



National

Newsletter

THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS INC.

Volume 15, number 3 - August 2007



A member association of
**Professions
AUSTRALIA**
A national organisation of professional associations



**Parramatta
gathering
discusses key
interpreting
issues**

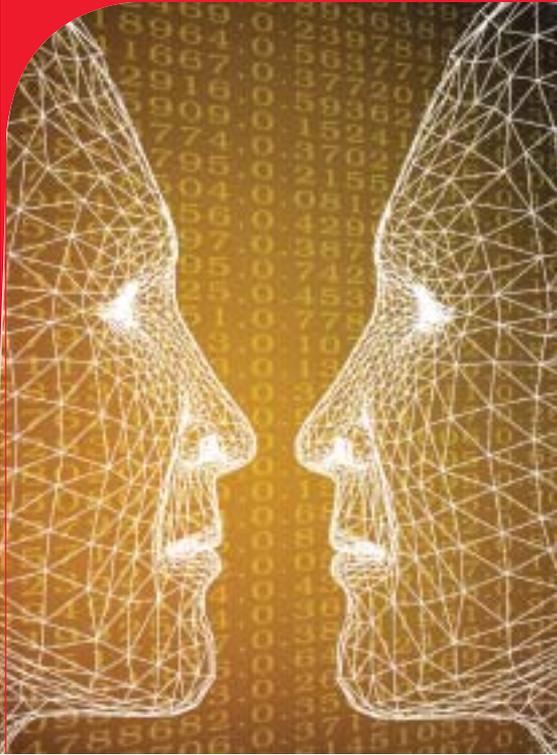


plus

Call for Excellence Awards submissions

New TIS contract examined

New Conference Interpreting Course at UWS



Have you ever wanted to become a Conference Interpreter and widen your expertise? Take advantage of an exciting learning environment with state-of-the-art equipment and enrol in the new Master of Conference Interpreting offered at the University of Western Sydney.

Where?

UWS – Bankstown Campus

When?

2008

How long?

One year full time or two years part time.

(Part-time study is not available for international students).

UWS is the premier training ground for Interpreting and Translation in Australia and our reputation and excellence in training interpreters and translators spans over 20 years.

UWS CRICOS provider code: 00917K

For more information about this course and other Interpreting and Translation courses with flexible combinations visit our website www.uws.edu.au, phone 1800 897 669 or email study@uws.edu.au



POSTGRADUATE PROGRAM IN TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING

The Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University in Sydney offers a Postgraduate Diploma in Translating and Interpreting and a Master of Translating and Interpreting in Chinese, Korean, Japanese, French, Spanish, Thai and in Auslan interpreting. Both programs are NAATI approved at Translator and Interpreter level and provide professional development and postgraduate qualifications for translators and interpreters.

In addition Macquarie offers a Master of Advanced Translation, a Master of Conference Interpreting and a double degree - Master of Translating and Interpreting with Master of International Relations.

Overseas student exchanges are available for students at universities in Asia & Europe such as the École de traduction et interprétation at the University of Geneva.

For more information about the academic program, please see our website:
<http://www.ling.mq.edu.au/postgraduate/coursework/tip.htm>

or contact the Translation and Interpreting Office: tel: 02 9850 6782
or email: translate@ling.mq.edu.au

President's message

President Uli Priester reminds us of how important the next three months are for AUSIT

AUSIT
National
Excellence
Awards 2007

The 'next big
thing' for AUSIT
is the inaugural
National
Excellence
Awards



celebration in November at the Shangri-La hotel in Sydney's historic area The Rocks. You will find an article in this issue of the Newsletter on how to nominate yourself or a colleague. Get behind this great initiative for our profession. There is good news in translation and interpreting and AUSIT is telling it.

2007 NAGM

Now is also the time to think about the next national AGM and who will lead AUSIT in the coming year. Leadership responsibility is taken on voluntarily; there is no payment or any other privilege attached to it. Looking after AUSIT is looking after ourselves. I would ask you to discuss this issue in the branch committees and make a personal commitment to the future of the profession by taking an active role in running the organisation. The AGM and election of the national executive for the next year will be held in Sydney on Saturday 10 November, following the Gala Dinner and presentation of the Excellence Awards on 9 November.

Monkeys and peanuts

Our colleague Sandra Hale from UWS keeps making the connection between quality interpreting work and remuneration. Low pay for community interpreting leads to the following inevitable effects:

- experienced, skilled and knowledgeable interpreters who can't make a living out of their work drop out and find more profitable things to do;
- the depleted pool of interpreters in the community field is replenished by newly accredited colleagues who haven't quite worked out yet what is going on.

The result is poorer service for users and less income for us. What can we do about it? Colleagues will have to ask themselves whether the rates offered by some organisations are worth the trouble. The profession would be better off if we applied a more stringent economic measure to what we are doing. After all, the idea is to make a living, not to support the federal or state treasurers.

A personal comment

You have not heard a lot from me in recent times. This is due to a health issue I am struggling with. Other colleagues have picked up the load and carried it. Thanks to you all for your help.

Uli Priester

AUSIT National Council

August 2007

PRESIDENT	Uli Priester
VICE-PRESIDENT	Annamaria Arnall
SECRETARY	Patricia Avila
TREASURER	Moreno Giovannoni
IMM. PAST PRES.	Chris Poole
PRINCIPAL DELEGATES:	
ACT	Malcolm Leader
NSW	Barbara McGilvray
QLD	Ita Szymanska
SA/NT	Claudia Ait-Touati
VIC/TAS	Eva Hussian
WA	Yutaka Kawasaki

Senior Practitioners

The application form on the AUSIT website <www.ausit.org> (click on 'News') contains all the information needed to apply for this category.

Since publication of the last newsletter the following people have been admitted to AUSIT as members or subscribers:

Kevin Michael Brown;
Susanne Creak;
Leo Cruise;
Xiuxiang Dunn;
Anna Katarzyna;
Angela Lai;
Yunseok Lee;
Kenny Kifah Lebde;
Marlis Silvia Walther

Congratulations and welcome.

Cover photos - 1. Representatives at the Parramatta pre CL5 Community Interpreting Gathering. Clockwise from front left: Henry Liu (NZSTI), Mette Rudvin, University of Bologna, Italy, Malcolm Fowler, UK, Barbara McGilvray, Terry Chesher, AUSIT.

2. Judging the 2006 AUSIT Excellence Awards are, from left: Silke Gebauer, Dr Rita Wilson, Patrizia Burley-Lombardi.

3. The hard-working 2006 Excellence Awards judging panel left: Silke Gebauer, Dr Rita Wilson, Patrizia Burley-Lombardi, Maria-Gabriela Carrascalao, Adolfo Gentile, Adrian Sever and Deputy Chief Magistrate Jelena Popovic.

