Interpreter Protocols in Australian Courts and Tribunals

A research project by UWS’ Interpreting & Translation Research Group

Accurate interpretation is vitally important in courts and tribunals to ensure fair and equitable proceedings, not only for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, but for those with hearing or speech impairments as well. Accurate interpreting depends on very high-quality interpreting, but also on the right working conditions that will allow interpreters to perform to their optimum level.

Currently there are no consistent and clear policies about interpreting practices across the country. With the support of the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration, the University of Western Sydney’s Interpreting and Translation Research Group (ITRG) is conducting a study which aims to review the current policies and to seek the views of interpreters, tribunal members and judicial officers on what needs to change or improve to facilitate better quality services. The results will be used to recommend the establishment of a national protocol for the use of interpreting services in Australian Courts and Tribunals.

The study will involve:

- A review of publicly available information on existing protocols for the use of interpreting services across Federal and State jurisdictions of Australian Courts and Tribunals.
- Surveys, focus groups and online fora discussions with judicial officers, tribunal members and interpreters to identify existing practices, working conditions and suggestions for improvement.
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of collated data.

Results will be disseminated through the publication of journal articles, seminar and conference presentations. As well as being used to make recommendations for the development of a national interpreter protocol for Australian Courts and Tribunals, project outcomes should also be useful in informing the continual development of professional legal interpreters.

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