



# Lost in Communication: Language and Symbolic Violence in Australia's Public Services

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis represents the work of the author alone except where due acknowledgement has been made; the work has not previously been wholly or partly submitted for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the consequence of work that has been done during the period of the PhD candidature.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

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## Table of Contents

<b>Declaration</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>List of Charts</b> .....	<b>viii</b>
<b>Glossary of Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>xi</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Context and Background.....	2
Objectives of the Study and Research Questions .....	7
Research Rationale and Significance.....	8
Research Design in Brief .....	14
Structure of the Thesis .....	17
<b>Chapter One: Constituting the Problem—On Language, Public Services and Equality</b> .....	<b>20</b>
Public Services and Equality .....	20
On Language, Ideology and Power.....	27
Translating and Interpreting in Public Service Settings .....	38
Why Is This Study Needed? .....	41
Summary .....	44
<b>Chapter Two: Language and Symbolic Violence - Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice</b> .....	<b>46</b>
Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice .....	46
<i>Habitus</i> .....	47
<i>Field</i> .....	48
<i>Capital</i> .....	51
<i>Symbolic violence</i> .....	52
The Field of Public Services and Language .....	55
Summary .....	57
<b>Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Design</b> .....	<b>59</b>
Understanding the Philosophy of the Research .....	59
Research Methodologies and Approaches .....	60
Research Approach for This Study .....	64
Research Questions .....	68
Data Sources for the Study .....	69
Case studies: Public service institutions .....	69
Case studies: Semi-structured narrative interviews with public service translators and interpreters .....	70
Surveys and narrations: Citizens with language barriers.....	72
Data Analysis Procedures .....	73
Reliability and Validity.....	74
Ethical Issues .....	74
Summary .....	76

<b>Chapter Four: Dialogue or Monologue? Practices of Public Services.....</b>	<b>78</b>
Contextualising the Agent.....	79
Implementation by Public Services of Policies for Engagement with the Public.....	84
<i>Social and welfare services agency</i> .....	86
<i>Emergency services agency</i> .....	89
<i>Three city councils</i> .....	94
<i>Two health services</i> .....	103
<i>Privacy and citizens</i> .....	104
Interviews with Three Representatives from Public Service Agencies .....	107
<i>Brief background information about participants</i> .....	108
<i>Circumstances in which they or their organisation need to communicate with the</i> <i>NES community</i> .....	108
<i>Methods of communication with NES community members and any challenges</i> .....	109
<i>Major issues are in public service provision through translation and interpreting</i> .....	110
<i>Engagement with NES community members to seek their views or opinions on</i> <i>policy, services and amendments</i> .....	113
<i>Suggestions to improve public service provision through translation and</i> <i>interpreting</i> .....	113
<i>Recognition of translators and interpreters are well regarded as part of the public</i> <i>service</i> .....	115
Comments on Data from Public Service Staff.....	116
Reflecting on Data Using Bourdieu's Concepts .....	118
Summary .....	120
<b>Chapter Five: Public Service Translators and Interpreters .....</b>	<b>122</b>
The Nature of Public Service Translation and Interpreting .....	122
The Situation of Public Service Translators and Interpreters in Australia .....	123
Semi-Structured Interviews with Translators and Interpreters .....	127
<i>Profile information</i> .....	127
<i>What texts or topics do interpreters and translators deal with?</i> .....	129
<i>What, if any, specialist training has been offered in public services, government</i> <i>policies or public discourse?</i> .....	130
<i>What are the major issues in the public service translation and interpreting sector? ..</i>	133
<i>Practices of sense-making in interpreting and translating in the public service</i> <i>setting</i> .....	138
<i>The training of professionals and NES speakers on the role of translators and</i> <i>interpreters</i> .....	145
<i>What is your understanding of your professional role and status within the public</i> <i>service setting?</i> .....	146
<i>Thoughts on private translation agencies</i> .....	148
<i>How do you perceive recognition of public service translation or interpreting as a</i> <i>profession?</i> .....	151
<i>The future of the profession</i> .....	154
Reflecting on Data Using Bourdieu's Concepts .....	156
Summary .....	157
<b>Chapter Six: Citizens with Language Barriers and Their Experiences .....</b>	<b>159</b>
Contextualising the Agent.....	160
Data from the Questionnaire .....	163
<i>Demographic information</i> .....	163
<i>Language skills</i> .....	164

<i>Communication with public services</i> .....	167
<i>Experience with use of language services</i> .....	178
<i>Participation in the wider community and democratic life</i> .....	180
Stories of People with Language Barriers .....	185
<i>Mr A and Mrs B</i> .....	186
<i>Mr C</i> 189	
<i>Mrs D</i> .....	193
<i>Mrs E</i> .....	195
<i>Mr F</i> 197	
Reflecting on Data Using Bourdieu's Concepts .....	199
Summary .....	200
<b>Chapter Seven: Discussion of Key Findings</b> .....	<b>202</b>
How and Why Are People Being Excluded from the Processes that Make Up Society? ..	204
Why Are People with Language Barriers Being Left Out? .....	214
Who Is Affected, and What Are the Economic, Social and Political Environments in which the Problem Is Most Apparent? .....	220
Realities of Second Language Learning .....	227
What Are the Structures, Processes and Relations of Power that Exist within Societies that Result in the Inclusion of Some and Exclusion of Others? .....	230
Summary .....	238
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>240</b>
How are current policies regarding public social inclusion, access and equity implemented in everyday public service provision, and what is their impact on the social inclusion of community members experiencing language barriers? ....	241
How can we better understand of the interaction between the public institutions that control critical services and citizens with language barriers in a field of practice shaped by asymmetric or unequal relations of power? .....	242
Contribution of the Research and Recommendations .....	244
Recommendations .....	246
Recommendations for Future Research .....	247
Limitations of the Study .....	249
<b>References</b> .....	<b>251</b>
<b>Appendix I: Questionnaire</b> .....	<b>272</b>
<b>Appendix II: Interview Schedule (1): Non-English Speaking Community Members</b> ...	<b>278</b>
<b>Appendix III: Interview Schedule (2): Public Service Translators and Interpreters</b> ...	<b>279</b>
<b>Appendix V: Interview Schedule (3): Public Service Managers and Coordinators Responsible for Arranging Translators and Interpreters</b> .....	<b>280</b>
<b>Appendix VI: Recommendations of the Access and Equity Inquiry and Government Response</b> .....	<b>281</b>
<b>Appendix VII: Multicultural Access and Equity Policy Minimum Obligations</b> .....	<b>290</b>
<b>Appendix VIII: Ethics Approval</b> .....	<b>294</b>

## List of Tables

Table 3.1 <i>Research Cultures</i> .....	62
Table 3.2 <i>Research Sub-paradigms</i> .....	63
Table 4.1 <i>City Council A Corporate Training 2011–2012</i> .....	98
Table 6.1 <i>Languages Other Than English Spoken by Participants</i> .....	166

## List of Charts

Chart 1: What is the most common public service you use? (Please circle one answer) .....	168
Chart 2: Who initiates the interaction between you and the public services? .....	170
Chart 3: In which language do public services (e.g., welfare, Centrelink, employment agency, housing, hospital, childcare, schools, police, courts etc.) contact you? ..	170
Chart 4: How do you mostly communicate with public services?.....	171
Chart 5: If you get help from family/friends, do you think your privacy/confidentiality is compromised? .....	176
Chart 6: Do you find quality of language services (e.g., interpreters or translated information) satisfactory? .....	178
Chart 7: Do you find translated letters, information sheets or brochures helpful? .....	179
Chart 8: What do you expect from interpreters? (multiple answers allowed) .....	180
Chart 9: Do you participate in social/cultural, sports or special interest clubs or groups (including religious events/activities where English is spoken)? .....	181
Chart 10: Do you ever get consulted by public services including city councils about any changes, new plans, new policies or services in writing or verbally? .....	182
Chart 11: Do you vote in federal, state and local elections?.....	183
Chart 12: If language were not a barrier, would you have contributed to public debates and policies at councils, state or federal government levels? .....	185



## **Glossary of Abbreviations**

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACEM	Australasian College of Emergency Medicine
AGIMO	Australian Government Information Management Office
AMAC	Australian Multicultural Advisory Council
AMEP	Adult Migrant Education Program
AMP	Agency Multicultural Plans
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
APESMA	Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers, Australia
APSC	Australian Public Service Commission
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CMEP	Child Migrant Education Program
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
DoHS	Department of Human Services
DPMC	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
HMHB	Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
IAC	Information Advisory Committee
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
LOTE	Language other than English
MFB	Metropolitan Fire Brigade
MLO	Multicultural Liaison Officer
NAATI	National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters
NARI	National Ageing Research Institute
NES	Non-English speaking
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
OAIC	Office of the Australian Information Commissioner
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PICF	Participant Information and Consent Form
PSI	Public Service Interpreting
PSTI	Public Service Translating and Interpreting
RoGS	Report on Government Services
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TIS	Translating and Interpreting Service

## Abstract

This research examined an often overlooked social problem that affects the lives and welfare of a significant number of Australians. This phenomenon is the interaction between public services and citizens who are either not proficient in or unable to speak the common language used by the society in general and by public services in particular. The phenomenon has implications for engagement, participation, equality and ultimately, social inclusion. There is a need for serious academic scrutiny that identifies ‘inconsistencies’ or ‘contradictions’ in the ways in which ordinary people with language barriers experience inequality in their relationship with public services today. This study examined this phenomenon and its implications in Australia in the context of public service provision.

This study addressed this gap by examining two interrelated issues: the inequalities at play in accessing critical services by citizens with language barriers within a supposedly socially inclusive public service environment, and the politics at play in the use of translators and interpreters, a key independent communication method, in public service provision.

To do this, this study, aided by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice, closely examined the practices and lived experiences of public service providers, translators and interpreters, and citizens with language barriers. First, gaining a rare insight into the circumstances and lives of community members with language barriers, this study exposed the vulnerabilities of these community members and the everyday incidents of *symbolic violence* they experience in essentially ‘forced encounters’ (forced by necessity) with public services. Second, through an examination of the everyday practices of public services, the study demonstrated serious gaps between access and equity policies and their implementation, revealing an ‘unchanging culture’ in the *habitus* of public services regarding communication with ethnic minorities. Finally, by providing an understanding of the work

environments of interpreters and translators, this study revealed the vulnerability and uncertainty experienced by them.

Given the multi-disciplinary nature of the research questions, spanning language, sociology and anthropology, this study incorporated a multi-faceted research strategy, interweaving qualitative and quantitative research paradigms and consisting of surveys, semi-structured narrative interviews, narrations and examination of publicly available reports and websites. The data obtained through this research strategy were analysed through statistics, content analysis and triangulation. Data came from three key players in this field of practice: public service agencies, interpreters and translators, and citizens with language barriers in Melbourne, Australia.

## Introduction

In the seemingly most ordinary settings, the political implications of what we say and how we say it are demonstrated time and time again. An example is offered in a story told by Allimant and Ostapiej-Piatkowski (2011) about a non-English speaking (NES) woman who had arrived in Australia as a migrant and rejoined her husband. Within weeks of her arrival she was taken to a GP by her husband and mother-in-law who interpreted for her. Somewhat later, she presented to the Immigrant Women's Support Service complaining of domestic violence. In the subsequent assessment, she showed the worker what had happened at the GP: she had been implanted with a contraceptive device—IMPLANON—without her knowledge or consent (Allimant & Ostapiej-Piatkowski, 2011, p. 10). This woman's story reminds us of the potentially devastating consequences for those who face and yet cannot surmount daily language barriers in our society.

Government agencies providing many of these essential services claim to operate with objectives such as access, equity, openness and inclusiveness in mind (Holmes, 2011). This takes place in the context of an increasingly aggressive economic liberalism (neo-liberalism) in public management, which places economic rationalism at the top of policy priorities, that has been adopted by both major political parties in Australia since 1980s (Dufty & Gibson, 2010). Although a series of access and equity policies have been introduced since early 1980s, a string of reviews of access and equity policies in 1992, 2005 and 2012 point to problems in implementation (Jupp, 1992, 2007; Department of Social Services, 2013). The underlying reasons for this ineffective implementation over almost four decades, the vulnerabilities that result from language barriers as experienced by many people in the society and the role and position of translators and interpreters, a key independent, communication method, in overcoming these barriers are not well researched or understood

(Doyle, 1992; Jacobs et al., 2006; Hale, 2007). This matters in a society profoundly shaped by migration especially since 1945.

## **Context and Background**

From late 1800s to 1945, Australia had a strict migration policy that favoured white English speaking Britons. Approximately 97% of the population in 1945 claimed an Anglo-Celtic background (Barnes, 2007). The preservation of a white Anglo-Celtic society was the main concern of national policy-makers after 1901. Even in 1945 returning servicemen were not allowed to bring their Asian wives to Australia (Barnes, 2007). However, a deep concern about security after the Japanese attack in Darwin, the desire to build an industrial nation, and dwindling numbers of Britons willing to migrate to Australia forced a policy change after 1957 encouraging a search for migrants from other sources. Still the concern for preserving a white, Anglo-Celtic country continued to shape the new migration policy. In 1945, Arthur Calwell, the first Commonwealth Migration Minister, announced that 70,000 migrants would be needed to maintain a 2% population increase annually and this would need to include migrants from non-British countries. Even so he promised that this intake relied on a basic rule: ‘for every foreign migrant, there will be ten from the United Kingdom’ (Hammerton & Thomson, 2005) As the numbers of British migrants kept dwindling, the ratio was reduced to 2:1 in 1950s and by late 1960s, only 50% of migrants had to be white, English-speaking Britons (Hammerton & Thomson, 2005).

The extensive immigration program which began in 1945 initially targeted displaced people from Eastern and Northern Europe. By 1952 it began to include southern European countries. The result was a significant mixture of large numbers of non-English speaking people into Australia (Jordans, 1997; Jupp, 2007). The formal ending of the ‘White Australia’ policy in migration in 1973 and increased humanitarian intakes of refugees from the late 1970s further expanded the source countries and regions of new settlers. The 2011 Australian

Census (ABS, 2011) showed that one in four of Australia's population were born overseas, and approximately one in five speak a LOTE (Language Other Than English) at home. Between 2008 and 2012, approximately 186,000 new settlers (17% across all migration streams, of a total of 1,078,920) arriving in Australia reported their English proficiency to be 'nil' or 'poor'. In aggregate, including newcomers and already settled groups, 654,964 people reported having difficulty speaking English in the 2011 Census (ABS, 2011). Koleh (2010) predicts this diversity will continue to grow due to increasing movement of people globally and the complexity of this will present challenges for government policies and will require innovative solutions to deal with the consequences.

Apart from the increased linguistic diversity associated with immigration since 1945, and particularly since the quite significant intake of family reunion and refugee settlers since the 1970s, Australia is also home to more than 200 Indigenous languages spoken by its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, although only about 18 of these languages are classified as viable, and 110 are classified as endangered with risk of extinction in the next 10–30 years, according to the National Indigenous Languages Survey Report prepared by AIATSIS and FATSIL in 2005. In 2011, 548,370 people identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin as counted in the Census, of which 61,800 stated that they spoke Australian Indigenous languages at home (ABS, 2011).

Finally, in addition to the people who do not speak English, there is another section of the community who need to negotiate language barriers in their everyday lives, namely the deaf and hearing-impaired community. Although the barriers faced by the deaf and hearing-impaired differ from those of other groups in that they result from physical disabilities, their language needs are nonetheless similar: they too are obliged to negotiate language barriers when interacting with the public services and the rest of the community in order to fully participate in society and have access to the same services and opportunities as others. In the

2011 Census, 8,406 people nationwide nominated Auslan as the language they spoke at home (ABS, 2011).

The social consequences of this change in the social make-up of the Australian society were first reported on in 1978 in a Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants, commissioned by the Federal Government of Australia and chaired by Melbourne lawyer Frank Galbally (hereafter, the ‘Galbally Review’). The uniform clientele of the public services in Australia was not uniform anymore (Jupp & McRobbie, 1992). The Galbally Review noted that those migrants in Australia who were not sufficiently proficient in English continued to be disadvantaged and were not reached effectively, if at all, by many programs and services: ‘[T]here is evidence quoted elsewhere in this Report and in other reports to suggest that nearly half a million of our population face these problems and that many suffer severe hardship because of them’ (p. 2). This finding is significant in that it provides an official insight into the circumstances in the late 1970s. It tells us that there was then a significant section of the community—at least half a million people among a population of approximately 14.4 million (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS])—who were facing significant language barriers and experiencing hardship and disadvantage as a result. Equally significantly, Galbally, in his introduction to the report, highlighted that the changing social make-up of the community presented challenges for the governments, drawing attention to the fact that programs and services were not accessible by these people at the time.

The official statistics tell us that, after nearly four decades, there are still people in the community who are not proficient in English, the common language of the country and public services, and are likely to face serious language barriers when they need to access basic educational, legal, health care, welfare and other community and official services, advice and information. Public services are typically the kinds of essential services that all members of a society need to be able to access (Percy-Smith, 2000; Hyman, 2014). The



importance of public services in achieving and maintaining a ‘good society’, enabling people to lead fulfilling, safe and flourishing lives where their human rights are respected and governments ensure a minimum of equality, opportunity and social justice, has been well recognised in the policy literature (Beilharz, Considine & Watts, 1992; Bessant, 2008; Hermann, 2014; Mahnkopf, 2008; Marshall, 1950; Marston & Watts, 2004). This has most often been discussed in terms of concepts of a theory of social citizenship. For example, Beilharz et al. (1992) drew attention to questions of the social and political rights raised by citizenship, while Bessant (2008) more recently argued that ‘unequal access to resources produces unequal access to power which in turn enhances the disproportionate influence of privileged elites’ (p. 364). Similarly, Mahnkopf (2008) described public services as an essential part of ‘social citizenship’, which makes access and equal treatment an obligation on the part of the government.

The UN *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1976), to which Australia is a signatory, highlights ability to access basic public services is a fundamental political human right of all citizens. Article 25 of the Charter declares that:

Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity..... without unreasonable restrictions:

- (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;
- (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;
- (c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

Although the rights of individuals, including those with language barriers, are recognised in the Covenant, the right to critical public services and the ability to exercise those rights in

terms of effective access may be quite separate things in practice. For example, in defining what a citizen means, Roche and van Berkel (1997, p. xvii) highlighted the significance of *having the ability to exercise rights* in addition to merely *having rights*: their definition encompasses ‘the possession of a range of civil, political and social rights and responsibilities—and the ability to exercise these rights and responsibilities—underwritten largely but not exclusively by nation states’. Galabuzi & Teelucksingh (2010) further argued that ‘unequal access to critical resources that determine the quality of membership in society, ultimately produces and reproduces a complex of unequal outcomes’ (p. 9), and identified inequality in access as a major obstacle in achieving social inclusion and a factor that leads to social exclusion.

Australian Government agencies providing many of these essential services claim to operate with objectives such as access, equity, openness and inclusiveness in mind (Holmes, 2011) and have introduced access and equity policies under various titles since early 1980s following recommendations made by the Galbally Review (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). The policies have, among others, objectives of removing language barriers to access government services (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015; Hale, 2007; Jupp, 1992). The current policy ‘Multicultural Access and Equity Policy’ (Department of Social Services, 2015), with the stated principle of ‘Australian government programmes and services should be accessible by all eligible Australians, responsive to their needs, and deliver equitable outcomes for them, regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds’ (p. 8) urges government departments and agencies to utilize ‘a range of communication techniques to engage with clients from different backgrounds, including the use of information in languages other than English, plain English and blended information delivery methods (e.g., print, online, face-to-face) and to ‘set clear guidelines for when and how staff should use translating and interpreting services’ (p. 10).

Although these policies point to translators and interpreters as key resources in overcoming language barriers (Doyle, 1992; Galbally, 1978; Vanstone, 2012), various reports over several decades point to a fragile profession crippled by lack of recognition, low pay and casualised workforce (APESMA, 2012; Ozolins, 2010). As a result, it becomes difficult to attract and retain qualified interpreters and translators in this critical profession, resulting in shortages (APESMA, 2012). The unavailability of interpreters impede access, leads to reliance on family members and friends or use of unqualified intermediaries and ultimately results in inadequate service (Doyle, 1992).

All of the above take place in the backdrop of an increasingly aggressive economic liberalism (neo-liberalism) in public management, a top policy priority adopted by both major political parties in Australia since 1980s (Dufty & Gibson, 2010). How much of the statements in access and equity policies reflect a genuine concern of the government for the welfare of people with language barriers and how much of it is figment in a neo-liberal public service environment characterised by deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision (Harvey, 2005) needs robust scrutiny.

## **Objectives of the Study and Research Questions**

This research aims to scrutinise some of the everyday communication processes and practices of public services that have been operating within a policy ostensibly committed to access and equity for citizens with language barriers since early 1980s. This is done through an analysis of communication practices of various public services that operate with stated policy objectives of access and equity, their impact on people with language barriers in every day settings and the position of translators and interpreters, a key feature of access and equity policies, in this context.

To do this, my study addresses the following research questions:

- How are current government policies on access and equity implemented in everyday public service structures and processes with respect to citizens experiencing language barriers?
- How can we better understand of the interaction between the public agencies that control critical services and citizens with language barriers in a field of practice shaped by asymmetric or unequal relations of power?

Addressing these two questions required elaborating them via several sub-questions to further focus the inquiry into the communication practices of public services:

- What is the experience of living with a language barrier like?
- What power relations exist in the communication practices of public services?
- What is the position of translators and interpreters in overcoming basic language barriers in delivering a public service?

In addressing these questions, the research focused on significant issues such as the production and reproduction of inequalities for citizens with language barriers, and the politics at work in the use of translators and interpreters, a key communication method in public service provision and access and equity policies. These questions are warranted for a number of reasons, some intellectual and others more practical in nature. This rationale is laid out in the following section.

## **Research Rationale and Significance**

Communication between government and community members is critical (Cavaye, 2004; Wang & Lim, 2011). This is mainly because governments exercise, through power granted by legislation and various institutions and means, control aspects of the lives of citizens and residents in a country and provide essential services and resources that are needed by the citizens (Hyman, 2014, p. 7). On one side, a government is represented by an organisation (any of a number of public services) that has control over how, when and to

whom critical resources, political and administrative processes and services—often essential for membership of a society—are dispensed. On the other side, a community member may be in need of a service, such as income support, health care, education or disability aides, not merely to sustain a ‘bare human life’ (Nussbaum, cited in Marston & Watts, 2004) but to develop their capabilities to take part in society and to lead a ‘good human life’. Jupp (1992) noted in modern democracies, a service should be accessible by all eligible citizens as a right. A point also made by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):

For a democracy to operate effectively, the government must communicate with the citizens of the country. They have a right to know what government ministries and other public sector bodies are doing, and why administrative decisions are made. The information provided by government must be credible and timely. (OECD, 1996, p. 6)

Language problems cause major barriers for access (Jones & Palmer, 1992). Doyle (1992) viewed language barriers, in public service settings, as communication barriers between two parties ‘who need to make themselves understood to each other within a service context (p. 40). In Australia, as early as in 1978, the Galbally Review provided the evidence that many people were experiencing disadvantage due to language barriers and proposed a series of recommendations to improve the situation.

At about the same time, in mid-70s, the economic crisis that ended sustained economic growth in the West in the aftermath of WWII meant reduced income for governments while public expenditures grew faster (O’Connor, 2002; Saunders, 1994; Watts, 1987). This then led to economic rationalism from the early 1980’s which led to a push to measure the performance of public services in terms of efficiencies, a key concept in private sector enterprises, but often resulting in a contradiction of their objectives to serve public

good. Hermann (2014, p. 118) observes 'from the 1980s onwards, the improvement in efficiency has become the main goal of public sector reform, while other objectives such as promotion of equality and social justice have increasingly become marginalised.' These neo-liberal policies had wide ranging impacts on every sphere of public life, from employment to economic activities and development of the private sector in almost every field, often leaving the most marginalised worse off (Hermann, 2014). Turner (2014) posits, with respect to impact of neo-liberal approaches implemented since 1980 in education and income distribution, 'the net effect of neo-liberal policies is to increase inequality as a whole' (p. 10). Jamrozik (2001) claims, 'with the shift of service provision to the private sector through the funder-purchaser-provider model, whether to the 'non-profit' or business organisations, entitlement to service by right becomes an entitlement by deserving - in effect, a shift back to the notion of welfare as charity' (p. 77).

Whether people with language problems are viewed by the governments as 'deserving' assistance is the nub of the problem. The increasing neo-liberal approaches to public service provision is that they tend to emphasise 'self-help' (Marston & Watts, 2004) and view users of public services as 'clients', 'customers' or 'consumers'. This is evident in the public service discourse. Patients have come to be referred to as 'consumers' or 'healthcare consumers' (DHS Victoria, 2004) and the unemployed receiving income support or people with a disability on pensions have 'customer reference numbers' allocated by Centrelink and they can make use of services such as 'customer news' and 'customer online' accounts through the website (DHS, 2015). Citizens were now stakeholders in an enterprise and the Australian Public Service was assigned 'a crucial role in this dialogue' (Holmes, 2011).

How did this Neo-Liberal approach deal with members of the society with language barriers? The governments in Australia ostensibly cared for the disadvantage and inequities experienced by people with language barriers and announced a series of access and equity

policies starting from 1980s to present (Australian Multicultural Advisory Council [AMAC], 2010; Commonwealth of Australia, 2015; Jupp, 1992). The current policy 'Multicultural Access and Equity Policy' states that the policy has 'a client centric approach with the focus being on what departments and agencies can do to adjust their mainstream policies, programmes and services to provide equitable access for all Australians' (DSS, 2015).

However, the gap between the stated policies and outcomes on the ground has been noted in literature. The OECD report and Australian Social Inclusion Board (ASIB) have identified people who lack proficiency in English, along with some other groups such as Indigenous Australians, low income households, and the elderly as social excluded in Australia (ASIB, 2012). Doyle (1992) observed that lack of communication with members of Indigenous communities and NES backgrounds often led to 'services which do not reach many of those they are intended to help (p. 40) and impeded their involvement with the services. He noted, in 1992, that the efforts to eradicate the barriers failed to make much impact. Then in 2012, the access inquiry panel released the findings of a review of access and equity policies in a report titled 'Access and Equity for a Multicultural Australia' (DIAC, 2012). The report noted a fading interest in access and equity policies, inconsistent commitment between agencies, poor communication practices with CALD communities and insufficient use of interpreters. The Inquiry Panel concluded this was due to a lack of clarity of the policies, lack of clarity about what needs to be done by the agencies and weak guidelines and governance arrangements.

Scheelbeek (1993) argued that, while the policies aiming at changing underlying attitudes so that the needs of immigrants, by far the most likely group where citizens with language barriers emerge from, can be systematically addressed, implementation was from being effective. Scheelbeek (1993) drew attention to the lack of coordination between programs designed to improve access and uncertainty created by funding considerations, and

lack of awareness of the needs of migrants by people who are implementing the programs, and observed, 'In the end, the process of accommodating the needs of immigrants is one of making the people fit the system, rather than making the system fit the people' (p. 77). This was echoed by Holmes (2011), who admitted that 'when it comes to the pursuit by public service agencies of engagement with marginalized groups and socially excluded citizens the epithet "one size fits few" seems appropriate' (p. 20). Neither Holmes (2011) nor Scheelbeek (1993) elaborated on the ways in which exclusion and marginalisation occur and their impact on people with language barriers; this study seeks to fill this gap.

While problems with implementation were acknowledged, the underlying reasons for almost three decades of problems with implementation in a public service environment ruled by neo-liberal concepts and how these impact on citizens and residents with language barriers do not appear to have received a great deal of attention or scrutiny. Doyle (1992) found access and equity policies in Australia overwhelmingly focus on access, which is more tangible, and not so much on equity, which is how people are treated (p. 51). Sen (2010, cited in Bowman, 2010, p. 5) in his famous 'capability approach' also highlighted the need to remedy 'diagnosable' injustices that people experience in all aspects of their wellbeing, not just in relation to the injustices accessing material resources.

There is clearly a need to analyse and understand the nature and impact of language barriers, which the access and equity policies have been targeting, on people who experience them so that injustices can be diagnosed. Jupp (1992) highlighted the need to understand the circumstances of people language barriers as a crucial step in solving the problems, 'Remedying these problems effectively involves knowledge of the 'missed' clientele by the agency through data collection and changes to standard procedures to accommodate variety' (p. 2) Similarly, Hale (2010), a researcher in the field of translating and interpreting, observed that in the triangle linking service provider, interpreter and service recipient (i.e. people with



language barriers), ‘the real voices of two of the participants—the service providers and the interpreters’ are heard, while ‘the other participant—the service recipient—is noticeably missing’. She further noted that almost no research has been done to ‘access their voices’, and called for more research to ‘fill this gap’ (p. 162).

This scrutiny needs to be multi-faceted as aptly expressed by Thompson (1998), who posited with respect to inequalities in the provision of human services:

the discrimination and oppression associated with inequality should not be seen as simply arising from the actions of a prejudiced or bigoted minority ... The reality of discrimination is far more complex with its roots in psychology, sociology, economics and politics. (p. 2)

Thompson (1998) also highlighted the need for an in-depth scrutiny as a first step, stating ‘Unless we develop an understanding of inequality and the ideologies underpinning it, we are likely not only to fail to address discrimination and oppression, but also to reinforce or even exacerbate them’ (p. 3).

The research rationale can, then, be summarised as, while political and philosophical conceptualisations and statements of ‘citizen-centric’, neo-liberal and private sector inspired public services since 1980s ostensibly aim at promoting ‘self-help’ and developing frameworks for active participation and membership of all individuals, including people with language barriers, in all aspects of life, access and equity, including in civic, social, economic, and political activities, as well as participation in decision-making processes, these conceptualisations expressed in policy statements tend to ignore or, at best, overlook the impediments and obstacles as they are actually experienced by people with language barriers. A failure to properly put policies of accessibility into practice, giving all community members equal access to public services, leads to the potential for vulnerability on the part of the community members who have language barriers, which in turn has the potential to

produce and reproduce inequalities that lead to the exclusion and marginalisation of a section of the community.

The present research provides much needed empirical data to reveal how the policies of access, equity and engagement are currently implemented with respect to citizens with language barriers and their impact on the lives of people as they experienced it. It is hoped that this will contribute to current and future initiatives to improve dialogue between community members with language barriers and public service agencies and make public service more accessible, through a review of their current practices in the light of findings of this research. The research also demonstrates the critical role and position of the profession of interpreting and translating, a key, independent communication method promoted in previous and current access and equity policies, so that they can be viewed as an extension of the public services and be better integrated in the public service provision in removing language barriers. The following section outlines the research approach and methods used in the research.

### **Research Design in Brief**

This study investigates the communication practices of public services, circumstances of people with language barriers and social practice of translation and interpretation offered as a service to people with major language barriers by state agencies in Australia. This is never an easy or simple process because as Strauss (1987) noted ‘the basic question facing us is how to capture the complexity of reality (phenomena) we study, and how to make convincing sense of it’ (p. 10). In broad terms, I have adopted a multi-dimensional set of methods that is chiefly qualitative, descriptive, and evaluative in nature with occasional recourse to some quantitative work.

Higgs and Cherry (2009) highlighted the value of qualitative approaches, stating, ‘By interpreting the lived experiences of practitioners and participants in practice (e.g., clients),

qualitative research helps to enhance the researcher's understanding of the nature, processes and experiences of practice' (p. 10). They argued that this then contributes to the knowledge of the field, calling this contribution 'illumination of practice'. They added that this process leads to change in practice by 'producing knowledge which is used by others ... to change practice and educate others about practice'. They posited that qualitative research allows for a close scrutiny of practice in a variety of ways, and if the gap between what is stated or assumed in policy and what is actually implemented in practice can be illuminated, '[t]his is often a significant trigger for people to change their practice'. Such a trigger for change is precisely the intended result of the scrutiny, carried out in this research, of the neo-liberal approaches of the governments reflected in the implementation of access equity policies.

The research strategy employed in this study is largely inspired by the work of the anthropologist and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Chapter 3 of this thesis outlines and defends at length its reliance on Bourdieu's body of theoretical and ethnographic work. Bourdieu's theoretical and interpretative work is well placed to provide a vocabulary and an interpretative frame that can help illuminate the serious vulnerabilities, often buried by particular discourse, resulting from some of the everyday, established communication practices and processes of the public services in their dealings with those with language barriers who continue to be silenced or ignored in this field in Australia.

With its focus on practice, habitus, fields of practice and the role played by symbolic violence in the reproduction of social, economic and political inequality, Bourdieu's work is especially relevant to the present research. His work enables a robust examination of the impact of some of the practices of public services that have been operating within an access and equity policy since 1985 (Jupp, 1997) with respect to communication and engagement with community members with language barriers; it also provides a framework for selecting and making sense of the data collected throughout this study.

*Symbolic violence* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) involves an unconscious submission to the force, whether real or symbolic, exercised by a dominating person or group on the dominated social agents in a particular environment, or *field*. The dominated social agents take part in this act willingly, as they see it as legitimate and a feature of their field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This is done in such a way that neither the dominating force nor the dominated is aware of it. The status quo is taken for granted and not questioned. The motivations for the exercise of symbolic violence are often not much different to those behind real violence: domination and maintaining domination. Those who possess more capital in a field can exercise symbolic violence ‘with complicity of those who suffer from it’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). For Bourdieu, the ideals of individualisation and self-help, key concepts in neo-liberal approach to public service provision, make it possible to hold people responsible for their misfortune and are deeply complicit in numerous types of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 3).

In terms of data collection methods, a range of qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to gather data from the three fields under discussion:

- examination of communication practices and reports by public services that are likely to deal with people with language barriers and interviews with public servants who deal with languages issues in their work,
- a survey of people with language barriers and the harvesting of their narrations, and
- interviews with interpreters and translators involved in public service setting.

Ethics approval was obtained where data were obtained via surveys or interviews.

Other data about public service practices came from publicly available information on their websites.

In terms of interpretative approach and data analysis, I used a combination of interpretative and critical paradigms (Higgs, 2001). In addition, data obtained through

surveys were interpreted using statistical analysis, situated in a quantitative research paradigm (Higgs, 2001). In addressing the key research questions—centring on the inequalities at play in accessing critical services by citizens with language barriers and possible reasons for this—the interpretive and critical analysis employed the social inclusion indicators proposed in the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) report (2009, p. 16):

- How and why people are being left out of the processes that make up the proper functioning of society?
- Who does this exclusion affect and what are the economic, social and political environments in which the problem is most apparent?
- What are the structures, processes and relations of power that exist within societies, which result in the inclusion of some and exclusion of others.

The analysis also made use of Bourdieu's Theory of Practice, especially the key concepts of *field*, *habitus*, *capital* and *symbolic violence*, as an interpretive lens.

## **Structure of the Thesis**

Chapter 1 reviews the literature on the role of public services, the social impacts of language barriers and the role of interpreters and translators, especially with respect to achieving equality in society. The discussion identifies some significant gaps in knowledge that this study aims to fill.

Chapter 2 outlines the value of Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice in examining the position of citizens with language barriers. As the discussion and analysis of findings in subsequent chapters are framed interpretively by Bourdieu's Theory of Practice, especially the key concepts of *field*, *habitus*, *capital* and *symbolic violence*, this chapter introduces these concepts and provides illustrations of them in the field of public services.

Chapter 3 describes the research design and data collection methods, as well as the interpretive and analytic approaches.

Chapter 4 provides a discussion of language policy initiatives on access and equity adopted by the public services. It then begins to develop an account of the range of communication practices employed by public service agencies with citizens who have language barriers.

Chapter 5 introduces the profession of public service translation and interpreting. It first reviews data from a number of studies on this profession conducted over the past three decades. It then presents the results of semi-structured interviews with public service translators and interpreters conducted in the present study to gain an insight into their circumstances through stories reflecting on their typical environments and the major problems they face.

Chapter 6 presents the results of a survey of community members with language barriers on how they communicate with public services and participate in some essential democratic processes. This chapter also presents individual case stories of a small number of citizens with language barriers, with a focus on their communication needs, in order to gain further insight into their everyday lives and identify some of the vulnerabilities resulting from language barriers.

Chapter 7 unites the previous three chapters with a summary of the key findings, using the social inclusion criteria proposed by the United Nations declaration in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) Report, aided by Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and symbolic violence, as a framework for the discussion.

Chapter 8 develops a conclusion to the thesis by discussing the findings in relation to the questions posed and objectives set out in the Introduction. It also identifies the major limitations of the study and suggests a number of areas for future research.



## **Chapter One: Constituting the Problem—On Language, Public Services and Equality**

In contemporary liberal societies, all citizens are assumed to be treated equally (Beilharz et al., 1992; Bowie & Simon, 1998; Kekes, 2003). This assumption underpins a concept of social justice that is built on the belief that everyone in a society, regardless of their ethnicity, background, abilities, beliefs or preferences, is entitled to fair treatment, equal human rights and equal access to the publicly owned resources available in the society (Bell, 1997; Lee, 2007; Miller, 1999). The brief outline of the context in Australia in Introduction revealed that there are many people in the society who are experiencing difficulties due to lack of English proficiency.

This chapter provides a review of the role of public services in achieving equality in a broad sense, the public management approaches that influences how the public service provision is done. The chapter then examines the relationship between language and politics through language regimes, an outline of language policies within access and equity, and the translating and interpreting profession as a language service used by public services in the Australian context. The chapter then identifies the gaps in knowledge that this study seeks to fill.

### **Public Services and Equality**

The importance of public services in achieving and maintaining social justice by addressing inequities in society is well recognised (Beilharz et al., 1992; Bessant, 2008; Castles, 1985; Hermann, 2014; Jamrozik, 2001; Mahnkopf, 2008; Marshall, 1950; Percy-Smith, 2000; Saunders, 1994; Smyth, 2006; Thompson, 1998; Wacquant, 1998; Watts, 1987).



Madanipour (1998, p. 76) described public services as ‘an institutionalised form of controlling access: to places, to activities, to resources and to information’, pointing to a direct role in achieving equality.

Public services have existed for centuries. Roman public service structures for sanitation, irrigation, and sewerage control are still standing in some parts of the territories once under Roman rule as well as advanced public-administration systems in Ancient Rome and Ancient Egypt, from which some of the modern public service administration systems still draw (Casson, 1998) Ancient Rome established different administrative hierarchies for military affairs, law, finance and taxation, internal affairs and foreign affairs (Beyer, 1959). However, they also seem to have had problems not so uncommon in today’s public services around the World. Beyer (1959) talks about ‘The hierarchical form of organization, full-time professional staffs, social stratification of the service, clearly marked paths of promotion, relative security of tenure- these were characteristics of both services. Both, moreover, had the same tragic endings, in becoming oppressive and burdensome to the people” (p. 249)

Welfare services run by charities often controlled by religious organisations formed some of the early public services aimed at helping the unfortunate and vulnerable in society (Saunders, 1994). The origins of the public service in the modern sense, however, date back to such formal welfare recognition, services and initiatives such as the Elizabethan Poor Laws of 1601, the French Revolution where the need for public assistance for the unfortunate members of the society was recognised in the 1793 Constitution, and social liberal views developed in the second part of the eighteenth century highlighting the role the state can play in creating the preconditions of positive freedom, such as freedom to enjoy security, health, decent working and living conditions (Beilharz et al., 1992).

In Australia, public services that targeted the welfare of citizens were first formalised in the Commonwealth Act in 1909 to provide old age and invalid pensions (Symth, 1998).

These were followed by a series of welfare services introduced between 1941–1945 – Child endowment (1941), widows pension (1942), and unemployment and sickness benefits (1943) (Beilharz, Considine & Watts, 1992, p. 82). However, according to Beilharz, Considine and Watts (1992), the period of post-war economic boom from 1945–1973 in which a policy of ‘full employment’ and financial resources existed, actually disguised some of the underlying social problems. From 1975, when the big spending finally ended, and economic rationalism took priority, ‘Australia’s welfare state has been ‘in crisis’’ (Beilharz et al., 1992, p. 89).

Traditionally there were two main conditions for social services (Hermann, 2014). Firstly, there should be a public interest in providing that service beyond the immediate benefit to the service receiver. A typical example for this is health services such as controlling infectious diseases through vaccination programs. The second condition is the notion of so-called natural monopolies (Hermann, 2014), which makes it impossible or undesirable to have more than one provider of a particular service, such as utilities. This then means that, because public services are often the most essential or critical services in any society, entitlement to public services is generally not disputed and makes up a key part of the welfare state (Marston & Watts, 2004).

The Oil Shock in 1973, which ended over two decades of sustained economic growth in the West after the end of WWII, and the economic crisis that followed it led to a reduction in incomes of governments while public expenditures grew faster (O’Connor 2002; Saunders, 1994; Watts, 1987). This led to economic rationalism from the early 1980’s which led to a push to measure the performance of public services in terms of efficiencies, a key concept in private sector enterprises, but often resulting in a contradiction of their objectives to serve public good. Hermann (2014, p. 118) says ‘from the 1980s onwards, the improvement in efficiency has become the main goal of public sector reform, while other objectives such as promotion of equality and social justice have increasingly become marginalised.’

However, the biggest game changer for public services was the introduction of neo-liberal policies in public services from the 1980s, especially apparent through two concepts – privatisation and marketization (Hermann, 2014). These neo-liberal policies had wide ranging impacts on every sphere of public life, from employment to economic activities and development of the private sector in almost every field, often leaving the most marginalised worse off. Jamrozik (2001) observes, ‘with the shift of service provision to the private sector through the funder-purchaser-provider model, whether to the ‘non-profit’ or business organisations, entitlement to service by right becomes an entitlement by deserving - in effect, a shift back to the notion of welfare as charity’ (p. 77).

The modern provision of public services is conceptualised as being underpinned by the approaches of co-creation and co-production (Alford, 2009). The concepts of co-creation and co-production assume the active participation of citizens in both policy making and service delivery, and highlight sustained collaboration between government agencies and citizens. However, participation requires certain skills and capabilities, which can be elaborated in two important aspects: first, the attitude and skills on the part of the public services, and second, the capabilities and skills of the citizens. Holmes (2011) recognised that the sort of ‘reasoned and respectful public dialogue’ as envisaged in key government approaches and policies would require a certain set of skills on the part of the citizen participants. Ideally, citizens should:

- ‘be well informed contributors’;
- have ‘courage to articulate and defend their views (and change them where justified)’;
- have ‘the civility to listen to and consider contrary views’;
- have ‘the reasoning ability to weigh evidence and assess claims’;

- have ‘the capacity to defer immediate needs or personal preferences in the interests of longer term benefits or outcomes or the public good’ (Holmes, 2011).

Holmes (2011) also acknowledged:

Such attributes depend largely on citizens’ socialisation and education. It seems reasonable to suggest that they are more likely to arise where people have enjoyed, for example, exposure in their families and schools to the discussion of preferences and ideas; the development of good communication skills and literacy; and a basic understanding of Australia’s system of government. (p. 19)

Given Holmes’s (2011) requirements, the question arises as to how these apply to citizens with language barriers. What do we know about the barriers that impede these citizens from accessing the information necessary to underpin the thinking and decision making that underpins effective citizenship and social inclusion? This is an area Holmes (2011) did not explore, and one in need of closer study. While Holmes did recognise that ‘Social exclusion and other deprivations are very likely to discourage many citizens from engagement, especially where inequalities of power and status prevail’ (p. 20), and admitted that this exacerbates ‘the problem of engagement’ so often lamented by those public servants and others, he did not elaborate on why public servants ‘lament’ the problem of engagement or how this influences practice. Most significantly, a dialogue needs two parties, but Holmes did not give any attention to the skills, knowledge and dispositions that may be required of the other party—the public service staff—for successful dialogue with citizens, let alone citizens with language barriers. Holmes did, however, refer to several initiatives that he regarded as encouraging signs, acknowledging that

it remains the case that in situations of disadvantage and marginalisation, citizens are even less likely to possess the capabilities—knowledge, skills, dispositions—that

would readily enable them to enter into dialogue and sustained deliberation with public servants and other professionals. (p. 20)

Beilharz et al. (1992) also drew attention to this shortcoming:

Modern democracy rests on the claim that all people can be citizens—that each person can participate in civic life and, potentially, in decision making. Yet modern democracies too frequently fail to deliver these promises or to facilitate these capacities; poverty and inequality prevent people from participating, keeping their eyes on the ground, keeping them concerned with providing food and shelter for themselves and their families. (p. 2)

Thus, the inequalities preventing participation by people with language barriers need to be examined.

Marston and Watts (2004), in their scrutiny of the problems with neo-conservative social policy, posited that ‘addressing the conditions under which we can flourish begins with a robust recognition that all of us are born with diverse natural constitutions’ (p. 39). They also explained that promoting the capacity of people to do those things that secure happiness or a flourishing life is itself *positive freedom*. Positive freedom is more than simply being free of external interference in the ordinary sense of the word, as a person can be ‘unfree’ because of a lack of access to basic services or options that would help them to prosper as individuals (Marston & Watts, 2004, p. 38). The robust recognition Marston and Watts referred to must also be extended to people with language barriers who require government support to ‘flourish’.

The literature review presented so far provides insight into the inequalities experienced by marginalised people who share, to some degree, the language and culture of the public services, but experience inequities in accessing material services provided by public services such as income support or housing, or suffer discrimination due to factors

such as disability, gender, and age. However, the significance of language barriers as a cause of inequalities in public service provision has received little attention.

One of the few authors who have raised the language barrier as a distinct factor for marginalisation is Thompson (1998). He included language barriers experienced by people not proficient in the dominant language in a society as a factor that increases the likelihood of marginalisation, and pointed to a gap resulting from this barrier, saying: emancipatory forms of practice need to be based on a degree of sensitivity, a raised level of awareness of how easy it can be to reinforce patterns of marginalisation unwittingly, simply by making ‘common sense’ assumptions. It is necessary to develop a critical awareness of how certain groups are systematically discriminated against through this process of marginalisation (p. 82). Thompson (1998) also drew attention to the multi-faceted nature of the issue of inequality in the provision of human services, including health and welfare services, claiming:

The discrimination and oppression associated with inequality should not be seen as simply arising from the actions of a prejudiced or bigoted minority ... The reality of discrimination is far more complex with its roots in psychology, sociology, economics and politics. (p. 2)

He then drew attention to the role of ideology, or the power of ideas that underlie and maintain discrimination and oppression, and claimed that ‘unless we develop an understanding of inequality and the ideologies underpinning it, we are likely not only to fail to address discrimination and oppression, but also to reinforce or even exacerbate them’ (p. 3).

