



NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF
TRANSLATORS & INTERPRETERS
Te Rōpū Kaitiakiwhakamāori 2-uaha, 2-tahi e Ararua

NZSTI Report

Voices from the Field: Working Conditions of Interpreters in New Zealand



Table of Contents

Abstract	5
Glossary	6
INTRODUCTION	7
The Interpreting Industry in Aotearoa	8
The Present Study	9
Anecdotal Evidence?	10
METHODOLOGY	11
Data Collection	12
Participants	15
Data Analysis	16
INTERPRETER WORKING CONDITIONS	17
Results	18
Theme 1: Interpreter pay and working conditions are often unfair and unsustainable	25
Theme 2: Interpreting is largely unregulated, with limited oversight of LSPs	36
Theme 3: Less skilled interpreters are often given priority over qualified accredited interpreters	47
Theme 4: Current industry practices often undermine the quality of interpreting services, putting clients at risk	57
Theme 5: Interpreting is an essential, high-skill service	69
APPENDICES	73
Appendix Summary	74
Appendix A: Consent & Participation Form	75
Appendix B: NZSTI Support Letter	76
Appendix C: Online Petition	77
Appendix D: Interpreting Service ADHB/WDHB Letter	79
Appendix E: Presentation at Auckland Hospital	87
Appendix F: Letter to Te Whatu Ora	95
Appendix G: Industry Recommendations to Improve Interpreting Services	99
Appendix H: Supporting Reference List	106

Principal Investigator & Data Owner: Dr Carolina Cannard

Report Owner: New Zealand Society of Translators & Interpreters (NZSTI)

Report Author & Independent Data Analyst: Dr Thanos Kyritsis

Foreword

To colleagues, T&I stakeholders, the New Zealand Government, and our clients,

This report was made for you.

Every day, we are all impacted by industry issues that the government and stakeholders struggle to address, let alone resolve. And those most harmed by inadequate language services are the very people everyone pledges to support: the culturally and linguistically diverse members of our community.

According to the OECD, New Zealand is a "superdiverse" nation. With over 160 ethnicities and 150 languages spoken in the country, Aotearoa ranks fourth globally for its proportion of overseas-born residents. The Ministry for Ethnic Communities identifies Auckland as the fourth most ethnically diverse city in the world. To say that our interpreting workforce is vital is therefore an understatement. From healthcare to justice, government institutions, business settings and international affairs: we are everywhere. I believe that interpreters truly enable us all to coexist in this diverse world.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of meeting resettled refugee women and hearing about their experiences using interpreting services in New Zealand. Their stories, which echo the concerns raised by interpreter colleagues about working conditions, motivated me to launch the 2022 "Fair Pay Petition" and advocate for the interpreting profession, despite every obstacle along the way.

But I did not do this alone: I was supported by colleagues who continuously advocate for change. To everyone who contributed to this report: you are extraordinary. Thank you!

This report provides reflections on our interpreting system and how it affects everyone involved. It can be used as a tool to end harmful practices and help create better language access for all.

To all readers: this report is now yours. Read it, share it, and use it to drive change.

Our translation and interpreting industry binds us all together — and in the words of Helen Keller: "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

With hope and gratitude,

Carolina Cannard



Dear members, colleagues and friends of translation and interpreting,

The New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters is proud to share this report, based on Dr Carolina Cannard's data, after years of relentless work and advocacy for better working conditions for practitioners.

When Dr Cannard approached us with the data and a desire to give something back to all the practitioners who had participated, we did not hesitate to support her. Not just because she is a valued NZSTI member, but because she stands for what we at NZSTI stand for: the certainty that the work we do is indispensable, the belief that the conditions in which it happens can be improved, and the hope that, when they do, our communities will be better served.

Together with the first National Survey of Translator & Interpreter Rates & Working Conditions (2025), this report paints a clear and nuanced picture of the work we have been doing together and the changes we still want to see. Last year recorded the largest number of displaced people as a consequence of war, persecution and violence around the world (UNHCR). The importance of having trained, human professionals to meet people's communicative needs has never been greater, and the value of our services cannot be overstated.

This report would not have been possible without Dr Cannard's staunch commitment and perseverance. For years, she took it upon herself to engage with as many practitioners as possible, listen to them, compile their experiences and put pressure on government and other stakeholders. And she did it all as an individual volunteer. As an organisation, we support her. As fellow volunteers, we admire her. As colleagues, we thank her.

We would also like to acknowledge Dr Thanos Kyritsis, who has been responsive and reliable, delivering top quality research and guidance across both projects. Finally, we would like to acknowledge every practitioner who participated. We know your time is scarce. Thank you.

We hope this report serves you well and helps bring the change our profession needs and deserves.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou,

Agustina Marianacci

NZSTI President

Abstract

- ❖ **Objective:** This report documents the lived experiences (“voices”) of interpreters in Aotearoa New Zealand, focusing on the intersection of professional standards, remuneration, workplace equity, and impact on clients.
- ❖ **Methodology:** This is a qualitative study of 44 testimonies collected between 2023 and 2025. Data was analysed through thematic analysis and word cloud visualisation to identify systemic patterns in the industry.
- ❖ **Key Findings:** The analysis revealed 5 key themes in participants’ voices:

1. Interpreter pay and working conditions are often unfair and unsustainable

2. Interpreting is largely unregulated, with limited oversight of LSPs

3. Less skilled interpreters are often given priority over qualified interpreters

4. Current industry practices often undermine the quality of interpreting services, putting clients at risk

5. Interpreting is an essential, high-skill service



- ❖ **Conclusion:** Without standardisation to prioritise qualified professionals over low-cost labour, the quality of interpreting services will continue to erode, placing both the workforce and vulnerable clients at significant risk. Specific recommendations for stakeholders and LSPs are discussed in Appendix G.

Glossary

ADHB	Auckland District Health Board
AIIC	International Association of Conference Interpreters
AUSIT	Australian Institute of Interpreters & Translators
CALD	Culturally And Linguistically Diverse
CDHB	Christchurch District Health Board
DHB	District Health Board
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LAS	Language Assistance Services
LSP	Language Service Provider
MBIE	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
NAATI	National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters
NZSTI	New Zealand Society of Translators & Interpreters
NZTA	New Zealand Transport Agency
OIA	Official Information Act
OT	Oranga Tamariki
T&I	Translation & Interpreting
WDHB	Waitemata District Health Board

Section I

INTRODUCTION

The Interpreting Industry in Aotearoa

The translator and interpreter (T&I) industry in Aotearoa New Zealand is currently defined by a stark paradox. On one hand, the government’s Language Assistance Services (LAS) programme¹ has moved to formalise the sector by mandating high-level NAATI certification (Enríquez Raído et al., 2020). This initiative is designed to ensure equitable access to public services for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities (MBIE, n.d.). However, on the other hand, these rising professional requirements have not been met with a corresponding increase in economic security (Cannard *et al.*, 2023). Practitioners are increasingly required to invest in expensive certifications and continuous professional development, yet they operate within a framework of stagnant pay rates that often fail to account for the overheads of self-employment, such as tax, insurance, and the lack of social safety nets like sick leave (NZSTI, 2025).

The economic reality for New Zealand interpreters is characterised by extreme fragmentation and an unregulated environment led by the lack of standardisation (Enríquez Raído et al., 2020; Gao, 2021). While research indicates a significant disparity between public and private sector rates (Cannard et al., 2023; NZSTI, 2025), the interpreting industry is characterised by cost concerns, which can negatively affect quality standards, procurement policies, and service accessibility (Enríquez Raído et al., 2020; Gao, 2021). Gaps around the use of interpreters create accessibility barriers that can have serious consequences for individuals and increase costs downstream (González Campanella, 2023; MBIE, 2016). This drive for cost efficiency can lead to professional qualifications being sidelined over more cost-effective options, such as hiring community volunteers or family members (Gao, 2021).

The report participants also raise concerns over regional monopolies, where dominant LSPs can sometimes control the narrative and suppress wages, leaving qualified professionals with little leverage to negotiate fair terms. Many practitioners also resent the “per-minute” remote interpreting models promoted by most LSPs, which reduce remuneration and undervalue the interpreters’ labour and preparation (Cannard et al., 2023; NZSTI, 2025). Moreover, it should be noted that the majority of interpreters in New

¹ <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/cross-government-functions/language-assistance-services>

Zealand are freelancers (NZSTI, 2025), which poses specific vocational challenges, such as irregular working hours, no employment benefits, and difficulties with KiwiSaver.

This disconnect between high-stakes professional responsibility and low economic reward has triggered what many describe as a “professional exodus” (Gao, 2021). As experienced interpreters leave the field for more sustainable careers, the quality of language access in critical settings—such as healthcare and the judicial system—is placed at risk (NZSTI, 2025). The evidence suggests that current market conditions are not merely an administrative issue but a human rights concern; without a sustainable workforce, the rights of non-English speakers to participate fully in society are compromised, leading to a violation of their right to effective communication (Cannard, 2024; Health & Disability Commissioner website, n.d.). In 2023, NZSTI urged the New Zealand government to take urgent action as interpreters leave the industry to seek better employment “meaning that some individuals currently have their basic right to effective communication denied” (see Appendix B).

In response to these challenges, the literature and recent industry discourse point toward a need for radical structural reform (see references in Appendix H, as well as Appendices D-E). For example, central to these proposals is stricter industry regulation and enforcement of quality controls. Moreover, there is a growing consensus around the necessity for legislated minimum pay rates and standardised working conditions—such as guaranteed minimum booking times—to prevent the exploitation of practitioners. In some cases, the move toward collective representation or unionisation may be a viable path for practitioners to reclaim professional agency and ensure the long-term viability of the industry in Aotearoa. The discussions on these matters continue. For more industry recommendations, see also Appendix G.

The Present Study

The present study aimed to record the **lived experiences (“voices”) of translation and interpreting (T&I) practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand**, focusing on the intersection of professional standards, remuneration, and working conditions, during a period of significant regulatory transition. To this end, the study analysed 44 independent testimonies submitted by practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand, collected between May

2023 and June 2025 and analysed using inductive thematic analysis. Thus, the study aims to move beyond “anecdotal” accounts to identify the structural barriers—such as market monopolies, precarious “per-minute” pay models, and the “professionalisation paradox”—that threaten the sustainability of the T&I sector and, by extension, the language rights of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Anecdotal Evidence?

While critics may dismiss individual accounts as “anecdotal evidence” (defined as information based on personal stories² rather than controlled research), such a dismissal overlooks the power of thematic consistency in qualitative inquiry (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to the framework for thematic analysis established by Braun and Clarke (2006), identifying recurring patterns across a dataset allows researchers to move beyond isolated narratives to find collective, evidentiary meaning.

When 44 independent testimonies from across Aotearoa New Zealand consistently highlight the same structural failures, they cease to be mere anecdotes and instead become a robust data set that reflects a systemic reality. This shift is supported by the principle of “data saturation”, the point in qualitative research when collecting more data no longer yields new themes or insights. As Guest et al. (2006) demonstrated, the most significant thematic patterns typically emerge within the first 12 interviews. With 44 testimonies, the evidence far exceeds the threshold required to validate the presence of a widespread, systemic issue rather than a series of outliers.

Crucially, these qualitative “voices” are entirely consistent with the empirical findings of the national NZSTI Rates Survey Report (2025). The alignment between individual lived experiences and the broader survey data validates these testimonies as reliable evidence of a professional crisis, proving that the grievances regarding stagnant pay and precarious conditions are not isolated incidents, but rather industry-wide trends.

² Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Anecdotal evidence. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anecdotal%20evidence>

Section II

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

Questionnaire and evidence

This investigation utilised a **qualitative approach**, which is best suited for capturing nuanced responses and experiences among participants. Informed consent was received prior to data collection by sending consent forms to participants and information on the testimonies' aim and process through Dr Carolina Cannard and NZSTI (Appendices A-B).

The primary instrument for data collection was a **short questionnaire**, including both closed and open-ended questions. Participants were asked to provide their professional background, including working languages, years of experience, and specific accreditations or professional memberships (e.g., NZSTI, AUSIT, or NAATI certification). The questionnaire also investigated how frequently interpreters declined assignments due to remuneration or working conditions. Finally, an open-text section allowed participants to share their perspectives or additional information regarding the industry. Testimonies varied in length, ranging from 1 to 45 pages. Some participants chose to submit a letter with their perspectives instead, while others attached further evidence of their claims. Additional evidence included: screenshots of contractor rates, hospital interpreter attendance sheets, email communications, screenshots of agency/LSP contracts and policies, scans of the MBIE remuneration policy for interpreters, payslips, New Zealand Herald newspaper articles, screenshots of Facebook publications (LSP recruitment advertisements), publicly available internet links, newspaper articles (e.g. from NZ Herald), the petition, publications, references verifiable via internet links, and logs of phone conversations / text message.

Collection and dissemination

The data collection of the interpreter testimonies occurred between June and October 2023 (with 2 additional files added in a later submission in June 2025). The aim of this data collection was to further advocate for the Fair Pay Petition (2023) by asking interpreters to send their testimonies as evidence of their working conditions to allow Dr

Cannard to create a strong case to present to the New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). With MBIE being the Ministry responsible for leading the LAS project and NAATI certification rollout in the country at the time, the access to such information would have allowed the Ministry to gain a direct insight into the state of T&I industry, relevant concerns and state of affairs. On 16 October 2023, over 120 documents were submitted to MBIE, including the testimonies collected between May and October 2023 and analysed within the present report.

A year later, in August 2024, Dr Cannard contacted NZSTI to seek the organisation's support in making use of the collected data, and advised the organisation to hire an independent research consultant, Dr Thanos Kyritsis, to conduct an impartial data analysis. The latter was contracted through NZSTI to handle and analyse the raw data as well as to write up this report, thereby ensuring **scientific validity and impartiality**.

Legality of data collection process

The original non-anonymised data is being held confidentially and stored securely, and has not been directly viewed by anyone except the principal investigator, Dr Carolina Cannard. As detailed below, Dr Cannard took legal advice and anonymised all testimonies to safeguard the identity of participants and comply with New Zealand law. To ensure the legality of this process, and that data collection and distribution was conducted within legal boundaries, Dr Cannard consulted with lawyers from the Auckland Community Law Centre (ACLC) and engaged a barrister specialising in defamation. Following consultations, legal processes were clarified, including two crucial points:

- Asking interpreters to send their experiences with agencies and comments on remuneration and working conditions, and sharing their comments with MBIE does not constitute a breach of contract with LSPs and would not result in any liability for the parties involved.
- All interpreter testimonies were to be received, read and anonymised directly by Dr Cannard prior to being sent to MBIE, ensuring that Dr Cannard removes any personal or identifying information of private companies / agencies such as logos, company and employee names prior to any dissemination.

Data anonymisation

MBIE clarified that the Ministry is bound by the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), which allows members of the public to request information held by a public agency, including the testimonies, both anonymised and non-anonymised. Dr Cannard communicated this information to participants, some of whom chose to sign their testimonies and waive anonymity. Some participants chose not to be anonymous and have signed their testimonies with their names to seize the opportunity to address their industry concerns directly and openly with MBIE. All other participants had their testimonies anonymised by Dr Cannard to protect their identity should an OIA be requested.

Furthermore, any LSP identified in the collected testimonies could claim they have been defamed in an attempt to threaten or place pressure. To reduce that risk, it was necessary to remove from all submissions any identifying information about the agencies concerned. As the data collector, Dr Cannard therefore reviewed all testimonies one by one and anonymised private companies/LSPs and individuals prior to submitting the testimonies to MBIE, and later NZSTI's independent research consultant, Dr Kyritsis.

Names of government departments such as the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), hospitals and DHBs (District Health Boards) did not need to be removed as they cannot sue for defamation. Therefore, the names of these departments were not altered. According to the advice received by the acting barrister, naming government / public agencies or departments, as well as the rates they offer/pay is "absolutely fine" in the context of this investigation. Consequently, there was no alteration to testimonies that included government departments as well as the reported rates paid to interpreters.

No Content Alteration Statement

Dr Cannard did not edit, remove, add or alter the contents of the received testimonies in any way, shape or form, with the sole exception of redacting private company identifiers (director and employee names, company names, logos, email addresses, etc.). This was explicitly highlighted when applicable. All "redacted" testimonies were sent back to the corresponding participant to seek consent on the redacted version. Only after receiving their approval was the final anonymised version sent to MBIE and, later, to Dr Kyritsis.

Participants

The study recorded the experiences of practitioners regarding fair pay and working conditions within the translation and interpreting (T&I) industry in Aotearoa New Zealand. A total of **44 independent testimonies (“voices”)** were collected between 2023 and 2025. Some of the email and payslip evidence they submitted goes even further back in time, including the pandemic period.

Participants were recruited through T&I professional networks, such as NZSTI’s mailing list. Participation was **voluntary, confidential, and anonymous**, and followed **informed consent**. To ensure privacy, the data collection process allowed participants to opt out of providing specific identifying details or to explicitly state their wish to remain anonymous. A small set of 8 participants chose to sign their letters using their names, while everyone else chose to remain anonymous.

While specific demographic tables cannot be provided in order to protect the participants’ identities, here is a high-level summary of key demographics:

- The corpus of testimonies covered interpreters working in the following languages: Amharic, Arabic, Assyrian, Cantonese, Czech, Fijian, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Malay, Mandarin, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, Urdu.
- Participants’ interpreting working experience ranged from 1 to 30 years of professional practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Participants mentioned membership to the following organisations: NZSTI, AUSIT, International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), Calliope Interpreters, Japan Association of Translators (JAT), American Translators Association (ATA).
- Interpreters held a variety of interpreting related qualifications, including BA, MA, PhD, PGDip and certificates among others, as well as language proficiency tests, and NAATI accreditation.
- 40% (18/44) of participants were NAATI-certified interpreters, while 4.5% (2/44) were awaiting their NAATI results.

- 52% (23/44) of participants disclosed and discussed specific pay rates and/or pay conditions, while several participants mentioned that they often decline assignments. However, this data was insufficient to present a thorough analysis in this report. For further information on interpreting rates in New Zealand and declining interpreting assignments, see [NZSTI's Rates Survey Report](#).

Data Analysis

Collected data was analysed using qualitative methods, specifically **inductive thematic analysis**. In this type of analysis, important issues (“themes”) are derived from the data by first finding keywords (“codes”) and then organising codes into coherent themes. This approach is called “inductive” (as opposed to “deductive”), because codes and themes are not set a priori, but are rather driven by the data itself. For example, in the testimony quote *“We are hoping that the restructuring of Te Whatu Ora will lead to a standardisation of the rate for interpreters throughout New Zealand.”*, some potential codes are *“Te Whatu Ora”*, *“standardisation”*, and *“interpreter rates”*, whereas a relevant theme could be *“Interpreter rates in healthcare are not sufficiently regulated”*. Keywords in quotes have been highlighted in bold by the researchers for readability. Obvious grammar and spelling mistakes have also been edited, to ensure consistent coding and elegant presentation of findings.

Word cloud analysis of the corpus of testimonies was conducted in the statistical software R (‘wordcloud’ package). The analysis required cleaning all anonymised data by removing numbers, punctuation, and stop words (e.g. “the”, “that”), and counting the frequencies of content words (e.g. “unfair”). The algorithm then organises the most frequently used words in a cloud, scaling their size based on the frequency. In addition, data was analysed using a **sentiment analysis**, which assesses the positive or negative emotion/sentiment attached to testimonies, based on the sentiment of each individual word that is not neutral (e.g. “who”, “because”). This analysis was also conducted in R using the ‘sentimentr’ package, and then combined with the word cloud analysis.

Section III

INTERPRETER

WORKING

CONDITIONS

Results

The testimonies (“voices”) from 44 interpreters in Aotearoa New Zealand were analysed using various qualitative methods, including thematic analysis, word cloud analysis, and sentiment analysis.

Figure 1 displays a word cloud analysis of the participants’ testimonies, highlighting the most frequently used words and topics. The most discussed interpreting-related topics included their working conditions, time, pay, rates, NAATI, and LSPs.

Figure 2 displays a sentiment analysis and word cloud analysis of the participants’ testimonies, highlighting the most frequently used words with emotional value, colour-coded by positive (blue) and negative (orange) sentiment. Work seems to be the most discussed topic with emotional value, but the sentiment it bears is more complex than binary. While work can contribute to society, help others and has intrinsically positive value, many participants discussed how their work was negatively affected by LSPs and current practices. As such, any results from a sentiment analysis should be viewed with caution. Nonetheless, they are indicative of the most commonly discussed and emotionally charged issues.

Tables 1 and 2 display all public and private entities/agencies mentioned in the testimonies. While it is legal to name governmental/public entities, data on private institutions has been anonymised to protect their identity.

Table 1: Government institutions and public entities mentioned in the testimonies

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A&E (Accident & Emergency) ● ADHB ● Auckland Courts ● CDHB ● Christchurch Justice Precinct ● Christchurch Hospitals ● Clause 2.3 of the Language Assistance Services – Operational Policy for New Zealand Public Sector Agencies and Those They Fund 2024 Guidelines ● CMDHB ● Courts ● Department of Internal Affairs - DIA ● DHBs ● Family Court ● Good employer obligations: the Employment Relations Act 2000, Minimum Wage Act 1983, Wages Protection Act 1983, Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act 1987 and the Holidays Act 2003 ● Government agencies ● Government interpreting agency ● High Court ● Hospitals ● Immigration New Zealand (INZ) ● Language Assistance Services (LAS) ● Language Assistance Services: Operational Policy for New Zealand Public Sector ● Managed Isolation Facilities (MIF/COVID-19) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MBIE’s Operational Policy for LAS 2024, art. 2.3 ● Ministry of Justice (MOJ) ● Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) ● NAATI ● NZ Code of Health and Disability Consumers’ Rights (Right 5) ● NZ Courts ● NZ Customs Service ● NZ Government ● NZ Police ● NZTA ● North Shore Hospital ● Oranga Tamariki ● Refugee and Migrant Services (MBIE) ● Refugee and Migrant Support ● ROI for Government ● Supplier Code of Integrity and Conduct issued by the Procurement Functional Leader ● Te Whatu Ora (Health New Zealand) ● Te Whatu Ora Waitemata ● Te Whatu Ora Waitaha ● The Panel: The Face to Face Interpreting Services Panel ● Translating and Interpreting Service of the Australian Government (TIS) ● Translation Service of the Department of Internal Affairs ● Waitemata District Health Board (WDHB) Interpreting Service
--	---

Table 2: Private institutions, agencies or LSPs mentioned in the testimonies

<ul style="list-style-type: none">● AllC● Australian LSPs● Calliope Interpreters● Dental clinics● ISO (accredited, credentials, quality assurance, quality assured, standards)● LAS provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● LSPs● “LSP agency A/B/C/D/E/F/G/H/I/J/K” [11 anonymised LSPs based in NZ or Australia]● NZSTI● Radiology service
---	---

Note. Tables 1-2 disclose the names (or anonymised entries) appearing in the testimonies and are not indicative of the frequency or the favourable or unfavourable nature of their mention. Data on private institutions has been anonymised to protect their identity.

