, and no more. Its purpose is also to give a prospective purchaser a bit more information on which to base their choices. The purchaser may assume certain things based on that information, but a rational person would not assume that anything good *necessarily* flowed from doing something for a living. If they assume anything it would simply be that a good outcome is *more likely* on the basis of this quite indirect indicator.

People aren't always rational of course. Worse still they are free to conclude whatever they want and spend their money accordingly! We will have to sharpen up the skills necessary to sell and deliver good quality T&I services to such an unruly market.

Mention of 'intentions' above raises another topic. Amending a constitution is a lot of work and many individuals (including myself) contributed to the last round, each with their own intentions and desired outcomes. Some got in, some didn't, compromise all around. For example, I am personally disappointed with the

(continued on page 4)

In this issue

<i>President's report</i>	3
<i>Membership category reform - Reasons, objectives, outcomes</i>	5
<i>AUSIT PD practicalities</i>	6
<i>How to deal with late payers</i>	7
<i>Letter to the editor</i>	7
<i>AUSIT & community interpreting remuneration levels</i>	8
<i>Due diligence - agency accreditation</i>	9
<i>Plan to find non-government clients</i>	10
<i>Professions Australia alerts</i>	11
<i>Translation in the Arab world</i>	12
<i>Countdown to CL5</i>	13
<i>Sign 'ers' and 'ums'</i>	14
<i>Eulogy - Greta de Tapia</i>	15
<i>Death at law</i>	15
<i>Monterey Institute of T&I Conference</i>	16

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Thank you once again to all for your submissions. I would like to remind members that the deadline for the July issue is 30 June 2006.

Special thanks go out to Barbara for her great proofreading work and Yveline for her ideas.

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Front cover photo showing one of the panels at the Arab Translation Conference held in Beirut on 25 September 2005. Photo by Mona Jabbour.

From the President

(continued from page 3)

name 'Senior Practitioner', as everyone who has heard it has mistakenly thought that AUSIT is making a value judgment about the person's standing or length of experience (or even age!) This was certainly not my intention when I contributed time to the development of the amendments.

I argued for 'Practising Member'. The objection to this was that people might assume others don't 'practise'. This was precisely the idea, and as long as AUSIT defines what 'practice' is, and anyone who meets the criteria is free to join in that category, I couldn't honestly see what the problem would be. No word will be immune to idiosyncratic interpretation.

As has been further noted by Moreno (see *letter to the editor, page 7 in this issue – ed.*), the amendments have resulted in people with only paraprofessional accreditation becoming full members. This is also in accordance with the wishes of some people, but not me.

I favour the gradual *strengthening* of a vertical career path. With each step harder to reach than the last, and fewer people reaching them. With meaningful and reliable gateways such as qualifications based on competencies, higher education degrees, the NAATI exam, completion of mentorship, and consistent performance at the professional level. And with substantial barriers to entry ensuring that people think carefully before entering the profession, then focus on obtaining a return on their investment after they've done so.

I had further concerns that changing the Constitution to allow paraprofessionals to join as full members is quite unfair to the current 'Ordinary Members', as they joined that category under conditions which have now

been diluted. We need to make membership of AUSIT, in every category, mean more, not less.

This position is not antipathetic to paraprofessional practitioners. Just the reverse. We should be building a ladder so that we can help people up. Instead we've built a paddling pool.

I confess that I overlooked this result of the amendments when we were debating them, and I will be preparing another amendment to try and rectify the situation (and atone for my neglect).

Amending the Constitution should be a regular activity. I have always thought this profession is so young that it barely qualifies as such. We are all in the middle of defining what it is to be a translator or interpreter. It is entirely natural that, as we achieve a better understanding, we ensure our (small c) constitution, expectations and aims change as well. Verily the world as we know it ends on a daily basis.

So what's this got to do with the rise in fees? I joined AUSIT just as Moreno was starting to bring about some broad changes, a bit of a revolution. AUSIT shook its sleepy head and realised that there is more to this industry than waiting for an agency to ring and send you to a court or a hospital. Apart from the simple growth of AUSIT membership I believe that we have now defined some non-negotiable minimum infrastructure for the Institute. We have two administrators who are paid close to market rates for their time, and we have a regular publication in the *Newsletter*. These, and the travel and accommodation costs for National Council members each AGM, are the big ticket items in our budget. With our current fees we were running at a \$20,000 per annum deficit. With the new fee

structure we are still in business. We cannot guarantee that there will be anything new for the higher fees; we will simply be able to continue doing what we need to do.

The amounts were arrived at after consultation with many members and I was surprised at the support for higher fees. We know there are also many people who regard AUSIT as a service provider and who therefore assess membership fees the same way as they would the price of showbags. I believe if you really want to get value out of AUSIT, you need to get involved. Attend, participate, volunteer, speak up. This is where the greatest rewards are for membership.

And the good news? That WAS the good news!

Corrections/apologies

In the article, 'Minister announces winners of AUSIT Excellence Awards for 2005' published on page four in the previous edition of the *National Newsletter* (vol 14, no. 1) it was incorrectly stated that the live Channel Seven broadcast of the Schapelle Corby verdict won the ratings for the timeslot. The live broadcast by Channel Nine actually won the ratings.

The article 'Critical Link and community interpreting' was also incorrectly attributed to Terry Chesher. The author was in fact Uldis Ozolins.

The editor apologises for any inconvenience caused.

Membership category reform - Reasons, objectives, outcomes

The eBulletin board discussion about reforming the AUSIT membership system started some time in 2003 when Moreno was President. Colleagues expressed concerns that the NAATI titles 'Translator (professional level)' and 'Interpreter (professional level)' were no longer an accurate definition of any level of professionalism.