As public services are provided within a policy environment, it is relevant to undertake a critical review of policies with respect to language and access and equity. This review is the topic of the following section.

## **On Language, Ideology and Power**

Language is a key aspect in all relationships of power in modern society (Fairclough, 2001; Talbot et al., 2003). It is used for social control by the state (Sarangi & Slembrouck, 1996); as such, language has also been used by states in multi-lingual societies as a political tool (Ishtiaq, 1999; Falola, 2001; Shohamy 2006; Weinstein, 1990). Bourhis (1984) explained that governments resort to intervention in public affairs, from economy to education and social welfare, through ‘planning as a rational and co-ordinated state action to solve problems and reach goals perceived to be in the best interests of the collectivity’ (p. 2). Therefore, Bourhis contended, ‘As the privileged tool of human communication, the vehicle of culture, and often the distinctive symbol of “peoplehood”, it is not surprising that language too has become the target of state planning by Government leaders and policy makers’ (p. 9). Weinstein (1980) stated that governments undertake language planning in a society ‘for the purpose of solving communication problems’ (p. 37). This aspect is important for a later discussion of the extent to which the Australian language policies have solved communication problems.

Shohamy (2006), however, contends, language planning can have other, more controversial, purposes, beyond solving communication problems, including selecting members of a group, to identify who is included and who is excluded, to determine who is loyal and patriotic. Bourhis (1984) stated that promoting or imposing a single language through language planning and policies, in a country can also be controversial.

Critics have doubted whether states were genuinely committed to frame a fair and equitable language policy. Shohamy (2006) claimed there are two language policies of a political or social entity – one that is declared officially and one that exists in reality, which can only be observed by examining ‘a variety of devices that are used to perpetuate language practices, often in covert and implicit ways’ (p. xvi). Shohamy (2006) claimed that language

policy, beyond stated policies and lip service paid to inclusion, ‘incorporates a variety of mechanisms, some overt and some covert and hidden, that serve as major devices that affect and create de facto language policies’ (p. xvii). She claimed that these practices, which may include language tests or highlighting the difference between native speakers and non-native speakers, lead to ‘violations of democratic process and personal and language rights’ (p. xv). She further posited that these covert mechanisms constitute the actual language policies, which are often unrecognised by the public. She claimed the reasons for this is a desire by the dominating groups ‘to sustain homogeneity, hegemony and mono-lingualism for the sake of national identity’ (p. xvii).

Sonntag and Cardinal (2015) examined the underlying position of the state in language planning and policies, using the concept of language regime, ‘language practices as well as conceptions of language and language use as projected through state policies and as acted upon by language users. State traditions guide and frame those practices and conceptions’ (p. 6). Sonntag and Cardinal (2015) further posited that the concept of language regime encompasses more commonly examined concepts of language ideology and hegemony. While language ideology refers to the conceptualisations of language use, language hegemony examines ‘discursive practices by which language ideologies become generally accepted by the majority of the population in any given society’ (p. 7). Language regime, on the other hand, refers to ‘analysis of the institutional and administrative mechanisms and policy instruments of domination’ (p. 7). These mechanisms and instruments are ‘not only socially constructed but also institutionally and historically constructed’ (p. 7).

Orman (2008) argued that ‘states do not give up power unnecessarily or of their own volition’ (p. 54). Orman made a distinction between historically or geographically multi-lingual countries and communities that are linguistically diverse as a result of migration, such



as Australia, in terms of how the same or similar linguistic diversity is approached differently by the state. Orman argued that, whereas in historically multi-ethnic communities such as Singapore or Belgium, the state tends to finely balance multi-lingual issues to maintain ‘social peace and the unity of the state’, this is often not the case when it comes to migrant communities: ‘Immigrant populations, on the other hand, are much smaller, less politically organised and lacking any territorial base, meaning that there is considerably less pressure on the state to grant them any extensive cultural/linguistic recognition’ (p. 55). Orman claimed that national identity-building makes the migrant state very selective in terms of languages: ‘Immigrant languages are generally not viewed as valid media for the expression of national identity and there is normally the expectation that immigrants must assimilate linguistically into the host society, at least in public life’ (p. 55). Barreto (2007) added that this effect is often achieved without an official policy, as in the United States, where ‘language has been used a common marker of insiders versus outsiders’ and ‘a commitment to linguistic assimilation has always been required of non-Anglophones’ (p. 15).

O’Rourke and Castillo (2009), in their study of language policies in Ireland and Spain, posited that attitudes towards the language needs of migrants in these countries are implicitly framed by the ideology that ‘linguistic diversity is a temporary phenomenon and communication problems with non-indigenous linguistic minorities will be resolved by the fact that everyone will eventually learn the host language’ (p. 48). They concluded that ‘The whole process of learning another language and making oneself understood in another language tends to be viewed from a monolingual mindset, leading to the institutionalization of linguistic discrimination’ (p. 49). They proposed that a solution would be found in introducing a ‘Top-Down’ approach, which can bring about ‘consolidated change’ in the provision of language services. Such a Top-Down approach describes exactly what has been

adopted in the Australian context. The next section examines the Australian experience.

### **Language Policies, Access and Equity in Australia**

English has been the common language in Australia since the European settlement, and continues to be Australia's unofficial 'official' language: the country is largely recognised as an Anglophone society. Unlike its national identity, which is still undergoing its process of self-definition, Australia's linguistic identity was established during the early years of the colony (Collins & Blair, 2001). This process was not a natural one, as in many other countries, but rather one that was created and maintained by government policies. Lo Bianco (1987) summarised the emergence of Australia's monolingual identity in this way:

Between the 1914–1918 war and World War II a trend towards English monolingualism began and was actively promoted by Government intervention restricting and even suppressing the use of other languages. There was active and deliberate opposition to Aboriginal languages, and many became extinct. (p. 6)

Even after the relaxation of policies designed to maintain monolingual and mono-racial Anglo Australia that occurred at the end of World War II, the assimilation practices continued to require new migrants to learn English and Australian cultural practices (Koleth, 2010).

Despite these policies, ending of the discrimination in selecting migrants and refugees based on their languages and cultures, especially since the official ending of the White Australia Policy in 1973 by the Whitlam Government (Hawkins, 1991, p. 263; Jupp, 2007, p. 11; Ozolins, 1993), has resulted in a country whose citizens and residents speak many languages. Jupp (2007) summarised the resulting shift in policy: 'As multiculturalism was widely accepted by the 1980s and Australian links with other societies were growing, it was argued that a national language policy was needed to counter the dominant monoglot Anglophone tradition' (p. 92). After much debate and controversy, the National Policy on

Languages, developed by Jo Lo Bianco, was formally adopted by the Hawke Labor government in 1987 (Ozolins, 1993). It was one of the first policies of its kind in the English-speaking world and a ground-breaking initiative (Ozolins, 1993). This policy essentially embodied the following four principles:

- English for all;
- support for Aboriginal languages;
- a LOTE for all; and
- language services, including interpreting and translating services (Ozolins, 1993, p. 250).

The momentum created by the introduction of the language policy led to some improvements in the early 1990s, but these gradually stalled and became diluted (Ozolins, 1993). Ozolins pointed to two reasons for this: first, the ideologies of economic rationalism, which viewed language policy in terms of its economic benefits and efficiency for Australian institutions, and second, a weakening of the broad coalition of language interests that originally made the case for the language policy. Ozolins (1993) posited:

It is the achievement of Australian language policy to precisely address these issues and be able to tie in approaches to access and equity, whether in language services, broadcasting, education or wherever, from a perspective of efficient functioning on institutions, a significant development from the previous perspective of the migrant or the minority as constituting a problem that mainstream institutions can do nothing to solve. (p. 256)

In contrast, Leitner (2004) claimed that, despite the stated comprehensive principles, which included the provision of language services and support for Indigenous people, ‘Policies really dealt with two issues—the provisions of LOTE for [NES people] and English proficiency’ (p. 269). In 2005, Cunningham and Hatoss took a more pessimistic view of

Australia's language policy: 'Australia had the best languages policy across the globe in 1987. Now it has none' (p. 13).

Leitner (2004), in his review of literature on past and present language regime in Australia, based largely on the work of Clyne, Lo Bianco, Ozolins and others, lists the following significant periods in Australian Language Policies:

- (a) A *laissez-faire* period to the 1870s
- (b) An assimilation policy from the 1870s to the 1960s
- (c) An integrationist policy that foreshadowed multiculturalism from the 1960s to the mid-1980s
- (d) A short period of multiculturalism that centred around community aspirations to the early 1990s
- (e) A shift to an economically-driven acceptance of plurilingualism to the mid-1990s
- (f) An Asian-language-focused policy to the turn of the 21st century
- (g) A return to seeing plurilingualism as a problem and a shift back to literacy in English at the present time (p. 220)

This brief summary of the journey of language policies in Australia shows how the policies gradually returned to their starting point.

Now let me turn to access and equity policies which accompanied and often included the language policies. Koleth (2010) classifies the Australian government policies about settlement of migrants and other new arrivals following easing of some of the restrictions of the White Australia policies after 1945 under assimilation (1940s and 1950s), integration (1960s and 1970s), multiculturalism (1980s and early 1990s), and a return to assimilation and integration (since late-1990s, in an increased global security environment).

The relationship between language and migration was also noted by James Jupp (2007), who pointed out that 'Australian multicultural policies have always been premised on

the supremacy of existing institutions and values and the primacy of the English language'. Jupp (2007) characterised the impact of this emphasis as follows: 'Language policy moved rapidly away from developing community languages to favouring English literacy and the "languages of commerce"' (p. 91). Jupp argued that even these initiatives are guided more by 'assimilationism and utilitarianism' than by a concern for multiculturalism (p. 92).

The close link between language policy making and economic concerns can be observed in the earliest language education policies instituted in Australia, namely the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP) in 1949 (Liddicoat, 2013, p. 107). The program taught adult migrants functional English so that they could communicate as workers in Australia. Given that multicultural concerns were not yet at the forefront during this period, the program had no cultural acceptance or social justice dimensions in terms of language acquisition. Its motivations were economic and political, aiming to allow migrants the means of working in the country but not to be included culturally. By the 1970s, the program had been expanded to include the Child Migrant Education Program (CMEP) in 1971, as the state recognised that the children of immigrants had to learn English as well, as future citizens of the country.

These programs clearly assumed an assimilative role for English. Indeed, one of the goals specifically cited under CMEP was that the program was intended to 'provide activities which assist in the integration of these children into the corporate life of the school and the community' (Liddicoat, 2013, p. 108). The language aspects of CMEP, which were to promote speaking, reading and writing skills in English, were part of the integration goals of the program as a whole. As a consequence, the program marginalised any language other than English, seeing different native languages as deficiencies among adult migrants and their children. Describing the effects of this policy, Jupp (2007) wrote:

Despite the adult and child education programs, many migrants have never learned English beyond the 'survival' level—and some (mainly southern European women)

have never reached that level. The number of languages used increased along with the need for translating and interpreting. (p. 95)

Further, the significance of language services and access and equity in multicultural discourse were aptly expressed by Jupp and McRobbie (1992):

The concept of access implies that all who are entitled to a public service should be able to have access to it on a comparably equitable basis to all others so entitled ... while services may be universally applicable they may not be equally accessible if they are uniformly delivered, because the clientele is not uniform. ... Equity implies that all who are entitled to government provision should be equally likely to receive it if eligible. Thus potential clients unable to access services are not being treated equitably, for example if they are only serviced in a language which they do not understand and no provision is made to translate or interpret for them. (cited in Hale, 2004, p. 28)

Language barriers preventing a section of the community from accessing government services appeared in government discourse from the early 1970s. By the late 70s, there was recognition that large numbers of migrants, especially those whose first language was not English, were experiencing many hardships as they settled into life in Australia, and required more direct assistance. This was confirmed by the Galbally Review into settlement services in 1978 which provided the first formal recognition of disadvantage faced by a section of the community due to language barriers. The Galbally Report (1978) made recommendations for action which were guided by the following principles:

- (a) all members of our society must have equal opportunity to realise their full potential and must have equal access to programs and services;
- (b) every person should be able to maintain his or her culture without prejudice or disadvantage and should be encouraged to understand and embrace other cultures;

(c) needs of migrants should, in general, be met by programs and services available to the whole community but special services and programs are necessary at present to ensure equality of access and provision;

(d) services and programs should be designed and operated in full consultation with clients, and self-help should be encouraged as much as possible with a view to helping migrants to become self-reliant quickly.

The Galbally Review led to some structural changes, such as the creation of ethnic affairs offices (Ozolins, 1993) and statements of access and equity then made into the Review into *Implementation of Victoria's Ethnic Affairs Policies in Victoria* (1983), the Commonwealth Access and Equity Strategy in 1985, albeit with a narrow focus on migrant settlement needs (Jupp & McRobbie, 1992). In 1989, the Hawke government announced *The National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia: Sharing Our Future*, which included a recognition that access and equity required action from public services, '...our institutions are now required to respond to the needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse society...' (Cope et al. 1991)

Jupp (2002) argued, however, that a problem emerged among the government departments implicated under the new Strategy because many were not accustomed to serving migrants' needs, which tended to be viewed as the responsibility of the Immigration Department. Jupp (2002) claimed: 'The persistence of assimilationist attitudes and a lack of cultural sensitivity meant that many were unable to access services to which they were entitled, often because they did not know these existed' (p. 93). Migrants did not deal only with the Immigration Department: they had to deal with many other departments for other needs such as income support, housing and health. Of these departments, Jupp (2002) wrote:

These frequently did not use interpreters, although they were increasingly available; had no understanding of religious or other cultural differences, which had become more marked as immigration moved into Asia, the Middle East and Africa; and

frequently referred non-English-speaking clients back to ethnic or multicultural agencies, which were not specialists and were designed to refer migrants onwards to mainstream service deliverers. (p. 94)

Monitoring initiatives such as mandatory reporting initiated by OMA met with resistance from various departments. Following the abolition of this office in 1996, the service was returned to the Office of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and was replaced in 1998 by what Jupp (2002) described as ‘the rhetoric of a Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society’ (p. 94). An OMA-funded study in 1992 found that there was resistance of many public agencies already surveyed in the extensive evaluation of 1992. The general finding of this evaluation pointed to a significant divide, in terms of understanding access and equity and what it means for service delivery between senior management at the higher policy levels of administrative hierarchy and those staff at the service delivery points, directly serving the public. Jupp (2007) commented, ‘It is an interesting comment on the resistance to multicultural reality that the situation continues to remain the same’ (p. 93); this was in the 1990s.

A review of the Access and Equity Strategy in 2005 also revealed concerns about its implementation, and resulted in the adoption of a new framework in 2006: Accessible Government Services for All. This framework made annual reporting mandatory by departments and agencies falling under the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997, which required government departments to develop and implement two-yearly Agency Multicultural Plans (AMPs). AMPs included six ‘dimensions’ and outlined the specific action agencies should adopt for better communication with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in Australia.

Again, concerns about the implementation led to the creation of the Access and Equity Inquiry panel in 2011–2012 tasked with examining how the access and equity policies



were being implemented by the government agencies and making recommendations for action to improve implementation. The panel made 20 recommendations, all of which were adopted by the Federal Government in March 2013 (see Appendix VI), leading to the announcement of the current policy: Multicultural Access and Equity—Respecting Diversity, Improving Responsiveness.

While the policies outlined above are at the federal level, states and territories have also developed their own policies following similar discourse. Other items of legislation, such as the Human Rights Acts and Anti-Discrimination Acts, also cover some aspects of access and equity.

Policy and implementation appears to be an ongoing issue (Doyle, 1992; Jupp, 2007; Commonwealth Inquiry Report, 2012). Scheelbeek (1993) noted that there was a gap between policy objectives and implementation in practice. Scheelbeek observed:

the process of dealing with these people's needs too often results in special, segregated programs subject to the vagaries of budgetary generosity or constraint, and to implementation by people lacking cross-cultural skills and that in the end, the process of accommodating the needs of immigrants is one of making the people fit the system, rather than making the system fit the people (p. 77)

This was echoed by Holmes (2011), who recognised that 'when it comes to the pursuit by public service agencies of engagement with marginalized groups and socially excluded citizens the epithet "one size fits few" seems appropriate' (p. 20). This was also reflected by the findings of the inquiry into the accessibility of Australian government programs and services for Australians of culturally and linguistically diverse communities (DIAC, 2012) which found that:

- much of the impetus of the policy has faded;

- commitment, and actual performance, across Australian government agencies was highly variable. A small number of agencies were seen to be performing relatively well in implementing Access and Equity and to have strong infrastructure to support this; others were seen to be performing weakly or to be uninterested. This variable commitment flows through to bodies delivering services on behalf of the Australian Government.
- poor agency communication with CALD communities and clients, lack of effective engagement strategies, poor or ineffective approaches to use of languages other than English in websites and written material, and also insufficient use of interpreters.

The inquiry panel attributed these issues about implementation to ‘the lack of clarity of policy and its application, lack of clarity of what agencies are required to do, weak whole-of-government guidelines supporting Access and Equity action and lack of commitment arising from insufficient governance and accountability arrangements’.

While major reviews into the access and equity policies in 1992, 2005, and 2012 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013) have repeatedly pointed to issues about implementation, they have failed to scrutinize the underlying reasons for the resistance against the policies in three decades or how the problems of implementation may be affecting a section of the community. At this point, the profession of translating and interpreting deserves attention, as it has been used a means to address some of the issues presented by language barriers (Jackson, 2014).

### **Translating and Interpreting in Public Service Settings**

Interpreting and translating as a communication method in removing disadvantage made it into Australian government policy documents with the 1978 Galbally Review; formally incorporated into language policy in 1987, it has been part of the access and equity policies in some form since then. The Access and Equity policy review, which forms the

basis of the current access and equity policy, includes the following recommendation and government response relating to translation and interpreting:

9. That the Australian Government develop a whole-of-government policy on communication by its agencies in languages other than English, including use of interpreters and translators.

Supported

The Australian Government intends to meet this recommendation in two ways.

First, under the Agency Multicultural Plans, each agency is to have a language and communication plan for CALD communities.

Second, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship is updating the Commonwealth Language Services Guidelines. These whole-of-government Guidelines, which will be included in the toolkit (see recommendation 6), will assist agencies to develop their language and communication plans.

Pöchhacker (2004) stated that interpreting provided in ‘heterolingual’ segments of a multi-ethnic society has a significant ‘intra-social’ dimension, and is a manifestation of ‘egalitarian states committed to the “welfare” of all their citizens and residents’ under the principle of ‘equal access’, which overrides ‘expectations of linguistic proficiency’ (p. 14). O’Rourke and Castillo (2009) also highlighted the desirability of viewing the communication needs of migrants from a ‘social inclusion’ perspective, based on the principle that ‘everyone has a right to information and support, and provision is therefore built on the system from the start’ (p. 48), as opposed to a ‘service provision model’, which is a ‘reactive model’ (p. 48).

However, as Hale (2004) argued, although the Australian access and equity policy is framed in a Top-Down ‘social inclusion model’, as advocated by O’Rourke and Castillo (2009), built on the principle that language barriers need to be removed to address disadvantage to a section of the community (Galbally, 1978), this has not eventuated in

reality. Hale (2004, p. 29) listed a number of reasons for this failure, including insufficient use of interpreters due to assessment by public servants that the client's English is adequate; lack of resources or desire to cut costs by encouraging clients to use family and friends as interpreters; and the unavailability of trained and/or accredited interpreters. Hale (2004) concluded that, unless competent interpreters possessing relevant training and a registration system are provided, the stated policies on language services will remain an 'illusion'.

Hale (2007) did not discuss the impacts of these problems on the everyday lives of people with language barriers. Ozolins (2010), in his comprehensive report on global public service translation and interpreting, significantly noted that lack of policy or reluctance in implementation is mainly due to the attitudes of government agencies. He wrote:

There are no easy or universal paths by which governments and institutions can be persuaded to adopt more comprehensive [public service interpreting] policies. There is no way out of a long march through the institutions to spread an understanding that language services are necessary not for 'them'—the non-speakers of the dominant language—but for the institutions to be able to function effectively for all their clients. (p. 211)

Ozolins (2010) argued that multi-faceted efforts are needed, highlighting a number of points that may lead to better implementation of language services policies, including, 'institutional functioning, backed sometimes by a concern for human rights, sometimes by institutional leaders who value inclusiveness and effectiveness in their public service, and sometimes by the fear of processes going wrong and clients being at a disadvantage' (p. 211). Ozolins also highlighted the position of interpreting as a profession in this context: 'There must at all times be a concern with the total environment of interpreter practitioners including employment, remuneration, professional support and support of target public services' (p. 211). Ozolins did not elaborate on the reasons for lack of support of public services.

So far, this chapter has provided an overview of literature of relevant theoretical debates and approaches and background relevant for this study. The discussion has touched on the role of public services in achieving equality, access and equity policies in Australia and the position of translating and interpreting within access and equity policies.

### **Why Is This Study Needed?**

The above review of literature identifies a number of significant gaps in our knowledge, which this study aims to fill, and in the process to make some contribution to an improvement in the welfare of those with language barriers in Australia (and perhaps elsewhere). Although Australia has had access and equity policies since 1985 and a language policy since 1987, there appear to be ongoing issues about the take-up of these policies by public services (Hale, 2004; Doyle, 1992, Jupp, 2007; Ozolins, 2010). There is a need to critically analyse the implementation of the access and equity policies and language regime relating to access and equity in Australia's public services through an examination of their practices and conceptions, not just stated policies, from a new angle. This analysis needs to occur in order to identify practices and processes that exclude people with language barriers, specifically from public services, and more broadly from participating in and benefiting fully from the society in which they live.

The in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of people who are affected is important because, as Percy-Smith (2000) observed, 'while the causes of social exclusion may be structural, its effects can be ameliorated or exacerbated by the attitudes, activities and policies of governmental bodies' (p. 6). Thompson (1998) pointed to the need to 'develop a critical awareness of how certain groups are systematically discriminated against through a process of marginalisation' (p. 82). Developing such an awareness needs to be achieved not only from the perspective of public institutions, but also from that of the people who are affected. This is a dimension of inequality that has been given very little focus in the analysis of

inequalities and discrimination, and remains under-researched and under-scrutinised (Bryson, 1992; Saunders, 1994; Taylor & MacDonald, 1992; Thompson, 1998). Sen (2010, cited in Bowman, 2010, p. 5) in his famous ‘capability approach’ highlighted the need to address ‘diagnosable’ injustices that people experience in all aspects of their wellbeing, not just in relation to the injustices accessing material resources.

Public services are the most critical resources in any society for achieving equality (Beilharz et al., 1992; Hermann, 2014). Studies and government reviews on access and equity undertaken so far have not focussed on ‘inconsistencies’ or ‘contradictions’ and ‘diagnosable injustices (Sen, 2010) in the ways in which ordinary people with language barriers experience inequality and exclusion. Jupp (1992) highlighted the need to understand the circumstances of people with language barriers as a crucial step in solving the problems, ‘Remedying these problems effectively involves knowledge of the ‘missed’ clientele by the agency through data collection and changes to standard procedures to accommodate variety’ (p. 2). Similarly, Hale (2007), a researcher in the field of translating and interpreting, observed that in the triangle linking service provider, interpreter and service recipient (i.e. people with language barriers), ‘the real voices of two of the participants—the service providers and the interpreters’ are heard, while ‘the other participant—the service recipient—is noticeably missing’. She further noted that almost no research has been done to ‘access their voices’, and called for more research to ‘fill this gap’ (p. 162).

Sen (1997), who examined unemployment and social exclusion extensively as part of his capabilities approach, concluded that ‘if we are really concerned with inequalities that matter, we have to take an interest in disparities in political and social position, in addition to other aspects of inequality, of which income distribution is a part’ (p. 159).

One of the key principles in Australia’s 1987 Language Policy, as well as the access and equity policies that have been introduced since 1985, was the provision of language

services, mainly translating and interpreting, as a communication method for access and equity and as a means of removing disadvantage. Previous studies have pointed to a marginalised, often neglected profession, but have tried to explain the state of the profession in terms of various professionalization theories (Mikkelsen, 2004) but the profession continues to remain in an uncertain position (Mikkelsen, 2004). The underlying reasons for this lack of recognition, especially within a public service setting, need to be investigated from a different angle.

The following two observations are aimed at the heart of the key issues of the communication practices of public services in dealing with community members with language barriers. The first of these relates to the significance of accessibility. The UNDESA report (2009) stated:

equal access to public information plays an important role in creating an inclusive society, as it will make popular participation possible with well-informed members of society. Information that pertains to the society, such as what a community owns, generates, or benefits from, should be made available to all. Collective participation, through accepted representations of all classes and backgrounds, in the planning, implementation and evaluation of community activities should be sought after.

Publication/information sharing and increasing the accessibility of the community's activities will eliminate doubts and suspicions, which could otherwise create a sense of exclusion. (p. 16)

The second observation relates to why there continue to be problems with incorporating translating and interpreting into public service provision, despite the 1978 Galbally Review's recommendation that these be used as a means to remove language barriers in accessing public services. Likewise, Percy-Smith (2000) argued that the processes that prevent some considerable proportion of the population from participation and exercising

their political rights have not attracted significant attention, and explained that ‘this is certainly a reflection of the primacy given to economic issues, notably employment, in the social exclusion policy agenda’ (p. 149). In a similar vein, Watts (1987) explored the impact of macro-economic policy going as far back as post-World War II Australia, which focused, and still does, on achieving, maintaining or restoring full employment, which by privileging the labour market pushes welfare concerns to a second-order priority, ‘and ensures that there can be no acknowledgement of the fundamental inequalities’ (p. 127).

In questioning the reasons for fundamental inequalities, the Council of Europe Report 2006 drew attention to another factor, claiming ‘the problem...is not incompatibility of cultures, but rather the incapacity of the receiving societies to recognize and modify their own structures of exclusion’. This is significant in that it shifts the focus away from the new communities who are often being accused of not integrating to the attitudes of the host communities. On this point, a similar view was expressed by Jakubowicz (2006), who argued that ‘inclusion reinforces a hierarchy of power where dominant groups essentially set the parameters under which minorities will be expected to behave’. Hyman, Meinhard and Shields (2011) also advocated the need to identify and address exclusionary processes and structures that produce inequities, rather than focussing on integration of population groups marginalised by national, racial, religious or ethnic origins (Hyman et al., 2011).

## **Summary**

Australia is home to an increasingly multilingual society, of which a significant number are not proficient in English, the language used by the providers of public services. Public services include the most critical services in a society; in general, the entitlement of all citizens to these services is not questioned. Modern public service provision is promoted as a citizen-centric approach, highlighting participation and consultation with citizens in the planning, development and delivery of services. However, studies have so far mostly tended



to focus on the redistribution effects of material public services, and have investigated the links between social exclusion and public services such as income support, education and health. The position and situation of people with language barriers in this context, and how it may contribute to social exclusion, have not been subject to serious academic scrutiny. The UNDESA Report (2009) claimed that tackling exclusion is the best or only way to understand the processes that cause it (the present study supports this claim). As Holmes (2011, p. 20), asserted, certain knowledge, skills and dispositions on the part of the citizens are essential to enter into a dialogue and sustained deliberation with public servants and other professionals. This is why access to public services, which implicitly involves engagement, public participation and equal membership in the community, must be analysed with respect to those with language barriers. As previously noted, Percy-Smith (2000, p. 6) observes that while structural causes may contribute to social exclusion, government agencies can address this situation through appropriate policies and attitudes.

While the stated objectives of access and equity policies since 1985 recognise that public services must remove barriers to access including language barriers, this has never been subject to robust scrutiny based on the lived experiences of people who are affected. This study seeks to fill this significant gap by critically analysing everyday practices of communication between community members with language barriers and public services, focusing on the use of translation and interpreting services as a key language service in this process.

## **Chapter Two: Language and Symbolic Violence - Bourdieu's Theory of Practice**

This study examines the realities of communication between citizens with language barriers and public services run by the state, along with the profession of interpreting and translating as a key communication method within the state apparatus. The relationship that is under scrutiny is not one of between more or less equal parties. It involves people in need of a service dealing with the state that has control over the society's most critical services, creating an inherent power asymmetry. This warrants a discussion of deep patterns of social/economic inequalities. One of the research questions in this study asks how we can make sense of the power relations inherent in this setting. The chapter elaborates on how Bourdieu explains the relationship between the state and its citizens, especially with respect to language, which is central to this investigation.

This chapter introduces the Theory of Practice of the French anthropologist and sociologist and key concepts Pierre Bourdieu as a proposed framework for responding to this question.

### **Bourdieu's Theory of Practice**

The power relations in a society (or an organisation) and the dynamics arising from these relations for the acquisition, maintenance and domination of capital by different groups form the backbone of Bourdieu's comprehensive 'theory of society', constructed on the concepts of habitus, field, capital and symbolic violence. These concepts enable an analysis of *how* power persists (Moi, 1991, p. 1019). Bourdieu's framework therefore allows us 'to focus on both the dynamics of domination and the reproduction and contestation of domination through practice' (McDonough & Polzer, 2012, p. 361).

*Habitus*

The term 'habitus' describes our beliefs, values, tastes, predispositions and commonsense (Bowman, 2010, p. 6). Bourdieu's (1979) concept of habitus represents 'a system of durable, transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices' (p. vii). He uses the term to refer to the more or less common attitudes, values, dispositions, preferences and tastes of people in a particular social setting. Habitus then manifests itself unconsciously, according to Bourdieu, in the way these people think, act and feel (Ortner, 2006, p. 109).

In addition to its content, one important aspect of habitus is how it is acquired. The development of habitus is a largely unconscious process of internalising structures (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002, p. 15). Rules, values and dispositions are taken in unconsciously through socialisation and embodied cultural history (Ortner, 2006, p. 110; Webb et al., 2002, p. xii). This internalised habitus makes people think that particular actions or choices, from a range of possibilities, are 'necessities', 'common sense', 'natural' or 'inevitable' (Webb et al., 2002, p. 38), and part of 'human nature' or 'civilised behaviour'. Other possibilities are simply not for consideration, 'because they are unthinkable', 'barbaric' or 'absurd' (Webb et al., 2002, p. 39). Habitus does not develop in individuals in isolation: rather, the dispositions are 'acquired in social positions' unconsciously and collectively (Gorton, 2000, p. 282). That means that it is possible to talk about the habitus of organisations such as those providing public services.

The other relevant aspect of the concept of habitus is that it 'is not fixed or permanent, and can be changed under unexpected situations or over a long historical period' (Navarro, 2006, p. 16).

Habitus is neither a result of free will, nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time: dispositions that are both shaped by past

events and structures, and that shape current practices and structures and also, importantly, that condition our very perceptions of these (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170).

This nature of habitus, as well as how it develops and how it can lead to the exclusion of some who do not have the ‘right’ habitus, can assist in the analysis of some of the practices, actions and decisions of public servants, and as a result, of public services with respect to treatment of citizens with language barriers. The habitus of public services as institutions may be manifested in the practices of their ‘officials’, who constitute one of the key parties in any communication with community members in public service delivery.

The importance of this concept of interplay then warrants an examination of the practices within public services with respect to their communication with community members who have language barriers. People often experience power differently, depending on which field they are in at a given moment (Gaventa, 2003, p. 6), so context and environment are key influences on habitus.

### *Field*

As described above, habitus is shaped by social environments, and determines an individual’s actions and decisions within that environment. Bourdieu called these social environments ‘cultural fields’ (Bourdieu, 1990; Webb et al., 2002, pp. 21–22). Webb et al. (2002) explained how the cycles that produce ‘cultural fields’ work: a cultural field or context is ‘defined by a series of institutions, rules and conventions’ that ‘produce certain discourses and activities ... The rules then produce and transform attitudes and practices as cultural fields’ (Webb et al., 2002, pp. 21–22).

Fields can vary; a field can represent a network, structure or set of relationships that may be intellectual, religious, educational or cultural (Navarro, 2006, p. 18). Each social field has unique logics of practice and a certain degree of autonomy, and contains positions that

are arranged in a hierarchal relationship (Lingard et al., 2006). A family, a religious group, a community association, a political party, a company or a sport club are all examples of fields.

Knowing and accepting the rules of the field and participation denotes acknowledgement of the stakes and recognition of that field. Bourdieu (1993) illustrated the processes and relations between the concepts of field, practice and habitus in his analogy of 'social games'. Participation in the game means one accepts all the explicit and implicit rules of the game. Bourdieu (1993) explained, 'Those who take part in the struggle help to reproduce the game by helping—more or less completely, depending on the field—to produce belief in the value of the stakes' (p. 74). This then means that one needs to know the rules of the game in order to participate in it. Knowing the rules, first and foremost, requires knowing the language of the game. If we view public services as a field—a social game—what happens if one does not speak the language of the game?

The concept of the game assumes that actors in a field share certain similarities and a belief in the field, and that these factors in turn determine who can enter the field and play the game. It must therefore be determined what circumstances can allow or generate the differing levels of integration of actors within a field, or exclude some from participating. According to Bourdieu, selection is done inadvertently, and the main reason for this inadvertency is habitus. Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) explained the significance of habitus in a field:

Permeating any given field, the habitus gives individuals a feel for the game that allows them to know how they and others should behave depending upon their hierarchical position, which, in turn, is determined by the amount of field-relevant capital they control. Because the internal logic of the field can be kept hidden, the habitus can be well protected from outsiders and may operate as tacit knowledge among insiders who thus reproduce the field and its hierarchies without consciousness of their involvement. (p. 125)

One's relative position in the field then determines how much power one has in that field (Webb et al., 2002, p. 23) and the ways in which that person can distinguish themselves from those with less power or influence (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006).

According to Bourdieu, the field that overarches all other fields, and thus wields the greatest power over human actions, is the field of economy and politics, which he called 'the field of power' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 56). Economy and politics are controlled by the state, which manages the public services through its agencies and departments; this means that the public services—the focus of this study—are part of the most powerful field. While participation in fields such as golf clubs, business clubs or even private schools may be discretionary, participation in a field that distributes the critical public services should not be permitted to be an exclusive field that allows access and entry only to select groups and denies access to others.

The ways in which people with less power or influence are excluded in everyday life from the field of public services can be investigated through the social practices of public servants. Jenkins (2002) defined 'social practice' as visible social action, behaviour or 'what people do' in everyday life, which is located in time and space and is 'not wholly consciously organised and orchestrated' (pp. 69–70). Webb et al. (2002) also drew attention to the unconscious, habitual and repetitive nature of social practice (p. 49).

The social practices of public services in their dealings with citizens with language barriers are the subject of this study; as such, the approaches to the dynamics within a field explained above are useful in the analysis of data collected as part of this investigation. As cultural fields can be any social and institutional arena in which people express and reproduce their habitus—values and dispositions—and where they compete for the distribution of different kinds of capital (Gaventa, 2003, p. 6), it is also relevant to examine what Bourdieu meant by 'capital' and how it is significant.

*Capital*

Bourdieu (1977) explained capital as anything tangible or intangible, or material or symbolic, that presents itself as 'rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation' (p. 178). He asserted that 'capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101), and that capital is essential in moving up or down in the hierarchy with the field. In plain language, capital refers to anything from collections of property or other material forms of wealth, skills, qualifications or professional titles to speech styles and tastes. The forms of capital an individual possesses then determine whether that person can enter a particular field and where that person's position would be.

According to Bourdieu (1990), capital is not limited to tangible goods such as money and property, which he calls 'economic capital'. It also includes intangible wealth, represented in academic or other qualifications, that can be turned into economic capital. Bourdieu also recognised the advantages and benefits one can gain from social networks and connections, calling these 'social capital', which again can be used to gain economic capital. According to Bourdieu, social capital is 'a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition'. In the same way that one has to work to create economic capital, creation of social capital also requires work. Although Bourdieu identified economic capital as capital's primary form, he highlighted the significance of other forms of capital in the creation of more economic capital. Bourdieu (1991) identified one more form of capital that differs from the others in that it is purely subjective: symbolic capital, which he defined as 'any property (any form of capital whether physical, economic, cultural or social) when it is perceived by social agents endowed with categories of perception which cause them to know it and to recognise it, to give it value' (p. 8). Bourdieu (1972/1977) described symbolic capital as 'a capital of honour and prestige' (p. 179). Symbolic capital is built on such things as reputation, publicity and fame, manifests itself in

titles such as ‘doyen’, ‘knight’, ‘master’ or ‘professor’, and provides its holder with certain rights and opportunities that can be converted into other forms of capital.

Membership in certain groups may also depend on how other group members recognise a person’s value and how much they want to be acquainted with that person. This means that, before accepting someone into a field, others may look at the newcomer’s economic capital (e.g., what sort of car do they drive? What sort of a house do they live in and in which suburb?), cultural capital (e.g., do they only have a high school education? or are they university graduates?), social capital (e.g., are they a member of a social club or group?) or symbolic capital (e.g., do they have the title of ‘professor’ or ‘master’?).

In his famous study of French society, *Distinction* (1984), Bourdieu showed how the ‘social order is progressively inscribed in people’s minds’ through ‘cultural products’, including systems of education, language, judgements, values, methods of classification and activities of everyday life (p. 471). These all lead to an unconscious acceptance of social differences and hierarchies, to ‘a sense of one’s place’ and to behaviours of self-exclusion (p. 141).

Possession of any one or more of these types of capital—financial, informational, legal, technical, political and so forth—can be said to ‘allow [the] possessors to wield a power, or influence, and thus to exist, in the field under consideration instead of being considered a negligible quantity’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 98). With respect to the concept of capital, the position of citizens with language barriers needs to be analysed in terms of how they are able to participate and compete in a field and struggle for capital in order to take up positions.

### *Symbolic violence*

Bourdieu used the concept of symbolic violence to explain how power is used in subtle ways by those who have it over those who do not. According to Bourdieu, symbolic



violence is an unconscious submission to the force, real or symbolic, exercised by a dominating person or group over the dominated social agents in a particular field. The main premise of symbolic violence is that individuals are ‘subjected to forms of violence’ in an internalised or symbolic way rather than a physical one; for example, they may be ‘treated as inferior ... limited in their social mobility and aspirations’ (Bourdieu, 1992, cited in Webb et al., 2002, p. 25). The other important aspect of symbolic violence is ‘the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity’ (Bourdieu, 1992, cited in Webb et al., 2002, p. 25). Dominated social agents take part in acts of symbolic violence willingly, seeing it as legitimate and a part of the environment, or field, in which they are operating. This internalisation is assisted by the process of ‘misrecognition’ (Bourdieu, 1992, cited in Webb et al., 2002, pp. 24–25), where individuals do not view themselves as victims or perpetrators of symbolic violence. Neither the dominating force nor the dominated are conscious of the violence, and take the status quo for granted without questioning it. The reasons for which symbolic violence is exercised are often little different from those for which real violence is used—domination and maintaining domination. Those who possess more capital in a field can exercise symbolic violence ‘with complicity of those who suffer from it’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Individuals may be treated as inferior or subordinate to others by being defined, for example, as ‘the marginalised carer, being limited in terms of realistic aspirations, or being denied resources’ (Webb et al., 2002, p. xvi). Bourdieu (1998) also explained the state’s role in exerting symbolic violence to its citizens, arguing that ‘the state is an X (to be determined) which successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical and symbolic violence over a definite territory and over the totality of the corresponding population’ (p.40).

A related concept in Bourdieu’s understanding of power is that of *doxa*, which is the combination of both orthodox and heterodox norms and beliefs—the unstated, taken-for-

granted assumptions or ‘common sense’ behind the distinctions we make. Doxa happens when we ‘forget the limits’ that have given rise to unequal divisions in society: it is ‘an adherence to relations of order which, because they structure inseparably both the real world and the thought world, are accepted as self-evident’ (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471). Doxa encompasses all those norms and practices that are ‘accepted as natural and self-evident part of the social order’ (Agarwal, 1997, p. 15). It ‘goes without saying’ and ‘is not open to contestation or questioning’ (Agarwal, 1997, p. 15), describing ‘an uncontested acceptance of the daily lifeworld’. Doxa is key to the realisation of symbolic violence in social practice (Webb et al., 2002). An example might be a young girl who marries a man chosen by her parents in an arranged marriage, without questioning this. The dominated person who was subjected to symbolic violence does not see it a violence, but rather misrecognises it as part of the normal existing social order (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

This study analyses the circumstances of people with language barriers in their quest to access the public services they need as members of society and looks for instances of symbolic violence as described by Bourdieu in public service doxa. Specifically, this is done through an analysis of how citizens with language barriers try to negotiate those barriers, and how symbolic violence is created in the practices of public services in communicating with citizens with language barriers. The main contention in this investigation is that many citizens with language barriers are victims of doxa, in that they do not see the disadvantage and discrimination they are subject to in relation to public service provision, especially when negotiating communication barriers.

Moreover, the identification of practices of symbolic violence can assist citizens with language barriers to make sense of their powerlessness. Understanding power and powerlessness—in this case, through processes of learning and analysis of the everyday experiences of community members with language barriers that expose invisible practices of

symbolic violence—can itself be an empowering process in any effort to address social exclusion and achieve social inclusion. As Blackledge (2005) explained, ‘Too little is still known about the countless acts of recognition and misrecognition that produce and reproduce the magical frontier between the dominant and the dominated’ (p. 45).

### **The Field of Public Services and Language**

By stating with authority what a being (thing or person) is in truth (verdict) according to its socially legitimate definition, that is what he or she is authorised to be, what he has a right (and duty) to be, the social being that he may claim, the State wields a genuinely creative, *quasi*-divine, power. (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 12)

Bourdieu (1994) placed economy and politics, which controls the bureaucracy, at the top of his hierarchy of forms of power, giving it an all-encompassing position: ‘[T]aking the vantage point of the Whole, of society in its totality, the state claims responsibility for all operations of *totalisation*’ (p. 7, italics in original). Indeed, he called the state ‘the Field of Power’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 56). This label is fundamentally appropriate because, Bourdieu (1994) claimed, ‘[T]he state is the culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital: capital of physical force or instruments of coercion (army, police), economic capital, cultural or (better) informational capital, and symbolic capital’ (p. 4). He further explained, ‘[T]he state concentrates, treats, and redistributes information and, most of all, effects a *theoretical unification*’ (p. 7, italics in original). This, Bourdieu claimed, constitutes the state, which controls ‘the means of imposition and inculcation of the durable principles of vision and division that conform to its own structure, is the site par excellence of the concentration and exercise of symbolic power’ (p. 9).

As for the way in which this is expressed in the state’s attitude to language in society, Bourdieu (1994) argued, ‘Culture is unifying—the state contributes to unification of the

cultural market by unifying all codes, linguistic or juridical.’ He then elaborated as to how the habitus of the state affects language in a country, arguing, ‘Cultural and linguistic unification is accompanied by the imposition of the dominant language and culture as legitimate and by rejection of all other languages into indignity’ (p. 7).

This happens to be a field that citizens with language barriers are obliged to engage with, because inevitably they have to access public services and resources, whereas other fields in a society may be more of a choice. For example, if we view a sports club or a society of history as a field, participation would be something for agents to choose. Therefore, any barrier to participation would be an issue for them to resolve. In contrast, citizens with language barriers do not have any choice with respect to their need to face and resolve the problem of a language barrier.

The practices and actions of public service institutions, as organisations run by the state, are undertaken by agents who act on behalf of the state, and are known as officials or public servants. Bourdieu (1994) described them as ‘authorized characters, “officials” who are acting *ex officio*, as holders of an *officium* (*publicum*), that is, of a function or position assigned by the state’ (p. 12). As the habitus of these ‘authorised characters’ ultimately reflects the habitus of the organisation, and as habitus is shaped by structural factors (and therefore by the state) as much as individual agency, this habitus becomes critical in the relationship between the public services and the citizens with language barriers, as well as citizens without language barriers. McDonough and Polzer (2012) argued:

Habitus gives rise to a sense of what actions are possible (and impossible) for agents variously positioned within an organization. Conditioned by both social origins and subsequent experiences and, thus, durable *and* transposable, habitus operates largely below the level of consciousness and provides members of an organization with a framework for accomplishing ‘appropriate’ practice. (p. 362)

Habits and dispositions ‘become durably incorporated in the body’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 86). Each field generates its own habitus or system of embodied ‘lasting, transposable dispositions’ (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 83).

The above described concepts and views of Bourdieu can help make sense of some of the problems that were first formally recognised in 1978 Galbally Review with respect to inequities experienced by citizens with language barriers in their dealings with the public services in Australia and have been observed by various authors and reports since. These include, among others, problems accessing health information (Scheelbeek, 1993), justice (Laster & Taylor, 1994) and education (Jupp & McRobbie, 1992) and Multicultural Access and Equity Review Report (DIAC, 2012). Some light can be shed on the question of why these problems remain by a scrutiny of the practices of public services, lived experiences of people with language barriers and the role of translators and interpreters in this context, for what Bourdieu (2000, p. 181) called ‘tangible self-evidences’.

## **Summary**

Communication between citizens and public services run by the state includes an inherent power asymmetry, as it is a process that links individuals in need of critical services and institutions in control of the distribution of those services. Citizens with language barriers face an even greater power asymmetry. The work of Pierre Bourdieu, through his Theory of Practice and concepts of habitus, field, capital and symbolic violence, offers a way of analysing the power relations in various settings in a society. In this study, the overarching field is the public services. This implies that one needs to know the rules of the game to participate in the game, and knowing the rules, first and foremost, requires knowing the language of the game. If we view public services as a field—a social game—the subject of this inquiry is what happens when one does not speak the language of the game.

Finally, the concept of 'symbolic violence' concept is useful for interpreting some of the social practices of public services and the experiences of citizens with language barriers in negotiating those barriers.

## **Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Design**

This research study examined a growing but often overlooked anthropological and sociological phenomenon that affects the lives of many people not proficient in the official or common language of the country in which they live. This phenomenon affects both those with linguistic or cultural barriers, such as migrant groups, and those with physical barriers, such as the deaf or hearing impaired community. The phenomenon under investigation is the processes of communication between the providers of public services, often the most critical services in any society, and citizens with language barriers. Given that the subject of this research is an aspect of the social world in which we live, a qualitative research method is appropriate (Herbert & Higgs, 2004). However, aspects of this study required some additional data from a representative group to support the qualitative data. Accordingly, quantitative methods were also used.

