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JILL BLEWETT MEMORIAL LECTURE

THE LANGUAGE OF EMPOWERMENT

AUSIT BIENNIAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Fremantle, Saturday 6 November 2010

Good morning distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

To begin, I would like to acknowledge the Nyoongar people, the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, and elders past and present.

It is a real honour to be here today to pay respect to:

- Jill Blewett - one of the pioneers and champions of the interpreting and translating industry in Australia; and
- all of you who, as practitioners, play such a vital, but often unrecognised role in so many aspects of both social and economic life in Australia.

My presentation this morning is going to touch on three themes:

1. the human rights context in which the interpreting and translating industry operates and might develop;
2. the role of the Western Australian Government, Office of Multicultural Interests and its policy work in the language services area; and
3. the working conditions within the industry and their impact on the quality of service that is provided.

Firstly, a little about my personal history which I understand was of particular interest to the organisers of this conference and led to the invitation to present this lecture.

Our heritage shapes our identity, values and beliefs and my Anglo/Somali identity has shaped most of my life, and led me on this journey of human rights, especially for minority groups, because I come from a minority group.

I was born in England. My mother was English and my father was from what was then called British Somaliland. At the time of my birth in the early fifties there were about 600 Somalis residing in the UK, although Somalis had been living in England for well over a century.

Although my father spoke many languages: Somali, Arabic, some French and Italian, he struggled with English. His own language, Somali, was not in a Latin script until 1972 so he wrote in Arabic but was not competent in written English.

My parents wanted me to be as English as the English so we could compete and be successful. Being bi-lingual in those days was not seen in the same way as today ...so although I learned some Somali and Arabic, it was not encouraged.

I learned from an early age about speaking a language other than English and the challenges this brought. I would often be asked to speak on behalf of my father - which was a show of disrespect for him and something I found very hard to do.

As you are all probably well aware, this is an experience common to children of migrants and refugees and it is even at this micro, family level, that we can see the impact of language on the balance of power in human relationships – children having a level of power within the family because of their proficiency in the English language.

My father worked overseas when I was growing up and letters would arrive - in English – my father would ask other Somalis to translate his words into English I still have some of these letters today and reading them they are very funny, as they were dictated in Somali to a Somali and translated into English by someone with limited English.

When he was back home his social life would revolve around his few Somali friends who he would meet at the only Somali café in the town, where he could speak Somali. As a child I remember the occasions he would take us to the café, where I would hear the Somali language spoken...hear the laughter and the gestures and learn about my Clan, my roots and my rich heritage.

These memories are tinged with happiness but also a sense of sadness as I would be very aware of how the community struggled...how dignified and respected elders would be treated. I remember one particular story my father told us when I was quite young and, given the topic of this conference, I thought useful to share with you: the memory of Mahmood Hussein Mattan. I am sure that Jill Blewett would see this as honouring Mahmood was born in Somalia. He met his wife, Laura, in Cardiff, Wales in the late 1940s. When the couple married three months later, few of their neighbours would speak to them. For a year - one which Laura describes as the "happiest of her life"¹ - the couple enjoyed some respite from the racist taunts when they moved to Hull with their first two sons after Mahmood found work there. They should have stayed, at least in Hull, which was also my community because there was a small close-knit group of Somalis, a café and a mosque.

Mahmood became the last person to be hanged at Cardiff prison in 1952 for a crime he did not commit. Even through this happened a year before my birth, his story became part of the mythology of Somalis living in the diaspora - a reminder and a significant marker for those of us growing up with Somali heritage.

Despite his limited understanding of English, his lack of understanding of the British legal system, he was not afforded an interpreter in court. In a trial slanted with racial overtones, Mahmood's own defence barrister described his client as "half-child of nature, a semi-civilised savage"². The evidence for the case was flimsy and there was a strong case for mistaken identity.

