

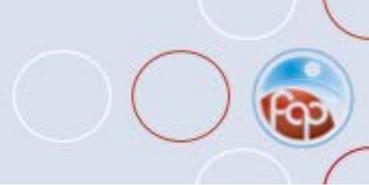


Interpreting and Translating Services

Interpreters and translators provide critical support and access to services for Western Australian's who have limited English language capacity. However the industry and its workers face a range of challenges.

Industry developments and workforce issues

- *Language specific supply issues continue.* The Western Australian Institute of Translators and Interpreters (WAITI) has identified the following languages as having supply issues:
 - African – Amharic, Oromo, Kiswahili, Tigrinya, Fula, Kuku, Dinka
 - Asian – Khmer (extreme/critical shortage), Chin, Thai, Vietnamese (high demand)
 - Indian – Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Bengali, Punjabi
 - Afghan – Hazaragi, Pushtu
- *Fragile employment conditions continue to cause problems.* It remains difficult to retain experienced, professional practitioners due to employment conditions (casualised, unreliable workload, poor remuneration, etc.)
- *The workforce is extremely aged,* with low numbers of young workforce entrants in the interpreting space. Retirement is depleting the workforce of the most experienced workers and is causing critical shortages in some languages. However, there is evidence of a growing number of young, highly skilled and tertiary qualified translators in WA, who have obtained qualifications overseas where tertiary courses are better established and recognised. This is predominantly for traditional Asian and European languages however, and not emerging languages.
- *Tension between key stakeholders in WA.* Tension exists between the WA peak body, WAITI, and the national accrediting body, NAATI. This is a multi-factorial issue that has been ongoing for some time. Of particular note, industry remains strident in their concerns around qualified practitioners versus those with certification alone. As part of the industry focus on professionalization and quality service delivery, feedback from industry remains that completion of full qualifications is critical.
- *Majority of workers remain untrained and/or without certification.* WAITI reports that the workforce is comprised largely of individuals who speak an emerging LOTE (language other than English) and English at variable levels of competence and that a range of occupation specific skill gaps exist.

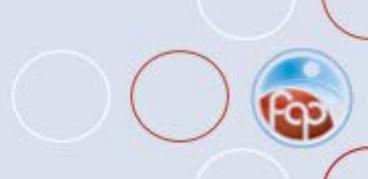


- *Implementation of new certification model.* After a lengthy process of consultation and development, NAATI (the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters) have a new certification model in place for the industry¹. Training has now been embedded within the certification as a pre-requisite, along with three other fields: English proficiency, ethical competency and intercultural competency.
- *Training now available in WA, but full qualifications are not required for certification purposes.* While training pre-requisites for certification testing are the four core units from the relevant Diploma, completion of an Endorsed Qualification meets all four pre-requisites for testing. The current offering at NM TAFE is not endorsed, however there are 4 endorsed qualifications available in WA. A scholarship program for the Diploma of Interpreting has however been established in a joint effort by the Office of Multicultural Interests and NM TAFE. Online Endorsed Qualifications are also available to those in WA, via TAFESA and RMIT.
- *Re-certification now required.* Unlike previous accreditation, practitioners are no longer recognised for life. Rather, ongoing CPD and work experience requirements now exist, with re-certification required every three years. Certification testing is not provided on demand, and it is not yet clear how those in WA seeking to sit testing for certification will do so where there are not sufficient numbers for local testing.
- *Certification test data will now isolate those seeking employment from those seeking migration points only.* Certification data collection and processes now allow for separation of the two cohorts undertaking testing – those seeking to work in the sector and those seeking points to support migration applications. The former sit a certification test, while the latter sit a CCL test. This should prove helpful in better understanding supply of workers moving forward.
- *Professionalisation a priority, but challenges exist.* The drive for professionalization of the industry continues and is a priority for all stakeholders. VET qualifications, NAATI certification and the ongoing CPD requirements embedded in the new certification model are all hoped to support this. Demand for PD is increasing, however casualization means that most practitioners have limited funds to expend in this area. This will make it hard for organisations to deliver PD profitably.
- *Digital technology is encroaching on service provision*, examples being:
 - *Translating:* post-editing, Google translate (misuse/reliance/ignorance of limitations), translation memories, crowd-sourcing and competition from practitioners based outside Australia who are often highly qualified but able to offer far cheaper rates for work
 - *Interpreting:* telephone interpreting (even when ill-advised, due to cost saving), Google translate (misuse/reliance/ignorance of limitations).