In this context, it is of value to discuss common research paradigms and their strengths and weaknesses, and then to present the approach, methods and design adopted in addressing the research questions in this study. This chapter presents that discussion.

### **Understanding the Philosophy of the Research**

Research is a systematic and critical inquiry into a specific problem, grounded in data (Sekaran, 2000). Such an investigation is guided by a series of questions posed by the researcher or researchers. The purpose of research is to contribute to existing bodies of knowledge by answering questions (Wood & Ross-Kerr, 2011). However, what makes a research question needs to be clarified. Wood and Ross-Kerr (2011) defined a research question as ‘an explicit query about a problem or issue that can be challenged, examined, and analyzed, and that will yield useful new information’ (p. 2). Wood and Ross-Kerr also posited that the most critical aspect of the new knowledge contributed as a result of answers produced by a particular research is that ‘they must be facts, not opinions’ (p. 2). This is

because, they added, the answers ‘can be used by other people in other places because the answers are valid no matter who asked the question or where the answer was found’ (p. 2).

This then brings us to the question—how do we undertake research?

## **Research Methodologies and Approaches**

The quantitative and qualitative research paradigms constitute two overarching classifications of a number of approaches and strategies (Herbert & Higgs, 2004).

Quantitative research, in simple terms, refers to methods of enumeration, and is ‘rooted in the positivist belief that there are simple universal truths which can be discovered with objective methods’ (Herbert & Higgs, 2004, p. 63). Herbert and Higgs (2004) listed the advantages of quantitative methods as:

- ‘simplification of description’;
- ‘the ability to infer causation’; and
- the ability to ‘make inferences about populations’ (p. 63).

One major limitation of quantitative approaches is that their variables need to be strictly controlled, which does not allow for the investigation of different dimensions or the complexity of everyday phenomena (Herbert & Higgs, 2004).

Qualitative research, on the other hand, to put it simply, refers to non-mathematical analysis (Herbert & Higgs, 2004). A more elaborate definition was offered by Hammersley (2013):

a form of social inquiry that tends to adopt a flexible and data-driven research design, to use relatively unstructured data, to emphasize the essential role of subjectivity in the research process, to study a number of naturally occurring cases in detail, and to use verbal rather than statistical forms of analysis. (p. 12)

Hammersley (2013) further explained some key features of qualitative research:



- ‘Qualitative researchers place more emphasis on generating and developing descriptions and explanations than upon testing pre-defined hypotheses’ (p. 12).
- ‘[I]n the case of interviews, qualitative research typically involves a relatively unstructured approach where the aim is to invite informants to talk at length about matters that are broadly relevant to the research’ (p. 12).
- ‘Qualitative researchers may ... use documentary data such as official reports...without seeking to quantify their content in the manner of much content analysis’ (p. 12).
- Increasingly, qualitative researchers make ‘use of material available electronically on the internet’ (p. 13).
- Unlike formal interviews, ‘most qualitative work investigates what goes in the ordinary settings in which people live and work, and/or uses interviews that are designed to approximate to ordinary conversations in key respects’ (p. 13);
- ‘Qualitative inquiry often involves investigation of a small number of naturally occurring cases, perhaps just one ... for in-depth examination of each case in order to document complexity’ (p. 13).

Higgs and Cherry (2009) explained, ‘Qualitative research offers us a substantial spectrum of cultures for inquiring into the behaviour and experiences of individuals and groups of people’ (p. 8). These cultures, according to Higgs and Cherry (2009), are described in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1

*Research Cultures*

Action and advocacy-based inquiry	Inquiries that value the learning, transformation and liberation that can result from taking action and reflecting on the consequences.
Narrative inquiry	Narrative inquiries focus on the life stories of individuals or groups. Approaches include biographies, autobiographies, written and oral histories, memoirs, story telling
Ethnographic inquiry	Involves deep and extended immersion in the everyday activities of groups or larger social systems. The researcher collects rich data through participant observation, interviews and curation of artefacts, rituals, stories and aesthetic texts
Phenomenological inquiry	This culture of inquiry focuses on lived experience and the way people make sense of those experiences.
Hermeneutic inquiry	This culture of inquiry involves the construction (or collation) and interpretation of new (or existing) texts.
Theoretical inquiry	This culture of inquiry is concerned with the way theory can be built from the observed behaviours and lived experiences of individuals and groups.

Higgs (2001) classified qualitative and quantitative each into three further sub-paradigms, according to the goals, research approaches and data-collection and analysis methods used under each broad approach. These sub-paradigms are described in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2

*Research Sub-paradigms*

Research paradigm	Key research goals	Research approach(es): examples	Research methods: data-collection examples	Research methods: data analysis
Emprico-analytical paradigm	To test hypotheses, identify cause-effect relationships	Experimental method, randomised effect relationships	Controlled trials, interviews, questionnaires	Statistical analysis
Interpretive paradigm	To understand, interpret, seek meaning	Phenomenology, narrative inquiry, naturalistic inquiry, arts-based inquiry	Interviews, case studies, storytelling, cognitive maps	Repeated return to data, extraction of themes, theorisation
Critical paradigm	To improve, empower, change reality or situation	Action research, collaborative research, feminist research, participatory research	Interviews, case studies, critical debate	Reflection upon data collected, action and outcomes, scholarly analysis, review by stakeholders

Herbert and Higgs (2004) argued that the exploration of a wide range of issues arising from the intersection between social and physical phenomena requires a variety of research paradigms and approaches. If the objective is to display ‘simple descriptions of variables or relationships between variables, or to identify causal relationships, or to make inferences about populations’, quantitative methods can be used (p. 64). Conversely, for in-depth exploration of social phenomena, qualitative methods are required. Strauss (1987) posited, in contrast, that any distinction between these two paradigms essentially relies on the way data are treated analytically, and that qualitative analysis will always include some quantitative analysis, albeit at a rudimentary level, by asking such questions as ‘How many?’, ‘How often?’, and ‘To what degree?’ (p. 3).

The following section addresses the approaches taken in the present study.

## Research Approach for This Study

Strauss (1987) posited that ‘The basic question facing us is how to capture the complexity of reality (phenomena) we study, and how to make convincing sense of it’ (p. 10). He argued that this involves two essential processes: extensive data capturing, and making sense of this data.

The ‘making sense’ stage involves three tasks:

- ongoing interpretations of data during the course of data collection, culminating at a high-level abstraction in final analysis;
- a theory that must be conceptually dense, to avoid a simple statement of phenomena;
- a detailed examination of the data must be undertaken to ‘bring out the amazing complexity of what lies in, behind and beyond those data’ (Strauss, 1987, p. 10).

In order to capture and make sense of data about the communication between public services and community members with language barriers, along with the role of translators and interpreters, this research study incorporated a multi-faceted research methodology, interweaving qualitative (interpretive and critical) and elements of quantitative (empirico-analytical) research paradigms, albeit at rudimentary level (Higgs, 2001). Herbert and Higgs (2004) highlighted the need for flexibility in choosing research paradigms:

In past decades much has been made of ‘paradigm wars’ which were divisive and unhelpful. In our view both qualitative and quantitative paradigms can generate valuable knowledge and there are many cases where the different approaches can be conducted in conjunction and harmony. (p. 63)

Pierre Bourdieu was one of those who used a multiple-method approach: in *Distinction*, survey data were sociologically interpreted from an anthropological perspective, along with qualitative methods (Nowicka, 2015).

Nevertheless, given the nature of the inquiry into the lived experiences of a section of society, the present research methodology is predominantly qualitative. Its design was guided by the following essentials for qualitative research, as advocated by Higgs and Cherry (2009):

- respect for the participants of the research endeavour (as individuals of agency and cultural belonging) and, where appropriate, engagement of participants as co-researchers
- recognition of research as a powerful tool for shaping social change and enhancing the human world
- the contribution of new knowledge to a field of human practice and being that is well articulated in a sound theoretical framework
- the location and justification of the research strategy within an articulated research paradigm that demonstrates congruence between the philosophical and methodological stance
- recognition of research as an interpretive act and a journey of learning
- the pursuit of quality (in particular credibility and rigor or authenticity to the research strategy) and ethical conduct
- the pursuit of elegant simplicity in presenting a sound argument in the written report of the research. (p. 6)

More specifically, case research methodology was used in this study. Case research methodology is considered useful in situations where the research is exploring a contemporary event, where control of subjects or events is not necessary and where there is no adequate theoretical base (Benbasat et al., 1987; Yin, 1994). Case research methodology can also provide an insight into a phenomenon (process, event, person or object of interest) and has been noted as particularly useful for three purposes:

- producing detailed descriptions of a phenomenon,

- developing possible explanations for it and
- evaluating the phenomenon (Cranefield & Yoong, 2007).

The use of case studies from the field was also highlighted by Foucault (1969, cited in Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 297), who asserted that researchers should ‘never lose sight of reference to a concrete example’.

The field of public service, as the broader context that is the subject of this study, is viewed as a set of social practices involving employees of public institutions, from policy makers to service point staff, interacting with community members with language barriers and translators and interpreters. This means that the present inquiry is a sociological one, at once descriptive, qualitative, quantitative and evaluative in nature. The research method employed in this study was largely inspired by Bourdieu’s body of research, including its empirical approach. It involved a combination of ethnographic, narrative, phenomenological and theoretical inquiries within a qualitative paradigm, as described by Higgs (2001).

Higgs and Cherry (2009) highlighted the value of the qualitative approach, stating, ‘By interpreting the lived experiences of practitioners and participants in practice (e.g., clients), qualitative research helps to enhance the researcher’s understanding of the nature, processes and experiences of practice’ (p. 10). They argued that this work of interpretation then adds to the knowledge of the field, calling this process ‘illumination of practice’. They added that this process leads to changes in practice by ‘producing knowledge which is used by others ... to change practice and educate others about practice’ (p. 11). They posited that qualitative research allows a close scrutiny of practice in a variety of ways, and if the gap between what is stated or assumed and what is actually implemented can be illuminated, ‘This is often a significant trigger for people to change their practice’ (p. 11). The goals of this study are essentially to examine the circumstances of citizens with language barriers in accessing public services, aiming ‘to understand, interpret, seek meaning, describe, illuminate

and theorise' their circumstances—falling under the interpretive paradigm (Herbert & Higgs, 2004, p. 63)—and, by doing this, 'to improve, reform, empower, change reality or situations' they are in—falling under the critical paradigm (Herbert & Higgs, 2004, p. 63). Accordingly, both interpretive and critical paradigms within the broader qualitative paradigm are appropriate approaches for this research.

To ensure validity and enhance credibility of this research, the analysis was based on a triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative data gathered from the agents from the three fields under scrutiny. These complementary data were sourced using the following methods:

- examination of concrete examples of various communication practices of and reports by a number of public services that are likely to interact with people with language barriers (Qualitative);
- interviews with public servants who deal with languages issues in their work (Qualitative);
- a survey of people with language barriers (Quantitative);
- narrations provided by people with language barriers (Qualitative); and
- narrative interviews with interpreters and translators (Qualitative).

Data analysis was conducted utilising the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software for the quantitative data and through content analysis for the qualitative data. Results were then considered in reference the social inclusion indicators proposed in the UNDESA report (2009, p. 16), which highlight the significance of examining everyday processes and practices in identifying social exclusion. The UNDESA report's proposed key social inclusion and exclusion indicators are listed below. These questions guided the analysis of the findings based on concrete examples of everyday practices of engagement between public services and community members with language barriers. The questions are:

- How and why people are being left out of the processes that make up the proper functioning of society?
- Who does this exclusion affect and what are the economic, social and political environments in which the problem is most apparent?
- What are the structures, processes and relations of power that exist within societies that result in the inclusion of some and exclusion of others.

In addressing the key research questions, which centre on the inequalities at play in accessing critical services by community members with language barriers and possible reasons for this, the discussion and analysis were aided interpretively by Bourdieu's Theory of Practice, especially the key concepts of field, habitus and symbolic violence.

## **Research Questions**

As outlined in Chapter 1, this study aimed to investigate communication and engagement between public service institutions and community members who lack proficiency in the language used by these institutions, with a further focus on the status of public service translation and interpreting as a key means of communication in a multilingual society. The research aimed to accomplish this by seeking answers to several research questions. Wood and Ross-Kerr (2011) highlighted the significance of asking clear and well defined research questions, stating, 'everything in your research plan depends on the question. It represents the point you want to make, to explore, to describe, or to know stripped clean of any superfluous verbiage' (p. 7).

The research questions addressed in this study are:

- How are current government policies regarding access and equity implemented in everyday public service structures and processes with respect to citizens experiencing language barriers?



- How can we better understand the interaction between the public institutions that control critical services and citizens with language barriers in a field of practice shaped by asymmetric or unequal relations of power?

Addressing these two questions required elaborating them in several sub-questions to further focus the scrutiny of the inquiry onto the effects of the communication practices of public services:

- What is the experience of living with a language barrier like?
- What power relations exist in the communication practices of public services?
- What is the position of translators and interpreters in overcoming basic language barriers in delivering a public service?

### **Data Sources for the Study**

Data for the investigation to answer the above research questions were collected using the methods detailed in the following subsections.

#### **Case studies: Public service institutions**

Data on the practices of public services were obtained from two sources. The first involved examination of the annual reports and/or relevant policies of a select group of public service institutions and organisations offering these services. This selection was based upon an extensive literature search at both state (Victoria, Australia) and national levels. The specific organisations and documents analysed for the purpose of this study are as follows:

- The Annual Report 2011–2012 by the Department of Human Services (DoHS)
- A resource guide developed to help Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) in communicating with community members from Burma, including Karen and Chin speakers (Resource Guide, Working with Communities from Burma—The Karen & Chin, MFB, 2008)
- 2012 report by the Moreland City Council

- 2012 report by the Moonee Ponds City Council
- 2012 Melbourne Sexual Health Clinic
- APC Report 2012–2103

The second source of data on the practices of Australian public service institutions or organisations involved three separate semi-structured interviews (refer interview schedule in Appendix V) conducted by the researcher with three public servants whose roles involved dealing with language services or who used language services in the performance of their duties with community members with language barriers. The candidates were identified and approached through the researcher's personal contacts from 25 years experience in the industry as a senior practitioner and his role as a main point of contact for advice from major policy and industry stakeholders over the past 10 years as an academic in the translation studies discipline. The researcher acknowledges this to be a small number of participants due to the limited availability of this category of respondents. However given the positions these participants hold, the researcher is confident of the breadth and validity of their views.

Thompson (1998), demonstrating the prevalence of inequalities in contemporary Western societies, especially drew attention to the role of workers in the human services, a key sector of public service, stating, 'for workers in the human services, this represents a particular challenge in so far as decisions made and actions taken can play a significant role in either moving towards a greater degree of equality or reinforcing existing inequalities' (p. 1).

### **Case studies: Semi-structured narrative interviews with public service translators and interpreters**

Qualitative data on translation and interpreting were obtained through semi-structured interviews with seven Australian translators and interpreters. A qualitative design is particularly appropriate for studies that aim to investigate experiences of services from the perspectives of the affected individuals (Green & Thorogood, 2004). The participating

translators and interpreters, all of whom were accredited at the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) professional level (formerly known as Level 3), worked in the following languages:

- Arabic
- Auslan
- Chinese
- Greek
- Italian
- Spanish

These translators and interpreters were selected based upon the researcher's personal contacts as an academic in translating and interpreting studies over the past ten years, from 25 years experience in the industry as a senior practitioner, and from his role as a main point of contact for advice and information from major policy and industry stakeholders. The choice of these participant practitioners was mostly heavily based upon their years of experience and their standing in the industry as senior practitioners, as well as the LOTEs spoken by them being representative of a number of community languages with high demand for translator and interpreter services in Australia. Each of them was interviewed separately via appointment with the researcher. They were given a list of questions drawn up before the interview (refer Appendix III) to prepare and guide their thoughts. Questions put to them in the interview were framed around the list, although occasional digression took place. This was done to standardise the interviews as much as possible. Although the original design of the questionnaire focussed more on probing responses to public service translation services (refer questions 5 to 8 in Appendix III), all respondents worked as translators and interpreters (except the Auslan interviewee) and the responses elicited covered both public service translating and interpreting.

The data from the interviews were qualitatively analysed and compared with the findings from key industry reports from the past three decades. The most recent report analysed was a survey conducted by the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers Australia (APESMA) in 2012 with the participation of about 300 interpreters and translators.

### **Surveys and narrations: Citizens with language barriers**

In order to elicit data on the lived experiences of community members with language barriers in their everyday encounters with public services or agencies, data were obtained through two research tools: surveys and stories. Although surveys provide data suitable for mathematical analysis, especially in investigating cause–effect relationships (Higgs, 2001), surveys can also assist in making broader inferences about populations (Higgs, 2001). It was therefore appropriate to include this quantitative method to obtain some statistical data about the situations of people with language barriers.

The survey was designed to allow for completion in 10–15 minutes, and was organised into three main parts:

1. Personal demographic information;
2. Language skills in English and LOTE;
3. Interaction with public services (e.g., welfare, housing, hospital, childcare, schools, police, courts);
4. Opportunities to participate in community life.

A pilot study was carried out with a group of community members with language barriers to assess the research instrument in terms of its clarity, coherence, suitability and comprehensibility. The pilot survey revealed some problems involving clarity of wording, formatting, ambiguous statements and repetitive questions. The list of questions were then revised, based on the received feedback, to form the questionnaire (Appendix I) and

Interview Schedule (Appendix II). A group of interviewers was recruited through the researcher's personal contacts as an academic of 10 years standing in translating and interpreting studies and from 25 years experience in the industry as a senior practitioner and from his role as a main point of contact with major policy and industry stakeholders. These interviewers were bilingual English and LOTE speakers who were employed as community workers, social workers, and language-specific settlement workers. A face-to-face individual training session was provided to each interviewer by the researcher, focussing on interviewing skills aimed at eliciting as much relevant information as possible based upon the list of questions drawn for this purpose. The importance of confidentiality of any information they are told and maintaining neutrality when recording responses were also extensively covered in the training.

The interviewers were recruited by the researcher primarily because of their bilingual skills and access to LOTE-speaking clients in their work contexts. They were tasked with distributing and collecting questionnaires, recruiting as many voluntary interview subjects as possible, sight translating the questionnaires, and conducting the interviews in the LOTE in which they were fluent. Each interview was to be conducted separately, in private, and out of their working hours. They were to fill in the response sections of the questionnaires and record the interviews in writing in a separate Interview Schedule printout that was to be returned to the researcher for data analysis.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The data gathered from the examination of publicly available reports and publications, interviews, and narrations were grouped, analysed and interpreted through content analysis around the themes relating to the research questions (Higgs, 2001).

The quantitative data obtained from the surveys completed by community members with language barriers were analysed by computer using the SPSS for calculating percentages,

means and standard deviation. Triangulation was carried out among the findings that were found relevant for the research context.

### **Reliability and Validity**

A triangulation process was carried out among the various research strategies (surveys, interviews and case studies). According to Long (2005), triangulation is a reliable research tool for validating and increasing the credibility of conclusions drawn from the data.

Comparing data from qualitative methods such as interviews and narrations with quantitative data from the surveys and finding concurrence enabled concurrent validity. Getting consistent results between qualitative and quantitative data indicated strong reliability. However, Brewer (2000) highlighted that, beyond research design and conduct, the purpose of a research study is highly significant in confirming its validity: ‘validity must be evaluated in the light of the *purposes* for which the research is undertaken in the first place’ (p. 3)

In this study, data gained from the three methods were grouped, analysed using the social inclusion indicators proposed by the UN UNDESA Report (2009), and further analysed using the concepts from Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice as a framework. In concluding the analysis, it was considered important to discuss the findings with respect to each key agent together in a chapter, as the social phenomenon under investigation in this study involves an interdependent relationship—recognised or not—of each with the others, and answers relied critically on identifying the perspectives of each agent within this reality. This also assisted in confirming the validity of any one perspective and revealing tensions and conflicts.

### **Ethical Issues**

This study involved critical examination of an anthropological and social phenomenon: communication between public services and community members with language barriers, with a focus on translators and interpreters, a key communication method

in this context in Australia. As such, due diligence was exercised to address any real or perceived ethical issues that may have arisen during the course of the study.

Ethics approval was sought from and granted by RMIT University's Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network, as a sub-committee of the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). Approval Code Number is CHEAN A 0000015644-07/13. The study was assessed as 'low risk', which is the lowest risk level on the scale. The terms of approval, including the complaints handling process and data retention and storage, were met.

Specifically, participants were advised before consenting to participate in this study of its nature, objectives and the procedures, of what they were expected to do in the course of their participation, what benefits their participation would have for them, and how their privacy and confidentiality would be maintained. This information was presented in the Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF), which included the RMIT University logo. Participants were clearly informed that they would be free to withdraw from participation at any point during the study, and that they would be free to have access to the final project report by simply contacting the researcher.

No names of participants or other identifying information were included in the research report, and this thesis does not contain specific reference to organisations, except where the data sources are publicly available reports or publications that are readily accessible by any member of the public. The latter was the case for all reports and websites accessed by the researcher when collecting data about the practices of public services in communication with the general public. The social service organisations whose reports and websites were accessed for the purposes of this study were chosen only for their connection with our multicultural community, and were not targeted for any other reason.

Data collected throughout the research phase of the study are to be retained in a secure place at the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies RMIT University (City campus) for five years, as per the University's requirements stated in the HREC approval. Only the researcher and supervisors have access to the data. The data will be securely disposed of at the end of this period.

## **Summary**

This chapter has provided an introduction to the scope of this research, its assumed validity and the various methodological approaches employed in order to inform the reader of the nature of this study. The chapter then reminded us of the research questions, and described the investigation tools used to search for answers to those questions. Given the social-practice nature of the research setting, it is important to test and try alternative research paradigms and tools, provided that they meet the study's objectives.

A multi-faceted research strategy was then utilised in this study, combining quantitative and qualitative strategies. The quantitative research instrument was used for the survey, while the qualitative research instruments were used for interviews and case studies. The quantitative data were analysed through SPSS software, whereas the qualitative data were analysed through triangulation and content analysis. The framework for discussing the findings utilised the following questions, which the UNDESA report (2009, p. 16) listed as indicators for successful social inclusion, and for the identification of areas where weakness in inclusion leads to exclusion and lack of engagement leads to faltering participation.

- How and why are people being excluded from the processes that make up society?
- Who is affected by this exclusion, and what are the economic, social and political environments in which the problem is most apparent?
- What are the structures, processes and relations of power that exist within societies that result in the inclusion of some and exclusion of others?



The chapter concluded by providing information on the reliability and validity of the methods as well as the ethics clearance procedure.

## **Chapter Four: Dialogue or Monologue? Practices of Public Services**

This research study examined a growing but often overlooked social problem that affects the lives of many people in Australia who are not proficient in the common language of English, or who have physical barriers to their understanding of that language (such as the deaf or hearing impaired members of the community). This problem is the communication, or lack of it, between public services and citizens with language barriers, and the implications of this for social exclusion in Australia. One of the key ways in which public services communicate with these groups is through interpreters and translators. Therefore, the following three chapters of this thesis are dedicated to each of the three key groups of agents in this field of practice—public service agencies, interpreters and translators, and citizens with language barriers.

This chapter focuses on public service agencies, a key agent in this field of practice, as their workplaces and the activities they undertake as part of their service provision broadly draw the boundaries of the field. Data for this chapter were collected from two sources: the publicly available reports and websites of five public services and/or organisations that deliver public services, and semi-structured interviews with three representatives from these public services and/or organisations whose roles involve communication with citizens with language barriers. This chapter is organised into three broad sections: Section 5.2 describes past and current policy initiatives with respect to language barriers; Section 5.3 presents the data from the annual reports and websites of five public services; and Section 5.4 presents the results of the semi-structured interviews with employees of public service agencies.

## **Contextualising the Agent**

For a democracy to operate effectively, the government must communicate with the citizens of the country. They have a right to know what government ministries and other public sector bodies are doing, and why administrative decisions are made. The information provided by government must be credible and timely. (OECD, 1996, p. 6)

Communication between government and community members is critical (Cavaye, 2004; Wang & Lim, 2011). On one side, the state is represented by public sector (any of a number of public services) that has control over how, when and to whom critical resources, political and administrative processes and services—often essential for membership of a society—are dispensed, made available or allocated (Tanzi, 2000). On the other side, a community member may be in need of a service in any number of areas, such as income support, health care, education or disability aides, not merely to sustain a ‘bare human life’ (Nussbaum, cited in Marston & Watts, 2004) but to develop their capabilities to take part in society and to lead a ‘good human life’. Accessing these services can, however, be very challenging: the process of access is unavoidably political and involves plays of power, as it involves interaction between a real person and an organisation governed by a series of policies (Mik-Meyer & Villadsen, 2013).

This describes the situation in Australia. The rapid and unprecedented diversification of languages and cultures in Australia following the removal of the last remnants of the White Australia Policy in the early 1970s, accompanied by the introduction of non-discriminatory migration policies as well as increasing humanitarian intakes due to wars and global conflicts, has led to huge changes in the characteristics of the users of public services. Settlement issues, including communication, arose as early as the mid-1970s. In 1978, these issues prompted what is known as the Galbally Review, undertaken by prominent Melbourne lawyer Frank Galbally, who was commissioned by the Fraser government to investigate the

state of the post-arrival programs and services offered to migrants (Koleth, 2010). The Galbally Review is very significant in that it is the first formal recognition of the diversity of the clientele of the public services, and the resulting need to respond to this situation. A significant conclusion of the report was as follows:

We have concluded that it is now necessary for the Commonwealth Government to change the direction of its involvement in the provision of programs and services for migrants and to take further steps to encourage multiculturalism. In taking these new directions, we stress at the outset that the closer involvement of ethnic communities themselves, and of other levels of government, is essential. (p. 1)

The report identified the rights of all Australians to maintain their culture without fear of prejudice, and identified the need to provide special services and programs for all migrants to ensure equality of access and provision. With respect to communication, the Review found ‘significant cultural and communication problems in the health area’ (p. 6).

The review established the following four guiding principles as a framework for its recommendations for action:

- (a) all members of our society must have equal opportunity to realise their full potential and must have equal access to programs and services;
- (b) every person should be able to maintain his or her culture without prejudice or disadvantage and should be encouraged to understand and embrace other cultures;
- (c) needs of migrants should, in general, be met by programs and services available to the whole community but special services and programs are necessary at present to ensure equality of access and provision;
- (d) services and programs should be designed and operated in full consultation with clients, and self-help should be encouraged as much as possible with a view to helping migrants to become self-reliant quickly.

This tells us that, in 1978, the needs of migrants, including access to services and information, were identified, and these needs were recognised by the then government, along with the need 'to change the direction of its involvement in the provision of programs and services' to make these more effective.

This milestone report triggered access and equity discourse in government policies. Below is a summary of milestone events in access and equity from early 1980s to 2013 (Department of Social Services, 2013).

1987 - The establishment of the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA).

1988 – The release of the first official access and equity report - A Fair Go, A Fair Share: Access and Equity for a Multicultural Australia.

1989 – A National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia...Sharing our Future was adopted.

1992 – Evaluation of the Access and Equity Strategy

1993 – Annual access and equity reports.

1996 – A Fair Go For All: Report on Migrant Access and Equity - the first Australian Parliamentary inquiry into implementation of access and equity policies.

1998 – The launch of the Charter of Public Service for a Culturally Diverse Society.

2005 – An evaluation of Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity.

2006 – A new framework 'Accessible Government Services for All' was adopted.

2011 – The People of Australia – Australia's Multicultural Policy was launched.

2012 – Access and Equity for a multicultural Australia Report – an inquiry into the implementation of access and equity policies by public services.

2013 – A new policy 'Multicultural Access and Equity – Respecting Diversity. Improving Responsiveness' was launched.

The Multicultural Access and Equity Review Panel released its report in 2012. The Panel made 20 recommendations (see Appendix for full list) to improve access and equity policy and implementation in consideration of the feedback received during the consultations. The inclusion of the relevant recommendations in full is warranted, as they relate to issues of policy and implementation—a key focus of this study. The recommendations in relation to policy were:

1. That the Australian Government reaffirm its commitment to the Access and Equity policy as the primary vehicle for ensuring responsiveness of the Australian Government to Australia's CALD population.
2. That the Access and Equity policy encompass not only responsiveness in service delivery, but require all Australian government agencies, whether or not performing service delivery activities, when they engage and communicate with the broader community, to also ensure that they include effective communication and engagement with Australia's CALD population.
3. That the key focus of the Access and Equity policy be made more transparent by renaming it the Multicultural Access and Equity Policy and by the introduction of an explanatory 'byline' which highlights some key elements of the policy—'Respecting Diversity. Improving Responsiveness'.
4. That the existing Access and Equity Strategy and Framework be updated and recast in the form of a set of firm commitments and implementation obligations on the part of agencies to Australia's CALD population (covering engagement, communication, policy, program design and service delivery) as set out at Attachment 5.

The recommendations in relation to implementation were:

6. That the Australian Government disseminate updated Access and Equity policy and associated obligations to all of its agencies, together with a toolkit of resources and better practice guidelines prepared by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

8. That the Australian Government incorporate Access and Equity considerations and obligations into funding partnerships and agreements with states and territories and into whole-of government guidelines on tender specifications and contractual arrangements for outsourced service delivery by its agencies.

9. That the Australian Government develop a whole-of-government policy on communication by its agencies in languages other than English, including use of interpreters and translators.

10. That the Australian Government incorporate Access and Equity considerations and obligations into its whole-of-government communication and advertising guidelines.

11. That the Australian Government incorporate Access and Equity considerations and obligations into upgraded whole of-government guidelines on the use of the Internet as a communication and service delivery tool by its agencies.

12. That the Australian Government assess or develop training packages on Access and Equity policy and cultural competency and incorporate them into Australian Public Service Commission sponsored courses and individual agency training on leadership, policy development and service delivery.

The government accepted all of the above recommendations and undertook to implement them (see Appendix for the government responses).

## **Implementation by Public Services of Policies for Engagement with the Public**

We have been taught to think in terms of highly structured lockstep bureaucracies with fixed roles. Yet the closer we get to the real world of service delivery, the more we are forced to visualise overlapping boundaries and uncertain boundaries. (Beilharz et al., 1992, p. 99)

The previous section listed a number of recent or current policies that had or have in their stated objectives a concern for access and equity and participation for people lacking sufficient language proficiency to access or participate in public services. Implementation, however, by layers of social policy administration and service delivery is another matter. H. C. Coombs chaired the Royal Commission into Australian Government Administration (Coombs, 1976). Known as the Coombs Inquiry, it is regarded as the beginning of ‘citizen-centric’ service delivery in Australia (Holmes, 2011). Access and equity policies have been in use since the time of the Inquiry. Some authors are more positive about the achievements of public services with respect to improvements in communicating with the public. Holmes (2011) claimed, ‘It is now unthinkable that an Australian government agency would not have a website enabling, as a minimum, public access to corporate and general agency information’ (p. 14).

However, the report from the *Inquiry into the Responsiveness of Australian Government Services to Australia’s Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Population* by the Access and Equity Inquiry Panel (DIAC, 2012) stated:

contributors felt that much of the impetus of the policy has faded, possibly losing priority amongst a number of subsequent social policy agendas. Commitment, and actual performance, across Australian government agencies was assessed as highly variable. A small number of agencies were seen to be performing relatively well in



implementing Access and Equity and to have strong infrastructure to support this while others were seen to be performing weakly or to be uninterested. This variable commitment flows through to bodies delivering services on behalf of the Australian Government.

In Australia, there is a lack of a central source of data on the implementation of access and equity or language service policies, in terms of allocation of resources or use of services by NES or deaf community members, although public service agencies are required to file reports on the action taken as per the policy guidelines. This issue was observed by Beilharz et al. (1992):

The apparent certainties that apply to a centralised social-security system that delivers income support to millions of citizens who meet rational eligibility criteria, do not apply to services such as child care centres, adoption agencies, women's refuges and meals-on-wheels providers. Yet all these form an important part of the welfare state and its administration. (p. 99)

Due to this lack of a single central data source relevant to the purposes of this study, pertinent data needed to be collected from the annual reports of public service agencies. For this reason, the researcher chose a range of public service agencies and reviewed their annual reports in order to gain insight into how they incorporated language policies in their structures and to gain evidence of practices undertaken to improve accessibility in the design, creation and delivery of services. The names of the service organisations reviewed can be revealed, as the reports are publicly available; however, it is not the intention of this study to focus attention on particular agencies. The reports and websites accessed were chosen either for their locations in highly multilingual areas of Melbourne, or for being more likely to encounter people with language barriers than other public services. The organisations whose

reports or websites are mentioned were not targeted for any other reason. The agencies, where possible, are referred to by their broad service areas.

### *Social and welfare services agency*

One of the areas of public service provision that anecdotally has the most contact with the community at large, including community members with language difficulties such as NES or deaf community members, is the social/welfare service. In Australia, a significant proportion of these services are provided by the DoHS, including large providers such as Medicare, Centrelink (formerly Social Security Department), child support and CRS Australia, and Australian Hearing. According to its Strategic Plan 2012–2016, available on the Department’s website, the Department works on the premise of ‘Excellence in the provision of government services to every Australian’ and, on its mission statement, it claims to provide ‘the service you need, when you need it’.

In its Annual Report 2011–2012, the Department reported that it administered \$144.7 billion in payments, or about 40% of government outlays. In the 2012–2013 financial year, the Department’s budget allocated by the government was \$4.3 billion, with a staff figure of about 37,000. Performance highlights, according to the Report, included:

- one-stop shop for different programs, use of speech recognition technology to assess Paid Parental Leave or Family Assistance claims over the phone;
- a new iPhone smartphone application for students to access Centrelink services;
- using social media for online discussion: Facebook, YouTube and Twitter to engage our customers and the broader community.

These performance highlights do not appear to be very friendly for people with limited English skills, literacy skills or technology skills. Despite this, the DoHS is by far one of the most accessible public service providers for community members with language difficulties.

The Department website provides a wide range of accessibility services, from text-to-speech converters, video and audio files to multilingual services, translation and interpreters.

The DoHS is one of the few government departments with its own language services unit.

The 2011–2012 Report stated:

the Department provides free translation and interpreting services in more than 230 languages to help customers conduct their business with us, more than double the number (100+) recorded in the Galbally Report. These services are provided by more than 3000 contracted interpreters. The Department also supplies regular, rostered, on-site interpreters who work out of 70 service centres where demand for assistance in certain languages is high.

The report also stated that in 2011–2012, the Department provided:

- 70,508 pre-booked on-site interpreter appointments
- 16,549 pre-booked phone interpreter appointments
- 134,060 ‘on demand’ phone interpreter requests
- 2,762 translations of customers’ personal documents needed to complete their business with the Department.

The Department reported, in addition to the above, that 32,488 customer calls were made to the Department using DIAC’s Translating and Interpreting Service in 2011–2012. This makes a total of 183,097 phone calls from NES or deaf community members. The report also stated that the Department handled approximately 56 million calls from customers in 2011–2012, compared to 55 million calls in 2010–2011. This makes calls from NES and deaf clients 0.33% of the total.

The recorded number of translations of customers’ personal documents needed to complete their business with the Department was 2,762. This number appears to be too low, given the volume of services handled by the Department, or even compared to usage of

interpreting services, with 255,000 recorded engagements (both face-to-face and phone interpreting).

In addition to translators and interpreters, the Department reports bilingual staff members who are paid an allowance for using their community language skills also assist with communication. An examination of the Department reports (DHS, 2015), however, shows a consistent decline in their numbers:

2012–13 – 775

2013–14 – 725

2014–15 – 699

The Department also has a Strategic Plan 2012–2016, with a stated list of goals about where the Department would like to be in four years' time:

- providing new and efficient ways to access government services, including online, via mobile devices and through other self-managed mechanisms
- providing a valuable community presence, with a strong focus on helping those most in need
- acting as the focal point to the community for government services, as well as working closely with the community and out partner agencies in developing new and innovative services
- responding quickly and effectively to change, be it political, economic or environmental, and to unexpected emergencies such as natural disasters.

The above stated goals do not appear to contain a clear statement about access to public services by all. Similarly, the summary of strategic priorities and key performance indicators does not appear to include any clearly stated intentions or expectations about access by all community members, including language services provision. Finally, the list of

strategic risks identified in the plan does not include any risks that may emerge in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for NES or deaf customers. For example, take the following stated strategic priority:

Make access to our service easier and more efficient.

Where appropriate, move transactions from a personal service basis (face-to-face or phone) to self-managed mechanisms. Where possible, provide access to our service online, including from mobile services.

This stated objective does not appear to take into account the difficulties it may create for service users who have language barriers or those who lack computer skills. This point was also noted by the Access and Equity Inquiry Panel (DIAC, 2012) which raised concerns that increasing replacement of face-to-face services with call-centres and online tools can make barriers to access insurmountable for a section of the community.

#### *Emergency services agency*

This agency is a provider of emergency services, including fire and safety. Its website states that the organisation is committed to diversity, and has a dedicated department to focus on Indigenous, multicultural, disability and gender matters. The agency has a staff position titled Diversity Development Manager. It also states that policies, research and strategies are developed by the Department, which works in partnership with government and the community. The agency reported that it has appointed a Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) with the task of liaising with new and emerging communities, and linking them to the agency's services and programs.

Examples of work undertaken by the agency's MLOs include:

- Representing the MFB in local committees such as ethnic communities' councils, local councils and multicultural networks and community safety committees.
- Mobilising MFB resources for participation in local festivals and events.

- Presenting fire safety information to local multicultural groups.
- Participation in multi-agency community safety projects.

The website contains the following information for NES clients who may wish to contact the MLOs in another language.

#### **How to contact the MLOs via an interpreter**

If you would like to contact one of the MFB's MLO's and speak in your language, you can contact the Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) on 13 14 50, and identify the language you speak.

TIS will connect you to an interpreter, once the interpreter is on the line, you should then ask to be connected to one of the XXX's MLO's in your zone.

The Emergency Services Agency is one of the few public service organisations that has systematically investigated communication and ethnicity issues in service delivery and produced resource kits to help staff better communicate with ethnic communities. Some of these are good practices in this respect among public service agencies. However, a close examination of some of the details in findings and suggestions as a result of the studies point to some inherent flaws and prejudices in attitudes to communication with ethnic groups. A resource guide developed to help the agency in communicating with community members from Burma, including Karen and Chin speakers (Resource Guide, Working with Communities from Burma—The Karen & Chin MFB, 2008), included the following:

The ability to develop effective communication strategies is essential to achieving successful engagement with diverse communities. You might want to consider the following options when developing communication strategies to access **any** diverse community:

Use of Community Leaders—It is important to seek support and endorsement for related community messages from key members within the diverse ethnic communities. The selection of community leaders is critical to the success of any awareness program. The use of credible, trusted community leaders can play a significant role in addressing some of the ‘cultural resistance’ to key messages. (emphasis added and agency name deleted)

Although it is without doubt intended to overcome communication barriers with the Karen and Chin ethnic minorities, this recommendation assumes that these communities live in tribes and have tribal leaders, urging the use of ‘credible, trusted community leaders’ in the dissemination of information by first seeking their support and endorsement, not just their feedback. According to Jeffreys (2012), these leaders almost always happen to be male, which may be due to an assumption that ethnic community leaders can only be men. The report made the suggestion to ‘Organise meetings with community leaders to pass information on to the community about fire safety’. While there are groups of migrants who speak the same language, they are not necessarily formally united as a group with established leaders, as they may or may not have been in their homelands. Generally speaking, migrant groups such as the Karen and Chin are linguistically homogeneous groups who may nevertheless be strangers to one another, and would therefore resist any suggestion that there is a group leader, or ‘elder’, as it were.

With the best of intentions, a public service agency is being advised to use the services of a third person, who has no legal role or professional capacity, to essentially endorse and deliver a public service; that is, the provision of information to members of the public who have language barriers. This reveals considerable ignorance of the true nature of these migrant communities, who are drawn together by a common language and perhaps other circumstances, but do not necessarily want a particular person in that group to become a

go-between for individual community members and public service providers. This kind of action is based on the assumption that there are, in fact, community leaders. The ‘community leader’ method of information dissemination does not appear to be included in suggestions for communicating with community members from English-speaking backgrounds.

A Western Australian Government document titled ‘Implementing the Principles of Multiculturalism Locally—A Planning Guide for Western Australian Local Governments’ also recommended the use of community leaders in passing information to ethnic communities, and actually suggested that the process and speed of passing the information to the ethnic communities may depend on the community leaders, cautioning, ‘Sector representatives and community leaders need time to encourage the participation of community members, for trusting relationships to build, and for information to circulate.’ In another example, a 2010 document by the Australian Red Cross recommended, ‘Where people from non-English speaking backgrounds are affected, communication should be provided in the necessary range of languages and styles. This may include the use of translations, interpreters, ethnic media and representatives of ethnic communities’ (Australian Red Cross, 2010, p. 102).

This practice of using community leaders to communicate with citizens who are not proficient in English can be compared to the colonialist practices employed by the first European settlers in Australia, when Woollarawarre Bennelong (c. 1764–3 January 1813), a senior man of the Aboriginal Eora people in and around Sydney, was engaged as a link between the British and the Eora people (Smith, 2006).

What do NES people feel about community leaders acting as communication facilitators between them and the public service agencies? The same resource kit concerning the Karen and Chin communities included a survey that found there was a lack of awareness of concepts such as ‘fire fighting force’, and a lack of knowledge of the use of modern



appliances that did not exist in the home country of the participants. Perhaps one of the most revealing pieces of data concerned the best methods of communication. The participants were asked whether they had suggestions for the Agency in order to improve communication. The survey listed the following suggestions made by the participants:

- Conduct information sessions in Burmese, Karen and Hakka languages at churches, and at community groups and association meetings.
- Arrange for groups to visit their local fire station.
- Join with other emergency services to provide comprehensive information sessions on their role and services.
- Hold information sessions regularly to inform new arrivals as soon as possible and advertise that firefighters are not part of the military.
- Ensure that information sessions are held in locations easily accessed by public transport as many newly arrived people from Burma may not have a driver's license or access to a car.
- The 000 service should have access to Burmese, Karen and Hakka language interpreters.

What is significant about these suggestions is that they are all suggestions that include direct communication between these community members and the public service agency, including via the emergency hotline 000, via interpreting and translation services. It is very significant that the participants themselves did not include the use of community leaders or elders to receive knowledge or information from public services as a method for improving communication. The idea of using community elders or leaders appears to have been generated by the public service agency, and does not reflect community members' views. It seems to be an idea entrenched in the habitus of officials in public services and appears to have remained unchanged since the days of the first settlers in Australia.

*Three city councils*

The following data come from the publicly available 2012 reports of three city councils in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. These three councils have similar population profiles in terms of diversity of cultures and languages.

City Council A covers approximately 12 suburbs in Melbourne. The vision statement of the council reads: 'The City Council will partner the community to be a city that is lively, proud, celebrates its diversity and cares for and respects all of its citizens'. The council reports that it is 'a highly culturally and linguistically diverse municipality', with many different cultural groups living within the council borders; residents of the council speak approximately 140 different languages at home'. The 2012 report provided the following statistics:

in 2011, more than one-third of the council residents were born overseas. Of the total Council population, 60 per cent were born in Australia. Of those residents born overseas, 87% were born in non-English speaking countries and 13% were born in English speaking countries.

Those who were born overseas include established migrant communities from Italy, Greece and Lebanon, with new arrivals mainly from India, China, Pakistan, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Iran.

The financial snapshot reported total expenses of \$150.8 million, mainly made up of employee benefits (\$80,597,000) and materials and services (\$47,335,000), with other expenses including finance and bad debts. As the report contained no specific section on language services or multicultural services that provides any relevant data for this study, the researcher examined the heading 'Materials and Services' to see whether any relevant spending on language or multicultural services was reported. Under the heading, reports on spending covered the following areas:

- Utilities
- Consultants
- Works contracts
- General services
- Office services and supplies
- Other supplies
- Materials
- Minor equipment and medical supplies
- Other related costs
- Property leases and rentals
- Metropolitan Fire Brigade levy
- Council grants and sponsorships
- Insurance

There was no heading directly referring to language services or multicultural services, although such services may have been included under ‘General Services’, ‘Consultants’ or even ‘Other Supplies’.

One particular section titled ‘Community Satisfaction’ sounded relevant, as it may have included some information about how the council interacts with the community, which includes approximately 140 languages, according to the council statement. The section reported that community satisfaction is assessed using a survey administered by the Department of Planning and Community Development for local councils that opt to participate. The survey aims to provide data that councils can use for planning their local government services. The survey covers the following two core statements:

- Community consultation and engagement: this includes consulting and engaging directly with the community on key local issues requiring decisions by Council.

- Lobbying on behalf of the community: this includes making representations to state and federal government and other organisations on key issues that affect the local community.

The survey also asks a series of optional questions applied only in selected councils. Some of the relevant questions for the councils that are the subject of the present case study included:

- Informing the community: this includes communicating information on Council events and programs through advertising, pamphlets, brochures, newsletters, emails and websites.
- Family support services: these include services for children, youth and families, including maternal and child health, immunisation, family day care and support and activity groups.
- Elderly support services: these include services for elderly people and their carers and families, including meals on wheels, home help and support and activity groups.
- Disadvantaged support services: these include assistance for disadvantaged and minority groups, including homeless, low income earners, Indigenous, refugees and new migrants.

The council reported that in 2012, it scored 88% on overall satisfaction. Twenty council services were surveyed, with seven of these receiving ratings above 90%. The council services that received the highest rating were its arts centres and libraries, at 97%, followed by community and cultural activities (96%), waste management (94%), family support services (94%), recreational facilities (92%), environmental sustainability (92%) and disadvantaged support services (90%).

Two of the segments in the survey, titled ‘Community Engagement’ and ‘Customer Contact’, in which the council reported 80% satisfaction, are worth further examination, as they provide data on how the council interacts with the community.

The survey template provided on the Department of Planning and Community Development website, which sponsors this survey for the city councils, contains the following screening questions for the administrators of the survey who visit households in the suburbs within a council to conduct the survey.