Important dates

18, 25 August, 1 September — Translator's Toolbox Training, Victoria
Contact Sarina Phan, sarinaphan@yahoo.com.au or tel: 0403 080 888

25 August Qld AUSIT Mini-Conference
See page 7 of this issue for details.

7-9 September 2007

2007 ASLIA Conference - Transitions.

See <www.aslia.com.au>. Send expressions of interest to <info@aslia.com.au>.

7 September 2007

Nominations close for National Excellence Awards

24 September 2007

Submissions closing date for National Excellence Awards

9 November 2007

Awards Presentation Gala Dinner (for news on the Excellence Awards, check <www.ausit.org> 'Excellence Awards'.)

TIS Deed examined

Vic/Tas member **John Gare** recently questioned a representative from the Telephone Interpreter Service on how their new contract will affect practitioners

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Email: ausitnorth@ausit.org and ausitsouth@ausit.org

Thank you once again to all for your submissions. I would like to remind members that the deadline for the AGM/Annual Report 2007 issue is 20 September 2007.

Please send any letters, articles or images for forthcoming editions to:

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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.

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Interpreters on the panel of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) agency, the Telephone Interpreting Service (TIS), were recently asked to sign a new contract form or 'Deed for the provision of services to and on behalf of the Commonwealth'. The Deed forms the basis of the performance of, and payment for, TIS telephone and on-site interpreting assignments for a term of three years commencing 1 July 2007.

On behalf of AUSIT, member John Gare had the opportunity to question TIS on several aspects of the Deed and supplies below comments received from Mr Andrew Thomson, Assistant Director of Contracts, TIS National, in an email reply dated 23 May 2007.

Availability

AUSIT: Clause 2.1.1 says that the Service Provider 'must be available during the times specified in Item E of Schedule 1'. This fails to allow for legitimate prior engagements from clients other than TIS within the times specified.

TIS: The section states an interpreter must 'be available'; in no way does it state that you must take a job... The next clause states that an interpreter can vary their availability at any time and the clause after that states interpreters have a right to refuse to take a job. The clause allows TIS to call within the specified periods with the expectation that the interpreter will be available as they have indicated.

Insurance

AUSIT: From the wording of clause 7.2.2 it could be understood that DIAC will arrange insurance at its own expense. This differs from the position as described in the briefings.

TIS: TIS has always paid for interpreter insurance and will continue to do so. This was what we stated at the briefings.

AUSIT postscript: Interpreters will note that the insurance required

(public liability for at least \$5 million, professional indemnity for at least \$500,000 and workers' compensation as required by law) is to be arranged at DIAC expense, 'on written request of the Service Provider' [read 'interpreter']. We followed up with a further request on 24 June 2007, asking TIS to 'indicate whether there is any recognised way of requesting that DIAC arrange the insurances required', but have yet to receive a substantive reply. Given that we are now well into the effective term of the Deed, interpreters relying on TIS to arrange insurance would be well advised to take this up with them in writing.

Termination of Deed by DIAC

AUSIT: Regarding termination for less than five acceptances of job offers in a year. The trigger in clause 8.2.2f. reads: '... fails to accept a request by DIAC to provide Services on five or more occasions within a financial year'. This wording seems ambiguous. It could be taken to mean that the Deed can be terminated at the sixth rejection of a job offer.

TIS: The termination section is intended to cover the issues where the interpreter's activities are causing a negative impact on TIS work or its reputation in the community. However TIS is actively recruiting interpreters and values its panel of interpreters who undertake to provide over 500 000 services per year. We are not looking to cut people from our panel arbitrarily.

Annual CPI increases

AUSIT: Could the commitment made in the briefings be embodied in a more positive manner than the wording of the second paragraph in A of Schedule 3? 'DIAC may, from time to time, notify the Service Provider of changes to the fees payable under this deed'?

TIS: The direct linking [of] the payments to the CPI outright [sic] may cause problems in (amongst other

things) a period of deflation. In the circumstances, notification of changes to payments is appropriate.

Reaction to the Deed in general

Members will draw their own conclusions regarding the TIS responses above. It was a surprise to find ambiguities in a document of this sort but AUSIT saw the Deed only when it came out on general distribution to all panel interpreters, and was in no position to insist on changes. The only thing TIS have undertaken to change is the introductory page of Schedule 4 — the Code of Ethics. The new Deed, like the 'Contract for Services' of 2000 (which it supersedes), reproduces in full an April 2000 issue of the AUSIT Code of Ethics. The AUSIT contact details on the introductory page are outdated and TIS has indicated that they will correct this page at the next reprint.

Reaction to Schedule 3 – Fees

The fees applicable under the new Deed were agreed upon with DIAC in Canberra well before TIS announced the Deed, and were covered in briefings given by TIS personnel in all capital cities in February and March of 2007. They incorporate an increase of 3.3% which, in the case of on-site interpreting, is the first increase in seven years. And the CPI increase in the seven years to the December quarter of 2006 was 25.3%! Conservative calculations based on the methodology of the AUSIT 2005 report 'Fair Pay for Interpreters' show that **the new TIS on-site fee of \$62 for a one and a half hour assignment equates to no more than \$15 per hour.**

Even this figure cannot be compared directly with a full-time employee's wage rate because, in the case of contract interpreters, no pay is received for public holidays, annual leave, sick leave or long service leave. By AUSIT calculations there are 1533 on-road and working hours available in the interpreter year, which means that an interpreter who worked a full year of standard one and a half hour on-site assignments would effectively earn $1533 \times \$15 = \$22,995$

per annum before tax.

Results of April meeting

When Moreno Giovannoni and John Gare met with TIS on 24 April 2007 to discuss these fees, the notes handed to Director of TIS National, Chris Greatorex, included the points below.

Re on-site interpreting

AUSIT questions whether, in the establishment of a fee such as \$62 for attendance and interpreting on-site for one and a half hours, TIS would be in compliance with the standards of the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines requiring:

- efficient, effective and ethical use of resources;
- accountability and transparency; and
- competitive procurement processes.

Re telephone interpreting

While the TIS telephone interpreting service reportedly continues to attract customers, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that it has lost its competitive edge in appealing to qualified interpreters. There have been personal appeals from TIS National to interpreters urging them to log on to the ATIS system more often, and Level 2 interpreters receive repeat calls from national and local operators offering them telephone assignments even when they are not logged on.

Clearly the fees stink and people are waking up to the fact. Yet TIS claim they will recruit 150 new interpreters this year. I can only close with AUSIT member Vivian Stevenson's nomination for a new entry to Ambrose Bierce's 'Devil's Dictionary':

Community Interpreters: a group of committed professionals dedicated to helping those more fortunate than themselves.