- The validity of NAATI testing was questioned by experts
- NAATI made a statement about professionalism with no possibility of it being monitored among those it accredited
- NAATI was focused on mass test accreditation rather than proper training
- NAATI accreditation could not be taken away if someone violated ethical principles
- Outside criteria, like extra migration points, were introduced without consultation
- NAATI accreditation was meaningless in the commercial domain

It looked to be AUSIT's responsibility to do something about this. A reformed membership category system was proposed which took into account a member's professional activity and his/her training in the field. Sole reliance on NAATI 'professional accreditation' (as our constitution demanded) was not enough. We had to broaden the range of criteria, while simultaneously focusing on actual professionalism indicators including T&I practice. The new system was planned to indicate:

- The degree of professionalism expected from AUSIT members in various categories
- Ongoing participation in PD activities

- Adherence to the AUSIT Code of Ethics
- A T&I career path.

In my notes I find references to a 'simple and straightforward three-tier system':

- Associate (newcomers, students, recognised T/Is, everybody with an interest)
- Member (accredited, some practice, attending PD, adherence to the Code of Ethics)
- Practising Member (same as Member with higher practice requirements)

Being aware that NAATI testing was a weak indicator of T&I skills and knowing how many 'paraprofessional' (and even 'recognised') practitioners were and are still working at a high level of professionalism, the steering committee decided after lengthy discussions that these colleagues were legitimately a part of the 'Member' category. The Qualifications Committee was to determine the criteria for 'equivalence to professional level', as provided by the Constitution. It was also decided that initially, no definite practice requirement would apply to the 'Member' category.

The planned category name 'Practising Member' was eventually found to be inappropriate because it would lead to the implicit conclusion that everybody outside this group was not practising. As a consequence, the steering committee settled on the name 'Senior Practitioner' which was the best compromise available. The Senior Practitioner category was always intended to include a minimum practice requirement.

What we have to do now is implement the new system and make it work.

Uli Priester

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Motions passed since the publication of the last newsletter:

Motion #91, dated 23.02.06

That AUSIT submits an expression of interest to FIT for participation in its ID card scheme.

That AUSIT administrators will facilitate applications from Members.

That all costs of the scheme (including additional time) will be fully recouped through admin fees.

That AUSIT administrators put forward an admin policy to the Executive for approval.

#93, 29.03.06

That Claudia Ait-Touati be accepted as the National General Secretary.

#94, 29.03.06

That NC approve the expenditure of no more than \$1,500 being for venue hire and catering for the members of the board of NAATI at a lunch to be held in Canberra on the 24th May.

#95, 29.03.06

That a new fee structure be implemented.
Associate \$99
Member \$176
Senior Practising Member \$220

#96, 28.04.06

That the recently revised membership dues become effective from 1 July 2006, meaning that any renewals paid after that date should be paid at the new rates.

#97, 28.04.06

To establish a national committee which is solely assigned with the organisation of the biennale conference.

Congratulations and welcome Claudia!

Since the publication of the last newsletter the following people have been admitted to AUSIT as members (motion #92):

Sue Massoudi, WA; Anthoula Paraskeva, VIC.

Welcome to these new members!

AUSIT PD practicalities

Annamaria Arnall on how to gain PD points as part of your membership

Half a year into the new membership categories, I think it might be helpful to talk about the practical details.

On the one hand, AUSIT membership is open now to all professionals, regardless of their NAATI-level status. After all, it is not the practitioner's fault that NAATI offers merely recognition in some languages and many so-called paraprofessionals are doing a better job than some 'professionals'. We know that NAATI accreditation alone does not make a professional, and this fact is now finally acknowledged at AUSIT.

On the other hand, AUSIT membership does stand for professionalism. The demand to demonstrate our standards has become stricter than ever. Amongst other requirements, we must account for our participation in *continuous and ongoing professional development (PD)*, or *lifelong learning*. Whilst this may have been an initial shock for some, I trust the confusion has been sorted out by now and every member knows that PD is something we do in the course of normal work processes. Many of us never stop to consider and consequently recognise that enlarging our vocabulary, keeping up with cultural/political developments in the country of the LOTE, learning new software and marketing approaches, and helping colleagues over the eBulletin are all legitimate forms of PD. Following several debates and discussions, I hope everyone is clear at least on the main points:

- many activities other than attendance at seminars count as PD
- previous studies, no matter what their level, do not count as PD.

In order to maintain membership in AUSIT, members now need to collect PD credit points. The requirement is four per year, and we have three years over which to collect 12 points. This flexible system means we can get three points in one year, seven in the next and two during the third (or any such combination). The year starts from the date of paying the membership fee. Members advise the administrators of the number of PD points they collected the previous year when they renew their membership. The administrator enters the number in the appropriate field in the database. If, after three years the number is 12 or more, all is well, the counter is re-set to zero and another period of three years begins. If after three years a member has less than 12 points, he or she cannot remain a Member, and can only be an Associate.

We rely on self-assessment. Points are allocated for activities (described on the PD Credit Sheet). Additional information on the 'Training' page of the AUSIT website can also help members determine how many points to claim, according to topic and duration.

There is nothing to prevent people making inflated and false claims initially: this is a risk the AUSIT leadership takes with this system. However, in our close-knit communities, any cheater will be promptly caught. We are all mature, ethical and responsible professionals, fully aware of the severity of the social sanctions we can expect for transgressions. The Qualifications Committee, all Branch Committees and the administrators have the right to conduct random audits, asking for proof of any member's PD point

claims.

So if you have not already done so, please download the PD Credit Sheet from the www.ausit.org website. Every time you do a PD activity, fill in the credit sheet and retain evidence of attendance such as the receipt for a fee, the email received upon the completion of a Virtual Lecture Room test, or a certificate of attendance or completion at the PD event or anything else for which you are claiming a point. The paperwork is to be kept for five years, in case of an audit.

The main points again:

1. Every time you do a PD activity, mark it in your Credit Sheet. Read carefully, as ceilings apply. Ask me or an administrator when in doubt.
2. Keep records.
3. Inform your administrator of the number of points you have collected *during the past 12 months only* when you renew your membership.

Happy PD.

(Continued from page 7)

"Otherwise, I can't see any problem in requiring a late fee, as long as you spell it out in your contract documentation."

