



Educational Interpreter Policy

In educational settings, the provision of certified interpreters is critical for students' educational and linguistic development and is essential in creating equal learning environments. Under Section 22 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, it is "...unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a student on the ground of the student's disability...by denying the student access, or limiting the student's access, to any benefit provided by the educational authority".

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which Australia is a signatory, states that signatories must:

- "provide forms of live assistance and intermediaries, including... professional sign language interpreters, to facilitate accessibility to ...facilities open to the public [including schools];
- recognise and promote the use of sign languages;
- (ensure that) persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education".

The peak body representing Deaf people, the World Federation of the Deaf, which has consultative status in the United Nations, has called upon governments to "Ensure that Deaf learners who may be placed in mainstream educational settings have access to the services of educated, trained and qualified sign language interpreters...and full participation in both the educative and co-curricular processes."

In the case of deaf students for whom a signed language (such as Auslan) is a primary or most reliable form of communication, a National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) certified interpreter is one way in which educational authorities can fulfil their legal obligation to provide access to both the curriculum and to other benefits provided by the educational authority (such as social interactions and extracurricular activities).

Deaf children who are not served by a NAATI certified interpreter are at risk of not gaining full access to either the curriculum, nor to norms of social interaction. Furthermore, unlike spoken language communities, where children of non-English-speaking background are likely to be exposed to their primary language in the home and in their wider social circle, deaf children are likely to be reliant upon a small number of language models, of which the interpreter is likely to be the strongest or only real language model.

The Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association, ASLIA is the national peak organisation representing the needs and interests of sign language interpreters in Australia. This document outlines ASLIA's policies and guidelines regarding the employment of sign language interpreters in educational settings, as a means of supporting employers, Government and representative unions to implement best practice for the recruitment and ongoing employment of educational interpreters.

This document is relevant for schools and institutes employing or engaging the services of Sign Language Interpreters. Educational settings is inclusive of prep schools, primary schools, high schools, government and non-government schools, universities, colleges, TAFEs and other Registered Training Organisations and learning institutes.

Definitions

An Auslan-English Interpreter works between Auslan and English, receiving a message in one language and delivering it in another, usually having to produce the interpreted message within a very short period after receiving the message in the first language. This requires a high degree of linguistic, cognitive and technical skills. An interpreter may interpret in simultaneous or consecutive mode.

Deaf Interpreter

Auslan Language Model

Educational Interpreters (EI) interpret from English into a signed language (e.g. Auslan) and interpret from a signed language into spoken English. And where the interpreter is a member of ASLIA, they will adhere to the ASLIA [Code of Ethics](#). The role of the EI is to

ensure that deaf students are able to participate fully in educational settings and that education providers are able to accurately and fairly evaluate student performance.

The role of the EI is varied and includes working in the classroom, excursions, presentations and performances from visitors or guest speakers, meetings and school/institution counselling sessions, institution events, and extracurricular or any other institution activities. Any individual who is required to interpret between English and Auslan in any capacity as part of their workload is an EI, regardless of their job title. An EI may also be required to:

- be a primary or only language model for a deaf student
- liaise with the teacher or teacher of the deaf to implement strategies to promote inclusion of the deaf student/s
- adapt classroom language to best meet the deaf student/s needs
- assist with note-taking or tutoring
- teach basic signing to staff and/or other students to encourage direct interactions between the deaf student and peers

The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) is responsible for the certification of all translators and interpreters for all spoken and signed languages in Australia.

For the purposes of this document, the term 'interpreter' is used to refer to a NAATI certified sign language interpreter, and educational interpreter refers to interpreters working in an educational setting. .

Educational Interpreter Policy

The Federal Government¹, as well as all State Governments² have policies in place

¹ <http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/docs/fact-sheets/onlineFactSheet4-interpreters.pdf>

² <http://www.multicultural.qld.gov.au/services-resources/translating-interpreting-services/services.html>;
http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au/services/language_services/national_interpreter_symbol/policy;
<http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/images/stories/pdf/2383%20vmc%20interpreter%20manual%20web.pdf>;
http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/resources/publications/Languages/language_services_2008.pdf;

stating that individuals who have “difficulty communicating in English” must be provided with “professional interpreters” and in most cases specifying the use of NAATI certified interpreters. In the case of State Governments, these policies apply to all Government agencies, including education departments. None of these State Government policies excludes children or students. As deaf students who communicate using Auslan have “difficulty communicating in English”, State Education Departments are responsible for ensuring that individuals who perform interpreting tasks in public schools, including those who work with deaf students, must be certified interpreters.

ASLIA supports the position of NAATI, which states that “(The level of) Certified Interpreter represents the minimum level of competence for professional interpreting” and that Certified Provisional Interpreter level “represents a level of competence in interpreting for the purpose of general conversations, generally in the form of non-specialist dialogues (including) interpreting in general conversations, interpreting in situations where specialised terminology or more sophisticated conceptual information is not required (and) interpreting in situations where a depth of linguistic ability is not required³”.

For the purposes of this document, an EI is any person whose duties substantially (that is, for more than 20% of their time employed) include:

- interpreting
- transliterating
- in any way converting spoken or written English into Auslan, or vice versa

This may include individuals employed as:

- Interpreters
- Translitterators
- Teachers of the deaf
- Teacher aides

http://www.workcover.sa.gov.au/custom/files/2283_CC_Interpreting_and_translating_policy_20101_0221516990.pdf; <http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/cdd/multitas/interpreter/>;

³ <http://www.naati.com.au/at-accreditation.html>

- Teacher aides (special)
- Teaching assistants
- Education Assistant
- Any other designation or job description.

