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**14<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of ASLIA National  
Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2008, Darwin, NT  
PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

I am delighted to offer my first report as President of ASLIA National to the 2008 ASLIA National Conference (ANC).

I took on the role a year ago with some trepidation, as I knew it would be difficult to follow in the footsteps of Presidents before me! They had set a very high benchmark, and I knew I'd have to work hard to maintain similar standards. During the first year of my term, however, I have come to realise that it is not only the Presidents that have set the high benchmark, but all members of the Board. Although the role of any President is to lead a team, the leadership cannot be as effective without the full commitment and participation of the team members. I have to say that over the last year I have been impressed and amazed by the dedication and passion of the current Board members of ASLIA National. We have achieved so much in such a short time, and my President's report would not be as positive if it were not for the sheer hard work of the following people:

- ❖ Vice President – Marcel Leneham (NSW)
- ❖ Treasurer – Meredith Bartlett (Vic)
- ❖ Secretary – Karin Fayd'herbe (Qld)
- ❖ Minutes Secretary – Karen Bontempo (WA)
- ❖ Public Officer – Geraldine Shearim (NSW)
- ❖ Committee member – Viona Woodroffe (previously NSW, now VIC)
- ❖ Committee member – Kylie Scott (NT)

I'd also like to thank the National Representative Council members, who have continued to liaise between the ASLIA National Board and their respective state Boards. These include:

NSW – Judy Jacobs and Susannah Macready

Vic – Eliza Allen and Christopher Hansford

Tas – Debbie Draeger

Qld – Bec Jones and Brett Milton

WA – Robyn Tsapazi

At the end of 2007 I facilitated a meeting in Brisbane to discuss how to resurrect ASLIAQ after it experienced some problems during the year. I would like to acknowledge the work of Maree Madden in bringing an initial group of people together to organise the formal re-establishment of the branch. Although Maree is not currently involved in that branch Board, her initial efforts should be applauded. Karin Fayd'herbe and Geraldine Shearim attended the launch of ASLIAQ on behalf of ASLIA National and their assistance with this endeavour is acknowledged.

It is with great sadness that we farewell Karen Bontempo from the ASLIA National Board at this AGM. Karen has been on the Board since 2001 and has served as a Committee member, as President and as Minutes Secretary. She has made an astounding contribution and has an

amazing capacity for handling a huge workload. She has worked tirelessly to respond to queries, develop policies, manage projects and consultations, contribute to the newsletter, research information and provide advice and support to the rest of the Board and our members. She has provided me with personal guidance as President, and I'd like to thank her for all her support. Despite many attempts to persuade her to stay, Karen has decided it's time to focus on her family and her PhD. She will be sorely missed, and the Board wishes her well with her PhD and all future interpreting-related endeavours.

It is this sense of pride in our profession, and the eagerness to work hard to develop our association that is evident in all our Board members, state representatives, and members. By attending the ANC 2008, you too are all demonstrating your own commitment to the profession, and to ASLIA. And for that I applaud you. Without you, there would be no ASLIA National.

We have all witnessed a radical shift in the sign language interpreting profession in Australia over the last ten years, in terms of training, practice, policies, procedures, provision and professionalism. ASLIA National has more recently been at the forefront of those changes. In this report, I would like to highlight the work of ASLIA National in continuing to push the boundaries over the last year.

### ***Summary of major accomplishments and initiatives in the preceding year***

#### **New strategic plan**

Shortly after last year's AGM and the change of Board governance, in November 2007, the ASLIA National Board had its first face-to-face strategic planning weekend in Sydney. Board members came together for 2 days and 2 nights to discuss and dissect our role, our plans and our intended future direction. The weekend was adeptly facilitated by Sharon Young, from TAFE NSW (some of you may remember her from last year's conference on the panel about interpreting in education). We chose Sharon as we were aware that she knew enough about ASLIA National and Auslan interpreting issues to be able to guide our discussions, but would have neutrality and objectivity in helping us to shape the goals of the organisation. It was an extremely productive weekend, where we worked hard and also had the opportunity to get to know one another better as a new Board. We came up with a new vision statement, a new mission, and identified 7 key goals for the Association, as follows:

#### *ASLIA National Vision Statement*

To lead and promote best practice in sign language interpreting across Australia.

