



Talking TIS newsletter

Summer 2014

Save time, find us online

In July 2013 we were very excited to launch our new website, TIS Online, enabling people to access our services in a clear and intuitive way.

TIS Online tailors information and services to three groups: non-English speakers, agency clients and interpreters.

Non-English speakers have information available in their own language through [translated frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#) so they can access TIS National services and work with interpreters. We also recently expanded the range of translated FAQs available to clients.

Agencies can enjoy improved access to information about TIS National supported by a range of new functions, including [e-Brochures](#), [FAQs for agency clients](#) and [TIS National news](#).

We've introduced new calculators to help you [estimate the cost of a booking](#) or [find out if you are eligible for the Free Interpreting Service](#) and we've updated our [Interpreter booking form](#).



A soon to be launched online booking tool will allow agencies to log into their personal TIS National account to view and manage their on-site interpreter booking requests and update their profile or contact details. If you are interested in participating in a trial of this system, email tis.comms@immi.gov.au

We highly value the feedback you provide about our new website.

We've already implemented a range of enhancements to the site in response to feedback provided by our clients and interpreters.

You can send us feedback using the [feedback form on our website](#).



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New eBilling service



TIS National recently launched the new e-Billing electronic invoicing system. It replaces paper invoices previously mailed to fee-paying clients.

e-Billing allows clients to download and view their TIS National invoices online or print hard-copies if required.

Clients who have provided us with an email address for billing purposes should now be receiving their monthly TIS National e-Bill by email.

If you have not registered an email address for billing purposes, please email tis.finance@immi.gov.au or call 1300 304 604.

Video conferencing pilot

TIS National has been trialling video conference technology for interpreting assignments, providing face-to-face interpreting where an interpreter cannot attend on-site.

Since the pilot was introduced it has been limited to selected clients while we test and assess the technology. While video conferencing services are still in pilot mode, planning is underway to upgrade the system for use commercially.

More updates will be provided in the next edition of *Talking TIS* as the pilot progresses.

Mystery shoppers out and about

TIS National is conducting a mystery shopping pilot to assess the quality of the on-site interpreting services we provide.

The mystery shopping pilot generates a discussion with interpreters about the way they deliver their services, providing an opportunity to understand what is done well and identify areas for development and improvement.

As with our phone interpreting mystery shopping program launched in 2012, if an interpreter attends an on-site assignment which is mystery shopped, an interpreter liaison officer may contact them to conduct a coaching conversation and provide feedback.

The coaching conversation may focus on the areas they performed well, while also highlighting areas requiring improvement to ensure all of our interpreters consistently provide a high standard, professional interpreting service.

What's new: interpreter sponsorship and scholarships

TIS National will launch an interpreter sponsorship and scholarship program in 2014 to enhance the professional capabilities of our interpreters, predominantly in regional areas and in new and emerging languages.

This program will be delivered in collaboration with a range of education providers nationally and will focus on developing interpreting skills in specialised areas such as mental health, torture and trauma, legal and health settings.



Top tip: ATIS Voice

Our automated voice-prompted immediate phone service, [ATIS Voice](#), allows you to automatically connect with an interpreter without assistance from a contact centre operator.

Users also receive a 10 per cent discount off our immediate phone interpreter service charges, so using the service is an excellent opportunity to reduce your interpreting costs.

What's new: more translated FAQs

We have recently increased the range of translated frequently asked questions available on our [website](#) to assist our non-English speaking clients.

This useful resource is now available in the following languages:

- Arabic
- Dari
- Greek
- Italian
- Khmer
- Korean
- Nepali
- Pashto
- Farsi (Persian)
- Russian
- Serbian
- Simplified Chinese
- Somali
- Spanish
- Tamil
- Traditional Chinese
- Turkish
- Urdu
- Vietnamese.

Did you know: online cost calculator

You can now estimate the cost of a TIS National interpreting service.

Whether it be an immediate phone, ATIS Voice phone, pre-booked phone or on-site service, our online [cost calculator](#) is a useful tool you can use before you request an interpreter.

Useful tips to access an interpreter



On occasion you may have experienced difficulties securing an available interpreter through TIS National.

To assist our clients we recently developed a range of useful hints and tips, which may be helpful when you require assistance from an interpreter.

