



## **Pro Bono Interpreting Policy**

This document outlines the ASLIA policy regarding pro bono interpreting. ASLIA believes that the best way to ensure the rights of Deaf people are upheld, and the integrity of the interpreting process be safeguarded, is by using NAATI certified Sign Language interpreters.

NAATI accredited Sign Language interpreters should receive appropriate reimbursement for services provided. This is in line with other professional bodies and recognises their relevant qualifications. Thus, ASLIA regards the use of volunteer Interpreters with caution. ASLIA does recognise that Sign Language interpreters have a moral and ethical commitment to members of, and to Deaf organisations belonging to, the Australian Deaf Community and the causes which benefit the community. As such, ASLIA believes that there is a case for the provision of some interpreting to be done in a pro bono capacity or at a substantially reduced cost.

The following are examples of suggested events that could attract or seek pro bono interpreting and could be referred to as a guide to negotiate with the local ASLIA association, local Deaf Society, other interpreting agency or NAATI certified interpreters for interpreting services to be provided pro bono or at a substantially reduced rate.

1. Deaf Community cultural events such as:
  - National Week of Deaf People (NWDP)
  - State organised assignments
  - Fund raising activities
2. Emergencies, where the interpreter would act as any citizen would, until an appropriately booked interpreter arrives.

3. Special occasions which are informal gatherings, where the interpreter has the ability to be an individual, with the ability to enjoy any social interactions as an individual, and is not be expected to act as an interpreter. The interpreter may however offer assistance with communication at the gathering if the need arises.
4. Personal events and situations such as:
  - Tupperware parties
  - Personal parties

The value of in-kind assistance to small, unfunded voluntary community organisations is underestimated. In-kind assistance could include, but is not limited to, the following suggestions and examples:

- free-of-charge access to library facilities, which could include internet access and research resources
- the provision of conference facilities at a reduced rate
- donations made of superseded equipment
- regular access to rooms for professional development and meetings
- kindred organisations such as AUSIT and Deaf Australia jointly-run professional development sessions with ASLIA

Unfunded, small, community, voluntary organisations are encouraged to contact their local ASLIA branch to negotiate for the provision of in-kind payment or assistance with Sign Language interpreting services. Please note that this does not include large organisations which are funded and have the ability to procure funding.

ASLIA outlines the following reasons why members should use caution when accepting pro bono interpreting work:

1. Volunteer interpreting has a direct and detrimental effect on the profession. This may create an environment in which organisations and individuals belonging to the majority culture mistakenly believe that interpreting services are, and should be, free-of-charge.

2. Deaf people may feel an emotional debt to their interpreter, therefore may not achieve access and equality, with the very instrument designed to facilitate such equality.
3. There may be conflict of interest resulting from an uninformed choice of interpreter. This conflict could occur because a NAATI certified interpreter may be a close friend or relative who may feel compelled to 'protect' the person from uncomfortable questions, withhold potentially embarrassing information or self-incriminating information expressed by the Deaf person. By the same token, the Deaf person may not feel comfortable expressing their feelings freely if an interpreter they know intimately is used.
4. The parties involved in the communication process may have their right to privacy and confidentiality compromised, and this situation leaves the parties involved with no recourse.
5. Volunteer interpreters may not feel obliged to produce a high standard of competence, appropriate level of skill and professionalism, if they are not appropriately contracted to an assignment.
6. Interpreters may find themselves in an unsafe work environment, which could lead to injury, and in such circumstances as a volunteer, may not have any legal recourse for compensation.
7. Volunteer interpreting has the capacity to erode the hard fought conditions of the interpreting profession, thus downgrading the position of colleagues.
8. Repeated volunteering may lead to an unsustainable expectation by consumers of interpreting services that all interpreters will work without remuneration; this has the potential to cause ill feeling between the parties involved.

In the main, no other professional groups in society are compelled to provide gratis work.

## Version History

<b>Version Date</b>	<b>Prepared by</b>	<b>Checked by</b>	<b>Approved by motion</b>	<b>Summary of updates</b>
V1.0 2012				
V2 2018	Danielle Ferndale and Peter Bonsor	De Brown	Approved	Template, update language, restructure
V3 2020		Julie Judd		