#### *ASLIA National Mission*

ASLIA National is the peak body representing signed language interpreters through:

- Collaborative partnerships and engagement with practitioners and communities.
- Providing value, relevance and leadership regarding the signed language interpreting profession.
- Contributing to the interpreting and translation body of knowledge and expertise.

#### *Goals*

1. To strengthen the position of ASLIA National as the peak body representing signed language interpreters in Australia
2. To maintain and enhance collaboration with the Deaf community
3. To sustain and increase a financial foundation to support organisational objectives
4. To model best practice and leadership in signed language interpreting

5. To influence and guide awareness and understanding of the sign language interpreting profession
6. To further the knowledge and expertise concerning the sign language interpreting profession
7. To engage with and advance the opportunities of under-represented practitioners and communities (i.e., Regional and remote, Deaf Relay interpreters, Deafblind and Indigenous)

The hosting of the ANC this year in Darwin ties nicely into the 7<sup>th</sup> goal, as is evidenced by the fact that we have Deaf and Indigenous presenters and participants.

In order to work towards the seven goals for the Association, the Board agreed to establish new portfolios/ sub-committees. These are as follows:

1. Publications and promotions (P&P) – (Chair: Karin Fayd'herbe; Committee members: Gerry Shearim, previously Karen Bontempo)
  - Policy development
  - Web development
2. Professional development, education, research and training (PDERT) – (Chair: Marcel Leneham; Committee members: Jemina Napier, Kylie Scott)
3. Finance and membership (F&M) – (Chair: Meredith Bartlett; Committee member: Viona Woodroffe)
4. Special Interests (SI) – (Chair: Viona Woodroffe; Committee members: Meredith Bartlett, Kylie Scott, Karin Fayd'herbe)
  - DRI
  - Deafblind
  - Rural and remote
  - Indigenous
  - emerging technologies

Any members wishing to discuss any issue that falls within the above portfolios can contact the relevant sub-committee chairperson as follows:

Marcel Leneham: [vicepresident@aslia.com.au](mailto:vicepresident@aslia.com.au)

Karin Fayd'herbe: [secretary@aslia.com.au](mailto:secretary@aslia.com.au)

Viona Woodroffe: [committee1@aslia.com.au](mailto:committee1@aslia.com.au)

Kylie Scott: [committee2@aslia.com.au](mailto:committee2@aslia.com.au)

## **Deaf Australia**

Over the last year I am particularly proud that we have consolidated our relationship with Deaf Australia (previously known as the Australian Association of the Deaf). ASLIA National has always had a good informal relationship with Deaf Australia, holding regular 'update meetings', but in the last year we formalised our relationship in two important ways. Firstly, we signed a joint agreement to work together to further the interests of Auslan interpreters in order to meet the needs of the Australian Deaf community. Australia was the first country to follow in the footsteps of the World Federation of the Deaf and the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters, who signed a joint agreement last year. This joint agreement between ASLIA National and Deaf Australia signals a new era for sign language interpreting in Australia, giving us the opportunity to work together for lobbying and raising the profile of Auslan interpreting. Secondly, ASLIA National and Deaf Australia jointly hosted a summit in Sydney in February 2008, the focus of which was to discuss issues of Auslan interpreting supply and demand. A range of stakeholders were invited to participate, and we were delighted to see over 80 participants, both deaf and hearing; including interpreters, consumers, government representatives, service providers and educators. As a consequence of the summit, ASLIA National and Deaf Australia have established a taskforce along with the

Australian Federation of Deaf Societies (AFDS) and the National Auslan interpreting Booking & Payment Service (NABS) to identify strategies for dealing with some of the issues raised. We look forward to working closely with Deaf Australia.