If you're having difficulty securing a phone interpreter, it may help to reconsider:

- the level of accreditation requested
- if your client speaks any other languages
- if you can call during an off-peak time
- if you could use our ATIS Voice service.

If you're having difficulty securing an on-site interpreter, it may help to reconsider:

- the level of accreditation requested
- if your client speaks any other languages
- if you can send your requests further in advance of appointments
- if you could schedule appointments together
- if you can provide an alternative date and time when submitting your requests
- if you could use a phone interpreter instead.

View our [frequently asked questions for agencies](#) online for more information.

You will also soon notice a range of improvements to the way we provide booking notifications to our clients. The changes will ensure you always receive clear, accurate and timely updates about your TIS National booking requests, also enhancing our capability to find interpreters to fill your requirements.

FECCA consultations

Over the last few months TIS National participated in a number of consultations commissioned by the Department of Social Services (DSS) and hosted by the [Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia \(FECCA\)](#) in selected parts of Australia.

The objective of the consultations was to elicit views and experiences of the accessibility, adequacy and equity of Australian Government services concerning people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. These consultations involved a mixture of participants, including representatives from local, state and Commonwealth government bodies, non-government organisations, consumers of services from CALD backgrounds, various service providers and interpreters.

Throughout the consultations it was highlighted there is a significant need for CALD communities, particularly in rural areas, to have improved access to professional language services including interpreting.

TIS National's phone interpreting services play an important role providing interpreting services to non-English speakers in metropolitan and rural Australia. The consultations, however, stressed that there is always scope to enhance and improve these services through interpreter recruitment and by raising awareness of interpreting services available to the Australian community.

TIS National is committed to strengthening relationships with FECCA and the groups involved in such consultations to help drive improvement programs to provide CALD communities with better access to government services.



FECCA consultation held in Dandenong, Victoria.

Real estate pilot extended to June 2015

The Department of Social Services (DSS) is pleased to announce the Real Estate Agencies Pilot delivered through TIS National has been expanded to include additional areas of new settlement. The expanded pilot will run until 30 June 2015.

An evaluation of the extended pilot from October 2011 until 30 June 2013, determined it was meeting its objective—assisting newly arrived humanitarian entrants and permanent residents to independently navigate the private residential property market.

Any licensed real estate agency operating in one of the eligible areas of new settlement can now self-register with TIS National for free phone interpreting services. Eligible areas of new settlement are found in all capital cities, major regional cities and some rural areas where newly arrived permanent residents and particularly humanitarian entrants are settling.

Real estate agencies across Australia are encouraged to register with TIS National for this free service. The locations of the eligible areas of new settlement are available [online](#). More information about the Real Estate Agencies Pilot is available [online](#).

For additional information on this initiative, please contact TIS National Language policy liaison by emailing tis.language.policy.liaison@immi.gov.au or calling 1300 575 847.



Meet Violette Brentnall

Violette is a Farsi (Persian) interpreter with TIS National and believes that interpreting services are essential for non-English speakers to help them achieve independence and autonomy. Violette believes that interpreting is a lifeline for all non-English speakers.



"I really love my job!"

Violette has been interpreting with TIS National since November 2011 and became an interpreter because she likes helping and providing services to people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. She previously worked for many years in the public service in Canberra, in Central Australia with Indigenous people and also worked for many years working with people in Africa.

When planning to retire, Violette decided to begin voluntary work as an interpreter. The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) provided Violette with some material and she practiced her interpreting skills for two weeks with the help of her sister. She sat the NAATI exam and passed with a good result.

Challenges as an interpreter

'One of the biggest challenges I have faced while working as an interpreter is the differences in culture. Sarcasm is very different between Iranian and Australian cultures. There is a lot of sarcasm in both cultures and both sides become very confused when it's used...I often need to communicate to the agency or the client and ask them to clarify what they really mean, as I do not want to just take a guess.'

'Another common challenge I face is when I am working with psychologists and they use certain terminology that I may not know how to interpret into Farsi...I explain the definition of the term to the NES rather than interpret the actual word. I often need to confirm with the psychologist by asking what they are saying and confirming what it means, as I want to be accurate and ensure that I am interpreting the correct information at all times.'