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>		
<b>IF IN COUNCIL AREA:</b>		
Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is .....from Wallis Consulting Group. We are conducting research on behalf of Victorian Local Government. The survey aims to find out how residents feel about the performance of local Government in your area. Can you confirm that you live in <b>(NAME OF COUNCIL)</b> ?		
	Yes	<b>GO TO S1</b>
2	In different Council area	<b>GO TO PRE S1</b>
3	Not available/callback (make appt)	<b>RETURN TO SMS</b>
4	Household refusal	<b>RETURN TO SMS</b>
5	Selected resident refusal	<b>RETURN TO SMS</b>
6	Language difficulties	<b>RETURN TO SMS</b>
ONCE HAVE CORRECT PERSON: Thank-you for your participation. The survey will only take about 8 or 9 minutes and the information you provide will be used to help councils improve their services. No information that you provide will be linked to your name.		

Interestingly, a household that presents ‘language difficulties’ is treated in the same way as a household that refuses to take part in the survey. One would think Option 3, ‘Not available/callback (make apt)’, would be a better instruction for survey administrators in order to encourage participation by people who present with language difficulties. There is no data publicly available on how many of the interviews were followed up with an interpreter or other language service (such as bilingual council workers), which is interesting, given that satisfaction with ‘Disadvantaged support services’ is 80%.

One other area that is relevant for interaction between the council and the community is the in-service training for staff. The following table shows the number of in-service training sessions and the number of participants in those sessions. The only training area in the list that may be relevant for the topic of this study is Diversity, which appears to have been offered twice, with a total participation of 22, the lowest rate of participation among the categories. The second lowest number of sessions and participants is in the topic of Leadership, with eight sessions and 88 participants.

Table 4.1

*City Council A Corporate Training 2011–2012*

Corporate Training 2011/2012 (including OHS)		
Training Category	Number of attendees (instances)	Number of courses run
OHS	463	14
Business	251	11
Leadership	88	8
Diversity	22	2
Lifestyle & Wellbeing	91	5
Compliance	129	5
Systems/Finance	159	142
Overall Total	1203	187

Source: City Council A Annual Report 2012

In a council that purports to have 141 languages spoken within its boundaries, and in which almost 45% of residents were born overseas, one would expect that diversity, including cross-cultural communication, would receive more attention. There was no reference to or report of a Multicultural Action Plan in the 2012 Report.

A quick look at the 2012 Annual Report of City Council B, a neighbouring city council that reports a population of over 165,000 from 140 countries speaking 125 different

languages, does not reveal any information about in-service training. In-service or professional development (PD) activities are mentioned as an indicator of implementation of the Access and Equity Guidelines.

The financial report included a segment on social inclusion, with the following projects marked as achieved:

- Six school/community early years hubs
- Three facilitated CALD playgroups
- Two new integrated mother and child English language learning programs

There was no reference to or report of a Multicultural Action Plan in the report.

City Council C reported that, of its total population of an estimated 75,297 persons, 40% were born overseas and 43% speak a LOTE. Its largest language groups include Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Greek, Italian and Spanish; 9.9% of the population do not speak English well or at all.

Council C is the only one of the three similar councils that has a published Multicultural Action Plan, with translations into a number of community languages, and a section on its website with actions and outcomes clearly reported for multicultural services. One of the reported actions referred to translation and interpreting services, and the action outcome referred to ‘encouraging council staff to use translation and interpreting services’; however, there was no report of how this was implemented in the year for the report, for example, in budget and spending on language services.

Two practices of City Council C are worth examining further, as they relate to invitations for the community to participate in certain council activities. One of these is titled ‘Have Your Say’, and concerns a list of amendments, projects and plans within the council on such topics as planning applications and waste minimisation projects. On one amendment application, the invitation for the community included the following instruction:

Anyone can make a submission to the amendment. Submissions must be in writing and include contact details. Submissions have officially closed but late submissions will be accepted until 30 August and can be lodged:

At Town Hall:

at the drop-in information sessions or Customer Service Centre (address withheld)

Via email (email withheld)

Via post: (address on original)

Register for Updates or Further Information

These instructions do not indicate how a non- or limited English speaking resident can participate in this process.

The other activity is the Community and Services Special Committee, which meets monthly and is attended by all Councillors. The invitation from the Council reads as follows:

The community are welcome to attend the meetings which are normally held in the Council Chamber at the Civic Offices from 6.30pm on the first Tuesday of the month. Meeting times, agendas and minutes are available on this web site.

The Committee makes decisions about:

Children, Family, Aged, Youth, Disability, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and Indigenous Services Social Policy and Advocacy, Libraries and Community Centres, Community Health and Safety Community Sports and Recreation Parks and Open Space Communications/Engagement, Arts, Culture and Festivals, Environmental Management, Waste Management, Local Laws, Transport, (Operational) Community Grants, Asset Management, Property and Leasing, including site contamination, Physical Infrastructure, Service Provision, and Operational Matters (including contracts), and any other matters deemed appropriate.



The Committee shall consider items on any matters related to the listed topics or issues. The Committee can refer any item to an Ordinary Meeting of Council for consideration. Community members can speak about an item on the meeting agenda for up to three minutes per speaker before the Committee votes. Where more than 10 requests to speak are received, a spokesperson will be appointed by the group, and allocated a maximum of five minutes. Any extension of time for presenters will be at the discretion of the Chair.

If you want to speak at the meeting:

1. Complete the Request to Address the Committee Form (Word Format 52 KB) and submit it to the Governance Officer
2. Read the Fact Sheet (Word Format 140 KB) for additional information on meeting procedures. The Committee shall also hear from people in support of written submissions before consideration of the matter at a subsequent Committee or Council Meeting.

Although relevant topics for community members with language barriers are included in the suggested list of topics, and an invitation to address the Committee is extended with a template form attached, this invitation is only in English and there is no information about how a community member with a language barrier would be assisted if they wanted to participate in the process. From the information available on the website, it is clearly inaccessible by community members with language barriers.

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) website declares, under the heading Cultural Diversity/Access and Equity, that in 1998, ALGA endorsed the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society, which guides all spheres of government in responding to the needs of all Australians through the principles of access, equity, communication, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability. The website

also refers to an ALGA publication, *Services for all: Promoting access and equity in local government*, which is designed to assist councils in taking a proactive approach to providing access to quality services and ‘a fair go’ for all residents. In Section 4.1 of this document, it is clarified that the access and equity policy is not designed to give any particular group any special advantage, but rather it is intended to:

... enhance program design and delivery arrangements so that they effectively and efficiently take account of cultural diversity in Australia. It is important that all members of the community in a particular Local Government Area are able to fully participate in the Council’s programs, comply with its regulations, and contribute their knowledge and experience to the community. (n.d., p. 17)

The document then lists some potential outcomes a Council may seek to achieve, including the following:

- increasing community participation and representation in Council elections and decision-making structures
- reducing racial tensions by promoting good community relations
- meeting legal requirements in terms of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies

However, a recent survey of government websites in a study to check website accessibility of government departments in Victoria found only 22 of 292 government web domains in Victoria having content in LOTEs in 2014 (personal correspondence). This is significant in that it demonstrates the enormous gap between the policy declarations and rhetoric about accessibility and inclusiveness, and the implementation of these principles by the public servants at service points. Participation requires access, and this starts with language. If citizens cannot access information, then they will not be able to access the service.

*Two health services*

Health services are critical public services. Good communication between a health practitioner and a client during a clinical consultation is essential to ensure the safety, quality and effectiveness of care (Berner, 2010; Heaney & Moreham, 2002; Jacobs et al., 2001). The greatest obstacle for accessibility for health services has been identified as language barriers (Ingleby, 2011). This section examines recent annual reports and website information of two health services to gain an understanding of how this situation has progressed in the decades since the Galbally Review 1978, which found ‘significant cultural and communication problems in the health area’ and recommended increased funding for bilingual health workers and funding for interpreters (p. 6).

One of the services examined is a government funded sexual health centre. Its website provides general information, including annual reports and client satisfaction survey results. Given the confidential nature of sexual health matters and the stigma attached to sexual health problems in all sections of the community, regardless of their ethnic background, one would expect that confidential access for all would be a priority for this service. In this type of service, someone with language difficulties would very likely not feel comfortable bringing a family member, friend or neighbour to interpret at an appointment, although in other settings they may tend to rely on such means to overcome language barriers. The contact information from the website of the centre does not include any information about how a community member with a language barrier can contact the service directly, although it does provide a number for the hearing-impaired. The information pamphlets on major services or information on common sexually transmitted diseases appear to be only available in English. The following section from a pamphlet on counselling services does not include information on accessibility for people with a language barrier.

#### HOW DO I MAKE OR CANCEL AN APPOINTMENT?

Some people like to first discuss their concerns with their doctor or nurse, so feel free to do this. Others prefer to initiate the appointments independently. Feel free to ask any staff member whilst at the Centre.

Alternatively you can phone for an appointment..... The service is free and no referral is necessary. As limited appointments are available please provide 24 hours notice if unable to attend. This enables someone else to have this appointment. Your assistance with this is appreciated.

The organisation's 2012 Annual Report did not include any information on accessibility by community members with language barriers, and the client satisfaction survey, which included questions about accessibility and other services, did not state whether any community members with language barriers had been surveyed. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) pointed out that:

All Australians have the right to access health care that meets their needs. In our culturally and linguistically diverse society, this right can only be upheld if cultural issues are core business at every level of the health system-systemic, organisational, professional and individual. (NHMRC, 2005, p. 1)

There is clearly an accessibility issue for people with a language barrier in accessing services provided by this centre.

#### *Privacy and citizens*

In Australia, a number of federal and state laws emphasise people's rights to have all their information protected. The overarching legislation is the Federal Privacy Act 1988, which is binding for all states and territories as well as federal bodies in Australia. The first objective of the Privacy Act reads 'to promote the protection of the privacy of individuals'. This objective places the responsibility for this task on the government agencies and

departments. The Act also points to Australia's obligations under Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:

1. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation.
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

The implementation of the Privacy Act in Australia is largely overseen by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC). The OAIC listed the following three ways in which this is accomplished:

- promoting and enforcing the legal rights conferred upon the community by the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (FOI Act) to obtain access to Government documents;
- safeguarding protection of personal information, by ensuring that Government agencies and private sector organisations manage information in accordance with the standards of the Privacy Act 1988 (Privacy Act);
- advancing government information policy and practice, with a particular focus on principles and strategies that support open government.

OAIC also stated that they respond to privacy enquiries from the public and in 2012–2013, the enquiries line answered 18,205 telephone calls, 9,009 of which related to privacy matters that were within the OAIC's jurisdiction and a further 1,703 enquiries that were out of its jurisdiction. Most callers are individuals seeking information about their privacy rights and how to resolve privacy complaints.

The OAIC reported the following case:

A caller was concerned about the actions of his ex-partner, who had obtained his details and was opening fraudulent lines of credit. The police had been contacted. The caller was advised that the Privacy Act may not apply as it does not cover the actions of individuals. The caller was nevertheless provided with information on NPP 2 (Use and disclosure), NPP 4 (Data security), the OAIC's complaints process, and OAIC fact sheets on protecting your own personal information.

This case deserves particular attention, as it may have implications for citizens with language barriers in situations where they share their personal details or confidential information with individuals such as family members, friends, neighbours or colleagues in the process of accessing public services. In these circumstances, the disclosure of the information does not take place between two individuals in their personal space, as in the above case, but rather would be taking place in the course of a public service provision, where an individual such as a family member, friend, neighbour or colleague comes into the possession of such details in the course of assisting the community member to access the service. This is a common scenario in public service provision, and warrants scrutiny in terms of its implications for the rights to privacy of people with language barriers.

Particular issues and circumstances surrounding privacy legislation and its implications for community members with language barriers, in cases such as that the example above, do not appear to be well reflected in the practices of the OAIC. One way of obtaining feedback on this issue would be through the Information Advisory Committee (IAC), established by the Australian Information Commissioner Act 2010 (s 27). The IAC assists and advises the Australian Information Commissioner in matters relating to the performance of the Information Commissioner's functions. However, its list of members as at 30 June 2013 did not appear to have a diverse membership in terms of backgrounds to reflect the diverse make-up of the community, which would facilitate feedback about practices that

may have implications for protecting the rights to privacy of CALD individuals. This aspect is discussed in the review of findings from citizens with language barriers in Chapter 7

### **Interviews with Three Representatives from Public Service Agencies**

The previous section examined the most recent annual reports of some public service providers that deal with the NES, deaf and hearing-impaired communities more often than other public services, either due to the services they provide (i.e. settlement or welfare services) or the ethnic mix of the population in their service area. It also examined the OAIC (which oversees the implementation of the Privacy Act), as some interactions between the Australian Public Services and community members with language barriers may have implications for the implementation of the Privacy Act. Through examining some of these agencies' practices via their publications, including reports, resource kits and statements, the researcher looked for practices that may be problematic in achieving their intended purposes, or that may actually be in breach of some broader guidelines or even legislation.

This section presents data from semi-structured interviews with key public service staff who were actually involved in communication with community members with language difficulties. It was deemed relevant to elicit data about the views and practices of these staff in managing communication with citizens who have language difficulties, as they are directly involved in service delivery to this group of people. Thompson (1998), demonstrating the prevalence of inequalities in contemporary Western societies, especially drew attention to the role of workers in the human services, a key sector of public service, stating, 'for workers in the human services, this represents a particular challenge in so far as decisions made and actions taken can play a significant role in either moving towards a greater degree of equality or reinforcing existing inequalities' (p. 1).

Data from the semi-structured interviews were integrated with data from the previous section and included in the discussion of findings in Chapter 8, along with data from the other

key agents in this field—citizens with language barriers and translators or interpreters. The three public service agents included Susie, a social worker, Michael, language services coordinator in a welfare agency and John, a language services coordinator in a health service.

*Brief background information about participants*

Susie is a qualified social worker who has been working within the northern suburbs of Melbourne, with a large concentration of NES communities, with marginalised families in facilitated playgroups, frail elderly people, people with acute mental illnesses and people at risk of homelessness. Michael had been working for a federal government department that provides welfare and income support services across Australia. In the past 15 years, he had worked in coordinating employment programs and supervising staff in service centres and as part of a Multicultural Service Officer team, but had also undertaken other roles, which included being the state coordinator for the communication of various international social security agreements to the public, training and writing of the multicultural training service packages, and a stint as program support manager for the Multicultural Service Officers in a region of Melbourne. John works in the health context and is responsible for language services in a public hospital with a large NES patients.

*Circumstances in which they or their organisation need to communicate with the NES community*

Susie, as a social worker, has been involved in a program aimed at mothers with young babies for four years. The program works alongside many women from NES background mainly from Turkish, Arabic, Chaldean, Vietnamese, Somalian and Nepalese. The issues she dealt with include homelessness, isolation, domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, severe mental health issues, post-natal or ante-natal depression, newly arrived refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers, financial deprivation or being young mothers (14–21 years old). Michael said NES clients access welfare services such as income support



or rent assistance as anybody else and this means, like everybody else, they need to make counter enquiries, put in application forms, ask for reviews of negative decisions or make complaints about treatment by staff. John responded that in the public hospital he was employed in approximately 43% of all occasions of service (both at acute and subacute level) are delivered to patients born in non-English speaking countries. While not all of them have low English proficiency, he estimated that between 20 and 25% of patients require an interpreter to communicate with health care staff.

*Methods of communication with NES community members and any challenges*

Susie responded that the program is given specific funding that allows the program to access interpreters either through staff interpreters in the community health centre or freelance interpreters through language services agencies. She said finding an interpreter in rare languages and dialects is always a challenge, especially when you need a female interpreter in a rare language, ‘Sometimes you need find a female interpreter to discuss issues about, say, breastfeeding and it gets more complicated.’ Susie says although telephone interpreter service comes handy for some business, ‘it is not appropriate using a telephone interpreter at a one-hour home visit, because there are always more than two people in the room communicating, children playing, babies crying.’

Michael explained that the organisation he worked for has for a long time established protocols and systems to encourage staff utilise the available interpreter or translator resources that are available in a range of languages. Some staff also have received credentials through bilingual proficiency tests and even as interpreters in prevalent community languages and help fill in the void with assisting clients who have low English language proficiency.

John said the hospital he works for delivers approximately 46,000 occasions of service per annum in over 100 languages either through in-house interpreters in common languages such as Arabic, Assyrian, Chaldean Chinese, Greek Italian, and, Macedonian, Turkish and Vietnamese or freelance interpreters from language services agencies for rare languages. The health service also maintains a translation database with hundreds of medical documents translated in the top eight languages.

*Major issues are in public service provision through translation and interpreting*

Susie summarised the main issues in delivering a service through interpreters and translators would be lack of funding, shortage of female interpreters in some languages and lack of communication between workers and the Centre's interpreter booking service throughout the organisation. Overall, Susie, says funding for interpreting is diminishing, 'The interpreters tell me there are less jobs than there used to be. My NES clients tell me years ago there were more interpreters helping them.' She believed this was due to decreased funding and this was why there are less interpreters and less work available for an interpreter and less interpreters for NES clients. In relation to availability of interpreters and impact on services, Susie said:

Sometimes I ask for a Chaldean female interpreter and end up with a male Arabic-speaking interpreter...It gets really frustrating. It is not unusual for NES clients to hang up. Sometimes, it takes a while to arrange an interpreter and so cannot make an appointment, which can delay communication and support, and as our women are pregnant it can be imperative that we see or speak to our clients ASAP. The women can get the wrong idea and assume we are not providing a supportive service. Our women are vulnerable and marginalised and often initially hard to engage. As our service is voluntary, they do not have to engage our service. Communication is crucial to building rapport and in providing a quality service to our clients.

Another issue, she said, having to work around the times when an interpreter is available,

I would rather book appointments when it's appropriate for the client.

Pregnant women are busy with other appointments, such as ante-natal ultrasounds and other tests. I work three days a week and many female interpreters don't work the days I work. Secondly, the women I work with are pregnant—they cannot wait weeks for a female interpreter. It is very inappropriate to have a male interpreter when discussing breastfeeding, childbirth, menstrual cycles and contraception'.

Susie said casualization and freelance employment conditions of interpreters create issues for the service provision, 'many females interpreters work only 10am–3pm, as they have children. This became a real issue for planning their consultations'. She said lack of available interpreters affected the welfare of her clients, '

as it becomes very time consuming filling out interpreter booking forms only to have the appointment cancelled, and then waiting on the telephone for a telephone interpreter only to find you end up with a male interpreter even though you asked for a female. The client can wait days for me to call back or even weeks to make an initial home visit, as I needed to wait for a female Vietnamese interpreter, only to have it cancelled. So if we have a case load of say nine to 10 clients, we would only allow four to five as NES clients due to time restraints. Funding requires us being seen as spending 90–95% of our time with clients. But funding agencies do not see the challenges we face working of a client load of almost all NES backgrounds.

Susie recalls a case involving a female client with an acute mental health issue that wanted a second opinion of her mental health diagnosis,

It took two months for me to locate a service that bulk billed and supplied a free interpreting service for psychiatry. I first searched for a Turkish-speaking psychiatrist but could not locate any within a 20 km radius of my client's home.

Susie said although it can be better, her service tries to overcome language barriers to deliver the service by providing interpreters, but she said there were many services that did not offer interpreters at all, and this restricted where she could refer her clients on to. This disadvantaged the clients making some services inaccessible in a timely manner. Susie says her clients did not complain and wait patiently.

Michael, who has worked in all three tiers (Federal, State and Local Government) of public services, also highlighted differences between services in the way they handle communication with NES clients as an issue:

In general....there seems to be at times inconsistencies with regards to the use of interpreters. Some agencies or government-funded services I have dealt with in the recent past are moving towards an integrated approach, embedded in the procedures and processes of service provision while others have only ad hoc arrangements at best.

John also agreed that availability of professional interpreters, especially in emerging communities in Australia is a major issue in delivering culturally sensitive patient care. Michael also highlighted funding as an issue. He commented that, unlike other allied health services such as physiotherapy or social work in health care, there is a lack of recognition of the value of interpreting and translating in health care delivery. He said 'this means lower

budget for language services, including unequal remuneration for equal years of study; this makes it rather difficult to attract and retain language professionals.’

*Engagement with NES community members to seek their views or opinions on policy, services and amendments*

Susie responded that she sought views and opinions of her clients through feedback forms at the conclusion of her engagement with them but this was mostly about satisfaction of the level of service provided by her and her Centre, not on policies or other broader issues, ‘I don’t work in the organisation’s policy department so I don’t know if they have asked specific questions to NES clients. But I am sure they would do, as this suburb has such a high population of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers’.

Michael said he was not in the policy area that deals with community engagement about policy changes but he believed they would be consulting all community members. While John said the health service he works for has a Cultural and Staff Diversity Committee, which partners with various organisations in the region to make sure the services are accessible and culturally appropriate and community views are heard.

*Suggestions to improve public service provision through translation and interpreting*

Susie was very clear, ‘More government funding for interpreters and translators—even more for translators, as there seems to be less funding or no funding for translation in my centre.’ Susie recalled a case where how language barriers which the service could not assist due to lack of funding disadvantaged the welfare of NES family. The story is provided as Susie described as it provides an extraordinary insight into how politics are at play in affecting welfare of members of the community we live in.

The first encounter is a NES Vietnamese pregnant female client who recently migrated to Australia on a spouse visa. Her husband is also Vietnamese but speaks

English, and he has a physical and slight intellectual disability, which hinders his speech and verbal communication skills. The couple needed a Vietnamese female interpreter. As the Community only has one casual/part-time Vietnamese interpreter, I had pre-booked an external female Vietnamese interpreter two weeks prior to the appointment (a home visit). Two hours prior to this appointment, I had a call stating that the interpreter had cancelled (this has happened to the same client twice before). I attended the appointment intending to ask the husband to communicate basic information, such as what baby material aids they needed and general health. But for more complicated questions, such as mental health issues and breastfeeding, I would call a telephone interpreter for the most of the one-hour home visit (which will cost the Community Centre more money, as it's calculated by the minute).

When I arrived, they had a letter from the immigration department and wanted it translated, and then for me to read the instructions and questions related to an Australian permanent visa application, and I was requested to write down their answers on the form, which needed to be done within 28 days of receiving the letter or the present temporary visa will be cancelled. I called the interpreting booking department and got put through to management. They stated that my community health centre did not get funding for translators, and I could make another appointment and hope the interpreter would have knowledge in the area of migration and would be willing to translate. I decided to read the information and do my best to fill out the forms in pencil (they can make changes as needed), with my client's husband interpreting his wife's answers. This was very slow and tedious. I asked my client's husband if he could visit a close family member and get them to assist with the forms. They finally called around and a friend will take them to Footscray to a cheap translator who works from home.

Michael regarded removal of inconsistencies in implementation of language services in public service provision between different public service providers use of interpreters in service provision would be the best long-term improvement. He commented,

There seems to be some organisations of the public service that can highlight and lead the provision of interpreting and translating for agencies who lack the practice or are not as consistent in this realm of service provision. It is evident that the agency I work for can be seen as a good practice model for the provision of language services and service delivery. This model could be considered and adopted by other departments, which would ensure that we are working towards a whole-of-government approach to language services provision, with equal servicing and common protocols that could be used by all staff in servicing NESB.

John said he could only comment about health care providers, 'Every hospital should have strong and established language services departments that deliver interpreting, translation and transcultural training, and are involved in research, in partnership with universities, concerning patients with low English proficiency'. He said, contrary to what some funding agencies assume, 'the funding spent on these services within health care system will improve access to professional health interpreters, and ultimately improve the health outcomes of patients with low English proficiency, containing costs in the short, mid and long term'

*Recognition of translators and interpreters are well regarded as part of the public service*

Susie said More than half of their clients are NES clients and without interpreters they would not be able to function, 'I see interpreters as a crucial part of the Community Health.

Many newly arrived people find it very difficult to find work due to language barriers and lack of educational or appropriate qualifications. Without translators and interpreters, these families and individuals could not become part of the Australian community. Many of my clients state ‘they like attending the services at my centre and mostly their needs are met because they always have interpreters and they can take care of themselves with the help of interpreters.’

Michael, again reflecting the inconsistencies between public services, said ‘there is no doubt increasingly the provision of translators and interpreters is becoming an integral part of the public service. It is instilled in its process of service delivery and embedded in our protocols and funding for such provisions, to ensure that language services are provided to its clients, but whether this is across the board—I would not say so’

John also reflected on the inconsistencies across service providers, ‘it varies greatly hospital to hospital. While we have seen some improvement in recent years, there is still a long way to go.’

### **Comments on Data from Public Service Staff**

Data from the three public service staff who deal with clients with language barriers provided an insight into the circumstances around communication and access and equity as it transpires in everyday settings. People with language barriers (there are up to 100 language backgrounds in the hospital where John is employed, and up to 230 languages in the welfare agency where Michael works, up to half of Susie’s client load as a social worker) need to access essential services such as health and welfare as any other member of the society. A combination of interpreters, bilingual staff and family members appear to be common methods of communication. The issue around availability of interpreters emerges as a major one, similar to the finding of Doyle in 1992, who found that funding constraints and lack of resources were major issues for those agencies who genuinely try to overcome language



barriers (p. 52). Where a client has special needs, such as gender-sensitive service which should be available to any member of the society (in Susie's case, it was a female interpreter to discuss breastfeeding matters) the shortage further exacerbates. Critically, the shortage leads to a situation where the bookings are made, not based on the client's needs or the professional's schedule but on the basis of the availability of interpreting services. Another issue that is revealed by data which confirms the inconsistencies in accessibility for people with language barriers. While some services such as the ones Susie, Michael and John work for appear to be doing significant work in making their services accessible, others may not have anything at all. This appears to be impacting on the welfare of vulnerable people as demonstrated by the story of a Turkish speaking mental health patient, who had to wait for months so that Susie could find an accessible service. Although waiting for months to see a specialist in a public health system is not uncommon, having to delay a health service for a lengthy period of time due to inaccessibility is not acceptable in a country which has had access and equity policies and guidelines since 1985.

The participants confirmed the inconsistencies between agencies in terms of how accessibility is incorporated in their procedures and processes in these significant public services, which the earlier analysis of the publicly available information from a range of services revealed in the previous section. Understanding how these inconsistencies are impacting on the welfare of a section of the society may gradually assist in solving this problem of inconsistent implementation. John, as an insider, acknowledged this remains a challenge, stating 'there is a long way to go.'

As revealed by the participants, interpreters and translators provide a common communication method between public services that deliver essential services and a significant section of the society. However, the recognition of this service appears to be inconsistent as well. While Susie and Michael believed interpreters and translators were

regarded as critical and recognised, John believed interpreters and translators were not recognised as well as other allied health services such as occupational therapy or social work, although they all work in delivering health care, and this lack of recognition, he believed, was not just symbolic but actually impacted on the funding arrangements. Data also reveals there appears to be a lack of insight into the communication needs of people with language barriers and communication. This was most apparent in Susie's revelation that the funding was only for interpreting and not translation, which simply the same thing in written form. This then disadvantaged people who are already vulnerable by forcing them to use family members with limited English skills and trying to source external help by privately paying for such services.

### **Reflecting on Data Using Bourdieu's Concepts**

The state's attitude to language in society is critical, as the state, being the Field of Power, controls the bureaucracy which is represented by public servants – the authorized characters (Bourdieu, 1992). Bourdieu (1994) explained how the habitus of the state affects language in a country, arguing, 'Cultural and linguistic unification is accompanied by the imposition of the dominant language and culture as legitimate and by rejection of all other languages into indignity' (p. 7). The practices and actions of public service institutions, as organisations run by the state, are undertaken by agents who act on behalf of the state. Bourdieu (1994) described them as 'authorized characters, "officials" who are acting ex officio, as holders of an officium (publicum), that is, of a function or position assigned by the state' (p. 12). As the habitus of these 'authorised characters' ultimately reflects the habitus of the organisation, and as habitus is shaped by structural factors (and therefore by the state) as much as individual agency, this habitus becomes critical in the relationship between the public services and the citizens with language barriers, as well as citizens without language barriers. Various authors pointed to the attitudes and dispositions of the Australian public

service. Jupp (2007) asserts that in Australia public services the monoglot Anglophone tradition, a legacy of the White Australia policy since the late 1800s, has always been dominant. This is despite the social changes brought about by the changes in migration policies in the aftermath of WWII which effectively ended the uniform – White, English speaking – nature of the clientele of public services (Jupp & McRobbie, 1992). This, however, does not appear to have resulted in significant changes in underlying attitudes and assumptions since the mid-1970s. Holmes (2011) stated that public services continue to remain ‘one size fits few’ (p. 20). As McDonough and Polzer (2012) argued, habitus, which operates below the level of consciousness, underlines what actions are ‘appropriate’ in an organization. As Jupp (1992) highlighted, ‘Remedying these problems effectively involves knowledge of the ‘missed’ clientele by the agency through data collection and changes to standard procedures to accommodate variety’ (p. 2). Data about the practices of public services and public servants reveal that, despite decades of awareness of the problems with language by a significant number of their clients and various access and equity policies introduced since the 1980s, the needs of these people do not appear to be a significant consideration in everyday communication practices of the dominant Anglo tradition. There are some good practices, largely driven by the commitment of some public servants who want to make a difference, such as Susie and Michael, but as they admitted, these practices vary in quality and number across the board in public services. And in some areas, there has been no change at all. Data also show people are suffering simply for not having language proficiency in the language of public services. This is best revealed in the story shared by Susie about one of her clients in a critical situation who had to wait for weeks for a referral to a psychiatrist before an accessible service could be found, potentially adversely affecting her health and welfare. This is an example of symbolic violence as defined by Bourdieu (1992), where neither the dominating force nor the dominated are conscious of the violence, and take

the status quo for granted without questioning it. In the case of Susie's client, she accepted that she had to wait for weeks because there was no service available which could provide an interpreter for her to communicate with the psychiatrist. This does not appear to be an isolated case. Data from the public servants reveal that shrinking and inadequate funding alongside an increasing push for economic rationalization and efficiency places enormous constraints on language services for those who need them. As public services expect clients to speak the dominant language and do not appear to view language barriers as an issue they should be addressing, the clients are left to find their own ways of negotiating barriers. Bourdieu explains that the ideals of individualisation and self-help, key concepts in the neo-liberal approach to public service provision, make it possible to hold people responsible for their misfortune and are deeply complicit in numerous types of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 3).

## **Summary**

This chapter has examined how public services incorporate, if at all, language services and the communication needs of community members with language difficulties into their everyday activities, within the broader framework of access and equity policies and initiatives. After a brief introduction to the current relevant policies, the stated policy objectives and the specific obligations of public service organisations arising from these policies to facilitate communication with members of the public who have language barriers, I examined the recent annual reports of some public services that deal with members of NES, deaf or hearing-impaired communities. This chapter also examined the OAIC (which oversees the implementation of the Privacy Act), as some of the interaction between the Australian Public Services and citizens with language barriers may have implications for the implementation of the Privacy Act.

I then turned to examining some of their practices via their publications, such as reports, resource kits or statements, the study found that practices and implementation vary significantly across public service agencies, from reasonably well-organised language and multicultural services to almost no implementation at all. Even in agencies with good practices, a critical examination easily points to inconsistencies and shortcomings in processes and implementation.

I then presented data from semi-structured interviews with three representatives of public service agencies. These representatives were senior staff involved in the commissioning of language services for communication with community members with language difficulties, or in some cases, they used language services themselves in providing services to the public. The chapter concluded with analysing the

## **Chapter Five: Public Service Translators and Interpreters**

The practice of translation and interpreting was included as a communication method in overcoming access and equity issues as early as the 1978 Galbally Review. Since then, government policies promoting access and equity have always included translation and interpreting in making government services more accessible. Previous studies examined this profession in terms of professionalization stages proposed by various authors (Pym et al. 2013). However their position in the provision of public services and their value in access and equity has not received as much attention. This chapter investigates the position of translators and interpreters in the field of public service translation and interpreting through the accounts and stories of practitioners who have provided valuable data about their lived experiences in in-depth interviews.

### **The Nature of Public Service Translation and Interpreting**

Public service translation and interpreting, as the name suggests, is generally defined by the specific context in which it takes place, namely in interactions between public service agencies and citizens who need these services, but lack or are unable to speak the language used in service delivery (Mikkelson, 2004; Wadenjo, 1998). The term ‘public service translation and interpreting’ has been used in some countries, including Australia, interchangeably with the term ‘community translation and interpreting’, an activity that takes place in ‘everyday and emergency situations which refugees, other immigrants, and migrant labourers may encounter in their communication with bureaucrats, officials, police, employment counsellors, school, public assistance and health care personnel of all kinds’ (Nicholson, 1994, p. 80). Tipton (2012) says, after emerging as an ad hoc and peripheral service within public service activities in 1980s and 1990s, it has become more and more recognised and become a widespread communication method in certain public services. Valero- Garcés and Mancho Barés (2002) highlighted that this communication between

public services and members of communities is not simply a matter of linguistic gap but involves cultural differences in terms of understandings of values and systems of the host society.

What the above definitions tell us is who the parties are in the communicative event—that is, public servants and community members—and how translators and interpreters should be mediating between them. What they fail to tell us is the nature of the relationship between these parties and the implications of this relationship within this field of practice. The relationship is inherently a social one, as the interaction between government agencies delivering public services and citizens is characterised by power differences.

The social aspect of translation and interpreting, especially public service interpreting and translating has led some scholars to draw on Bourdieu's key concepts of field, capital and habitus (Valero-Garcés & Blasi, 2010; Inghilleri, 2003; Aguilar-Solano, 2012). However, their attempts to understand the field of translating and interpreting in Bourdieusian terms were largely confined to describing the role of translators and interpreters using his concepts, and were not a comprehensive study of the field and its key actors.

The following sections examine the position of public service translators and interpreters from data available in major industry reports and research over the past four decades, and also from first-hand interviews with currently practising interpreters and translators.

### **The Situation of Public Service Translators and Interpreters in Australia**

Three major reports, albeit with slightly differing foci, approximately 10 years apart, effectively sum up the recent and current state of the industry. These studies are *Interpreting and Translating: Demand and Provision* (Athanasiadis & Turner, 1994), *Survey of Interpreting Practitioners* (Ozolins, 2004) and *Lost in Translation* (APESMA, 2012). The picture that emerges from the reports is of a fledgling industry with an overwhelmingly

insecure, casualised workforce, who rely on labour hire firms called translating and interpreting agencies for work. In Europe, approximately 65% of translators and interpreters worked part-time. Other characteristics of the industry include poor pay conditions that have not kept up with cost of living increases over two decades, a predominantly female workforce (70% or above in Europe) and a prevalent feeling of not being recognised as a profession.

Three main problems affecting this industry deserve an expanded treatment, as they are relevant to some of the questions investigated in this study. These problems are severe in that they have been resistant to change and attempts to solve them. One of these is the employment patterns in the industry. The subcontracted or casual nature of employment arrangements means that interpreters earn their incomes from bookings or assignments they receive mostly from private agencies or government-run language services, such as the TIS or the DoHS. The number of in-house interpreters is very low, and where they do exist, it is usually in health service settings such as hospitals and community health centres.

Regardless, pay conditions appear as a major concern in almost all available reports into the industry. Interpreters claim that rates have not kept up with the times. The APESMA report (2012) found that approximately 90% of translators and interpreters reported a lack of income security, and 87% that their incomes were not keeping pace with inflation, as major work challenges. From an income perspective, full-time employment for an interpreter is considered seven to 10 assignments a week (Ozolins, 2004). In Victoria in 2013, this would mean an income range of \$400–650 a week gross, if an interpreter only undertakes standard bookings. The federal minimum wage in 2013 was \$622.00 (Department of Employment, 2013). A standard booking is generally one and a half hours in duration, and in most spoken languages, the rates for professional interpreters would be in the range of \$60–68, and for paraprofessionals, \$55–62 per assignment. The rates are higher for sign language interpreters in Victoria: approximately \$80 per hour for minimum two-hour bookings in 2015 (Echo



Interpreting, n.d.). Rates also vary between states in Australia. In 2000, a standard booking was two hours in duration and the pay was \$50 per assignment, yielding an income range of \$350–500 a week; at that time, the federal minimum wage per week was \$400.40 (WorkplaceInfo, n.d.).

Ko (cited in Ozolins, 2004) reported that only 32% of professional interpreters (those who have obtained accreditation through an approved course) received on average seven assignments or more a week. Assignment rates for paraprofessional interpreters (in some small languages, this is in fact the highest accreditation level) were as low as 9% reporting that they received on average seven or more assignments a week. This points to a very low-paid group of professionals and paraprofessionals earning mostly well below average wages, given that almost 65% of respondents to Ozolins' (2004) study stated that 75–100% of their income was derived from translating and interpreting only. This is a very interesting situation, as it is vastly different from comparable societies such as those in Europe, where studies have shown that the number of translators and interpreters who rely solely on income from their profession is much lower. A study by Katan (2009, p. 118) showed that most part-time translators and interpreters (69%) had second jobs, while 54% had a third job and 8% had a fourth job.

Some authors argue that this part-time nature of the profession may be the explanation for its low status. Pym, Grin, Sfreddo and Chan (2013) argued that the profession does not fit the definition of a regulated profession under the Professional Qualifications Directive (2005/36/EC), and lacks key signals of professionalisation due to its employment nature and hence lack of status. Others, such as Ko (1999) and Turner (1994, cited in Ozolins, 2004), also pointed to the lack of opportunities for regular full-time work as undermining its professionalisation.

Another factor that has been put forward in explaining translation and interpreting's lack of professional recognition is its lack of underpinning theory grounded in research, or the lack of a strong research base in training in the field of public service or community interpreting and translating. Hale (2007) stated that 'research has been one of the most neglected areas in community interpreting [...] with no consistent link between the results of research, the little training available and the practice of interpreters' (p. 197). The existing body of research has been aimed at providing 'practical answers to improve practice, rather than to advance or refute theories' (p. 202).

Common traits of a profession generally include a period of specialized training, charging fees for services, a professional body or association and a code of ethics (Carr-Saunders, 1928, Tseng, 1992). Reflecting on the status of translators and interpreters in Australia using these traits, most of the above criteria appear to have been met, albeit rudimentary in some respects: there is training in the vocational education sector and higher education sector, although training is available only in a limited number of languages; there is a professional association –AUSIT; there are legislations and guidelines for access and equity that recognises the profession as a major language service; and there is a certification authority in the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI), which acts as a pseudo-registration authority. However, these factors do not appear to have silenced cries for recognition of professional status. Mikkelsen's (2004) conclusion that there is a 'lack of recognition of the social value of interpreting services, poor working conditions and inadequate remuneration still plague social service or community interpreting' in 2004 still appears to be the case in 2015.

The next section presents the results of semi-structured interviews with translators and interpreters conducted to gain further insight into their circumstances in the various public services settings in which they work.

## **Semi-Structured Interviews with Translators and Interpreters**

Participants in the interviews were asked a number of questions to capture key issues in their work. As noted earlier, questions were framed around the questionnaires, although some digression took place. These questions were followed by an invitation to share stories in order to capture a natural account of their professional lives and experience. Participants' working languages included English and Arabic, Auslan, Mandarin, Italian, Greek and Spanish. For purposes of identification in the following discussion, the participants are named after their working languages.

### *Profile information*

Profile information was provided by all the participants at the beginning of their interviews.

**Ms Greek:** I was born in Australia and graduated with a BA in Interpreting / Translating in 1985 (NAATI Prof. Accred.) whereupon I commenced work as a TI. I have worked in the TI industry ever since—as a practising TI and in management and education.

**Ms Italian:** I have been in Australia for about four years. In 2010, I did my masters in T&I at RMIT University and I got my accreditations as a NAATI paraprofessional interpreter and a professional translator (Italian–English). I enrolled in the Advanced Diploma in Translation and I got the NAATI accreditation as a professional translator for English to Spanish. I started working as a practitioner in T&I in November 2011 for all the main language service providers in Melbourne. I do some sessional teaching but I still work as a practitioner.

**Ms China:** I have been in Australia for 14 years and have been involved in T&I for the past 12 years. I have a background in business and came to T&I through a

NAATI-approved course. After I received my accreditations, I practiced as a freelancer for about five years, and I have primarily been in T&I education.

**Ms Spanish:** I have been living in Australia for 40 years. I completed high school in my native country, Peru. I am a native Spanish speaker. After working doing some clerical work in a bank, I completed a one-year certificate course at RMIT TAFE, which gave me NAATI paraprofessional (old Level II) accreditation. While working for the Central Health Interpreter Service (CHIS), I sat for the NAATI Interpreting and translating Level III exams and passed. I subsequently completed a Bachelor of Arts at Monash University and recently finished the Masters Course in Translation and Interpreting Studies at RMIT University.'

**Ms Arabic:** I have been in Australia since 1990. I completed my high school education at Princes' Hill high school. I completed an advanced diploma in polymer engineering at RMIT University in 1994. I also completed an advanced diploma in interpreting and translation at RMIT in 2003. I am a NAATI level 3 interpreter and translator both directions in the Arabic language. I have a Master's degree in interpreting and translation from RMIT University and I am currently studying law to be admitted to the legal profession as a legal practitioner.

**Ms Auslan:** NAATI Interpreter Level Accreditation since 1990. No interpreting courses when I started in the 1980s. Self-trained through PD and working closely with the deaf community and ASLIA Victoria. Completed teacher training and MA in Linguistics. Wide range of interpreting from providing access in secondary schools, TAFE and university courses for deaf people to medical appointments, social welfare and employment or corporate meetings and events.

*What texts or topics do interpreters and translators deal with?*

Public service translation and interpreting, as the name suggests, covers texts and discourse relevant to the delivery of public services. This question in the interview sought to elicit more data to identify specific topics that are common in the work of PSTI professionals.

Answers to the question, ‘What sort of texts/topics do you translate or interpret?’ revealed that the text types and topics varied, reflecting the features of the particular ethnic groups. Ms Greek replied:

Most of my translation work is comprised of community information provided by government departments. Topics mostly targeting my language’s ageing demographic include ageing, continence, dementia and mental health. My interpreting work also covers those same topics. Legal interpreting work has recently included crime, traffic, family violence and personal safety orders and family law.

Ms Italian said that her work as an interpreter was mainly concentrated in health settings, such as medical face-to-face interviews, family meetings, home visits and medico-legal conferences, reflecting the ageing of the Italian community, who were one of the first migrant groups arriving in Australia in the aftermath of World War II.

Ms China explained:

All topic areas, both in community T&I and in business fields. In the community domain, it can be anything from a flyer for a childcare centre, letter from the casino to their excluded clients with problem gambling issues, government policy papers, to coroner’s reports.

Ms Spanish said that text types were very broad, including legal, health and education, and to a lesser degree, commercial texts.

Ms Arabic also listed a broad spectrum of topics, but she said she preferred to work mainly in legal settings.

It is interesting to note that the PS interpreters and translators included legal settings within the PSTI field, although the industry and academic literature (Benmaman, 1997; Berk-Seligson, 2000; Colin & Morris, 1996; Cottareill, 2002) may construe legal interpreting and translating as a separate field of practice.

Ms Auslan said that she worked in a broad range of topic areas, from educational settings to welfare services. She added, ‘but in the last seven years I have done a lot of interpreting in employment meetings, social welfare and counseling’.

*What, if any, specialist training has been offered in public services, government policies or public discourse?*

In the translation and interpreting profession, specialised areas typically refer to the medical and legal fields. This is evident in training courses bearing these fields in their titles or specialised certification systems (e.g., Court Interpreter Certification in the US). Public service translation and interpreting does not come to mind as a specialised area, despite the fact that it is the area in which interpreters and translators most regularly work in countries with multicultural communities. This survey question sought data to understand how interpreters and translators acquire specialist knowledge and skills in public service translating and interpreting.

Ms Greek responded:

The study of ‘Public Services’ was included in a unit in my BA called ‘Community Skills and Services’, but other than that I have not formally studied any of the above. I do however make it part of my own PD [professional development] to keep myself informed of key issues affecting public domains where I work.

Ms Italian said that the topic was briefly covered in her translating and interpreting studies, mainly in practice dialogues or translation passages based on public service content,

but that there was no specific course with this title. She added that ‘working as a practitioner I learn on the field every day’.

Ms China said:

No. I realised as soon as I started practising that I needed to have such knowledge in order to perform competently. I regard it as part of my ongoing self-development to read about, research, listen to and understand all the relevant issues to do with public services. Otherwise I am not doing justice to the clients I work with. I don’t think I would pay this level of attention to public services if I were in my home country!

Ms Spanish explained that, apart from a course titled ‘Language Policy and Services’ in her postgraduate studies, she had no training in public service discourse or specialised training relevant to public service settings.

Those who responded to the survey indicated that they had no significant specialist training or educational background in public service discourse, policies and services. They were also asked whether they could think of any reasons (e.g., availability, cost, time) for this, and how they thought specialised training or studies might help translators and interpreters in this domain. Ms Greek responded:

For a start, I am not aware of any short courses on such topics. I know of undergraduate courses but I don’t think they are viable for practising TIs due to cost and to some extent time. I also expect that such courses would be too detailed. Based on my own university and work experience, I think specific targeted training on public service discourse, policies and services is invaluable for community interpreters. Cost is a barrier to training for interpreters because interpreters are part of the insecure workforce in Australia and their remuneration is insufficient to afford or warrant further training.

Ms Italian echoed a similar view, saying:

Public service discourse and knowledge of policies in Australia have to be part of the training of T&I students. In Australia, the public service is the major source of work for interpreters and translators, just because Australia is a multicultural society. They will be the future interpreters and translators.

Ms China stated:

I have never seen any professional organisations I was associated with (e.g., AUSIT, NAATI and agencies I worked for) promoting or offering anything like this. Most PDs revolve around ethics, terminology, business skills, et cetera. I used to hate the way texts were written by government agencies when I had to translate them. It reads completely ‘foreign’ to the target language readers. Had I understood it then the reason why they were written that way, I would have saved my energy in cursing! So definitely, yes, training in public service discourse will help T&I practitioners appreciate the underlying imperatives and ideology that are intended, and stimulate discussions on how to deal with transfer issues in this type of texts.

Ms Spanish explained that it involved more training at work: ‘It is something that so far most interpreters read about if they are interested in a particular area, or through work itself it becomes known to the interpreter/translator.’

Ms Arabic said, ‘I have had no formal specific training in any area, but my past and present education assisted me to succeed in the areas of community and legal work.’ She added, ‘Specific training was not available; it was generic and always administered by non-industry professionals.’