Thematic analysis of interpreters’ testimonies (“voices”) resulted in five interlinked core themes. A summary of the themes is presented in Table 3, followed by a more detailed description and numerous quotes.

In brief, the interpreting industry in Aotearoa New Zealand faces significant challenges, from limited financial sustainability and lack of professional respect to the erosion of services provided to cultural communities. These issues are often exacerbated by certain Language Service Provider (LSP) practices, as well as governmental accreditation standards and procurement processes. Despite the invaluable services interpreters and translators provide, many feel undervalued, underpaid, and frustrated with the state of the profession. The findings presented here are largely in line with the thematic analysis conducted on qualitative data collected during the NZSTI Rates Survey (2025), corroborating the observed patterns in NZ.

Table 3: Themes emerging from interpreters' testimonies on working conditions in Aotearoa (N=44)

Theme	Keywords (Codes)	Example Quotes
1. Interpreter pay and working conditions are often unfair and unsustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Low rates ● Cancellation policy ● No mileage/travel time/parking ● Low profitability ● No rate increase ● Low rates by agencies ● Exiting the industry ● Declining assignments ● Unfair working conditions ● Financial unsustainability ● Inflation 	<p><i>"[...] after calculating travel time along with travel/parking/petrol costs at the hourly rates offered and which have remained unchanged for many years, the take-home pay is similar to the minimum wage"</i></p>
2. Interpreting is largely unregulated, with limited oversight of LSPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Standardisation ● Unregulated industry ● Government oversight ● LSPs ● Exploitation by LSPs ● Intimidation by LSPs ● Agency monopolies ● Government tenders ● Cancellation policy ● Low rates by agencies ● ISO 	<p><i>"It is hard to believe in the government's grasp of the situation and their support towards the workforce when LSPs such as [LSP agency] are in the list of approved LSPs. [LSP agency] has an infamous reputation in this country as an exploitative agency which prays on interpreters' needs."</i></p>
3. Less skilled interpreters are often given priority over qualified accredited interpreters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NAATI accreditation ● Qualifications ignored ● Professionalisation paradox ● LSPs ● Unqualified interpreters ● LSPs prefer unqualified interpreters ● Exploitation by LSPs ● Financial unsustainability ● Qualifications ● Cost of qualifications 	<p><i>"What is the study and hard work for then, when we are left at mercy of such monopolistic behaviour of big companies who still keep recruiting and employing inexperienced and unqualified interpreters at the time when the experienced ones are working hard towards their NAATI accreditation?"</i></p>
4. Current industry practices often undermine the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quality of interpreting services ● Vulnerable clients ● Health interpreting ● Legal interpreting 	<p><i>"Nurses have asked me to leave the room when they do a procedure, not understanding that we are there to interpret"</i></p>

<p>quality of interpreting services, putting clients at risk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff shortage ● High skill required ● Unqualified interpreters ● Client risk ● Interpreter preparation 	<p><i>during procedures. Hospital staff have said to me ‘I am going to give you all the information about a procedure, for you to then pass on to the patient as I am busy and need to leave.’”</i></p>
<p>5. Interpreting is an essential, high-skill service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Helping people ● Vulnerable clients ● Healthcare interpreting ● Legal interpreting ● Job satisfaction ● High skill required ● Passion for interpreting ● Job satisfaction 	<p><i>“Interpreters have valuable and specialised skills and their work is very important. Many have invested a lot of time and money in obtaining qualifications and credentials.”</i></p>

Note. The table shows the five themes emerging from a thematic analysis of comments provided by 44 testimonies. “Themes” are the key issues emerging from the data, while keywords (“codes”) come up directly or indirectly in the respondents’ comments. Keywords are grouped together in a coherent way to produce meaningful themes.

The following sections explore each theme in more depth and present a multitude of relevant quotes in red boxes. Quotes have been anonymised by removing any identifying features. Some keywords and codes of the thematic analysis have been highlighted in bold by the researchers to improve readability.



Theme 1: Interpreter pay and working conditions are often unfair and unsustainable

The most prevalent theme identified is that current remuneration and working conditions are not only financially unsustainable but are also perceived as fundamentally unfair and disrespectful to the profession. Many respondents reported that pay rates have remained stagnant for years, failing to account for inflation, the specialised nature of the work, or the high level of responsibility involved in high-stakes interpreting. Beyond the financial aspect, practitioners expressed a profound sense of professional devaluation; they feel they are treated unfairly, rather than as skilled experts. District Health Boards (DHBs) and various T&I agencies or LSPs are frequently cited as the primary drivers of these conditions, often demonstrating a lack of regard for the interpreter's time and expertise through practices like last-minute cancellations without compensation or expecting unpaid “on-call” availability.

When practitioners factor in uncompensated overheads—such as travel, parking, and essential preparation time—their net earnings often fall below the national minimum wage. This economic reality, coupled with a perceived lack of professional status from government and agency stakeholders (see Themes 2-3), creates a climate where T&I work is relegated to a “side gig” rather than a viable career. This systemic disrespect forces qualified professionals to seek alternative income or abandon the profession entirely, feeling that their dedication to public service is exploited rather than valued (see also Pym & Macreadie, 2026).

“Due to **inflation** and other factors, all our expenses have increased quite significantly (insurance, **rates**, online subscriptions, professional services, groceries, utilities, etc.) yet interpreter rates almost never seem to increase. Why should we be treated differently to other professionals? Especially after being expected to obtain **NAATI** credentials... Interpreters should expect annual increases just like any other professional.”

“One experience is very positive, an agency I have worked with since last November. I am very content with the **pay rate**, their **cancellation policy** (if any happened), their after hours **pay rate**, and their way of communication. I really cannot say enough how happy and content I am with this agency. But on the contrary, my experience with another agency is very unpleasant, even though it's a GOVT interpreting agency. I was actually shocked with the pay rate.”

“I turn down interpreting assignments due to **low rates** or question **unfair** working conditions to shed more light into our everyday pay inequities and some absurd working demands/terms from LSPs.”

“Then, it was the **cancellation** policy, it was shocking to know that they could cancel a job without pay if they do so within two hours or more of the starting time of the appointment. Two hours is a very short time to accept **cancellation** without pay. It should be at least 24 hours before, if not 48 hours. [...] This is even more frustrating to me than the low pay. Because once I commit to a job, I allow for extra time before the appointment time for any unforeseen road issues, I also rely on public transportation so I am usually an hour early before my appointment to make sure I would be on time and avoid any delays. So, to cancel the job just two hours before its time is very **unfair**.”

“I find that the contract offered by the only company managing the public sector interpreting appalling; it is an insult to us interpreters as professionals. The pay rate is incredibly poor: we are paid a gross amount, by the minute, which makes no provisions for lack of work in case of illness, public holidays, the fluctuation in the volume of calls offered, because of the “on demand” nature of the service offered. We are employed as “contractors” yet the company only pays this appalling gross rate, which is less than what I used to be paid net in 2018. They send us a statement of service instead of us invoicing them. This rate does not reflect the increase in the **cost** of living, nor does it allow for any contractors’ protection, such as superannuation, tax contribution, ACC levies, and mental health wellbeing.”

“Considering the low hourly rates and short assignments, for me, some of the worst conditions are not being paid for travel time, parking, arriving early. [...] I recently agreed to help out at A&E in an emergency. The phone call was early on a Sunday morning. The topic was both demanding and distressing. After an hour of intense interpreting, the clients had to urgently rush off and said they would ring me back regarding payment. I never managed to chase down the nurse, never received a purchase order, and had my invoice declined by the DHB. Of course I am willing to help out in a matter of life or death but so do doctors and nurses, and they get paid for it. [...] I occasionally get asked to interpret at various Auckland Courts, which I am happy to do. However, it’s a three-hour drive from where I live, plus I need to allow time for Auckland traffic during the busiest time of the day. Even for multi-day assignments, my request for accommodation in Auckland always gets declined. Consequently, I cannot do these assignments as the type of work is too demanding to be performed in these conditions.”

“The low pay speaks for itself. What has become increasingly worse however is time spent commuting which is not factored into our hourly rate. For example, I accepted a job at the airport ~ 5 pm and I spent 2.5 hours commuting. I would have made less than minimum wage for this job. In general commute times are longer and finding parking can also be time consuming.”

“Based on the payment models used by most LSPs (whether it be charging per minute for phone interpreting, paying an insufficient minimum rate for on-site bookings, paying more for the first hour but less for subsequent hours, etc.), interpreters end up working more and more for less. Where is the logic in that?”

“Our attempts to improve our pay and working conditions have not been supported by the **government** and they have, in fact, undermined our efforts. For example, when we were in contract negotiations with the MOJ and ADHB, the **government** leaked information about interpreter pay rates to the press. The information that appeared in the press was misleading as they quoted huge amounts paid to interpreters but did not mention that these amounts included hotel and airfare fees.”

“I absolutely refuse to work for NZD 35 per hour, and because of that I have not done any face-to-face interpreting in NZ for a while. I do a great deal of telephone interpreting for an agency in Australia who pays better rates.”

“The industry standard for health interpreting ranges on average from \$100 to \$150 (+GST) an hour for health interpreting commercially, with our colleagues employed in

the same role in the same organisation (Te Whatu Ora Waitematā) receiving \$80 (+GST) per hour and \$140 (+GST) per hour for afterhours. We are contracted at \$50 (+GST) per hour and \$70 (+GST) per hour for afterhours. These rates have not increased in about 10 years. [...] A second challenge we face regularly is that when our work is **cancelled** on the day we are not reimbursed for all the hours we are booked for. We instead receive either a **cancellation** fee of \$25 if the booking is **cancelled** before we arrive at the location, or \$50 if we find out about the **cancellation** once there. For example, if we accept a 4-hour booking for a surgery and arrive at 7am on the day to find it has been **cancelled**, we would only receive a payment of \$50 despite having blocked these hours out. As a contractor who has provided services to a variety of other **government** and non **government** organisations, Te Whatu Ora Waitaha is the only client I know of who does not reimburse for all hours booked when a booking is **cancelled** within 24 hours. Full payment for bookings **cancelled** within 24 hours is also the commercial industry standard, and the policy for interpreters working for Te Whatu Ora Waitematā.”

“Ongoing rate for highly skilled medical interpreting is \$50 per hour. Interpreter has to arrive 10 min prior to an appointment. 1 hour of total driving time + walking due to no parking close by. Parking \$9 for 2 hours. I always have to pay for 2 hours (that’s minimum time) even if I am only booked for 1 hour in case the appointment takes longer. After deducting taxes and parking I end up getting \$30 for 2 hours = \$15 per hour!!!”

“No increase in 23 years (this as the **Government** agrees to pay increases for all other health sectors!). In my view, the rate should be raised to \$70 per hour forthwith.”

“Any interpreter already working for a DHB, for example, knows that after calculating travel time along with travel/parking/petrol **costs** at the hourly rates offered and which have remained unchanged for many years, the take-home pay is similar to the minimum wage [...]. And we are talking about highly skilled work here. And unless you speak a high-demand language like Mandarin, for example, you certainly won't get offered 8 hours of work in one day. So for many interpreters, it is almost impossible to survive off this work alone.”

“To interpret for the hospitals in Christchurch, we are under a contractor contract and we get paid \$50 per hour. If we found out on the day that the appointment is **cancelled**, we get paid only the first hour (even if we were booked for several), that means if we have made arrangements to block this time (babysitting, etc.), we lose

money. To add insult to injury, our pay hasn't been reviewed in 11 years, despite the rising **inflation** rate."

"Those reasons I declined some assignments are due to either having a low hourly rate (between 30 to 35 dollars), only one hour minimum booking without compensation for more than 40 minutes of travel time (CDHB booking), or multiple hours or days booking with a very short notice period for **cancellation** without any compensation. Previously, I have occasionally asked for better conditions before accepting."

"I would like to draw attention to the importance of fee raise for interpreters and a special attention to add a new category for paying the parking fees or at least make a special discount. Almost half of the fees go to parking and fuel."

"I work as a staff interpreter, but the pay rate is lower than median wage even though I have over 10 years experience, I feel I am strongly **underpaid** given I am one of the busiest interpreters at our agency."

"[Declining assignments is] not frequent, but I've signed up with ADHB but haven't started working for them since the rate is so low [...] The recent experience I had with ADHB regarding rates was that because I don't have a degree or certificate in medical interpreting, I've been categorised as level 2, which earns, during normal hours, \$31.83 for the first hour and \$26.53 for the second. Level 1 gets \$1 more than this. There's a level 3 which is even lower. My colleague who speaks 2 languages, says if you are contracted "full time" with them, you'll get \$3k per month. And this is based on - no parking and no holiday pay. I believe some interpreters have raised the issue with ADHB and got the feedback of "it's been reported to higher management team" but then heard nothing. Just to add to this: I also had an induction with ADHB and it took me an hour and guess what – it's NOT paid!!! Also to work for the DHB I had to get a chest Xray that **cost** me \$200. I just felt that the people managing the interpreting service there had a "if you don't want this job, there are so many people who want this" attitude. They say they care about interpreter wellbeing, but do they really?? Or am I just a cheap labour working for a **monopolistic** organisation?"

"I don't even bother wasting my time with NZ agents as the pay is horrible considering what I can get through [overseas] agents. (As I am listed in the NZSTI website, often NZ or AU companies contact me. When I tell them my minimum rates, they all say too high). I would love to work more domestically but unfortunately it seems to me interpreters aren't respected as much as they are in [overseas countries]. I can't

understand why people in NZ are willing to pay good money for a lawyer when they need legal help, pay good money to an accountant when they need tax help, good money to a doctor when they need medical help, yet they are unwilling to pay a decent wage to an interpreter when they need language help. (It's not just a matter of **low rates**. **Cancellation** policies and compensating the interpreter when they are traveling is also important. Every time I say "yes" to one job, I am saying "no" to another opportunity so I should be compensated for that opportunity loss.)"

"[I decline assignments] very often. I am constantly asked to quote for work and when I do, I quote according to my experience and availability at the time, usually below what I believe my work is worth. However, I only rarely get an assignment I have quoted for (unless it is for a private client, which is a different topic). Also most times my travel **costs**/time are not accepted."

"I also asked to be removed from the database of some LSPs due to their condescending attitude towards interpreters, ridiculously **low rates** and/or **unfair** terms & conditions."

"I must admit, the payrate [at WDHB] is abysmal. [...] I am an interpreter living on the Shore and I have a job at 09:30 AM at Waitakere hospital. Obviously, I will need to be there at least 15 minutes before the appointment, so I have to be there by 09:15 AM. Given the traffic, I will need to leave home by 08:30 AM. I meet the patient at 09:15 but in most instances there is delay in the patient being seen (doctors dealing with backlog) so eventually we see the doctor around 10AM. Eventually, I would be leaving the hospital around 11 am. So, a 1-hour appointment turns into a 2.5-hour commitment, but I would be paid for the 1 hour which is around \$37, hence my hourly rate becomes \$14.80! Way below the minimum wage."

"Mileage and parking should be covered when working for the health board. MOJ and agencies pay for it, which is **fair**."

"I would like to share my own experiences of having to decline interpreting job requests due to poor pay conditions. In the past I was approached by one service provider on several occasions. They found my contact details through the NZSTI website and the rate they initially offered was 35 dollars per hour. However, when they contacted me for jobs they would negotiate the rate on the phone, for instance, once I was offered \$20 per hour to interpret for a client in a WEEKEND and the reason was because they believed the assignment would not require any technical terminologies. On another occasion I was requested to drive to a nearby city for a

two-hour court hearing at the rate of \$35 per hour but they would not cover the 5-6 hour driving time in any way and the mileage rate they offered was substantially lower than the MOJ official rate. Due to this type of unpleasant dealings and the **unfair** remuneration I have since declined all job requests from this service provider.”

“I don’t turn down jobs due to low pays as I have worked with the Christchurch Hospital one day only every week in the past two years. Yet, the pay they make is very low (\$50/hr, excl. tax, parking, petrol)”

“[I decline assignments] approximately once a month. I stopped working with some agencies due to **unfair** pay and terms. I do not accept assignments from [LSP agencies]. Apart from an appallingly low rate, which has not changed for the last 20 years in most places, other critical issues are **cancellation** terms, travel **cost** (timewise with traffic delays in Auckland), and lack of information to prepare for assignment.”

“There is another matter of late **cancellation** policies of most of the service providers: They have 4 hour late **cancellation** policy which means when we commit to them and if the assignment gets **cancelled** less than 24 hours we do not get paid and also we lose any other assignments which we decline to accept their jobs. If I quote or say the hourly rate you are offering is too low could you please increase it little bit I never hear from them. As Interpreters we are constantly working towards our professional development and post covid with riding **cost** of living it has become extremely difficult to **sustain** ourselves. Sometimes the pay rates we get, including reimbursements, are not worth taking the jobs.”

“The **cost** of living here in Auckland is very high. My pay rate is still the same for the last 10 years.”

“It takes an hour to get to the hospital, just one way into Tauranga because of traffic. Parking is always an issue, too. Also, as a professional interpreter, I like to get there half an hour earlier to find the responsible person in charge, get some information to read and get familiar with the patient’s details. There must be more than \$50 NZ dollars to cover petrol, travel time, taxes, ACC levies and the nearly three-hour trip to work for one.”

“In my case, I was very enthusiastic when I got hired by [LSP agency] to interpret in Court for the MOJ for the first time, in 2019, under these conditions: Payment is \$35 per hour of interpreting (GST included). You can also be reimbursed for mileage at 50 cents per km if you travel more than 10km in one direction within Auckland. You can also be reimbursed for parking, but you must keep your receipt and email it to us. At

the end of the day, my takeaway home pay was: 6 hours (there was a 1 hour lunch break which is not included) at a rate of \$35 per hour of interpreting GST included. TOTAL: \$210 (GST included). On top of paying approx. 20% tax as an independent contractor/freelancer, my takeaway home pay for the whole day was probably around \$168, not including the preparation necessary to go to Court and prepare for the case in advance. At the time, due to lack of information and transparency, I thought that this was a good, normal pay for interpreters in New Zealand. It took me many years to understand why I couldn't make ends meet and why I had to seek numerous other part-time jobs to make ends meet, despite accepting (at the time) every single interpreting and translation proposal I was offered, in the hopes that this would show how professional, motivated and dedicated I was as a new interpreter in the industry in New Zealand."

"Since returning to New Zealand after working [overseas] as a translator and interpreter, and studying translation and conference interpreting in Australia, I have found the **low rates** offered to translators in the public sector disappointing and unreasonable. This is why I have focused on working with direct clients in the private sector. I was offered a position as an interpreter for the Auckland District Health board, and when I said we would need to discuss the remuneration and expense compensation first, they laughed nervously and said, "Well, it might seem a bit low, but..." I was offered \$31.83/hour for the first hour, then \$26.53/hour but only for each ¼ hour (no full hour fee). Interpreters would not be given a parking space nor parking expense compensation. There was no compensation for travel time, or time spent looking for parking, which they said was often difficult to find. They offered a call out fee that was \$21.74 for travel, regardless of how far I had to travel. It would not cover my petrol, let alone parking and time. If an assignment was **cancelled** within 2 hours of the booking, I would receive the full fee. But nothing if **cancelled** earlier. I told them I would be working for less than minimum wage and could not accept it because the rate was too low considering the travel time and expenses I would incur."

"I have been contacted by agencies in NZ and Australia asking me to interpret at the NZ courts for \$25-30/hour. I have refused each offer because the amount of preparation and the stressful nature of this job requires a **trained** professional who should be **fairly** paid. I believe I should be able to set my own rates, as all other professionals do."

"Apart from a small number of (low-paid) full-time interpreter positions for high-demand languages (ie. in the health sector), almost all interpreters work as contractors or

occasionally casual workers, depending on the type of employer. They do not have a guaranteed stream of work, and as a result must supplement their income doing other things. Some are fortunate enough to work as translators too, but others are forced to leave the profession and seek full-time employment, because even with a decent amount of work being available (depending on the language), it is still not a viable or stable source of income. And once interpreters begin working full-time, they are no longer available to accept interpreting assignments (apart from weekends or during the night, when there is much less work available). This also means that they are less likely to maintain their language proficiency and interpreting skills.”

“We are respectfully requesting that: 1. Our hourly rate be benchmarked against nationally agreed MBIE rates for health interpreting, including after hour rates. 2. Our contracts are amended to reflect industry best practise, providing full payment of booked hours when a **cancellation** is made within 24 hours. We would appreciate the opportunity for a few interpreter representatives to sit down and talk with you about these issues. We are aware that the **healthcare** system is under significant pressure however, this is a matter that we simply cannot afford to wait on as more and more of us seek better paid work elsewhere to meet the rising **cost** of living.”

“Rates should also increase each year to keep up with **inflation**, just like in any other profession. While the Ministry of Justice finally increased its hourly rate to \$65.00 this year (previously \$35.00/hour for many years), it is still well below the hourly rate offered to NZ Sign Language and Te Reo Māori interpreters (see screenshot below). There is a significant discrepancy between \$65/hour and \$100-120/hour, and while I am sure the higher rate is well-deserved, and while the recent increase to \$65/hour for other languages will still be welcome for those who are lucky enough to work directly for the Ministry of Justice, perhaps this difference could be taken as an indication of where we should be headed, so that interpreters of languages other than NZ Sign Language and Te Reo Māori can also be properly recognised for their work.”

“Minimum fees are very important. It’s the same for any profession (a bit like having a callout fee for a plumber or an electrician). Otherwise it is not worth leaving the house. Not to mention the fact that interpreters often have to prepare/study before assignments, for which we are not paid any extra. The generally-accepted industry standard for on-site jobs has always been a minimum of three hours’ pay. Until now, this standard has been largely maintained by some **government** departments and LSPs (despite the hourly rate not increasing in many years), however not in all cases, and not by all privately-run LSPs. Very few LSPs seem to be paying a three-hour

minimum. Some are only paying 1 hour or 90 minutes. MBIE has historically been better at guaranteeing minimum fees of at least three hours but only in some cases. While some of its branches have paid a 3-hour minimum, and in specific cases an extra hour for travel/parking, others have only booked and paid for one hour [...] I feel the one-hour minimum payment commonly applied in the industry really needs to be abolished, even if the first hour is paid at a higher rate. Otherwise it is not viable to leave the house/office for an interpreting assignment that only lasts one hour paid at \$40.00 (before tax). Minimum booking fees for on-site jobs should ideally be three hours, depending on the hourly rate paid. [...] While interpreters are not required to travel for phone interpreting calls, an appropriate minimum fee should still always apply, as these assignments are no less important. The interpreter's time, skill and concentration are equally being applied. In fact, telephone interpreting presents many added challenges due to not being able to see the speaker, or even hear them properly at times. Interpreters are also less likely to have a briefing or receive any context about the topic or situation. This should all be reflected in the interpreter's rates and particularly with some sort of adequate minimum fee. Under a current telephone interpreting provider's terms, for a call lasting only 2 minutes during business hours, an interpreter would only be paid \$2.20 given there is no minimum fee for short calls of up to 15 minutes. Is it really worth picking up the phone for this small amount of money? It's almost like paying to work because one's time would be better spent doing other things. [...] Payment for the time booked should also be a basic requirement (even if the assignment finishes earlier), as interpreters have already made themselves unavailable for other work during that time."

