

# WORKSHOP REPORT

## *Improving working conditions for interpreters*

*A collaborative session*

NZSTI CONFERENCE – CHRISTCHURCH 2023  
OVERCOMING CHALLENGES | CREATING HARMONY  
16 SEPTEMBER 2023

**Carolina Cannard**  
**Agustina Marianacci**  
**Dr Alejandra González Campanella**

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***“Pay is determined to a great extent  
by what the Government takes cognizance of.”***

**Robert Aurbach, J.D.**

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# Workshop overview

## Interpreter pay rates in New Zealand: improving working conditions for interpreters

Despite their crucial role, interpreters in Aotearoa New Zealand have been consistently underpaid. The local interpreting profession is at a turning point, with interpreters expected to constantly maintain and upgrade their skills, adapt to the growing industry needs, obtain relevant certifications (NAATI) and renew credentials. Nevertheless, their remuneration has broadly remained the same and, in many cases, it has even worsened over the years.

Interpreters are trained professionals who enable equitable access to public services for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. They provide a critical service to individuals who would otherwise see their rights and entitlements curtailed. Current interpreter pay rates fail to account for the self-employed nature of the job, which does not include usual employee benefits such as sick and holiday leave and requires professionals to cover their own taxes, levies, insurance, etc. Practices such as the elimination of minimum fees, for both onsite and phone interpreting, leave interpreters scrambling to find suitable compensation for their time and lead to precarious employment and professional exodus. In turn, interpreters' dissatisfaction with their working conditions and the resulting career abandonment leave CALD communities without language and communication support during crucial events, such as medical interventions, health emergencies, court hearings and immigration/legal appointments.

To address these issues, an interactive session was held on 16 September 2023, during the 2023 Conference of the New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters (NZSTI) in Ōtautahi Christchurch. The session was divided into three parts: a 20-minute presentation, followed by 20 minutes of group discussion and then 20 minutes for open dialogue amongst all session participants. Carolina Cannard's fair pay petition for interpreters and national call for interpreter testimonies was introduced in the first block to shine some light on the matter. However, the focus of the session was to stimulate a discussion among practitioners and other stakeholders involved. In groups, attendees were invited to exchange insights relating to possible challenges and solutions, which were fed back to the room. The workshop aimed to enable dialogue and collaboratively devise pathways that can be actioned in the future.

Over 50 people attended the workshop on the day. The discussion groups were mixed and included representatives from the whole Translation & Interpreting (T&I) industry, namely language practitioners, interpreter trainers, language service providers (LSPs) and government representatives from the New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). The presence of government officials among participants was not lost on language professionals, who warmly welcomed the interdisciplinary focus of the session.

The workshop opened with a 20-minute presentation facilitated by interpreters and T&I academics Carolina Cannard, Dr Alejandra González Campanella and Agustina Marianacci. The petition on Fair Pay for Professional Interpreters in New Zealand (with 1,595 signatures to date) was introduced together with the reasoning behind the collection of interpreter testimonies to strengthen the call. The letter issued by the New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters (NZSTI) in support of the fair pay petition was applauded by attendees. In this letter (included below), the NZSTI President calls for “the New Zealand government [to] take urgent action to remedy the situation”.



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

14 June 2023

**Petition for fair pay for professional interpreters in Aotearoa New Zealand**

Tēnā koutou,

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

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

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

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

Ngā mihi,

Isabelle Poff-Pencole  
President

Upon explaining the workshop structure and rationale, Carolina Cannard introduced the most salient concerns from colleagues to date. The presentation slide below highlights the key issues raised by the interpreters who offered testimonies in response to the open call and served to kickstart the discussion amongst attendees.

# ISSUES RAISED



## Lack of industry regulation:

-  Working conditions: interpreters declining assignments
  -  Remuneration
    - Acceptable minimum hourly rates
    - Minimum allocation, Travel compensation
  -  (Casual) employment standards
    - Cancellation policies
    - Recognition of contracting conditions
    - Official complaints mechanism
-  Quality control
  - Fair pay
  - Accreditation/Qualifications

Before starting the group brainstorming session, informed consent was sought from all attendees by advising them that the information shared during the workshop would be collected anonymously to draft a report aimed at assisting MBIE’s research on interpreter pay inequities and working conditions. Attendees were also advised that they were not to refer to any individual or company by name when sharing testimonies. Of note, attendees were offered the opportunity to leave the room at that point if they did not want to engage in the activity, but everyone chose to remain and participate in the workshop.