'I'm not sure about this. In some forensic work I've done for lawyers I was told in very clear terms that a late payment clause was unenforceable... I don't know what makes a viable late payment strategy (and we all know companies who impose them), so it would be worth getting legal advice about how to construct something that works.'

Daniel Muller, 9 March

'Interesting to hear that late payments may not be enforceable ... so it's back to the discount if paid before delivery I guess. Talking about accounting ... are "provisions for bad debt" considered an expense, i.e. tax deductible?'

How to deal with late payers

- from the March eBulletin postings

Posted by Marie Meynadier, 8 March 06

'...One of the colleagues I subcontract for has a "late payment penalty fee" notice on his invoices and I am considering doing something similar for a couple of clients who are regular late payers (up to six months), just because I hate chasing payments, sending reminder mails etc...Do any of you apply penalty fees, and if so what is your experience with them (Do they work? Did the late payers drop their bad habits? Do they scare off clients?), and how does it work legally? E.g can you state your own payment terms or is there an indicative late penalty rate for the state/country where your company is registered?

Maria Gonzalez, 8 March

'My view is that for the most part such measures do not pay. It is one of the idiosyncrasies of commerce that business is administered with floating capital and not from last year's profits...'

'...I guess it will depend on what your own clients can bear. Very few practitioners would be given work if they were to harass the clients for 'prompt' payment, especially in the business environment we move ... We are very vulnerable, particularly working for private agencies. Government agencies pay promptly provided our paperwork is in order...'

Tony McGillycuddy, 8 March

'Why not try the reverse approach? If you know who your habitual late payers are, simply charge them extra up front, and then offer a discount for prompt payment.

Otherwise, I can't see any problem in requiring a late fee, as long as you spell it out in your contract documentation before the client accepts for the job. I don't think you'd get very far trying to impose a late fee after the event, though.'

Andrea Hoffman, 9 March

'I have my payment terms and a "late payment penalty fee" notice in my quotation. When clients accept the quotation they also accept the payment terms. When I issue my invoice I state the same terms again.

It works pretty well. *Knock on wood* So far I've only had to write a reminder a few times in the last 15 years or so...'

Chris Poole, 9 March

'I would say the only meaningful penalty is don't work for them again. That's the most powerful market mechanism available to you. Once they've got your work there's buggger all you can do really except hassle them as politely as you can. Over \$2,000 and you might consider a solicitor's letter or debt recovery agency (but of course you won't be working for them again)...'

'...Then there's "late" and there's "late". I've been late paying people too. Sometimes these things happen (you run out of money). All you can do in that position is ring them before they

ring you and explain what's happening and work out a payment plan. I don't think there's anyone who has told me that they won't work for me again because of that. (Maybe they just haven't told me...) Everyone gets into difficulties from time to time. You have to be a bit flexible in business.'

Duncan Markham, 9 March

"Why not try the reverse approach? If you know who your habitual late payers are, simply charge them extra up front, and then offer a discount for prompt payment."

'In accounting terms that's much fiddlier isn't it?'

(continued on page 6)

Letter to the editor

Dear editor,

On 29 March 2006, Chris Poole wrote in <AUSIT-eBulletin@yahoogroups.com>:

'Excessive competition? What does it exceed? Would you lessen it if you could? Who can say what the correct amount of competition is? Could we trust that person/body to make the decision on our behalf? Would we have a say?'

I've been on sabbatical and just recently decided to catch up with the changes to the constitution passed at the last national annual general meeting.

Let me congratulate our President, Chris, and his helpers for putting through some major changes to the constitution, particularly with regard to membership. The relevant section now reads in part:

'5.3.3 Member

The prerequisites for Membership are:

- 1) full age and
- 2) NAATI accreditation or Recognition or equivalent qualifications and experience, as determined by the Qualifications Committee of the Institute according to Rules laid down from time to time by the Institute in General Meeting, and
- 3) such evidence of professional skills maintenance as may from time to time be determined by the National

Council...'

(Taken from the AUSIT Constitution as amended 2005)

This clearly now enfranchises, brings into the fold and welcomes as 'full' AUSIT members all paraprofessional interpreters and translators, who previously enjoyed only limited membership rights.

There are hundreds of them out there. I've been meeting them in the hospitals (where I've been doing some interpreting myself). Like all of us they will need to prove themselves by continuing to work and develop professionally. And we need them.

And given that, as Chris says, 'the more competition the better it is for everyone' we have not only embraced potentially hundreds more members, we have also injected some life into the market.

One thing we should be doing though, is targeting our new potential members with a membership campaign, letting them know about the change and encouraging them to join. I'd be grateful if anyone could enlighten me as to anything going on behind the scenes. You'd expect the membership numbers to have grown already and to be creeping up.

Any info?

Moreno Giovannoni

AUSIT and community interpreting remuneration levels

John Gare wants our Institute to become more involved in contract consultations

People apparently choose to take on community interpreting because they love the work: remuneration levels in the domain are unattractive in the extreme. A typical fee of \$60 for an hour and a half on site, after taking into account travel time, travel cost, and contractor overheads to fund super and insurance etc., expands out to an equivalent annual salary of \$18,321 (p. 16, *AUSIT Report 'Fair Pay for Interpreters', October 2005*). For comparison, a casual cleaner's hourly wage of \$13.77 is better, being equivalent to \$22,995 for the same number of working days.

There are some deep economic forces at work here and I have a feeling that crude manifestations of the contracting method of hiring have something to do with the situation. There is fascination and appeal, for employers, in a system which appears to be capable of transferring costs and even legal responsibility onto the shoulders of employees, while leaving income flowing unhindered into the coffers of the employer. The T&I industry already has long years of experience of this system and the result, in community interpreting, is as described above. We see whole sectors of work administered by sole service providers, with admission to interpreting work in a sector effectively controlled by the service provider. Practitioners who register with a service provider or, in the case of Centrelink and TIS, directly with the relevant government instrumentality, are told what the fees will be and, generally speaking, are offered work assignments at those fees and those fees only.