Ms Auslan said she did not have any specific training in this area. She added: There has never been a specific PD in this area although the topic is covered in the Diploma of Interpreting English–Auslan. I do know at Vicdeaf, staff interpreters have compiled



lists of Centrelink jargon to help in certain meetings and appointments but this is ad hoc and for specific appointments.

Training in public service discourse would be of great benefit to interpreters and their clients. The way that government agencies work can be quite different from other workplaces or service providers and is quite a neglected area. Because it is such a broad area, interpreters usually just learn on the job.

*What are the major issues in the public service translation and interpreting sector?*

This line of inquiry aimed at identifying major issues in this vital but little recognised profession from the point of view of practising translators and interpreters. Ms Greek sounded very frustrated and wary, saying:

There would be too many to mention! Most of the issues that TIs face are as a result of insecure work, low pay, lack of respect and understanding of the important role they play in facilitating access and equity for CALD communities.

Ms Italian (who mainly worked in health settings) endorsed this, saying that hospital staff, doctors and, interestingly, patients' relatives were unaware of the interpreter's role and responsibilities. The following three stories from Ms Italian shed a great deal of light on some of the issues experienced by interpreters in everyday practice, especially in complicated interpersonal interactions between a range of players, including public service representatives, booking agencies, NES clients and their relatives.

**Story 1:** I arrived to a hospital reception announcing my arrival. I asked how many patients I needed to assist during my 90-minute assignment. The answer was: 'I have no idea, just have a sit in the interpreters waiting room and wait.' I insisted, explaining that it is my right to know at least how many patients needed my assistance, and that it is my responsibility to make sure that all the patients and the doctors in need receive my service, the service I'm paid for. While I was sort of arguing, the

manager of the office called me in the back saying: ‘Did your agency tell you how things work here?’ I said, ‘What do you mean by that?’ ‘Well, I’ll explain to you: you arrive, you have a sit in the waiting room for interpreters, and you just wait until doctors call you. You have to be there for 90 minutes.’ I said, ‘I’m sorry, but you have no power to make rules. One of my responsibilities is to coordinate my job with the patients and the doctors to make sure that they receive my service. You can’t park us in a waiting room waiting for a patient that maybe doesn’t show up, or waiting for doctors that are not aware that an interpreter has been assigned to their interview. Moreover, just for your information, you book the interpreters’ services for assignment, not for 90 minutes.’ I called the agency explaining what was going on and that it was not the first time (another time, at the same hospital, we were in there waiting in vain for 45 minutes to be called). I had been waiting for half an hour and I decided to leave. They didn’t want to sign me off because, according to them, I had to wait for 90 minutes for a patient who, as the agency found out, was seen before my arrival. I underline that I arrived 15 minutes early ... The agency paid me for the assignment, though.

**Story 2:** Doctors who don’t realise that the interview is between the patient and themselves, not between themselves and the patients’ relatives. They see patients without waiting for the interpreter, talking to their relatives, who make decisions for the patients, who are unaware of what has been said. The patient leaves the hospital with the same worries and doubts. The government’s purpose and effort in ensuring that LOTE patients have the same access and assistance to health services fail.

**Story 3:** The patient’s relative refused to have an interpreter for her mum, saying that she was perfectly able to interpret for her. I didn’t accept her attitude and I explained to the patient and the doctor the risk of not using an interpreter, asking them to make

the decision, plus that I had the legal responsibility to interpret for her. The patient was frightened by her daughter, so she said she was ‘fine’, a ‘fine’ that was not very convincing. The doctor didn’t know what to say, he was confused. He understood my points but was sort of intimidated by the relative. I was not happy at all and I called the agency and the head of the in-house interpreters’ office. Eventually I couldn’t perform my profession.

Her frustration was expressed strongly in her cry, ‘*Sedat!* [the researcher’s name] This is what I do every day! Arguing with people just to do what I’m paid for!’

Ms China described her own frustration:

It frustrates me when other professionals do not have any training in using interpreters. In the dock of a county court courtroom, a few accused and a number of interpreters were all squeezed in without appropriate seating. Interference of hearing each other’s interpreting (sometimes in the same language, sometimes other languages) made it impossible to do your job appropriately. And yet the judge and lawyers could carry on the proceedings as if they could not see!

It also frustrates me when LOTE speakers take for granted the interpreting service provided to them and funded by taxpayers. When they do not have the courtesy to even ring up the service provider about not coming for the booked appointment, interpreters are sent away completely wasted. I am sure if they had to pay for it, they would have done it differently!

Ms Spanish said:

[Given] the lack of experience from the part of the writers of documents/written texts as to who their ultimate audience—in the case of multicultural people—will be, therefore it is left to the translator to clarify and adapt, with the permission of the author/agency, the text to make it suitable.

Ms Arabic presented a direr situation with the following highlights:

The issues we interpreters face in the public service sector are endless. Below are some of the most common ones.

- Interpreters are not considered professionals, we are considered language aid people, especially in hospitals.
- Interpreter assignment booking is not valued by hospital and health centre staff. They do not understand when interpreters have to leave at the completion of our time due to other commitments.
- In courts we are sometimes asked to perform duties beyond our physical ability or our expertise. For example, taking instructions from an accused person who is in custody, at the custody centre of the court, in a booth smaller than one meter square in size. The prisoner is usually very frustrated and violently spoken. This puts strain on the interpreter because we are not trained to deal with disturbed people, it is very difficult for the interpreter to hear amid the echo and the noise in the custody centre and we are usually interrupted by the lawyer or professional in these situations and that makes the prisoner angry and frustrates the whole situation.
- At the Children's Court we are required to sight translate the family report prepared by DHS. This is usually a report 30 pages and over. They expect us to complete this duty within half an hour or so before the case goes to court. Even if the most diligent interpreters can complete this task, this doesn't mean that the non-English speaker understands the concepts and issues involved. I believe a conference prior to the court hearing should be held with the client by their lawyer to discuss the contents and effect of the report on the outcome of the case.

- This is also done usually in the absence of the professional. The interpreter is left alone in the hearing room with the non-English speaker. What happens if there are questions put by the client? I usually take notes but legally we are not allowed to do that because this would mean that the interpreter is giving evidence because the written notes are my own words put on paper to reflect and communicate the intended questions.
- There are also logistic and mechanical issues faced by interpreters at courts. We are kept within very close proximity of the client. Our role is also neglected by legal professionals. I don't ever witness a lawyer or accused person mistreat the court clerk or coordinator. In my opinion, for the duration of the assignment, we should be considered or at least treated like court staff. We abide and hold our ethics in all of our assignments, but in court I have to abide by the interpreters ethics of the profession, and I have to adopt the court ethics. For example: do not approach the clerk during the call over, interpret simultaneously then consecutively, then sight translate a document, then take the accused person to the registry to sign his or her bail conditions. These things have an order of completion. So they want us to present ourselves and act as if we have court and legal training, as their in-house staff do, yet we are not considered essential for the process. Only when the interpreter leaves at 1 sharp or 4 o'clock is when they realise the importance of our role.

Ms Auslan said:

Centrelink appointments are extremely challenging with clients who are not literate in English and in trying to interpret some of the vague language used by officers. As Auslan interpreters we have to sit opposite the clients, and this is very awkward as we sit next to the Centrelink officer and can see the computer screen, which the client

cannot. Government rules on eligibility are very challenging to interpret, especially if the officer assumes a certain amount of understanding. Sometimes with conditionals and embedded clauses in questions or information, the meaning is easily lost.

Officers may ask the client to fill in the form and then start talking to them, but being deaf they cannot hear the English or see the interpretation, so the interpreter needs to alert the officer to this. The appointment will take longer because of this. Of course, often the form must be sight translated, which also takes time, and often the interpreter needs to ask the officer for guidance.

Interpreting at Centrelink is also very challenging on a management and emotional level, as often deaf clients can be in a very vulnerable position and in need of immediate assistance, and become angry or emotional when there is a lot of red tape or uncertainty in answers.

Clients can become abusive just due to the frustrations of dealing with a government system with so many rules and layers of red tape. Often, quite inexperienced paraprofessional interpreters can be given these assignments, which really require a higher accreditation level and experience in dealing with this type of work. This is more so with DHS appointments, including child protection, which are demanding and complex on many levels, and yet PP can be sent to these jobs. It leads to more frustration on the part of the deaf client when the interpreter can't understand them.

#### *Practices of sense-making in interpreting and translating in the public service setting*

The interview with translators and interpreters also sought to elicit data on the core task interpreters and translators are engaged in for sense-making. Most people assume that the involvement of an interpreter or translator in a conversation or correspondence between a public service and a member of a NES community means that sense-making has been achieved. This inquiry aimed to understand how translators and interpreters feel about sense-

making and what challenges they face. To this end, the following question was asked: ‘Do you feel some of your translations may not make much sense to the NES community for reasons other than linguistic issues?’ Interviewees were also invited to share any examples or stories.

Ms Greek responded:

Absolutely. From time to time translations are referred back to me because they are seen to be inaccessible to the CALD community for linguistic reasons. At times this occurs because a third party is requesting changes outside a translator’s brief, which ultimately reflects concerns with the authoring of the source text, and at times, the suitability of the information itself for the community.

Poor quality of the source material in English to begin with: Over the last 27 years I have seen a deterioration in the quality of writing, where it is more convoluted and complicated than is necessary (despite ‘plain English’). I find that texts arrive on my desk for translation having been thoughtlessly and hurriedly prepared. Further to that, many public service texts that I come across read as though they are written for the employees within that organisation and not the public—for example, use of public service weasel words. The problem begins with the authors, who might also benefit from some training in ‘writing for translation’. Then, after that, texts contain information about concepts that are unfamiliar to the CALD readership. This can present a problem for translation in many languages, but in my community, which has lived in Australia for several decades, this is less of a problem when a source text is accessible—so content needs to be addressed to the target readership. I think ultimately the most fundamental concerns are linguistic, but in relation to the source language and not necessarily the target.

And finally, translations vary in quality, but I think that in Australia translators often produce rigid translations that stay close to the structure of the source text, and whilst they are arguably linguistically correct, they are compromised in terms of idiom and accessibility.

Another problem affecting quality of translation is the ridiculous deadlines we face today and the interference of inadequately qualified third parties who demand changes that are not always correct or appropriate, thus affecting the readability of the final translated text.

Other barriers are the education and literacy levels of the CALD readership. I had one experience several years ago where a lengthy translation was rejected by a bilingual worker on the grounds that her clients just did not read.

While my comments revolve around linguistic issues, I think there is a planning and management component to it as well.

Ms China had similar views:

The following is a quintessential example of government discourse gone mad. This is an excerpt from the Queensland Government Advocacy Standards (endorsed by their Minister for Communities, Disability Services, Seniors and Youth) that I was asked to translate into LOTE in 2007, presumably for a LOTE-speaking community. Each page of the standards starts with a statement followed by explication, and then the quality indicator. The following excerpt is standard no. 5. [Sections highlighted by the translator] are the worst in the sense that they make very little sense (at least in the LOTE), and the way this is written is completely for people who are probably bureaucrats and are used to the government nonsensical writing. There is no definition in the booklet to be found what an advocacy agency is (in the context of disability service). The main readership of this document are referred to inconsistently



throughout this horror document as ‘people with disability’, ‘people advocated for’ and sometimes ‘advocatee’, as highlighted here. I thought I did the worst job in my life because I don’t think the translation makes any sense at all in the LOTE—not of my making!

Advocate for participation and involvement in the life of the community.

This standard is intended to ensure the advocacy agency implements policies and practices that:

- provide advocacy that facilitates the inclusion of people with a disability into the life of the community
- promote the engagement of people who have demonstrated minimal conflict of interest and have acted in the best interest of the advocatee.

Advocacy Standard Indicators

Actions taken by the advocacy agency are consistent with its vision and values statement to promote community inclusion.

The advocacy agency promotes the use of appropriate social networks and informal supports for advocatees.

The advocacy agency promotes the use of community services which are local and/or mainstream.

Ms Spanish said: ‘I always spend time contemplating issues of transfer of meaning, which is time consuming, but I feel that it is necessary so that translations are useful.’

Ms Arabic presented the following revealing story in the legal setting:

Some of the interpreting and or translation may not make sense to the non-English speaker due to problems understanding the concept of the whole message.

For example: an accused person at the police station being interviewed for allegations of rape. The police officer utters the following: ‘We intend to interview you for rape

as a result of allegations put by the victim XY.’ In Lebanon the word rape means sexual intercourse by force and that is penis–vagina penetration and the man has to ejaculate.

The accused man answered ‘No’ and he continued to participate in a record of interview because he did not penetrate her, and in his mind he was innocent and had nothing to worry about.

The allegations did not suggest there was sexual intercourse penis–vagina, but the interpreter cannot tell the police about this difference between the two cultures nor can the interpreter clarify to the suspect.

In order to test whether involvement of translators at the text-writing stage may offer some way of addressing some of the sense-making practices, translators and interpreters were asked whether their translation/interpreting outcomes would improve if they were involved at the text-writing stage or consulted more systematically by public services about effective communication with particular communities. Ms Greek responded:

I don’t necessarily think I should be involved at the writing stage but I do think writing needs to improve and texts written with translation in mind. I have seen my translations published. I just don’t believe anyone actually reads them except other translators!

On the need to be being consulted systematically for better communication with ethnic communities, she said,

I don’t think I am the expert in that area. I could advise on the basics of writing for translation. I think all public service writing training (and I know it exists) should include writing for translation and there should be translators involved in the course design. Communication is a much broader issue and translation is not necessarily the best way to reach some communities. Direct communication in their own language is

often the best way but that is outside the domain of translation as such—or translation is a part thereof.

Ms China said:

Probably more if something is written—particularly if it is meant for the multilingual readers in the community, it would greatly help if it is run past some sort of multilingual/translational focus groups to inform how the ST must structure or express what it intends to convey. Some sort of guideline developed to aid the writing of public service texts meant for translation would also be of great help. I have seen my translation published, and as translators normally feel—there are always places you can improve on. So not completely happy about them.

She went on to clarify:

Not me personally as a translator. However, as stated in the previous question, it would be of great value if some sort of guideline can be developed. In some instances I had to change the whole format of documents to make it meaningful and therefore communicative to the English speaker. For example: a court decision from Iraq in relation to custody and property settlement. The Arabic document was over 2,000 words written on one A4 page with no punctuation. I had to break it down and put information under different headings to clarify the stages in those proceedings.

Ms Spanish also thought that translator involvement at the writing stage would not be necessary: ‘I don’t think I personally would need to be involved at this stage if the writers were good communicators—factoring in mind who their audience will be. Yes, I have seen my translations published.’

Ms Auslan said:

At the moment I know that Government agencies are employing Auslan translation companies to put important information into Auslan. From what I have seen, these

have been well done and culturally appropriate. However, there is a huge range of deaf people in the community and not all are fluent Auslan users, and some require more simple explanations with lots of visuals.

Ms Auslan agreed, stating:

Definitely! As stated above, often Government appointments are complex and demand the greatest skill in interpreting and management.

I know of one example where a paraprofessional was sent to a round table conference of DHS child protective workers, case managers, et cetera, and one deaf client who was a fluent Auslan user, but very fast and became even more difficult to follow as the meeting progressed. The English speaking officers spoke quickly and interrupted each other, not allowing the interpreter to be able to keep up and certainly not allowing the deaf person to contribute as the interpretation was always behind. Only one interpreter was booked for this meeting, which went for over one hour. No decisions could be made as the communication broke down completely. The deaf person went back to their Case Manager and told her she could not understand what was going on and the interpreter did not understand her Auslan anyway.

If the organisers of the meeting had consulted with the Case Manager, or even spoken to the booking agency about the requirements of the job, this could have been avoided.

Don't get me started on Medical and counselling appointments, which can be catastrophic if an appropriate interpreter is not employed.

Police example: A deaf woman wanting to make a statement about family violence was refused an interpreter because she had a 13-year-old son who was fluent in Auslan. When she alerted a support worker to this, the police person in question was called and asked to book a professional interpreter, which was refused. After several

failed attempts this case is now with the Legal Ombudsman. We can only imagine the impact on a child having to interpret an incidence of violence in his own home.

*The training of professionals and NES speakers on the role of translators and interpreters*

There has generally been a consensus that professionals who work with interpreters and translators should receive in-service training on the role of interpreters and translators in public service provision, and there are some government ad hoc initiatives to this end.

However, there is a need to understand how this may help translators and interpreters, and also whether this training should be extended to NES community members, who seem to be left totally out of the equation. The participants were asked, 'How would it help if professionals and NES speakers were provided training on the role of translators and interpreters?'

Ms Greek replied:

It would help a great deal. Clarification of roles means clarification of expectation. Understanding fosters respect and better outcomes.' Ms Italian endorsed this by saying 'Yes, absolutely, that was the point I wanted to make with the above stories. Also, I have the feeling that very young professionals are more aware of our profession. They might have received some sort of training.

Her answer indicates that some of the initiatives, such as the inclusion of 'Working with Diversity' subjects in the curricula of training and educational programs in different disciplines, may be producing some positive results in raising awareness of the role of interpreters and translators.

Ms Spanish said it was not so much an issue in her language, Spanish, but she believed it would be desirable with newer communities settling in Australia, especially refugees.

Ms Lebabon responded:

The non-English speaker would then know that we are not their advocate or their mother and professionals would utilise the service more effectively, therefore achieving better outcomes across both languages, bridging the barrier and treating non-English speakers no less than they would a native speaker.

Ms Auslan said:

HUGELY! Deaf people also need to know about how to access government services and their right to an appropriately accredited and experienced interpreter they can understand. Training would perhaps allow interpreters to think carefully and do prep before accepting and completing government appointments. Also Government officers can achieve their objectives with clients by having a bit of background and so asking for more information.

*What is your understanding of your professional role and status within the public service setting?*

Interpreting and translating, by definition, always takes place between at least two parties who do not share a common language. This multi-party work setting is, as highlighted earlier, probably one of the most distinguishing features of interpreting and translating as a profession. In the public service setting, this means translating and interpreting always take place between public services and community members. This setting leads to questions about the role of translators and interpreters and how they view themselves—are they part of the public services, community members or somewhere in between?

Ms Greek responded that what matters most is how public services view interpreters and translators, rather than how interpreters and translators view themselves. She said: ‘As an interpreter—yes. I see myself as “an extension of public service”. It would help me in my job if others saw me as same and minimise the many conflicts that occur and foster more teamwork (I hope).’ Ms Italian agreed and stated that the status of the interpreter, whether

employed casually, sessionally or full-time, was the same, and even being officially part of the public service did not make much difference, saying, ‘If I think of the in-house interpreter, they are part of the hospital’s service and they experience more or less the same issues.’

Ms China said:

Refer to my answer to Q5 [‘How would it help if professionals and NES speakers were provided training on the role of translators and interpreters?’]. It would be of great benefit to all involved. Interpreter education has hammered enough that we T&I practitioners have to be linguistically and culturally competent. However, the best communication outcome cannot be achieved if our two clients in the communication event do not make any effort, or do not know how to make the communication work the best it could be. It is high time that doctors, nurses, teachers, police, lawyers, et cetera, include training on how to work effectively with an interpreter. With LOTE citizens who may legitimately need T&I services in their daily lives, there may be a need to instill an understanding of the provision of such service and the role of translators and interpreters somewhere into their process of becoming an Australian citizen. I feel they should be brought to the attention that this is a great service the government is providing, and it should not be taken for granted, and they have the responsibility to understand the role of T&I.

Ms China said:

No, I don’t think the people who used my service treat me as an extension of public service. They regard themselves as part of public service. And using this human Google translator helps them complete their duties. I feel I’ve been regarded more as a subordinate role, rather than an equal member in the public service workforce.

In contrast, Ms Spanish believed that, ‘Yes, because the public servants would regard us, interpreters, as peers and professionals in our own right—which we are!’

Ms Arabic said: 'If this [training] is achieved, the only beneficiary would be the professionals themselves. We know our capabilities and our scope but they need training on how to work with interpreters.'

Ms Auslan said:

Yes. Working *with* instead of *for* is always a superior model. If government officers work with interpreters as fellow professionals, then, as said above, effective outcomes are likely. Remember *both* clients need us, not just the NES clients. We are not 'deaf' interpreters (we hear and we use Auslan actually) or 'Arabic' interpreters only, but use English as well for our 'other' clients.'

#### *Thoughts on private translation agencies*

In Australia, increasing government spending on language services and the outsourcing of these services to private agencies from the late 1980s saw a big increase in the number of companies recruiting interpreters or translators on a casual or sub-contractor basis. These private agencies operated in a wide range of languages and acted as booking agencies for the public services. One of the other reasons for this was the diversity of the languages involved. As reported in the Introduction, the DoHS reported having provided language services in approximately 230 languages. A private agency reported (personal correspondence) that on a typical day, they provide interpreters/translators in about 75 languages. This diversity often means that it would be almost impossible for public service agencies to deal with the interpreters/translators directly. Dealing with a single point of contact for all language services appears to be working for public sector agencies.

However, private agencies, despite being the largest employers of interpreters and translators, attract criticism from interpreters and translators about allocation of work, and being responsible for lower pay due to their cut from the fee charged to the government agencies and fierce competition during the tendering process for government contracts.



Ms Greek explained:

I think they are a legitimate business but I have observed the deterioration of our industry while they've been at the wheel over 20 years. Some of the older players know our industry well, but unfortunately this knowledge is not passed down to their employees. Interpreters and translators feel unsupported by the agencies that they depend upon, but who also depend upon them for their business. The scales are tipped too far in accommodating the customer and not supporting their primary resource, the TI, often leading to less than satisfactory outcomes for everyone. I like and prefer working with agencies, but I think they need to lift their game and work with TIs.

Ms Italian had a more positive experience with the private booking agencies:

I, personally, have never had issues with the agencies. When I had problems working with professionals during an assignment, problems I was not responsible for, they supported me, and they didn't let me alone, following up the issues for me. For instance, I was at a hospital for an interview, patient-doctor. The doctor called the patient with his first name. The first name corresponded to the first name of the patient I needed to assist. When I introduced myself to the doctor as the interpreter, I double checked the patient's surname, to be sure it was with the right patient. She treated me with such superficiality, that she didn't even hear my question properly, answering yes. At the end of the story, I assisted another patient with the same name. In the meanwhile, the receptionists couldn't find the interpreter and called the agency, who called me, but, of course, I couldn't get the phone because I was in the middle of the interview. Eventually, the receptionist didn't want to sign me off because I assisted the wrong patient, even though it was not my mistake since the doctor confirmed the name and surname of the patient with me. I called the agency before

leaving the hospital and they said they would have paid me anyway and they would sort things out with the hospital.

On the other hand, there is one thing I want to point out. Every now and then, we receive communications from the agencies about the way we should act when performing our profession. This is embarrassing for them, first of all. The content of the list of 'suggestions' or of 'do and don'ts' is ridiculous. It includes:

- Running late for assignments.
- Arriving late and not advising the agency.
- Not showing up at all and not notifying the agency.
- Not reporting to interpreting offices in hospitals where required.
- Answering mobile phones or texting during the assignment.
- Not waiting outside CALD client homes for arrival of the health care or other staff, before entering the client's home.
- Providing additional input when interpreting and not abiding by general practice.
- Interrupting meetings to feed parking meter.
- Self-promotion by requesting professionals to book you for future assignments.
- Rushing assignments and limiting your availability while on assignment, before completion of the job.
- Returning assignments at short notice, for example, on the day the professional required the service or the previous day.
- Accepting booking requests via email in haste and failing to update and check personal diary, resulting in no-shows on the day.
- Failing to double-check bookings online for accuracy of information.

These reminders are insulting for professional interpreters. Moreover, if things like those happen, it is because agencies use 'ad hoc' interpreters, for the sake of their

wallet and at the expenses of clients A, clients B and the whole category of professional interpreters who have received training and education, also contributing to the de-professionalisation of our profession.

In summary, I can say that they are supportive, generally speaking, but they are the cause, together with the careless attitude of the government, of the main issues in the T&I industry affecting directly professional interpreters and translators.

Ms China simply stated, ‘My experience working with translation agencies is mostly positive. They have highly competent checkers and I normally learn from or engage in meaningful exchanges in the revision stage of each assignment.’

Ms Arabic said:

I was always a good player in chess, but I don’t like Monopoly! The agencies treat us as Monopoly cards, they place us in different jobs at the last minute to suit their needs, to earn more money at the end of the day. For some demanding jobs, I have to be given notice to mentally prepare myself; for example, at the RRT or in mental health, I need to be mentally prepared so I can detach and do a good job for all parties involved, but also to maintain my own sanity in the process. Government agencies staff have better communication skills and their approach is more professional.

Ms Auslan said:

As stated, the organisations I have seen working between English and Auslan such as Sign Language Video Production at Vicdeaf are doing a good job, although translation between Auslan and English is really in its infancy, with not many people having training in this work.

*How do you perceive recognition of public service translation or interpreting as a profession?*

Translating and interpreting is a relatively new profession in the modern sense, although arguably it has been around since the first contact between communities speaking

different languages. This, coupled with an entrenched community perception that translating and interpreting is something anyone who speaks two languages can do, has resulted in a long struggle to get the industry recognised as a profession, although there has been significant progress in conference interpreting and, to some extent, in specialised areas such as legal interpreting. It was, therefore, considered relevant to seek the views of practising interpreters and translators about their recognition as professionals and the appreciation of their services by the recipients of those services.

Overwhelmingly, the responses were that they did not feel recognised as professionals. Ms Spanish responded that recognition was ‘not across the board. It is very subjective; some people, particularly those who speak another language, would think of us as professionals.’

When it comes to appreciation of their services by the recipients of those services, Ms Greek sought to clarify: ‘By whom? Some people say thank you from time to time.’

Ms Italian stated:

Not at all. Very few people we work with are aware of who we are and what we do.

Not only are they unaware, also they treat us as the latest wheel off the cart, as obstacles, as a nuisance, disregarding that without us the communication can’t happen; sometimes discriminating patients with interpreters, also avoiding giving all the explanations they would give to an English speaker.

Nevertheless, I have noticed that young professionals can work with interpreters much better. In some cases, they even tell the interpreter to feel free to ask for clarification if something is not clear enough, making sure that the interpreter is comfortable ... I have the feeling, especially in a specific hospital where RMIT students do their training, that the students have been actually trained to work with interpreters.

Regarding being appreciated for the services she provides, Ms Italian said:

My only reward is the smile and the hugs of patients who appreciate my assistance and the quality of my performances. I must say though, that a few times I have been requested from different hospital clinics. This is a great recognition.

Ms Chinese said: 'Not really. But I must say more and more I can see professionals are starting to realise this is not everyone's cup of tea and it should be regarded as a profession in its own right.'

Ms Spanish said: 'Yes, there are some professionals who at times thank me for making the communication easy, and they tell me I seem to be an experienced person in the area.'

Ms Arabic said: 'This is one of our main concerns; we are not recognised as professionals although we go through extensive formal training and personal professional development to be well equipped to perform our duties.' She added: 'I am well known in the legal fraternity and my work is highly sought by professionals.'

Ms Auslan responded in the negative to the question of she thought PSTI was recognised as a profession. She said:

No, but I do believe that Auslan–English interpreters are appreciated ... perhaps more than spoken language interpreters? SLC, the Vicdeaf agency that I work for, recognise that it is important to send appropriately accredited and experienced interpreters to public service appointments, and my skills are appreciated in that respect. I am often thanked at these appointments, but also make sure that I inform the clients of the level of difficulty of the task and how important it is to have appropriate interpreters booked. Only experienced and NAATI Interpreter Level Accredited interpreters are sent to police, court or DHS appointments.

*The future of the profession*

The Victorian Multicultural Commission Report highlighted a possible future shortage of interpreters in the public service setting due to problems attracting young people into the profession, ageing interpreters and translators, and many practitioners leaving the profession due to low pay rates and employment issues.

All interpreters and translators expressed concern about the prospects of their profession in the future. Ms Greek responded that prospects were

Grim. We are going backwards—prior to 70s with a decline in professionalism.

Already we are seeing hospitals promoting ‘bring a friend who speaks English’. Soon we will see young children interpreting for their parents, same as many of us did in the 1960s and 1970s, because public servants think this is okay and it saves governments money. There is potential for change but it will require collaboration from all concerned.

Ms Italian had a similarly pessimistic view of the profession into the future:

Very dark. Infinite times I have thought about leaving the profession. It’s not professionally rewarding; it’s not economically rewarding, plus I need to argue so often just to perform it, just to have the possibility to do what I’m paid for. Hopefully, the union will get somewhere through the talks with the parties involved in the industry. But, it will take time, not to consider that to have a voice in front of the policy makers we need to be many, and many interpreters are very sceptical in joining the union for many different reasons.

Ms China responded:

Long way to go—if we want to reach equal status as doctors, nurses, accountants, lawyers, et cetera. However, if we look beyond our national borders, we have to say that we still have something to be proud of—internationally, whenever a public

service T&I or national credentialing system is discussed, Australia will more likely than not be hailed as a beacon or something to look up to. This is in no small part due to the good work of all the T&I practitioners. You have to say the biggest winner in all this is the LOTE citizens who enjoy the critical service we provide and the governments who procure our service at ever decreasing rates! We have to continue the struggle of making a case about the human and financial costs of not doing what we are doing, for example, losing babies or wrongly convicting someone due to lack of publicly funded T&I services, so that fair and just recognition and remuneration is deservedly afforded to us.

Ms Spanish's impressions were:

Until better remuneration is attained and people can make a decent living from it, I don't see a solid future where a high standard of professionals can stay in the field. People feel forced to move to other areas of work so that they can make a decent living. The way the agencies assign work on-line at the moment makes life very difficult for interpreters to organise their working day! Some people believe that if they get better qualifications, they stand a better chance of having more work—agencies (the Hotline staff or the people who assign work) do not make any distinction!

Ms Auslan also had a pessimistic view of the current situation of interpreting services and highlighted the link between funding cuts which forces agencies to save money by engaging interpreters at lower accreditation levels or not booking interpreters at all and the potential social cost associated with this:

The future is pretty bleak. The problem in the industry is that the remuneration rate is low ... and with government budget cuts, the first thing to go is often quality services for NES clients. Some agencies do not even attempt to find accredited interpreters at

professional level, because they cost too much! And of course the best interpreters often will not work for the rates offered. Unfortunately, the social cost in the end is so much higher.

### **Reflecting on Data Using Bourdieu's Concepts**

Data from several reports into the industry of translating and interpreting over several decades and, crucially, data from the interviews with seven practising interpreters and translators provide a unique insight into the circumstances of these professionals. Data reveal that, despite translating and interpreting being specifically noted as one of the key means of achieving the objectives of all access and equity policies and strategies in Australian public services, this profession continues to be fragile, with low pay and work conditions, struggling for recognition and respect for the vital service they provide.

As previously noted, among the common traits of a profession are specialized training, the imposition of fees for services rendered, the existence of some sort of professional body or association and a code of ethics (Carr-Saunders, 1928, Tseng, 1992). Most of these conditions apply to translating and interpreting in Australia, although often at a basic level. There is training at the vocational education and higher education levels in a fairly limited number of languages, a professional association has existed for some years, government policies of access and equity recognise the profession, and NAATI exists as a pseudo-registration body. Nevertheless, the establishment of these conditions has not resulted in translators and interpreters enjoying a strong professional recognition in the sectors in which they work (Mikkelsen 2004).

Pierre Bourdieu, although he did not specifically aim at developing traits or characteristics for professions, used notions of field, habitus and capital to analyse the social practices of groups of people and how they then use these to allow entry to social groups to some members of society and exclude others to maintain their symbolic capital (Bourdieu,



1989). Unlike traditional views of the way in which professionalism is acquired, according to Bourdieu's theory of practice, membership of a subjective position within a professional field does not merely rely on having technical knowledge in a certain area, it is acquired through development of certain dispositions and attitudes – habitus – that reflect in the way they think, speak, dress and act. As this extra ability is a socially constituted capacity, it requires one to be exposed to the social environment specific for this group of professionals. Doctors in a hospital environment or lawyers in a court environment are good examples of this. In the Public Service field, however, the same field of power is occupied by professionals from many different professional fields and are therefore jostling to develop and maintain their symbolic capital in competition with other professions. As data from this chapter reveal, Interpreters, a new set of professionals, come into this mix as freelance individuals for brief periods for specific assignments. They do not have the advantage of being in an environment long enough, as a social group, to develop the 'appropriate' dispositions or attitudes sought/required for recognition as a legitimate profession within the Public Service.

### **Summary**

The six individuals interviewed in this chapter were interpreters and translators working with English and Arabic, Auslan, Greek, Italian, Mandarin and Spanish. These individual case studies provide a valuable insight into the circumstances and practices of a key agent—the translator or interpreter—in this field. The participants all provided translating and interpreting services within the public services domain, which covers anything from local councils, hospitals and schools to courts or tribunals, reflecting the wide range of services provided by the government-run or funded organisations or agencies. This presents a challenge for interpreters and translators, as they only spend brief periods in each of these different work environments and then leave, unlike other professionals who remain

permanently in a single environment, enabling them to develop skills and resources for the job they do.

When asked what the significant issues were for them, participant comments generally resembled ‘too many to mention’ or ‘endless’, which reflects the diversity of work settings and dynamics involved in the job, as well as the many real issues that hinder the performance of good, professional translating and interpreting. The main issues mentioned were recognition and respect for their professional role by the public service agencies and their staff, and also, it appears, by the community members who have language barriers.

Current industrial conditions were identified as a significant cause of concern by most of the participants. Public services mostly engage interpreters and translators through private labour hire agencies that provide translators and interpreters they have on their books as sub-contractors or casual employees. The overwhelming view was that private agencies were mostly driven by profit-making at the expense of translators and interpreters and are undercutting each other in pursuit of contracts from government agencies, and passing these cuts on to translators and interpreters. They overwhelmingly highlighted a lack of support from the agencies, who are mostly concerned about keeping their clients—the public services—happy.

## **Chapter Six: Citizens with Language Barriers and Their Experiences**

Chapters 4 and 5 have examined two critical agents -public services agencies and organisations, and professional translators and interpreters engaged in communication in service provision contexts—within the public service field of practice. This chapter focuses on arguably the most important actors in this field—the citizens with language barriers, including speakers of LOTEs and the deaf or hearing impaired. These citizens live, work, get sick, marry, raise families, divorce, travel, pay taxes and are bound by the same laws of the community as everybody else. For all intents and purposes, they are part of the community and national society. However, something is missing: they are not proficient in the common language of the country in which they live, either because of migration or humanitarian settlement in their adult life, or because they did not have access to education, or because they were born with a physical disability and cannot hear or speak auditory languages. Accessing public services by communicating in the language the service providers speak or write, something many in society take for granted, is something these citizens need to ask and negotiate for. Cronin (2006) wrote:

If language differentiates the animal from the human, then denying the utterances of others the status of language-that-can-be-translated is to reduce them to the condition of animals. (p. 67)

This chapter seeks to gain a rare insight into the lives of community members with language barriers, mainly with respect to their communication needs and dealings with public services and the wider community. The lack of research into the circumstances of community members with language barriers was noted by Hale (2010), a researcher in the field of translating and interpreting, who observed that in the triangle linking service provider, interpreter and service recipient (i.e. people with language barriers), ‘the real voices of two of

the participants—the service providers and the interpreters’ are heard, while ‘the other participant—the service recipient—is noticeably missing’. She further noted that almost no research has been done to ‘access their voices’, and called for more research to ‘fill this gap’ (p. 162).

The chapter presents much-needed data on the circumstances of the community members with language barriers, collected through the questionnaire (see Appendix I) and from five selected case studies. The data from the questionnaire were gathered from 130 returned surveys from community members. The data from the case studies were collected from four NES and one deaf community member.

This chapter includes the following sections: Section 6.2, ‘Contextualising the Agent’, presents a definition of citizenship and background on citizens with language barriers; Section 6.3 presents the data from the questionnaire, including evidence on experiences with the use of language services and participation on key democratic processes; and Section 6.4 presents narrative accounts on how these citizens interact with public services. Finally, Section 6.5 summarises the chapter.

### **Contextualising the Agent**

As this study is essentially concerned with the relationship between citizens and government, a brief discussion of what is understood by the term ‘citizenship’ is warranted before presenting the experiences of the citizens who participated in this study. Dictionaries have provided the following definitions:

- A legally recognized subject or national of a state or commonwealth, either native or naturalized (‘Citizen’, n.d., *Oxford Dictionaries*);
- A person who legally belongs to a country and has the rights and protection of that country (‘Citizen’, n.d., *Merriam-Webster*).

A cursory review of literature, however, indicated that defining citizenship is a challenging task. Butcher and Mullard (1993) claimed that this is because citizenship is a 'contested' concept, the meaning of which is open to debate and interpretation.

Ungerson (1992), recognising the different definitions available, drew attention to one aspect in common of all definitions: 'it is always concerned with the relationship between the individual and the state' (p. 143). Beilharz et al. (1992) explained that, chronologically, the nineteenth century involved the struggle for political citizenship (primarily the right to vote), while the twentieth century opened the struggle for social citizenship. Beilharz et al. highlighted the need for concrete action, arguing, '[S]ocial citizenship involves the pursuit not of equality but of the potentially equalising measures, pursued by state or community, that could better enable the participation of all, not just the powerful, in civic and political life' (p. 17).

More recently, since 2000, there have been a number of initiatives within public services relating to engagement and dialogue with the public in general, in the fields of service planning, design and delivery in Australia. These were initiated mainly by the APSC, the ANAO and the DPMC, with the objective of achieving changes that would promote citizen-centric public service provision (Holmes, 2011). The 2004 report *Connecting Government: Whole of Government Responses to Australia's Priority Challenges* declared that the 'dialogue between government and its citizens as stakeholders is a fundamentally important part of our democratic system. The APS has a crucial role in this dialogue' (cited in Holmes, 2011).

In 2009, the Commonwealth Ombudsman published a report on the use of interpreters for the following government services: the Australian Federal Police, the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, Centrelink and the DIAC. The report set

out eight best-practice principles for Australian government agencies when using interpreters, which covered:

- agency policies;
- promoting interpreter services;
- fair, accessible and responsive services;
- the specifics of who can be used as an interpreter;
- staff training;
- good record keeping;
- accessible complaint handling mechanisms; and
- promoting qualified interpreters.

In Victoria, a number of Victorian laws provide responsibilities and rights relating to interpreters. The Victorian Mental Health Act 1986 [section 5] requires mental health services to:

take into account the language needs of clients who are mentally ill; ensure clients are informed of their legal rights under the Act and relevant provisions of the Act are explained in a language that clients are most likely to understand.

The Health Services Act 1988 [section 9(e)] specifies as an objective to ensure that ‘users of health services are provided with sufficient information in appropriate forms and languages to make informed decisions about health care’. The Multicultural Victoria Act 2011 [section 26] requires all Victorian Government departments to report annually on the use of interpreting services and communications in LOTEs.

These initiatives for citizen-centric public services highlight participation. However, participation requires certain skills and capabilities, not just on the part of the public services, but also on the part of the citizens. Holmes (2011) argued that ‘Social exclusion and other deprivations are very likely to discourage many citizens from engagement, especially where

inequalities of power and status prevail' (p. 20). Holmes stated that this exacerbates 'the problem of engagement' so often lamented by those public servants and others. Holmes did not elaborate on why public servants 'lament' the problem of engagement or how this influences practice. With respect to marginalised community members, although Holmes referred to several initiatives that he regards as encouraging signs, he nevertheless acknowledged:

it remains the case that in situations of disadvantage and marginalisation, citizens are even less likely to possess the capabilities—knowledge, skills, dispositions—that would readily enable them to enter into dialogue and sustained deliberation with public servants and other professionals. (Holmes, 2011, p. 20)

With these concerns in mind, this study sought data from citizens with language barriers through a questionnaire and case study narratives. These data are presented in the following two sections. Section 6.3 presents data collected through the questionnaire.

## **Data from the Questionnaire**

### *Demographic information*

Of 200 copies distributed, a total of 130 surveys were returned. For some questions, participants could select more than one answer; and some did not answer all the questions. The distribution of gender among the participants was reasonably balanced, with 47% male participants and 53% female, offering a gender-balanced perspective from the sample of citizens with language barriers. The age distribution was also reasonably balanced, with the under-30 group representing the largest block (34%), followed by the 31–38 group (35%) and the 51+ group (31%).

The overwhelming majority of the sample were relative newcomers to Australia, with 46% reporting that they had lived in Australia for less than five years, and another 27% reporting they had lived in Australia for between five and 10 years. This means that 73% of

the respondents had lived in Australia for less than 10 years, which puts them into the ‘newcomers’ category. The rest of the respondents had been in Australia for a much longer period, with 11% ticking 10–15 years, and another 14% ticking 15–25 years. The proportion of respondents who ticked 25+ years in Australia was just 2%.

The educational qualifications of participants revealed some interesting trends, with 33% of participants having a degree or higher (10% having a postgraduate degree and 23% having an undergraduate degree). When we add the 27% who had completed secondary schooling, which is still a highly respected level of education in many developing countries with limited access to higher education, we are looking at 60% of respondents who were reasonably well educated.

### *Language skills*

The next set of questions related to the respondents’ language skills in both English and their LOTE. To the self-reporting question, ‘How well do you speak English?’, approximately 84% reported having no language proficiency or that they were not confident in English. Responses were spread between ‘Nil’ (18%), ‘Limited’ (40%) and ‘Average’ (26%). Some 15% reported that their English was ‘Good’, and one participant reported an ‘Excellent’ English level.

As reading and writing skills are also important tools of communication in dealing with public services, the respondents were also asked, ‘How well do you read and write in English?’ Results were similar to those for oral skills, with 83% of responses spread between ‘Nil’ (24%), ‘Limited’ (34%) and ‘Average’ (25%). Another 16% reported that they were either ‘Good’ (14%) or ‘Excellent’ (2%). As this was self-reported proficiency, even those who indicated a high level of English proficiency may still face language barriers in certain settings. For example, interpreters may also be required in certain situations for people who self-report that they speak English well, as they may struggle to understand complex health



terms, and stressful or unfamiliar situations may affect patients' ability to communicate effectively (OMAC, State Government Victoria, 2014).

One of the government policy initiatives to manage linguistic diversity and to enable people to become self-sufficient is the teaching of English. Learning English is encouraged through free English classes provided to newcomers to the country. In this context, the respondents were asked whether they had attended English classes in Australia: 70% responded 'Yes' and 30% responded 'No'. Of those who responded 'Yes', 67% had attended for between one and six months, 17% reported attending English classes for seven to 12 months, 8% had attended for between one and two years and another 8% reported attending for a duration longer than two years. In order to understand the major reasons for not attending English classes for longer, the respondents were asked to respond to the question 'If no, why did you not attend English classes in Australia?' A wide range of responses was received, ranging from 'Family commitments' (25%), 'Cost' (21%), 'Work' (34%) and 'Other' (26%). Responses in the 'Other' category included statements such as 'I was homesick and could not concentrate' to 'I chose self-teaching'. Some reported that they learned English in the LOTE country, so they did not need to attend classes in Australia.

After establishing the current profile of the NES background community members with respect to their English proficiency, they were asked, 'Do you think your English speaking, reading and writing skills will significantly improve enough in the next five to 10 years that you will not need any interpreters or translated texts?' To this, 39% responded 'Yes. Definitely', but 61% were not as confident, and responded either 'Not sure' (29%) or 'No, I don't think so' (32%).

With respect to LOTE (see Table 6.1) proficiency in the above skills—speaking, reading and writing—the responses demonstrated, as expected, much higher proficiency levels in all skills, with 94% responding that they spoke their LOTE at a 'Good' or

‘Excellent’ level, and 6% reporting their LOTE speaking skills were ‘Limited’ (2%) or ‘Average’ (4%). Responses for reading and writing skills revealed a significant drop in confidence, with 66% reporting ‘Good’ or ‘Excellent’ skills, and 24% reporting their LOTE reading and writing skills as either ‘Limited’ (15%) or ‘Average’ (9%). Most strikingly, 10% of the respondents reported their LOTE writing skills were ‘Nil’. In other words, 34% of the respondents were not confident in their literacy skills.

Table 6.1

*Languages Other Than English Spoken by Participants*

Arabic, Assyrian, Cantonese, Chaldean, Dari, Farsi, French, Greek, Hebrew, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Mandarin, Pushto, Spanish, Turkish, Urdu

In brief, the participants in this research study represent both sexes equally. They are mostly young or middle-aged and relative newcomers to Australia, with most reporting that they have been living in Australia for less than 10 years. They are reasonably well educated, with just over 60% of all respondents having qualifications ranging from secondary schooling to postgraduate studies. They appear not to be confident with their proficiency in speaking English, with 84% ticking a response in the Nil-Limited-Average zone. The responses for reading and writing skills show a similar level of confidence, with 83% ticking an answer in the Nil-Limited-Average zone. LOTE speaking skills fared much better, as the respondents were mostly recent arrivals to Australia; however, with respect to writing skills, strikingly, 10% of the respondents reported their LOTE writing skills as ‘Nil’, and another 15% reported them as ‘Limited’. In other words, 25% of the respondents were not confident in their literacy skills in LOTE either.

With respect to learning English, the majority had attended English classes (70%), but most of those attended only briefly for one to six months (67%). A variety of reasons for not attending classes in English were given by 44% of the participants, including family

commitments, work, homesickness, cost or that they did not feel they needed it, as they had studied English in the LOTE country. In terms of the participants' expectations of developing sufficient English skills so that they would not need interpreters or translated information in the next five to 10 years, 44% of participants were not sure or did not think their English would improve sufficiently for that.

This accords with the following conclusion of the 1978 Galbally Report:

Even though we have emphasized so heavily the value of teaching English to migrants we accept that there will always be a substantial number in the community who do not understand English. (p. 4)

#### *Communication with public services*

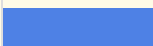





This study essentially investigated the communication between public services and citizens with language barriers within the Access and Equity policies implemented by the government agencies that deliver public services. This stage of the research sought data on how communication transpires between public services and citizens with language barriers in everyday activities.

In particular, it sought answers to the following questions:

- With which public services do people with language barriers have most contact?
- Who initiates the contact?
- What language do agents of these public services use in communicating with people with language barriers?
- What is the most common method of communication used by people with language barriers?
- Are people with language barriers assisted in their formal communications with public services by family members or friends?

- If so, how do they feel about their privacy and the confidentiality of their personal information under such circumstances?