Being an interpreter is rewarding

'One of the most rewarding moments of my interpreting career was when I was working in a detention centre. There was a miscommunication with the body language of the non-English speaker. The non-English speaker had his arms crossed across his chest and the English speaker assumed that he was being disrespectful intentionally.'

'In Australian culture this body language is a defensive shield, closing off to social influence, however in Iranian culture it is the most polite way to sit while someone is talking to you.'

'It was important that I acted quickly to diffuse this situation as both the client and the agency staff member were becoming quite irate. I mentioned that there may be a misunderstanding between the two cultures. I explained to the English speaker that in Iran, sitting with arms crossed is the most polite way that somebody can sit and show attention to someone and that they were actually showing a lot of respect for you by sitting like this. I then explained to the non-English speaker about Australian culture and how it was bad mannered to sit the way they were sitting.'

'It was so rewarding because the very tense, difficult situation immediately became laughter and relaxed. Both clients apologised to each other and the remainder of the interview flew so well and finished quite positively.'

Tips and advice for interpreters

'Just be honest. If you don't know or understand something, tell the client that you don't understand what they are saying. Don't try to make it up or try to guess what it means. Always be totally honest, open and communicate with both sides.'

'If you are in a situation where you are uncomfortable, immediately voice it. For example, I had a man who to every question the agency staff member asked him, he would answer sarcastically and he was getting very rude. This made me feel very uncomfortable and I realised I was developing a bad feeling about him and I was about to take sides. I immediately said I could not continue interpreting for this particular client because I felt very uncomfortable and requested they please get another interpreter.'

Want to become an interpreter?

TIS National is continuing to recruit interpreters to accommodate the growing need for interpreting services throughout the community. We encourage interpreters to have accreditation at the professional level from the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) where available.



Our current recruitment priorities are those who have NAATI accreditation at any level, in the following languages:

- Amharic
- Arabic
- Bengali
- Myanmar (Burmese)
- Dari
- Dinka
- Hazaragi
- Indonesian
- Mandarin
- Nepali
- Nuer
- Oromo
- Pashto
- Farsi (Persian)
- Punjabi
- Samoan
- Somali
- Swahili
- Tamil
- Thai
- Tigrinya.

In languages where NAATI accreditation is not available, we prefer applicants with NAATI recognition.

We would be interested in speaking with individuals who have an interest in working as an interpreter and have good language skills in English and one or more of the following languages:

- Anyuak
- Chin (all dialects)
- Ewe
- Hokkien
- Juba
- Karenni
- Kirundi
- Kurdish (all dialects)
- Kunama
- Liberian Pidgin
- Loma
- Maori
- Mauritian Creole
- Mon
- Rohingya
- Shona
- Susu.

For more information about becoming a TIS National interpreter visit the [interpreter recruitment](#) page on our website or contact our interpreter liaison team by calling 1300 132 621.

Machinery of Government changes

Following the swearing-in of the new ministry led by Prime Minister Tony Abbott on September 18, there have been [Machinery of Government \(MoG\) changes](#) that affect the former immigration and citizenship portfolio, including a name change to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP).

Humanitarian Program

DIBP is still responsible for Australia's Humanitarian Program, including the [Community Proposal Pilot](#), Assisted Passage, the Australian Cultural Orientation program and the [No Interest Loan Scheme](#). Further, under the Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946 the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection is the legal guardian of Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors (UHM) who falls under the auspices of the Act. The UHM program will therefore be managed by DIBP.

Settlement and multicultural affairs

Settlement and multicultural affairs functions have transferred to the new Department of Social Services (DSS), including:

- Humanitarian Settlement Services
- Settlement Grants Program
- Complex Case Support
- Diversity and Social Cohesion Program
- Empowering Local Communities Program
- Multicultural Arts and Festivals Grants
- Building Multicultural Communities Program
- Free Interpreting and Translating Service policy/funding (service delivery responsibilities remain with TIS National)
- Community Hubs Program.

Adult Migrant English Program

The Adult Migrant English Program has transferred to the Department of Industry, which also manages skills and vocational education policy.

Transition to the new arrangements is almost complete. Please be advised that consideration is currently being given to whether TIS National will remain as part of the DIBP portfolio or move to the DSS. In the short to medium term, TIS National will remain with DIBP.