Other AUSIT state office bearers

ACT

Chair	Malcolm Leader
Secretary	Ursula Hoffmann
Treasurer	Tarja Karjalainen
PD Coordinator	Malcolm Leader
NAATI RAC	Carole Aubury

NSW

Chair (acting)	Andrew Bean
Secretary	Stephen Houston
Treasurer	Hania Geras
M'ship Sec.	John Yang
PD Coordinator	Shared by 4 members
NAATI RAC	Paul Sinclair

Qld

Chair	Ita Szymanska
Vice-chair	Jadranka Brown
Secretary	Sam Berner
Treasurer	Julie Segal
PD Coordinator	Maurite Fober
NAATI RAC	Sam Berner

SA/NT

Chair	Claudia Ait-Touati
Secretary	Hiroimi Waki
Treasurer	Dirk Pohland
NAATI RAC	Claudia Ait-Touati

Vic/Tas

Chair	Eva Hussain
Vice-chair	Kate Ritchie
Secretary	Lydie Pradier
Treasurer	John Crone
PR Officer	Silke Gebauer
PD Coordinators	Sarina Phan Brad Paez
NAATI RAC	Chris Poole

WA

Chair	Yutaka Kawasaki
Secretary	Michele Dreyfus
Treasurer	Diana Rodriguez
Liaison with WAITI	Ella Davies
PD Coordinator	Annamaria Arnall
NAATI RAC	Michele Dreyfus

All these people's contact details are available from the AUSIT website.

OUR VERY OWN 'OSCARs' 2007

AUSIT's T&I Excellence awards going national

Don't miss the opportunity for a statue — get your nominations and submissions in!

By **Barbara McGilvray and Kate Ritchie**

Glamour is not something necessarily associated with our industry, but when the winners of the inaugural national AUSIT Excellence Awards take the stage to receive their trophies on 9 November, the applause, flashlights and excitement will rival a night at the Oscars. This national recognition of excellence in interpreting and translation is an industry first and inaugural winners will gain special recognition.

Entry for the 2007 AUSIT Excellence Awards is open to all T&I practitioners and relevant organisations based anywhere in Australia. Nominations and submissions are now open for the categories 'Outstanding Contribution to the Translation and Interpreting Industry', 'Excellence in Translating', and 'Excellence in Interpreting'. There will also be local awards in the same categories for the best entries from the host state of New South Wales.

The Excellence Award concept, with its key message of outstanding performance in T&I, has proved to be of immense value in enhancing the professional image of translators and interpreters in Victoria since 2004, when the first state-based awards were organised in Melbourne. Extending the Excellence Awards program to cover the whole of Australia will multiply those benefits. For the 2007 Awards AUSIT is renewing its partnership with NAATI and SBS Radio, and has so far also secured the support of the following sponsors: the CRC, Macquarie University, the University of Western Sydney, TIS and Rowland House Insurance. We are also hoping to form sponsor partnerships with some major private T&I agencies.

The selection criteria for recognition of initiatives through these awards include innovation, role-model

value, benefits delivered to users and/or practitioners, and their level of impact on the industry as a whole. Additional criteria assessed for the interpreter and translator categories are linguistic skills, professionalism and ethical conduct, evidence of research, accuracy in conveying all the information, faithful reproduction of the style of the original, and, importantly, the degree to which the interpreting/translation fulfils its purpose and meets the needs of the parties involved.

Entries for the previous rounds of the Victorian Awards included translations or interpreting of community information brochures, books, dignitaries visits, court verdicts, surveillance recordings, film festival events, communication in a health setting, educational videos, training programs, multilingual multimedia projects and lots more.

AUSIT invites all members, along with everyone involved in the industry — practitioners, service providers, buyers and users of T&I services — to submit projects of their own or nominate others for this unique recognition. There are many benefits for Award winners, including a permanent presence on the AUSIT website and a place in T&I history as an inaugural winner. The National Excellence Awards are open to any organisations with an interest in translation and interpreting, and to all Australian-based practitioners holding NAATI qualifications or equivalent (which can include a documented track record in T or I, and/or relevant tertiary qualifications).

AUSIT President Uli Priester says: 'I encourage everybody to participate in the Awards — be it by submitting an entry or simply by nominating worthwhile initiatives. This is not

only about recognising individual performance; it also serves to publicise role models and enjoy the 'glamour factor', from which all members of the profession stand to benefit in the long run. Put 9 November in your diaries — it will be an unforgettable night'.

Unlike movie stars, potential Excellence Award winners have to do more than look glamorous, so please go to <www.ausit.org> and download the 2007 Award Entry kits (complete with entry forms and details on how to make a nomination or a submission). On the website you can also check out the category criteria, FAQs, previous Vic/Tas winners (with some great pictures), and jury comments.

Celebrate our industry's very first 'Oscars' on 9 November with all the doers, movers and shakers at a five-star hotel — book your ticket, don your frock (designer or non-designer — it's the words that are on show) and get yourself to Sydney!

Nominations close:
7 September 2007

Submissions close:
24 September 2007

Awards Presentation Gala Dinner:
9 November 2007 at the Shangri-La Hotel in Sydney.

Go to <www.ausit.org> 'Excellence Awards' to obtain instructions and forms.

Lots to crow about

If you like the idea of our Excellence Awards but aren't quite ready (or are too shy) to make a submission for one yourself, tell your business network and non-AUSIT colleagues all about your professional association's campaign to reward excellence. Your contribution to the Awards publicity activities also communicates something about you; that is, you care about doing things the best way possible. Here are some of the things you can do:

- ***Go through your email address book and select all those contacts who you think should know about the Awards.***
- ***Email an Awards leaflet and/or press release to this group together with a personal message from you (a great way to remind clients that you are still around!). Promotional materials and media releases can be downloaded from <www.ausit.org>.***
- ***Take along Awards leaflets to your clients' offices and suggest they be displayed, or mail them out with your business communications (to agencies, hospitals, council offices, chambers of commerce, state organisations etc).***
- ***Make a list of newsletters and other publications (including online and internal company circulars) you know and contact the publishers with information about the Awards.***
- ***Contact your AUSIT branch and discuss how to ensure there will be plenty of entries from your state — later you can tell all your contacts who won an Award.***
- ***Keep a log of who you send the information to and let the Awards committee know — next time we campaign for sponsorship, this data will prove handy.***

What if lots of you contact the same people? All the better: with more reminders, the message of excellence is sure to sink in. This all helps to give clients and service users a better awareness of T&I.

Become an Awards cheerleader and have some of the glory rub off on you!

MINI-CONFERENCE IN BRISBANE

We Queenslanders don't do things by halves.

After a quiet period the AUSIT Qld Branch is bursting back on the PD scene with a one-day event to be held at Griffith University on 25 August 2007.

The mini-conference will present speakers throughout the day, a networking lunch, and an inaugural dinner on the preceding Friday in a beautiful setting over the Brisbane River where excellent food and wine will be coupled by an excellent speaker.

Subjects discussed will include Blogs as marketing tools, a session on Dragon Naturally Speaking, Interpreting in a mental health setting, Working with agencies, Revalidation as a quality assurance tool, and a presentation on Malinche, a Latin American interpreter/slave.

