INDIGENOUS INTERPRETERS PROJECT

The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) has a funding agreement for 2015/2016 & 2016/2017 with the Australian Government through the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet’s (PM&C) Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) to: increase the number of accredited Indigenous languages interpreters in South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland.

The three objectives of the project are:

1. Increase the number of accredited Indigenous interpreters and examiners.
2. Increase the range of Indigenous languages for which there are accredited Indigenous interpreters.
3. Increase the accessibility of interpreting resources for Indigenous interpreters and organisations

NAATI offers four levels of interpreter accreditation - Paraprofessional Interpreter (PPI), Professional Interpreter (PI), Conference Interpreter and Conference Interpreter (Senior).

Most Indigenous interpreters are accredited at the PPI level. PPI accreditation for Indigenous interpreters may be obtained through one of the following ways:

- completion of a NAATI approved course – this would normally be a Diploma of Interpreting course delivered by a TAFE college (In some instances, completion of the course can qualify a person for NAATI accreditation).
- delivery of intensive interpreter workshops by a reputable consultant or organization (such as NTAIS) followed by NAATI testing in conjunction with a NAATI-approved consultant.

The first Indigenous language PI tests were developed in 2009 by the Northern Territory’s Aboriginal Interpreter Service (AIS). In doing so, they developed their own component covering legal and court training. In 2013/14 NAATI received funding from the NTAIS to develop PI tests in a number of languages spoken by their experienced interpreters who are engaged in court and health interpreting. A Professional level training manual for Indigenous Interpreters was developed with this funding.

1. Increase the number of accredited Indigenous interpreters and examiners

NAATI delivers PPI test training workshops to provide Indigenous language speakers who have an interest in interpreting with an opportunity to become a NAATI accredited interpreter. The workshops provide information about the NAATI interpreter test including the Australian Institute of Translators and Interpreters (AUSIT) code of ethics which all NAATI accredited interpreters are required to abide by.
Participants are then given an opportunity to sit the NAATI PPI test. Some workshop participants are already working as Indigenous language interpreters but have not previously been accredited by NAATI. NAATI accredited interpreters seeking to revalidate their credentials may also attend these workshops. In order to maintain high standards, NAATI has put in place a revalidation system whereby all interpreters who have gained accreditation since 2007 onwards are required to show evidence of professional development and work experience.

NAATI covers costs associated with participation in these workshops including travel and accommodation (if required). NAATI also administers an Indigenous interpreter’s accreditation fund that can be used by eligible individuals to cover the costs associated with NAATI application and test fees. The funding may also be used by accredited interpreters applying to have their credentials revalidated.

In order to increase the number of NAATI accredited Indigenous language interpreters, NAATI also needs to increase the number of examiners available to assess candidate tests. An examiner panel usually consists of two examiners already accredited in the language being tested.

One panel member will have the Indigenous language as their first language and the other will have English as their first language. If examiners of this background are not available, NAATI will consider unaccredited nominees, but only if they have proven linguistic skills in both languages and have had some experience as interpreters. NAATI trains interpreters interested in becoming NAATI examiner panel members.

The NAATI test must be marked according to the NAATI guidelines set out in the NAATI Examiners’ Manual. Each examiner records their marks for the candidate on a Result Sheet. Test candidates do their test with a test supervisor in the room. The test is audio recorded and the two examiners who know the language well are asked to mark the recording. The recording is then sent to a third examiner who knows NAATI interpreting standards well and acts as the ‘moderator’.

NAATI works collaboratively with Indigenous language interpreting services such as the AIS and the Kimberley Interpreting Service Aboriginal Corporation (KISAC) as well as Indigenous language centres to develop new testing materials and recruit workshop participants, test candidates and examiners.

2. **Increase the range of Indigenous languages for which there are accredited Indigenous interpreters.**

NAATI currently offers accreditation in over 25 Indigenous languages and has recently created new paraprofessional interpreter (PPI) level test materials in Yindjibarndi, Kalaw Kawaw Ya (KKY) and Yumplatok (Torres Strait Creole).

3. **Increase the accessibility of interpreting resources for Indigenous interpreters and organisations**

NAATI has engaged TafeSA to develop online interpreting resources (dialogue animations) in the following languages: Yumplatok, Kalaw Kawaw Ya, Martu Wangka, Nyangumarta, Ngaanyatjarra, Walmajarri and Kimberley Kriol. This material will assist with interpreter training particularly for candidates who may not have had any exposure to the interpreting industry. The dialogue animations show Indigenous interpreters on typical assignments for the police, housing officials, etc. providing good examples of interpreting practices.
Other activities

A comprehensive overview of NAATI’s accreditation system is currently underway (see information about the Improvements to NAATI testing project on the NAATI website). NAATI is and will continue to engage with Indigenous interpreting stakeholders to discuss proposed changes and recommendations arising from various review processes to ensure the needs of the Indigenous interpreting sector will be considered in any new proposed certification scheme.