"Due to **inflation** and other factors, all our expenses have increased quite significantly (insurance, rates, online subscriptions, professional services, groceries, utilities, etc.) yet interpreter rates almost never seem to increase. Why should we be treated differently to other professionals? Especially after being expected to obtain NAATI credentials... Interpreters should expect annual increases just like any other professional."

"As living **costs** continue to rise, our rates in most interpreting settings have not changed in well over a decade. Some of them have even been lowered. You would be appalled to know what health interpreters earn per hour for highly specialised work, involving constant **ethical** challenges, client education, 24/7 availability as well as emotional pressure at times). Some DHBs require us to pay our own parking as well. Not to mention the hourly rate for legal interpreters working in a high-pressure court environment which carries huge **responsibility** in terms of accuracy, often open to

scrutiny. Sometimes it is not even worth leaving the house for the rates offered. This is unacceptable given that we are contractors working in specialised fields and when you consider that the quality and accuracy of our work could severely impact the future of the migrant using our services. Will there be any accountability by the suppliers that win the **government** tender for face-to-face interpreting services in terms of maintaining certain working conditions for their interpreters, such as **fair** pay rates and prioritising the use of NZ-based practitioners? Does the LAS working group, MBIE or otherwise plan to undertake ongoing monitoring of company practices once the tender has been won by companies or are they free to do as they wish once they win the tender? These days, companies in the translation/interpreting industry are constantly trying to find ways of lowering **costs**, sometimes due to market pressure. Sadly, interpreters never come out on top. But surely government-funded work should be paid **fairly**... [LSP agency] for example, the company providing telephone interpreting services, is about to issue new payment terms for its NZ-based interpreters. While I personally believe their proposed separation of payment levels based on the interpreter's experience/ **qualifications**/ professional affiliation is **fair** and a positive step in terms of ensuring high standards of interpreting, as well as switching to weekly payments instead of every 60 days (although only coming into effect later in the year), some of the other terms are not favourable for interpreters (such as removing a minimum fee for shorter calls, and the lowering of fees in general). Telephone interpreting is very challenging, often in specialised settings and should be remunerated **fairly**.”



Theme 2: Interpreting is largely unregulated, with limited oversight of LSPs

The second most commonly mentioned theme pertains to Language Service Provider (LSP) practices and their impact on the T&I industry. A central issue is the complete lack of industry regulation and standardised rates across the sector, which allows for extreme volatility in practitioner income. Because rates are unilaterally set by agencies rather than through negotiation or industry-wide benchmarks, practitioners are often forced to accept “take it or leave it” offers that do not reflect their level of expertise. While the implementation of government-appointed LSP panels was allegedly intended to raise wages by allowing practitioners to work for the LSP offering the best working conditions, these mechanisms have failed to do so. Instead, the industry has seen LSP oligopoly—and in some regions, a total monopoly—where a few dominant players control the majority of government and private contracts. Despite the existence of panels offering interpreters more choice, market concentration remains high as LSPs have partitioned the country, operating in distinct regions or settings. Such concentration allows certain LSPs to control the narrative and suppress wages, as professionals have few alternative avenues for work.

Participants also reported that these market pressures lead to unethical recruitment practices, specifically the hiring of underqualified or uncertified T&I staff to fulfill contracts at a lower cost. This not only undermines the value of professional accreditation but also serves as a tool for intimidation; some practitioners reported feeling that if they requested fair pay, they would be easily replaced by less qualified individuals.

Furthermore, a pervasive lack of respect characterises some LSP–practitioner interactions, with respondents citing “inflammatory” communication and a general disregard for their professional status.

“We are hoping that the restructuring of Te Whatu Ora will lead to a standardisation of the rate for interpreters throughout New Zealand.”

*“For interpreters working remotely (i.e., who do not live in a city and cannot offer face-to-face interpreting in the private sector) there doesn’t seem to be an alternative, thanks to MBIE giving the contract to one company which detains the **monopoly** of the interpreting work.”*

*“I have turned down abusive requests from agents. I’ve highlighted the line that I feel is offensive, and inappropriate. When a flawed system doubles up with bullying behaviour, I said no. But I am unsure if others are **empowered** enough to stand up to such bullying behaviour, too. The email (evidence I attached to my testimony) reads condescending, with the last sentence highlighting the exact system failure: the agents hold all the **powers**, in particular economic **power** over the interpreters.*

[excerpt from attached email] I do remember the days when you first worked for us for \$35.00 per hour when we first introduced you to court work and you said how much you appreciated being offered the work.”

*“In the past 12 months I declined all interpreting assignments from a well-known agency as they only want to pay NZD 35 per hour. The problem in Canterbury is that there is a **monopoly** of this agency. And as such, they control the narrative, making it impossible for professionals that do not accept lower rates to find work elsewhere.”*

“However, despite the working condition and the pay, I have declined interpreting assignments due to concerning behaviour of the agents. Lack of professionalism, and bullying behaviour are two main reasons that I have declined assignments.”

*“I understand that the government’s priority and focus at this stage is to improve interpreting services and standards in New Zealand, however the written translation side of things was also being considered at one point during the early stages of the LAS project. This since seems to have been abandoned though, as it was made clear during the NZSTI conference [...] that changes to translation standards are currently not being considered. I would like to express my concern at this, because certified translations are an important part of immigration and other **government** department settings and processes involving migrants, especially when it comes to **fairness** and*

honesty. There is currently very little **regulation** in the translation industry. NZTA is the only **government** department that has a fair and consistent approach to translation requirements in the industry (with a tender opened up to **qualified** translators every few years for driver licence translations - it's not bullet-proof, but it's the best process out there and the requirements for service users are also made very clear). For most other **government** departments, the requirements are loose, inconsistent, and allow for almost anybody to carry out this important work. There is often no mention of NZSTI membership, which should surely be a benchmark for quality of services and I believe it would be the easiest, most logical step and safest minimum requirement for certified translations, since members need to have certain **qualifications** in order to gain full membership and use a certification stamp. Affiliate membership could also be considered for rarer languages.”

“As an interpreter, the only interactions that I have, and can have with the interpreting system is the agent. This is unfortunate, and should be addressed so we can adjust the system to be open, **fair**, and **sustainable**. The agents are profit driven businesses. They hold the disproportional **power** in the current New Zealand interpreting system. Such structure presents a number of challenges and in particular, pushes the interpreters into a disadvantaged position. Economically, interpreters rely on the agents to provide work. There is no other way where competent interpreters can be directly contracted to the **government** agencies. Such economic dependency disincentivises interpreters to report any employment issues without **risking** their income sources. Contractually, most interpreters work on casual contracts, for multiple agents. Few hours here, few hours there. The main benefactor from a pool of casual workers is the labour contractor, in this case, the agent. They rely on the interpreters to deliver the work, profits from it. And they hold such **power** OVER the interpreters. This is the New Zealand interpreting system as it stands. It is far from being **fair** to the workers, and healthy and functional in the long run. The onerous of the work is on the interpreters, pre, during and after any work assignment. The agents are exempt from common **responsibilities** and duties bound by any permanent, or fixed term contracts. There is no clear pathway for the interpreter to raise any work-related issues that are safe, and confidential. The rights of the workers are not protected.”

“In their latest emails to me, [LSP agency] kept reminding us how long they'd been working with us, when they never actually gave us any other interpreting jobs, rather took them away from us (probably by securing preferential access at some courts) and gave them to their new **unqualified** recruits. The last dealing with them was a really unpleasant experience because they tried to force me to take an Oranga Tamariki job

under very unfavourable conditions – 2-hour job, \$35/hour, \$0.50/km mileage (when IRS mileage rate was \$0.83/km), **cancellation** up to 1 hour before start and only 1 hour guaranteed. When I refused to work under such conditions, they started reminding me that I had accepted the job over the phone (obviously without knowing the conditions and fine print).”

“I had interpreted directly for Oranga Tamariki before, they had me in their database and didn’t have a problem reaching out to me in previous cases. But, Oranga Tamariki didn’t reach out to anyone other than [LSP agency] and the important meeting was subsequently **cancelled**. I later interpreted for the person who needed the interpreter at Oranga Tamariki and she said that she had been told that the meeting couldn’t go ahead because there were no interpreters available. This proves that [LSP agency] does enjoy preferential treatment by **government** agencies, and we consider this as **unfair** and unacceptable **monopolistic** behaviour. We have now **cancelled** our registration with [LSP agency] because what they do is just not right. And the fact that **government** agencies play their game is even more worrying.”

“... and apart from inferior pay conditions, I would also like to question [LSP agency]’s attachment to a **government** department. From what I’ve heard from my clients, when they apply e.g. for apostille, DIA automatically offers them translation by [LSP agency] as a “seamless and economic way” of getting their documents ready for use overseas, at least that’s how my clients described the approach. [LSP agency] used to charge reasonable fees for their translations but have since almost doubled them and are currently the most expensive agency I know of in New Zealand, fees starting at whooping \$95 for even such trivial service as selective translation of birth/marriage/death certificate, apostille or driver’s licence. At the same time, they are not willing to share more of the hugely increased profit with the people who actually do the work for them – the translators. I have done translations for them for over 20 years and they pay the same \$20 per such translation as they did back then, no adjustment to **inflation**, no increase with the profit they enjoy. I brought up this topic with them a few times and they said they needed the huge margin for “administrative **costs**, revision **costs**, finalisation **costs** and other project expenses”, which is a ridiculous argument when most other agencies a) charge less and b) share more with their translators. They also told me that if I didn’t like it: “we understand if you have decided to no longer continue working for us”. And then they stopped sending me further jobs. [...] If they have evolved from a **government** service to a commercial entity operating at huge margin, they should be no different to any other company in New Zealand, should not be attached to a **government** body, should not use the

government websites to preferentially promote their overpriced services, should not use preferential treatment by a **government** body and should not be allowed use **government** premises for their commercial activities. The **government** is paid from our taxes and a commercial entity should not benefit from that, I believe it's illegal to do that in New Zealand. Ideally, [LSP agency] should be separated from the **government** and operate at their own expense as an independent agency, same as everyone else, and the **government** should stop promoting them on their websites, our taxes are not meant for that. The **government** should refer to NAATI and NZSTI websites for translation services.”

“Parking is an issue everywhere so some compensation is needed and yet no one pays interpreters parking. MB and MoJ used to but after the LAS project and interpreting agencies taking over all bookings this has been stopped. [...] The LAS project has backfired because it has given the **power** to interpreting agencies who are now able to enforce any rate they want and any **cancellation** policy they want and interpreters have no choice but to accept or lose work.”

“In terms of remote interpreting, I can ascertain that I have not worked with current tender holders [LSP agency] nor previous infamous [LSP agency]. When the changes were implemented, I decided to take a stance against the deterioration of working conditions offered by both LSPs. When [LSP agency] services were being rolled out, I got a phone call from the agency's project managers encouraging me to join their company. I told them that I would not be signing their contract if they were not prepared to offer a minimum fee for over-the-phone interpreting services, such as the one previously offered by [LSP agency]. When I mentioned the minimum fee, [LSP agency] representatives replied that “the industry” was moving away from minimum fees in Australia, which is one of the **risks** of importing foreign private companies to replace local, governmental alternatives. This is particularly dangerous when the **government** does not seem to be imposing any minimum standards and, if it is, the interpreter workforce has not been properly advised of what they are.”

“It is hard to believe in the government's grasp of the situation and their support towards the workforce when LSPs such as [LSP agency] are in the list of approved LSPs. [LSP agency] has an infamous reputation in this country as an **exploitative** agency which prays on interpreters' needs. [LSP agency director] has made extremely condescending and **disrespectful** comments towards me via text and email whenever I have demanded higher rates when offered a job through their agency. This has resulted in me never working for [LSP agency], of course, but I wanted to highlight that

I believe that having [LSP agency] in the list of providers is detrimental to the cause. Please see the [attached] email thread where [LSP agency] admits that “the maximum rate we apply to **qualified** interpreters for this is \$35 per hour”. So \$35 is what they consider a **qualified** interpreter’s work to be worth when representing CALD people during stressful Covid times, particularly in isolation facilities. When I replied with information about my own rates, [LSP agency] discloses that they charge the Ministry of Justice \$80. [LSP agency] is known to hire **untrained** and **trained** interpreters to go to Court assignments for \$35/hour. Therefore, if [LSP agency] charges the MoJ \$80, pays interpreters \$35 and make a profit of \$45. The LSP’s profit is higher than my pay when I am the one preparing and doing the high-stake job at the Court and they are acting solely as an intermediary. This is where the government’s (everyone’s) money is going!”

“The rate reductions in the new contract have been brought to the attention of MBIE months ago (personal communication). They claimed to want to ensure better working conditions for interpreters, yet they’ve done nothing to improve this situation. [...] It appears that MBIE has established no guidelines for minimum rates applicable and LSPs offer a wide variety of working conditions, some of which will be better than the current offers and some of which will be a reduction in earnings for practitioners.”

“Therefore, as per [LSP agency]’s terms, it means that if the hearing does not go ahead, I will be informed of it within less than 24 hours (but not on the day) of the start time and will lose 3 full days of paid work with ZERO compensation. Minutes after I refused this booking pointing to their **unfair** terms, they simply offered this job to another colleague. It is hard to contemplate how the LSP project could have led to the **government** accepting agencies to the likes of [LSP agency]. I hope it can be looked into.”

“Interpreting and translation is very competitive which makes it very difficult for new interpreters and students to enter the profession. When you start seeking work after graduating from university, you don’t know who to contact, how to find clients and how to connect with colleagues in the same industry. Most of us are freelancers or contractors, so we do not go to an “office” where we can meet with other colleagues and discuss and learn about the industry – at least, not in the beginning. This makes it very easy for new interpreters to accept work with some **unethical** LSPs who do not hesitate to **exploit** them and try to **underpay** them and make profit through them. As a new interpreter, you are often “simply happy to be offered any type of work”, no matter the **unfair** conditions, just to get your foot through the door. The lack of transparency,

regulation and publicly set minimum standards keeps you blind as a new professional, since you can't tell what is normal or wrong, or simply put, migrant **exploitation**. Of course, not all LSP offer **unfair** working conditions, some are very **ethical** and caring towards the interpreters that they hire. However, the LSPs that do **exploit** the loose system to **underpay** interpreters or recruit non-professional bilinguals are major companies in New Zealand, often approved by the **Government** itself and therefore hold a lot of **power** over the interpreting industry.”

“[LSP agency] is a big company with a lot of **power** in our industry in New Zealand, yet they are constantly conducting such **unethical** practices even in the light of NAATI [certification] being implemented within the next year. My fear is that these practices will continue despite the implementation of NAATI, unless the industry becomes **regulated** and such companies are audited by the Government.”

“As I am sure you are already aware, the interpreting sector in New Zealand for public-sector work has largely remained fragmented and **unregulated** over several decades. As a result of this lack of **regulation**, interpreters have continued to endure substandard conditions for many years. These conditions have not improved, and in some cases they have even worsened, leaving interpreters in a **vulnerable** position. Sadly, in practice there is no requirement for LSPs to onboard **qualified** or experienced interpreters, which enables some of them to further justify paying **low rates** to their interpreters (contractors) along with other substandard working conditions. While there are some LSPs who do behave professionally and **ethically**, others have questionable practices and this is widely known. The profit margins of those LSPs who do behave professionally still mean that the take-home pay for interpreters is minimal. While some **government** departments have applied stricter criteria to their process of onboarding interpreters over the years, even their rates paid to interpreters who are contracted directly (as opposed to being contracted via to an LSP acting as an intermediary) have not improved in many years, with the exception of the Ministry of Justice, which has recently revised its payment terms for interpreters. [...] Interpreters also feel that MBIE should be doing a lot more to safeguard competent and **qualified** interpreters who have worked hard to obtain their credentials and acquire experience over the years, as well as demand that LSPs operate **ethically**, transparently and with integrity, especially given they are holding such important **government** contracts.”

“Please also note that some LSPs are offering a higher hourly rate for the first hour only, with subsequent hours being calculated at a lower rate, or subsequent time being calculated in 15-minute increments if jobs continue beyond the booked time

(rather than paying for full subsequent hours). This can be deceiving as it gives the illusion that they are paying a decent hourly rate, yet once this is calculated and divided by the hours worked, the hourly rate is in fact much lower. Whereas MBIE has always paid for the next full hour rather than in small increments, which is **fair** as it makes the job slightly more worthwhile.”

“Interpreters often accept bookings weeks or months in advance and then plan their lives around them, so it is really a lack of consideration to not be paying adequate **cancellation** fees given the unstable nature of our work. The Ministry of Justice has always had a suitable graduated **cancellation** policy based on the amount of notice given, and perhaps this could be used as a reference. It is also not clear to interpreters whether some LSPs still receive funds from the **government** even if assignments are **cancelled**, when interpreters do not receive anything. Could there be more transparency in relation to this matter? [...] MBIE’s own **cancellation** policy is also considered to be **fairer** than that of some of the LSPs, however there is still room for improvement because an interpreter might go from expecting a full day’s work to suddenly earning half of that or nothing at all, depending on when the job was **cancelled**.”

“Another complaint I have about the procurement of interpreting services in relation to health interpreting services is that the DHBs have often been contacted by the Police and the New Zealand Customs Service to provide interpreters. I think this is a practice that needs to stop. Firstly, I personally refuse to attend a police/legal assignment and be paid the **low rates** that the DHBs offer, but more importantly, specialised legal settings require different training to health interpreting. Not all health interpreters should be doing legal interpreting. I think MBIE really needs to look more carefully at which sectors are assigned to which LSPs. Similarly, companies such as those offering telephone interpreting do not necessarily provide interpreters with **healthcare** interpreting expertise over the phone for health interpreting jobs, because calls are assigned immediately to whichever interpreter is available.”

“I know many colleagues who have chosen not to work with certain LSPs out of principle and because they feel they deserve better, however sadly there are also a lot of newer interpreters who feel they don’t have a voice, who feel this is the only way to gain experience, or who simply do not understand their worth. Some are even paid less than others working for the same LSP, despite working with languages of limited diffusion, where in theory they should be in high demand and therefore highly valued! I have also heard of interpreters who have still not been paid by a telephone

interpreting provider following liquidation. They have either given up fighting or do not feel confident enough to voice their concerns about working conditions in any way. There needs to be more awareness in the industry and more transparency so that all practitioners know their worth and are aware of what **fair** pay should look like. There is certainly a lot of dissatisfaction surrounding working conditions, and this in turn affects the quality of services for both users and migrants.”

“LSPs are privileged to be entrusted with important **government** service contracts in Aotearoa New Zealand, yet the conditions offered to interpreters remain, in many cases, substandard. I am referring to things like a lack of adequate minimum payment per booking (which should ideally be three hours - or even two hours - for on-site bookings, because a one hour minimum or even 90 minutes is not enough); **unfair cancellation** policies that only compensate interpreters for extremely last-minute **cancellations**, which are far less common than **cancellations** that occur more than a day before the booked date; lack of prompt responses to email queries (yet interpreters are expected to confirm booking requests as soon as possible!); the use of innovative online LSP platforms where multiple interpreters receive the same booking request and must “grab” it straight away if they have any chance of getting it, etc. I would also like to point out that detailed information is often not provided about the booking on some of these online platforms, and the only way to access said information is to accept the job first, because by the time you log in to the system to read about the job, it has already been taken by another interpreter. This means we must accept the job without knowing what it is about, which in turn compromises our own **ethics** (i.e. conflict of interest, or the principle of not accepting jobs we are not **qualified** or experienced to do, etc.), and it could even be a **breach** of health and safety legislation by LSPs (note that during recent discussions at the AUSIT conference in Australia, it was pointed out that Work Health and Safety legislation in some States in Australia were actually being **breached** by LSPs for not offering adequate briefing to workers). The Ministry of Justice is one of the only agencies offering adequate pay to interpreters to date. Personally, I think the hourly rates are still low for the type of work we do, yet it is a big improvement compared to recent years. So the question is, if the Ministry of Justice can pay a **fair** rate of \$65/hour with a minimum of 3 hours + other components such as travel time of \$50 + GST/hour after a certain amount of kilometres, and mileage at the IRD rate after a certain amount of kilometres, why can't interpreters be earning this from whichever LSP they work for? For us, there is no difference between receiving the booking directly from Ministry of Justice and a private LSP, except for being able to access certain jobs that those LSPs hold exclusive contracts for. There is barely any special care or attention provided compared to

working directly for **government** departments. So why should we earn less to do the same job? Yes, LSPs might provide professional development webinars and have fancy online platforms, but we can access professional development of our own accord, and if you are only offered minimal bookings from an LSP, re-learning how to use their platform and remembering your log-in each time, i.e. every few months to accept the odd job, is hardly best use of one's time. And while I do understand that companies have overheads to cover and can handle complex bookings that involve multiple languages, the argument that they cannot afford to pay interpreters what we are asking for, is in my opinion flawed. In fact, I do know of one LSP that pays exactly what the Ministry of Justice pays interpreters directly, so I know it is possible. What a pity this LSP never ran for the **government** tenders."

"I also read [LSP agency director]'s emails to MBIE, which were released under the Official Information Act 1982 and was shocked how vehemently he lobbied against a petition for **fair** interpreter pay conditions. He actually harassed the petition author to such extent that she had to hire a lawyer to protect herself. One of [LSP agency director]'s repeated questions stood out even more – he kept asking MBIE if LSPs would be able to use **unqualified** interpreters after 01 Jul 24 when no NAATI accredited interpreters are available. It seems to me that he was preparing ground for his agency to continue with their practice even after the deadline with those **government** bodies where they enjoy **monopoly**, i.e. if [LSP agency] cannot provide a NAATI accredited interpreter, they'll be able to provide one of their **unqualified** interpreters, rather than allowing the client to reach to other LSPs or to NZSTI or NAATI databases. [...] In total, we consider [LSP agency]'s practices as void of ISO Quality Assurance, self-serving, harming the interpreter community's reputation, going against their interpreters' best interests, coercive, **monopolistic**, **unethical** and generally unacceptable for a LSP that has been approved by MBIE. We'd like MBIE to investigate this matter, because agency with such poor quality history that pushes its ISO credentials in front of it is overtaking the interpreting industry in this country at the same time when the **government** has made formal interpreting education and NAATI accreditation mandatory for all interpreters in the public sector."

"I realise that these issues are not necessarily MBIE's **responsibility** but I suppose the point I am really trying to make is this: How tight is MBIE's screening process really when it comes to selecting LSPs for public sector interpreting contracts? [...] Yet what deeply concerns me is that while some of these companies may look great on paper, I don't believe they are actually applying best practices in real life."