*Chart 1: What is the most common public service you use? (Please circle one answer)*

#	Answer		Response (n:128)	%
1	Health services (e.g., hospitals Community Health Centres etc)		77	60%
2	Education services (e.g., childcare, kinder, school)		34	27%
3	Welfare services (e.g., Centrelink, housing)		47	37%
4	Legal or Justice (e.g., Legal Aid, police, courts)		5	4%
5	Local government services (i.e. local council services)		7	5%
6	Other (please specify)		3	2%

Responses (see Chart 1) show that by far the most frequently accessed public service was health services (60%), which covers hospital-based services and those provided through community health services and funded agencies located in the suburbs. This is significant because, given the number of young and middle-aged respondents, the use of health services is likely to increase with an ageing population who are also likely to also have language barriers. This has implications for planning and budgeting by public services with respect to the demand for language services well into the future. The significance of language services in health settings is recognised in literature. When communication barriers exist, the quality of care for clients diminishes. Some potential consequences of communication barriers are: poor understanding of discharge diagnosis, poor understanding of treatment plans, late presentation of symptoms and reduced likelihood of participating in medical decision making. Victorian community service workers have reported that they ‘are aware of multiple incidences where miscommunication within consultation rooms and hospital settings have had negative impacts on clients’ health outcomes’.

The Australian Psychological Society noted the ways in which quality of care diminishes in the therapeutic context when communication barriers exist:

It is impossible to provide a high quality psychological service without effective communication between the psychologist and the client. Inadequate communication with clients who have low English proficiency limits their ability to access services and also has a profound impact on the quality of treatment received when they do access services.

In psychological settings, communicative demands are complex. Clients are required to communicate difficult experiences and to discuss interpersonal relationships. In the case of refugees, extremely sensitive issues of torture and trauma are also likely to be raised in a psychological context. 'In the presence of a thought disorder, delirium, dementia, anxiety or depression, the capacity to communicate in a second language is further impaired'.

The second most commonly accessed service category (37%) is the welfare services, primarily social security and human services. Welfare services play a significant role in achieving equality in a country (Watts, 1987). With respect to society in general, not just people with language barriers, Thompson (1998) pointed to the vulnerability of groups accessing health and welfare services, asserting:

The users of health and welfare services are often from disadvantaged groups, and the fact that they are in need of such services may disadvantage them further. That is, the illness, crisis, loss or other problem that brought them into contact with a professional worker is likely to make them more vulnerable than would otherwise be the case. (p. 2)

Thompson explained that the reason for this is the power difference between the public servant at the service point and the service user, and the potential this creates for abuse or misuse of power, mostly inadvertently: '[T]he misuse of power, stemming from a lack of awareness and understanding, is unfortunately all too prevalent' (p. 2).

*Chart 2: Who initiates the interaction between you and the public services?*

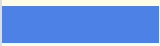

#	Answer		Response (N:126)	%
1	I contact the public service when I need a service		89	71%
2	Public service contacts me when they have something to tell me		47	37%

Chart 2 shows how the initial contact is made between public services and citizens with language barriers. The interaction with public services appears to be initiated in a bottom-up approach, with community members approaching the service when they need it (71%); this pattern is likely not so different from that among community members with no language barriers. It may, however, have implications depending on ease of access to public services, and whether or how access is incorporated into the public service provision. Using an analogy with physical disability, if a wheelchair-bound community member wanted to access a public service, it would be reasonable to expect that access should be facilitated by building a ramp or providing other arrangements (e.g., a disabled car park near the entrance, wider sliding doors) so that the wheelchair-bound community member would be able to initiate contact with the public services as needs arise.

*Chart 3: In which language do public services (e.g., welfare, Centrelink, employment agency, housing, hospital, childcare, schools, police, courts etc.) contact you?*



#	Answer		Response	%
1	English		109	88%
2	LOTE		15	12%
	Total		124	100%

Chart 3 shows that 88% of respondents with some language difficulties reported that their interactions were almost exclusively in English – public service centric, not client-

centric. In other words, citizens with language barriers must negotiate the language barrier from the very first contact. Returning to the analogy with the wheelchair-bound community member, it is as if this person were obliged to negotiate an entrance without a ramp or revolving door to gain access to the public service. Poor or insufficient practices of communication with people with language barriers was also recognised in the Inquiry Report (2012):

Poor agency communication with CALD communities and clients was frequently cited as a central feature in lack of agency responsiveness. Contributors complained of lack of effective engagement strategies, poor or ineffective approaches to use of languages other than English in websites and written material, and also insufficient use of interpreters.

The problems underlying this variable performance were seen as flowing from the lack of clarity of policy and its application, lack of clarity of what agencies are required to do, weak whole-of-government guidelines supporting Access and Equity action and lack of commitment arising from insufficient governance and accountability arrangements.

*Chart 4: How do you mostly communicate with public services?*


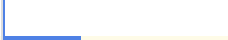

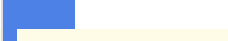

#	Answer		Response (N = 130)	%
1	Interpreters		55	42%
2	Translated letters or information		1	1%
3	Family and friends		45	35%
4	I manage with my limited English		41	32%
5	Other (please specify)		8	6%

Chart 4 shows the communication methods commonly used by community members to negotiate language barriers between themselves and the public services. The most commonly used method, the data show, is interpreters. It is not clear, however, whether the

respondents who did not choose interpreters really preferred not to use interpreters, or whether the service was not available to them. The benefits of communication through interpreters, and the risks of not doing so, especially in critical services such as health, are well documented in literature (Bird, 2010; Vanstone, 2012):

A number of preventable adverse events have occurred in Australia where qualified interpreters were not engaged, including a 35-year-old Afghan refugee who died and two clients who had procedures undertaken on incorrect body parts. (Bird, 2010, p. 241)

The next most frequently used method in communicating with public services is through assistance from family members and friends (35%). It is commonly accepted by all stakeholders in this setting that this is not good practice; however, this does not prevent it from being commonly practiced, for reasons of convenience to both service providers and service users, or where interpreters are unavailable for the language at hand for a variety of reasons. For example, arranging an interpreter may mean a delay, which may not suit either the community member or the public service; otherwise, the cost involved for many public services may be a deterrent.

Chan (1997, p. 104) also reported that use of English-speaking friends or relatives was the most common method employed by police officers if an interpreter was not available. Australian Red Cross Guide 'Communicating in Recovery' (2010) makes the following recommendation for communication with members of CALD communities during disaster recovery, 'Will you require translations services? If so, what translation services are available in the area? It may be possible to use a member of the group who speaks English as a translator' (p. 103)

In the health setting, a Report by Foundation House (Vanstone, 2012) revealed that in Australian hospitals, family and friends were used as interpreters anywhere from 20%–61.5%



of the time, and in one Melbourne hospital, 71% of health practitioners reported that they would use a client's family and friends (Vanstone, 2012). These are significant figures, and given that the most commonly accessed areas of public services are health and welfare services, the use of friends and family members to assist with communication is problematic in two significant ways.

First, there is the issue of competence. Medical terminology can be complex and can present challenges for even ordinary citizens with no language barriers. Winkelman (2009) described medical terminology to be often hard to understand by patients, mainly due to the use of common terms to mean different things or imply different processes, which often leaves patients confused, because the language used by health professionals is designed to communicate with other health professionals, not with clients. Communication problems, Winkelman argued, result in misdiagnosis and low rates of compliance.

In an example of the potential consequences of using family or friends as interpreters, a recent court ruling in NSW found a surgeon and a hospital liable for damages for conveying the diagnosis of a medical condition and the risks of a medical procedure to treat the condition to a patient with limited English through her friend, who also had limited English. This significant ruling is quoted below:

The New South Wales District Court held that a surgeon and hospital were negligent in failing to properly inform a non-English speaking patient of the risks of surgery in terms she understood.

Sandra George underwent surgery at St Vincent's Sydney to remove a benign tumour at the base of her skull. During the operation Mrs George's facial nerve was inadvertently severed, causing paralysis of the right side of her face. Mrs George alleged that the defendants were negligent in failing to warn her of a risk of injury to her facial nerve.

The Court found that Mrs George had consented to the surgery in the mistaken belief that she had a cancerous tumour in her brain which required surgical removal. The Court accepted that Mrs George would not have consented to the procedure had she known the tumour was benign and understood the associated risks of surgery.

Although Mrs George requested the services of a trained interpreter, she was initially informed of her diagnosis and options through the assistance of a friend who had accompanied her to the appointment and who also had a limited understanding of English.

The Court acknowledged that language difficulties have real potential to cause fundamental misunderstandings in the course of doctor/patient communication.

It found there was no reliable evidence that Mrs George had understood what had been explained to her at a number of pre-operative consultations in relation to obtaining her informed consent to the surgery. The Court awarded Mrs George \$330,999.85 in damages. (24 February 2015 – *George v Biggs* – [2015] NSWDC 11)

McAllister and Street (2005) noted that, apart from breaching many health institution policies, there may be other problems with using family members as interpreters. There are risks that family members will:

- not understand professional terminology nor have the vocabulary for these concepts in the other language;
- censor, misunderstand, or even deliberately mistranslate what they interpret, or refrain from interpreting all of what you or the patient says;
- take over from you or exclude one party from the interaction, perhaps providing a summary of what they believe you want or need to know. (p. 245)

Another major concern arising from the use of friends and family members for communication relates to the implications for the privacy and confidentiality of the service

users' information relating to their health or personal welfare needs. Information of this type may carry a lot of social stigma. By law, every citizen is entitled to have their privacy respected and the confidentiality of their personal information protected. Data on this issue of confidentiality was explicitly sought in a separate question asked of participants (see Chart 5).

The third most common method of communication, responses show, was that participants chose to manage on their own with their limited English (46%). This finding also points to potential risks, given that health services are the most common public services accessed, as reported by respondents. The first question for practitioners to ask would be who assesses the client's English proficiency, and using which assessment tools, to determine that it is sufficient for the purposes of the interaction. The following is one recommendation given to public servants on how to assess clients' language proficiency:

Ask the client simple questions. If they are having difficulty, they need an interpreter ... ask the client to spell out their address or say their date of birth—this can indicate both proficiency in spoken English and literacy level. (Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health, 2005)

Common sense tells us that this level of proficiency would hardly be sufficient to comprehend and respond to medical language, as mentioned earlier (Winkelman, 2009). In addition to the NSW court ruling quoted above, there have been other reported cases of misunderstanding experienced by clients with limited English. A Foundation House report (Vanstone, 2012) listed 'inaccurate assessment of English language proficiency' as one of the factors that led to people with language barriers being deprived of access to qualified interpreters.

As alluded to above, with respect to using family and friends for communication with public services, another important consideration in addition to issues of competency to

undertake the task is to do with privacy and confidentiality. In Australia, citizens' privacy is protected primarily by the Federal Privacy Act (1988):

Some states and territories, including Victoria, also have information privacy legislation ... In Victoria, the Information Privacy Act (2000) applies to the management of all personal information except health information in the Victorian public sector [including Victorian Government agencies, statutory bodies and local councils]. The Health Records Act 2001 came into effect on 1 July 2002. Where the federal PA 1988 does not apply, the HRA 2001 does apply to personal health information held in the public and private sectors. (Fitzroy Legal Centre Law Hand Book)

*Chart 5: If you get help from family/friends, do you think your privacy/confidentiality is compromised?*

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Not at all	32	26%
2	Sometimes	73	58%
3	Always	20	16%
	Total	125	100%

The question 'If you get help from family or friends, do you think your privacy or confidentiality is compromised?' (Chart 5) sought data about how citizens with language barriers feel about having a family member or friend present in an interview or consultation to help with communication. Responses revealed some striking data, with 16% responding 'Always', and a majority (58%) responding 'Sometimes'. In other words, 74% of participants are not in fact always comfortable with sharing their information or details with a family or friend, although they may agree to have them there to help them communicate, for example, with a health professional or a welfare professional.

McAllister and Street (2005) observed that people may be reluctant to disclose sensitive or personal information in front of people they know. This would have implications for the accuracy of information obtained by the professionals, as a person who is concerned about their privacy or confidentiality may feel powerless to give information openly, and manage this by not being fully frank about things or withholding information from the health or welfare professional, leading to ‘incomplete or inaccurate information’ (McAllister & Street, 2005, p. 245). The protection of privacy and confidentiality, which most people can take for granted when they deal with a public service agency or agents, is therefore not accessible, at least sometimes, to citizens with language barriers who have to rely on others to help them communicate. This has implications for the implementation of the privacy and confidentiality Acts and Regulations by public service agencies that allow such practices to occur. It is also in breach of Article 17 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976):

1. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation.
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

People who allow their family and friends to help them with communication may consent to this arrangement, or even expect and insist that they should help them. In other words, they may be complicit in this arrangement. The findings from this survey question, however, reveal these people may still have concerns, which they ignore for the sake of having the language assistance necessary to access a critical service. This points to a serious vulnerability arising from this arrangement.

### *Experience with use of language services*

As discussed in the previous chapter, the need for language services to enable people with language barriers to access public services and the role of government in facilitating this was recognised in Australia as early as the 1970s (Galbally, 1978). At present, language services are provided by government agencies such as the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), along with many private agencies acting as labour hire firms, providing services funded by government agencies through local tenders or contracts.

In the previous section, it was revealed that 42% of respondents indicated that they mostly communicated with public services through interpreters (Chart 4). This section presents data on the experiences of citizens with language barriers in their interactions with public services through language services such as interpreting and translating.

*Chart 6: Do you find quality of language services (e.g., interpreters or translated information) satisfactory?*

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Very Satisfied	19	15%
2	Satisfied	56	45%
3	Not sure	40	32%
4	Dissatisfied	9	7%
5	Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
	Total	124	100%

When asked ‘Do you find quality of language services, such as interpreters or translated information, satisfactory?’, 60% of respondents responded that they had had a positive experience, with 56 respondents indicating ‘Satisfied’ (45%) and another 19 indicating ‘Very satisfied’ (15%). However, a very significant section of the respondents (32%) indicated that they were ‘Not sure’ about this question. Only a very small number of respondents (7%) responded that they were ‘Dissatisfied’. It was beyond the scope of this study to investigate the reasons for this dissatisfaction; however, given that a significant

number of respondents either were not sure about the service quality or were dissatisfied, further research on the experiences of people with language barriers in using interpreting and translating services is warranted.

*Chart 7: Do you find translated letters, information sheets or brochures helpful?*

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	69	55%
2	Not sure	32	26%
3	No	24	19%
	Total	125	100%

The participants were also surveyed on whether they found translated letters, information or brochures helpful (Chart 7): 55% answered 'Yes'. However, it was significant that 26% said they were 'Not sure', and 19% responded 'No'. Issues regarding the quality of translations can be investigated from a number of angles. One of these angles is to explore what the users of interpreting and translation expect from the interpreters or translators, because the ways in which interpreters and translators professionally assess quality generally focus on transfer issues, such as accuracy, pronunciation, additions or omissions, not so much on meeting the expectations of the users.

Having said this, the reasons for the participants' experiences with translated information and what they perceive as affecting quality are beyond the scope of this study. This is an area that merits further research, given the lack of literature on the subject. Certainly, any investigation of quality would need to take into account what the users of the professional service expect; this aspect was investigated in this study, as shown in Chart 8.

*Chart 8: What do you expect from interpreters? (multiple answers allowed)*

#	Answer	Response	%
1	To help me communicate with public services	102	78%
2	To give me advice	10	8%
3	To be an advocate for me	10	8%
4	To support me when I deal with public services	26	20%
5	Other (please specify):	7	5%

Responses show (Chart 8) that almost eight out of ten participants stated that they expected interpreters to help them communicate with public services, which is in line with the stated purpose of such a service. Other responses, however small in number, are significant, as they include functions beyond or even in conflict with the purpose and role of interpreting. For example, an expectation of ‘support in dealing with public services’ (20%) is in direct conflict with the professional role of an interpreter as a communication method. The support should come from the public service, not from the interpreters. When community members with language barriers perceive that the interpreter is not supporting them, this may lead to quality concerns on their part. These responses, other than Response 1, are also revealing in that they could indicate the needs of community members with language barriers in dealing with public services, such as bilingual advice, advocacy and support.

#### *Participation in the wider community and democratic life*

The questions up to this point have sought to elicit data on how community members with language barriers deal with communication issues in their interactions with various public services. This section provides data on broader issues about public participation and engagement.

Socialisation has been identified as a significant tool in developing skills, knowledge and dispositions essential to developing the capabilities to effectively engage with public services (Holmes, 2011). The following three questions relate to the investigation of this



aspect. One aspect of socialisation is participation beyond the immediate family and ethnic community. Participation in the wider community among the participants (Chart 9) was very low, with 54% indicating that they never or rarely participated. A significant 25% said they did so only sometimes. This echoes a finding by Colic-Peisker (2002), who asserted:

Because of the language barrier, this group of migrants lived largely within an ‘ethnic bubble’. This ethnic community (clubs, neighbourhoods, extended families) was an island of the familiar world in the ocean of incomprehensible, (sub)urban, English speaking society.

Hawtin and Kettle (2000) wrote:

Social inclusionary policies, therefore, are not possible unless residents not only feel safe, secure and comfortable but also feel that they belong, have ownership of what is going on, feel proud of where they live, do not feel oppressed and feel able to control their living environment. (p. 122)

*Chart 9: Do you participate in social/cultural, sports or special interest clubs or groups (including religious events/activities where English is spoken)?*

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Never	43	33%
2	Rarely	27	21%
3	Sometimes	32	25%
4	Often	11	9%
5	Always	16	12%
	Total	129	100%

Engagement with public services is a more formal method of socialisation. One of the common methods of formal engagement is consultation by public services with the citizens (Holmes, 2011). This consultation refers to seeking feedback on important issues that affect the community members.

The blueprint *Ahead of the Game: Blueprint for Reform of Australian Government Administration* declared, under the sub-heading ‘Creating more open government’, that the APS will:

- Enable citizens to collaborate with government in policy and service design.
- Develop and implement new approaches to collaboration and consultation with citizens on policy and service delivery issues.
- Make public sector data available to the wider public in a manner consistent with privacy principles.
- Conduct a survey of citizens’ views on their satisfaction with government programs, services and regulation to inform government business. (cited in Holmes, 2011)

The question asked of respondents about their experiences of consultation are shown in Chart 10. The responses paint a bleak picture, with 64% of respondents reporting that they had never been consulted, either in writing or orally, and another 28% reporting that they were only sometimes consulted.

*Chart 10: Do you ever get consulted by public services including city councils about any changes, new plans, new policies or services in writing or verbally?*

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Not at all	82	64%
2	Sometimes	36	28%
3	Always	11	9%
	Total	129	100%

Percy-Smith (2000) argued:

as all the main political parties increasingly compete for the centre ground in politics, it could be argued that while the socially excluded are increasingly the focus of policy

interventions, they are at the same time denied an effective political voice in the development of those policy interventions. (p. 162)

Based the data yielded from this research, this observation reflects the current situation in Australia in 2015. Butcher and Mullard (1993) reminded us that ‘strengthening democracy is not easy; it means inventing, and then putting into place, the institutional structures and processes through which ordinary citizens can gain a voice and exercise influence’ (p. 234). Data reveal this is hardly the case for people with language barriers in Australia.

*Chart 11: Do you vote in federal, state and local elections?*

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Not at all	60	47%
2	Sometimes	7	5%
3	Always	62	48%
	Total	129	100%

Cavaye (2004) asserted that ‘the most basic form of citizen participation is simply casting vote’ (p. 4). In Australia, voting is compulsory. Citizens in every society are unequal in many ways. But democracy is commonly understood to entail a substantial degree of political equality, even in the face of social and economic inequalities. In relation to opportunities to contribute to public debate on government policies and to participate in democratic life, participants were asked, ‘Do you vote in federal, state and council elections?’ Most strikingly, 53% of participants either responded that they voted ‘Not at all’ (47%) or ‘Sometimes’ (5%). Although the questionnaire did not ask for information on their eligibility to vote, the proportion of respondents who did not vote at all is still significant, and should present a cause of concern for governments.

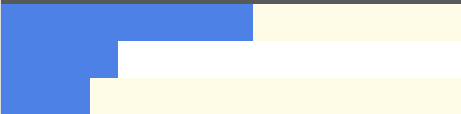
This finding is consistent with those from previous studies that show low rates of participation in elections by ethnic minorities. Anwar (1994, p. 24) found, in a survey, that the percentage of ethnic group members who did not register to vote was 24%, as opposed to 6% among Anglo-background groups. Among various reasons for this, Anwar listed lack of familiarity with the political processes, language difficulties, general alienation and issues with the policies of electoral offices, which may not be accessible by multicultural groups.

Percy-Smith (2000) listed at least four categories of people who do not participate in political life in their communities. These include those who are formally excluded due to their residency status (e.g., people on temporary visas, asylum seekers); those who are effectively excluded, (e.g., people whose disabilities prevent them from attending meetings, or those who are unable to read election communications); those who exclude themselves (e.g., by making a conscious decision to do so because they do not see the benefit in participating, as they don't like the alternatives); and finally, those who also exclude themselves for reasons such as lack of information, knowledge and understanding of politics, political processes and the opportunities for participation; participation not being a part of their everyday experience or expectations; alienation from political institutions and processes; or not feeling that they have a stake in society and, therefore, the way it is governed. (p. 150)

Respondents indicated that language was a significant barrier stopping them from participating in public debates and policy discussions at all levels of government, with 55% responding positively. This was a factor picked up by Anwar (1994). However, language barrier alone was clearly not the only barrier excluding people from voting. When asked if they would have contributed to public debates and processes even if language services facilitated this engagement, 45% ticked either 'No' or 'Unsure'. This may be an indication of reasons beyond an immediate language barrier, and may involve some of the issues that Percy-Smith (2000) lists in Group Four of her classification of people who do not participate

in political processes. The barriers to participation in the political process, specifically in elections, by people from ethnic groups is beyond the scope of this study, and warrants further, more dedicated scrutiny.

*Chart 12: If language were not a barrier, would you have contributed to public debates and policies at councils, state or federal government levels?*

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		56	55%
2	Not sure		26	25%
3	No		20	20%
	Total		102	100%

The final question in the survey invited participants to share any other views or further information on the topics covered so far in the survey. The number of responses for this question was limited. One comment offered was:

There should be specialised interpreters for each field like law, public service, medical and more, as many interpreters are not competent with the jobs they do and do not properly explain topics that have been discussed with certain clients.

This highlights a need for specialisation in interpreting in common domains, such as legal, medical and public services. Australia currently has a generalist interpreter accreditation system managed by NAATI, which means that when an interpreter gains accreditation, it qualifies them to work in any field. This is different from the UK model, where interpreter accreditation is divided into specialist fields such as legal, medical and public service.

## **Stories of People with Language Barriers**

In order to gain insight into the ways in which community members with language barriers interact with the public services and the broader public, individual case studies were conducted through observations and interviews. These interviews were conducted by

bilingual speakers of English and the languages outlined in Table 6.1. Responses were recorded in English. The questions asked in these interviews were open-ended, so that a natural account of life as the participants experienced it could be obtained.

The profile information for all selected cases is detailed in Section 3 (Profile for Research Samples). Occasional elaborations of that profile information are provided in this section.

*Mr A and Mrs B*

A and B are an old couple living in a suburb of Melbourne. A is 85 years old and B is 75 years old. They are both pensioners and live in a house they are renting. They do not speak a word of English. They are primary educated and speak Turkish at home. Their main interaction is with their children, who all have their own families and their own children. Although the children help as much as they can, in their daily lives, A and B have to interact with the public services and the wider community, although their immediate neighbourhood are all Turkish-speaking like themselves.

When the researcher asked an open-ended question, ‘Who do you interact with in everyday life and how do you manage your daily tasks such as work, shopping, health with no or limited English skills?’, this is how they responded:

**A:** I am getting old and with old age comes the problems. I have a weak heart, cataracts in both eyes, hearing loss and very bad arthritis in my knees. I have medical appointments almost every week. There are many medications that I have to take and some are very important for my health and there are instructions to follow. Although my children accompany me to the medical appointments, they are not always around because of their family and work commitments. We sometimes get medical professionals such as a district nurse, council staff, utility service representatives, salespeople cold-calling, men in dark suits come to the door and say things in English

and look at us angrily and leave a phone number with their name. My son, the youngest one, says they are debt collectors looking for him. We communicate with them or try to communicate with them. They repeat things many times and show us letters or medicine packaging or business cards. We try to guess what they are saying and nod yes or no. Sometimes they leave us some letters or leaflets and some other times they get us to sign some forms and letters, which I can barely see, let alone read. I remember, one of our neighbours had a noisy rooster that woke everyone up at 4am every morning. One day, a neighbour told me in Turkish that she made a complaint to the council. One day, an official-looking man came to my backyard. He tried to look over the fence to see the neighbour's backyard. I think he was looking for the rooster to catch and take away, because I could only tell from his gestures.

I try to do my own banking. I hand my card to the bank teller and indicate how much I need in writing or with my fingers. If I can't go to the bank branch, there is a Turkish-speaking girl working in the chemist. I give her my bankcard and password and she withdraws money for me from the ATM machine outside the chemist. Sometimes some strangers also helped me. My children told me not to do it.

On one occasion we even went to court because the previous real estate agent wanted to keep the bond money we paid them for the rented unit because they claimed we damaged the kitchen. It was a daunting place in a grey building in the city, very formal. There was no interpreter, but my son was with us. He told us that the judge looked at the photos of the kitchen and did not see any damage so she dismissed the landlord's claim. We won. The real estate agent returned our money.

**B:** We have to look after ourselves. We cannot always call the children to help. We have some neighbours who have no children or relations who can help at all. So people must find a way to manage by themselves. We live here in this country. There

are so many tasks to manage to keep the house running, you can't always find someone to help you.

I had a cancer diagnosis two years ago. I had surgery and they removed the cancer. A nurse visited me at home and gave me information about cancer but it was all in English. She said, children or neighbours can read it to you. How can I find anyone to read it to me? Everyone is busy. Sometimes I feel my children do not tell me everything they read because they don't want me to get upset, but I want to know everything because I am scared of cancer. I also have diabetes and blood pressure problems. I go to many medical appointments for my eyes, kidneys, to get my nails cut by a professional and also some women's conditions.

We spend most of our time in our garden tending our flowers and vegetable patches. You don't need to speak to anyone when you are in the garden. You can't speak to the plants and flowers either. About two years ago, it did not rain much. Children told us there were water restrictions about watering gardens but nothing in detail. A car stopped once and the man in the car shouted something to me when I was watering my front lawn but I didn't understand what he was saying. When I told my son about it, he said maybe he was telling you that you were not supposed to water your plants because of water restrictions.

When we get mail, we keep them until we get the children to read them. On a few occasions we were too late to hand in a form for our pension and missed the deadline because we could not see the children quick enough. Then it meant going to the Centrelink office in person. Sometimes I make inquiries with Centrelink using telephone interpreting service but it takes a lot of time. They keep us on hold. I don't know what we would do if there was an emergency. We would call the children, I think, because we don't know where else to contact and how to contact.



*Comments on Mr A and Mrs B*

A quick look at A and B's account of their daily lives and interactions identifies a number of important aspects. One is the range of topics and public and private agencies they have to deal with. A brief list would include:

- local government agencies, including council by-laws officers;
- state government agencies, such as the Residential Tenancies Tribunal, Department of Infrastructure, medical services such as hospitals, specialists, visiting nurses, allied health services, podiatrists, dieticians, optometrists and social workers;
- Federal Government agencies, such as Centrelink and aged care services;
- private companies, such as banks, utility services, debt collection agencies and real-estate agencies.

Their interaction with all of these public agencies and private organisations is often not voluntary. They must interact to maintain their independent lifestyles, their privacy and self-esteem. This interaction takes place in English for a number of reasons:

- English is the common language of the society in which they live;
- Most government services do not take into account citizens with language barriers;
- There are logistical limitations on language services—that is, interpreters or translated information is not always available or accessible;
- The nature and range of topics and the agencies and individuals involved.

*Mr C*

Mr C is a 37-year-old male. He arrived in Australia as a sponsored spouse.

In response to the general questions, 'Can you tell me about your life in Australia? How did you come to live here? Who do you interact with in everyday life and how do you manage your daily tasks such as work, shopping and health with no or limited English skills?' he said:

**C:** I have been here for 13 years now. Before I arrived in Australia, I didn't even know where it was. My then-wife was born in Australia and a distant relative and our families introduced us and we got married within a couple of months. I completed high school back in my country. I learned English at school but it was really very basic and some years, we did not even have an English teacher as I lived in a small town and not many teachers wanted to work in small towns. When I arrived, I did English classes for only four weeks. Then I started working for my then-wife's family business—a take-away shop. I had to work because I borrowed money from my family when coming to Australia and my then-wife's parents were expecting me to contribute to the family business as I was a cook. I did not have time to learn English in a school as I was working almost 12 hours a day for six days a week.

My marriage then turned sour and problems started with my wife, who was born and educated here, and her parents, who were very demanding. We got separated after a physical confrontation with her father. Police were involved. I went to the police station and was interviewed. The police told me to leave the house for a few days I shared with my wife, although the title was in our joint names. Then my wife went to the court for an intervention order to get me out of the house permanently. The court issued an intervention order for two years and told me not to go near the house. I did not have any other relatives. So I moved in with a friend for a few days and then rented a room with others.

My wife withdrew her sponsorship as a spouse. Then the immigration department sent me a letter which my wife's friend handed to me. My friends told me that my visa had been cancelled and told me I had to leave the country. I saw a lawyer and went to the Migration Review Tribunal. The Tribunal listened to my story and looked at the evidence given to my lawyer and decided that I could stay in Australia. In the

meantime, my wife applied for divorce and I was sent many documents in English by her lawyer. I saw a lawyer who helped me prepare documents and sign. We divorced. Lawyers sometimes arranged for an interpreter when we had to sign something but mostly I had to take a friend with me to explain things.

I then kept working for a take-away shop in the kitchen with others who spoke my language. I then went back to my home country and married again. I sponsored my new wife. She arrived within a year. She does not speak much English either, although she completed an associate degree in bookkeeping, and could not go to free English classes for long because she fell pregnant soon after she arrived. Many nurses and social workers visited her at home and there were also medical appointments at the women's hospital. The baby was born a little premature and had some problems. We had many nurses and others visiting us for a few years. They gave us lots of information but they were all in English and told us to get friends to read them for us. At home we speak our mother tongue only. If we get letters or notices from government, we usually ask our neighbour or someone from my work to read them for us. Our main contacts are nurses and other government staff who visit us about the care of our daughter, who is still struggling with speaking and moving. They sometimes come with an interpreter, sometimes not. My wife is pregnant again with our second child. I work long hours because we have a big mortgage. Everyone at work, including customers, are mostly from the same language background. We only watch satellite TV in my language and hang around with friends and colleagues who speak our language. Our children will learn English as they grow up but I am not sure how much we can learn.

*Comments on Mr C*

Mr C came to Australia as a result of an arranged marriage with a woman who was a distant relation. Although he had some contact with the English language schools initially, he had to work for financial reasons and also as an expectation from his in-laws, who were running their own business, a take-away shop. He had to stop English classes because of long work hours. English was not so essential in his immediate work environment, as he was mostly working in the kitchen as a cook with other colleagues who could speak his ethnic language, and the business owners were his in-laws. In this period, his social contacts were limited to his immediate family and work environments. Any contact with agencies such as the immigration department or language schools was usually mediated by his wife. However, when his marriage broke down, he had to deal with government agencies such as police, legal aid departments, tribunals and courts directly, as his disputes were with the people who were closest to him, being his wife and her family. His contact with the government agencies appears to have been facilitated by friends who could speak English and interpreters in more formal settings, such as police interviews and tribunal and court hearings. Written correspondence appears to be almost invariably in English, and he had to seek help from others around him who could read and write in English, disclosing many private and confidential details in this process, as he needed to understand the contents of the letters and respond as needed.

When he remarried, his second wife was overseas and could not speak English. He sponsored her through migration agents who could speak his language. His wife appears to have stopped English classes due to pregnancy. They had extensive contact with the Royal Women's Hospital and other local services, such as social workers. Later on, when his wife had a premature baby, it appears that more government services such as district nurses and early childhood development professionals were involved. Although services seem to have

been using interpreting services, most of the written information and advice appears to have been provided in English, and the recipients had to ask others to explain the content of the letters.

Returning to English classes appears unlikely for Mr C, as he has to work long hours to pay off a mortgage and his wife has fallen pregnant with their second child. Their social contacts seem to be limited to colleagues and friends who speak the same language as they do. TV and radio, which are the main modes of getting news about local and international affairs, are also in their language, not in English.

*Mrs D*

Mrs D is a 42-year old female who migrated to Australia 17 years ago from Lebanon.

In response to the general questions, ‘Can you tell me about your life in Australia? Who do you interact with in everyday life and how do you manage your daily tasks such as work, shopping, health with limited or no English skills?’, she replied:

I didn’t speak English at all when I arrived in this country. I was lucky that my family was supportive and I was able to go to English classes to learn enough English to find a job.

I took English classes and found a job. I continued to study English at the same time to find better jobs and did a Certificate IV, Certificate III in business management, and then I did a hairdresser and beautician course. When my family members started a pizza shop, I worked for the family business as a pizza maker for seven years.

I believe my English speaking skills are sufficient for everyday things, for example, doing my shopping and speaking with my son’s teachers in parent–teacher interviews or school events. But I still don’t feel confident in many other places, official places. I experience difficulties dealing with government offices and some private companies or agencies. Would you believe that I struggle to communicate with gas or electricity

companies if I have a dispute about a bill or connection, et cetera? I get nervous and sometimes miss some words that they say. They speak very fast. I remember hanging up on them a number of times. Sometimes I felt the officers on the other end hung up on me too, at least that's how it felt. I need a phone interpreter when I call Centrelink, I request an interpreter at hospitals and I always had an Arabic interpreter when I went to court for my family matters.

I usually rely on family members to make phone call inquiries with community agencies and government departments. But this usually means I need to ask one of my brothers or sisters to arrange a time with me, and depending on when they are available, I may have to wait for days sometimes. I feel that my freedom is restricted and dependant on others' convenience.

I am a 42-year-old woman. I have raised three children and I have a clear view of the world and the future. I am confident in what I can do. I have always worked when children were old enough. Yet I am dependent on others because my language skills are not always sufficient. Would it help if interpreter services or translated information was available? Yes. Definitely. I would like to be able to manage my own affairs, my time, but due to the language barrier this is not possible. Seeking help from friends and family members makes me feel exposed and hopeless at times.

*Comments on Mrs D*

Mrs D followed the routine many migrants go through, arriving in Australia, receiving support from family and friends, learning the language and finding a job. She did not abandon training as soon as she found a job, but continued to study to get other skills that may improve her chances of getting a better job and pay. Typically, in many ethnic communities, a family business employs and is supported by most family members. Mrs D spent long years in the family business. Her comments on her English skills and

communication needs are very interesting and revealing, in that she is, despite English classes and other vocational studies, still not confident enough with what sounds like the ‘officialese’ of government departments such as Centrelink, as well as more formal settings such as courts, and, interestingly, even with utility companies. Mrs D requires the assistance of family members for interacting with these by phone or face-to-face.

A recent court action against an energy company in Australia found, in one instance, a sales representative continued to negotiate with a consumer who was a native Tamil speaker after being told they had difficulty understanding English. The consumer was prompted to say ‘yes’ when replying to questions on a phone call to confirm an electricity contract. As observed by Weerasinghe and Williams (2003), proficiency in English does not always mean no problems or barriers in communication for people from CALD communities; the use of professional jargon, culture-specific terms and expressions by service providers and practitioners can also present barriers. Mrs D’s frustration caused by having to rely on others to communicate with various government agencies and others was very strong, as she was bound by their availability and was not as independent as she would have liked to be, as language services were not available in all places she had to deal with.

### *Mrs E*

Mrs E is a female who migrated to Australia from Afghanistan, sponsored by her children, about 15 years ago. She lives with her husband in a house not too far from her children in a suburb that has many residents from the same region.

I am over 70 and living in Australia for 15 years now. As it’s known, with old age come the problems. Seven years ago I had a stroke as a result of which I lost 35% of my eyesight. For a while I managed by wearing glasses, but they don’t help me anymore. Wherever I go I need someone to accompany me. Along with this stroke, my heart condition started to deteriorate, and last year I had open heart surgery. After

the surgery I have been taking up to 20 tablets of different types, which are so important to keep me going. During my stay in the hospital and any other medical appointments when my children are not around there for me due to work and family commitments, I need help from interpreters. But interpreters are not always available. For example, when nurses come around to check my blood pressure, or other medical checks, they say something and I don't understand. I only try to guess what they are saying. The duty nurse from pathology calls every day to confirm the rate of my blood viscosity to take the appropriate amount of medication. During the day my husband and I are alone mostly, and when the phone rings, if it is the nurse calling from pathology I can't communicate, and I would say 'no English' and hang up. All letters and documents from the hospitals or Centrelink that we receive in the mail are in English. We usually wait for the children to visit us and also read the letters to us. If there are any forms to be completed, children do that for us, as they already know our circumstances very well.

We have some English-speaking neighbours. We don't talk to them much, although we smile and exchange a greeting. Back home, neighbours were like extended families, we used to talk and exchange food and gifts and tools, et cetera. Here we don't have that. On special occasions such as Muslim festivals and other similar occasions, we cook traditional Afghani meals and desserts and send a plate to our neighbours, they express their gratitude. We don't know completely what they are saying, all we know is the phrase 'thank you' and guess the rest. In fact our English skills are limited to 'yes', 'no' and 'thank you', the rest is just sign and body language.

Often we feel we are like birds without wings to fly, or even worse, because even if a bird can't fly, it is able to communicate with other birds, while we can't even do that



at this stage. We can't help it and we have no other choice. We have to be as we are; always we think, something is missing, we have lost something. How to describe it? I don't know, language? Life? God knows, all I can tell is, 'I feel I have lost something that is irreplaceable'. That's how it is.

*Comments on Mrs E*

Mrs E represents one of the most common forms of migration, having arrived under the family reunion stream, where parents are sponsored by their children who have arrived in Australia under other migration streams such as skilled migration or humanitarian migration. Often this type of migration means that parents who are almost at the pension age arrive in the country with limited or no English, and rely on their children's help with most of their everyday tasks. In Mrs E's case, this was further complicated by her serious health problems, including a stroke and heart surgery. She had to have extensive contact with health services during the treatment and follow-up appointments and tests. Communication was a major challenge, as she was unable to understand or express even the simplest things in everyday contact with public services. This also appears to have added to her isolation and homesickness, as she and her husband were not able to live an independent life as they did back home. They, however, tried not to let the language barrier totally isolate them, and attempted to have some contact with their neighbours by sharing food on special occasions.

*Mr F*

So far, the stories told in this chapter have been from members of spoken language communities. This section tells the story of Mr F, a member of the deaf community in Australia.

I come from a family with three members who are deaf from birth, including myself. I tried very hard not to let my disability stop me from doing what I wanted to do. I

studied a Certificate 3 of Spatial Information and, more recently, a Diploma of Interpreting (both in RMIT University).

I have had to access public services on many occasions. These included hospitals, city council, consumer affairs, charity organisations and police. Communication is not easy. I usually have to write down what I want and let the public service officers write down the response or information. I sometimes do my own research and find the information and then take it to the customer service to show them why I am there. However, it gets challenging finding interpreters with hospitals or police after hours. It causes a lot of delays and waiting. The attitudes of public service officials vary towards people like me. Some have no understanding of how to deal with people who have disabilities, and some have a good attitude and they even go out of their way to get the information I need or to explain things to me. I am self-sufficient most of the time but when I need to make a phone call, I ask for help from a member of my family or a friend of mine.

More and more public services put information online and cut down on phone services. They cut down on staff helping community members in person. This creates problems. Often it's hard getting through with phone calls due to privacy laws (third person = relay officer), and I find it hard to explain easily to get what I am after. For instance, some wording or jargon wording in public service areas is hard to understand by community members. More internet-friendly for people with disabilities—or Auslan Video of the service provider—that way it's easy for me to follow and understand rather than in writing.

#### *Comments on Mr F*

Mr F is a member of the deaf community in Australia. Deaf or hearing-impaired citizens face enormous challenges in communication in their everyday lives, including

accessing public services. The areas Mr F interacts with, such as health and welfare services, are similar to the areas other citizens with language barriers also nominated. Although Mr F has developed some strategies, such as using written notes for communication or actually printing the inquiry he wants to make first to explain himself, unlike hearing citizens he has a physical disability, which is often something that cannot be improved, reversed or overcome completely. This means ongoing reliance on language services in almost everything he does. New methods of communication with the public, such as recorded messages and a reduction in face-to-face dealings with the public, often due to rationalisation and cost-cutting initiatives, appear to make life difficult for deaf or hearing-impaired citizens.

### **Reflecting on Data Using Bourdieu's Concepts**

Data from the surveys and narratives of people with language barriers provide some striking insight into the circumstances of these 'missing clientele' of public services. One of the most remarkable is the vulnerabilities they face due to reliance on others for communication assistance in accessing public services. They rely heavily on family and friends for help, but data reveal they are also concerned that their privacy is compromised as they have to disclose information that they would otherwise not have to. They do not appear to question this and accept this as normal. This accords with what Bourdieu (1992) calls *symbolic violence*, which is based on two main premises - individuals are 'subjected to forms of violence' in an internalised or symbolic way rather than a physical one, for example, where the dominated social agent submits unconsciously to an arrangement in which they are treated as inferior and, secondly, the dominated agent willingly participates in this arrangement, eg, they may agree or even prefer that a family member interpreters for them. The example of the female client of the social worker, Susie, is a case in point. She was forced to wait months to get access to a service and yet simply waited without complaint. Both sides in this interaction saw nothing unusual in this. Furthermore, in assisted

communication transactions where clients rely on a third party to access essential services, such as health and welfare, these clients find themselves having to share details about their health, sexual life, finances and feelings with a third party.. They accept this as legitimate and do not view themselves as victims, leading to a process of ‘misrecognition’ by which the same treatment is reproduced (Bourdieu, 1992, cited in Webb et al., 2002, pp. 24–25). They are denied the dignity and respect others in society expect. And receive. In this way, they are treated as ‘inferior’ (Webb et al., 2002, p. xvi). This constitutes a form of ‘violence’, according to Bourdieu. This violence occurs not in the privacy of a household, but in the delivery of some essential public services controlled by the state. This makes the state the perpetrator of symbolic violence. Bourdieu (1994) explained the state’s role in inflicting symbolic violence on its citizens, arguing that ‘the state is an X (to be determined) which successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical and symbolic violence over a definite territory and over the totality of the corresponding population.’

Data also reveal that a significant section of people with language barriers do not participate in the consultation and political processes available to the rest of the society. They are not participating in the ‘game’ if we see public services as a game. Bourdieu (1993) explained, ‘Those who take part in the struggle help to reproduce the game by helping—more or less completely, depending on the field—to produce belief in the value of the stakes’ (p. 74). The concept of the game assumes that actors in a field share certain similarities and a belief in the field, and that these factors in turn determine who can enter the field and play the game. The processes, data reveal, are not accessible to some of the actors and exclude them from participating.

## **Summary**

This chapter has examined the situations of community members with language barriers. It presented data collected using two research methods: questionnaire and first-

person interviews with community members with language barriers. The data from the questionnaires indicated that health services, education services and welfare services (including income support) appear to be the most frequently accessed public services in order of highest frequency.

A significant portion of participants in this study were experiencing problems with participation in the wider community and in democratic processes, for example,, expressing their views in consultation processes at local government levels. These results stand in contrast to those of customer satisfaction surveys conducted by city councils, which have shown overwhelmingly that community members were satisfied with the services. In the present study, an overwhelming 76% respondents agreed that they would contribute to public debates and policies at all levels of government if language were not a barrier. This has significant implications for policies that aim to increase public participation, consultation and engagement.

These five complementary case studies have provided valuable insight into the range of day-to-day struggles of citizens with language difficulties. All participants reported contact with public services. Both data from the questionnaire and case studies indicate contact with government services is mainly facilitated by friends and families, and by interpreters only for more formal activities. This leads to vulnerabilities which constitute, what Pierre Bourdieu calls, 'symbolic violence', where the victim and the perpetrator, accept this arrangement as legitimate and do not question.

## Chapter Seven: Discussion of Key Findings

This chapter unites the main findings from the data presented in the three previous chapters, obtained through the qualitative and quantitative methods: the questionnaire, the case studies, the interviews, and the narrations. The chapter discusses the broad contributions this study makes to current scholarship through analysing and questioning everyday language barriers within the context of the provision of public services—critical services for any member of society—that lead to inequalities, which then produce and reproduce the experience of symbolic violence. This chapter also highlights approaches that may be of benefit to public policy makers and staff at public service provision points in planning action to address some of the issues identified in this study. It also recommends areas requiring further research.

The discussions in this chapter are guided by the research questions posed in Chapter 1, which were formulated around the issues of accessibility of public services for community members with language barriers, the position of translators and interpreters – a key, independent communication method - in this field of practice, and the vulnerability of community members with language barriers. This vulnerability was investigated by examining these community members' lived experiences in communicating with the public services that have been operating within an access and equity policy environment since early 1980s.

The main research questions asked were:

- How are current government policies regarding access and equity implemented in everyday public service structures and processes with respect to citizens experiencing language barriers?

- How can we better understand of the interaction between the public institutions that control critical services and citizens with language barriers in a field of practice shaped by asymmetric or unequal relations of power?

Addressing these two questions required elaborating them in several sub-questions to further focus the scrutiny of the inquiry onto the effects of the communication practices of public services on people with language barriers:

- What is the experience of living with a language barrier like?
- What power relations exist in communication practices of public services?
- What is the position of translators and interpreters in overcoming basic language barriers in delivering a public service?

The framework for discussing the findings utilised the following questions listed in the UN UNDESA Report (2009) as indicators for successful social inclusion, along with areas where weakness in inclusion leads to exclusion and lack of engagement leads to faltering participation. These indicators also inspired the research questions in this study, though the UNDESA proposed indicators and the research questions do not match exactly; particular questions correspond to more than one UNDESA indicator. These benchmark questions were:

- How and why are people being excluded from the processes that make up society?
- Who is affected by this exclusion, and what are the economic, social and political environments in which the problem is most apparent?
- What are the structures, processes and relations of power that exist within societies that result in the inclusion of some and exclusion of others? (UN UNDESA Report, 2009, p. 16)

In using this framework, the discussions were aided by Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, capital and symbolic violence. Bourdieu's (1984, 1990, 1992) work provided a way

to conceptualise the interplay of structure and agency through social space positions and internalised value systems based on actors' amounts and relative weights of economic and cultural capital. While Bourdieu's critique of systems of social stratification is wide-ranging, his fundamental criticisms of the symbolic violence inherent within the representational practices of the intellectual field provided a tool to examine the practices of public services from a different angle. Public services can be considered part of the field of power (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 56), and hold the monopoly on the critical resources and services required by citizens.