Further information about the program, directions and a booking form will be eflushed to members very soon, but do spread the word to all and sundry who might be interested. And hurry, places are strictly limited.

For more information contact:

Maurite Fober, Qld PD Coordinator
– exacttranslation@bigpond.com

Or Sam Berner, Qld Secretary
– sberner@arabic.com.au

AUSIT Website latest

Another PD resource has just been uploaded on the AUSIT website.

Read Justice Len Roberts-Smith's paper for the critical Link 2005 Conference: Forensic Interpreting - Trial and Error. You may want to write a short essay about what have you learned from it and get 10 points when it is submitted.

You'll find the paper where other similar PD material is housed: in the Virtual Lecture Room. Access through National Office. Log in!

Happy reading and writing,
Annamaria

Superannuation for interpreters - just a phone call away?

by **Phillip Gould**, AUSIT NSW member

One of the main advantages of being a freelance interpreter is that you never *have* to accept an assignment which is offered to you. Not having permanent employment also of course means no sick pay, holiday pay etc., and there's a widely held belief that there's no entitlement to superannuation if you work as a contractor or freelancer. Yet this is apparently not the case as the relevant legislation may define you as an employee for superannuation purposes. Even TIS and Centrelink, two Federal Government agencies with a long-standing commitment to miserly remuneration for community interpreters, make superannuation contributions. However, claiming superannuation which might be owing to you is not as simple as filling in a form — unfortunately you have to go through the brilliantly inefficient and counter-productive procedures of the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). But if enough interpreters are prepared to make a phone call, there is a short cut.

If you earn more than \$450 in a calendar month from an employer, that employer is required to pay the equivalent of 9% of your gross earnings into a super fund. If it is found that they should have been paying you super but weren't, they can be made to pay any outstanding

amounts from the previous five years. By simply labelling you a 'contractor', an agency does not free itself of its superannuation obligations. There is information on this on the website of the ATO: <www.ato.gov.au/super>. Type 'contractors' in the 'search' box and go to 'Superannuation guarantee for contractors'.

After reading the website and making a couple of phone calls to the ATO, in October 2005 I wrote to them outlining my situation. The ATO replied with a form letter after apparently not having read the contents of my letter. They also suggested I should first speak to my employers to see if they felt they should be paying me super, but as I didn't think anything positive would come of that, I instead decided to pursue the matter through the proper ATO channels. After a few more letters in each direction I made an 'Application to Lodge an Employee Notification'.

From the outset I had emphasised that I wanted my name and details to be kept confidential, explaining that interpreting is a highly casualised and intimate industry and that I did not want to be blacklisted. The ATO then wrote asking my permission for them to use my name when contacting employers, saying that if I did not give my consent, they wouldn't be able to

pursue the matter further. I eventually gave my consent to use my name with three agencies.

Another problem with the way the ATO handles the matter is that if you name several employers, each case is dealt with by a different ATO officer, usually in different states. This means you have to provide a lot of duplicated information on your case and about the nature of the interpreting industry. There seems to be no central point which handles an individual's case and thus the ATO appears to have no overview of the super obligations in the interpreting industry.

In October 2006 the ATO wrote to me saying that they had determined that one of the employers did have super obligations. That body, not an interpreting agency but a government organisation involved in law enforcement, stopped offering me work after the ATO gave it my name and it is appealing the ATO's decision. Around the same time another of the three employers, a private interpreting agency with a good reputation among interpreters and one which I had received work from for more than 15 years, also stopped allocating me work. I subsequently found that it was also appealing the ATO's decision. Both those organisations confirmed to me over the phone that the reason they had 'temporarily' stopped giving me work was because of the superannuation issue. The third employer, a private interpreting agency with a reputation which is neither particularly bad nor good, sent me a cheque for its outstanding superannuation obligations for the previous five years and is still giving me some work. As far as I know, it has not paid super to any of its many other interpreters.

One of the most frustrating aspects of the ATO's approach is that, even if they decide that a particular employer does have to pay super to one

'If you earn more than \$450 in a calendar month from an employer, that employer is required to pay the equivalent of 9% of your gross earnings into a super fund. If it is found that they should have been paying you super but weren't, they can be made to pay any outstanding amounts from the previous five years.'

interpreter, they don't automatically have to pay it to other interpreters, allegedly because the circumstances of each case may be different. Around the same time as my case, another interpreter who I had never had any contact with was independently pursuing the superannuation issue, also with some success. On top of this, there was some discussion of the super issue on the AUSIT eBulletin in June this year, but if anything is to be achieved for interpreters in general, a concerted effort is necessary.

If you want to see whether any agencies should have been paying you super, you have three options. You can ask the agencies directly, with the risk that they will simply say no and you will then no longer receive any work from them. You can go through the long-

winded notification procedure, again with the risk of losing some sources of income. The only option through which you can avoid being singled out and keep your identity confidential is to call the ATO's Superannuation Line on 131 020 and ask to lodge an 'Employee Notification', emphasising that you do not give your consent for the ATO to use your name. You will be required to provide information on yourself and the agencies concerned, including the figures on agencies from which you have earned more than \$450 in any calendar month over the past five years. If a large number of interpreters do this in regard to a particular agency, the ATO will then carry out a random audit of that agency. The ATO are apparently conducting such an investigation

into one interpreting agency at the moment. It is important when doing all of the above to keep records of the names of ATO officers you speak with and any reference numbers they can give you. As a way of encouraging the ATO to follow matters up, it may also be useful to tell them there are likely to be other interpreters in the same situation lodging Notifications for those employers.

Interpreting is an occupation in which individuals often work alone, thus making any joint action difficult; some agencies take advantage of this to the detriment of interpreters. On the superannuation issue persistence and collective action could pay off, and all it might take is a few phone calls by a few hundred AUSIT members.

AUSIT DVD availability and prices

The following DVDs of AUSIT NSW Professional Development events are now available. Each provides a valuable learning tool for translators and interpreters wanting to take their careers to new heights.

Ethics? Who me?

Interpreters face ethical challenges on a daily basis right throughout their professional lives. This professional development workshop brought together an expert panel of interpreters and ethicists to examine the issues raised in three typical case scenarios: courts, police interviews and schools.

Attracting Non-Government Clients

Starting out as an interpreter or translator can be nerve racking. How do I find non-government clients? How do I market myself? How can I hang on to clients once I have found them? Should I work for an agency first when starting out? How can I plan and manage my professional career successfully? All these questions are addressed and answered in this DVD.

Interpreting and Translating for the Police - 1

In this first seminar on interpreting and translating for the police, AUSIT

(NSW) invited officers from the NSW and Australian Federal Police to give presentations on how interpreters and police can best work together in the context of a highly multicultural country like Australia.

With presentations on topics as diverse and problematic as child sexual assault and electronic eavesdropping, this DVD provides practical advice on dealing with some of the most difficult issues that arise.