¹ <http://www.innocent.org.uk/cases/hhmattan/index.html>

² <http://www.stephen-stratford.co.uk/mattan.htm>

On 24 July 1952, Mattan was convicted of murder and the judge passed the mandatory sentence of death.

The whole Somali community across the UK knew about this case and also knew he was innocent.

It took his family 46 years to have his conviction overturned. When the Criminal Cases Review Commission was set up in the mid 1990s, Mahmood's case was the first to be reviewed. On 24 February 1998, the Court of Appeal came to the judgement that the original case was, in the words of Lord Justice Rose, "demonstrably flawed". The family was awarded compensation and his body was exhumed and he was finally given a Muslim funeral. The compensation was the first award to a family for a person wrongfully hanged for a crime they had not committed.

The other murder suspect went on to commit another murder and attempted murder.

These events taught me a lot about justice, rights and entitlements. It also made all of us second generation Somali's fearful of the justice system, the police and also afraid that our own fathers might be next - given the flimsy evidence this case rested on.

THEME 1: Human rights and language

Is there an obligation on countries to provide interpreters for people who do not speak the national language or one of them?

It is well recognised that a criminal trial cannot be fair if the accused does not understand the language in which it is conducted. The 1966 *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) protects this right explicitly: the accused is entitled to "have the free assistance of an interpreter if he cannot understand or speak the language used in court".³ This rule is well-accepted in Australian law now. In the 1992 case of *Dietrich vs R.*, Justice Deane said:

*"If available interpreter facilities, which were essential to enable the fair trial of an unrepresented person who could neither speak nor understand English, were withheld by the government, a trial judge would be entitled and obliged to postpone or stay the trial and an appellate court would, in the absence of extraordinary circumstances, be entitled and obliged to quash any conviction entered after such an inherently unfair trial."*⁴

This was reiterated by the Western Australian Chief Justice, the Hon Wayne Martin, who is quoted in the WA Equal Opportunity Commission report into the need for an Indigenous Interpreting Service released in July this year, as saying:

*"If the trial of an alleged offender occurs in circumstances in which that person is unable to comprehend the course of the trial because, for example, of an inability with English and the lack of an interpreter, the trial process is unfair and any judgement obtained would be set aside. The provision of adequate interpreting services for Aboriginal people is therefore an essential pre-requisite to the capacity of the courts of this State to deliver justice."*⁵

³ ICCPR article 14(3)(f).

⁴ *Dietrich v R.* (1992) 177 CLR 292.

⁵ Western Australian Equal Opportunity Commission (2010) *Indigenous Interpreting Service – Is there a need?* p.4

The Federal Court extended the rule to asylum cases before the Refugee Review Tribunal in a case which also discussed the quality of interpreting in this context.⁶

The development of human rights law has propelled the growth of interpreting and translating. The 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* ensures the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms to everyone without distinction of any kind such as race, language, national origin and other grounds. This protection is repeated in the binding 1966 International Covenant.

In 1992, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities* was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. While it has the status of a declaration and not a treaty, it does represent consensus on emerging standards relating to minority groups. For example, it provides that:

- States shall protect the existence and the identity of minority groups within their respective territories and shall encourage the conditions for the promotion of that identity. States are required to adopt legislative and other measures to achieve these ends (article 1);
- People from minority groups have the right to profess their language and enjoy their culture (article 2); and
- States shall take positive measures to ensure that people from minority groups are able to exercise fully and effectively all their human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full equality before the law. Such measures extend to opportunities to learn in the mother tongue of the group, as well as education initiatives and measures to participate fully in economic progress and development (article 4).