It is true that people who would probably describe themselves as independent contractors keep turning up and doing the work, but does that mean that all is well? I would contend that it does not. As any survey will show, practitioners are anything but happy with remuneration levels in

community interpreting. They and their love of the work are clearly being taken advantage of by most of the fixed fee agencies and instrumentalities. And since there are many languages in which the bulk of the available work is in the community interpreting domain, the outlook for future recruiting of interpreters is likely to be adversely affected as potential students discover that remuneration levels in the industry lag substantially behind those in other professions available to job-seekers with commensurate training.

I would like to see AUSIT taking a more direct interest in this issue of collective importance to all members. In my opinion, it does not sit well with a professional association when substantial numbers of its members outside regular full-time employment find that they are unable to name their own fees. I believe AUSIT members, and especially interpreters, should be sensitive to every indication of willingness to contemplate change, from whichever quarter it comes.

At irregular intervals, major agencies and government instrumentalities conduct contract and fee reviews. Centrelink's last one in 2004 was essentially a non-event with nil revision of fees. Even so, our then-President Yveline Piller did succeed in getting an audience with a high-ranking civil servant. The principle that AUSIT have a stake in practitioner remuneration and contracting matters was reestablished. TIS is currently conducting a review of its contract, and AUSIT can expect to receive calls for help from members if the outcome is not to their liking. In my opinion it would be better for AUSIT to have a say in the formative stage of the contract.

One organisation which has demonstrated an inclination to contemplate change is VITS LanguageLink, who in 2003 commissioned a 'Survey of Interpreting Practitioners' by Uldis Ozolins. The report of the survey, published in 2004

and available on the VITS website, is a thorough documentation of interpreter discontent. But VITS have not stopped there. They have implemented in part a major recommendation of the Ozolins report. This is recommendation nine which reads in part, '*That the policy of pay differential for different levels of accreditation be slowly extended to become an industry standard*'. In a fee revision effective March 2006, by increasing the minimum assignment fee for professional (L3) interpreters from \$58 to \$61 and leaving the fee for paraprofessionals (L2) at \$52, VITS have increased the pay differential between the two NAATI accreditation levels from \$6 to \$9. This can be seen as a step towards creating something of a career path incentive for people to upgrade their qualifications. Too bad that the top rate is still less than a cleaner's pay, but the \$9 differential is something new and worth watching.

The Brisbane-based National Auslan Booking and Payment Service (NABS) provides an even larger pay differential between L3 and L2 interpreters — \$15. This organisation's federally funded private medical interpreting service commenced operation in February 2005, and pays L3 sign language interpreters \$124 for 90 minutes on site. Under their agreement with the Federal Government, NABS are also required to make available ongoing professional development opportunities for interpreters.

The NABS contract is thought to have been developed in consultation with Auslan interpreters. What I would like to see is renewed involvement of AUSIT in such consultations. A healthy community interpreting domain is in the best interests of the agencies and service users, and it must be as clear to them as it is to practitioners that the present situation is unsustainable.

A problem here, apparently, is the perceived lack of a mandate for the AUSIT executive to take the initiative in
(continued next page)

Due diligence - agency accreditation

Daniel Muller ponders the practicalities of a certification scheme to protect T/I practitioners

It is a T/I's daily bread — a work request from a previously unknown agency. Oh good, we exclaim, but nagging questions arise as soon as the request is read: will they pay? When will they pay? Unfortunately there are still agencies around who think that they can get away with paying late or not at all — after all, we're half a world away and 'just a small fish' in the ocean; surely we're not going to make trouble for that unpaid \$50 invoice. Think again!

For a well-networked freelancer, there is a wealth of (sometimes) useful information out there. For example, there is the ProZ.com blueboard, where colleagues rate agencies according to the likelihood of them working again for the said agency; be sure to read the comments and don't just take that rating number at face value. Other sites offer blacklists of notoriously bad agencies, at least until they are forced to take them down.

The above will probably give a good indication of reliability for big and established agencies, but there is always the option of asking colleagues and fellow professionals for their experience with certain organisations. Professional associations such as AUSIT, or specifically created groups (e.g.

WPPF) efficiently serve to exchange information for that purpose.

The aforementioned checks are probably as good as it gets in terms of giving freelancers peace of mind before investing time and effort. However, these are subjective assessments and are likely to be biased to the negative. Human nature makes us provide more feedback about negative experiences than positive ones. These assessments may also be tainted by unfulfilled expectations. Furthermore, everybody has a 'bad' day — even the best agencies.

One way to potentially overcome this would be to implement a certification scheme where agencies — and freelancers for their part — would be bound to adhere to a precisely defined set of criteria in order not to lose their certified status. This would most notably involve adherence to an agreed purchase order, which in turn would need to fulfill minimum standards. Such standards should involve payment terms, methods and procedures in case of disputes. A scheme of naming the good rather than shaming the bad also stands a higher chance of standing up to legal scrutiny.

The logistical problems with such a scheme are, however, momentous.

On a micro-level, constant supervision of certified agencies would need to be enforced, while on a macro-level the scheme would have to be made known to a worldwide scene of freelancers and agencies. The administration of the scheme may render it economically unviable. And who'd be paying for it, anyway?

So it's back to piecing together information about a potential new agency client and relying on instincts on whether to quote and what terms to demand. The potential for late payment (or no payment) should be calculated into the offer price and conditions, even at the risk of losing a potential client. If it still goes all wrong, and traditional recovery means such as courts and tribunals fail, then help may be on the horizon with AUSIT's Board of Professional Conduct (BoPC), which at this time is in development. One crucial point stands out though — a document trail will always be a necessity.

(from previous page)

seeking consultations. In a message to the eBulletin in March 2006, Immediate Past President Yveline Piller quoted examples of muted responses from the affected members when contract issues arise. Is this because members do not have high expectations for the outcome of AUSIT intervention? Or is it that there are not many AUSIT members remaining active in community interpreting? Hopefully

the forthcoming academic survey will provide answers to questions like these. If we should be sensitive to indications of willingness to change, we would clearly also want to retain, applaud and strengthen positive aspects of the industry. An important positive aspect in my opinion is the existence of agencies that expect and require their panel members to nominate their own fees. I am on the panels of several private

agencies that do not set fees, but instead strike an agreed rate with the practitioner. There should be more of it!