*“We spoke to those interpreters many years ago and they were not willing to take it further even then, for them, it was already a buried unpleasant past. One of them actually suffered a panic attack during the interpreting and had to be replaced by [interpreter name]. The only one with whom I spoke more recently (about 2 years ago), was the one who was never paid by [LSP agency] for her last job from which she had to be relieved because [LSP agency] gave her absolutely no heads-up (and it was the big medialised high court case!) and when I asked if she wanted to pursue it with our assistance, she said no, because she had a new job and didn’t want to reopen the matter or jeopardise her new job and put her family under stress if [LSP agency] went after her with their lawyers for **breaching** secrecy. I don’t think we’ll be able to convince them to change their mind now when it’s even further away from the unpleasant events, they were too scared to go against such a big company.”*



Theme 3: Less skilled interpreters are often given priority over qualified accredited interpreters

A significant theme in the data is the “professionalisation paradox”, where rising accreditation standards—specifically the policy for NAATI certification—actually intensify the strain on practitioners rather than relieving it. While the government promotes certification as a mark of quality, participants noted that their specialised qualifications are frequently ignored by LSPs during the booking and remuneration process. This disconnect is fueled by an unregulated industry that demands high-level, costly credentials from interpreters while failing to provide any legal or structural protections in return. The result is a profound sense of professional disrespect; practitioners are expected to bear the full financial and temporal burden of maintaining international standards, yet they continue to operate in a market that treats their expertise as a low-skill commodity. Ultimately, this leads to less qualified interpreters being given priority, thereby posing substantial ethical and legal risks for clients (see Theme 4).

“It is currently impossible to make a living working as an interpreter even after years of study and work. Current rates do not reflect travel time, mileage, parking, taxes, insurance, let alone years of experience and continuous professional training”.

“The current job opportunities in this field do not adequately compensate interpreters for their time, preparation, background, and experience. As a result, taking on job assignments is mostly limited to vocational or community service decisions.”

*“Fully **qualified** interpreters should be contracted directly by the **government** agencies, rather than by agencies.”*

*“Our current contracted per hour rates are well below industry standard for an equivalently **trained** and skilled interpreter.”*

“I am also receiving feedback that the NAATI exam is exceedingly difficult, and that few interpreters have passed it.”

“While the opportunity for funding for training and NAATI certification is welcomed, one of our biggest concerns as interpreters is what will be paid once these services change hands.”

*“Those of us who have consistently worked hard to upgrade our certificates are being told to sit NAATI. At a meeting recently MBIE told us that uncertified will remain in the system because they have been working for decades and that they know the skills of interpreting. How on earth can an interpreter call himself or herself that he is a **qualified** interpreter when they do not have the basic skills in interpreting. And yet they have been allowed to work in the industry without a single certificate. Is this **fair** on us interpreters who have done their certificates and proved to the institution that [...] they have passed their exams and **qualify** as true interpreters. I would like to see all uncertified interpreters pushed out of the system and asked to do at least advanced and liaison interpreting certificates. They are getting paid \$50 an hour and getting away with murder. MBIE must put an end to this double standard. We are not a third world nation so behave like a first world nation.”*

“Despite holding a degree in interpreting and translation, in two languages versus English, and holding the NAATI certification, which is now a pre-requisite to be able to work as interpreter both face-to-face and over the telephone and videos, we, the interpreters, are increasingly worse off and there doesn't seem to be an alternative way to get more work in the public sector.”

“I trust the importance and seriousness of our profession will start to be recognised by the various users and beneficiaries of our work, and that a reasonable increase in remuneration (one not only in tune with the skills required by this profession but also,

of course, to the **cost** of living in this country) will accompany the requirements for higher **qualifications** for interpreters recently introduced.”

“I replied that since I had just got our NAATI accreditations (for which I had studied and worked hard) and hadn’t notified them yet, I would stick to \$35 because it wouldn’t be **fair** to want more without the notification, but for future jobs I would want higher rate and would definitely not agree to their other conditions and fine print. I also reminded them that as my agency, they should stand behind me in negotiating **fair** conditions with the client, not against me. Their reply was: “We respect your credentials, but you did accept this job on the phone. Then started to renegotiate after the fact.””

“We’d like MBIE to look at this, because agencies with such poor-quality history who push their ISO credentials in front of them are overtaking the interpreting industry in this country at the same time when the **government** has made formal interpreting education and NAATI accreditation mandatory for all interpreters in the public sector.”

“My other concern is the NAATI certification requirement. We as professional interpreters are promoting this and we are supporting it but other interpreters who do not have the **qualifications** and who cannot be bothered to improve their skills are not. I am involved in the training and with NAATI and my concern is the Ministries - the **government** sectors- are they all in? Some high level personnel from MOJ at a meeting with interpreters announced that if not enough interpreters are certified by July 2024 then they will use non certified interpreters!! So what is the message we are sending out and what is the point of the NAATI requirement if not all abide by it? What about the agencies will they have to abide by it and use only NAATI certified interpreters? Not one agency has a payment policy for NAATI certified and Non Certified interpreters going forward , except the Australian ones [...] I asked! So all these are questions that need answers but who do direct them to? That is the problem, there is not one central authority we can talk to, we are having to approach every party/ministry/agency we work with separately and that is just too difficult and time consuming and frankly exhausting to the point where you just leave it!”

“In terms of minimum standards, quality checks and the **responsibility** of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment towards the interpreting workforce, I find that once again the **consequences** of all and any changes implemented in the language provision system are being endured by the workers. Professional interpreters have had to study, upskill, remain up to date with all news and, most importantly, sit for

NAATI certification tests that do not seem to offer any rewards or improvements of their working conditions.”

“For all of these reasons, I am urging the **government** to step up to ensure basic minimum working conditions for interpreters as a part of the LAS Programme. A lack of involvement would only continue to impoverish and **disrespect** a mostly female and migrant dominated workforce.”

“Until 2021, interpreters were paid a flat fee for the first 15 min of \$12.84 (business hours), so an average call of 19 min -as in the last 3 months- would be \$17.6 for interpreters. With the new contract, there is no minimum fee anymore. Additionally, interpreters are paid according to their NAATI status. Therefore, during business hours, a Certified interpreter would make \$19 for the same 19 min call, whereas a provisionally certified interpreter would get \$17.1 (-0.5 compared to 2020), and a provisionally certified interpreter would only get \$16.5 (-1.1). Also, this **ONLY APPLIES** to health and legal settings. All others will now receive a payment of only \$10.5 for a 15 min call, regardless of NAATI accreditation, meaning a loss of \$2.34 or 18%. In the case of after-hours calls, until 2021 interpreters would get \$18.35 for a 15 min call. With the new contract, certified and provisionally certified interpreters get \$22.5 and \$20.25 respectively, for health and legal **ONLY**, whereas in any other setting and all other **qualifications** get only \$18 for the same call. Additionally, calls under 15 minutes would mean a greater loss given the removal of the minimum fee. The difference is also very pronounced for longer calls. While calls of 30 min or longer are rare (only 17% as reported in the latest newsletters), such calls used to represent interpreters at least \$30.69. Now, [LSP agency] will pay a certified interpreter \$30 for a 30 min call during business hours (health and legal), and provisionally certified or other get only \$27 and \$25.5 respectively.”

“I am all for advancing the level of the profession, as we are seeing now with the requirement for the NAATI accreditation, however the level of remuneration needs to step up accordingly.”

“I am reluctant to sit the NAATI CPI and CI exams as I do not wish to field more inquiries from agencies for low-paying interpreting jobs. I have not proceeded with this process yet, preferring to focus on direct client jobs where I can set my own rates. [...] I have been reluctant to take the CPI and CI tests because there are not many NAATI certified interpreters in NZ. I do not want to be inundated with emails from agencies telling me they want me to accept assignments for \$30 or \$40 an hour in the public sector. We are in a recession and a **cost** of living crisis. It costs AUD \$50K plus to get a

Master of Interpreting and Translation Studies and years of study before and after that to reach the level required for NAATI certification. An interpreter for a doctor, nurse, lawyer, or mediator is doing a highly skilled job and should receive comparable compensation for their role in helping the professional doctor, nurse, lawyer or mediator, etc, do their job properly.”

“Many interpreters are concerned that although the LAS project requires them to obtain further interpreting certifications (for some, this is an even bigger commitment as it involves further training or re-training before even being able to sit the NAATI tests), we have not received any guarantee that our working conditions will improve. This has left interpreters feeling helpless and disillusioned about whether their conditions will ever improve, and some interpreters have even chosen not to follow the path of becoming NAATI certified, particularly those near the end of their careers. For some, it is simply not worth it if there is no guarantee of stable income at the other end of the process. This is a shame because this group involves experienced and skilled interpreters.”

“In my personal case, four NAATI exams later [...] I am now one of the most **qualified** interpreters in the country. In theory, this should equate to a higher demand for my services (I do not work with languages of limited diffusion). However, my workload for on-site interpreting bookings in the public sector has not increased. In fact, my workload has actually decreased significantly this year, particularly bookings related to **government** agencies that operate under MBIE. The only way I could keep busier with more interpreting bookings would be to load up my schedule with **healthcare** interpreting; choose to accept substandard conditions offered by some LSPs; or make myself available for telephone interpreting, none of which are financially viable options for me. For **healthcare** interpreting, if I calculate the amount of time spent travelling, parking and working, divided by the total hours spent out of my day on a single assignment, it works out to be less than the minimum hourly wage. The substandard conditions offered by some LSPs are not even worth leaving the house for, and telephone interpreting for the agencies that hold the **government** contracts largely pays per minute, with no minimum fee for short calls, so sometimes it is not worth picking up the phone. Interpreters are not parking metres - we are **qualified** individuals with businesses to run and bills to pay.”

“Additionally, I realise that MBIE’s priority is to create an interpreter workforce that holds a minimum of CPI credentials for now, but I do believe there should be a distinction in both procurement and pay rates between the two certifications, at least

in court settings. As the nomenclature suggests, the Certified Provisional Interpreter and Certified Interpreter are two different levels of **qualification** and different skills are examined in the tests. In some courts in Australia, for example, Certified Interpreters must be prioritised over Certified Provisional Interpreters, and pay rates differ accordingly. I do realise there would not be enough fully Certified Interpreters to meet the demands in New Zealand courts, but this is something that could perhaps be considered from a quality perspective, considering the challenging and **risky** nature of court interpreting. Court interpreting also involves skills like simultaneous interpreting and sight translation that are tested in the Certified Interpreter exam, but not the Certified Provisional Interpreter exam. If a trial cannot continue due to interpreting issues, this will **cost** the **government** a lot more in the long run, in delays, re-trials, and booking a new interpreter.”

“Finally, although I am grateful to the New Zealand **government** for funding my NAATI certification exams, I do feel that if interpreters are not going to be considered as an important part of the equation and treated accordingly, you may **risk** losing a large chunk of your workforce. The interpreting population is aging, and new interpreters may think twice before entering the profession, given the pay rates offered and lack of apparent **regulation** in the industry (despite the best intentions of the LAS project). Other good interpreters will leave the profession after many years of experience, and those who have obtained NAATI certification may even be tempted to relocate to Australia. At the end of the day, it is not just the interpreter who suffers. The professionals using interpreting services cannot complete their job properly either, and the migrants needing language assistance will also be disadvantaged, because either an interpreter will not be available, or the interpreter used might not be sufficiently **qualified** (since NAATI-credentialled interpreters are not being prioritised for bookings despite the transition period ending earlier in the year). Surely this is not a result that aligns with the original purpose and intention of the LAS project?”

“What is the study and hard work for then, when we are left at mercy of such **monopolistic** behaviour of a big [LSP agency] that still keeps recruiting and employing inexperienced and **unqualified** interpreters at the time when the experienced ones have either finished or are working hard towards their NAATI accreditation?”

“[The] requirement does no favours for **qualified** translators who have dedicated years and money on studies to earn their **qualifications**. I can't see how it would be too complicated for MBIE, the LAS project (or NZSTI, although this hasn't ever happened as far as I am aware) to step in and liaise with **government** departments to implement

NZSTI membership as a logical and minimum requirement for certified translations for government/official purposes. Other requirements by **government** departments often refer to using a private or official translation company, but virtually anybody can set up a translation company these days, without necessarily being **qualified** or having undergone training (involving **ethical** practices) or being linked to a professional body. The below example is taken from the NZTA website and is relevant to interpreting only, not translation, but as you can see, there is little insistence on using a professional/**trained** interpreter - basically it is optional!

'If you can't use a member of the NZSTI or NAATI, you can provide someone else to interpret the test for you. They must be over 18 years of age, and present a passport or New Zealand driver licence when interpreting the test. Your theory test will be closely supervised at all times.'

*While I understand that interpreting is the focus right now for MBIE and the LAS project, I still think simple steps could be taken in the meantime to ensure that **government** departments across New Zealand are requiring duly **qualified** translators to carry out certified translations. Not only would this be **fairer** for **qualified** practitioners, it would also ensure safe-guarding against things such as fraudulent practices or unjustified amendment of original document content, since only **qualified/ethical** translation service providers would be handling the client's documents."*

*"We have proof that participating agencies who have entered into an exclusive arrangement with an LSP do not seek **qualified** and NAATI-certified interpreters, they will accept any interpreter that the preferred LSP provides, regardless of quality or **qualification**. These were bookings many months in advance, so it wasn't a matter of practicality or urgency at all. This also makes it look that the whole **government** push for NAATI certification was in fact in vain and a mockery, when it's not actually enforced in the case of LSPs, and some of them are very well aware of it and make most of it [...] And until LSPs are allowed to enjoy exclusivity or preferential treatment, it's very clear that some will not see the Guidelines as an incentive, they will rather see incentive in their exclusive business with the participating agencies and will do whatever they can to prevent others from encroaching on their **monopoly**, even to the detriment of quality. "*

*"I have noticed some advertising on public Facebook groups (example attached from [a certain] Facebook group although these have also been spotted in other language groups) seeking **unqualified** people to carry out **government** interpreting work - in this*

case, health interpreting for a DHB. I completely understand that it's a free market and that companies are entitled to operate and compete as they wish, and I also realise we are still 3 years away from full/compulsory implementation of NAATI certification for public service interpreters in New Zealand, however I still find this recruiting strategy very concerning in light of the perceived objectives of the LAS project - especially when it comes to forming a panel of trusted LSPs to provide quality interpreting services for public sector work. Obviously I can only speculate that this particular company is hoping to become one of the new LSPs for face-to-face interpreting, but I believe it is quite likely. In any case, I had understood that the objective of this project was to improve the quality of interpreting through the certification and upskilling of interpreters. Yet it is obvious from this announcement that the company is not seeking to hire professional or **trained** interpreters. The advertisement states that the training of "highly bilingual" speakers "will be provided for free". Sadly, in our industry, **cost-cutting** and/or profit margins are usually the main reasons for hiring **unqualified** contractors. Or worse still, an insufficient pool of professional interpreters on their books available due to substandard pay conditions that **qualified** interpreters are not willing to accept. I myself and a number of colleagues are more than familiar with the rates offered by this particular company, and we choose not to work for them for this reason. It is however harder for freshly **trained** interpreters (or non-interpreters, which seems to be the target group here) to be aware of such practices. In an already crowded interpreting industry, something definitely isn't right if **unqualified** interpreters are being recruited in languages that are not rare languages.

If what this company is offering here is free interpreter training/certification funded through MBIE, then I am a little surprised. Although it states on the LAS website that funding is also available for those "intending" to work as interpreters, I would like to think that the MBIE funding offered for training and NAATI exam **costs** will be provided for the upskilling and certification of existing professional interpreters in the first instance, not just to any bilingual speakers who feel like becoming interpreters? I understand this might be a bit different for rarer languages, but note that the language being targeted here is [language], which is not a rare language. Although it was considered to be one of the languages in highest demand in recent telephone interpreting statistics, there are still quite a number of **trained** Spanish interpreters out there, myself included. We are more than open to accepting greater work volumes - just under the right conditions. The reality is that many of us have had to reconsider our career choices as a result of unchanging and even worsening pay conditions. And

even with the introduction of NAATI certification, it doesn't look like this situation is going to improve for us in the coming years.

If however I am mistaken and **government** funding for NAATI certification is not being offered to just anybody, then having a company suggest that individuals can become interpreters almost overnight is equally concerning and quite frankly misleading. As a **qualified**, professional interpreter who is still constantly learning and developing, I can assure you that being "bilingual" is not enough to automatically make you a good interpreter, and no series of online workshops will adequately prepare you as a practitioner compared to a proper university-level programme. **ESPECIALLY** for health and legal settings, which require even further specialised training and experience. Newcomers might not **qualify** for funding later down the track anyway due to their visa status or other requirements, and would be unlikely to pass a NAATI test with such limited and superficial training and experience.”

“I would like to recount a recent experience that occurred. I have worked for the courts, amongst others, for most of my career. But over the last 9 months I have not received any bookings. A member of my community had told me that the courts claimed they did not have any interpreters in my language and their case had been adjourned several times without contacting me. I then found out that the courts had been contracting an outside interpreting service, rather than use their own court registered interpreters. The agency contacted me initially then after I accepted, they **cancelled** the job. When I advised the lawyer she begged me to turn up anyway. When I did, I found that the same agency employed an **unqualified** interpreter at very **low rates** for the same client. I have talked to other very experienced interpreters and it seems that this activity may have been going on for a while. It aggrieves me that they are shunning experienced interpreters and instead employing at rock bottom rates. Unfortunately, a lot of my community are the real victims, as they are either unable to complain or afraid to make a complaint about poor interpreting. If I raise the matter, it is merely seen as a case of sour grapes.”

“Individual interpreters are the ones who will have to go through NAATI testing and upskilling, and while I personally am not against this, it feels like our interests are being considered the least. Companies, on the other hand, will do anything to fill an interpreting job, even if it means contracting somebody without the relevant specialisation or somebody who has never done interpreting before (yes this does happen, and yes it even happens in high-pressure settings such as court trials). You also have DHBs contracting their own interpreters for other settings such as police and

customs matters, which require completely different training to health interpreting (yet still paid at low DHB rates).”

“[...] The [attached] email shows repeated attempts by [LSP agency] to hire **untrained** people to replace **qualified** professionals. This company doesn’t hesitate to ask **QUALIFIED** interpreters to help them recruit **UNQUALIFIED** people to do their job instead and **underpay** them.”



Theme 4: Current industry practices often undermine the quality of interpreting services, putting clients at risk

Another critical issue is the erosion of the quality of T&I services, especially for vulnerable clients, particularly those navigating high-stakes environments such as health and legal interpreting. In these settings, linguistic precision is a matter of fundamental human rights and physical safety; however, practitioners report that current procurement models prioritise cost-saving over professional competence, which poses serious legal and ethical risks for clients.

Research from Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia highlights that the failure to provide adequate interpreting services places CALD communities in a position of significant disadvantage (e.g. Lopez, 2022; Cannard, 2024; Beagley et al., 2020), with “sub-optimal” interpreting—defined as either low-quality or completely unmet demand—costing the Australian economy alone upwards of \$892 million per annum (Deloitte, 2023). According to this research, these disadvantages may be caused by factors such as emotional distress from not understanding medical or legal choices, higher risk of medical or legal errors, and legal delays or adjourned hearings.

This systemic devaluation has led to a critical staff shortage of qualified professionals. As experienced, certified interpreters exit the industry due to unsustainable conditions, they are increasingly replaced by uncertified or underqualified individuals. This “de-professionalisation” of the workforce, deeply related to the “professionalisation paradox” explored in the previous section, creates a dangerous gap in service quality, where the nuances of medical terminology or judicial procedure may be lost, ultimately placing the New Zealand public and the integrity of state institutions at risk. Furthermore, the human cost of this gap in services is profound, as inadequate access to high-standard language support impacts the right to “highest attainable standard of physical and mental health”, as well as their entitlement to a “fair and public hearing” (Deloitte, 2023).

*“Clients, including **vulnerable** people such as refugees and CALD communities struggle to find competent interpreters to assist them, or are surprised with the appointment of **untrained** and unprofessional interpreters during crucial moments (e.g. at the hospital or in Court trials) who often have no knowledge of ... [ethical considerations] due to their lack of training or long-term interest in the profession.”*

*“The nature of the calls we service can at times be very stressful, there is no scheme in place to help interpreters with vicarious **trauma**, which is the greatest cause of all mental health related problems including stress, anxiety, and depression.”*

“Why should an immigration adviser be providing certified translations?! This seems inappropriate to me, on so many levels.”

*“Also, preparation is often made impossible when **untrained** staff request interpreters and claim that no information can be made available due to confidentiality.”*

“There are many staff (courts, hospitals, prisons etc.) that have never received any training on how to work with an interpreter. While educating people we work with is part of our job it can add tension to the working relationship and makes it more difficult than it needs to be. Here are some examples:

- *Upon arriving at the hospital, I have asked staff for background information on the patient to help prepare for the interpreting session. Many staff are happy to do this but ~20% of the time staff refuse to provide me with any information,*

citing 'patient confidentiality'. Sending interpreters in blind, without any background information, is not in the patient's or the interpreter's best interest. Our role should be clarified to staff so that we can offer optimal interpreting.

- Nurses have asked me to leave the room when they do a procedure, not understanding that we are there to interpret during procedures.
- Hospital staff have said to me "I am going to give you all the information, about a procedure, for you to then pass on to the patient as I am busy and need to leave".
- During a 6-hour refugee interpreting session staff have interrupted my break to ask me to do sight translations."

"The low rate of pay we are currently receiving means myself and my fellow interpreters are increasingly looking elsewhere for interpreting work, which results in Interpreter Services having to outsource interpreters to a third party. This interpreting company charges Te Whatu Ora Waitaha \$150 (+GST) an hour plus mileage for the same service that we provide."

"The Manager of the Interpreting Service acknowledged to me that there had been no increase in rates in many years, and that this was a problem when it came to attracting new interpreters."

"Large amount of taxpayer's money has been poured into upskilling the profession. However, without putting proper system in place to ensure the rights of the interpreters, the retention rate will be a problem, which will in turn, affect the ROI for **government** and the **sustainability** of the sector."

"I am very concerned about non certificated interpreters working in the system particularly in courts. These interpreters have been working for decades without showing any interest to get any certificates in interpreting. [...] This is not **fair** on the service provider, the clients. They are under the impression that all interpreters are **qualified** and have no idea that **unqualified** interpreters are being given to them. We had a meeting recently where a NAATI member was present and MOJ staff. Their answer was that some rare languages need interpreters as well so if they have no **qualified** interpreters then people with no certificates will be allowed to interpret."

“Dame Sylvia Cartwright’s enquiry findings on informed consent in 1988 underlined the need for obtaining patients’ informed consent. This in turn implied that competent interpreters should be used, and strengthened the case for professionalisation.”

“25 years ago, I used to be paid by NZ courts, DHBs, **government** agencies \$120 per hour + Gst. Now with the new MBIE procurement system which gives the lion’s share to LSPs, I am expected to accept rates of \$35-\$65 per hour This non-sensical and unfair degradation of interpreters’ pay rates in New Zealand can only lead to a decline in the quality of public sector interpreting and a shortage of public sector interpreters.”