Police 2: Interpreting and Translating for the Police - 2

In this second workshop on interpreting and translating for the police, the NSW and Australian Federal Police teams used role play in their presentations to indicate the types of issues faced by interpreters working with their services.

These three role plays demonstrate the challenges facing interpreters and translators working in criminal investigations and provide practical advice on some of the most difficult issues which can arise.

Dealing with Stress While Interpreting

In the course of their work interpreters may be faced with client issues

of trauma, distress and grief, or challenged by ethical dilemmas or conflicts of interest which can in turn cause the interpreters stress or distress.

In this workshop participants had the opportunity to discuss their own experiences (in health, legal, educational, social security, business or other settings) with an expert panel and explore ways of managing their stress in future interpreting assignments.

DVD prices (incl. GST) as at July 2007

Members and students
\$22 (excl. packing and postage)

Non-members
\$33 (excl. packing and postage)

Institutions
\$55 net (no extra charge for packing and postage. Additional licence required for student use – enquire for details)

Extra for packing and postage to members, students and non-members:

Qty 1 or 2 \$5 total extra charge

Qty 3 or 4 \$8 total extra charge

Contacts:

AUSIT (NSW) <ausitnorth@ausit.org>
or <ausitdvd@ozethai.com>, tel: 1800 284 181.

Parramatta Gathering

Pre Critical Link 5

Report by **Terry Chesher, Helen Slatyer, Felicity Mueller and Claire Nelson (NZSTI)**

The evening before CL5, AUSIT NSW hosted a gathering of more than 40 T&I practitioners, welcoming members of professional associations from around the world. The purpose of the gathering, held on 10 April 2007 at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Parramatta was to discuss issues which affect all professional associations of community interpreters, regardless of location. Intending participants had been invited to submit for discussion the three top issues of concern for their respective professional associations.

Delegates were welcomed by Andrew Bean on behalf of AUSIT President Uli Priester, who was unwell. Countries represented included Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Israel, Italy, Malaysia, New Zealand, Spain, UK and USA, with participants bringing material about their own associations.

Terry Chesher (AUSIT) explained that the purpose of the gathering was to discuss the issues raised in the submissions. The following themes were defined and formed the basis of the discussion:

1. Associations - organisation and survival;
2. Status;
3. Standards, training/testing, entry levels;
4. Employment, pay and conditions;
5. Professional development.

Speakers were asked to limit their contributions to about three minutes

per issue. Discussion on the first three issues took up the major portion of the meeting, with the final two not addressed in depth due to a lack of time.

Associations: organisation and survival

Jan Cambridge (UK, IOL, or Chartered Institute of Linguists, the UK registration body set up with government money — <www.iol.org.uk/>) reported there is heated and acrimonious debate in the UK about the respective roles of the practitioners' associations and their two trade unions, and about who should be setting rates of pay and terms of employment — a professional association, the professional register standards body, or trade unions. Many people don't understand the difference between the associations and unions, and join one or the other without understanding their respective roles.

Discussion followed on what should be the proper function of these groups.

Nancy Festinger (USA, NAJIT, a non-profit national association dedicated to furthering the court interpreting and legal translation profession, with 1000 interpreters at both state and federal levels — <www.najit.org/>) pointed out that all action in trade unions occurred at the state level through interpreter associations (unionisation is not permitted at the federal level in the US). State-based organisations, which have through unions fought for better conditions and pay, have

generally succeeded (mainly through banding together with other unions and the organisation). There have been long struggles, a petition for a union, and negotiations with court administrations for improved conditions and salaries for court interpreters. The national association sees its role as one of advocacy, being active on the legislative front and forming partnerships in order to affect legislation at the state level to improve court interpreters' pay and conditions.

Q: Does the interpreter base understand this separation of functions?

NF: They do, recognising that NAJIT fights for its constituents. Many associations have become experts at their local levels and they advise other states going through similar processes. They all want us to defend their rights. We have no legal standing but have a certain weight, being the largest association of interpreters in the [United] States. We have 1000 members. ATA has perhaps 5000 but it's made up of both T and Is. Our members expect us to do more and we give them the support we can.

Malcolm Fowler (UK, lawyer accompanying Yvonne Fowler): There needs to be a distinction between roles. We [the lawyers' group] run a steering committee on T&I provision. Agencies do all they can to maintain standards in T&I provision and this involves the participation in the training program in the Midlands of a range of players in the system. Our remit from the appropriate government body is to maintain standards, but we insist on proper conditions and pay [for T&I]; when it comes to these nuts and bolts it is up to interpreters to defend them. There are a number of associations. We support them but we can't fight their battles for them, because that would affect our weight [sic] in defending the quality of the system. We have problems with audibility in our courts,

'...there is heated and acrimonious debate in the UK about the respective roles of the practitioners' associations and their two trade unions, and about who should be setting rates of pay and terms of employment – a professional association, the professional register standards body, or trade unions.'

so we kick up a fuss [agreement from the audience]. With regard to rates and so on, we sympathise and encourage and collect information, but final responsibility rests with interpreters.

Heather Glass (Australia, WAITI - active in WA since 1975): Most interpreters are not employees, so they can't be union members. WAITI used to recommend minimum fees, but this now constitutes a breach of the Restricted Trade Practices legislation, although the Law Society and the AMA have a recommended fee structure. Why haven't we pursued this? Because we believe that there are other issues to be resolved first. We need to look at other professions to see what we can do. Salaries of other professionals are determined by unions.

TC inquired about sources of funding and whether sponsorship is sought to help fund the activities of the professional associations. AUSIT's activities are mostly performed pro bono by members, with two part-time paid administrators but no staffed premises.

It was learned that apart from AUSIT Vic/Tas, none of the associations represented have sponsors, and rely on membership fees to fund their activities. Some have corporate members.

TC asked whether professional associations had paid staff and premises.

NF: NAJIT has a Director.

JC: IOL (set up in 1910-11) has a building and 30 staff but needs major funding. The Chartered Institute is a parent company of four different companies. The cost is £175 per year, membership fees of the professional association are high (£80 - £100 p.a.), but this includes entitlement to be on the register/directory.

Henry Liu (President NZSTI, New Zealand Society of Translators & Interpreters — <www.nzsti.org/>): To be on the directory does one have to pay?

JC: Yes. Licensing is where the money comes from. We have a mandate to run the directory and a mandate to charge fees for membership.

YF: That is not expensive relative to the costs of practising as a lawyer, doctor etc.

Izabel Arocha (President MMIA, Massachusetts Medical Interpreters Association, now being launched as the International Medical Interpreters' Association): Membership fees have to be worth it for interpreters if you want them to pay money — think services. What interpreters need are encouragement and resources to remain in the profession. There is a very high turnover, conditions are poor, and there is not much support. Interpreter associations have an obligation to provide that and the necessary services. Think of yourselves as a business.

TC: It appears that excellent T&I graduates leave the profession because of the low pay.