### **How and Why Are People Being Excluded from the Processes that Make Up Society?**

In the following discussion, this question is examined in two steps: (1) how are people being excluded from these processes, and (2) why is this happening? Here, 'people' refers specifically to community members (citizens and residents) with language barriers, and the 'processes' focused on are communication and interaction with public services, as the largest representatives of mainstream society. In Chapter 3, a brief outline of the government's access and equity policies and public service approaches to engagement and dialogue with citizens in Australia was provided.

The following conclusion offered by Frank Galbally in 1978 creates a 'back to the future' moment for the present discussion:

The migrants who have the greatest difficulties are those who arrive here with little or no understanding of the English language and who remain at a disadvantage because of that. Difficulties are greatest immediately after arrival, particularly for migrants who come from countries without a long established tradition of migration to Australia or for those who are refugees. (Frank Galbally, QC, Chair, Review of Post Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants, 1978, p. 1)



Then in 1992, Jupp & McRobbie noted the prevailing attitude among public servants towards clients with barriers ‘The strong assimilationist traditions of the past, the predominance of British immigration until recently, created expectations that clients of services would either be fairly uniform or would become so without much difficulty’ (p. 2).

These two statements are significant in that they provide an insight into the circumstances of citizens with language barriers and the prevailing attitudes of public services in 1977–1978 and early 1990s. It also broadly outlines the phenomenon that is under scrutiny in this study: the language barriers and the access and equity to public services. The access and equity to public services is not used in the sense of tangible, material services only but also in the sense of access and equity in engagement. Engagement, in the governance and policy context, is understood to be ‘a relatively sustained and systematic interaction between the parties’ (Holmes, 2011, p. 13). Doyle (1992) drew attention to the significance of engagement in access and equity, positing that access and equity should not be viewed as a government concession, or something to be ‘given’ to people, as, he asserted, ‘ability to give confers the power to withhold’ (p. 50). Doyle (1992) advocated that ‘Access and equity must be achieved through a durable process of joint community and government action’ (p. 50). This statement by Doyle links access and equity and engagement in clear terms. The significance of public engagement for public services is expressed in the following statement in APSC’s 2010 Report, *Empowering change: Fostering innovation in the Australian Public Service*:

Citizens and businesses are especially important external sources of ideas. Not only are they outside the public sector, but they also directly feel the impact of new policies and services. Governments cannot effectively address needs and concerns that they do not fully understand (cited in Holmes, 2011, p. 15).

For the purposes of the present discussion focusing on access and equity, it is necessary to focus attention on the elements of engagement in order to use them as an analytical tool to examine the data obtained in the previous chapters. Holmes (2011, p. 13) proposed three essential elements for the practice of engagement in the context of interest: information access, consultation and public participation (Holmes, 2011, p. 13)

*Information access* refers to the availability and accessibility of relevant information, which Holmes called ‘a bedrock condition for effective citizens’ participation’ (Holmes, 2011, p. 13). In Chapter 5, the use of language services by public services was examined through publicly available annual reports, other published material and websites. It was shown that practices and implementation vary significantly across public service agencies, from reasonably well-organised language and multicultural services to almost nothing. Even in agencies with good practices, a critical examination easily points to inconsistencies and flaws in processes. For example, a health service that provides highly confidential sexual health services for people with serious sexually transmitted diseases, which still have a lot of stigma attached to them in the community at large, does not include in their contact information on their website how people with language difficulties can contact them in a confidential way.

In fact, this accords with the findings of a recent survey that showed that only 22% of 292 government agencies in Victoria had accessible information of this nature on their websites in 2012 (personal correspondence), despite the establishment of a Federal Government website in 2001. Holmes (2011) claimed, ‘It is now unthinkable that an Australian government agency would not have a website enabling, as a minimum, public access to corporate and general agency information’ (p. 14); however, this research has shown that this is not the case for a significant section of community members, and that this statement by Holmes should be qualified by adding ‘if you speak English’. In examining

those rare websites with accessibility information, which includes translated information in relevant community languages; it is found that some significant issues remain. For example, the offer of large print publications appears to be available only for community members who can read English, and it appears that translated texts are not produced in large print for community members who have difficulties reading (personal correspondence with major translation agencies).

The findings of this research demonstrate that the accessibility and availability of information remain significant issues, despite almost four decades of language service policies and access and equity initiatives, both at state level and federal level. This lack of accessibility remains a significant source of social exclusion, which Hayes, Gray and Edwards (2008) described as ‘restriction of access to opportunities and [a] limitation of the capabilities required to capitalise on these [opportunities]’.

Accessing public services remains a significant challenge, if not an impossibility in some cases, for most people with language barriers. As evidenced by data from the interviews, narrations and the questionnaire, people with language barriers still find themselves having to wait for weeks and months for critical services such as healthcare or treatment as accessible services are not available. They are still made to rely on others, be it family members or neighbours, to access essential services. Often data show these people accept this and assume this is legitimate. This state of affairs appears to be in contravention of the Public Service Administration Act 2004, section 7 (e) (i), which reads:

- e) **respect**—public officials should demonstrate respect for colleagues, other public officials and members of the Victorian community by—
  - (i) treating them fairly and objectively;

Consultation is another element of engagement, and has been described as ‘a second order of citizen engagement’ that aims to include ‘the interests of the addressees of policies

and/or the general public in the decision-making process' (Holmes, 2011, p. 14). In support of this, the Public Service Administration Act 2004, section 7 (e) (iii) reads:

- (e) **respect**—public officials should demonstrate respect for colleagues, other public officials and members of the Victorian community by—
  - (iii) using their views to improve outcomes on an ongoing basis;

However, how much respect (if any) is extended in practice is not evident in the findings of this study. Marston and Watts (2004) argued that 'in contemporary welfare politics, there has been a curious absence of social respect' (p. 41). A similar observation was also made by Richard Sennett (2003) in relation to some failed policies of the American 'welfare state':

Lack of respect, though less aggressive than an outright insult can take an equally wounding form. No insult is offered another person but neither is recognition extended: he or she is not *seen*—as a full human being whose presence matters. When a society treats the mass of people in this way, singling out only a few for recognition it creates a scarcity of respect ... Like many famines, this scarcity is man-made; unlike food, respect costs nothing. Why then should it be in short supply? (p. 45)

Lack of respect, though not necessarily conscious, was revealed through some of the findings of this study. One instance of this was in relation to the accessibility of consultation processes by people who have language barriers. Governments can use a range of tools for this purpose to promote accessibility of the consultation process, from plebiscites and public meetings to focus groups and surveys. One of the city councils examined in this study—which reported that 45% of its residents were born overseas, that there were 180 languages spoken within the council boundaries and that it has a multicultural plan in place—does not include any information on its community consultation notice about how someone with language difficulties can participate. Holmes (2011) argued that, 'according to the public

policy literature, local, state and territory governments appear to have fared better than the national government in engaging citizens in both the development and implementation of policy, and in service delivery' (p. 18). This may be the case for people who are proficient in English, but with respect to people with language barriers, the situation is different.

Participants' responses to the question, 'Do you ever get consulted by public services including city councils about any changes, new plans, new policies or services in writing or verbally?' (see Chart 10) indicate a very dire situation, with 64% reporting they had never been consulted, and another 28% reporting that they were only sometimes consulted.

It must be acknowledged at this point that many English speaking community members probably have similar feelings about consultation. What the next question revealed, however ('If language were not a barrier, would you have contributed to public debates and policies at council, state or federal government levels?'), was that even if the language access issue were to be resolved, only 55% responded that they would contribute to public debates, with the remaining 45% responding 'Not sure' or 'No'. This may indicate a reluctance to engage, and the reasons for this reluctance may relate to the lack of capabilities other than linguistic ones, such as knowledge, skills and dispositions, that are regarded as prerequisites for such engagement (Holmes, 2011).

Hawtin and Kettle (2000) aptly highlighted the significance of participation, stating, 'on a personal level participation may bring independence self-esteem, dignity, experience of working together and community belonging' (p. 122). The part played by being left out of the dialogue for so long and hence not having the opportunities to develop the capabilities needed for such engagement goes to the heart of policies and their implementation. Findings point to the existence of what Sen (2010, cited in Bowman, 2010) referred to as 'capability failure' (where individuals are unable to speak or act freely) (p. 5).

The findings also showed that Holmes' (2011) observation that 'the days of no or little external policy input are well and truly over' is not the case with community members with language barriers. As Thompson argued, good practice cannot be discriminatory:

Practice which does not take account of oppression and discrimination cannot be seen as good practice, no matter how high its standards may be in other respects. For example, a social work intervention with a disabled person which fails to recognise the marginalised position of disabled people in society runs the risk of providing the client with more of a disservice than a service. (Thompson, 1998, p. 11)

A government agency in the Department of Local Government commissions surveys on behalf of participating councils about residents' views of council services, including facility of contact. One of the surveys found an 80% satisfaction rate in a council that claimed to be 'a highly culturally and linguistically diverse municipality, with many different cultural groups living within the council borders and residents who speak approximately 140 different languages at home'. However, the instructions for the survey administrators required them to refer back to the survey centre if they encountered language difficulties—the same instruction provided for residents who refused to participate. This leads to the possibility of a skewed result, implying that the reported 80% satisfaction rate with council accessibility is not accurate. Instructions also required that where 'a resident is not available at the time, [survey administrators must] make an appointment and go back'. It seems reasonable that this should also be an option in situations where language difficulties emerge.

One of the practices commonly adopted by public service agencies in community consultations, as well as in dispensing some of their services (e.g., informing members of the public of services or useful information), is to enlist the assistance of a third party called a 'community leader' or 'community elder'—a practice that dates back to the first European colonists, when Aboriginal elders were used to communicate with Indigenous people. One of

the most well-known of these was Aboriginal elder Bennelong in NSW, who could speak English. In that historical context, the practice which could probably be justified, as there were no other means of communication. However, in 2015, this colonialist practice, which can be called the ‘Bennelong Method’, is prevalent in many public service guidelines issued by Australian Public Service agencies recommending the use of community elders or leaders to disseminate information about public services or collect feedback from the community members to pass on to the government agencies. As summarised by Jamrozik (2001), ‘ethnically and culturally, Australia is increasingly diversified but its multicultural nature is not yet reflected in government and other social institutions, which have remained monocultural, retaining many features inherited from colonial times’ (p. 84).

If not community elders, then children can sometimes also be targeted to disseminate information. This is despite the fact that the Australian Government Multicultural Access and Equity Policy clearly sets out the obligations of public services to implement access and equity policies.

However, how these Access and Equity policies are implemented in practice is questionable. The following is a recommendation offered under the communications strategy development section of the Multicultural Access and Equity Policy:

In engaging with CALD groups it is important to plan how information will be best received. Include your CALD target group and its specific communications needs in your strategy. Also note the channels that would best engage with them. These channels could include:

- Local community newspapers or publications
- SBS TV or language-specific radio stations
- Social media—engaging with children or grandchildren to pass on your information.

This is a good example of what Neil Gilbert (2002) referred to as ‘silent surrender of public responsibility’. There is no information about what sort of official status these people may have or what sort of skills or qualifications they should possess, or how the rest of the community sees them, beyond a statement that ‘they should be credible’. Another public agency cautioned against rushing ‘community leaders or elders’ to do work for the agency by advising that a ‘community leader may need time to do their job’. This implies that a community leader or elder who does not appear to have been appointed by the agency or by the community as a go-between according to any selection criteria other than being a community leader, who has no official position and may not have any professional qualification, can be relied on to do what a public service agency needs to do, such as collecting feedback from the public or providing information to the public on their services. This practice also appears to allow these community leaders to set their terms of service, specifying the pace and timing of the work and the best way of going about it.

Further, Jeffreys (2012) drew attention to the gender imbalance in the use of community elders and leaders and observes community leaders who are picked for consultation appear to be almost exclusively male. Data from the resources this study examined did not show any indication that use of community elders or leaders is practised in dealing with members of the community from English-speaking backgrounds. In other words, there is no suggestion that information or feedback should be sought from English-speaking community members through identified community leaders. This appears to be recommended as a method for ethnic communities only, and appears to originate from a perception that these communities live in tribal configurations.

The practice of using a community leader for communication with ethnic communities has appeared in the ‘recommended methods of communication’ with community members with language difficulties produced by some large and critically



significant public service agencies, such as the MFB. Interestingly, the suggestion about using community elders appeared in a report that also included a survey of NES Karen and Burmese speakers. The survey included questions asking them how they would like to be communicated with, and none of the reported responses by the NES community members asked for the use of community elders or leaders, but rather for direct contact with language services.

Public participation is the key third element Holmes (2011) identified in the practice of engagement with citizens. The word ‘participation’ is narrowly defined as ‘the action of taking part in something’ (‘Participation’, n.d.). Specifically, public participation refers to the interaction between a government and its citizens, hence there is a more social aspect to it:

Public participation as an addition to representative processes may provide an antidote to national political elites or technocrats. It can counter the overweighted influence of powerful lobbies. It may also offer an effective way to overcome a citizen’s sense of futility and powerlessness in the face of these larger forces. (Holmes, 2011, p. 15)

Data obtained from public services and community members point to significant problems with regard to the issue of participation. A significant number of community members, 47%, responded that they never voted in federal, state or local elections, and 5% only did so sometimes. Although this study did not seek data about their eligibility for voting, it is safe to assume that a large portion of the respondents would be eligible. However, these data are significant in that they are consistent with similar findings in the UK (Anwar, 1994). Lack of participation may not be wholly attributable directly to language services, as VEC or AEC websites have significant accessibility information and language services. Authors such as Percy-Smith (2000) have argued that alienation, not feeling part of the system or not finding it relevant are some of the other reasons for failing to participate. This aspect is beyond the scope of this study and warrants further, dedicated investigation in Australia.

The data so far have pointed to an environment where engagement between public services and community members with language barriers is commonly a top-down affair, and often in a language that is not accessible for a significant portion of them. It is safe to describe this engagement as more of a monologue than a dialogue, as described in policy rhetoric. If engagement is ‘not a single process or set of activities, ... [but] an ongoing process or conversation that builds trust and relationships’ (Holmes, 2011, p. 13), then clearly engagement is not occurring with respect to community members with language barriers. This is very significant, in that current practices may be helping to produce and reproduce some of the inequalities that lead to exclusion. In this vein, Thompson (1998) observed the critical role played by the professional practices, stating, ‘it is not simply a matter of reducing or cushioning inequality, there is also the important question of seeking to ensure that professional practice does not increase such inequality or amplify its harmful or destructive consequences’ (p. 1). Similarly, Marston and Watts (2004) wrote:

Neither is equality a factual claim about how we are all actually identical blank sheets of paper but is rather an ethical idea that we should all have a legitimate expectation that we can expect to be treated fairly whatever our capacities or disabilities. (p. 40)

### **Why Are People with Language Barriers Being Left Out?**

The findings presented above clearly make the case that people with language barriers are being left out of the processes of public services in Australia today. This stands despite the fact that these public services have been operating within a policy environment with stated objectives of access and equity in participation and accessing services since early 1980s and confirms the findings of OMA review of access and equity in 1992 which found a significant divide in terms of understanding access and equity between those at policy making levels and those at the frontline service points and the findings of *Inquiry into the Responsiveness of Australian Government Services to Australia’s Culturally and Linguistically Diverse*

*Population* (DIAC, 2012), which found, among other things, a fading commitment by public services to access and equity, big discrepancies from excellent service to basically nothing, poor communication and engagement practices with CALD communities and clients and insufficient or ineffective use of language services including interpreters (DIAC, 2012).

Jupp's observation, in 2007, that 'It is an interesting comment on the resistance to multicultural reality that the situation continues to remain the same' (p. 93) is still the case. The reasons why this resistance to implementation of access and equity policies by the public service is still an issue after almost three decades, however, may prove more complex than explanations such as budget constraints or resourcing issues. Richard Sennett (2003) argued: 'in the society, and particularly in the welfare state, the nub of the problem we face is how the strong can practice respect towards those destined to remain weak' (p. 263). Although one can choose simply to blame the situation on the indolence of public service institutions, the findings of this study indicate there are significant inconsistencies and entrenched misconceptions in practices for engaging with members of the public who have language difficulties. These inconsistencies may be a direct result of a struggle between new attitudes and entrenched, resistant, old misconceptions, assumptions and culture within the public services. As Thompson (1998) put it, 'discriminatory ideas become embedded in everyday "common sense" and are rarely questioned or challenged' (p. 2). Further, Taylor (1998) argued that liberal democratic states may display an inherent tendency to exclude people who they perceive as having 'other ways of being' (p. 147), including newcomers, due to the underlying belief that 'democracies work well when people know one another, trust one another, and feel a sense of commitment toward one another' (p. 48).

Writing in 1992, Beilharz et al. (1992) argued, with respect to achieving change in public services, that the scale of internal bureaucratic resistance went beyond what could be attributed to a few powerful individuals, saying that 'bureaucratic bias was entrenched in a

type of selectivity and inertia that had become culturally embedded in the Australian public services' (p. 117). Even when the ideals of the Coombs Inquiry, which promoted full representation of social groups, more open decision-making procedures and participation in bureaucratic policy making by ordinary citizens, led to some initiatives and pressures to alter levels of group representation, no significant alteration to the role of the public services institutions and agencies resulted (Beilharz et al., 1992, p. 112). Beilharz et al. identified the main reason for this as 'little thought [having been] given to the way in which the bureaucracy would respond to these pressures' (p. 113). Jamrozik (2001), drawing attention to the under-representation of the ethnic and multicultural diversity in government agencies such as legal institutions and public administration, argued that this resulted in a monocultural structure of institutional power governing a multicultural society (p. 89).

The findings from the present study demonstrably show that there is an entrenched culture of maintaining traditional mono-lingual and mono-cultural dispositions, assumptions and resistance within the public service points that are tasked with implementation of access and equity policies, and that this attitude remains largely unchanged. This finding confirms Jupp's (1992) observation that 'The idea of a non-uniform clientele has been difficult to promulgate in Australia other than for Aborigines' (p. 2), although the Anglo-Celtic dominance was significantly diluted as a result of the ending of discriminatory migration processes following WWII, and that NES clients with language barriers are expected to fit in the 'uniform' service. This finding is also in line with the observations of Holmes (2011) that public services continue to remain 'one size fits few' (p. 20). Changing policies and guidelines to ones that promote access and equity for all, along with a 'citizen-centric' model of public service delivery, does not appear to have resulted in significant changes in underlying attitudes and assumptions since the mid-1970s. This was identified as a risk by Cavaye (2004), who claimed that '[T]here are examples of traditional thinking in community

engagement approaches that amount to ‘we are from the government and we are going to engage you’, rather than valuing and investing in relationships and building true partnerships’ (p. 11). Further, Cavaye argued that trends have indicated ‘a changing practice and not changing assumptions’, and cautions that unless there is new thinking, accompanied by a genuine belief in the value of achieving community engagement, government agencies will ‘develop a mindset that supports the “delivery” of community engagement’ (Cavaye, 2004, p. 11), as opposed to fostering such engagement by more organic means.

Considering that policy decisions have recognised the problems with communication since as early as the 1970s (see, the Galbally Report, 1978), the reasons why people with language barriers still experience exclusion, in 2015, due to communication difficulties appear to be partly because any action under the policies adopted targets a change in the behaviour and skills of people with language barriers, rather than a change in the public services’ agencies and processes. The need for changes to institutions and their practices rather than changes wrought on socially excluded individuals, groups and communities was also acutely observed by Percy-Smith (2000). While there are policies and effective measures in place to help people with disabilities to participate in the political process, Percy-Smith (2000) argued that, despite this:

In practice, the barriers confronting people with disabilities are reflective of a more fundamental cultural and political problem—namely the fact that, while equality of citizenship rights is widely trumpeted as a ‘badge’ of a democratic society, the fact that they are imperfectly realised in practice suggests that, in reality, many people have a rather weak attachment to them. (p. 159)

Butcher and Mullard (1993) claimed that for the effective implementation of community policies, ‘[c]ommunity policy requires new ways of relating to communities served (which will involve organisational change and possibly also changes in day-to-day

practice, professional attitudes, budgetary priorities, and decision-making methods)' (p. 236). This recommendation could well be applied to the implementation of Access and Equity policies to address demonstrated problems and shortcomings at the point of implementation—the public service agencies. Data from the semi-structured interviews with public servants indicate how lack of funding and resources, which the Galbally Review highlighted as an area to be addressed in 1978, continue to force staff to resort to using family members as language aides in the course of activities related to the provision of some critical public services. Also revealed in the interviews with public servants were inexplicable practices, such as funding interpreter services but not translation services, when in fact the client of the public servant needed a translation service. This demonstrates a lack of insight or appreciation into what the public needs to overcome language barriers, a point also highlighted by Jupp (1992), who stated that the solution requires understanding and knowledge of the 'missed' members of the public by the public services so that they can change their processes and practices. This does not appear to be the case in Australia in 2015.

It is relevant at this point to analyse this vexing problem using Bourdieu's concepts of Theory of Practice, capital, field, habitus, symbolic power and symbolic violence. The public services continue to be dominated by a culture that views Australia as a mono-lingual and mono-cultural (Anglo) country. While changes in the field (e.g., introduction of strict guidelines, frameworks or reporting requirements) may ultimately lead to changes in the attitudes and predispositions—habitus—of public services towards engagement with community members with language barriers, these changes may be superficial or not sufficiently radical to address the underlying problems of failure to incorporate practices of access and equity for people with language barriers in everyday interactions. This is evidenced in practices such as continuing to recommend the use of community leaders for communication—the Bennelong Method—to disseminate information in ethnic communities;

or in practices such as a highly multicultural city council arranging community consultations and promoting these only in English; or in the privacy commissioner advisory panel, which was entirely composed of English-speaking members from mostly academic backgrounds, very similar to the profile of participants in the housing planning decisions described by Hawtin and Kettle (2000): ‘public participation within planning exercises has traditionally been characterized as undertaken by middle-class, middle-aged, able-bodied white men’ (p. 119).

In a field where, as Bourdieu conceptualises, there are rules and one needs to know the rules in order to play, it appears that the dominant players—that is, the public services—are able to adapt to the new rules—that is, the Access and Equity framework and language services policies—but have barely changed their old dispositions, if at all. However, as Chan (1997) concluded, ‘Changing the field can be just as difficult as changing habitus when the distribution of power and resources is the target of change’ (p. 92). This conclusion was also reflected by Holmes (2011), who claimed that ‘people with hard-earned professional qualifications and official responsibilities might well be reluctant to share power with users and communities’ (p. 25). Holmes made this comment with respect to citizens who have the same language and cultural background as the public services; when it involves citizens who do not have the dominant Anglo-Celtic language and cultural background, the public service appear to resist changes that may empower a section of the community.

As Bourdieu highlighted, ‘[w]hat today presents itself as self-evident, established, settled once and for all, beyond discussion, has not always been so and only gradually imposed itself as such’. Therefore, the resolution of these problems revealed in the practices of the dominating agent—the public services, the ‘authorised characters’ (Bourdieu, 1998) — in their communications with the dominated agents—community members with language barriers and translators and interpreters—depends upon adequate resolution of the entrenched

attitudes in the representatives of public service agencies. Current government initiatives do not appear to target these entrenched attitudes, and are limited to cultural and ‘respect of diversity’ training, if at all, and do not focus on building capabilities essential for engagement—‘skills, knowledge and dispositions’. As data from public service reports reveal, the number of training sessions on access and equity within in-service training programs in agencies appear limited and in some cases, there is no reference to such sessions; this probably reflects the overall picture in the public services.

### **Who Is Affected, and What Are the Economic, Social and Political Environments in which the Problem Is Most Apparent?**

Using Bourdieu’s social theory approach, if we view public services as a social field, rather than an industry in which agents have a position and are in competition for status and material resources, each agent’s position and access to capital will be dependent upon factors such as their upbringing, level of education, participation in social and cultural events and acquired dispositions. A community member who speaks the common language in the field, who participates in sports and community events such as playing Aussie Rules Football or volunteering in fundraising activities for the local school, who follows the news and current events, votes in elections, and lives in suburbs that are regarded as desirable, is actually displaying and manifesting a certain disposition, which agents in the field use to judge each other and differentiate themselves from others. Such practices and attitudes in all aspects of social life, from education and work to leisure activities, according to Bourdieu, shape the opportunities, constraints and life chances of individuals. Bourdieu’s point was that agents internalise these dispositions, which generate specific practices, and engage in the reproduction and legitimising of existing social space differences.

Data from the surveys and case studies in this research provide a capital-oriented understanding of the social spaces currently occupied by community members with a



language barrier. Language is at the heart of competition for capital, the lack of which seriously compromises one's position in the social space. The findings show that community members with language barriers continue to participate, or try to participate, in society, despite the clear disadvantage they have from the outset and the public services, who have the power, fail to assist them, as evidenced by the findings of major reviews into access and equity in 1992, 2005 and 2012 (DIAC, 2012) and the findings from data obtained in this study about the current practices of public services. Bourdieu (1998, p. 52) posits that the state wields 'a quasi-divine' power by determining, using its power, what people can be or what rights they can enjoy. This appears to be the case in the relationship between public services and people with language barriers.

The findings reveal a number of 'legitimate' practices imposed on the community members with language barriers, which constitute significant practices of symbolic violence perpetuated by the public services. These practices are portrayed as self-evident realities of an English-speaking public service environment. Despite data that show community members overwhelmingly prefer using translators and interpreters as an independent communication method (as a preference, interpreting is second only to direct communication), the communication between public services and community members with language barriers is mainly conducted in English (95%) with only 42% of the 130 participants indicated that they had accessed interpreters, whereas 35% indicated that they received help from family and friends, and 32% said they managed with their limited English. Interviews with public service representatives provided some acknowledgement of this situation. For example, one public servant revealed how, in one case, she could not find an accessible service for two months in a mental health referral and in another case, a family member with poor language skills had to be relied up as the service only funded interpreting, not translating. Revisiting the analogy used in Chapter 7 of a person in a wheelchair needing to use a ramp to access a building,

these figures would indicate an expectation that 67% of community members were required to bring along their own ‘ramp’ to negotiate a language barrier for access. Because community members continue to use family and friends as the means for access or do not question why a service is inaccessible or they should be waiting for months, these anomalies appear to be regarded as ‘legitimate’ by both the community members and the public services—thus the community members become complicit in this practice. However, this does not mean that this situation is right; indeed, it falls under what Bourdieu calls symbolic violence.

Another example is the use of intermediaries known as community elders or leaders in communicating with community members with language barriers, rather than directly communicating through interpreters and translators, in consulting or providing information to the communities of NESB backgrounds. Although it may be convenient from a resourcing and efficiency angle, this practice of symbolic violence is also in potential breach of privacy and confidentiality legislations. For example, some of the feedback from the community members that is passed on to the public services via the community elders or leaders, who have no official status or position, may be private or confidential in nature, but a community member may feel compelled to disclose the information to the community elder or leader, who appears to be acting on behalf of a public service agency, therefore wielding a certain degree of power. This practice has the potential to hinder development of the relevant skills, knowledge and dispositions that Holmes (2011) asserted are essential for sustained engagement and effective dialogue with the public services in order to develop a trusting relationship.

What exacerbates the above situation further is that the sort of access required is not for an activity in which participation is largely voluntary—for example, a private or leisure activity such as a BBQ, birthday, fishing club or even an activity such as reading a novel or

attending a conference presentation in another language. The forms of interaction that are the subject of this study take place, in many cases, in forced encounters, or ones that are obligatory for membership in society. In other words, community members seeking a welfare service, disability service or health service, which 77 of 128 participants (60%) picked as the most common public service they used, or those who encounter trouble with police or legal disputes with landlords or neighbours, have no choice but to communicate with various public services to ‘make themselves understood’ (Doyle, 1992). As Susie, one of the public service representatives interviewed, revealed some pregnant mothers she was assisting with had to wait for weeks so that a female interpreter could be found, affecting timely delivery of an essential service and appointments had to be arranged around availability of interpreters rather than healthcare needs of pregnant women. In allowing this to continue without intervention to improve direct accessibility or respect the person in need (Marston & Watts, 2004; Sennett, 2003), the state is in breach of its legal obligations.

These forms of symbolic violence described above are further exacerbated when we consider that 74% of participants responded that when they received help from family or friends with communication with public services—in forced encounter settings, as described above—they felt that their privacy or confidentiality was compromised. Of these, 16% responded that this was always the case, and 58% responded that it was sometimes the case. This is significant in that it tells us that a large section of the community with language barriers have had to seek help from family and friends in order to access various services for such reasons as time, convenience, cost, and fear. Some, especially in the case of the elderly, may want their family member to be present if it makes them feel safer, and are prepared to forgo privacy concerns for that safety. This is largely either accepted or ignored by the public services, as data from interviews with public service staff showed, which legitimises the practice; however, in the process, the legislated rights of these people to maintain their

privacy and confidentiality are breached, because of the oversight of the public servants. This is potentially in breach of the Public Service Administration Act 2004, Section (e) (i and ii), which reads:

- (e) **respect**—public officials should demonstrate respect for colleagues, other public officials and members of the Victorian community by—
  - (i) treating them fairly and objectively; and
  - (ii) ensuring freedom from discrimination, harassment and bullying.

Individual privacy is also regulated under a number of international and national laws, including the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 (Cwlth) and its APP, which binds all public and private entities; the National Health Act 1953 (Cwlth); a range of state laws and regulations, including the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic); the Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic); and the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic). The ICCPR (1976), Article 17 states:

1. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation.
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

With respect to remedy in case of breach of the rights granted under the Covenant, the Covenant states in Article 2 (3):

Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes:

- (a) To ensure that any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy, notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity;

(b) To ensure that any person claiming such a remedy shall have his right thereto determined by competent judicial, administrative or legislative authorities, or by any other competent authority provided for by the legal system of the State, and to develop the possibilities of judicial remedy;

(c) To ensure that the competent authorities shall enforce such remedies when granted.

The above international and national principles and laws place the onus of protecting the privacy of the citizens on the governments. The privacy concerns identified through the survey conducted in this study relate specifically to a client of a public service and an individual known to that client (e.g., a relative or friend), and not so much to the public service itself; therefore, these concerns may not fall under the jurisdiction of the legislation or OAIC work area. However, the setting in which the exchange of information takes place is not a private setting or activity. The exchange takes place in the course of provision of a public service. The information disclosed by a client who requires language assistance through an intermediary such as a relative or friend or a community elder is for the purposes of accessing a public service. In such circumstances, the onus is—or should be—on the government agency to protect the privacy of the citizen. Complicity of the citizen with a language barrier in breaching his or her own privacy rights by choosing to bring along a relative or friend, or being forced to communicate through a community leader, which they may find difficult to reject due to family ties or cultural norms or social pressures within small communities, cannot be a justification for allowing such practices of symbolic violence to be repeated everyday. As AMAC (2010) statement quoted at the outset of this thesis highlights aptly ‘No good society can ignore discrimination of this kind. Nor can any Australian government purporting to live by the creed of the ‘fair go’.

A remedy to language barriers that appeared has appeared in migration and access and equity policies is the idea that people will attend English classes and develop proficiency to

integrate into the uniform clientele of public services and the Australian society (Liddicoat, 2013). This means the level of proficiency of English must be assessed. Current policy and guidelines leave this assessment of language proficiency to the public service staff. A public service agency, seeking to inform public servants on how to assess language proficiency, made the following recommendation:

ask the client simple questions. If they are having difficulty, they need an interpreter ... ask the client to spell out their address or say their date of birth—this can indicate both proficiency in spoken English and literacy level. (Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health, 2005)

Although there have been significant improvements in this respect to eliminate this type of misinformed judgement, it is difficult to argue that it has stopped such judgments from occurring altogether. Australian courts and police forces leave the assessment of language proficiency of a person to the judge or the police officer. There is no assessment tool that they can use to assess proficiency of a defendant or suspect and assessment remains largely subjective. In cases of a person lacking another capability—say, making independent decisions, or driving—the capacity assessment is referred to experts, such as a psychologist or GP, but not in cases of language proficiency assessment. Ingleby (2011) cautions against judging proficiency based on fluency in everyday interactions, and posits proficiency in everyday language may not be adequate in health care settings where the communication is about ‘non-everyday matters and may be accompanied by considerable stress’ and advocates that the government must take steps to remove language barriers in receiving high-quality care, not wait for people to improve their language proficiency (p. 233). Pöchhacker (2004) argued that interpreting provided in ‘heterolingual’ segments of a multi-ethnic society has a significant ‘intra-social’ dimension and is a manifestation of ‘egalitarian states committed to

the 'welfare' of all their citizens and residents' under the principle of 'equal access', which overrides 'expectations of linguistic proficiency' (p. 14).

It is appropriate here to discuss some aspects of learning a second language, as NES people learning English is a key policy objective of the Federal Government's language services policy.

### **Realities of Second Language Learning**

Ingleby (2011) observes that in migration countries, language proficiency has become a political issue, which views migrants who are not proficient as people who are not 'making enough effort to integrate' (p. 233). This attitude is evident in recent statements by political leaders. British PM David Cameron who declared that those who are on a five-year spouse-sponsored visa must improve their English and pass a test after two and a half years or face deportation (Mason & Sherwood, 2016). This resonated quickly in Australia with calls on Talk-Back radios and letters to newspapers that English classes should be compulsory for migrants. This is not a new trend. Since 1945, migration and settlement policies have always highlighted the need for migrants to learn English (Zappala & Castles, 2000). English proficiency was linked to Australian identity (Eggington, 1997).

Doyle (1992) found that there was a lack of sympathy by the public service agency staff for migrants who were in Australia for many years but still did not speak English and in some cases involving younger migrants, public servants simply assumed they would be proficient and asked them to fill in some forms in English for themselves and elderly NES persons (p. 43). Liddicoat (2013, p. 107) posits most migrants who arrived in 1950s and 60s were only taught functional English so that they could communicate as workers in Australia. This level of proficiency in a country like Australia with English being the lingua franca, according to Clyne (1994), would not allow these people to access to power, unless they

somehow develop ‘a fairly high degree of communicative competence in English if they achieve some active command of “Anglo” communication rules’ (p. 208).

The reality of acquiring a second language with sufficient fluency to be self-sufficient is very different, especially for those who have very little or no formal education in their own language. This was revealed by the findings of Van Lier (1998, cited in Hakuta et al., 2000), who observed, in a paper commissioned by the US Department of Education, that in the second language acquisition, whether it involves children, adolescents or adults, fluency that developed in the first year or even in the second year, was devoid of any significant developments of complex grammar and were mostly contained to ‘formulaic utterances, conversational strategies, and a highly simple code’:

This simple code is sufficient for everyday social contact, and often gives the impression of amazing conversational fluency in these contexts, but it is not the elaborate, syntactically and lexically complex code of the proficient language user (p. 2).

The figures provided in Chapter 1 of this thesis indicate that a large number of migrants arriving under the auspices of the family stream, skilled migration and humanitarian migration programs have either poor or no English skills. The findings show that 30% of participants did not attend English classes in Australia. Of 89 respondents who answered the question about the duration of their English classes, 84% said that they attended for less than 12 months, and 67% of these were for less than six months. This is insufficient time for someone with a low level of English proficiency, or none at all, to achieve the linguistic levels required for self-sufficiency. Hakuta et al. from Stanford University (2000) found that oral proficiency takes three to five years to develop, and academic English proficiency can take four to seven years.



The other aspect of attaining a high level of proficiency in a language requires a certain base or background. Colic-Peisker (2002), in her study of migrants from Croatian backgrounds in Western Australia, identified several significant impediments to learning English to a proficient level that would enable the migrants to participate in social and employment settings equally. One such impediment, she argued, is that even if migrants arrive with some level of proficiency in English, they still need time to learn the local idiom:

Phrases and idiomatic expressions are deeply embedded in the history and culture of every nation and can hardly be transferred into another language/culture. They have to be learnt from scratch, representing one of the main difficulties in acquiring a level of linguistic competence beyond basic functional communication. (pp. 157–158).

Colic-Peisker (2002) found age and limited previous formal education to be other significant impediments in language acquisition. Crystal (1994, in Colic-Peisker, 2002) pointed to the fact that adults need to learn a language in formal or ad hoc learning environments, whereas children learn a language by copying people around them as they develop. Colic-Peisker (2002) added, ‘This means allocating specific time and effort to language learning or refinement’, highlighting that this must be done on top of work, family commitments and other everyday tasks. The findings of this study show that most newcomers undertook English studies that were limited in duration due to similar reasons listed by Colic-Peisker.

Colic-Peisker (2002) found that ‘Most migrants from the 1960s cohort are still affected by language barriers after living in Australia for decades’ (p. 160). Colic-Peisker’s finding with respect to Croatian migrants is relevant for most migrants who do not come from an English-speaking background as data from this research revealed. This further indicates that most of these people will continue to need assistance in order to engage with the Australian public services or their agencies. Even when they have developed a certain level

of basic language skills, this may still be insufficient where formal processes and discourse present challenges for their level of proficiency. Even some of those that indicated that they had 'good' language proficiency may actually require language services at some level of interaction with the public services. One of the respondents, Mrs D, who had studied English and some other vocational courses said, 'I continue to rely on my family members when making inquiries with the utility companies, because I find their language difficult to understand.'

A large proportion of these community members work and contribute to the economy, but 41 (32%) out of 129 respondents stated that they did not think their English skills would improve sufficiently in the next five to 10 years for them to no longer require language assistance. In their interactions with the public services, including legal services such as police, courts, tribunals or some complex medical services, these people will still face language barriers and require language assistance, including translators and interpreters, for the foreseeable future.

### **What Are the Structures, Processes and Relations of Power that Exist within Societies that Result in the Inclusion of Some and Exclusion of Others?**

Sen (2001, p. 74) defined an inclusive society as one 'characterized by a widely shared social experience and active participation, by a broad equality of opportunities and life chances for individuals and by the achievement of a basic level of well-being for all citizens'. Based on the discussion under the previous two questions, one emerging issue pertaining to the inclusiveness of Australian society is the apparent disconnect between stated policy objectives and their implementation by frontline staff, 'the authorised characters', as Bourdieu (1998) calls them, who act on behalf of the state. This disconnect appears to go

beyond a mere resourcing issue or mere indolence and is in fact rooted in the organisational culture, as some agencies, as revealed by the public service staff representatives, have fairly comprehensive processes and procedures to improve accessibility, others have hardly anything. This is hardly any different than the finding reported by Doyle (1992) 'Despite the stated commitment for such policies at the upper echelons of Commonwealth departments, many agency staff do not seem to be informed, able or willing to address access and equity issues in their normal practice.' (p. 51). This clearly disadvantages a section of the community with language barriers as evidenced by the story shared by Susie involving a Turkish speaker who had to see a specialist for a psychiatric assessment and had to wait approximately for two months before Susie could find a service that bulkbills and provides interpreter service for communication. This is a clear case of symbolic violence created as a result of public services failing some vulnerable section of the society.

One other structural issue that has emerged from this study is the lack of a central source that collects data on communication with people with language barriers and matches this to their identified needs. The financial reports of public service agencies examined in this study did not include any item referring overtly to language services, whereas other items with detailed descriptions appeared in some of the lists. Does this mean, therefore, that there is no budgetary provision for language services among these agencies?

The other issue relating to the structures and processes that result in the inclusion of some and exclusion of others is the treatment of the providers of a key language service, one that is preferred by those with language barriers second only to direct communication: translating and interpreting. This is especially critical for sustained collaboration, engagement and socialisation of community members where there are language barriers.

[G]ood social networks are the ‘lifeblood’ of social value—knitting together the local citizens and civil society organisations, yet for these relationships to be sustainable, honest brokers are often essential. (Kippin et al. 2012, p.93)

Public service translators and interpreters serve this function, creating a bridge between government, local authorities and community members with language barriers. They will be increasingly vital as the idea of open and accessible public services gains traction, with increasing efforts for inclusion. One social worker from a healthcare institution recognised that ‘we cannot function without interpreters and translators’. However, this view does not appear to be shared across the board; another public servant from another institution revealed a significant underlying problem in the capacity of language services to help citizens with barriers:

Another issue is that Language Services is not a fully recognised discipline within the health context like, for example, Physiotherapy or Social Work or any other Allied Health discipline. This means lower budget for language services, including unequal remuneration for equal years of study; this makes it rather difficult to attract and retain language professionals.

The data from the interviews with public service translators and interpreters in Chapter 6 confirm the findings of various industry reports, particularly one recently produced by APESMA involving a large number of practitioners, mainly interpreters. The report stated that public service translators and interpreters hold an ambiguous position in relation to the other two significant agents in public service provision, namely the public services themselves and the community members with language difficulties. While they are directly or indirectly funded by the government via its public service agencies to facilitate service provision to community members who have a language barrier, interpreters and translators are not treated as part of the service provision by the public service agencies, but more as an

ad hoc ancillary tool. Extraordinarily, in some cases, it was revealed through the story of Susie, one of the public service representatives, that translation, which is the written form of interpreting, may not be funded by a public service when that was needed for communication, which then forced the public servant to use a family member to assist with communication.

Increasing marketisation of community services, including language services, especially since the early 1990s, has resulted in increasing competition by private agencies trying to outbid each other in procurement tenders or direct contracts. This appears to have forced government agencies into either trying to find ways of managing language services through free or cheaper options, such as the use of family or friends, or using any bilingual staff who happen to be present, or engaging the language service brokers who charge the least. Jamrozik (2001) drew attention to the risks of pushing this model too far, predicting that ‘the community services will become a market, operated on market principles, creating “deserving” winners and “undeserving” losers’ (p. 78). The use of translators and interpreters by public services should not be viewed as an inconvenience—as quoted at the outset of this chapter, ‘a piece of gum on the bottom of a shoe—ignored for all practical purposes, but almost impossible to remove’ (Morris, 1999, p. 7)—but as an integral part of public service, critical to overcoming barriers affecting participation and thus reducing the inequalities that ‘produce and reproduce’ exclusion.

The data show that there is little, if any, recognition of the professional standing of this service within the public services. Interpreters and translators report that any recognition is ad hoc and made by individual officers rather than at an institutional level. Moreover, examples of personal experiences in the data collected underline the lack of regard or respect from clients in either of the two other groups that are the subjects of this study for the time, needs and boundaries of the professional roles of translators and interpreters.

As indicated previously, this lack of recognition and the alienation of this critical profession is a pernicious problem that comes up in almost all studies into this fragile industry. The reasons for this may need to be examined from a different angle. Bourdieu's framework can help us to understand the situation described above in relation to the ambiguity of the position of public service translators and interpreters. It is crucial, when attempting to examine one's own position in relation to a field, to understand how membership to that field works. In explaining how membership to a field comes about, Bourdieu (1993) wrote:

It is difficult to conceive of the vast amount of information which is linked to membership of a field and which all contemporaries immediately invest in their reading of a work: information about institutions—e.g. academics, journals, magazines, galleries, publishers, etc.—and about persons, their relationships, liaisons and quarrels, information about the ideas and problems which are 'in the air' and circulate orally in gossip and rumour. (Some intellectual occupations presuppose a particular mastery of this information.) (p. 31)

Interpreters and translators by default never operate within their own field, but are always negotiating another, often high-status and dominant fields such as the medical and legal arenas. As previous and current industry reports show, most employment opportunities for interpreters and translators in public service settings are on a freelance or subcontracted basis, and always require venturing into another field. For example, a lawyer practices law within a legal system, and a medical doctor practices medicine within a health system service, as in hospitals or community health centres. In contrast, interpreters and translators visit fields such as these for a short period of time (often an hour and a half for a standard booking), provide their professional services, and then leave for another assignment, which will quite possibly be in a different field. Interpreters who participated in the interview

indicated that they worked in a wide range of service provision settings, where they acted as communication tools enabling the provision of the service, and in that capacity they formed part of the service. It is not uncommon for an interpreter to start the day in a day procedure unit in a hospital at 7am, then go to a local court assignment at 10am, and finish the day with a 3pm assignment in a public school between a parent and a principal or teacher.

By operating within a number of fields, interpreters and translators do not have the opportunities to acquire all the information about those particular fields—'and about persons, their relationships, liaisons and quarrels, information about the ideas and problems which are 'in the air' and circulate orally in gossip and rumour'—which Bourdieu argued is presupposed in membership of a particular field in some cases. Interpreters thus lack the primary habitus that influences positions and position-taking in a given field. They find themselves in a losing battle for membership of a particular field, or even for simple recognition of their vital role within those fields, despite not being members of them, as the stories from practising interpreters reveal in this study. This may explain the self-described frustration of the Arabic interpreter in court settings, where, for all intents and purposes, she is part of the legal process, as she is paid by the court and assists the court to overcome a barrier in accomplishing a task in its processes; nevertheless, she is denied the same recognition or protection as, say, the hearing attendants or deputy registrars in the same setting. Data from the interviews suggest that this could, in fact, be an industrial issue, as in some settings, such as courts, interpreters appear to be sitting on both sides of the fence: some of the rights to which a hearing attendant or deputy registrar serving at the counter is eligible, such as protection of staff from abuse, intimidation or threatening behaviour, are not afforded to the interpreters who are paid by the court.

Interpreters acknowledged in their stories that they had received some recognition from the other agent in their workplace, namely, the community members with language

barriers. This may be because interpreters enjoy power over these agents, in that they are fluent in the language of the community member and also in the language of the dominant agent—the public services—in the field. Interpreters inevitably acquire a degree of influence from other dominant fields, such as the medical or legal fields due to their knowledge of those fields and their frequent exposure to them. For example, for a community member going through an intervention order process at a local court, this is usually a rare experience that they will have once or twice in their lives, if that. They will be foreign to the setting, to the language, and to the faces and procedures, whereas an interpreter may undertake a similar assignment once or twice a month. Community members, therefore, may be identifying and recognising the voice of someone who speaks their language and is familiar not only with their culture, but also with the unfamiliar field in which they find themselves. In this case, recognition is afforded, not for membership of a community, but for the assistance provided by the interpreter.