“As a direct **consequence** of poor interpreting rates, I have had to seek other sources of income, which often directly affect my availability to cater to the language needs of the migrant and refugee communities who need professional support. Moreover, the rates offered by some of the LSPs approved by the New Zealand **Government** disincentivise engagement. This results in new or **unqualified** interpreters filling in, even when underprepared, which can have a very negative **impact** in service users’ lives. The main example of this would be interpreting at any of the hospitals in the Auckland area, all of which have slightly different rates and agreements, all equally terrible in terms of rates and conditions. For me, an experienced professional interpreter, taking work from (former) DHBs and approved provider ADHB is counterproductive and simply not worth my time, financially.”

“In this pursuit of professionalisation and guaranteed language provision for the culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Aotearoa, LSPs that are constantly driving rates down and questioning interpreters’ worth further discourage trust and goodwill among all parties involved.”

“Lastly, demographically speaking, almost every interpreter is an immigrant, and comes from an ethnic background. An entire workforce is made up by ethnic communities, who are by nature, **vulnerable**. They make unique contributions to New Zealand society, especially at courts and hospitals. Who will protect their rights, when they run into issues with the agent?”

“I’ve worked as an interpreter in courts and had a horrible experience with a judge who wouldn’t let me interpret for the defendant because he didn’t want to wait for the interpretation and asked me to explain to the client after the hearing. I respectfully explained that it wasn’t appropriate and that my job was to ensure that the nonEnglish-speaker could exercise their right to information (especially since it related to their potential ongoing detention). I asked to be allowed to interpret but the judge

dismissed me, asked me to stop talking, and moved on. I had to watch the hearing, take notes, and the defence lawyer called me on my phone after the hearing to have me relay what had happened to their client. It was a mess... I felt very uncomfortable and the client was distressed because they didn't understand what was happening and what it meant. While I don't have a long list of examples like this, the experiences of interpreters to whom I spoke for my research during 2021 strongly confirm the generalised lack of understanding and disregard for appropriate interpreting. These examples - in my view - also stress the prevailing disregard for culturally appropriate, **trauma**-informed public services that ensure CALD communities **fair** treatment and dignity when engaging with **government** and other public agencies. This is also a factor impacting interpreter job satisfaction and continuity, as it certainly takes a toll to manage those interactions and have to educate people all the time. I firmly believe that true change and improvement in working conditions for interpreters need to include better remuneration schemes (rates, **cancellation** fees, minimum time, travel), service provider education, and pre- and post-assignment support in the form of briefing before jobs and ongoing supervision and debriefing.”

“Also concerning is the quality of education received by future interpreters in Aotearoa. While the **government** is allocating significant resources to upskill the workforce and ensure minimum quality standards are met, the quality of training programmes beyond basic **ethics**, culture and linguistic competency remains unknown. A clear example of this came recently from the NZSTI conference in Christchurch, where a lecturer from one of the interpreter training programmes depicted refugee-background clients as innately mentally ill and even potentially dangerous. The lack of **trauma**-informed training for interpreters working with refugees and other **vulnerable** communities was also evident from research and continues to highlight the dangers posed for clients who are expected to trust interpreters despite their significant bias and prejudice towards certain client groups. These aspects are not – and probably cannot – be accurately measured by NAATI or any other standardised test, yet require full consideration. Given that the **government** is also investing resources in developing a mandatory module on working in the New Zealand context, similar considerations for short training targeted at improving nonlinguistic aspects of interpreter performance such as safe practices should be considered.”

“I believe politics is getting in the way of interpreters in NZ. And with this, the bigger fish have the better options.”

“Most nurses and caregivers work as interpreters around the hospital during working hours, especially for [language]; I have witnessed it. There is no training for nurses and doctors on phone interpreting services, so they are too shy to use the service as they need to learn how to approach it. Training to use the phone or video call interpreter service is crucial for the medical staff and their patients.”

“This is not the first time that interpreters are attempting to bring **unfair** and **unethical** practices to the Government’s attention. Several attempts have been made in the past, but after several meetings with numerous organisations and stakeholders and many petitions to the courts, the interpreters’ voices never went too far. Partly because at the time, in 2012, the efforts were conducted by a group of older, pioneer interpreters who were coming to the end of their careers, had seen a lot of abuse over the years and, understandably, did not have the energy, motivation or drive to push matters forward. Unfortunately, some of these people have already retired from interpreting without seeing any progress. Hopefully this petition will allow things to move forward this time and our concerns will not go unanswered yet again. I cannot understand how the interpreting profession will survive unless our concerns are taken into account by the people who have the **power** and authority to help improve our industry and put a stop to **unethical** practices that harm both the interpreters and the clients that we interpret for.”

“Although not all interpreters are in favour of the changes being introduced under the LAS project, I personally believe it is an important step towards bringing some much-needed **regulation** to the industry. However, at the same time I also feel that given the project’s aim is to improve the quality of interpreting services in New Zealand, a number of critical factors have been overlooked, and this could have serious **consequences** for our industry. Sadly, this will also affect those who use and depend on interpreting services. [...] There will also no doubt be a shortage of interpreters next year once the NAATI requirement takes effect. The system may even collapse, particularly in sectors such as **healthcare** or in the courts, where there is high usage of interpreters. This could have serious **consequences** for migrants relying on language assistance and cause delays in the respective systems.”

“In terms of quality of interpreting, I also have a few comments I would like to make. It could be argued by LSPs or end-users that the quality of interpreting in some cases is not adequate. I believe that any concerns about quality could and should be mitigated by only contracting competent and **qualified** interpreters. This is not happening in our industry, unfortunately, particularly with some LSPs. And even with the introduction of

NAATI certification requirements, which should in theory take care of this issue and set a benchmark for quality and professional conduct, this requirement has not yet been fully implemented. Interpreters are also concerned that the practices of some LSPs of onboarding **unqualified** “interpreters” will continue even after NAATI is fully implemented. Will MBIE monitor LSPs? How will LSPs be held accountable? How transparent will their practices be? Those who are working in the industry without the appropriate credentials have been allowed to do so due to lack of **regulation** in our industry, and while I do not wish to invalidate the importance of experience acquired through interpreting practice, I do believe a combination of **qualifications**/credentials, experience and professional affiliation is vital. The NZSTI is also a good benchmark for competence, because becoming a member requires meeting specific criteria in terms of **qualifications** and experience. Sadly, many interpreters have not joined our professional association (some have never even heard of it), which means they might not be aware of appropriate industry practices, adequate working conditions and/or **ethical** obligations. I hope that MBIE will continue to work closely with our professional body NZSTI when rolling out the LAS project.”

“In the interests of spending **government** money more wisely, why can't the money be used to invest in a **fair**, transparent and centralised interpreter booking system? There is already a system in place for Ministry of Justice, and health interpreting services are already set up too (despite paying interpreters poorly), so why can't MBIE provide such a system for all other bookings that fall under MBIE? Surely it would be more **cost** efficient in the end, and interpreters could also be paid **fairly** and transparently. Interpreters could then put more time into their work, training, upskilling and professional development. Migrants would receive the quality and availability of services they deserve, and the professionals using our services (such as health professionals, lawyers, judges, and **government** officials, etc.) would also be able to work more efficiently.”

“I would like to bring to MBIE’s attention some of the experiences of refugee women with interpreters in New Zealand so **vulnerable** clients and patients from CALD communities can have their voice heard by the **Government** through my testimony. [...] It is crucial to understand that improving the remuneration and work condition of interpreters and **regulating** the interpreting industry would not only benefit the interpreters themselves, but it would deeply improve the quality of services that **vulnerable** CALD communities receive as they rely on the assistance of interpreters. [...]

- *SUGGESTION: recognise the important role of interpreters, especially within the refugee and migrant CALD communities. By giving interpreters the professional recognition that they deserve, the trust of clients in language assistance services and professional interpreters can also be reinforced.*

[A refugee woman's experience:] 'Interpreters are good people, I say, they're the best thing that could have happened to us here, they're amazing. After arriving in New Zealand, we start being dependent on them. Yes, because we were like children, who had just started, let's say, to walk, to talk and thanks to them, we were able to communicate, do things and adapt to the new country. They tell us if we must go to the doctor the next day, that tomorrow we'll need to do this or that thing, that we must study, that this meeting will begin at that time... Because everyone was giving us orders but no one knew anything. Only through interpreters were we able to grow here. If, for whatever reason, I missed a meeting when the interpreters were there, I could still watch, but, if no one can explain to me, I don't know anything. I don't know anything, nothing comes from watching if I can't speak, if no one can explain to me. So here's what I think: we are children until we learn how to speak. Without these people, we are nothing at the beginning here in New Zealand.'

- *SUGGESTION: recognise the sensitive nature of health interpreting assignments through two simple steps:*

1 – Allow patients the possibility to request, if possible, the same interpreter for sensitive topics and ongoing therapy or counselling. This can be easily applied by attaching on the patient's file the interpreter's name or gender preferences (some women may feel more comfortable going through a female interpreter than male). [...]

*2 – Recognize the sensitive nature of **healthcare** interpreting and the feedback received by refugee and migrant associations about interpreters experiencing mental distress/vicarious **trauma** at times. While mental health practitioners get regular debriefing and supervision as part of their routine work, interpreters do not. This issue must be thoroughly addressed.*

- *SUGGESTION: Evidence has emerged through my ongoing PhD research which shows that many **vulnerable** patients, such as refugee women, often stay unattended, and therefore cannot effectively access **healthcare** because interpreters do not accept assignments. This is happening even in the case of high-demand languages and in high-**risk** environments such as hospitals. Informal conversations with interpreters indicate that many are in fact turning down assignments because the rates are so low that it is simply not worth the effort to show up. This leads to a direct violation of Right 5 of the NZ Code of Health and Disability Consumers' Rights on 'the right to effective communication', which states that patients 'have the right to effective communication in a form, language and manner that enables you to understand the information provided. Where necessary and reasonably practicable, this includes the right to a competent interpreter.' MBIE must therefore ponder if the current interpreting system in place is serving or failing its purpose. It is crucial to understand that improving the remuneration and work condition of interpreters and **regulating** the interpreting industry would not only benefit the interpreters themselves, but it would deeply improve the quality of services that **vulnerable** CALD communities receive as they rely on the assistance of interpreters.*
- *SUGGESTION: recognise the importance, role and sensitive nature of interpreting. Raise awareness to service providers around New Zealand about the need to employ professional interpreters and the negative and **traumatic** effects that can occur when using family members and friends to act as interpreters themselves.*
- *SUGGESTION: [...] An official complaints mechanism, with the possibility of anonymous submissions should be established for such stories to not ever happen again, and, in the case of rumours, to allow clients to raise facts and separate events from stories or rumours that may harm their community in the long-term.*

[A refugee woman's experience] 'I will really appreciate the indigenous approach, you know the one from the Māori people, when you go to do research, the Kaupapa Māori approach. You know, you come to us, you take our information, and then, what are you going to do with that information? How are you going to help us improve our life? That is my question to you. Yes, you came to us, you came to me, I gave you my information, I gave you whatever. How are you going to help me, my

community, to improve our life? Through your research. That is my question.'

- *SUGGESTION: [The voice above comes from] a refugee woman participant who very openly asked me, a western researcher, to justify the use that I will make of the sensitive information that refugee women shared with me about their life and community in New Zealand. [She] has also lived in New Zealand for many years and has become familiar with the Kaupapa Māori principles and “indigenous approach” that she seems to find fitting and appropriate for herself and her community. By including the experiences of refugee women in my interpreter testimony, I wish to honour the knowledge derived from this research to actually help participants have their voices heard and not just being “used” for the benefit of someone conducting research on them. I therefore call on MBIE to reflect on the experiences of refugee women that I have shared in this testimony to improve today’s language service provision system with respect and consideration towards our CALD communities and their life and future in New Zealand.”*

*[From a complaint letter to MBIE] “I’m writing to you with our concerns about practices of one particular LAS provider on MBIE’s list. [LSP agency] pride themselves with ISO quality assurance, list of languages and number of interpreters, but our experience with them, as **qualified** interpreters, is very different. They first contacted us back in 2014 and offered us the first and also the last interpreting job ever with them. Then they started to recruit people ‘from the street’ (basically contacting anyone who could speak both [languages x/y] and English) and sent them, without any preparation and briefing, to court interpreting jobs. We spoke to some of those interpreters and they all said how they were shocked when they were put on the spot in the court and felt totally unprepared and inadequate, because not only they didn’t know the legal terminology, they could not even remember the words in [language], because they mostly came from mixed marriages and only spoke English at home. [LSP agency] even sent their inexperienced interpreters to high profile and medialised court cases and on two occasions, their interpreter quickly gave up and the court had to call us directly to take over. And [LSP agency] keep recruiting like that even now, I got a text message from them last year that they had found my name on the Justice of the Peace website (where it says I speak [languages x/y]) and offered to recruit me, probably without realising I was already in their database. All that at the time of fast-approaching government’s deadline of 01 July 2024 for all interpreters working in the public sector to get themselves NAATI accredited. [...] [LSP agency] pride*

themselves with ISO quality assurance on their website, but the above practice actually proves otherwise.”

“[...] there was another serious incident with [LSP agency] where they basically forfeited any of their claims of “ISO Quality Assured” and which raises even more serious concerns about their self-proclaimed **monopoly** over certain **government** bodies. [...] The client who needed interpreting at Oranga Tamariki eventually went to the court unprepared because no interpreter was provided, and the court booked an interpreter through [LSP agency]. [...] I have interpreted several times for this client in hospital and at Oranga Tamariki and she shared serious allegations against the interpreter that the agency provided for [LOCATION] Family Court hearing on [DATE]. Without prejudice, I’m passing this on for your investigation:

1. The interpreter didn’t interpret at all. Rather, she discussed the case with the court and counsels and only briefly summarised the whole hearing after it finished, outside the courtroom. How the court could have allowed that is beyond my understanding.
2. The interpreter discussed details of other cases she interpreted in, including personal details of the other clients.
3. The interpreter shushed the client when she wanted to ask something and had no clue what was going on.

When I later interpreted for the client at Oranga Tamariki, OT staff were horrified how badly she misunderstood the whole hearing, she basically understood the result as the exact opposite, because the interpreter didn’t tell her anything, she spoke and acted on her behalf. The client, therefore, voiced her objection at Oranga Tamariki to have that interpreter in any future hearings. [...] I thought MoJ would like to hear this feedback, because if it happened as the client says, it would be serious **breach** of practically all rules of interpreting, it would cast bad light on interpreters and compromise trust in them. I was personally shocked to hear all that and am sending this purely for your information, I have nothing personal against the other interpreter. [...] When Oranga Tamariki found out how badly the client was informed and how the hearing proceeded, they said they’d initiate their own investigation, but I don’t know if they ever did. When the client was supposed to have another court hearing in February this year, she asked [interpreter name] if the court had booked either of us, which they didn’t, and when the client then asked [interpreter name] to check with MoJ if they had indeed booked an interpreter and to make sure that the same interpreter

hadn't been booked, MoJ confirmed that the court had again booked the interpreter through [LSP agency] and that [LSP agency] had booked the same interpreter. The court then asked [LSP agency] to provide another interpreter, which they apparently did (we wonder who), but the hearing went ahead without the client present, so the interpreter wasn't needed in the end. All this confirms that [LSP agency] do enjoy **monopoly** over certain **government** bodies, because no interpreter was provided when [LSP agency] had none available. And it also confirms that [LSP agency] provide **unqualified** interpreters despite all their claims of "ISO Quality Assured", at least in our languages. They basically gather anyone they can find in the community, promise training which they never provide and send such people even to high-profile court hearings. I spoke to one of such interpreters and she said that she had voiced her concern about interpreting at such high level and [LSP agency]'s answer allegedly was: "You speak both languages, right? Then don't worry, you'll be fine."

"Formally speaking, the use of **unqualified** interpreters provided by LSP if the LSP cannot provide a **qualified** interpreter is a clear **breach** of the process outlined in MBIE's Operational Policy for LAS 2024, in particular article 2.3:

<https://www.mbie.govt.nz/assets/language-assistance-services-operational-policy-for-nwzealand-public-sector-agencies-and-those-they-fund-2024.pdf> We would also like MBIE's comment on [LSP agency]'s claims of secured contracts with **government** agencies, which they then use to coerce interpreters into working for them."



Theme 5: Interpreting is an essential, high-skill service

Despite the challenges raised in the previous themes, some interpreters and translators take pride in their work. The profession requires high levels of skill and expertise, and for those passionate about language and service, the rewards go beyond financial compensation. These rewards can be intrinsic (personal satisfaction) or extrinsic (positive social impact). These findings are consistent with the NZSTI Report (2025).

*“Interpreters should be paid adequately, just like any other contractors. Interpreters have valuable and specialised skills and their work is very important. Many have invested a lot of time and money in obtaining **qualifications** and credentials. Professional interpreters also continue to work on their language skills and professional development throughout their careers. They never stop learning, and they also spend time studying terminology and preparing for assignments. Our work involves a lot of pressure and **responsibility**, due to the accuracy required when carrying out our work, the significant cognitive load involved, and exposure, not to mention dealing with other challenges that arise (**ethical**, professional, interpersonal and otherwise).”*

“For me, interpreting is a casual job that I really enjoy. I can take jobs as I wish as my main source of income is not paid interpreting. I would certainly not enjoy working full-time in the gig economy community interpreting in NZ.”

“...I love being an interpreter and helping people to meet their needs. Sadly I had to leave my full-time interpreting work for a much higher paid job in a corporation. I would stay if interpreters got the right pay and the **respect** we deserve.”

“I worked exclusively with high level **government** officials and diplomats in New Zealand and in [country] for many years. I've changed my job but still I am sought for my language service. I am in a financially comfortable position and the only reason I am doing interpreting is to provide a service. In other words, I do not need the money. But I know it is important to others who do, and it is even more important that we work towards an interpreting system that is more just, and treat the people who are in it well. ”

“As I see it, most interpreters continue with the work because they are good at it and enjoy it, and because it is ‘a lifestyle’. Typically, interpreters are independently wealthy; I cannot see how anyone with a mortgage, 3 children, etc. could survive on 3 or 4 callouts a week (\$300 income).”

“The current job opportunities in this field do not adequately compensate interpreters for their time, preparation, background, and experience. As a result, taking on job assignments is mostly limited to vocational or community service decisions.”

“While it is true that interpreting is my passion, it is also my work (and together with translation work) the only means I have to make a living. I believe we have been **underpaid** for decades, despite the fact that many **government** operations and other procedures could not go ahead without our input.”

“I would like to stress that I believe that interpreting services in [the DHB] setting are of the utmost importance and I would appreciate the opportunity to do this kind of work if doing so did not mean I would have to subject myself to rates bordering minimum wage.”

“I work as an interpreter for the passion for languages and working with people. Not for the money. Nobody can rely on this remuneration to pay the bills.”

“... Some service providers offer extremely **low rates** that I feel is better to decline the assignment. But I do not feel happy about it because I want to work and help the NES clients.”

“While I am passionate about language and communication, I have made the conscious decision not to pursue community interpretation work. This decision is based on careful consideration of various factors, including compensation and the

value of my time. Community interpretation is a crucial service that bridges language barriers and facilitates communication between individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds. I hold immense **respect** for the dedicated interpreters who provide these services, as their work is invaluable in promoting understanding and inclusivity. However, I have chosen not to engage in community interpretation in New Zealand for the following reasons:

- **Compensation:** Community interpretation is often poorly compensated on an hourly basis. This low compensation does not adequately reflect the skills, training, and dedication required for this role. As a professional, I believe in receiving **fair** compensation for my time and expertise.
- **Value of Time:** As a professional, I have other opportunities as a simultaneous interpreter that provide better financial returns for my time and skills. While I value the importance of community interpretation, I have opted to focus my efforts on areas where I can achieve a more **sustainable** income while continuing to contribute positively to society through my language abilities.

I want to emphasise that my decision not to pursue community interpretation is not a reflection of the importance of the field or the individuals who dedicate themselves to it. I hold the utmost **respect** for community interpreters and the vital work they do. To attract and retain skilled interpreters, it is essential to offer competitive compensation that **respects** the professionalism and commitment of those pursuing a career in community interpretation.”

“Then you have interpreters who carry out interpreting work as more of a hobby or side-job, either to maintain their language skills, to supplement their income, or because they simply enjoy human interaction (particularly if they are not the main breadwinner in their family, for example). This means that they are less concerned about **low rates** and poor conditions because they do not depend on this income to make a living.”

“We support the consumers of Waitaha and contribute to helping Waitaha meet one of the foundations of the new health system (Te Pae Tata) - health equity for everyone. We assist in achieving this outcome by bridging the language barrier between health practitioner and consumer/whānau.”

“Being an interpreter at the hospital requires proficiency in two languages and sound medical knowledge. In New Zealand, every individual has the legal right to a

competent interpreter when meeting with health service providers. As health interpreters, we are critical in enabling clear communication between health practitioners and patients, enabling patients to make informed decisions about their **healthcare** journey. We believe that it is not just in our interests but in the interests of the patients and health practitioners we support that our working conditions are brought up to reflect industry standards.”

“Health interpreters have a lot of **responsibility** in terms of the accuracy and importance of their work. They also handle and have access to sensitive information, including patient data (full name, phone number, address, NHI number, health condition, etc.) in order to carry out their work. While patients deserve trust and professionalism from interpreting services, as well as the assistance of interpreters who are appropriately **qualified**, interpreters are not being paid/treated as professionals if we analyse these pay rates which have remained the same for many years. You may wonder why interpreters continue to work for such rates, and the only answer to this is that either they do not depend on this income to make a living (they are not the main breadwinner in their household, or they have an alternative primary source of income), or they speak a language in such high demand that they are given full-time (or near full-time) hours of work.”

“It is important to note that just like any professional skill, and not dissimilar to professional athletes or musicians, it is very important for interpreters to keep retain and practice their skills regularly. However, they cannot do this if they are not getting enough adequately paid work.”

“The **consequences** of interpreting mistakes or misconduct (albeit unintentional) due to lack of training in technique and **ethics** could be extremely serious. We are talking about a defendant or victim's future being ruined in a legal setting, for example, or a patient's life being put at **risk** in a health setting. It's just not worth waiting until something terrible happens for things to change. Waiting until 2023 might be too late... Our **vulnerable** migrants are the ones who will suffer, along with individual interpreters who are not properly remunerated for highly-skilled work (and it doesn't look like this will change much, even once we are NAATI-certified).”