The international community has also forbidden practices which prohibit minority groups communicating in their own languages – this would ban the practice of some authorities to forbid Indigenous children from speaking their own language⁷. That protection applies in all countries where “ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist”, which certainly includes Australia.⁸

This right is not just confined to citizens or to Indigenous groups. The 1994 Human Rights Committee’s ‘General Comment’ on the rights of minorities⁹ says:

“Just as they need not be nationals or citizens, they need not be permanent residents. Thus, migrant workers or even visitors in a State party constituting such minorities are entitled not to be denied the exercise of those rights.”¹⁰

However, research in Denmark in 1989 revealed some employers had banned guest workers from chatting to each other in their first languages in the workplace – not for safety reasons, which might be reasonable, but because it made their Danish co-

⁶ *Perera v Minister for Immigration & Multicultural Affairs* [1999] FCA 507.

⁷ See HREOC *Bringing them home: report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (1997)

⁸ ICCPR article 27; see also Convention on the Rights of the Child article 30 in the same terms.

⁹ Human Rights Committee: CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.5, General Comment No. 23. ‘The rights of minorities’. Paragraph 5.1.

¹⁰ *Ibid* Paragraph 5.2.

workers uncomfortable.¹¹ This practice is unacceptable as a denial of a fundamental human right.

In some of my own research on racism in the workplace in Western Australia, I have interviewed many bi-lingual staff who reported similar experiences - that co-workers did not trust them when speaking in their first language.

Of concern is that similar experiences have been related in relation to the way that some migrants on temporary subclass 457 visas in Australia have been treated by some employers.¹²

In 2009, the United Nation's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights likened linguistic barriers to race discrimination. The Committee adopted the following wording on this:

*"Discrimination on the basis of language or regional accent is often closely linked to unequal treatment on the basis of national or ethnic origin. Language barriers can hinder the enjoyment of many Covenant rights, including the right to participate in cultural life as guaranteed by Article 15 of the Covenant. Therefore, information about public services and goods, for example, should be available, as far as possible, also in languages spoken by minorities and States parties should ensure that any language requirements relating to employment and education are based on reasonable and objective criteria."*¹³

So there is a highly authoritative treaty interpretation which requires the removal of language barriers in the provision of government services.

These human rights understandings have supported the development of multiculturalism to the point where we now recommend that agencies identify or recruit and reward bilingual staff who can communicate with customers in their own languages.¹⁴

They are also reflected in the Government of Western Australia's Language Services Policy which was most recently revised in 2008 and I would like to spend a few minutes now talking about the Office of Multicultural Interests and, in particular, its role in relation to language services.

THEME 2: OMI'S Role

The Office of Multicultural Interests – which we refer to as OMI, is a division of the Department of Local Government and responsible for providing advice on multicultural policy across the public sector, communities and the business sector.

¹¹ M Wilkie 'Victims of Neutrality: Race Discrimination in Denmark' (1990) 59 *Nordic Journal of International Law* p. 4.

¹² Department for Communities (2008) *Response to Visa Subclass 457 Integrity Review Issues Paper #3: Integrity/Exploitation* p.5, accessible at: http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/publications/submissions/Deegan_Issues_Paper_3.pdf

¹³ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, E/C.12/GC/20, General Comment No. 20. 'Non-Discrimination in Economic, Social and Cultural Rights'. Paragraph 21.

¹⁴ OMI *Implementing the Principles of Multiculturalism Locally: A planning guide for Western Australian local governments* (2010) p. 20.

OMI's main role is to implement the Strategic Plan launched in 2009 across the public sector, community and business sector and to promote the benefits of multiculturalism for all Western Australians.

Our purpose is "To lead Western Australia in achieving the full potential of multiculturalism".

Our vision is "An inclusive and cohesive society which draws on its cultural and linguistic diversity to enhance the social, economic and cultural development of the State".

OMI's language services functions include:

- responsibility for oversight of Western Australia's Language Services Policy;
- providing advice and referral to government agencies on language services issues;
- representing the Minister for Multicultural Interests as the WA member of NAATI; and
- liaising with professional associations, relevant non-government organisations and ethnic communities in relation to translating and interpreting issues.

The Western Australian Language Services Policy was first endorsed as Government Policy in 1992. That Policy was revised in 2000.