One of the community members expressed this very concisely in answering a question about whether they found interpreting and translating services helpful, saying: ‘I get help from interpreters mainly in hospitals and I see them as part of the excellent health service I receive in this country.’ This highlights that, regardless of whether they are in-house interpreters or subcontractors outsourced from external agencies, interpreting and translation services are part of the service provided to the public, and are recognised and treated as such by the public themselves, but not the public agencies. Data show that most interpreters and translators are employed as ad hoc, ancillary services. As one public servant revealed, ‘the process by which language services are purchased is the same process used to purchase the toilet paper or other bathroom supplies’. This attitude to sourcing language services indicates a concern for achieving savings and cost-cutting, at the expense of equity when it comes to supplying language services.



The findings regarding the everyday practices of public services lead to the conclusion that public service translators and interpreters are not treated by public services as part of the fields within which they work, but that they are merely catalysts who allow one field to communicate with another where communication is inhibited by language barriers. Status is understood as the presumed value of expert skills, rather than the skills themselves. An individual or group with a high status is ideally attributed trustworthiness, prestige, authority, higher pay and a degree of professional exclusivity. Unless this unique value possessed by translators and interpreters is objectified and clearly demonstrated in these terms, any move towards proper recognition of the position and role of the interpreters and translators appears to be almost impossible. This can be judged by the data revealed in this study and by the little progress achieved in this recognition since the mid-1970s, when training courses and a certification system implemented by NAATI appeared. The real problem is that the public service agencies fail to accord interpreters and translators full or temporary membership of the field. They do not acknowledge that, in order to do one's job, one needs to be very familiar with the medical, legal, educational or other specialist terms in order to convey those exactly in the client's language.

One interesting attempt at diagnosing the reasons for the lack of professionalisation of interpreting and translation was offered by Jean Shannon, a member of the task force implementing the recommendations of a KPMG report into a National Language Services Bureau on behalf of DILGEA. She blamed the 'welfare need' focus of the language services for poor professionalisation, and made the following comment in relation to the Translating and Interpreting Service (Shannon, 1991, p. 84, cited in Ozolins, 2004, p. 5):

According to Shannon (1990), the TIS service was created in the spirit of a voluntary organisation to meet an immediate 'welfare need'. 'As such, the culture within the organisation as well as the pervading attitude of many of our contract staff is one of

altruism [but] the continuance along a ‘charity’ mentality has done nothing for the growth of the service, its efficiency or the enhancement of the profession.’ (Shannon, 1990)

Although this statement was made in good faith in an attempt to diagnose the underlying problems that may prevent the professionalisation of this industry, it is very revealing in terms of how the language services are perceived by some in government agencies, which are the largest users and providers of language services.

This attitude appears to underpin how public services view a translator or an interpreter even today: as a person assisting in a ‘charity’-like service for a member of the community lacking language skills, not as someone assisting in overcoming a barrier to enable the engagement and socialisation of a citizen and the proper provision of services to the public, which is the single most important task of any public service.

Any recognition from public servants, which some interpreters acknowledged in their stories, came from individuals, specifically for the help provided by that interpreter to that individual, rather than a whole-field recognition of the interpreter as a professional. Unless the professional right of interpreters to exist and function in a given field is recognised—in this case, by public services—and they are recognised as an extension of the public services, the uncertainty that frustrates and victimises interpreters who work in these fields will remain a profound problem.

## **Summary**

This chapter discussed data from the previous three chapters using the defining questions proposed in the UNDESA Report (2009, p. 16) as a framework for revealing practices in which weaknesses in inclusion lead to exclusion, and lack of engagement leads to faltering participation. These discussions were aided by Bourdieu’s concepts of field, habitus and symbolic violence. The findings and analyses based on the UNDESA benchmark

questions show that the accessibility and availability of information remain significant issues, despite decades of language service policies and access and equity initiatives at both state and federal levels. The public service remains closed to most people with language barriers. Public engagement and participation by people with language barriers remains as elusive as ever, leading to serious levels of exclusion from public and social life.

The critical profession of translation and interpreting, which constitute the most commonly used communication methods and those most preferred by community members with language barriers, is in a position of uncertainty. Members feel powerless in dealing with serious problems relating to their role in public service provision and their conditions of employment in a highly casualised workforce. Translators and interpreters involved in public service provision appear to be suffering from the lack of both identity and a sense of belonging. They are not regarded as an extension of the public service, but rather as an ad-hoc ancillary service. In many settings such as courts, there is confusion about where they belong. This ancillary position undermines their professional status, which then negatively affects their employment conditions and pay. Descriptions provided in three key studies, conducted three decades apart, show that time has not helped; if anything, things are getting worse, at least according to the translators and interpreters themselves. The play of power in public services will continue to make these professionals vulnerable and powerless to resolve the problems plaguing their profession, and requires strong government intervention.

## Conclusion

This chapter offers a conclusion to the thesis by discussing the main findings from Chapters in order to answer the questions posed and objectives set out in Introduction. The chapter begins by summarising the research findings related to the research questions. It then discusses the potential contributions that this study can make with respect to reducing social exclusion and improving the accessibility of public service provision in multilingual settings. The chapter ends with a discussion of recommendations arising from this study and an acknowledgement of its limitations.

The main research premise set out in the Research Rationale (Section 1.4) of the Introduction was:

While the stated policies of access and equity with respect to citizens with language barriers ostensibly aim at achieving equality in accessing public services, participating in democratic life and enjoying individual rights as a citizen, these policies and their objectives have not been subjected to robust scrutiny in terms of their implementation. A failure to properly put policies of accessibility into practice, giving all community members equal access to public services, leads to the potential for vulnerability on the part of the community members who have language barriers, which in turn has the potential to produce and reproduce inequalities that lead to the exclusion and marginalisation of a section of the community.

The core of this research addresses the following questions:

- How are current government policies regarding access and equity implemented in everyday public service structures and processes with respect to citizens experiencing language barriers?

- How can we better understand of the interactions between the public institutions that control critical services and citizens with language barriers in a field of practice shaped by asymmetric or unequal relations of power?

**How are current policies regarding public social inclusion, access and equity implemented in everyday public service provision, and what is their impact on the social inclusion of community members experiencing language barriers?**

This research question was predominantly answered through a rigorous examination of the actual practices of public services with respect to accessibility by people with language barriers, in the context of their stated objectives of ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘openness’ in the service provision policies in place since the mid-1970s, using the social inclusion criteria identified by the UN UNDESA Report (2009, p. 16).

The benchmark questions measuring these criteria were:

- How and why are people being excluded from the processes that make up society?
- Who is affected by this exclusion, and what are the economic, social and political environments in which the problem is most apparent?
- What are the structures, processes and relations of power that exist within societies that result in the inclusion of some and exclusion of others?

Hawtin and Kettle (2000) asserted, ‘On a personal level participation may bring independence, self-esteem, dignity, experience of working together and community belonging’ (p. 122). However, the findings of this study show that the public service is far from being open for most people with language barriers.

This conclusion, however contestable, is demonstrably true. The ease of access to public engagement with and participation in public services for people with language barriers remains as elusive as ever, leading to serious levels of exclusion from public and social life. The stated objectives of engagement, public participation and social inclusion by public

services appear to be at odds with practices in the front line. Despite responses to the survey and individual migrant case stories clearly demonstrating that a large section of the community have language barriers that hinder their effective interaction with the public services, and that they are therefore in need of assistance in order to overcome these barriers, the everyday practices of the public services are abundant with examples of how this assistance is not extended consistently, and need is largely ignored by the public services. This should not be viewed as an underappreciation of some good practices carried out by some agencies.

This study also demonstrated that the habitus of public services remains largely unchanged, and that public service provision remains as a ‘one size fits few’ practice, excluding and potentially marginalising a significant section of the community. The current interaction between public services and community members with language barriers can more accurately be described as a monologue, rather than a dialogue.

**How can we better understand of the interaction between the public institutions that control critical services and citizens with language barriers in a field of practice shaped by asymmetric or unequal relations of power?**

As Bourdieu claims, the ideals of individualisation and self-help—key concepts in a neo-liberal approach to public service provision—make it possible to hold people responsible for their misfortune, and are deeply complicit in numerous forms of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 3). The findings of this study reveal a number of ‘legitimate’ practices, such as appointing and using a community leader—a practice that dates back to Bennelong in 1788, and currently survives in the suburbs of Melbourne in 2014—or allowing family and friends to act as interpreters and translators in settings where private and confidential details are shared, are imposed on community members with language barriers. Such conduct constitutes significant practices of symbolic violence perpetuated by the public services.

When viewed from a Bourdieuan perspective, in which agents in a field are in constant struggle to change their positions to improve their social, cultural and symbolic capital, the agents who make up the field are required to participate in order to consolidate or change their positions. Findings show that a section of the community is excluded from this necessary participation by being denied assistance by the agents who control the public services, thus preventing them from developing appropriate capital—relevant skills, knowledge and dispositions, which Holmes (2011) asserted are essential for sustained engagement and effective dialogue with the public services so that a trusting relationship can develop. This failure to remove barriers to full and equal participation can be viewed as an act of resistance to change by public service agents; this resistance is implicit in their actions despite the illusion created by their policies and frameworks of ‘inclusiveness’, ‘openness’ and ‘engagement’ in Australia. The resulting implication is ‘that what is required is a radical transformation of the social—including organisational—conditions of production of the habitus that is actively complicit in its own domination’ (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008, p. 31). In other words, we must free our minds as a first step towards freeing ourselves from the injustices of the status quo.

The professions of translating and interpreting, which constitute the most commonly used communication methods and those most preferred by community members with language barriers, data from this research revealed, are struggling in a position of uncertainty and isolation. Its members feel powerless in dealing with serious problems, including the lack of recognition and a sense of belonging within public service settings, reflected in their conditions of employment in a highly casualised workforce. The serious problems relating to these conditions of employment, demonstrated repeatedly in major reports by Athanasiadis and Turner (1994), Ozolins (2004) and the APESMA (2012), and reinforced by the stories and reflections of practitioners revealed in the present study, are profoundly connected to the

processes of purchasing the service, which, according to one of the participants, is the same process that is used to purchase cleaning products including toilet paper. In an increasingly neo-liberal public service culture focused on economy, efficiency and effectiveness (Stenson & Edwards, 2004), the social aspects of services appear to be a secondary concern and issues around belonging and treatment of interpreters in contexts such as schools, courts and hospitals remain pernicious problems, and ones that are complex to resolve; recognition must be achieved, not only from public service management, but also from the professionals such as doctors, teachers, judges, barristers and social workers who represent fields of their own, as well as the public service.

Using Bourdieu's concepts, an agent in a field must possess the habitus required to be part of that field to compete for capital. Development of the necessary habitus—dispositions—often is not a deliberate, clear act, but a process that is shaped by being in that field for a sustained period of time and becoming familiar with the stories, tastes, language, style of dress and practices within that field. Interpreters and translators, a heavily casualised workforce, do not have this opportunity to develop the capital to be part of these subfields, and hence originates a cycle of misrecognition and perceptions of alienation. The play of power in public service contexts will continue to make these professionals vulnerable and powerless to resolve the problems that plague them; direct government intervention is required to create the conditions in which agents from other fields recognise the role and membership of translators and interpreters.

### **Contribution of the Research and Recommendations**

This research has significantly added to the existing body of knowledge by demonstrating how ordinary people experience inequalities in their interactions with the public services that deliver critical services to the community. The research has demonstrated in a practical way how the stated objectives of access and equity policies over 40 years since



the mid-1970s (even despite compulsory reporting of language assistance initiatives under the Federal Access and Equity Framework since 2007) continue to fail in their implementation in everyday service delivery, and any public service approach to removing language barriers remains unchanged and largely ineffective. A recognition of this failure by the public service agencies could result in the development of practical and effective government social inclusion initiatives at the public service–public interface, focusing on implementation rather than broad policies in the short term, and aiming at changing the habitus of the public servants in the long term.

Using Bourdieu's concepts as an analytical framework, the study has exposed some common practices of symbolic violence in the routine practices of public services in Australia. These make some sections of the community vulnerable and deny them the opportunities to participate and develop the habitus—skills, knowledge and dispositions—to participate in society and become active citizens. This exposure can itself be an empowering process for community members with language barriers to identify and deal with the inequalities that produce and reproduce vulnerability and exclusion.

Finally, drawing from previous studies and current stories from practising interpreters, this study has demonstrated the uncertainty of the position of a key profession—translating and interpreting—in public service provision, not only from an industrial relations point of view but also as a social phenomenon. The study attempted to explain the lack of recognition by the public services of these professionals, even though they are, and should be, a part of the service provision.

A PhD thesis is required to demonstrate mastery of research methodologies and selection of an appropriate approach for PhD research design. From a purely academic perspective, this research has added value by utilising both qualitative and quantitative

methodologies to make sense of a social phenomenon. This has generated knowledge that other researchers may refer to or build upon.

## **Recommendations**

Several recommendations deserve spelling out as a result of this study's academic scrutiny of the stated objectives of public services in terms of access, equity and inclusiveness; their practices in everyday activities; some of the effects of these policies and practices on community members with language barriers; and the position of the profession of translating and interpreting in this setting.

1. The significant gap identified in this study between policy and practice in terms of the accessibility of public services for people with language barriers points to a lack of recognition and respect for the needs of such people in the community; this lack of recognition and respect appears to be entrenched in the public service culture. This gap is not so much a function of funding and resourcing as of the fact that contact point staff do not recognize the needs of people with language barriers. The need for a new value discourse and a cultural shift is demonstrated. Barriers to accessibility should not be viewed only in terms of physical settings, such as ramps, rails or lighting, but also in terms of language accessibility.
2. Although this study identified a number of impediments to dealing with the public services for people with language barriers, there are bound to be more of them in specific settings. It is essential to prioritise a review by public services of their own practices, in a bottom-up approach, in order to identify and remove actual or potential impediments confronting people with language barriers. The purpose of this review which can be undertaken by what we can call 'accessibility officer' would be to identify barriers and suggest remedies.

The public service management would, then, resource and implement actions that would ensure that the public services are accessible and people with language barriers do not have to be vulnerable and dependent on others, and that they are able to be active citizens with the opportunities to develop the dispositions required to participate and flourish in society.

3. Translating and interpreting are two key, independent, communication methods for those barred by language from full participation in Australian society. They help to enable people with language barriers to lead independent lives and maintain their privacy and self-esteem. The findings in this study verify previous industry reports and studies, and further demonstrate that these critical service providers are not afforded due recognition by public services, and they work and live in uncertainty. There is an urgent need to incorporate these professionals into the public service and recognise their unique position as a communication vehicle as an extension of public services, not an ad hoc service.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

This research study has identified a number of significant research areas that would justify interest from funding bodies and PhD candidates, as they have significant implications for social inclusion and minimising exclusion. These areas for future research are presented below.

This study identified serious gaps in access and equity policies and how they are implemented by the frontline service delivery staff through an examination of the practices of these service providers. Findings indicate that the approach by public service staff has not changed, despite four decades of access and equity policies. A more focused study of the perceptions of public service delivery frontline staff, in terms of how they view community

members with language barriers and how they handle these barriers, would be justified to provide information and insight for policy makers at higher levels to close the apparent gap between policy and implementation. This justification echoes the recommendations of the Report on the OECD Conference, ‘Innovating the Public Service—from Ideas to Impact’, (2014), which stated: ‘We need to have empathy with citizens, to understand their experience and motivations, but also we need to have empathy with those within the system/the public sector and understand why things work as they do.’ The report also pointed out that ‘Governments will need to look at their internal working practices if they are going to use innovation processes involving citizens. Many of these practices are not set up for closer engagement with, or involvement of, citizens.’

This research study exposed instances of symbolic violence in the practices of public service agencies that are so routine that they are regarded as legitimate by all, including people with language barriers. Previous major reviews on access and equity in 1992, 2005, and 2011 focused on identifying access issues but did not examine how these issues may be affecting the lives of people. Although this research partially filled this gap, further research into the nature of vulnerability and its impact (tangible, intangible, economic, environmental and its social significance) on the lives of people with language barriers would be justified.

This research study confirmed the findings from previous industry reports on the status of translators and interpreters and the lack of recognition they receive from public services. Since studies conducted over longer periods of time have indicated similar issues, a study into the perceptions public servants have of these professionals may provide more new data that would help reveal some of the underlying issues that produce and reproduce this situation.

This study found a high number of people with language barriers not participating in elections at all, or only sometimes. This is consistent with previous research conducted in the

UK that showed above average levels of non-participation among migrant groups. However, a similarly high number of responses indicated that even if language were not a barrier, they felt they still would not participate; this indicates other barriers to or explanations of non-participation. Several authors (Anwar, 1994; Percy-Smith, 2000) have listed other reasons for non-participation, such as lack of a feeling of belonging, relevance or understanding of processes in general. The barriers to participation specifically in the elections by people with language barriers in Australia warrants further, more dedicated scrutiny.

The data from the questionnaire show that a very significant section of the respondents (32%) indicated that they were 'Not sure' about their satisfaction with language services, and 7% responded that they were 'Dissatisfied'. It was beyond the scope of this study to investigate the reasons for this poor satisfaction; however, given that a total of 39% of respondents returned unsure or negative responses about their satisfaction, further research on the experiences of people with language barriers in using interpreting and translating services in terms of quality issues is warranted.

### **Limitations of the Study**

While this study produced significant findings relating to inequalities experienced by people with language barriers in their interaction with public services, there are limitations directly relating to the specific questions that have been the focus of this research, and caution must be exercised in generalising these findings. One of these relates to the quantitative data obtained from the surveys completed by community members with language barriers. The number of surveys returned was 130 from 17 languages. By comparison, a survey, seeking feedback from NES community members, administered by the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia and distributed nationally in 2012-2013 online and through its wide network of peak bodies, community organizations, service agencies and individuals had only 100 quantifiable surveys returned nationwide (FECCA, 2013, p.15).

Having more participants from more languages and dialects spoken in Australia, which a 2012 DHS report puts at more than 245, excluding indigenous languages and deaf community members, would definitely contribute to a more comprehensive picture of the NES communities. However, despite the challenges of obtaining data from NES communities in terms of sourcing, communication, logistics and funding, the number of surveys returned, and given that the data obtained came from a reasonably large number of responses from a balanced distribution of languages from different parts of the world and from people with different lengths of residence in Australia, this study provides a valuable insight into these under-researched members of our society (Hale, 2007). Future research can target different languages and communities for comparison.

Another limitation is the number of public services examined and the number of public servants interviewed in investigating the implementation of policies and the underlying attitudes of public services in interacting with NES community members. However, examination of selected public services and interviews with a limited number of public servants provided some excellent examples of how some entrenched problems and issues impact on the implementation of access and equity policies. Further research can target other public service areas commonly accessed by NES members of our society such as education and the criminal justice system.

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## **Appendix I: Questionnaire**

### Understanding the language services needs of NES community members

#### Objectives:

This questionnaire is designed to gain an insight into the language services needs of NES community members in accessing public services. The questions are specifically designed to collect data that address:

- 1- Common features of the demographic profiles of NES community members,
- 2- The nature and frequency of their interaction with public services,
- 3- Their language services needs into the future,
- 4- Their access to and use of interpreters and translated information and correspondence.

It is anticipated that the data collected will assist in understanding the current state of interaction between NES community members and Public Services and will have implications for public service provision and methods of communication, especially the use of translators and interpreters.

### **PART I: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

(Please circle or tick the answer that best describes your situation or circumstances)

#### 1.1. Gender

1. (Male)

2. (Female)

#### 1.2. Age

1. 30 or under

2. 31–50

3. 51+

#### 1.3. Life in Australia

1. Less than 5 years

2. 5–10 years

3. 10–15 years

4. 15–25 years

5. 25 years +

## 1.4. Level of Education

1. Nil
2. Primary (1–6 years)
3. Junior Secondary (7–9 years)
4. Senior Secondary (10–12 years) non-university tertiary
5. Undergraduate
6. Postgraduate

## 1.5. English and LOTE (Language Other Than English) skills

## 1.5.1 How well do you speak English?

1. Nil
2. Limited
3. Average
4. Good
5. Excellent

## 1.5.2 How well do you read and write English?

1. Nil
2. Limited
3. Average
4. Good
5. Excellent

## 1.5.3 What language/s other than English (LOTE) do you speak?

.....

## 1.5.4 How well do you speak your LOTE that you use most?

1. Nil
2. Limited
3. Average
4. Good
5. Excellent

## 1.5.4 How well do you read and write your LOTE you use most?

1. Nil
2. Limited
3. Average
4. Good
5. Excellent

## 1.5.5 Have you ever attended English classes in a school or centre in Australia?

1. YES (go to question 1.5.2)
2. NO (skip to 1..5.7)

## 1.5.6 If yes, how long did you attend English classes in Australia?

1. 1–6 months
2. 7–12 months
3. 1–2 years
4. 2 years +

1.5.7 Why did you not attend English classes in Australia?

- |                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Family commitments          | 2. Cost   |
| 3. Work                        | 4. Health |
| 5. Other (please specify)..... |           |

1.6 Do you think your English speaking, reading and writing skills will significantly improve in the next 5–10 years to the extent that you will not need any interpreters or translated texts?

1. Yes, definitely    2. Not sure    3. No, I don't think so

1.7 Employment

1.7.1 Are you currently in paid employment?    1. Yes    2. No

1.7.2 Which language did/do you mainly use at work?    1. English    2. LOTE

1.7.3 Does/Did your employer provide any translated information or interpreters to explain the work rules, occupational health and safety guidelines, employment terms?

1. Never    2. Sometimes    3. Always

1.7.4 If no, how do/did you manage to follow work rules, occupational health and safety guidelines, employment terms etc?

1. Colleagues help    2. Family helps    3. My boss helps  
4. Other (please specify) .....

**PART II: INTERACTION WITH PUBLIC SERVICES (Eg, welfare, housing, hospital, childcare, schools, police, courts etc.)**

(Please circle or tick the answer that best describes your situation or circumstances)

2.1 What is the most common public service you use? (Please circle one answer)

1. Health services (e.g., hospitals Community Health Centres etc)
2. Education services (e.g., childcare, kinder, school)
3. Welfare services (e.g., Centrelink, housing)

- 4. Legal or Justice (e.g., Legal Aid, police, courts)
- 5. Local government services (i.e. local council services)
- 6. Other (please specify) .....

2.2 How do you mostly communicate with public services?

- 1. Interpreters
- 2. Translated letters or information
- 3. Family and friends
- 4. I manage with my limited English
- 5. Other (please specify) .....

2.3 If you get help from family/friends, do you think your privacy/confidentiality is compromised.

- 1. Not at all    2. Sometimes    3. Always

2.3.1 If there were independent professional interpreters/translators available, would you use them rather than family/friends?

- 1. Yes, definitely    2. Not sure    2. No, not at all

2.4 Who initiates the interaction between you and the public services?

- 1. I contact the public service when I need a service
- 2. Public service contacts me when they have something to tell me

2.5 In which language do public services (e.g., welfare, Centrelink, employment agency, housing, hospital, childcare, schools, police, courts etc.) contact you?

- 1. English                      2. LOTE

2.6 How often do you receive translated information from public services in your language about new services, changes, new policies or rules?

- 1. Never            2. Sometimes            3. Always

2.7 How often do you use interpreters in communicating with public services?

1. Never      2. Sometimes      3. Always

2.9 Do you find quality of language services (e.g., interpreters or translated information) satisfactory?

- Very satisfied      Satisfied      Not sure      Dissatisfied      Very dissatisfied

2.9.1 Do you find translated letters, information sheets or brochures helpful?

1. Yes    2. Not sure    3. No

2.9.2 What do you expect from interpreters?

1. To help me communicate with public services
2. To give me advice
3. To be an advocate for me
4. To support me when I deal with public services
5. Other (please specify)

### **PART III: OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY LIFE**

(Please circle or tick the answer that best describes your situation or circumstances)

3.1 Do you vote in federal, state and local elections?

1. Not at all      2. Sometimes      3. Always

2. Do you participate in social/cultural, sports or special interest clubs or groups (including religious events/activities where English is spoken)?

1. Never      2. Rarely      3. Sometimes    4. Often      5. Always



3.2 Are you ever consulted by public services including city councils about any changes, new plans, new policies or services in writing or verbally?

1. Not at all            2. Sometimes            3. Always

3.3 If language were not a barrier, would you have contributed to public debates and policies at council, state or federal government levels?

3.3 Do you use English in your daily life at all?    1. Never            2. Sometimes    3. Always

3.4 Do you have any English speaking neighbours? 1. None            2. A few            3. Many

**PART IV: ANY OTHER COMMENTS**

Please feel free to comment on anything that can provide further information on the above topics.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

## **Appendix II: Interview Schedule (1): Non-English Speaking**

### **Community Members**

The interview intends to obtain more details about some of the information elicited in the survey to gain a deeper insight into the interaction between NES community members and public services.

1. Can you tell me briefly about your background? (e.g., your country of origin, how long you have been in Australia, studies, work experience etc.)
2. Can you tell me about what sort of public services you usually access or you have accessed in the past? (e.g., welfare, Centrelink, employment agency, housing, hospital, childcare, schools, police, courts etc.)
3. Can you tell me what your English skills are like and how you manage your everyday activities with limited or no English?
4. How do you get information from public services, how do you communicate with public services, who helps you?
5. Can you tell me about any major dealings/stories with public services currently or in the past?

## **Appendix III: Interview Schedule (2): Public Service Translators and Interpreters**

The interview intends to obtain further information about some of the data elicited in the survey to gain a deeper insight into the circumstances and role of public service translators in public service delivery.

1. Can you tell me about your brief background in Australia? (e.g., how long you have been in Australia, studies, work, NAATI accreditation etc)
  
2. Have you studied public service discourse translation as a specialist area?
  
3. Can you tell me what sort of texts you translate?
  
3. Can you tell me what the major issues are in public service translation? [any stories]
  
4. Can you tell me what the major issues are for the public service translators in terms of work, remuneration, future prospects? [any stories]
  
5. Do you feel some of your translations may not make much sense to the NES community for reasons other than linguistic issues? Any examples/ stories?
  
6. Do you think your translation outcome would be better if you were involved in the text writing stage? Maybe ask if they've ever seen their translations actually in publication?
  
7. Do you think if you were treated as part of the public services, as an extension of public service to the NES clients, your role and professional status would improve?
  
8. What do you think of private translation agencies? What is your experience working with them? [stories]
  
9. How do you see the future prospects of this profession?

## **Appendix V: Interview Schedule (3): Public Service Managers and Coordinators Responsible for Arranging Translators and Interpreters**

The interview intends to gain a deeper insight into the practices of public service agencies in dealing with NES communities.

1. Can you tell me briefly about your background?
2. What are the circumstances in which you need to communicate with the NES community members?
3. How do you communicate with NES community members? Do you find it challenging? (stories)
4. Can you tell me what the major issues are in public service provision through translators and interpreters? (stories)
5. Do you initiate contact with NES community members to seek their views or opinion on policies, services, amendments etc? Any examples/stories?
6. What do you think should be done to improve public service provision through translators and interpreters?
7. Do you regard translators and interpreters as part of public service?

## **Appendix VI: Recommendations of the Access and Equity**

### **Inquiry and Government Response**

1. That the Australian Government reaffirm its commitment to Access and Equity policy as the primary vehicle for ensuring responsiveness of the Australian Government to Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) population.

#### **Supported**

Access and Equity policy has been in place since the mid-1980s.

The Australian Government supports the Inquiry Panel's view that it is important to strengthen Access and Equity Policy to ensure that government policies, programs and services are responsive to Australia's CALD population.

The Australian Government reaffirms its commitment in announcing the new policy, and 'fast facts' will be circulated to agencies to highlight the key changes from the previous framework.

2. That Access and Equity policy encompass not only responsiveness in service delivery, but require all Australian government agencies, whether or not performing service delivery activities, when they engage and communicate with the broader community, to also ensure that they include effective communication and engagement with Australia's CALD population.

#### **Supported**

The Australian Government supports this recommendation, noting that Access and Equity already applies not only to service delivery but also departmental policies and programs. The Australian Government acknowledges that Access and Equity considerations have mainly been applied to service delivery and supports the 'recast' obligations (as set out at Recommendation 4) that seek to strengthen its application to policies and programs.

3. That the key focus of Access and Equity policy be made more transparent by renaming it Multicultural Access and Equity Policy and by the introduction of an explanatory 'byline' which highlights some key elements of the policy—'Respecting Diversity. Improving Responsiveness'.

**Supported**

The Australian Government supports renaming the policy ‘Multicultural Access and Equity’ to clarify its target group. The Australian Government also supports the inclusion of the tagline Respecting Diversity. Improving Responsiveness to help communicate the key objectives of the policy. DIAC will incorporate the revised name and tagline in its policy guidance and supporting documents.

4. That the existing Access and Equity Strategy and Framework be updated and recast in the form of a set of firm commitments and implementation obligations on the part of agencies to Australia’s CALD population (covering engagement, communication, policy, program design and service delivery) as set out at Attachment 5.

**Supported**

The Australian Government will recast the existing Access and Equity Strategy and Framework with an enhanced set of Multicultural Access and Equity obligations. The enhanced set of obligations aims to bring structure to the implementation of Access and Equity across government and to improve the performance and accountability of government in this endeavour.

As recommended by the Inquiry and set out at Attachment 5 of the Access and Equity Inquiry report, under the revised policy all Australian government departments and agencies will be required to prepare and implement a two-year Agency Multicultural Plan to address their Access and Equity obligations. The government notes that while many agencies already provide robust reporting, a two-year Agency Multicultural Plan will enable strengthening of reporting across all agencies. To assist agencies and ensure a degree of consistency, DIAC will make available a template for the two-year plan.

Agencies can reference relevant and existing documents that may align with Agency Multicultural Plans.

The lead department in each portfolio will be responsible for determining whether their Agency Multicultural Plan covers the whole portfolio, or whether agencies within the portfolio prepare their own plans. The Australian Multicultural Council can make recommendations to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs for exemptions that may be sought from highly specialised technical agencies within a portfolio.

The Australian Multicultural Council will be responsible for providing feedback to agencies on their draft Agency Multicultural Plans.

Agencies are to assign a Senior Executive Officer to be responsible for the implementation of the Multicultural Access and Equity obligations in the agency.

The new arrangements will be effective from 1 July 2013.

5. That Access and Equity policy considerations be incorporated into all Australian government social policy initiatives, such as the Social Inclusion Agenda, Disability Strategy and policy on homelessness.

### **Supported in principle**

Australian government departments and agencies with responsibility for across government social policy and initiatives should ensure Multicultural Access and Equity considerations are meaningfully addressed. These departments and agencies should reflect this alignment in their Agency Multicultural Plans.

6. That the Australian Government disseminate updated Access and Equity policy and associated obligations to all of its agencies, together with a toolkit of resources and better practice guidelines prepared by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

### **Supported**

The Australian Government notes that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) will support agencies in developing Agency Multicultural Plans and implementing Multicultural Access and Equity.

DIAC, as the coordinating agency for Access and Equity, will disseminate and promote the obligations (as set out at Attachment 5 of the Access and Equity Inquiry report) to agencies. A key mechanism to support agencies will be the development and ongoing maintenance of a toolkit of resources and good practice examples.

7. That the Department of Immigration and Citizenship work closely with the Australian Bureau of Statistics in dissemination and practical implementation of updated Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity being developed by the Bureau.

**Supported**

The Australian Government notes that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship has a close relationship with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and will continue to cooperate with the ABS, including in relation to the dissemination and practical implementation of the publication Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity (1289.0), currently being updated by the Bureau. The publication will be referenced in the toolkit.

8. That the Australian Government incorporate Access and Equity considerations and obligations into funding partnerships and agreements with states and territories and into whole-of-government guidelines on tender specifications and contractual arrangements for outsourced service delivery by its agencies.

**Supported in principle**

Multicultural Access and Equity considerations apply to all Australian Government funded services, irrespective of whether they are delivered by other government agencies, state and territory governments, community organisations or the private sector.

As part of each Agency Multicultural Plan, individual agencies are required to demonstrate responsiveness to Multicultural Access and Equity considerations and obligations (as set out at Attachment 5, point 11, of the Access and Equity Inquiry report). Where relevant, the Agency Multicultural Plan should consider incorporating Multicultural Access and Equity service requirements into contracts, grant agreements and related guidance material of which the agency has carriage.

9. That the Australian Government develop a whole-of-government policy on communication by its agencies in languages other than English, including use of interpreters and translators.

**Supported**

The Australian Government intends to meet this recommendation in two ways.

First, under the Agency Multicultural Plans, each agency is to have a language and communication plan for CALD communities.

Second, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship is updating the Commonwealth Language Services Guidelines. These whole-of-government Guidelines, which will be



included in the toolkit (see recommendation 6), will assist agencies to develop their language and communication plans.

10. That the Australian Government incorporate Access and Equity considerations and obligations into its whole-of-government communication and advertising guidelines.

### **Supported**

Existing Guidelines on Information and Advertising Campaigns by Australian Government Departments and Agencies (Department of Finance and Deregulation advertising guidelines by Australian government departments and agencies) set out the principles applying to Access and Equity provisions. The Guidelines also set out the principles applying to Australian Government information and advertising campaigns undertaken in Australia. Agencies subject to the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 must comply with these Guidelines. The Access and Equity Inquiry report references the market research that the Department of Finance and Deregulation is currently undertaking to identify the media consumption and information preferences of culturally and linguistically diverse Australians. It is expected that this research will be valuable in providing departments and agencies with a much stronger evidence base to assist with informing and tailoring communications strategies to reach these audiences.

11. That the Australian Government incorporate Access and Equity considerations and obligations into upgraded whole-of-government guidelines on the use of the Internet as a communication and service delivery tool by its agencies.

### **Supported**

The Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO) will update the Web Guide (Australian Government Web guide) to incorporate the existing Better Practice Checklist dealing with Multicultural Access and Equity issues. The Web Guide will be cross-referenced by the Multicultural Access and Equity toolkit under Recommendation 6. The Web Guide will be updated in early 2013.

12. That the Australian Government assess or develop training packages on Access and Equity policy and cultural competency and incorporate them into Australian Public Service

Commission sponsored courses and individual agency training on leadership, policy development and service delivery.

**Supported**

The Australian Public Service Commission, through the Strategic Centre for Leadership, Learning and Development, is currently progressing a whole-of-APS strategy for the development of leadership and core skills. The inclusion of cultural competency as an essential skill for an effective public service will be considered and progressed within this framework.

13. That the Department of Immigration and Citizenship retain responsibility for coordination of Access and Equity policy, monitoring of implementation and consolidated performance reporting across all Australian government agencies, subject to review and oversight by the Australian Multicultural Council.

**Supported**

The Australian Government notes that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), with its existing whole-of-government responsibility for multicultural affairs, including the Multicultural Access and Equity policy, will retain responsibility for coordination of Multicultural Access and Equity policy and, in conjunction with the Australian Multicultural Council, for monitoring of reporting across all Australian government agencies.

DIAC also provides Secretariat support to the Australian Multicultural Council, and will liaise with the Australian Multicultural Council for review and oversight of the Multicultural Access and Equity policy.

14. That the Australian Government request the Auditor-General to undertake periodic performance audits of selected groups of agencies' performance in meeting their obligations under Access and Equity policy.

**Supported**

The Australian Government agrees to this recommendation. DIAC will write to the Auditor-General requesting the audits be considered as part of the ANAO's forward performance

audit work program, noting that the Auditor-General is independent from government and thus will consider his response in the context of other priorities and available resources.

15. That Australian government agencies review the accessibility of their complaints mechanisms to CALD communities and adjust them as necessary, in consultation with CALD communities.

### **Supported**

The Australian Government supports strengthening the transparency and accountability of government agencies in relation to complaint and feedback mechanisms. Examples of good practice complaint and feedback mechanisms will form part of Multicultural Access and Equity toolkit and departments and agencies will address their accessible feedback strategies in their Agency Multicultural Plans.

16. That the Department of Immigration and Citizenship continue to commission the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia to provide structured feedback from CALD communities on their perceptions of agencies' Access and Equity performance within the new arrangements.

### **Supported**

DIAC and the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia have an existing funding arrangement for the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia to undertake community consultations on Access and Equity and report on their findings. The Australian Government supports DIAC in working with the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia to design and facilitate activities that will inform Multicultural Access and Equity monitoring and performance.

17. That Access and Equity reporting prepared by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the Australian Multicultural Council, together with any available reports by the Auditor-General, be considered by the Cabinet at the same time as biennial reporting flowing from Social Inclusion policy.

### **Supported in principle**

The Australian Government notes that the Social Inclusion Board does not report biennially to Cabinet. However, Multicultural Access and Equity reporting prepared biennially by DIAC and the Australian Multicultural Council will be presented to the Minister and tabled in both Houses of Parliament.

DIAC and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet will continue to explore opportunities for Multicultural Access and Equity reporting to be considered by Cabinet.

18. That the Australian Government explore, in conjunction with states and territories, the use of the Report on Government Services (RoGS) process to gain a better understanding of Access and Equity performance in relation to CALD clients.

### **Supported**

The Australian Government notes that DIAC, with advice from the Secretariat for the Review of Government Service Provision, will annually extract from the Report on Government Services a 'compendium-style' report highlighting CALD-specific data.

The publication will be distributed throughout the Multicultural Access and Equity networks and made available in the toolkit.

19. That the Australian Government consider adequacy of current provision for research, including national research priorities, on the practical outcomes of the migration program. This assessment should particularly include research on interactions between the Australian Government and Access and Equity target groups and interactions with temporary entrants.

### **Supported**

Australian government departments are considering key challenges in incorporating social science research and evidence into policy development and the government's future research priorities for policy.

The Australian Government is considering a National Research Investment Plan which provides a strategic framework and a set of principles to guide the government's investment in research. The Plan aims to ensure Australia has the capacity to conduct research in areas of national priority and provides advice on the future role of the national research priorities. In addition, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship has an annual program of research into the practical outcomes of the migration program. It is set each year to address

priority issues, data, research, evaluation and analytical gaps to inform the work of the department.

All relevant research produced by agencies is to be referred to in Agency Multicultural Plans.

20. That the Australian Government ensure that agencies give clear and coordinated, whole-of-government advice to long-term temporary entrants to Australia, particularly New Zealand citizens contemplating long-term temporary residence in Australia, both before and after arrival, on their entitlements.

### **Supported**

The Australian Government notes that DIAC, in consultation with key agencies, is to lead the development of a clear and coordinated information resource for New Zealand citizens contemplating long-term residence in Australia.

## Appendix VII: Multicultural Access and Equity Policy Minimum

### Obligations

	Minimum obligation	Why is this a minimum obligation?
1. Leadership	<p>1.1 Executive accountability: Assign a Senior Executive Officer to be responsible for implementation of multicultural access and equity obligations in the agency.</p> <p>1.2 Agency commitment: Leadership to ensure that staff understand and are committed to multicultural access and equity implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from clients and stakeholders suggests that the better performing departments and agencies have a dedicated point of leadership and clear planning for achieving their multicultural access and equity obligations.</li> <li>• With effective leadership, staff are better placed to understand and commit to the implementation of their AMP. This department and agency level ‘buy in’ helps ensure that your AMP translates into accessible services, inclusive policies and effective programs for Australia’s diverse communities.</li> </ul>
2. Engagement	<p>2.1 Stakeholder engagement: Have a stakeholder engagement strategy to understand culturally and linguistically diverse communities’ interaction with their agency.</p> <p>2.2 Language and communication: Have a language and communication plan for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including on the use of languages other than English and incorporating the use of interpreters and translators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A strategic approach to stakeholder engagement builds better ongoing relationships and is more likely to realise benefits for both the department or agency and its stakeholders.</li> <li>• Enhancing the effectiveness of a department or agency’s engagement strategies towards its diverse stakeholders can also assist departments and agencies to better target their efforts and achieve their strategic objectives in a more effective and efficient way.</li> <li>• Feedback from clients, stakeholders and departments and agencies, indicate that communication with diverse communities is central to improving performance in multicultural access and equity.</li> <li>• Lack of effective language and communication practices risks excluding those whose English language skills are low or still developing or who have a low level of familiarity with Australia and how the Australian Government system works.</li> </ul>

	Minimum obligation	Why is this a minimum obligation?
3. Performance	<p>3.1 Performance indicators and reporting: Develop a set of KPIs relating to engagement with, or outcomes of services to, culturally and linguistically diverse clients.</p> <p>3.2 Feedback: Have arrangements to ensure affected culturally and linguistically diverse communities are able to provide feedback on agency multicultural access and equity performance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The KPIs your department or agency sets will provide a clear-cut, objective basis for measurement of your department or agency's performance in multicultural access and equity. In doing so, they demonstrate clarity of commitment and accountability.</li> <li>• Establishing clear benchmarks upon which your performance will be measured will also assist departments and agencies with whole-of-government reporting obligations and performance auditing.</li> <li>• An important element in achieving responsiveness is for clients to be empowered to give feedback and make complaints to government departments and agencies.</li> <li>• Having arrangements in place to ensure that feedback mechanisms are truly accessible to diverse communities will help improve responsiveness to their needs and build trust/credibility.</li> <li>• Trust in government will increase if feedback is incorporated into policies, programs and services and clients are informed of how their feedback has been addressed.</li> </ul>
4. Capability	<p>4.1 Cultural competency: Have training and development measures to equip staff with cultural competency skills.</p> <p>4.2 Research and data: Each agency is required to collect ethnicity data on the culturally and linguistically diverse groups with which the agency engages and to which it delivers services directly or indirectly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong foundations in cultural competency increase the capacity of Australian Government departments and agencies and their staff to understand and respond to the growing diversity within the Australian community.</li> <li>• Demonstrated cultural competency also helps to build trust and provides a vital bridge between a department or agency and the communities they serve.</li> <li>• Without effective research and data collection, departments and agencies risk failing to understand the multicultural nature of their client group (whether they interact directly with them or through policies and programs delivered by third parties). This in turn represents a major barrier to effective planning and delivery.</li> <li>• Having a strong evidence base is also critical when evaluating the effectiveness of a department's or agency's policies, programs and engagement activities in serving the needs of Australia's diverse communities.</li> </ul>

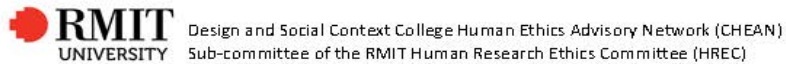
	Minimum obligation	Why is this a minimum obligation?
5. Responsiveness	<p>5.1 Standards: Any whole-of-government standards and guidelines developed by the agency must address multicultural access and equity considerations.</p> <p>5.2 Policy, program and service delivery: Provision to ensure that policies, programs, community interactions and service delivery (whether in-house or outsourced) are effective for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.</p> <p>5.3 Outsourced services: Where relevant, provision for incorporation of multicultural access and equity requirements into contracts, grant agreements and related guidance material of which the agency has carriage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where relevant, multicultural access and equity considerations in whole-of-government standards and guidelines is important to ensuring that such standards and guidelines properly reflect and account for the diverse communities we serve.</li> <li>• It also enables departments and agencies with responsibility for whole-of-government standards and guidelines to demonstrate leadership in multicultural access and equity.</li> <li>• Australia’s diverse communities simply want multicultural access and equity to work ‘on the ground’. This applies to all aspects of government work, from policy design right through to service delivery and engagement and whether delivered directly or outsourced.</li> <li>• Where relevant, inclusion of multicultural access and equity requirements in funding agreements with states and third-party service deliverers is important to driving better multicultural access and equity performance through Australian Government-funded programs.</li> <li>• Those delivering services on behalf of the Australian Government need to be aware of multicultural access and equity considerations in order for those services to work effectively ‘on-the-ground’ for Australia’s diverse communities.</li> <li>• Note: It is important that this is done progressively, particularly in relation to existing contracts and funding agreements, and is mindful of other obligations on agencies (such as the National Compact).</li> </ul>



	Minimum obligation	Why is this a minimum obligation?
6. Openness	<p>6.1 Publishing: Agency to publish its Agency Multicultural Plan on its website and performance reports against agency KPIs for culturally and linguistically diverse clients in agency annual reports.</p> <p>6.2 Data: Agency to make culturally and linguistically diverse data available to other agencies and the public.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective delivery of multicultural access and equity, like any area of social policy, requires effective accountability and governance arrangements.</li> <li>• Placing your AMP on your department or agency's website, and publishing performance reports against the KPIs in your department or agency's annual report, demonstrates your department or agency's commitment to accountability and enables a more objectively based analysis of department and agency performance.</li> <li>• Transparency regarding the diverse communities with which your department or agency interacts helps build trust with communities, demonstrates your department or agency's understanding and commitment to serving their needs and allows other departments and agencies and the public to better understand how the work of your department or agency contributes to building Australia's successful multicultural society.</li> </ul>

## Appendix VIII: Ethics Approval

Note that the title on the Ethics Application and Approval is different. This is the only change. All the research tools are the same.



### Notice of Approval

**Date:** 01 October 2013

**Project number:** CHEAN A 0000015644-07/13

**Project title:** Public Service Translation as a field of practice

**Risk classification:** Low Risk

**Investigator:** Professor Rob Watts

**Approved:** From: 01 October 2013 To: 30 October 2013

I am pleased to advise that your application has been granted ethics approval by the Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network as a sub-committee of the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

#### Terms of approval:

1. **Responsibilities of investigator**  
It is the responsibility of the above investigator/s to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by the CHEAN. Approval is only valid whilst the investigator/s holds a position at RMIT University.
2. **Amendments**  
Approval must be sought from the CHEAN to amend any aspect of a project including approved documents. To apply for an amendment please use the 'Request for Amendment Form' that is available on the RMIT website. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from CHEAN.
3. **Adverse events**  
You should notify HREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
4. **Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF)**  
The PICF and any other material used to recruit and inform participants of the project must include the RMIT university logo. The PICF must contain a complaints clause including the project number.
5. **Annual reports**  
Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report. This form can be located online on the human research ethics web page on the RMIT website.
6. **Final report**  
A final report must be provided at the conclusion of the project. CHEAN must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
7. **Monitoring**  
Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by HREC at any time.
8. **Retention and storage of data**  
The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

In any future correspondence please quote the project number and project title.

On behalf of the DSC College Human Ethics Advisory Network I wish you well in your research.

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