Section IV

APPENDICES

Appendix Summary

The final section includes **8 appendices** as supporting materials and evidence for this report, as well as some key testimonies and letters that were too large to include in the quote sections above. While participants in the study submitted various emails, letters, and other types of supporting evidence, in the interest of brevity and anonymity it was not possible to include all of them here. Most information was included in quote sections in the main text, and some key letters are included here to corroborate observations and participants' voices. Specifically the appendices include:

- A. The **consent & participation form** that respondents in this study filled out.
- B. The **letter by NZSTI** supporting Dr Cannard's fair pay petition.
- C. The **online petition for fair pay** initiated by Dr Cannard that preceded the current study.
- D. A **letter by Interpreting Service ADHB/WDHB**, demonstrating industry trends and patterns for the past 2 decades. This letter was attached as additional evidence to a participant's testimony, and is being shared with the author's permission. Together with Appendices E-F, they demonstrate the challenges in the health industry, discussed from different perspectives and professionals.
- E. Summary of the **presentation by the NZSTI Auckland branch at Auckland City Hospital** on issues and challenges relating to interpreting in medical consultations. This evidence was also attached to a testimony as further evidence capturing professional challenges in that demanding industry (also linking to theme 4 of the thematic analysis).
- F. **Dr Cannard's letter to Te Whatu Ora** following their decision to opt out of the LAS project. This letter was attached to her testimony as further evidence of challenges in the health industry. The letter concludes with a relevant Australian supporting documentation published by the University of Queensland, AUSIT, and ASLIA.
- G. **Industry recommendations** extracted from a participant's testimony and attached materials. Note that these suggestions do not necessarily reflect the opinions of NZSTI or the report author, and some may not be fully relevant at the publication date; however, they summarise issues widely raised amongst practitioners.
- H. **Bibliography and a list of supporting references**, linking the issues discussed in this report to the wider literature and discourse, both in Aotearoa and worldwide.

Appendix A: Consent & Participation Form

Name	<input type="checkbox"/> Interpreter's name: <input type="checkbox"/> I wish to remain anonymous
Working languages	<input type="checkbox"/> My working languages as an interpreter in NZ are: <input type="checkbox"/> I do not want to provide this information
Working experience	<input type="checkbox"/> Approx. number of years I have been working as an interpreter in NZ: <input type="checkbox"/> I do not want to provide this information
Qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/> Qualifications & memberships I hold to work as an interpreter in NZ: <input type="checkbox"/> I do not want to provide this information
Declining assignments	Approx. how frequently do I decline interpreting assignments due to low remuneration or unfavourable working conditions: <input type="checkbox"/> I do not want to provide this information
Other	Other information I wish to provide with my statement:
Consent	I consent to the information sent to Carolina Cannard being shared with relevant parties to support fair pay and better working conditions for interpreters in New Zealand. I understand that the information sent may be shared or made public by the parties involved. <input type="checkbox"/> YES, I give my consent
Date

Share your thoughts here:

Appendix B: NZSTI Support Letter



New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters
Te Rōpū Kaiwhakamāori ā-waha, ā-tuhi o Aotearoa

14 June 2023

Petition for fair pay for professional interpreters in Aotearoa New Zealand

Tēnā koutou,

The New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters (NZSTI) fully endorses the petition by NZSTI member Carolina Cannard on Change.org calling for 'Fair pay for professional interpreters in Aotearoa New Zealand'. This petition has met with overwhelming support and has now been signed by 1,546 individuals, including many members of NZSTI.

Ever since its inception in 1986, NZSTI has been advocating for the professionalisation of the translation and interpreting industry in Aotearoa. Interpreters are professionals trained to bridge a language gap. They provide a critical service to culturally and linguistically diverse individuals to ensure that everyone in New Zealand has equitable access to public services.

Under the Language Assistance Services (LAS) programme, the New Zealand government is working towards improving the quality of interpreting services by requiring interpreters to obtain NAATI certification. This, it is envisaged, will further help lift the standard of interpreting services provided in Aotearoa, something NZSTI has long advocated for. However, current pay rates fail to reflect the high level of specialisation, skill, time and continued study required to provide clients with the service they have the right to receive. Many experienced interpreters have had to leave the industry and seek better paying employment elsewhere, meaning that some individuals currently have their basic right to effective communication denied. Unless pay rates are set at a fair level that reflects the professional nature of an interpreter's job, we envisage that this trend will continue to accelerate.

We ask that the New Zealand government take urgent action to remedy the situation and fully support the petition's call for better pay for interpreters.

Ngā mihi,

Isabelle Poff-Pensole
President

Appendix C: [Online Petition](#)³

9/22/23, 11:08 AM

Petition · Fair pay for professional interpreters in Aotearoa New Zealand · Change.org

change.org



Welcome back to Change.org! A new petition wins every hour thanks to signers like you.

Petition strength

8 Good

Add a decision maker

An important piece of information for you and your supporters.

[Add decision maker](#)

Start an image test

Upload a few images and we'll find the one driving the most signatures.

[Start smart image test](#)



Fair pay for professional interpreters in Aotearoa New Zealand

Started

30 July 2022

1,594

Signatures

2,500

Next goal

Support now

[Share this petition](#)

³ <https://www.change.org/p/fair-pay-for-professional-interpreters-in-aotearoa-new-zealand>

Why this petition matters



Started by [Carolina Cannard](#)

Interpreters are trained professionals who bridge the language gap and enable equitable access to public services to everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand. They provide a critical service to culturally and linguistically diverse individuals who would otherwise see their rights and entitlements curtailed.

However, in spite of their crucial role, interpreters in Aotearoa New Zealand have been consistently underpaid.

Current rates fail to account for the self-employed nature of the job, which requires professionals to cover their own taxes, levies, insurance, etc. Moreover, hiring agencies and services generally limit the time paid to interpreters to the allocated time for the appointment. This means that interpreters often receive no payment for their preparation or travel time. Combined with the increasing elimination of minimum fees, for both onsite and phone interpreting, such practices leave interpreters scrambling to find suitable compensation for their time and lead to precarious employment and professional exodus.

This is a problem not only due to the industry's unfair, low rates that do not reflect our highly skilled interpreting profession, but because the lack of interpreters leaves clients and patients without language and communication support during crucial events, such as medical interventions, health emergencies, court hearings and immigration/legal appointments.

Interpreters are expected to constantly maintain and upgrade their skills, adapt to the needs of the industry, sit for tests, obtain relevant certifications and renew credentials. Nevertheless, their remuneration has remained the same and, in some cases, it has even worsened over the years.

Under the Language Assistance Services (LAS) programme, the New Zealand government is working towards improving the quality of interpreting services by requiring professionals to achieve further certification. However, no measures have been taken to ensure fair pay for interpreters to retain them.

By denying interpreters a pay rate reflecting their high level of specialization, the industry is leaving patients and clients without the quality services they deserve, often forcing them to rely on bilingual friends and family (<https://blogs.otago.ac.nz/pubhealthexpert/government-funding-of-interpreters-in-primary-care-is-needed-to-ensure-quality-care/>). This problem affects already disadvantaged minorities in Aotearoa New Zealand, whose basic right to effective communication is further denied (Right 5 – Right to effective communication of the Code of Health and Disability Consumers' Rights).

We want to ensure that anyone who cannot communicate effectively in the country's official languages receives the support they need and deserve into a language they comprehend. To do this, we need to have a pool of qualified language professionals who receive fair pay and enjoy adequate working conditions. Therefore, we have started this petition to bring this issue to the relevant authorities and call for immediate measures.

BETTER PAY FOR INTERPRETERS = HIGHER QUALITY INTERPRETING AND ASSIGNMENT ATTENDANCE = FULFILLMENT OF SERVICE USERS' RIGHTS

Thank you very much for your support!

Appendix D: Interpreting Service ADHB/WDHB Letter

Unveiling Two Decades of Neglected Compensation: A Call for Fairness and Recognition

Demanding Long Overdue Pay Review and Salary Adjustment for Dedicated Service
of Contracted Interpreters in Health New Zealand

To whom it may concern,

Dear Sir/Madam,

We hope this letter finds you well. We are writing to address a matter of utmost importance regarding our pay rates as contracted interpreters at Interpreting Service of Te Whatu Ora, Health New Zealand (formerly Auckland District Health Board, abbr. ADHB). In this letter we will bring our concerns into several main points based on the situation of contracted interpreters from ADHB and WDHB.

Only two dollar change in pay rate since 2001

We are deeply concerned about the current state of our pay rates. It is disheartening to note that there has been virtually no change in our pays for an extended 22 years of time, from 2001 to 2023, despite the increasing demands and responsibilities of our profession. The table below presents our pay rates from 2001 to 2023

Table 1. Comparison of Pay Rates of ADHB Interpreting Contractors from 2001 to 2023

Year	1 st hour N/H	2 nd hour N/H	1 st hour A/H	2 nd hour A/H	TINT N/H	TINT A/H	APC	Call Out
2001	\$30.00	\$25.00	\$40.00	\$35.00	\$15.00	\$25.00	\$5.00	\$20.00
2002	\$31.05	\$25.88	\$41.40	\$36.23	\$15.53	\$25.88		\$20.70
21yrs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2023	\$32.06	\$27.17	\$43.47	\$38.04	\$34.64	\$43.04	\$7.80	\$21.74

N/H = Normal Hour, A/H = After Hour, TINT = Telephone interpreting, APC = Appointment Confirmation.

From the table we can see that the face-to-face interpreting, which makes up more than 95% of our total jobs for contracted interpreter (Data column 1), have only increased \$2.06, with a growth rate of 6.8% over 22 years. (See attached contract copies)

Meanwhile, the minimum wages in New Zealand have increased 187.01%, from \$7.70 to \$22.10 per hour in 2001-2023 and that is 27.5 times of the growth rate of ADHB contracted interpreters. (Table2.; Fig. 1). Please note that the growth rate is comparing with 2001.

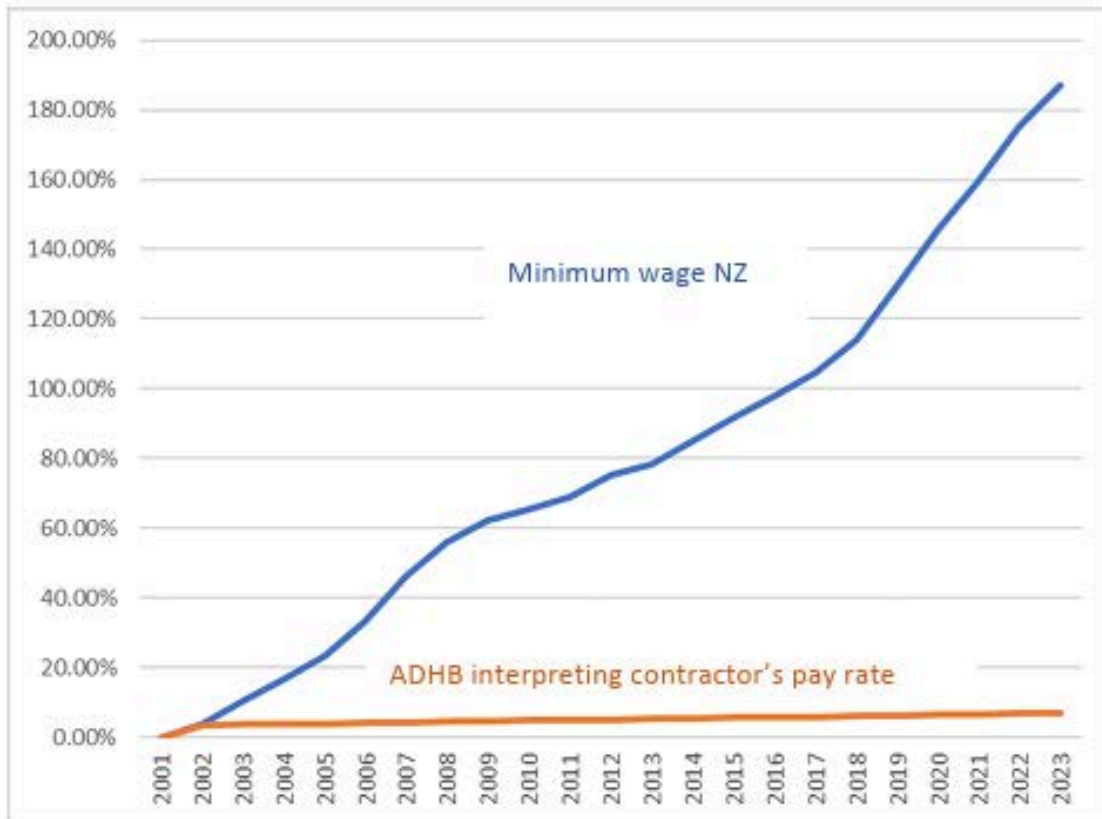
<https://www.employment.govt.nz/hours-and-wages/pay/minimum-wage/previous-rates/>

Table 2. Growth Rate 2001-2023: Minimum Wage NZ vs. ADHB interpreter's Pay Rate

Year	Minimum wage NZ	Growth rate	ADHB interpreter	Growth rate
2001	7.7	0.00%	30	0.00%
2002	8	3.90%	31.05	3.50%
2003	8.5	10.39%	31.1	3.67%
2004	9	16.88%	31.15	3.83%
2005	9.5	23.38%	32.06	6.87%
2006	10.25	33.12%	32.06	6.87%
2007	11.25	46.10%	32.06	6.87%
2008	12	55.84%	32.06	6.87%
2009	12.5	62.34%	32.06	6.87%
2010	12.75	65.58%	32.06	6.87%
2011	13	68.83%	32.06	6.87%
2012	13.5	75.32%	32.06	6.87%
2013	13.75	78.57%	32.06	6.87%
2014	14.25	85.06%	32.06	6.87%
2015	14.75	91.56%	32.06	6.87%
2016	15.25	98.05%	32.06	6.87%
2017	15.75	104.55%	32.06	6.87%
2018	16.5	114.29%	32.06	6.87%
2019	17.7	129.87%	32.06	6.87%
2020	18.9	145.45%	32.06	6.87%
2021	20	159.74%	32.06	6.87%
2022	21.2	175.32%	32.06	6.87%
2023	22.1	187.01%	32.06	6.87%

Figure 1.

Growth Rate 2001-2023, Minimum Wage of NZ vs Pay rates of ADHB Contracted Interpreters



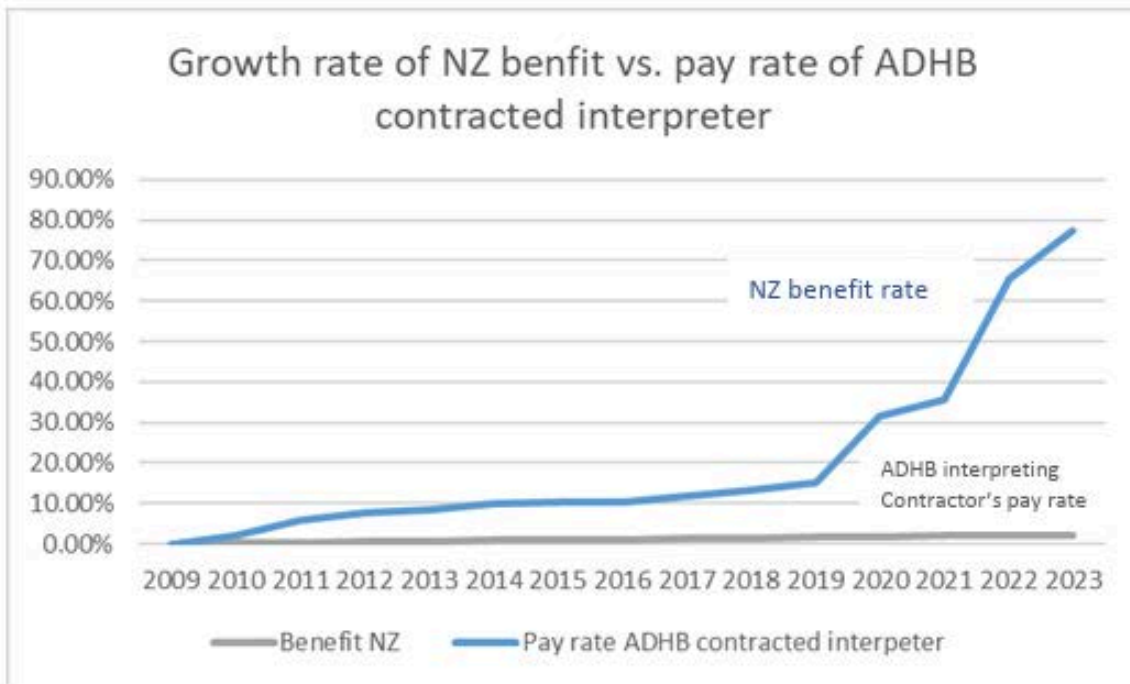
It can also compare the pay rate of ADHB interpreting contractors with the main benefit rates provided by the New Zealand Government (such as Unemployment Benefit or Job Seeker Support for individuals who are single and 25 years or older) from 2009 to 2023. The Unemployment Benefit has increased from \$190.39 to \$337.74 by 77.39%, whereas the pay rate of ADHB contracted interpreter only has 2.10% increase over past 14 years. (Table 3 and Figure 2)

<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/benefit-rates/index.html>

Table 3. Growth rate 2009-2023. Pay rate ADHB contacted interpreter vs. Unemployment Benefit NZ

Year	Pay rate ADHB interpreter	Growth rate	Unemployment Benefit Rate NZ	Growth rate
2009	31.4	0.00%	190.39	0.00%
2010	31.45	0.16%	194.12	1.96%
2011	31.5	0.32%	201.4	5.78%
2012	31.55	0.48%	204.96	7.65%
2013	31.6	0.64%	206.21	8.31%
2014	31.65	0.80%	209.06	9.81%
2015	31.7	0.96%	210.13	10.37%
2016	31.75	1.11%	210.13	10.37%
2017	31.8	1.27%	212.45	11.59%
2018	31.85	1.43%	215.34	13.10%
2019	31.9	1.59%	218.98	15.02%
2020	31.95	1.75%	250.74	31.70%
2021	32	1.91%	258.5	35.77%
2022	32.05	2.07%	315	65.45%
2023	32.06	2.10%	337.74	77.39%

Fig.2



Contracted interpreters in the ADHB Interpreting Service have not received regular pay rate reviews and adjustments for the past two decades, unlike the general practice in New Zealand's healthcare environment. This is a unique circumstance as pay rates are typically reviewed regularly for individuals in other parts of the country.

The pay rate is significantly below the profession's average standard

Our pay rates are not only far behind the general societal growth rate but also not comparable within the same profession. For example, interpreters at the Ministry of Justice had their rate increased to \$65 per hour from 01/05/2023, with additional benefits and a rate review scheduled for next year.

Border control of immigration has contracted interpreting jobs to ADHB Interpreting Service at \$120+gst per hour plus mileage and parking, while our interpreters receive only their current rate.

Contracted interpreters at ADHB are paid significantly below the average level within the profession. According to the New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters, interpreters working for language service providers typically earn \$35-\$80 per hour, while self-employed interpreters usually earn \$80-\$140 per hour(careers.govt.nz). The pay rate at ADHB falls considerably below these standard levels. Our interpreters have encountered situations where patients from private sectors are willing to pay them \$100 cash for an hour of service, preferring it over higher charges from other language service providers. Police officers and their accountant at the police station expressed pity and shock regarding our interpreters' low pay rate, which has not been changed over a decade and it is the lowest rate among all the interpreting service. In addition, as contractors, interpreters do not receive benefits to cover like sick day, holiday pay, work equipment, office space, etc, further impacting their income.

The screenshot shows a webpage from careers.govt.nz for the job title 'Interpreter'. The page includes a navigation bar with 'Contact us', 'Search', and 'Menu' options. Below the title, it lists 'Kaiwhakawhiti Reo ā-Waha' as an alternative title and provides a brief description: 'Interpreters convert what people say from one language into another.' The page is divided into two main sections: 'Pay' and 'Job opportunities'. The 'Pay' section states that interpreters working for a language service provider usually earn \$35-\$80 per hour, while self-employed interpreters usually earn \$80-\$140 per hour. The 'Job opportunities' section features a gauge chart with three segments: 'POOR' (yellow), 'AVERAGE' (blue), and 'GOOD' (green). The needle points to the 'AVERAGE' segment. The text explains that chances of getting a job as an interpreter are average because the industry is small, but good for te reo Māori interpreters. The source is cited as 'New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters, 2020'.

Existing interpreters face a lack of work, while new interpreters are continuously hired

Over the past years, pay rates for contracted interpreters at ADHB have remained stagnant, leading to a significant decline in individual income. Despite this, the service continues to hire new interpreters to "fill the gaps in jobs," creating an unsettling phenomenon. Existing interpreters struggle to find enough work to support themselves, but new staff members are consistently brought in, making it difficult to demand a pay increase. Consequently, everyone's pay remains stagnant. While minimum wages and unemployment benefits in New Zealand increase annually, the welfare and respect for contracted interpreters at ADHB have been neglected and forgotten.

Long overdue fair pay for contracted interpreters adds to their difficulties during challenging times

Despite facing various challenges, we are wholeheartedly committed to providing high-quality interpretation services and bridging the language barrier in healthcare. Our role is indispensable in ensuring effective communication and quality healthcare services. As essential workers, we have remained on the frontline during the COVID-19 pandemic, dedicated to safeguarding our community.

The stagnant pay rates since 2001 have significantly impacted the livelihoods of contracted interpreters at ADHB. With an annual inflation rate of more than 7% and food prices rising by over 20%, interpreters face substantial financial challenges compared to previous years, putting a strain on meeting their daily needs.

The stagnant pay rate is affecting the quality of work

The stagnant pay rate not only affects us personally but also impacts the quality and sustainability of the interpretation services we provide. By July 2024, interpreters are required to have a NAATI (the national standards & certifying authority for translators and interpreters in Australia) certificate to continue their jobs in ADHB, and it must be reviewed every three years. Despite the increasing demands and responsibilities of our profession, there is no comparable payoff for our commitment, experiences, and skills as contracted interpreters at ADHB. There are no promotions or pathways for career advancement or increased income. This lack of incentives discourages professional growth and hampers the quality of our work.

Furthermore, for some interpreters who have served long time start to feel a gradually decreased respect from medical professionals due to being in the low-pay group. The prevailing perception is that the less we charge, the less seriously we are taken.

We believe fair and competitive compensation is essential to recognize the value of our work, maintain motivation, and ensure high-quality service. Fair pay rates will allow us to focus on our roles with dedication and professionalism, benefiting both Te Toka Tumai Auckland and the patients we serve.

Interpreters have made many attempts for fair pay, but their efforts have been ignored

Over the years, our colleagues have made numerous attempts through oral communication, email, and formal proposals to address the long overdue pay review and increase with the administration of the Interpreting Service in ADHB. Unfortunately, none of these efforts have been successful, leading to a great deal of frustration. Please refer to Appendix 4 for one of these attempts.

Interpreters and people they serve are migrants and their well-being deserves equal attention

Due to the nature of the work, the uniqueness of contracted interpreters and people they server is that they are migrants and minority ethnic groups. Coincidentally the interpreters are the least considered for pay reviews and adjustments in ADHB. These trained professionals play a crucial role in integrating migrants into New Zealand society and without them the essential medical consultations, procedures, and services for non-English speakers would not go ahead. Ensuring equal rights and treatment for ethnic groups is vital to consolidate a diverse and inclusive society in New Zealand.