In 2003, OMI commissioned a "*Needs Analysis of Interpreting and Translating Services within the WA Public Sector*" due to community concerns around these issues.

As recommended by the *Needs Analysis*, a review of the 2000 Policy was undertaken in 2005 to examine its perceived deficiencies and gaps in services.

A Scoping Paper on Indigenous Interpreting Services was also produced in 2007.

It took several years to finalise the Language Services Policy 2008, in part due to various reviews and workshops that were undertaken. The final Policy was drafted taking into consideration the considerable feedback received from Government, non-government agencies, and translating and interpreting industry organisations during this lengthy consultation process. The draft of the revised Policy was sent to relevant Government agencies for their final consideration and comments, and further amendments were made, prior to submission to the previous Cabinet for endorsement in June 2008.

This was the beginning of what has been a very productive working relationship with local representatives of the interpreting and translating sector which continues to be of enormous benefit to OMI.

The Policy was endorsed by the current Premier and Minister for Multicultural Interests and Citizenship, the Honourable John Castrilli in October 2008, and is now State Government policy and applies to all State Government agencies.

The policy reflects the view that a multilingual society is a significant asset to Australia and that the language you speak should not compromise the service you receive from government and state organisations.

The Policy applies to Indigenous people, migrants and people who are deaf or hearing impaired.

Its aims are to ensure:

- that Government services are responsive to the needs of clients who have issues with the English language and to improve interactions with them; and
- that the rights of Western Australians to access State Government services are not compromised by limited English language skills.

To address deficiencies in the previous policy, the 2008 Policy gives much greater recognition to Indigenous interpreting issues.

The Policy also includes:

- principles underlying the use of interpreting and translating services by State Government agencies;
- minimum standards to assist agencies to provide effective interpreting and translating services to people who require them which provide guidance as to the circumstances for their use; and
- guidelines on how to implement the Policy.

A key feature of the Policy, and one which has created considerable discussion and debate in other jurisdictions, is our definition of a 'competent interpreter and translator'.

According to our new Policy, a competent interpreter and translator is one who (1) adheres to a professional Code of Ethics for Practitioners incorporating the principles of impartiality and confidentiality, and performance that is accurate and faithful, and (2) who meets at least one of the following criteria:

- is NAATI accredited; or
- has obtained a formal qualification in interpreting or translating from an accredited tertiary institution.

In languages where there is neither training nor NAATI accreditation, an alternative criterion is to be:

- NAATI recognised;
- recognised by an approved or contracted service provider – such as the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), Deaf Interpreting Services, or the Kimberley Interpreting Service; or
- being employed as a Bilingual Language Aide who has additional training in interpreting services, such as having completed a nationally accredited training unit.

The Policy states that the level of competence of an interpreter or a translator is commensurate with their level of accreditation or training.

This is consistent with the approach being taken nationally with the work being done through the Australian Quality Training Framework and which I hope will contribute to

the development of a more appropriate recognition of the profession, lifting its visibility and status.

I know that Jill Blewett was a staunch advocate and pioneer in the development of quality standards for the interpreting and translating profession and I would hope that she would regard both the Policy and the national developments very positively.

The implementation of the Policy was supported by a Premier's Circular and, subsequently, a Public Sector Commissioner's Circular. These require State Government agencies to have policies for funding and delivering translation and interpreting services that take account of relevant government policy, legal circumstances and the needs of current and potential clients.

OMI has supported Government agencies in their implementation efforts by developing a new Western Australian Interpreter Card and two brochures: *A Guide for Government Agencies* and *Information for Communities*, the second of which has been translated for our website into ten languages.

These were launched in the metropolitan area by the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests in June this year and, in September, I re-launched them in Broome at the invitation of the Kimberley Interpreting Service.

Often, people assume that it is only migrant communities that need interpreter services. As you would be well aware, this is not the case in Australia where there are as many as 160 Indigenous languages spoken, including 77 in Western Australia alone.