After the introduction of the topic and the quick summary of the main areas of interest, attendees were split into nine groups of 4 to 7 people. Large tables containing the key categories introduced during the presentation were distributed to each group to guide the discussions. Participants were asked to reflect on topics and consider both “challenges” that interpreters are facing and “solutions” that could be implemented to improve the industry overall. The main ideas were captured on the tables provided, which were then photographed, included at the end of this report and transcribed for clarity.

To ensure that everyone felt safe and comfortable sharing their ideas with the group, a Slido poll was created and shared with participants. This tool allowed anonymous comments which were posted live during the discussion and read out loud to the group. The poll remained open for 48 hours to allow participants to submit additional comments beyond the time restrictions of the workshop.

The following table summarises the comments and discussions that arose from the workshop. Each point will be developed further in the next section.

AGGREGATED	CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
<b>REMUNERATION</b> <b>(Rates, minimum allocation, travel allowance...)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low rates that do not reflect the demands of the work, skills needed, qualifications, preparation and experience</li> <li>- No minimum payment</li> <li>- Rate variation, lack of consistency</li> <li>- Disparity between the private and public sectors</li> <li>- Inconsistent payment of mileage; unpaid resources, lunch and tools; low ROI</li> <li>- Code of silence, lack of transparency and isolating nature of the work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recommended/legislated minimum rates</li> <li>- Review of work terms &amp; conditions</li> <li>- Call-out rates/minimum payment per job</li> <li>- Standardization and pay scales which align with annual inflation</li> <li>- LSPs to be operated as a social enterprise/not-for-profit organisation</li> <li>- Treating interpreters as employees, with corresponding benefits</li> <li>- Good cancellation policies</li> </ul>
<b>EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS</b> <b>(Cancellations, nature of contracting...)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Last minute cancellations</li> <li>- “On call” time is unpaid</li> <li>- Casualisation of employment</li> <li>- High ACC levies and complex tax situation</li> <li>- Mental strain/lack of regular breaks</li> <li>- Lack of transparency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unionisation</li> <li>- (National) collective agreement</li> <li>- Readily available legal advice</li> <li>- Training about employment rights</li> <li>- Recognition of casual/unpredictable nature of work for tax purposes</li> <li>- Strong professional body</li> </ul>

<b>INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL</b> <b>(pay rates, accreditation...)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No overseeing/governing bodies</li> <li>- No funding for mandatory PD and accreditation</li> <li>- No auditing</li> <li>- Lack of transparency</li> <li>- Use of untrained bilinguals</li> <li>- Workforce with inconsistent levels of education and language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- T&amp;I Council to oversee the industry</li> <li>- NZSTI's active representation</li> <li>- Paid mandatory PD</li> <li>- Better government procurement policies</li> <li>- Compliance audits of contracts</li> <li>- Guidelines and ongoing performance improvement</li> <li>- Review system including client feedback</li> </ul>
<b>OTHER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Favouring lowest fee tendered</li> <li>- Less utilised languages: maintaining and investing in CPD with low ROI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Government to set standards for tenders</li> <li>- Government agencies to access adequate funding for interpreting services</li> </ul>



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# Workshop discussion summary

An overview of comments and discussions arising from the workshop

The discussions that arose were very lively and fruitful, which led to an animated discussion once facilitators started passing the microphone around the room. While it is difficult to report comprehensively on all the conversations that took place, the following is a summary of the key topics emerging from the tables and the session discussions.

## Remuneration

### Challenges

Interpreters face a multitude of challenges when it comes to their remuneration, which often fails to adequately reflect the demands of their profession and their particular status as contractors/freelancers. One significant issue is the generally low rates that interpreters receive, which do not align with the skill set required for their work. Moreover, there is a considerable rate variation in the industry, creating inconsistent remuneration patterns that do not reflect each practitioner's qualifications, preparation or experience levels. The disparity is even greater when comparing the public and private sectors.

Compounding this lack of consistency in remuneration, there is no minimum payment guarantee. In many cases, remote interpreters are compensated on a per-minute basis, while in-person assignments are of insufficient duration to justify the time and effort expended in travel. The situation for face-to-face interpreting is aggravated by the fact that many practitioners find themselves uncompensated for travel or affected by varying mileage reimbursement policies among different Language Service Providers (LSPs). In the case of remote interpreting, the absence of a minimum fee guarantee, now replaced by 'per minute' rates, fails to acknowledge the complexity of the job, particularly in the case of over-the-phone (OTP) interpretation, where information provided by body language and contextual cues are absent. There is also a lack of reimbursement for essential resources, lunch and necessary tools, further eroding interpreters' return on investment.

Such interpreter remuneration conditions are subject to a "code of silence", with limited information available about industry rates and employment agreements, either publicly or among the workforce. This lack of transparency, combined with the inherently isolating nature of the work, leaves interpreters at a disadvantage when advocating for fair compensation.