An imperative call for urgent improvement of contracted interpreters' pay rate

Therefore, we respectfully request a comprehensive review and adjustment of our pay rates to reflect the current market conditions, industry standards, and the skills and expertise required for effective interpretation. We understand the constraints of budgetary considerations, but we firmly believe that a fair increase in our pay rates is crucial to maintain the high standard of interpretation services and retain qualified interpreters within Te Toka Tumai Auckland.

We kindly request an opportunity to discuss this matter further and explore potential solutions. We believe that open dialogue and collaboration can lead to a mutually beneficial outcome that addresses the concerns of all parties involved.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your prompt response and a favourable resolution that recognizes the importance of fair compensation for contracted interpreters.

Yours faithfully,

Name List of Signed Interpreters (Interpreting Service of Auckland District Health Board and Waitematā District Health Board)

Appendix E: Presentation at Auckland Hospital

[In 2023], the NZSTI Auckland branch was invited to assist in organising a presentation to the renal and palliative care teams at Auckland City Hospital on issues relating to interpreting in medical consultations. Both teams work with patients who have life-limiting conditions and frequently need to have sensitive discussions with patients and their families.

At the presentation on 28 February [2023], branch members and two interpreters talked about some of the challenges involved. It was a well-attended session, with 18 staff in the room and many more joining via Zoom. We received very positive feedback from attendees regarding how useful it was to understand things from the interpreter and patient perspectives. The following is a summary of the talk and of the questions that were raised during discussion afterwards.

[Interpreter 1] initially provided an overview of the interpreter's role, skills and training, and then proceeded to detail some of the specific challenges of interpreting in a healthcare setting:

1. Characteristics of the health setting as opposed to other settings

- Challenges are particularly amplified in health settings, with frequent ethical dilemmas requiring constant decision-making and self-evaluation*
- Having to spend a lot more time with the client (ie. patient) on our own without the presence of a health professional, particularly outside the consultation setting*
- Spending more time with patients opens up opportunities for conversation, and interpreters need to establish very clear boundaries*
- Less formal setting than legal settings, with our role being less clearly defined, and not feasible to maintain physical detachment all the time*
- Double-edged sword: Spending more time with patients provides an opportunity to build trust (re. language competency and professionalism), and interpreters might gain more context about what the job will be about (if appropriate), but at the same time interpreters must constantly be aware of professional boundaries and make conscious decisions, which can be challenging, exhausting, and sometimes very awkward*
- Patients may be in a vulnerable physical/emotional state and see interpreters as a life-raft due to linguistic/cultural connection, leading to challenges in managing patient expectations*
- A support person is often present (usually a family member), and having added participants poses further challenges, sometimes changing the dynamics of the consultation setting and even interfering with the interpreting process*

- Every single time interpreters attend a health interpreting assignment, they are constantly challenged to use their professional judgement as ethical dilemmas present themselves, either before, during or after their interpretation

- Health interpreters must find solutions on the spot, repeatedly explain and clarify their role, and set boundaries in order to protect both themselves and the patients, as well as meet the expectations of the service provider

2. Linguistic challenges

- Languages are different: different structures, some are more concise than others, lack of direct equivalents in other languages for medical terms, or it might be common to borrow words from English

- Common complaint in our industry: “the client said one thing and the interpreter went on and on.” Perhaps it takes longer to express that concept in another language?

- Language can be very ambiguous, with clarifications sometimes necessary before we can even begin interpreting and even the smallest grammatical feature changing the meaning in another language

- Often there are linguist variations within a single language - Interpreters might have difficulty understanding a clinician’s accent in English

- Medical terminology: Interpreters generally cover all medical settings and they can be very specialised, a constant learning curve

- Possibility of knowledge gaps in a patient’s vocabulary, the patient might not understand a term in their own language, even if you have interpreted it correctly


- Names of medications can be complex and hard to remember, spell and reproduce, often spoken very quickly by clinicians

- Speakers are also different (both patients and clinicians), some expressing themselves more succinctly and directly than others, which requires more effort to manage

3. Cultural challenges

- Language and culture are inextricably linked

- Family power dynamics are often evident in healthcare settings, which varies between cultures, i.e. sometimes a family member will try and answer on patient’s behalf

- 
- Family members expecting and wanting to do the “interpreting” themselves
 - Differing cultural attitudes around illness and death, and potentially wanting to shield loved ones from the truth in the case of a terminal illness
 - Expectations based on patient’s own culture
 - Lack of trust in authorities due to past experiences in home country
 - Lack of trust in the interpreter, especially if they are part of a small language community in New Zealand
 - Interpreter’s gender might be an issue for patients from certain cultures and in certain health settings
 - Patients might be used to health systems that function differently, ie. GP referral system
 - Cultural differences might affect patient engagement: some patients might not want to ask the clinician questions because they don’t want to be seen as disagreeing with an authority figure or to reveal ignorance, or patients might simply feel too embarrassed to open up fully
 - Interpreter’s professional boundaries may be challenged when dealing with cultures with different concepts of affection, sharing or personal space (ie. interpreters might be asked personal questions, opinions, for favours or advice, and they might be offered food, gifts, or receive invitations)
 - While setting firm boundaries is important for interpreters, it can also be awkward or appear rude in some cultures
 - Health interpreters must constantly try to find a balance and manage these situations in a professional yet polite and culturally appropriate way

4. Role Boundaries

- Interpreter’s role is frequently misunderstood by both patients and health clinicians
- Although booked by the health interpreting service, interpreters are there to serve both the clinician and the patient equally, often facing conflicting expectations
- Dealing with a patient’s family members is often one of the greatest challenges, as sometimes family members do not want an interpreter or think they need one

- Most clinicians now understand that family members should not be used as interpreters, but we still have a little way to go - family members are not impartial and they are certainly not trained to be interpreters

- Family members might also interfere with the interpreting to protect the patient (despite the best of intentions), and interpreters need to find quick solutions to manage this so that the patient is not excluded from the conversation in English

- Family members might come directly to the interpreter after an operation and ask how it went, or to ask specific questions about how the patient coped, yet interpreters are not medical staff and must manage boundaries very carefully here

- If the patient shares something or asks the interpreter questions in the absence of a health professional, interpreters might feel torn between confidentiality, accuracy, impartiality and duty of care

- Sometimes interpreters are asked by health practitioners to do things that are not part of their role (ie. holding bandages, holding patient's hand, sit with a patient to provide emotional support, etc.). While part of the interpreter's role is to educate clients/users about their role boundaries, it does become awkward when a patient is distressed, especially if health practitioners are not aware of our role

- Patients might also ask interpreters for help (ie. to hold their belongings, or to help them stand up), so interpreters constantly have to navigate these unexpected requests and find appropriate solutions

- Side conversations between clinicians (ie. handovers or conversation during a procedure) pose challenges for interpreters because practitioners might not expect this information to be interpreted, however part of the interpreter's role and responsibility is to ensure that all participants remain linguistically present - if the patient could speak English, they would have been able to understand

- Any side comments made by the patient in the presence of a clinician also need to be interpreted back into English

- Sometimes interpreters are asked to relay information once the practitioner has left the room due to time constraints

- Sight translations of written documents need to be handled with care (ie. patient questionnaire forms in clinic waiting rooms without the presence of a health practitioner), and longer documents such as brochures may require more time and preparation

- Patients are often sent away with information brochures or instructions in English, without any guarantee that they will completely understand that information when they get home

5. Emotional challenges

- Interpreting for a patient throughout their health journey (which may or may not lead to recovery) can have an emotional toll on interpreters

- Migrant patients face the additional challenge of being in a country that is not their own, away from their usual support networks while navigating a different health system in a different language and culture

- Interpreters accompany patients through periods of worry, stress, pain and frustration, even death, making it hard not to feel some degree of empathy, even if it doesn't affect our impartiality or professionalism

- Compassion fatigue and the emotional toll from interpreting a patient's struggles in the first person can have an accumulative negative impact on interpreters

- Turning down assignments knowing that there are interpreter shortages can also have an emotional effect on interpreters, knowing that the patient's appointment might not be able to go ahead.


[Interpreter 1] concluded her section of the presentation with a breakdown of what clinicians and interpreters can do to achieve better and more efficient communication outcomes:

- It is vital for clinicians to understand the interpreter's role and its boundaries

- The cognitive load of understanding, retaining, processing and then reproducing information in another language is huge, so interpreters have some very basic requirements to do their job properly: clear audible speech, small chunks of information if possible – ideally two or three sentences – no rushing, and only one person speaking at a time

- Part of the interpreter's role is also to manage the speakers, which may involve politely cutting in if the speaker talks for too long, asking for clarification, repetition, or even correcting their own interpreting – these are actually all signs of a professional interpreter

- The more context and information provided at the outset, the better the interpreter can do their job, so a quick briefing is ideal, particularly in more sensitive contexts relating to end-of-life care where cultural differences or challenges involving family members are anticipated

- 
- Interpreters interpret using the first person to make the exchange more efficient and less confusing, and while most clinicians are already doing this, there is still room for improvement
 - Clinicians need to remember that interpreters are required to interpret everything that is said in the room, including side conversations that may not seem very important
 - Remote interpreting in health settings is very challenging due to audio/technical difficulties and not being able to see the patient – a briefing by a clinician is particularly important here to provide further context
 - Better provision of more information materials for patients in languages other than English
 - Feedback by clinicians is always useful, either in person, to the interpreting service or via the interpreting service's phone app that is used to sign interpreters out
 - By clinicians better understanding the interpreter's role, the interpreter is better able to support the best possible outcomes for patients

After this, [Interpreter 2] shared the perspectives of the participants that she interviewed as part of her PhD research, focusing on the experiences of refugee women and interpreters in New Zealand. She touched on four key issues regarding communication in health settings that refugee women shared with her, to highlight pros and cons and areas needing work in order to deliver a better service in the future.

1. Lack of information: being new to New Zealand, many refugee women do not know that they can request an interpreter for free. They reported that often, no one asked them if they needed an interpreter. It is paramount to explain to all patients that they can request an interpreter for free, to ensure their right to effective communication of the Code of Health and Disability Consumers' Rights (Right #5) is respected.

2. Use of family members as interpreters: as many women don't know about their right to access an interpreter for free, they often bring along their friends or family members to assist them and act as interpreters. This is not only dangerous because there can be misinterpretation leading to serious consequences, but can be a very traumatic event for the family, especially if children are used to interpret.

3. Sensitivity around using a male or female interpreter: women refugees have often been victims of sexual violence, and it can be very difficult or even triggering to talk about their health in front of a male interpreter. It is preferable, when possible, to ask patients if they have a preference between using a male or female interpreter.

4. *The problem of interpreter unavailability due to low rates: [Interpreter 2] pointed out the rising number of interpreters turning down onsite and remote health interpreting requests due to low pay rates. She explained that many colleagues are accepting fewer health interpreting requests because the overall pay is not enough to make a living compared to the amount of time and effort spent.*

[Interpreter 2] concluded her presentation by inviting the audience to reflect on the pros and cons of the language communication systems in place, and to evaluate if our healthcare interpreting system is serving or failing its purpose.

The session concluded with questions from the audience:

1. In an acute situation where there is no interpreter (even over the phone), what's the best thing to do?

There is no best answer in this scenario. Using a family member to interpret raises a range of issues but in such a situation is probably better than nothing. It's important to provide feedback so management of Te Toku Tumai (former ADHB) are aware, both of the lack of interpreter availability and the risks of using a family member, as [Interpreter 2] pointed out in her presentation.

2. Related to the above, is Google Translate better than nothing?

The danger of using translation apps for medical terms is that the translation may be correct but for a completely different context, a particular risk if translating single words. It is generally safer to avoid machine translation for medical terms though it could possibly be used for easy-to-understand questions such as 'Do you need water?' It would be beneficial for wards to provide language cards with translations of basic routine questions, such as 'Would you like a drink? YES/NO', 'Do you want to have lunch? YES/NO' or to explain that a patient cannot eat or drink anything because they are nil by mouth, where it would be counter-productive to locate an interpreter. Departments can contact the interpreting service to arrange for such resources to be translated and provided.

3. What would constitute a good briefing?

Interpreters are aware that there are frequently time pressures. However, even a briefing of 30 seconds to one minute before the consultation starts can cover the most important issues, such as giving context of patient and current problem, how to manage family members present, and ground rules for how to speak when interpreter is involved (the latter is helpful to provide to patient and family too), particularly in more sensitive settings such as end-of-life care. One clinician mentioned concerns about the misinterpretation of wording such as 'palliative care' and

'hospice', and clinicians are encouraged to provide this sort of feedback to both interpreters and the interpreting service.

4. Clinical staff can get support from each other after a difficult incident. What about interpreters?

A debriefing from the clinician is always helpful. Interpreters also have access to the EAP service.

5. Who can call the interpreter service to make a booking?

Basically any staff member, just not the patient.

6. Is the patient rights leaflet that refers to the right to use an interpreter available in multiple languages?

No, translations need requesting by individual hospital departments from interpreter services.

7. Can/should a bilingual staff member do without using an interpreter?

Potentially, however it would be advisable to consult hospital policy on this. This also assumes that clinicians are genuinely bilingual and, depending on whether their medical training was in an English-speaking country or not, are aware of terminology in both English and the other language to a sufficiently high standard. This raises the question of who should be considered bilingual or proficient enough and how this should be assessed. Some medical staff might be truly bilingual while others might have some language knowledge and still consider themselves capable of assuming the role of the interpreter. Another issue is that clinicians, given they are not trained as interpreters, will not be aware of aspects like keeping all parties linguistically present (i.e. if English is spoken by anyone else present in the room), etc.

8. Will the NAATI certification requirement cause even further interpreter shortages? And will interpreters be faced with additional costs in obtaining their certification?

There could be a shortage initially if interpreting services do not prepare for this well in advance. Some interpreters might be nearing the end of their careers and choose not to go through the certification process. The NZ government is funding further training and test costs for interpreters until 2024, although interpreters will be required to recertify every three years, and there will be a cost associated with this.

Appendix F: Letter to Te Whatu Ora

14 April 2025, Auckland, New Zealand

Letter in response to Te Whatu Ora's decision to opt out of the LAS programme

Dear team at Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand,

Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand is an uncontested pillar of our country Aotearoa New Zealand. It employs a dedicated workforce working tirelessly to guarantee access to healthcare and effective communication to patients with cultural and linguistic backgrounds from around the world. Inevitably, your decision to opt out of the LAS programme has brought great concern amongst interpreters who work alongside healthcare professionals and clients who rely on our services, as well as academics who study the healthcare and interpreting systems of New Zealand.

The NAATI certification and its implementation has been a controversial decision led by MBIE. Nevertheless, it was implemented as an attempt to uplift the interpreting profession in New Zealand, which has been historically unregulated and underpaid, leading to systemic fails, as documented throughout the years. Throughout my 5 year-long research, I discussed directly with those who suffer the consequences of these systemic failures, namely resettled refugee women with reproductive healthcare needs. Hundreds of references can be provided to support the claims contained in this letter.

Your email dated 21 March 2025 to interpreters poses a threat to patients, healthcare professionals and interpreters alike. It states that *"Health NZ does NOT require NAATI accreditation for interpreters employed by, or supplying services to, Health NZ. There is a lack of accredited NAATI interpreters at this time in New Zealand, and we must place patient safety at the heart of everything we do."*

Your decision to waive the NAATI requirement as well as the LAS programme contradicts your intention, as it does NOT place "patient safety at the heart of everything" – on the contrary, this decision will perpetuate an unsafe, unregulated working environment in dire need of profound, systemic change. Justifications are observed as follows:

1) Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand to set a leading example

Your leading agency sets an example for others to follow: if you opt out of LAS and NAATI, you send the message to all agencies that attempts to improve the industry collectively do not matter. It will create a negative domino effect before others start following your lead, with agencies opting out of the LAS programme, proving that our interpreting industry is set to fail despite efforts to improve and regulate it.

Following your lead, the only ones who will benefit from opting out are unscrupulous LSPs who profit by hiring ad-hoc unqualified interpreters accepting low rates, unsustainable working conditions and whose practices frequently lead to 'bad' interpreting, unethical behaviours and confidentiality breaches.

2) Lack of accredited NAATI interpreters in New Zealand

The shortage of NAATI certified interpreters is understandable: NAATI is a demanding test, and most qualified interpreters who do pass it decline to work for shockingly low rates. That indeed leaves either very few NAATI interpreters willing to assist Te Whatu Ora, or 'ad-hoc' interpreters who carry out interpreting work as a hobby or side-job. Whilst some unqualified interpreters may be excellent in their work, this is not the case for the vast majority of unqualified interpreters, who are less concerned about low rates and poor conditions because they do not depend on this income to make a living.

Most unqualified interpreters have never had a formal interpreter training and are not members of New Zealand's only professional association, NZSTI - consequently, most of them are not aware of ethics implications, may act unethically, lead to re-traumatisation of clients and put patients and healthcare workers at risk when offering low quality of interpreting, as repeatedly documented through research (evidence can be provided). But opting out of the LAS and NAATI, your message is clear: the better the interpreter, the less New Zealand services are prepared to work with them. It's a race to the bottom.

NAATI was imposed as means to ensure that tested, highly competent interpreters can be given priority to deliver high-stake services, such as healthcare interpreting. If NAATI is not what Te Whatu Ora seeks, then priority must be given to interpreters who either hold relevant qualifications or professional affiliations guaranteeing their genuine interest in the profession and understanding of the implications of their work in patient's safety and the work of health professionals. That practice has

yet to be confirmed, leading to the assumption that today, anyone claiming to be an interpreter can come to the hospital and have an active, possibly perilous role in people's lives and health without any restrictions or repercussions.

3) The problem(s) with low rates

Health interpreters have immense responsibility in terms of the accuracy and importance of their work. They handle sensitive information and confidential patient data. While patients deserve trust and professionalism from interpreters who are appropriately qualified, interpreters are not being paid nor treated as professionals. Nevertheless, interpreters continue to work for such low rates, because they either do not depend on this income to make a living, or they speak a language in such high demand that they are given fulltime hours of work.

If interpreters are not going to be considered as an important part of the equation and treated accordingly, Te Whatu Ora will continue losing a large chunk of its interpreting workforce. The interpreting population is aging, and new interpreters are reluctant to enter the profession given the pay rates offered and lack of apparent regulation in the industry (despite the best intentions of the LAS project). Other good interpreters will leave the profession after many years of experience, and most of those who have obtained NAATI certification will not agree to work for degrading payrates.

4) The problem(s) with unqualified 'ad-hoc' interpreters

The historical pay inequities of interpreters have contributed to today's professional exodus of interpreters who struggle to make ends meet. Evidence from my PhD research shows vulnerable patients often stay unattended and do not effectively access healthcare because interpreters decline low-paying assignments. This happens even in the case of high-demand languages, with interpreters turning down assignments because the rates are so low that it is simply not worth the effort to show up. Those who suffer again are patients and healthcare providers. Professional exodus due to unsustainable working conditions must therefore be tackled as it impacts the quality and availability of interpreting that refugee women receive, impeding their access to essential services and leading to a violation of the right to effective communication:

All these interconnected issues have led to a violation of Right 5 to effective communication of the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights, which stipulates that (1) *Every consumer has the right to effective communication in a form, language, and manner that enables the consumer to understand the information provided. Where necessary and reasonably practicable, this includes the right to a competent interpreter.* Vulnerable CALD clients struggle to find competent interpreters to assist them, or are subjected to the appointment of unprofessional interpreters who often have no knowledge of professional ethics due to their lack of training or long-term interest in the profession.

The lack of qualified interpreters has direct consequences on the healthcare system and professionals. Te Whatu Ora's participation in improving the remuneration and work conditions of interpreters and regulating the interpreting industry will not only benefit the interpreters themselves, but it would deeply improve the quality of services that healthcare workers and vulnerable CALD communities receive as they rely on the assistance of qualified, professional interpreters.

It is not just the interpreter who suffers from all the conditions stated above. The healthcare professionals relying on interpreting services cannot complete their work effectively, as the already overstretched health system suffers financially and practically from 'bad' interpreting, postponed or cancelled appointments, and medical conditions left untreated due to lack of availability of qualified, professional interpreters. This all leads to CALD patients needing language assistance being once more disadvantaged, because either an interpreter will not be available, or the interpreter used might not be qualified (since NAATI-credentialed interpreters are not being prioritised).

Thank you for taking cognisance of these observations, supported by interpreters who attended NZSTI's meeting on 10 April 2025 to discuss these pressing issues. A 2022 Australian Healthcare survey is included at the end of this letter to show how we are all fighting against the same systemic issues. A 2022 petition to advocate for "Fair pay for professional interpreters in Aotearoa New Zealand" collected 1,600 signatures and was sent to the Refugee and Migrant Services (MBIE) along with interpreter testimonies to make sure that we are heard by important stakeholders. Te Whatu Ora, you are one of these important stakeholders. I hope that the information provided in this letter urges you to work collaboratively with interpreters, NZSTI and academics as we all care about our communities and work hard to advocate for quality interpreting services in Aotearoa New Zealand to improve conditions for all.

Best regards,

Dr Carolina Cannard

Translator & Interpreter – NAATI Certified - Member of NZSTI, AUSIT & SiNZ

2024 PhD research on the lived experiences of refugee women of reproductive age with interpreters in New Zealand

2022 Interpreter Satisfaction Survey Key Takeaways for Health

- When a Language Service Provider (LSP) sends an uncertified person to an interpreting assignment (instead of a certified interpreter), patient-centered care may be compromised due to lack of accuracy, sufficient knowledge and gaps in understanding the ethical framework thus putting patients at risk.
- Experienced interpreters are leaving the profession because of poor pay and working conditions; this is creating an “experience gap” and leading to the use of uncertified bilingual persons.
- Some language service providers are providing their contractors with a badge that says “interpreter”; in certain cases these are untrained bilingual persons instead of certified interpreters and those individuals may not be competent to interpret health information.
- There is no effective oversight of the provision of interpreting services and no place to go to report concerns.
- There are things that you can do to lessen the likelihood of patient harm and exposure to liability.

Please contact us for further information and a copy of the report

Rob Aurbach

Consultant and Lawyer Uncommon Approach
rob@uncommonapproach.com

Carina Mackenzie

Certified Translator and Interpreter
Chair AUSIT Queensland
qid@ausit.org

Dr Danielle Ferndale

Certified Provisional Auslan Interpreter
ASLIAQ President
qldpresident@aslia.com.au

Patricia Argüello de Avila

Certified Interpreter and Educator
patriciaeavila@yahoo.com



Researchers from the University of Queensland surveyed interpreters who are certified by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) in Queensland. Approximately 300 individuals responded and provided a wide range of information.

When a Language Service Provider (LSP) sends an uncertified person to an interpreting assignment, patient-centered care may be compromised.

Use of uncertified bilingual persons rather than NAATI certified interpreters is more likely to lead to serious miscommunication between the patient and those providing care. Numerous instances of miscommunication and the relaying of incorrect medical information were disclosed in the survey. Such miscommunication may complicate diagnosis and treatment, and compromise compliance and clinical rapport.