It is very pleasing to note that the Kimberley Interpreting Service began in 2000 with six interpreters and now has 170 trained interpreters representing 26 Kimberley languages.

The need for Indigenous interpreting was highlighted in the Western Australian Equal Opportunity Commission's recent report 'Indigenous Interpreting Service – Is there a need?' which cited numerous examples where lack of interpreters has meant that Aboriginal people have been denied access to key services.

OMI recently conducted a survey of public sector agencies in WA on their awareness of the Language Services Policy and their implementation measures. Three in five (61%) of the agencies which responded to the survey indicated they were aware of the Policy. That figure needs to be considered in light of the fact that many among the agencies surveyed do not provide services to the public.

Several major human services agencies are currently developing their own agency-specific language services policies based on the State Policy. They include the Department of Health, the Department for Communities, the Department of Indigenous Affairs, the Department for Child Protection, the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the WA Police.

Many agencies have well-organised administrative procedures and protocols for accessing interpreters when needed. For example, some of you would be aware that at least two major hospitals have a pool of interpreters to call on who are familiar with their medical issues and terminology. Our Department of Treasury and Finance has recently invited departments to participate in a group buy-in scheme for interpreting services.

We have been told that bilingual staff are the first point of call for interpreting and translating services in some organisations. One Department pays such staff an allowance for those skills.

Although we still have some way to go in promoting the use of interpreters and translators, it is heartening to witness this increasing recognition of interpreting and translating as an essential service in terms of achieving substantive equality.

I hope, too, that developments at both the State and national levels are supporting an increase in the status of the industry in general and practitioners in particular.

In this context I would like now to focus on the challenges of the profession itself.

THEME 3: Working conditions

Already Australia has witnessed a strong increase in employment in translation and interpreting: an 84% increase between the 2001 and 2006 Censuses and both the benefits and challenges of the industry are becoming increasingly apparent.¹⁵

From my experience working in the community and at the Association of Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS), I am aware of some of these benefits and challenges.

Apart from the positives associated with providing language assistance to those who need it, I also know that becoming an interpreter or translator can transform a person's life and I'd like to share one of those stories with you.

Fatima (not her real name) is a Somali who came to Perth in the mid 90s from a refugee camp where she lived for five years with her husband and five children.

She was highly educated, had lived in Italy, both her and her husband spoke Italian, Arabic, Swahili and Somali but she had limited English. She set about helping the community twenty-four hours a day and learnt English and became an interpreter.

Through this work I saw her confidence grow, she became empowered, had an income to help support her family and now, years later, she chooses when to work and who to work with.

The experience of being an interpreter gave her an understanding of how the system operates, how governments work and about relevant services so that she could then support the Somali community. She has become empowered and a strong woman in the community.

Then in 2008 she joined a major research project¹⁶ I was managing at the time. The aims of the research were to explore the nature and understanding of family and domestic violence within the Sudanese, Somalian, Ethiopian, Liberian and Sierra Leonean communities and its impact on individuals, family relationships, the community and settlement.

Fourteen bi-lingual community members were given comprehensive training over two full days in qualitative research using a gendered and culturally inclusive approach to

¹⁵ S Rogers 'Translating and Interpreting Labour Market in Australia':
www.ling.mq.edu.au/translation/lmtip_australia.htm

¹⁶ The Exploration of the Nature and Understanding of Family and Domestic Violence within the Sudanese, Somalian, Ethiopian, Liberian and Sierra Leonean Communities and Its Impact on Individuals, Family Relations, the Community and Settlement-Research Report-Dr Colleen Fisher, ASeTTS 2009.

undertake interviews with members of their respective communities on behalf of the researcher. A decision was made among the bi-lingual, bi-cultural interviewers to undertake the interviews in languages other than English. Fatima was now part of one of the first major research projects into this very important issue. She received a research certificate of acknowledgement from the University of Western Australia and now tells me she uses the experience and knowledge gained to assist her own children with their University studies.