IA: We held regional meetings to hear what interpreters wanted. There are certification credentials, training opportunities, PD, associations conducting free training, workshops, continuing education, corporate members as well. We provided a forum to discuss their needs and we've responded to these.

Felicity Mueller (AUSIT): Could we ask people what their membership fees are?

The following associations provided details about their membership fees:

AUSIT: A\$176.

NZSTI: NZ\$60, no GST (A\$70).

IOL: £80, registration £170 (based on a test).

JC: It's a vicious circle really, because if you're not earning much, £50 is half your weekly earnings.

UK lawyers: £2000 (A\$5000).

WAITI: A\$60.

NAJIT: US\$105.

MMIA: US\$30.

Israel: A\$50.

NCIHC: US\$100 for organisations, US\$35 for membership, US\$45 for government employees, plus donations.

Medical Interpreter Network of Georgia (MING): US\$45.

California Healthcare Interpreter Association (CHIA): US\$35 - students, US\$45 - Active members, US\$5,000 - corporate.

Status of the community interpreter

TC: Are there cases where there is legislation making it a requirement to have interpreters present?

Nancy-Gaelle Barras (Switzerland): There is no legal basis for the use of an interpreter in any domain apart from the legal one. So a lot of community-based interpreters work in legal settings, because they get better pay. Zurich is starting to set levels [standards], higher than [for] other settings. My question is, do you have any legal requirement to use interpreters?

TC: ...or trained interpreters?

Rosy Lazzari (AUSIT): The HCIS NSW Department of Standard Procedures <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/pd/2006/PD2006_053.html> mandates the use of interpreters in public hospitals and medical centres. Even consent forms for an operation must indicate the presence of an interpreter.

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YF: What qualifications do they have to have?

RL: In order to work for the HCIS you must have NAATI accreditation and specialised training within the HCIS. In the UK anyone can be called an interpreter.

TC: This is the thirtieth anniversary of TIS and HCIS. TIS is the national Translating and Interpreting Service provided by government.

Vadim Doubine (AUSIT): There are several telephone providers, the biggest is TIS (part of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship), but its translating is outsourced. VITS in Melbourne is also a large provider. Centrelink has its own telephone interpreter service, and occasionally CRC offers telephone interpreting. TIS is government funded but also has a commercial service – they charge fees to agencies and private individuals [for translation]. This is quite different from the UK and US situations.

YF and JC: In the UK there is no legal obligation, not even an understanding of interpreting. There is even resistance to using interpreters. There is a card which refers to bringing a relative with you.

Michal Schuster (Israel): Regarding interpreter insurance, I would like to consult those present. We are starting next year with a pilot service for telephone interpreting. Interpreting is not a professional activity, so no one wants to offer us insurance. I've tried to give them facts from other countries, but they're not interested.

[Here the discussion returned to the rationale behind the establishment of

government language services]

TC: Thirty years ago there was a different climate in Australia. The Federal Government commissioned a very significant review of post-arrival services for migrants, the Galbally Report. Consequently, the Federal Government gave money to all states, NAATI was set up and the Government also encouraged tertiary institutions to offer training courses. States were federally funded to provide services and by 1980 the HCIS was entirely funded by state governments. Interpreters are independent of hospitals, even though they work in them. The Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW (now CRC) was established in 1977 for court work and still provides many of the interpreters. They have an award for court interpreters. Government money is provided as Australia is a country of immigration. [Consensus from around the room.]

HG: There is no legal obligation for competent interpreting. Variations occur between states; there is an obligation by policy, not by legislation. It would be irresponsible to give the impression that TIS, VITS and others will necessarily provide a competent interpreter.

VD: If an interpreter [working for TIS] breaches the Code of Ethics they will be in trouble. The [AUSIT] Code of Ethics is very important.

Cindy Roat (USA, NCIHC, National Council on Interpreting in Health): I feel your pain, as I am from a country which is also struggling. We are interpreters. What is our job? To speak to people in a language they understand. We need to speak to

hospital administrators to convince them to use the interpreting that is available. If you want to convince doctors and nurses to use interpreters, use the language they use.

In the US, interpreting began with the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title 6. Programmes using federal money cannot discriminate against people. There was an attempt to get the Supreme Court to interpret this to include language, but it was not successful. But there are many other reasons to use an interpreter.

People get defensive about legal things – use other arguments; for example, scientific evidence on the impact of a trained interpreter. Doctors understand research. When talking to administrators, talk about the costs of interpreting. Understand how your systems work and change; for example, what would encourage lawyers to use interpreters? How do you talk to judges? What would make them change? We may need to learn to use a new language.

MF: The Human Rights Act (UK) is the most powerful thing in England. Use the 'fear factor'. Cite very bad examples from the past. [Here there were mutterings of disagreement from group, but he strongly asserted this was the most effective way in England]

CR: Patient safety is the big thing at the moment. Next year it will be something else. Three years ago it was quality assurance.

TC: Risk management [is an issue]. [Consensus from around room.] The manager of HCIS in Sydney will present a paper on risk management at CL5.

HG: WAITI's top issue (of three) is 'having an informed and eloquent profession'. We are trying to confirm the need for competent professionals and are getting interpreters informed about making a move on this. We want to make sure that interpreters make sense when talking on their/our own behalf. We can tell lawyers, doctors and others, 'You should use this', but unless we can make them feel they are missing out, or risk missing out, they won't use us.

RL: The recalcitrant ones — forced only by legal requirements — become

'When talking to administrators, talk about the costs of interpreting. Understand how your systems work and change; for example, what would encourage lawyers to use interpreters? How do you talk to judges? What would make them change? We may need to learn to use a new language.'

the best fans and say, 'Absolutely, I now see why.'

You have to provide a superb service; that is, take a two-pronged approach.

CR: In the USA a generation of physicians have based their experience on 'ad hoc' interpreting, but now the buy-in is greater amongst medical students. Working with interpreters is part of their training right from the beginning.

RL: A psychiatrist in Sydney included interpreting in her first and second year course for trainees, showing them how to use interpreters. Then they see interpreters as their equals. Practitioners' status will improve.

HG: Every three months new police recruits get an interpreting workshop in WA.

Camille (Sweden, STTF, Sign language interpreting): Deaf clients don't need education but [it is needed] for hearing clients. We are discussing going to the police/all clients and recruiting/training organisations. Are other countries doing this?

Willya Waldburger (AUSIT): Professional development workshops (held bi-monthly) have included two recent sessions on working with police. Federal and NSW police have participated in discussion and role plays together with interpreters, both learning about the other's roles; the audience included spoken and signed language interpreters. NAATI revalidation will require proof of continuous work as a T/I. Health professionals also need to understand the role of the interpreter.

CR: Why don't we require English-speaking agencies; for example, doctors, to be certified to use us?

JC: Particularly outside the justice system. The best way is to get doctors to help with your class. They routinely say: 'I had no idea it was so different'.