### **New Code of Ethics roll out**

Those of you who were present at the Sydney ANC in 2007 will remember that the members voted unanimously to endorse a new Code of Ethics. The new Code is a value-based Code, incorporating the perspectives of interpreters, Deaf consumers and service providers and identifying 5 core values to underpin our work. These values are:

1. **Professional accountability:**  
Accepting responsibility for professional decisions and actions.
2. **Professional competence:**  
Committing to provide quality professional service throughout one's practice.
3. **Non-discrimination:**  
Approaching professional service with respect and cultural sensitivity.
4. **Integrity in professional relationships:**  
Dealing honestly and fairly with participants and colleagues.
5. **Integrity in business practices:**  
Dealing honestly and ethically in all business practices.

The new Code and Guidelines can be downloaded from our website at:  
<http://aslia.com.au/o/content/view/175/167/>

The last year has seen a roll out of the new Code. Marcel Leneham developed a template PowerPoint presentation for us to use in the roll out. Workshops have been held in Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney, with a session scheduled for Perth later in the year, to introduce the new Code to our members. We also plan to provide workshops to the Deaf community, and are currently liaising with Deaf Australia to film an Auslan version of the Code. NAATI have now included the new Code in their information for Auslan test candidates.

### **Revalidation Revolution!**

The NAATI revalidation concept has been strongly encouraged by ASLIA National, with efforts to promote employers willing to require revalidation of their interpreters, and to inform and advise members of the concept. We would like to commend those organisations that have encouraged interpreters to opt in to revalidation and signed up to the ASLIA National *"Revalidation Revolution!"*. ASLIA National are proud that the highest number of interpreters to voluntarily opt in for revalidation are Auslan interpreters, and feel that the push from ASLIA National may have been partly responsible for this. The work of Geraldine Shearim in regard to the "Revalidation Revolution" initiative must be acknowledged.

### **Industry affiliations**

- I have maintained regular contact with the new CEO of NAATI, Dr Lindsay Heywood, and I am delighted that he accepted our invitation to present at the ANC this year. ASLIA National has provided input into further updates of the Revalidation Logbook to ensure that all categories are applicable to Auslan interpreters; and more recently we have been asked to join NAATI's new Professional Reference Group to provide feedback from practitioners. I have also had regular meetings (via teleconference) with the Presidents of the Australian Institute for Translators and Interpreters (AUSIT) and the Western Australian Institute of Translators and Interpreters (WAITI) to exchange information. The three organisations have agreed to collaborate more

closely to have a stronger 'voice' for the purposes of lobbying and raising the profile of interpreters and translators. Some work has been undertaken in regard to coming to an agreed position on sharing interpreting costs at AUSIT events attended by ASLIA members.

- ASLIA National is a member of the Steering Committee to direct the government T&I competencies project (TIB09), which is being led by Government Skills Australia in order to develop a national training package and standards (<http://www.governmentskills.com.au/content/view/692/742/>). This project aims to develop consistent, nationally endorsed training packages for interpreters and translators. In the last few months there have been local consultations for this project around the country. ASLIA National strongly encourages members to remain aware of developments in this project and provide feedback. I'd like to thank Marcel Leneham for representing ASLIA National at the meetings.
- After the last ANC, ASLIA National liaised with the organisers of the Supporting Deaf People Online Conferences in order to provide a discount for ASLIA National members to the SDP 2008 conference. A discount will be offered again for the 2009 conference taking place in January. For the discount code, email: [president@aslia.com.au](mailto:president@aslia.com.au)
- ASLIA National has continued to liaise with SLIANZ & WASLI to share information from our region, and we are also continuing with the precedent established at the 2007 ANC in supporting interpreters from developing countries. Last year we arranged sponsorship for two interpreters from Fiji to attend the Interpreter Trainers Workshop and ANC. This year, we are providing sponsorship to the Cambodian and Thai interpreters to attend the Interpreter Trainers Workshop, and have also been in discussion with SLIANZ about coordinating an online conference for the WASLI region (Australasia/Oceania).
- In addition to the above, ASLIA National regularly responds to requests for assistance from members, stakeholders and the wider community (nationally and internationally); handles items of correspondence; and initiates contact in regard to a variety of matters. In the past year this has included, among other matters, making submissions to the Attorney Generals' Dept regarding Deaf jurors; approaches to the Federal Government to introduce ASLIA National; funding applications; providing input into NAATI's strategic plan, and so on.