Experienced interpreters are leaving the profession because of poor pay, benefits and working conditions, creating an 'experience gap' and leading to the use of uncertified bilingual persons.

The compensation paid to interpreters is not commensurate with the training and education required to be a NAATI certified interpreter, and there is no compensation for the economic risks and expenses associated with casual employment. There is no entitlement to holiday or sick leave and there is inconsistent compensation for out-of-pocket expenses such as parking, petrol, and tolls to travel to the site of the interpreting job. Generally, the rates paid are similar to those of unskilled labour engaged in hospitality or domestic work.

The collective impact of these concerns is reflected in reported current job satisfaction and intent to stay in the profession. A large middle group of interpreters with 5 to 20 years of experience report much higher levels of dissatisfaction and intention to leave interpreting altogether. This raises concerns about the creation of both an experience gap and a shortage of NAATI certified interpreters in the future. As the experience gap grows, the use of uncertified individuals has become an increasing concern.

There is no accountability for the quality of persons sent to health assignments – a language service provider may give a bilingual person who is not a certified interpreter a badge saying "interpreter"; however, this does not mean the person is competent to interpret health information.

There is no clear mechanism for the resolution of concerns about interpreting services. Some language service providers issue "Interpreter" badges to persons regardless of whether they are NAATI certified or not.

There is no effective oversight of the provision of interpreting services and no place to go to report concerns.

No governmental agency currently requires the reporting of critical information from the industry and there is no clear mechanism for getting concerns about the quality of interpreter services provided resolved. Language service providers are effectively an unregulated industry.

Appendix G: Industry Recommendations to Improve Interpreting Services

[The following list of recommendations comes from a participant's submitted testimony, and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of NZSTI or the report author.]

A) CREATION OF A GOVERNMENT OWNED INTERPRETING SERVICE(S)

Rationale:

- a. This would be a solid and trustworthy long-term solution.
- b. The New Zealand Government will become a benchmark for the industry, setting authority and standards of comparison, implement its own quality control, training opportunities and gain direct insight into the interpreting industry.
- c. It would ensure that the money spent into implement NAATI certifications nationwide pays-off in the long term, as highly qualified NAATI certified interpreters will possibly refuse to work for LSPs offering bottom wages, however, they may agree to work for government organisations that offer fair, regulated working conditions and fair wages.
- d. Using private LSPs for Government assignments is counter productive: LSPs are interested in making profit by being the middle-man and making margins between the Government's direct pays to them and using untrained interpreters who will accept lesser pay than trained and qualified professional interpreters.
- e. Private LSPs will become less inclined to continue maintaining unethical practices if the New Zealand Government/MBIE sets the bar with its own services.
- f. It is possible to seek help from experienced professionals on how to set up such a service, e.g. consult with the Council members of NZSTI, or take example on existing established systems such as the TIS – the Translating and Interpreting Service of the Australian Government.
- g. It is not acceptable to force contractors to have to sign up with LSPs to get work opportunities, especially when numerous LSPs pay the lowest rates possible and have unethical practices (non-existent or disadvantageous cancellation policies, continuous employment of “cheaper” untrained interpreters etc.).



B) ALTERNATIVES TO CREATING A GOVERNMENT OWNED INTERPRETING SERVICE(S)

- a. In case the New Zealand Government is unable to create a government owned interpreting service, then the Government needs to ensure all contracting LSPs abide by fundamental conditions that guarantee respect of industry standards:
- b. It is possible to do so by conducting mandatory audits and establishing official pay thresholds under which it would be unlawful to pay interpreters.
- c. This information of pay minimums or (thresholds per qualification level or NAATI credentials) should be made public information that can be accessed on MBIE's and/or NZSTI's website. This remuneration information could be updated every couple of years to keep up with trends and inflations.
- d. Doing so would also provide industry knowledge and a guideline for new professionals and students who enter the industry but may not know what acceptable remuneration is and fair pay working conditions should entail. Many new or young interpreters accept low pay rates and unfavourable working conditions by LSPs because they do not know what would be considered as fair pay as they enter the industry.
- e. Close collaboration with NZSTI should take place to find the best way to create a union to advocate for interpreters. NZSTI is fully run by volunteers, therefore MBIE's assistance and support would be essential to facilitate the creation of a union.

C) RECENT TENDER FOR PHONE & VIDEO INTERPRETING SERVICES

- a. On 24 August 2023 the latest tender for phone & video interpreting services closed (the contact person's name that was communicated online was Sandra Worboys: procurementandcommercial@mbie.govt.nz). This is the perfect opportunity to review the terms and conditions that LSPs propose to contracted interpreters.
- b. The tender should impose a provision for minimum remuneration guarantee for interpreters, such as a 15-minute fee guarantee, which, if I am not mistaken, used to be the norm before it was regrettably removed a few years ago.
- c. Cheaper does not mean better: usually the cheapest LSPs are selected through the tender process, however, this often means that the LSP has cut pay funding to interpreters and do not conduct quality controls so that they are able to lower their prices and win the tender. This impacts directly on the availability and quality of face-to-face and remote (over-the-phone) language support.

d. MBIE must establish a framework to hold LSPs accountable in terms of providing appropriate working terms and conditions to their contracted interpreters.

e. MBIE should review and impose a fair and strict cancellation policy. Maintaining a frail cancellation policy may be great for the Government to cut down costs but it is terrible for interpreters, as repeatedly foregrounded in the interpreter testimonies and NZSTI's Conference workshop report on "Improving working conditions for interpreters" submitted to MBIE.

D) INTERPRETING INDUSTRY REMUNERATION & WORKING CONDITIONS TO BE REVIEWED, IMPLEMENTED AND REGULATED:

Rationale:

To bring significant and long-term improvement of the interpreting industry in New Zealand, the following focal conditions must be considered:

a. Establishment of official pay thresholds under which it would be unlawful to pay interpreters. These threshold minimums (per qualification level or NAATI credentials) should be made public information that can be accessed on MBIE's and/or NZSTI's website. The lack of adequate minimum fees guarantee for short assignments, for both onsite (face-to-face) and remote (over-the-phone) assignments discourages interpreters from accepting such tasks as it because not worthwhile to leave the house to pick up the phone, as repeatedly foregrounded in the interpreter testimonies submitted to MBIE. Remote (over-the-phone) interpreting assignments should at least include a mandatory 15-minute fee guarantee.

b. Health interpreting rates are amongst the lowest in the industry and must be reviewed and improved, as highlighted by the group of Christchurch health interpreters (see correspondence submitted as evidence) and repeatedly foregrounded in the interpreter testimonies submitted to MBIE.

c. Cancellation policies must be reviewed and reinforced. Reimbursement of all hours booked when a booking is cancelled within 24 hours is the commercial industry standard in many countries, yet it is often not respected in New Zealand as per the interpreter testimonies submitted to MBIE. The cancellation policy below can be used as a guideline for acceptable work and cancellation conditions:

- Assignment cancelled in less than a week: reimbursement of 25% fee
- Assignment cancelled in less than 2-3 days: reimbursement of 50% fee
- Assignment cancelled in 24 hours or less: reimbursement of 100% fee

d. Parking, mileage and travel time compensation policy must be reviewed and applied in all settings.

e. As previously mentioned, MBIE must act as an official regulatory body and establish a framework to hold LSPs accountable in terms of providing appropriate working terms and conditions to their contracted interpreters.

f. MBIE must ensure that only professional and trained NAATI certified interpreters will be allowed to work in high-risk environments such as Court proceedings with the Ministry of Justice. It is unacceptable for LSPs to be allowed to hire untrained and unqualified people to act as professional interpreters and jeopardize the quality of language services that clients may require in such important settings. This can be easily achieved by demanding all public services to require formal professional identification from interpreters prior to the start of assignments, such as:

- The interpreter's NAATI identity card (sent to interpreters upon receiving their NAATI accreditation) and/or
- Their NAATI Practitioner number (as printed on their certificate and NAATI card) and/or
- Proof of affiliation to NZSTI (or any other recognised professional body) by requesting their (NZSTI) membership number, as published on NZTI's website under each member's public profile.

This practice will promote professional recognition, trust from service providers and stakeholders as well as quality maintenance as unprofessional / untrained interpreters will no longer be able to provide assistance in high-stake settings (the front of the card displays the NAATI practitioner ID Number which can be verified online and the back shows the credential type for the corresponding language pair).

E) ESTABLISHMENT OF A RECONGNISED OFFICIAL COMPLAINTS MECHANISM FOR INTERPRETERS AND CLIENTS

Rationale:

Creation of an official national complaints mechanism that would allow to raise concerns without fear of retribution for interpreters and clients. This would not just be in the interest of interpreters to raise their concerns, but would greatly benefit health and legal practitioners, as well as vulnerable CALD clients and patients who may need to raise concerns for the quality of interpreting they have received, but there is no current mechanism to allow them to do so.

F) INZ TO REVIEW THE CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTED CERTIFIED TRANSLATIONS FOR IMMIGRATION PURPOSES

Rationale:

Although this matter applies to translators, and not interpreters, many linguists work as both translators and interpreters, and the following issue contributes to the problem of unqualified people providing language and translation services in New Zealand without the knowledge or training to do so. The following issue is well known within the Translation & Interpreting industry in New Zealand and has been repeatedly condoned by language professionals in New Zealand:

a. The current conditions set by Immigration New Zealand (INZ) for translators to provide official translations of documents are unprofessional, outdated and do not reflect quality and control standards that should be upheld for such important matters as official documentation being translated across countries.

b. INZ's website lists the conditions under which it is possible to provide official translations as follows (copied information as published on INZ's website):

We accept translations carried out by:

- the Translation Service of the Department of Internal Affairs (New Zealand)
- reputable people within the community who are known to translate documents accurately (but not applicants themselves, their immediate family or the applicant's licensed immigration advisor)
- embassies or high commissions (if the translation is endorsed with the appropriate embassy or high commission seal), or
- any other private or official translation business.

We will also accept translations from a licensed immigration adviser who is:

- a trustworthy person within the community
- known to translate documents accurately
- not an advisor on the application.

You must pay for the translation.

Each translation must be:

- made by an experienced translator
- be on the translation business's official letterhead, if possible
- certified as a correct translation by the translator
- stamped or signed by the translator or translation business.

c. In the above conditions, there is no mention of the translator being a professional or having to prove their qualifications by any means, by being a member of NZSTI for example. Allowing a "trustworthy person within the community" who is neither a recognised professional or a qualified translator to provide official translations is inviting people to provide possibly erroneous and even misleading translations to Immigration New Zealand.

d. The current conditions are so lax, that I myself witnessed a very serious breach of immigration conditions on social media that I am now reporting here: a backpacker was venting on a popular Backpacker’s public Facebook group about not having to go through a translator or pay them to issue the translation of their criminal record. Instead, the backpacker posted publicly that they simply used a free online machine translation tool (DeepL) to automatically translate their criminal record for free and then submit it to INZ.

The most shocking part is that this translation was apparently accepted by Immigration New Zealand as the backpacker was issued his visa to enter the country. As a professional translator and interpreter I was so outraged by this that I kept screenshots of the conversation that took place online – I am able to provide such screenshots as proof of this having taken place only a few months ago. I imagine that this was a harmless backpacker trying to save on money, however, what would happen if such lax conditions were known by the wider public, or even criminals, who could falsify their official translations and send them to INZ to be loosely accepted? Official translations provided to INZ should be considered a matter of national security.

e. Similarly - and regrettably – many colleagues have reported the rise of individuals advertising cheap translation services online in migrant community groups, without having any experience, knowledge or qualifications in the matter.

f. To protect INZ and uplift the industry standards, current conditions to provide official translations should be reviewed, renewed and strictly regulated.

g. Being a member of NZSTI, NAATI or holding appropriate qualifications or relevant professional credentials should become minimum mandatory conditions for any individual to be able to issue certified translations within New Zealand.


G) ACKNOWLEDGE THE EXODUS OF PROFESSIONAL INTERPRETERS FROM THEIR INDUSTRY DUE TO LOW RATES

Last, but not least, it is paramount to mention that the historical pay inequities of interpreters have contributed to today’s professional exodus of interpreters who struggle to make ends meet. This reality has led to a breach of Right 5 to effective communication of the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers’ Rights, which stipulates:

Right 5

Right to effective communication

(1) Every consumer has the right to effective communication in a form, language, and manner that enables the consumer to understand the information provided. Where necessary and reasonably practicable, this includes the right to a competent interpreter.



Clients, including vulnerable people such as refugees and CALD communities struggle to find competent interpreters to assist them, or are surprised with the appointment of untrained and unprofessional interpreters during crucial moments (e.g. at the hospital or in Court trials) who often have no knowledge of NZSTI's interpreter Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct due to their lack of training or long-term interest in the profession. Part of submitting my interpreter testimony is to bring this crucial matter to MBIE's attention, and demand better industry regulation to remedy this situation.

Thank you for taking cognisance of the observations and proposals of my testimony. I hope that the information provided here can assist you in establishing an accurate industry report and advocate for professional interpreters and translators in New Zealand to improve our working conditions for all.

Appendix H: Supporting Reference List

- Abraham, D., & Fiola, M. A. (2006). Making the case for community interpreting in health care: From needs assessment to risk management. *Critical Link*, 4, 202.
- Aurbach, R. (2022). *Report into engagement and job satisfaction of Queensland spoken and sign language interpreters*. AUSIT & ASLIAQ / University of Queensland.
- Beagley, J., Hlavac, J., & Zucchi, E. (2020). Patient length of stay, patient readmission rates and the provision of professional interpreting services in healthcare in Australia. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 28(5), 1643–1650. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.12989>
- Blake, C. (2000). Ethical considerations in working with culturally diverse populations: The essential role of professional interpreters. *Standard and Ethics*, 1(1), 27-31.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Broom, E., Cannard, C., & Burdekin, H. (2023). *NZSTI Auckland Branch: Presentation at Auckland City Hospital*. New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters.
- Cannard, C. (2024). *'She was my voice': Lived Experiences of Refugee Women of Reproductive Age With Interpreters During Resettlement in New Zealand* [Doctoral thesis, Auckland University of Technology]. <http://hdl.handle.net/10292/18332>
- Cannard, C., Marianacci, A., & González Campanella, A. (2023). *Improving working conditions for interpreters: A collaborative session* [Workshop report]. NZSTI Conference, Christchurch, New Zealand. <https://translationswitham.com/2023/09/29/workshop-report-improving-working-conditions-for-interpreters/#more-3891>
- Cheng, Q. (2015). Examining the challenges for telephone interpreters in New Zealand (Doctoral dissertation, Auckland University of Technology).
- Crezee, I., Jülich, S., & Hayward, M. (2011). Issues for interpreters and professionals working in refugee settings. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Professional Practice*, 8(3), 253–273. <https://doi.org/10.1558/jalpp.v8i3.253>

- Crezee, I., Zucchi, E., & Jülich, S. (2020). Getting their wires crossed? Interpreters and clinicians' expectations of the role of professional interpreters in the Australian health context. *New Voices in Translation Studies*, 23, 78–109.
- Crezee, I. (2015). Teaching interpreters about self-care. *International Journal of Interpreter Education*, 7(1), 74–83.
- De Moissac, D., & Bowen, S. (2019). Impact of language barriers on quality of care and patient safety for official language minority Francophones in Canada. *Journal of Patient Experience*, 6(1), 24–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2374373518769008>
- Deloitte. (2023). *Economic analysis of interpreting services: Final report* [Executive summary]. Department of Home Affairs. <https://ausit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Executive-Summary-Deloitte-Access-Economics.pdf>
- Duman, D. Ç. (2021). What do codes of ethics tell us about impartiality, and what is preferred at the hospital? *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series: Themes in Translation Studies*, 20, 115–135. <https://doi.org/10.52034/lanstts.v20i.612>
- Enríquez Raído, V., Crezee, I., & Ridgeway, Q. (2020). Professional, ethical, and policy dimensions of public service interpreting and translation in New Zealand. *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, 15(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1075/tis.20007.enr>
- Field, J., McClunie-Trust, P., Kearney, C., & Jeffcoat, J. (2020). Language and communication: A vital component of health for people with refugee backgrounds. *Kai Tiaki Nursing Research New Zealand*, 11(1), 42–49.
- Flores, G. (2005). The impact of medical interpreter services on the quality of health care: A systematic review. *Medical Care Research and Review*, 62(3), 255–299. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077558705275416>
- Gao, Y. (2021). *Exploring Healthcare Interpreting for Chinese Immigrants in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Auckland).
- González Campanella, A. (2022). 'Trauma informs so much of what happens:' interpreting refugee-background clients in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Perspectives*, 30(5), 856–872. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2022.2098784>

-
- González Campanella, A. (2023). Availability and acceptability of interpreting services for refugees as a question of trauma-informed care. *Interpreting and Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 3(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/27523810231159174>
- Goodman-Delahunty, J., & Martschuk, N. (2017). Risks and benefits of interpreter-mediated police interviews. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 23(4), 451–471.
- Gray, B., Hilder, J., & Stubbe, M. (2012). How to use interpreters in general practice: The development of a New Zealand toolkit. *Journal of Primary Health Care*, 4(1), 52–61. <https://doi.org/10.1071/HC12052>
- Gray, B. (2022, May 17). *Government funding of interpreters in Primary Care is needed to ensure quality care*. Public Health Communication Centre Aotearoa. <https://www.phcc.org.nz/briefing/government-funding-interpreters-primary-care-needed-ensure-quality-care>
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82.
- Habib, T., Nair, A., Von Pressentin, K., Kaswa, R., & Saeed, H. (2023). Do not lose your patient in translation: Using interpreters effectively in primary care. *South African Family Practice*, 65(1), a5655. <https://doi.org/10.4102/safp.v65i1.5655>
- Jieun, L. (2010). A Case Study of an Untrained Interpreter's Court Interpreting. *번역학연구 (Translation Studies)*, 11(1), 339–360.
- Juckett, G., & Unger, K. (2014). Appropriate use of medical interpreters. *American Family Physician*, 90(7), 476–480.
- Judicial Council on Cultural Diversity. (2022). *Recommended national standards for working with interpreters in courts and tribunals* (2nd ed.). <https://jccd.org.au/>
- Kletečka-Pulker, M., Parrag, S., Droždek, B., & Wenzel, T. (2018). Language barriers and the role of interpreters: A challenge in the work with migrants and refugees. In *An uncertain safety: Integrative health care for the 21st century refugees* (pp. 345–361). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Lopez, A. (2022). *Latin American refugees and immigrants in New Zealand: The impact of migration status on quality of life* [Doctoral thesis, Auckland University of Technology]. Tuwhera. <https://hdl.handle.net/10292/15018>

-
- Marianacci, A. (2021). *Ethics for interpreters: The code is only the beginning* [Handout]. CC BY 4.0.
- Marianacci, A. (2022, September 10). *Community interpreters are out in the cold*. Public Service Association (PSA).
<https://www.psa.org.nz/our-voice/community-translators-are-out-in-the-cold/>
- Marianacci, A. (2022). Horizontal methodologies in community interpreting studies: Conducting research with Latin American service users in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Interpreting and Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2(1), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/27523810221110033>
- Matthews, T. (2023, January 26). Court interpreters in Mass. plan February walkout over stagnant wages. *MassLive*.
<https://www.masslive.com/news/2023/01/court-interpreters-in-mass-plan-february-walkout-over-stagnant-wages.html>
- McIntosh, A., & Cockburn-Wooten, C. (2019). Refugee-focused service providers: Improving the welcome in New Zealand. *The Service Industries Journal*, 39(9-10), 701–716.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2018.1472243>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Anecdotal evidence. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*.
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anecdotal%20evidence>
- Migrant and Refugee Women’s Health Partnership. (2019). *Guide for clinicians working with interpreters in healthcare settings*. <https://culturaldiversityhealth.org.au/>
- Miletic, T., Piu, M., Minas, H., Stankovska, M., Stolk, Y., & Klimidis, S. (2006). *Guidelines for working effectively with interpreters in mental health settings*. Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit.
- Ministry for Ethnic Communities. (2025). *Strategic opportunities to deliver higher impact for New Zealand*.
<https://www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz/resources/corporate-publications/bim-january-2025/strategic-opportunities-to-deliver-higher-impact-for-new-zealand-ethnic-communities>
- Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. (2016). Fair and accessible public services: Summary report on the use of interpreters and other language assistance in New Zealand.
<https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/12344-fair-and-accessiblepublic-services-summary-report-on-the-use-of-interpreter-services-and-other-languageassistance-in-new-zealand>

Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. (2024, November 6). *Response to official information request regarding the Language Assistance Services (LAS) complaints process* (Ref: 28402). FYI.org.nz.

<https://fyi.org.nz/request/28402-information-about-the-las-complaints-process>

Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. (2025). *Response to official information request regarding Language Services Provider (LSP) obligations and participating agencies under the Language Assistance Services (LAS) programme* (Ref: 29347). FYI.org.nz.

<https://fyi.org.nz/request/29347-information-about-lsps-and-participating-agencies-obligations-under-the-las-programme>

Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. (n.d.). *Language Assistance Services*.

<https://www.mbie.govt.nz/cross-government-functions/language-assistance-services>

Mortensen, A. (2008). Public health system responsiveness to refugee groups in New Zealand: Activation from the bottom up. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 33, 166–182.

Munyangayo, T., Rabadán-Gómez, M., & Webb, G. (Eds.). (2016). *Challenges and opportunities in public service interpreting*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-45000-5>

New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters. (2025). *NZSTI report 2025: National survey of translator & interpreter rates & working conditions*. <https://www.nzsti.org/>

Paradise, R. K., Hatch, M., Quessa, A., Gargano, F., Khaliif, M., & Costa, V. (2019). Reducing the use of ad hoc interpreters at a safety-net health care system. *The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety*, 45(6), 397–405. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jciq.2019.01.004>


Puthooppambal, S. J., Phelan, M., & MacFarlane, A. (2021). Migrant health and language barriers: Uncovering macro level influences on the implementation of trained interpreters in healthcare settings. *Health Policy*, 125(8), 1085–1091.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthpol.2021.05.018>

Pym, A., & Macreadie, R. (2026). Translator employment and the risk of market collapse: News from Australia. *Translation & Interpreting*, 18(1), 1–18.

<https://doi.org/10.12807/ti.118201.2026.a01>

VanderWielen, L. M., Enurah, A. S., Rho, H. Y., Nagarkatti-Gude, D. R., Michelsen-King, P., Crossman, S. H., & Vanderbilt, A. A. (2014). Medical interpreters: improvements to address access, equity, and quality of care for limited-English-proficient patients. *Academic Medicine*, 89(10), 1324-1327. <https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000000296>



Watt, K., Hu, W., Magin, P., & Abbott, P. (2018). "Imagine if I'm not here, what they're going to do?"—Health-care access and culturally and linguistically diverse women in prison. *Health Expectations*, 21(6), 1159–1169. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.12820>