Fatima's story is similar to so many others.

At the same time, becoming an interpreter can bring significant challenges.

I know that AUSIT has highlighted some of the features of the industry which are of particular concern – and I will go through them briefly as I am sure you are even more aware of them than I am:

- it is female dominated – AUSIT reported in 2008 that 61% of translators and 71% of interpreters are women;
- most are self-employed and obtain part-time casual work, through agencies;
- the best paid work is commercial but the greatest bulk of work is from government agencies;
- the pay rates are highly variable and actually decreased earlier this decade (AUSIT estimated the average 'salary' at 86% of the minimum wage); and
- travel time and expenses are rarely reimbursed.¹⁷

To ensure the profession is ready to take advantage of new opportunities, some aspects of these working conditions need to be addressed.

You know far better than I the complexities of your work. It involves far more than interpreting and translating words. The situations themselves are often complex and involve sophisticated terms and meanings, especially in legal and health contexts.

Through my work at ASeTTS I provided both in house and delivered external training to services in the use of interpreters and I also have some knowledge of the emotional toll that interpreting can sometimes take on interpreters.

I am also well aware of the challenges facing small language groups, such as the reality that, because we are drawing from such a small pool of people for interpreters, it can result in members of small communities interpreting for people that they know, and the shame and confidentiality issues that can arise as a result.

¹⁷ From the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators Inc (AUSIT) (2008) *Response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations Inquiry into Pay Equity and Associated Issues Related to Increasing Female Participation in the Workforce*. See also S Rogers op cit.

Workers at the Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS), which is ASeTTS equivalent in New South Wales, have reported that:

*“...interpreters identify strongly with their clients and are affected by the abuses of their clients and the system. ... Many interpreters feel that they are not adequately respected as professionals by the other professionals with whom they work. The job can be lonely, stressful and demanding. They drive long distances in the country, or rush from session to session in the city when patients are sometimes uncooperative and they have no choice about with whom they work. Interpreters spoke of “giving and giving until there is nothing left”.*¹⁸

They reported occasional “moral dilemmas ... such as when being asked to make a dialect report for a court case or refugee determination hearing, when it is not their role and it prejudices the relationship with the client.”¹⁹

Others reported “... being left, after difficult sessions, carrying unresolved feelings such as helplessness and anger.”²⁰

Interpreters may be called on in many crises and other traumatic situations: child abuse, domestic violence and other crime victimisation, asylum applications, family tracing, serious illness or injury, and mental illness to name a few.

Like any professional dealing with clients in such circumstances, interpreters risk being traumatised in turn – that is, experience secondary or vicarious trauma. Symptoms can include consistent headaches, sleepiness, feelings of dread before appointments, intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, nightmares and insomnia.

Interpreting for people affected by assault, abuse, torture and other violence will affect interpreters because an empathic ability is part of their work and the act of interpreting requires the interpreter to convey tone and affect along with content.

The interpreter must find and say the words which describe horrific acts and how the victim felt and is feeling. Words carry meaning, emotion and compelling images. Moreover, the interpreter is the *only* person speaking directly with the victim – hearing first hand.

At the same time, while listening and translating, the interpreter also has to:

- decide how much of the victim’s affect and tone to replicate and how to do so;
- negotiate cultural differences between the professional and the person; and
- maintain appropriate empathy at the same time as a professional attitude.

This must be both challenging and stressful.

¹⁸ Stuck in The Middle: Debriefing for Interpreters’ by Risé Becker and Robin Bowles, (STARTTS) *Refugee Transitions* Issue 15, Winter 2004; <http://www.startts.org.au/default.aspx?id=292>

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ *ibid*

American research among interpreters working with refugee clients found little apparent cause for particular concern regarding the implications of vicarious trauma for interpreters, finding that the reactions are “usually short-lived and rarely cause disruption to the interpreters’ lives outside of the clinic.”²¹

Coping strategies included after work distractions, turning to family and friends for support and focusing on the importance of their work.