April 2006

Plan to find non-government clients

Useful pointers from a PD presentation by NSW committee member **Andrew Bean**

The following is a summary of a short presentation given as part of an AUSIT NSW Branch PD event entitled 'Attracting Non-Government Clients'.

Firstly, before drawing up any sort of plan to find non-government (or any other) customers, make sure you are quite clear in your own mind just what it is you're really trying to do. In other words, what is your objective? Many plans fail because not enough attention is paid to making a quantified and time constrained objective. Stating that your aim is 'to find new customers' is too vague. So you try again, and restate that the objective is 'to have ten new customers within three months'. This is both quantified and time constrained, but is it realistic?

If you have no work at all then maybe it is. Assuming you work a 40-hour week, in any one month you could average one 16-hour job for each of your new customers. But if you only want to find another ten hours of work per week and you want the average size job to be 16 hours, you simply cannot handle ten new customers in the time available and you have an unrealistic objective. Therefore, based on your personal situation and expectations, make sure you start by setting a quantified, time constrained and *realistic* objective.

Now you can move on to the plan itself which can be broken down into five logical steps.

1. Compile a potential customer list.

In most industries this is very difficult but fortunately, for us, there is a ready solution. The Chamber of Commerce for your language has a directory of members and, one way or another, you need to get yourself a copy. (If there is no CoC or equivalent directory for your language then, unfortunately, this plan is not for you.)

2. Identify market segments.

Here there are three considerations, namely that each segment is:

- homogeneous i.e. there is commonality between customers within that segment. In most cases, in our profession, they will be classified in terms of fields of particular expertise such as legal, technical, medical etc.;
- accessible. Are the customers within the segment readily contactable? If they are in the CoC directory, this should not be a problem;
- substantial. Are there enough potential customers listed in the territory in your particular field(s) of expertise to make it worthwhile pursuing?

3. For each selected segment:

- compile a potential customer list. For each name taken from the directory, go to the website and assess whether your potential customer really appears to be in your chosen market segment;
- make personal contact. Here, the good old-fashioned telephone is the way to go. By telephoning, and explaining the purpose of your call to whomever answers the phone, you should be able to get to the right person. Emails tend to attract the 'delete' button and letters are likely to be found in the wastepaper basket;
- send information. Having found the right person, do not hang up until you have agreed on the information he/she would like you to supply;
- follow-up. Always, always. So make sure, when agreeing on information to be sent, that you have left the door open to do this; e.g. 'If it's okay with you, I'll give you a call in x days/weeks to discuss what I'm going to send you now'.

4. For each selected segment:

- revise the customer base. You're not going to get a 100% hit rate. In fact, you will probably be doing well to get 10 to 20%. So you can delete the rest from your potential customer list. (However, do not throw it away. Often a potential customer who is not interested today may be interested at sometime in the future. Give them a call in three to six months time to see if the situation has changed.);

- review/revise objectives. With your potential customer list now revised to a much shorter list, do all your original objectives still look realistic? If not, revise them.

5. For each customer within each segment:

- keep in touch. A customer not contacted is a customer who forgets you. Each time you are in contact make sure you agree to get in touch again. Set up a control system telling you when that follow-up is due and recording what you discussed during the previous contact.

To summarise, the above is a systematic approach to finding non-government customers. It is *not* a magic wand and requires perseverance and patience, particularly step 3, establishing personal contact. Many customers will have no need for your services; others who do may not be available and you will have to persist until you make contact.

Two final points:

- This presentation was given by a translator, not an interpreter, with potential translation customers in mind. I have a feeling that the hit rate using this method to find interpreter customers will be much lower.

- To handle the sorts of questions you are likely to get from your potential new customers, the AUSIT brochure 'Translation – Getting it right' will provide many answers.

Good luck.

Professions Australia

Information taken from Professions Australia Alerts, numbers 360-366

Office of Workplace Services

The Australian Government has established the Office of Workplace Services (OWS) as an independent agency to monitor workplaces and give advice to employees and employers under the WorkChoices reforms. The OWS will ensure that the rights and obligations of workers and employers under the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* are understood and enforced fairly and will have beefed up powers to enforce compliance with workplace agreements and awards. Employees and employers will be able to bring claims to the independent agency for assistance with enforcement and, if necessary, prosecution for breach. Further information can be obtained through the WorkChoices Infoline on 1300 363 264 or the OWS website at <<http://www.ows.gov.au/>>.

Review of OHS Act

The Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations has announced a review of the Commonwealth *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991* (the OHS (CE) Act). The OHS(CE) Act covers employees working in Commonwealth departments, statutory authorities and Government Business Enterprises. An issues paper has been released to assist in the preparation of submissions and is available on the department's website: <<http://www.dewr.gov.au/>>. Submissions should be forwarded to the Safety and Compensation Policy Branch, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, GPO Box 9879, Canberra, ACT, 2601 or by email to <mailtomarjorie.hutchinson@dewr.gov.au> by 30 April 2006.

Small business tax

The Board of Taxation, which provides advice on improving the design of taxation laws and their operation, is currently investigating tax compliance costs borne by small business with a view to reducing that cost. Submissions from small businesses can be made to The Board of Taxation (c/- Treasury Langton Cres, Canberra 2600 or via email <BoardofTaxation@treasury.gov.au>).

Higher education discussion paper

The Minister for Education, Science

and Training has challenged Australia's higher education sector to actively debate the implications of Europe's Bologna Process for the Australian education sector. By 2010 under the Bologna Process, the 45 nations involved aim to build a European Higher Education Area, making it easier for students to move between institutions.

In a move to encourage more Australians to experience an international education, the Minister announced a review to identify impediments to increasing the number of Australians who study overseas. Compared with other countries, few Australians take the opportunity to study abroad. Difficulties with student mobility programs, credit transfer, financial limitations and course requirements all restrict participation.

