

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

**ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 27 February 2017**

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

**(AE17/092) - Translating and Interpreting Services - Programme 2.3: Visas**

Senator Di Natale, Richard (L&CA) written:

1. Older people are unable to access Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) after the initial negotiation process is completed and people have to pay for their own interpreter costs if they need language services. Does TIS disaggregate data in relation to aged care services to ascertain how many people call interpreters when receiving services at their own cost?
2. What are the service delivery targets for Translating & Interpreting Services?
3. How many Translating & Interpreting Services requests are unable to be met within service delivery targets?
4. Which languages in Translating & Interpreting Services have shortages of interpreters?
5. What strategies or plans are in place to address interpreter shortages?
6. What, if any, has been the growth in registered organisations using Translating & Interpreting Services?
7. What, if any, has been the growth of General Practitioners using Translating & Interpreting Services?
8. Allied Health Professionals don't have access to free Translating & Interpreting Services.
  - a. How is this gap being filled?
  - b. Who is covering the costs of Allied Health Professionals using Translating & Interpreting Services for their patients?

*Answer:*

1. Older people are unable to access Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) after the initial negotiation process is completed and people have to pay for their own interpreter costs if they need language services. Does TIS disaggregate data in relation to aged care services to ascertain how many people call interpreters when receiving services at their own cost?

TIS National is one of the largest public sector interpreting service providers in Australia, providing telephone and onsite interpreting services to four major client groups:

- Department of Immigration and Border Protection
- other government agencies such as the Department of Social Services
- non-government organisations (NGOs) such as the Salvation Army and Lifeline
- external fee paying clients such as utilities, telcos and banks.

In the financial year 2016-17 to date (to 20 March 2017), less than 400 services were paid for directly by Non-English speakers (NES) across all client groups.

2. What are the service delivery targets for Translating & Interpreting Services?

TIS National has service delivery standards, or Grades of Service (GOS), which relate to the period of time taken to answer a call (for immediate telephone interpreting) or fulfil a service request (for onsite interpreting services). The GOS targets are outlined in the table below.

<i>Service Type</i>	<i>GOS</i>
<i>Immediate telephone interpreting services</i>	<i>90% of calls answered within 30 seconds</i>
<i>Onsite interpreting services</i>	<i>85% of service requests allocated to an interpreter within 3 days</i>

3. How many Translating & Interpreting Services requests are unable to be met within service delivery targets?

**GOS: Immediate telephone interpreting services, calls answered within 30 seconds:**

	<i>2017 FYTD</i>
<i>Calls answered outside GOS target</i>	<i>406,797</i>

**GOS: Onsite interpreting services, service requests allocated to an interpreter within 3 days:**

	<i>2017 FYTD</i>
<i>Bookings allocated outside GOS target</i>	<i>7,829</i>

4. Which languages in Translating & Interpreting Services have shortages of interpreters?

Within the top 50 languages by demand, based on 2017 financial year-to-date figures (to 20 March 2017), there is unmet demand of greater than 10% in 10 languages.

<i>Karen</i>
<i>Somali</i>
<i>Portuguese</i>
<i>Malaysian</i>
<i>Indonesian</i>
<i>Oromo</i>
<i>Polish</i>
<i>Filipino</i>
<i>Tibetan</i>
<i>Karenni</i>

5. What strategies or plans are in place to address interpreter shortages?

TIS National works as part of the broader interpreting industry to build capacity in the industry. This includes working in close partnership with NAATI, participating in NAATI advisory committees and providing input into the Improvement to NAATI Testing programme, due to be implemented in January 2018. TIS National also maintains relationships with other key stakeholders, including:

- higher education, vocational education and training providers in the sector
- State and territory departments responsible for language services
- advocacy organisations such as the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils.

TIS National also operates a Sponsorship and Scholarship programme to build capacity and improve professionalism amongst interpreters. Under this programme, interpreters who gain NAATI accreditation or who upskill to a higher level of accreditation are eligible to have their testing fees reimbursed. This programme also provides funding to reimburse all eligible interpreters for the cost of participating in one professional development course attracting NAATI revalidation points each year.

6. What, if any, has been the growth in registered organisations using Translating & Interpreting Services?

The number of active client accounts registered for TIS National services grew by over 14% in the 2016 financial year and increased a further 7% in the 2017 financial year-to-date (20 March 2017).

7. What, if any, has been the growth of General Practitioners using Translating & Interpreting Services?

Access to the Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS National) for General Practitioners is managed and funded by the Department of Social Services (DSS).

8. Allied Health Professionals don't have access to free Translating & Interpreting Services.

a. How is this gap being filled?

The Free Interpreting Service (FIS) eligibility criteria is set by DSS.

b. Who is covering the costs of Allied Health Professionals using Translating & Interpreting Services for their patients?

FIS eligibility criteria is set by DSS.