### **Deaf Relay Interpreter Certification Project (DRICP)**

The DRICP is now complete. As a consequence we now have 27 Deaf Relay Interpreters in Australia who hold ASLIA/NABS DRI Certification in recognition of their skills in working with people with limited Auslan fluency. This is in addition to the cohort of Deaf students who hold the TAFE Diploma of Interpreting. I'd like to congratulate all those that passed, and commend all who took the test. This was a ground breaking project, and involved a lot of work in developing a test to accurately assess the skills of deaf people working as interpreters in a particularly specialised field. We were not able to test the skills of people who work with deafblind consumers, and were also cognisant of the fact that many DRIs have had minimal opportunities for training. Nevertheless, we feel that the end product was a rigorous test that meets the standards of the equivalent NAATI paraprofessional test for hearing interpreters. Our project officer, Della Goswell, is currently evaluating the whole project and a final report will be submitted to NABS (as the funding body) before the end of the year, and a summary made available on our website. The final evaluation report will make recommendations for the further training and testing of Deaf Relay Interpreters. I believe that ASLIA National and NABS have set a new benchmark for the certification of DRIs, which is not matched in any other country, as the test reflects the real work experience of DRIs as closely as possible. I'd like to thank Della Goswell for all her work, and also Board members Karen Bontempo and Meredith Bartlett for their input in organising testing, and Karen Bontempo also for co-managing the project with me. The support of Keri Gilbert and NABS over the duration of the project must also be acknowledged with gratitude.

Complementing the DRICP, over the last few months DRI Ross Onley-Zerkel from Melbourne, in conjunction with ASLIA National and ASLIA-Vic has lead the development of an information brochure relating to Deaf Relay Interpreting. As well as explaining the role of DRIs, it also gives practical advice on how to work with a relay interpreter. This initiative demonstrates a commitment by ASLIA National to promote and advocate for the use of DRIs. The brochure will be made available via state branches soon.

### **Secretariat**

After ANC 2007, ASLIA National gave a commitment to secure funds to establish a Secretariat position to strengthen our position and role in the interpreting, translation and deafness sectors. To date, we have not had a paid Secretariat to undertake the duties and responsibilities of the Association – all our national Board, and co-opted members from time to time, contribute voluntarily to the development of the profession at a national level. The Board members each dedicate many voluntary hours per week to ASLIA National, in addition to their personal work, study and family commitments. As the workload and expectations of National Board members has increased exponentially since 2005 – there has been a significant increase in the requests for our expertise, direction and input. In order to realise our potential and meet the newly established goals set out in our 2008-2010 strategic plan, we feel it is vital to employ a paid staff member. To this end, we have approached various organisations for support, to provide seeding funds. We have received positive assurances from some organisations, and are awaiting decisions from others. Either way, we are confident we will have enough money to employ a part-time Executive Officer on a short term contract by the end of the year. The role of our Executive Officer will be to carry out the functions of the association under the supervision and support of the National Board, including administrative, financial and secretarial duties. I'd like to thank Karen Bontempo for helping me to draft the letter of request and for coordinating the approach to organisations during my leave of absence.