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## Solutions

To address these challenges associated with interpreters' remuneration, there was a strong call for minimum rates and the regulation of working conditions, with some participants demanding recommended and others legislated minimum pay. Improved working conditions might include setting a minimum duration for assignments, such as a minimum of three hours for court interpreting and two hours for hospital interpreting, to ensure that interpreters are compensated fairly for their time. During the discussion, a workshop participant used Chile's interpreting standards for comparison, highlighting how all interpreting jobs lasting between 1 and 4 hours are considered and compensated as half a day of work, 4 to 8 hours are considered and compensated as a full day, and anything above that is considered and compensated as extra time.

Improved working conditions might also involve pay scales which are annually adjusted to account for inflation, as well as the use of standardized templates for accommodation and travel arrangements. It was argued that remuneration should also include call-out rates to offer more financial security, especially considering the short nature of assignments for certain services.

There was also a suggestion to implement a tiered payment structure based on the interpreter's experience and qualifications to help address the disparity in earnings. This approach recognizes that more experienced interpreters should receive higher compensation and may involve different pay categories based on the number of hours worked.

Finally, there were discussions about the need to reassess the way government agencies and LSPs are operating. One group called for government agencies to stop functioning as LSPs, i.e., procuring language professionals directly or from a closed list. Another suggested that LSPs need to operate as social enterprises or not-for-profit organizations. There were also calls for interpreters to be recognized as employees rather than independent contractors. Such a change of employment status would offer benefits like holiday pay, superannuation, and indemnity insurance.

## Employment standards

### Challenges

Poor interpreter employment standards have an impact on interpreters' job security and overall well-being. Unpaid last-minute cancellations, for example, leave interpreters without income even when they have set aside considerable time for the job (including preparation). This lack of standardization in cancellation policies results in financial uncertainty and instability. Another example involves the lack

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of understanding of the cognitively demanding nature of the job, often reflected in limited opportunities for regular breaks.

Moreover, considering the unpredictable nature of the job, interpreters can be considered to be informally “on call”, as they are expected to be available to work or respond to job requests when needed, even during off-duty or non-scheduled hours. However, they receive no compensation or payment for their availability, which is only one of the many drivers of their employment casualization. In this context of scarce benefits and limited employment protections, interpreters have to contend with high ACC levies and complex tax obligations. Once again, the lack of transparency in the industry makes it challenging for interpreters to understand their rights, negotiate fair terms, and advocate for better working conditions.

## **Solutions**

Addressing the challenges associated with interpreters' employment standards requires a high-level and multi-faceted approach. Workshop participants highlighted the need for readily available legal advice, resources and training to better understand their rights, negotiate better contracts, and address other issues related to their employment. In this context, a strong professional association is seen to play a vital role in representing interpreters' interests, providing resources, and facilitating connections with colleagues. This support network can help interpreters navigate challenges and advocate for better conditions collectively. Of note, there was a strong call for unionisation among several groups, with one group mentioning the possibility of a national collective agreement.

## **Industry quality control**

### **Challenges**

The discussion around quality control in the interpreting industry identified several significant challenges jeopardising the consistency and reliability of interpretation services. A central issue is the absence of overseeing or governing bodies that establish and enforce industry standards. Without such regulatory bodies, ensuring uniform interpreting provision across settings in Aotearoa New Zealand becomes extremely difficult.

The lack of systematic auditing mechanisms and transparent processes hinders the evaluation of interpreter and LSP performance alike. This results in, for example, the use of untrained bilingual individuals or non-qualified alternatives due to cost considerations. This practice, driven by financial incentives, significantly undermines the overall quality of interpretation support. Similarly, government procurement policies might prioritize the lowest fee tendered for interpretation services. Such a cost-

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focused approach would encourage the selection of interpreters based on price rather than qualifications, potentially compromising quality.

Finally, in terms of interpreting quality, many interpreters face a financial barrier to pursuing mandatory professional development (PD) and accreditation. In the future, the lack of funding might impede their ability to continuously enhance their skills and secure necessary recertifications. The financial barrier might further exacerbate the existing heterogeneity within the workforce, comprised of practitioners with varying levels of targeted education and language proficiency. This issue is particularly relevant in the case of less prevalent languages, with interpreters facing greater difficulties maintaining and investing in continuous professional development due to the limited demand for their services.

## **Solutions**

To address some of these challenges, participants suggested that a Translation and Interpreting (T&I) Council should oversee the industry and help set and enforce standards. The need to create a union to act as an official representative body for translators and interpreters was raised again. The important role of the New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters (NZSTI) was highlighted, with attendees urging the organisation to play an active role in representing the interests of the interpreting workforce. Of note, the groups also reflected on the lack of funding for NZSTI and the voluntary nature of its council. The government was called to support NZSTI's work and development by allocating funding to assist the work of volunteers.