DEST has prepared a discussion paper that argues for greater compatibility between European and Australian higher education. This would facilitate easier movement of students between Europe and Australia and make Australian university courses more attractive to students in the region. The paper is now available on the DEST website at: <http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/Bologna_Process_and_Australia.htm>.

Tougher bankruptcy laws

People who dispose of assets in the lead up to bankruptcy are the target of legislation passed by Federal Parliament. The changes toughen existing laws which allow the trustee to recover property disposed of prior to bankruptcy or owned by a third person but acquired by that person using the bankrupt's resources.

Previously, people approaching bankruptcy could avoid these provisions by, for example, off-loading assets to family members and then deliberately delaying the bankruptcy; or by building up wealth in the lead up to bankruptcy in the name of a person who allows the bankrupt to use or benefit from property acquired with that wealth.

Taxation - release of international study

The Treasurer has released the Report of the International Comparison of Australia's Taxes by Messrs Warburton

and Hendy.

The Report concludes that with an overall tax to GDP ratio of 31.6 per cent, Australia is a low tax country by comparison with other developed economies. Australia has the eighth lowest tax burden of the 30 OECD countries.

Australia is one of only eight OECD countries that does not levy any wealth, estate, inheritance or gift taxes.

In 2003, Australia had the third lowest government expenditure as a proportion of GDP of the 28 OECD countries for which data is available. By 2005, Australia had moved to the second lowest spending government out of the 28 OECD countries.

The biggest structural difference between Australia's tax system and those in other countries is our absence of social security contributions.

Australia's total wage and salary tax take as a proportion of GDP is low compared with the OECD-30 and the OECD-10. Once social security taxes and payroll taxes are accounted for, Australia has the second lowest level of direct taxation on individuals and payroll in the OECD-10.

The report does not effectively address how current tax arrangements impact on Australia's international competitiveness and our ability to address a range of issues including professional skill shortages and compliance costs.

Copies of the report are available on <<http://comparativetaxation.treasury.gov.au>>.

Ruling on service trust arrangements

After extensive consultation with professional and industry groups the Tax Office today issued a final ruling – see: <<http://law.ato.gov.au/atolaw/view.htm?docid=TXR/TR20062/NAT/ATO/00001>> and a guide - see <<http://www.ato.gov.au/content/downloads/N13086-04-2006.pdf>> to help professional firms determine if fees paid under a service arrangement are tax deductible.

The ruling confirms the Tax Office's long-standing view that service arrangements are acceptable provided they are entered into for commercial reasons - and that the fees charged are not grossly excessive.

الملتقى العربي للترجمة

الترجمة في الوطن العربي: الواقع والمأمول



Translation in the Arab world

23-25 شعبان 1426 هـ / 27-25 سبتمبر 2005 م

AUSIT member **Mona Jabbour** attended the Arab Translation Conference in Beirut, which addressed common issues and differences facing T/Is in Australia and the Arab countries

On 25 September 2005 I had the opportunity to attend the Arab Translation Conference held over three days at the Phoenicia Hotel in Beirut. The program was very intensive and included the following sessions: Translation/Interpreting (T&I) Strategies in the Arab World, Training and Skills Development, Issues in the Arab Countries and Ways of Addressing Concerns, Translation and Cultural Exchange, Economics of T&I, Machine Translation in the Arab countries, Pedagogical and Professional Quality Management of Translation Programs and Lexicography.

The conference received wide media coverage and included a

promotional press conference. It was very well attended and organised. There were attendees from all Arab countries as well as from China, Japan, Britain and France. Speakers from these latter countries spoke about T&I experiences between their languages and the Arabic language.

The conference was a great opportunity for me to learn about T&I issues in the Arab countries and to learn about issues faced by our colleagues on the other side of the world.

Translation has been known as the bridge between people and civilisations since the days of Babylon. It was through translations

that the West learned about Arab sciences, mathematics, medicine and literature. During the reign of the Arab Caliphate Al-Maamoun, translators used to earn the weight of the books they translated in gold: this is how much translation was appreciated during that era.

I felt that although we live and work thousands of miles away, we share similar interests and concerns. In some sessions I felt as if I was in an AUSIT discussion forum. Some of the similarities and differences concerning our profession here in Australia and in the Arab world include:

- The lack of recognition of our profession. Although

(continued next page)

translators and interpreters are highly regarded by society, the profession is not regulated and there is no strong union to prevent non-accredited people from working as T/Is;

- The lack of financial resources to fund large translation projects.
- A lack of uniform technical dictionaries.
- Teaching sciences and mathematics in English and not in Arabic makes it hard for Arabic readers to familiarise themselves with new Internet and technical terminology. This also limits the market for translation as students in Arab countries learn English and other languages so there is no great demand for science books to be translated into Arabic.
- Most translation work is either literary, or in the commercial and diplomatic fields, while in Australia the bulk of our work is community-based

translations. The situation is the same for interpreting: in the Arab countries there is no community interpreting as they are not migration destinations like Australia; it's mainly interpreting in the commercial, diplomatic and political fields.

In the session about machine translation or Computer Assisted Translation, Sakhr Software Research Director Mr Shalaby highlighted the technical difficulties with machine translation in regard to the Arabic language. Some reasons include the following:

- Unlike Latin languages MT Software does not have Arabic vowels.
- There is more freedom in the order of the words in the Arabic language.
- Less punctuation is used in the Arabic language so we have longer sentences, and this makes it harder for the computer to recognise the beginning and end of the

sentence.

- The verb can be used after the noun, or the adjective after the subject, which makes computerised word processing harder.

One way to overcome these problems is to make the text in the source language more machine translatable, then the translator post-edits the text.

I learned a lot about the courses offered, the nature of work and many other issues related to our profession overseas. During the break sessions I talked to many people; we shared our experiences and I gave them an idea about our profession here in Australia.

This year's conference is titled: Translation — TransNation. It's going to be held in Beirut, Lebanon from 18 – 20 September 2006.