IA: In the USA courts hire trainers to teach how to work with interpreters. It helps the clients understand, but I see a need to educate interpreters. We [the MMIA] have 50 full-time interpreters. We train interpreters to recognise the importance of client education on both sides; that is, for doctors and the speakers of other languages.

JC: Interpreters need to feel empowered.

MF: I blame the lawyers. A good model is how the City College service providers (lawyers, courts etc.) voluntarily teach interpreters about their service and learn a lot themselves in the process.

Knowledge is power. If interpreters are qualified and have their status recognised, they can insist on the right treatment – breaks, audibility, pace, training and accreditation – and can then show their badge and insist [on respect for their role].

TC: The CL5 theme was chosen to highlight that 'Quality Interpreting is a shared responsibility', and sought participation from service providers [for their edification].

RL: Status must be recognised by the people we work for as well. Interpreters are leaving the profession because they don't feel valued. Organisations [employers] need to value their ethical interpreters. Money isn't always the issue: working conditions mean a lot.

HG: Everything I've heard speaks to me about the roles of professional associations. [The point is] not to get lawyers, doctors, etc. to our conference; we should get interpreters to our conference and teach them. They are the only people who can do it.

Standards, training, testing, entry level

Suggestions were put forward on how to train professionals to work with interpreters.

- Target teaching hospitals, colleges of law etc.
- Prepare/provide suggestions on how to work with interpreters.
- The UK National Centre for Languages (CILT) has produced cards: 'Ten top tips for working with interpreters' and a booklet, and has developed national occupational standards, specifying required levels of qualifications.
- We can show them better than we can tell them. Interpreters should not be negative and say, 'No, this

is not my role', but rather, 'This is how I can help you'.

- Boston Medical Centre has a physician consultant for interpreter services. Doctors are more likely to listen to him because he is also a medical practitioner.
- Working with interpreters could also be introduced as part of cultural competency training for medical professionals.
- Coordinators of interpreter services could be trained to train providers through visiting area hospitals.

IA announced that her association has chosen the Critical Link conference as the place for the launch of the international association IMIA. There has been no international medical interpreters' association to look after the needs of medical interpreters and to foster collaboration with other organisations. A press release was tabled.

HL suggested there be a meeting of professional associations prior to Critical Link 6 as is the practice in FIT. We are still at the information-gathering stage and there is a lot more to be done. His proposal that dedicated time be allocated for professional organisations as part of Critical Link 6 received strong support.

Doing business as a T&I practitioner

Sarah Walls on the interactive NSW workshop presented by **Somsak Patradoon**

Making a profit as an interpreter and translator is first and foremost a matter of attitude, in Somsak Patradoon's view. 'Because we don't treat it as a business, it isn't profitable,' he said. 'The moment we treat it as a business, it will become profitable.'

With 26 years' experience as an accountant and auditor and 21 years as an interpreter and translator in Thai and Chinese, Somsak is well qualified to advise AUSIT members on how to sharpen up their business and marketing skills. On 21 June 2007 he gave an entertaining and informative three-hour workshop on the topic as part of the NSW Branch's Professional Development (PD) programme.

The workshop attracted over 30 people and was recorded as a DVD for future distribution. (AUSIT NSW has now produced five DVDs from its PD events, with total sales so far of nearly 80 copies, bringing in over \$3000). The workshop covered a wide range of topics, from business structure and start-up to tax obligations, marketing T&I services, service contracts, accounting and reporting, and the personal and professional warning signs when things start to go wrong.

Like most people, Somsak got into interpreting and translating by accident. 'I arrived in Australia in 1984 and was in the public service as an accountant for 16 years,' he said. 'I did interpreting on my flexidays — my wife complained that I never took flexidays, as I was doing interpreting in the courts! But that was where my heart was.'

Somsak now interprets about three to four days a week, as well as doing commercial translations. He also teaches T&I at Macquarie University and is a member of the NSW Branch and PD committees. Somsak is confident that it is possible to make a good living from T&I. Those in full-time self-employment are doing very well, he says, thanks to jobs from all over the world.

Among the critical questions facing the interpreter or translator looking to put their business on a firm footing is what business structure to adopt. While most people start out as sole proprietors, once the business starts to grow there are advantages in paying the \$400 fee to register as a company. Your company can employ you and provide you with superannuation, workers' compensation and professional indemnity insurance. It can pay you a modest salary, on which you pay personal income tax, while the remainder of your company's earnings are taxed at the lower company tax rate. Or you may prefer to form a partnership or a trust.

Interpreters and translators need to be aware of their tax obligations (e.g. GST, which is compulsory for those earning over the threshold, set at \$75,000 p.a. as of 1 July 2007; business record-keeping; and business activity statements, which for those on less than \$50,000 p.a. need only be done once a year) and of the main tax deductions (equipment, phones, motor-vehicle and home-office expenses, super contributions — which will be fully deductible from 1 July 2007 — advertising and business travel).

Warning signs that a business is not doing well may be either financial or non-financial. Financial signs include poor cash-flow management, falling revenue, an increase in debtors and refusals by banks to provide credit. The non-financial signs are complaints about service, a decline in repeat business, not keeping up with technological change in business and, not surprisingly, increased stress levels.

Somsak says the key to success is to know your market and not compete solely on price, but rather on quality. Translators and interpreters need to cultivate professional business presentation. Somsak recommends that you:

- use well-designed business cards, brochures, letterheads and

invoices;

- prepare a good resumé, covering letter and service statement;
- get your own internet domain name;
- keep up with changes in technology;
- specify in your service contract how quality is to be determined, e.g. by providing a translated page in advance;
- prepare a confidentiality clause;
- for small direct clients, indicate that assignments will only be delivered after payment is made. For large jobs, consider specifying 50% payment in advance, 25% when the job is almost finished, and 25% on completion;
- use electronic recording of income and expenses. A simpler version of MYOB costs around \$100 or you can use e-Record, provided free by the Australian Tax Office;
- use customer satisfaction surveys: send one out to all clients, including agencies, a week or two after the completion of an assignment.

Somsak had a keenly interested and lively audience who peppered him with dozens of questions. As Terry Chesher said in thanking him, it was a 'wonderfully interactive session'. Those who missed it can view the power-point presentation on the AUSIT website.

The success of the evening was also due to the combined strength of the NSW PD committee: Willy Waldburger organised the event, cooked all the quiches and coped with last-minute relocation of the event following a double booking; Stephen Houston contributed technical skills; Georges Mayes sold DVDs and, with Teresa Lee, helped with catering; Terry Chesher introduced Somsak and chaired the Q&A session afterwards; and Andrew Bean and Hania Geras staffed the door.

Interpreting decay and death

by AUSIT Vic/Tas member **Moreno Giovannoni**

It's the same every time. I wait on the footpath or sit waiting in the car for the Royal District Nurse to arrive. Or the council employee. When they arrive I introduce myself and follow them inside. I feel and follow the pecking order, one step behind the boss.