However, recent Australian research indicates there are serious issues to be addressed.

Anecdotal research in Western Australia found interpreters may feel overwhelmed by the material they must translate, or fear becoming overwhelmed, but believe that requirements of confidentiality prohibit them from seeking personal support. Interestingly the session yesterday on interpreting in refugee settings supports this.

They also may feel a sense of powerlessness as they had entered the profession with altruistic aspirations of assisting their compatriots.

Interpreters who are traumatised are at both physical and psychological risk, but many of those surveyed had no understanding of the risks associated with their work.

In a study undertaken by the Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit, the majority of interpreters acknowledged the need for debriefing opportunities but said this had never been offered. They also felt that mental health services needed to brief them properly before interviews and to address issues affecting their physical safety.²²

In terms of the support needed to protect interpreters from vicarious trauma the Child Safety Commissioner in Victoria has said, in the context of working with troubled children and young people:

“Organisations need to provide safety, stability and support for staff working with traumatised children and young people, and all levels of management (not just direct care staff) should have a good understanding of the impact of abuse, neglect and other traumas in young people’s lives. Organisations and services should:

- *work from practice frameworks that are based on theory and research;*
- *use well-documented and resourced structures for supervision;*
- *have enough staff to manage crises;*
- *provide appropriate training to do the job;*
- *provide access to debriefing; and*

²¹ K Miller ‘The Role of Interpreters in Psychotherapy With Refugees: An Exploratory Study’ (2005) 75(1) *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 27–39. See: http://drkenmiller.org/Ken_Miller,_Ph.D./CV_files/The%20Role%20of%20Interpreters.pdf

²² T Miletic, H Minas, Y Stolk, D Gabb, S Klimidis, M Piu & M Stankovska, *Improving the quality of mental health interpreting in Victoria*. Report by the Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit, Melbourne, 2006: www.vtput.org.au

- *encourage reflective practice.*²³

The realities of interpreters casual and contractual work makes this inherently difficult. Only rarely are interpreters regular members of teams which these days expect to receive appropriate support when dealing with traumatic situations.

This is just one of the challenges the industry is grappling with and will continue to confront in the coming years.

The industry has certainly come a long way and I would imagine Jill Blewett would be proud of the many people who have taken on the advocacy role for which she is so well known and respected.

The challenges will need to be addressed as the demand for the industry is likely only to expand in the face of an ageing and growing culturally and linguistically diverse population, continuing humanitarian and business immigration and a global financial and business environment.

There will be challenges for government and non-government agencies in responding appropriately to client needs and challenges for the interpreting and translating sector to meet the demands of the changing community.

Not least of these is the availability of interpreters from new and emerging communities which can lead agencies to resort to relatively unqualified interpreters.²⁴

While as bureaucrats we are busy dealing with these realities, it is heartening to reflect on the positive impact the industry is having – daily – on people's lives at the most basic level.

And also to reflect on the opportunities that the industry provides, in many different ways, to enable new Australians to realise their full potential and I offer you, as practitioners, my own thanks for the valuable work that you do.

I am sure that by working together all of us – government, the interpreting and translating industry as well as relevant communities – can address the challenges that face us now, and those that lie ahead, to ensure that human rights are upheld, and those who work to uphold them, are also appropriately recognised and supported.

Thank you, once again, for this invitation to speak. It is a privilege and I wish you all the very best with the important work that you do.

²³ *From isolation to connection: A guide to understanding and working with traumatised children and young people*, Child Safety Commissioner (Victoria), November 2009, p18. Accessible at: <http://www.ocsc.vic.gov.au/downloads/isolation-to-connection-september-2009.pdf>

²⁴ Department for Child Protection comment in OMI LSP Survey 2010.