Countdown to Critical Link 5

Sydney, 11-15 April 2007

A reminder that the deadline for submission of papers to Critical Link 5, the international conference on community interpreting, is 25 June (for hard copy submissions) and 30 June (on-line). If you would like to submit an abstract, or you would like to encourage employers, policy makers, educators or interpreters to participate, do it now! Full details on the call for papers are on the website: <www.criticallink2007.com>, where the program will soon be announced in detail.

The theme is "Quality in Interpreting – a Shared Responsibility" and speakers from Australia and overseas will examine the issues from several

angles. For example, all primary participants — whether they be lawyers, psychiatrists, police or whatever — need to understand the role of the interpreter, respect the skills involved, and know how best to work together. What does quality in interpreting mean? Who shares responsibility for quality in interpreting (educators? interpreters? the system? accreditation bodies? professional associations?) How can changes to improve working conditions, policy, and training be implemented? What can interpreters and translators learn from discourse studies?

There will be workshops for interpreters in different fields,

discussions on the interpreter's perspective, the role of the interpreter and many other topics. Pre- and post-conference activities will include a meeting of members of associations, including AUSIT.

To get an idea of what has been discussed at previous conferences, go to <www.criticallink.org> for the text of some of the papers. Selected papers from previous Critical Links (Vol.19:1997, Vol.31:2000 and Vol.4:2003), including a number of papers by Australian delegates, have been published by John Benjamins, and are available at university and other libraries.

Terry Chesher

Sign 'ers' and 'ums'

Former TAFE lecturer in Deaf Studies and NAATI Auslan examiner **Dr Harry Blackmore** discovers the momentary hesitations in sign conversations

The TAFE Auslan sign language class was watching a video of a deaf person in full signing flight. One of the students interrupted proceedings by asking: 'what's this sign?' and moved a hand in fair imitation of what the deaf person had done.

As the class teacher, I did not immediately recognise, nor could I recall, having seen this sign on the video. Then it struck me — the deaf person had hesitated in the discourse, grasping for the right word, and then continued on. For that momentary hesitation, the

signer's hand made an incomplete movement, hardly registered by a native signer, but observed by the tyro who wanted to know its meaning.

Just as a speaker may hesitate or show indecision in conversation by making an 'er' or 'um' sound, which is ignored by the listener (unless excessively repeated), so a signer may do the same and make an incomplete movement — the equivalent of the voiced 'er' and 'um'. While concentrating on the signer's conversation, the practised sign reader barely notices the

hesitant movements which are, in effect, sign 'ers' and 'ums'.

Other movements convey similar messages; e.g. the finger poised in mid-air, or chin cupped between thumb and forefinger, while the signer, with brow furrowed, is really appealing for a moment to wait and remember something. No doubt other examples will be recalled by experienced signers.

Teachers and interpreter practitioners in spoken languages probably encounter similar situations.

(from back page)

Monterey Institute of Translation and Interpretation

Anthony Pym presented a paper on behalf of Daniel Gile, on the relationships between theory and training, and between theory and practice. Both are well-respected researchers and teachers in T&I based in Europe. Gile made a distinction between theory that has a scientific purpose to define reality and theory that has a didactic purpose to function as a training. This allows us to use translation theories as tools to reflect on our practice and to draw on different theories in different contexts rather than seeking an absolute solution or an absolute match between theory and practice. It also allows us to see the value in different schools of thought and recognise that these different schools of thought do not always need to compete with each other.

Anthony Pym later presented a paper about translation and localisation. As an Auslan interpreter, 'localisation' was something that I had not come across in my work so I found Pym's presentation fascinating. He defined localisation in a broad sense as 'taking a product and

tailoring it to an individual local market.' The complication arises when a product (e.g. web pages, computer programs, advertising) is being transferred from one language and culture to another. A word used comfortably in advertising in one language may be offensive in another. Another example relates to how you use your computer. On a PC you can usually open a file by using a keyboard shortcut, typing 'CTRL' and the letter 'O' (for open), but what happens if you want to translate this program into Spanish? The word for 'open' in Spanish is *abrir*, so for a Spanish-using person, typing 'CTRL' and 'A' would be more appropriate. A world away from the simultaneous community interpreting that I usually do! After the conference I saw a family member typing a letter in French, with a German keyboard and a computer loaded with Hebrew software.

The conference was stimulating both in terms of exposure to new ideas and in seeing how similar issues that are relevant in Australia are being dealt with overseas. It

was also an opportunity to see and hear the leaders of our profession and to realise that spoken and signed language interpreters have a lot to offer each other. I encourage anyone working in our profession to seek out enriching opportunities such as this and to keep the discussion going.

Biography

Karin Banna has eight years experience as an Auslan (Australian sign language) interpreter. She has also been a member of the Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association (NSW) during that time and has held the roles of Treasurer and Secretary on the executive committee of the association and has recently been appointed President. She has an MA in Interpreting and Translating and is also a member of AUSIT. She is particularly interested in opportunities for spoken language and sign language interpreting researchers and practitioners to share knowledge and experience.

Grete de Tapia - Eulogy

Edited Eulogy for **Grete de Tapia** by the **Tapia** and **Lira** families, contributed by **Jorge Cziment**

Grete de Tapia was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1924. When she was three years old she migrated to Chile with her parents and her sister, Elsa. There she grew up and gained full command of three languages, German, which she spoke at home, English, when at school and Spanish with her friends. She took up swimming as a hobby and competed at national events. At 21 she fell in love and married Olof Tapia. They had two children, Isabel and Eduardo.

She established an interpreting and translating firm in Santiago, Chile, and was a founding member of the Chilean Association of Interpreters and Translators. She had her own business for ten years until she lost her husband and decided to migrate to Australia to be close to her daughter and grandchildren.

Grete continued her career in Sydney as an interpreter for the courts, doctors and different government departments; she was continuously in demand due to her knowledge, work ethics and professionalism. She used to say she would have loved to stop working but work didn't allow her to stop. She travelled extensively in Australia and overseas, and always welcomed opportunities to gain new knowledge through international conferences. One of her favourite sayings regarding this



subject was: "I have an ocean of knowledge one inch deep".