### **Other significant things**

ASLIA National has also been working on other various issues, policies and administrative matters. These include, in brief:

- Development of position role descriptions for each of the Board Members, which were adapted from descriptions developed for ASLIAQ by Maree Madden.
- Development of a reimbursement policy for ASLIA National Board members in attending events as a representative of ASLIA National. Thanks to Viona Woodroffe and Meredith Bartlett for developing this new policy.
- Coordination of 4<sup>th</sup> ASLIA National Interpreter Trainers' Workshop. This year we have six different presentations, including a keynote from Liz Scott Gibson, and a discussion panel. This is the largest ITW to date, and Karen Bontempo and Marcel Leneham deserve thanks for their work in organising the event.
- Coordination of the National Interpreter of the Year awards, with thanks to several Board members for taking responsibility for various aspects of the organisation.
- Production of the ASLIA National biennial national newsletter, which is distributed to members, WASLI and the region (eg. Fiji). We are currently in discussion with the ASLIA VIC Across The Board editorial team to determine how National and Victoria may be able to work together to avoid duplicating resources in regard to a comprehensive, quality newsletter product for members.
- Dissemination of a discussion paper concerning the membership structure for ASLIA National in the future, incorporating suggestions from discussions with members at the 2007 ANC. Feedback was received from various state branches and individuals,

and a session is being held at ANC 2008 to discuss the proposal further. I'd like to acknowledge Karin Fayd'herbe and Marcel Leneham for their work on this issue.

- On-going work on a new ASLIA national outreach member category, to allow Auslan interpreters with no branch in their state to join ASLIA National directly. The development was put on hold until the outcome of the Membership Discussion Paper is finalised.
- In terms of finances, we have organised for ASLIA National credit cards to make purchases easier. As an organisation, we are still in a financially healthy position with invested funds of \$20,000, but we have minimal cash in the operating account due to the finalisation of the DRICP. Meredith Bartlett should be commended for streamlining our accounting system, organising new credit cards and account signatories, and investigating auditing requirements.
- The translator & interpreter survey conducted by Macquarie University, with collaborative funding from ASLIA, AUSIT and AFDS is complete. Over 800 surveys were returned, with 122 from Auslan interpreters. Preliminary results from the Auslan interpreter data has been presented at this conference. ASLIA National expects to receive a final report by the end of the year.
- The ASLIA National PO box has been moved to Sydney during the year as a more appropriate location. The Association must always have a NSW member on the Board due to the Public Officer position being in NSW, so a Sydney PO Box seemed logical. Changes have been made to the letterhead, stationery, and website to reflect this move.
- Last but not least, the Board has provided support to the ANC 2008 Organising Committee & selected the JW Flynn Orator for 2008. The Board would like to acknowledge Board member Kylie Scott and her Organising Committee, Debb Lovett and Tanya Miller, for their extremely hard work in organising such a memorable conference.

### ***Future plans***

- Continuation of the joint taskforce with Deaf Australia to address issues facing the interpreting profession and the supply and demand challenges/training issues for the profession. Particular thanks go to Marcel Leneham and Karin Fayd'herbe for their contributions to the initial summit earlier in the year, and Marcel's efforts in continuing to represent ASLIA National on the taskforce must be noted.
- Development of a comprehensive policy and procedures manual will be a priority in 2009, to streamline ASLIA National's operations and provide guidance to the Board and members
- We will again advocate for the development of an Interpreter Trainers Network (ITN) and a position paper on best practice in interpreter education, under the auspices of ASLIA National. Greater input into interpreter education in Australia is sought, as ASLIA is a key stakeholder in this process. The ITN initiative has not been sufficiently well supported last year to move forward at all, however is considered to have great merit and importance and will be high on the agenda again in the coming year.
- Support will be offered to the ANC 2009 team to assist them in coordinating a quality event.

***In conclusion***

It's been an exciting year in the life of ASLIA National. The profession and the Association are both moving forward at a tremendous rate. It would not have been possible to achieve so much over the last year if it were not for the commitment and passion of our Board members. I'd like to thank them all for their dedication to ASLIA National, and in particular, Marcel Leneham for acting as President while I took a leave of absence. I look forward to the year ahead, and to reporting further achievements at the 2009 AGM. For more detailed information on any aspect of this President's report, please contact ASLIA National on [info@aslia.com.au](mailto:info@aslia.com.au)

Jemina Napier  
PRESIDENT  
7<sup>th</sup> September 2008