Educational interpreting requires specialist knowledge, terminology and sophisticated conceptual information. Thus, ASLIA asserts that:

- Government departments and agencies, including education departments, as well as schools and early childhood programs in the independent/private sector, should ultimately aim to employ (whether full-time, part-time or on a casual or consultancy basis) only Certified Interpreters
- all EIs should ultimately aim to attain NAATI certification at the Certified Interpreter level.

Qualities and Qualifications

ASLIA advocates that at minimum, an EI must be:

- extremely fluent in both Auslan and spoken (and written) English
- proficient in the skills involved in interpreting between the two languages
- able to demonstrate a good understanding of pedagogical theory and practice, including education of the deaf
- able to demonstrate a good understanding of, and respect for, both Deaf and mainstream cultures (including the history of Deaf education, oppression of Deaf culture and the concept of hearing privilege)
- able to demonstrate knowledge of child and language development
- able to demonstrate knowledge of the specific subject areas being taught
- a good team worker
- aware of the “illusion of inclusion” that can occur during mediated learning⁴ and

⁴ For further information and references, see <http://www.nmsd.k12.nm.us/publications/documents/IllusionofInclusion-RealitiesandConsequences.pdf>

strategies to mitigate this

- and possess a strong sense of professional ethics and boundaries

However, ASLIA also understands that there are currently a number of barriers to this policy being implemented, including:

- a lack of Certified (and indeed Certified Provisional) Interpreters throughout most states and territories of Australia
- interpreters working in schools are not designated as 'interpreters', although their job description or actual duties include interpreting
- the cost of employing Certified Interpreters
- concerns that interpreting pay rates may be higher than those enjoyed by a classroom teacher

ASLIA therefore makes the following recommendations:

1. An EI may be employed directly by an individual school, institution or education department, or employed indirectly via an interpreting agency.
2. All EIs should be **NAATI certified at Certified Interpreter level**. Other qualifications, particularly in interpreting (such as a Master of Translation and Interpreting) or education (such as a Bachelor of Education) may also be useful, and should be taken into consideration when employing a school interpreter.
3. ASLIA recognises that there is a shortage of interpreters credentialed at Certified Interpreter level. Therefore, ASLIA recommends that, **where no suitably credentialed Certified Interpreters are available, a Certified Provisional Interpreter may be employed**. Any Certified Provisional Interpreter employed as a school interpreter should be required to be working towards Certified Interpreter. This may take the form of:
 - Current enrolment in a course approved by NAATI, the completion of which will result in Certified Interpreter credentials.
 - Attendance at professional development opportunities, with a view to sit a

NAATI Certified Interpreter test within the next three years.

4. ASLIA recognises that there is also a shortage of interpreters qualified at Certified Provisional Interpreter level. ASLIA cannot condone the employment of individuals without interpreting credentials to perform interpreting work in educational settings, given the likely impact of this on the education and linguistic development of the deaf student. Therefore, ASLIA recommends that, **where no suitably qualified Certified Interpreters or Certified Provisional Interpreters are available, an individual who is not credentialed may be employed, subject to the principles below.**
5. It must be recognised that employment as an EI of an individual who is not credentialed (that is, a person who is not an actual interpreter) should be a last resort only. Such an individual cannot be seen to provide a deaf student with genuine access. Any individual employed as a school interpreter who is not a credentialed interpreter should be required to be working towards Certified Provisional Interpreter and then Certified Interpreter credentials. This may take the form of:
 - Current enrolment in a course approved by NAATI which will result in Certified Provisional Interpreter credentials.
 - Attendance at professional development opportunities, with a view to sit a NAATI Certified Provisional Interpreter test within the next two years.
6. All EIs, regardless of level of certification, should engage in professional development opportunities, with a frequency of one PD session every three months. Ideally, these will be provided by the place of employment as well as by professional associations such as ASLIA.
7. Educational interpreters should be subject to, and benefit from, ongoing performance appraisal and review. ASLIA recommends that this performance appraisal occurs annually and that it must be undertaken by a suitably credentialed person or team, holding a minimum of Certified Interpreter NAATI credential. In circumstances where such a person is unavailable within the educational institution, then the educational institution is responsible for outsourcing or otherwise providing access to an appropriate appraisal.

8. Interpreting is a high-skill task, and pay rates must reflect the skills, knowledge, credentials and responsibilities of the position, as well as the demand for interpreting services. Educational interpreters must be paid at rates consistent with interpreters in other sectors. Pay rates should be commensurate with:

- Certification level
- Other qualifications
- Experience

9. Employers of EIs must provide safe working conditions for interpreters. See ASLIA's Occupational Health and Safety policy for further information.

10. As with all NAATI-accredited interpreters, EIs who are members of ASLIA must adhere to ASLIA's Code of Ethics.

To address ongoing skill shortages, employers of educational interpreters are encouraged to liaise closely with ASLIA, as well as with training organisations (such as TAFE, the Deaf Education Network, National Auslan Booking Service, La Trobe University and Macquarie University) to increase the numbers of NAATI certified interpreters available.

Employers of school interpreters are also likely to find that interpreters who are currently working outside the education sector, or who have chosen to leave the field of interpreting for better paid work elsewhere, will choose to return to the education sector once there are improved standards and working conditions, including higher pay rates equal to that of accredited interpreters in other sectors.

Version History

Version Date	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by motion	Summary of updates
V1.0 2011				
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V3 2018	Christy Filipich Carolyn Montologue Danielle Ferndale	David McQuiggin Sheree Murray		Formatting, content