She developed the hobby of looking for four-leaf clovers at Hyde Park during her lunch break from work. Not only was she lucky, she was also very persistent and persevered in her search, sometimes finding clovers with up to eight leaves. She would give them away as a good luck token. Eventually she accumulated so many that she made key rings with them, which she gave away to family, friends and acquaintances for good luck.

At age 65 she rekindled her love of swimming and became the talk of family and friends when she enrolled in the Masters Games in Melbourne, bringing home two

gold and one silver medal for best swimmer in her age bracket. Since then every year she would make the commitment to attend at least one competition and always came back a winner. She won her last gold medal in November last year in Adelaide, at 81 years of age.

Grete had an extraordinary memory and could recite verses and prose she had learned by heart at school. She also had a joke for every occasion. She said she could access her jokes file in her brain according to subject, from A to Z. As the conversation flowed, so did the jokes: she never took herself or life too seriously and always had a captive audience. Happy to live and grateful to be healthy, she never allowed life to defeat her. Until two months ago, at age 82, she was still working and climbing up and down the stairs to her unit on the third floor.

She touched many people's hearts with her generosity, humour and love of life. Grete gave herself completely to others and never felt lonely or alone, although she had lived on her own since arriving in Australia. She always had time to make a call, or send a note or small letter to whoever needed it most.

She was one of a kind and will be greatly missed by family, friends and colleagues.

Death at law

In my work as an interpreter I have plenty of brief and intense encounters with people in trying circumstances: in court rooms, jails and other difficult places. Ultimately, death is the worst outcome in life's series of tests; even though we know it's coming, we prefer not to think about it too much. The day I was informed of a client's death just as I walked into a lawyer's office for an interpreting job, I got a shock. My debriefing session was to write this poem.

DEATH AT LAW

*'The client's dead, he passed away this morning.
I asked to sit to catch my breath and so
I heard the lawyer on the phone. 'I've never
lost a man like this, on the very day.*

*We'll have to wait a week or two, the family
needs some time for grieving. Cancer. The chemo
did no good.' The lawyer on the other phone
began to read the Death and Probates Act*

*to see what should be done in cases where
adversaries are suddenly deceased.
'Could I sign your papers,' this lawyer said.
He signed, I rose, it was clearly time to go.*

*I felt regret for the man who died, doctors
and lawyers at his throat. I wished for him
a better death next time around, one free
of cancer, chemo, debts and litigation.*

Jacqueline Buswell

Monterey Institute of Translation and Interpretation Conference

Karin Banna's experiences at an international T&I Conference in California, USA

In September 2005 I attended the 35th Anniversary conference of the Graduate School of Translation and Interpretation at the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS) in California. I was nervously excited way about attending the conference for a number of reasons. Firstly, the conference provided an opportunity to hear some of the leaders in international translation and interpreting research whose work I had been exposed to during my MA in T&I at Macquarie University. It also provided a forum to share thoughts and ideas with other conference participants; I was to present a paper to an international audience and was also one of four sign language interpreters in a group of predominantly spoken language interpreters. A colleague, Marcel Leneham and I, both from Sydney, were the only Auslan (Australian Sign Language) interpreters who attended. We also met two ASL (American Sign Language) interpreters, Carol Patrie and Sharon Neuman Solow, who are well known for their contribution to training, research and leadership in ASL interpreting in the US.

The sound of many different languages surrounded us as we lined up to register. We were amazed to see how the different language groups managed to form so quickly. Although Marcel and I had been speaking in English, we thought we should start signing to each other in Auslan so that we too had our little sub-group and so that we could at least be seen if not heard. This was a different experience to the ASLIA Winter School, which you read about in the last edition of the AUSIT Newsletter. There, as Auslan interpreters we were same as most of the other participants, here we were different – but not too different!

The conference theme was 'Professional Education of 21st Century Translators and Interpreters' and the papers were many and varied. Dominant themes included distance education for interpreters and translators, defining and assessing interpreter competence, translation and technology, and issues related to community and legal interpreting. Many of the issues remain relevant to both spoken and sign language interpreters and interpreter trainers.

One of the areas of focus of the conference was the development of competencies for interpreters – a theme that echoes current discussions in Australia. Carol Patrie presented a report on a collaborative project by the National Distance Learning Center for Interpreter Education, in Colorado, USA. The project defined entry to practice competencies for ASL/English interpreters and identified five key domains of competence: theory and knowledge; human relations; language skills; interpreting skills; and professionalism, then described units of competence for each domain. A number of related papers from spoken language interpreter researchers and trainers followed.

The next day another paper describing a project undertaken at Cambridge Health Alliance in Boston provided a template of competencies required by their full-time and casual interpreting staff and a foundation for designing professional development opportunities for them. The following day Barbara Moser-Mercer presented a paper on a project in progress at the University of Geneva that examines the skill acquisition of interpreting students using a performance psychology perspective. This empirical study

compliments the discussion about defining competencies of interpreters, providing a means of evaluating how effectively interpreters-in-training acquire competency and then expertise.

Another conference stream focused on issues of community interpreting in different contexts. I presented a paper about the role of the interpreter in court and the different perceptions of the role expressed by a small sample group of Auslan and spoken language interpreters, as well as legal professionals. Following my presentation, I heard a paper by a lecturer from MIIS, Kayoko Takeda, about Japanese interpreters working as a team to produce an interpretation and translation of testimony from deposition hearings for corporate litigation in the US. In this context a witness testifies under oath outside the courtroom before trial. I was amazed to discover that the usual process involves an official interpreter with one or two 'check interpreters' who monitor and correct the interpretation of the official interpreter whilst they are interpreting. Sight translation from a laptop screen is also often used. The interpretation is recorded and transcribed and the official interpreter and the checkers discuss issues about the interpretation afterwards; the witness can review the transcript and make corrections. This approach seems far removed from the norm expected of legal interpreters in Australia. The audience for this presentation expressed concerns about the ability of the interpreters to work whilst being monitored. One person commented that there might be cultural differences in how interpreters work together and that many would not agree to work in this way.

(continued on page 14)