- *Indigenous language services have expanded due to Federal funding*, resulting in the extension of the former provider, KIS, into Aboriginal Interpreting WA. From July 10, the organisation is responsible for Aboriginal languages services across all regions of WA. Some key work includes:
 - *Health* – interpreters on site 5 days a week in 5 Kimberley hospitals, with an on-call after hours service.
 - *Legal* – negotiations underway to expand the existing standby interpreter arrangement for the Fitzroy Crossing circuit court to other regional circuit court locations.
 - *Policing* – acknowledgement of unconscious bias and anticipated resulting demand for increased interpreter support. Negotiations for translation and recording of police caution into 40 Indigenous languages.

Industry workforce priorities

- *Training* – the WA peak body, WAITI has been heavily involved in the development and review of the Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas serving their industry. Completion of these qualifications, in full, is viewed as the most appropriate mechanism for skilling the workforce sufficiently. Training is also considered important by the certifying body, however there is no requirement to complete qualifications in full and training providers need to apply and make payment to NAATI if they want their qualifications to be endorsed. The industry continues to be highly engaged in the VET space, and with projects involving their qualifications. WAITI has proposed a model to create a pathway to the Diploma and Advanced Diploma qualifications that incorporates English and LOTE and a Certificate IV bilingual qualification based on an expired accredited course developed previously by NMTAFE.
- *Indigenous workforce* – interpreting is required by the Indigenous community for legal and medical purposes, but also to support accessing of government services. Kin relationships and other cultural issues can limit the pool of interpreters considered suitable to provide services. Cultural considerations must also be factored into training for this workforce. Geography remains an issue, in terms of both service provision and access to training. As for other interpreters, English proficiency can be a barrier to training as can perceptions and misunderstandings regarding Australian versus Aboriginal English. Some question as to use of federal funding for Aboriginal interpreters.
- *Professional development and professionalisation* – cost effective options for professional development are required, to assist practitioners to maintain their skills, build niche/technical skills required to work in specific contexts and to support soft skill development. Overall the aim of the new CPD requirements attached to certification is to bolster the capability of practitioners in the sector.
- *Responsiveness to language specific demand* – unlike other industries, translating and interpreting cannot cross-skill existing workers, to enable them to shift from low demand languages to emerging, in-demand languages. Supply issues continue to exist and access to affordable training to skill new workforce entrants with existing language skills to enter the workforce is critical. Given many potential practitioners for emerging languages face financial,



cultural and English proficiency challenges, accessibility of training and support services and funding options are considered vital. Language specificity, particularly for emerging languages creates extremely thin markets and sourcing of trainer/assessors able to assess is problematic. Industry remains concerned about high numbers of individuals completing qualifications with no intention of working in the industry (qualifications provide points for migration), or who intend to work briefly in the industry while completing other studies or as a secondary job, as it is more attractive than other common income sources (hospitality/fast food).

- *Employment conditions* – these remain poor, with the occupations being relatively low paying, casualised or contract-based in nature and work being intermittent. Many do not earn a living wage in the industry and have other employment, or are reliant on others in the household for financial stability/security.

References

This profile is based on industry advice provided to the Financial, Administrative and Professional Services Training Council, in addition to the sources listed below. For further information please refer to our stakeholder engagement list. Information provided is current at the time of publication.

ⁱ Additional information on this new certification model has been provided to supplement this profile, as follows: Model - <https://www.naati.com.au/media/1585/naati-certification-model-website-versionpdf.pdf> Scheme Summary - <https://www.naati.com.au/media/1918/certification-scheme-design-summary-feb-18pdf.pdf> Translator Descriptors - <https://www.naati.com.au/media/1586/descriptors-for-translator-certifications-version-1-june-2017pdf.pdf> Interpreter Descriptors - <https://www.naati.com.au/media/1917/descriptors-i-draft-v1155-february-2018pdf.pdf> Recertification PD catalogue - <https://www.naati.com.au/media/2007/recertification-pd-catalogue-finalpdf.pdf> English Proficiency Requirements - <https://www.naati.com.au/media/1703/english-prof-detailed-infopdf.pdf>