Waiting in the house is the old woman, or the old man or both. Sometime's there's a daughter, a tired looking woman in her late fifties, who says she speaks Italian (so I wasn't really needed), but that for some reason 'they' said they wanted an independent interpreter. I say, 'That's fine. I'm here if you need me.'

Signora, le faccio da interprete, va bene?

People are sensitive about their ability to speak and understand the language. They tell you they can talk about normal things, but that they don't always know the technical words. This gives them an out from their embarrassment at not speaking the language — *the technical words are for interpreters, normal people know normal words. No-one expects you to know the technical words.* This way they can save face, which is good. But I have met children who can't speak to their Italian parents about love, fear, anxiety and hope, decay and death, because all they know are the names of vegetables and items of furniture.

On a home visit we meet to talk about decay and ultimately death. Not untimely death. Death is always on time.

The mother can't cope on her own any more. *The old man is becoming incontinent. We need someone to clean the house. Only the main rooms; no second bedrooms. Two hours maximum a fortnight. Showering is okay. I can help him do that. The toilet too. Maybe one day. I still do my own cooking. No, no - no meals on wheels.*

He used to keep a beautiful, splendid vegetable garden. But now look. (It is the middle of winter, and I'm expecting

to see a blasted heath through the kitchen window, but still I see luxuriant, though overgrown, leafy vegetables, fennel gone to seed.)

The tiles are busy-patterned, curlicue frilly; there are Paisley tiles, doilies on all surfaces, carved leg faux-antique furniture (Franco Cozzo style), display cabinets beloved of Italians. Piles of tea-towels sit neatly placed in incongruous places, on chairs. The odd assortments of decorative flair. It stopped sometime in the seventies. The income declined, they kept the old things (furniture, cushions, kitchen). The kids left home, the parents relaxed, took it easy, stopped spending, made things last. Their lives got old and so did their decor. The air got stale and became musty; they didn't let new air in.

I'm sitting at the kitchen table with my notepad and the council worker is speaking. Crumbs are spread on the table cloth; they stick under my forearms and I wipe them off secretly. The old lady's housekeeping standards have decayed. The floor feels a bit grubby underfoot. I can see the smears of stuff on the bench-top against the light.

At the community legal centre the old woman is letting herself be done over. We're doing enduring powers, for a life that won't (endure that is). Medical and financial enduring powers of attorney. In the waiting room the daughter said they wanted

an independent interpreter. That's fine. Just in case something were to happen to mum and she can't decide any more. Dad died a few years ago.

The old woman looks like her husband has died. I've seen recently-widowed old women before. Many of them look like they've had the life sucked out of them. The face is tired, eyes a touch dull. The smile forced if I try to engage them in chit-chat when the solicitor leaves the room for a minute. (But I know a merry widow neighbour too, who regrets her husband worked far too much and never took a holiday with her. I think I'm now the age he was when he died.)

On the home visits the worst of it is the family photo gallery.

Like ducks on the wall or a display on top of the television set (which is as large as a cupboard, but never a giant plasma) is a set of framed photographs of the family — the reason in the end for doing it all. The ship's journey: from Genoa or Naples, Messina or Trieste, the Adriatic, the Mediterranean, Gibraltar or Suez, the Atlantic Ocean, the Indian Ocean, Fremantle, Adelaide, Melbourne (Port Melbourne, Princes Pier) — to work and have a house and grow children and vegetables and bottle the tomatoes. But when the grandchildren get old, how old are you by then?

It reminds me of the family photo gallery I've started back home: the children at school, the children older,

'Waiting in the house is the old woman, or the old man or both. Sometime's there's a daughter, a tired looking woman in her late fifties, who says she speaks Italian (so I wasn't really needed), but that for some reason 'they' said they wanted an independent interpreter. I say, "That's fine. I'm here if you need me."'

with mum and dad. My gallery stops there. For now it only occupies one shelf on a book-case.

But in the house of decay the photo gallery includes grown children, the children's weddings, the children with their spouses and their own children (so grandchildren), them as grandparents, them just ten years ago when they were still going out to dances and parties.

There can be so much decay in ten years, and even death at the end.

The dental hospital houses another form of decay. I avoid looking into the mouths of the patients. It's the most boring work. There's very little talking at the dental hospital, as you would expect. It's difficult to talk with metal tools in your mouth.

When I report to reception the receptionist invariably looks for the Italian client so I can introduce myself and do with them what Italians do with each other. *Secret Italian business.* It doesn't occur to them I'm working for the dentist. I must be there for the patient. *Your client is not here yet, take a seat.* But because I normally sit all day, I stand and wait for the dentures to come out and the few stumps of decaying teeth to be checked and scraped and drilled and polished.

After a day of this I go home and tell Anna about it and she tells me to stop doing it if I find it depressing. But I don't find it depressing. I am grateful to all these strangers. I see what will happen to my own parents. I see what will happen to me. I see the love of old middle-aged children for their

older parents. I see the attempt to ease old people through decay to death. I am a Buddhist and a Stoic. My life is anything but unexamined. Socrates would approve.

I love the old people.

The pay is low. The treatment is shabby. But I suspect I would do it for nothing.

Inquiry into consent form sight-translation

The WA Department of Health is conducting an informal inquiry concerning the sight-translation of consent-to-treatment forms in health interpreting situations — the result of concerns expressed by WAITI. We have been approached to express our opinion on the matter. We sent out a call to our membership for their opinions without much response, but we were fortunate that the national Guidelines on Health Interpreting were at the final stage of drafting. The latest draft guidelines were sent to the Department with a cover letter including this summary:

'An accredited interpreter, above all a well-trained interpreter, should be able to sight-translate a simple consent form to a patient. Ideally the sight-translation is done in the presence of a doctor or a nurse. This will allow the patient to ask any questions or clear any doubts about any part of the consent form directly with the doctor or nurse, via the interpreter. Interpreters should not attempt to answer any questions for the patient: this is the domain solely of health professionals.

Furthermore, interpreters should

not sight-translate any additional information given to the patient. That sort of information should either be in the patient's language or the patient should be asked to take it home with them and have it translated by someone who can assist.

The other important issue here is that interpreters should not sign statements at the end of consent forms which do not reflect exactly what they do; namely, sight-translating the consent form and interpreting questions and answers between patient and health professional. Interpreters are advised to cross out any incorrect statements and write in the correct ones before signing. Interpreters should not be asked to verify the patient's understanding of the procedures, treatments or risks. It is the duty of the health professional to ensure the patient understands these issues, via the interpreter.'

We are yet to receive a formal reply to our submission,

but we hope this has helped the Department of Health as well as our members. My sincere thanks go to the WA Branch Committee members for their great cooperation on this issue, and to Barbara McGilvray of NSW and Patricia Avila of Queensland for their valuable assistance.

Yutaka Kawasaki
WA Chair

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