When discussing the lack of industry quality control, a large portion of the responsibility was placed on the government, which could play a leading role by setting clear and mandatory standards for interpreting service tenders that prioritise ethical practices, quality and qualifications over cost. Participants also suggested regular compliance audits of interpreter contracts to help identify areas for improvement and ensure that contractual agreements align with quality standards. It was highlighted that government agencies should also be supported in securing funding for interpreting services.

Together with the development and dissemination of industry-specific guidelines, participants also suggested the implementation of an official complaints mechanism to act as a centralised feedback and review system. Such a system could have the added benefit of enabling input from clients, practitioners and LSPs to collect valuable insights into interpreter performance.

## Table recreation

Below is a recreation of the table that was distributed and the notes that were taken in each group, reflecting the attendees' key ideas on challenges and possible solutions in the current interpreting industry in New Zealand. The tables below show a verbatim transcription of the tables handwritten by participants and collected from all 9 groups at the end of the workshop (photos of the original tables are included at the end of the report).

GROUP 1	CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
<b>REMUNERATION</b> (Rates, minimum allocation, travel allowance...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Different rates/rates vary</li> <li>- No consistency/standard</li> <li>- New interpreters getting more</li> <li>- Rates don't include travel, resources, tools</li> <li>- Rates don't take into consideration quals, training, credentiality, preparation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recommended rates based on experience &amp; quals</li> <li>- Remuneration should include call-out rates</li> <li>- Standardising?</li> </ul>
<b>EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS</b> (Cancellations, nature of contracting...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Last minute cancellation means interpreters don't get to paid even though they have set aside considerable time for the job.</li> <li>- Interpreting at some places can involve physical work such as carrying bags, taking people around.</li> <li>- Mileage sometimes not included or not at IRD rates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cancellation should be 2 days before</li> <li>- Minimum time for jobs (for ex. 3 hours)</li> <li>- Unionise</li> <li>- Legal advice from... NZSTI? Union? Government?</li> <li>- Employment and contractor agreements <u>in writing</u></li> <li>- Presentation from MBIE about legal requirements re: employment and contractor agreements</li> </ul>
<b>INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL</b> (pay rates, accreditation...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rare languages can't be NAATI credentialled – what can they do?</li> </ul>	
<b>OTHER</b>		

GROUP 2	CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
<b>REMUNERATION</b> (Rates, minimum allocation, travel allowance...)	Hospitals pay way less than Court, City Council, Police etc...	Hospitals and other public agencies stop acting as LSPs
<b>EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS</b> (Cancellations, nature of contracting...)	Too high ACC levies for T/I Get interpreters as employee instead of vendors/contractors	NZSTI to voice the issue to ACC
<b>INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL</b> (pay rates, accreditation...)	No overseeing/governing bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- T-I Council to oversee</li> <li>- NZSTI to act as an active representer</li> <li>- Union</li> </ul>
<b>OTHER</b>		

GROUP 3	CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
<b>REMUNERATION</b> (Rates, minimum allocation, travel allowance...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low rates, mileage, lunch</li> <li>- Commitment to pay full booked job</li> <li>- No minimum payment</li> <li>- No consistency btw LSPs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimum payment per job</li> <li>- Pay scales/yearly inflation [arrow sign going up]</li> </ul>
<b>EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS</b> (Cancellations, nature of contracting...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "on call" time unpaid</li> <li>- Cancelled jobs unpaid</li> <li>- Complex tax situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Government agencies should guarantee same rates for interpreters</li> <li>- Cancellations: paid within 6hours</li> <li>- Transparency</li> <li>- Recognition of casual/unpredictable nature of work for tax purposes</li> </ul>
<b>INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL</b> (pay rates, accreditation...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unpaid required education / accreditations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paid mandatory education hours</li> </ul>
<b>OTHER</b>		

GROUP 4	CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
<b>REMUNERATION</b> (Rates, minimum allocation, travel allowance...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “per minute” charge</li> <li>- Low rates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimum period/increment of engagement</li> <li>- Legislate minimum rate/conditions</li> </ul>
<b>EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS</b> (Cancellations, nature of contracting...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Casualisation of employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cancellation fee policy</li> <li>- Strong professional body</li> <li>- Connecting with colleagues</li> </ul>
<b>INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL</b> (pay rates, accreditation...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No measures</li> <li>- Historically minimum level of pay does not reflect demands of the work/skillset</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;">LACK OF TRANSPARENCY</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Government procurement policies</li> <li>- Compliance audits of contracts</li> <li>- Guidelines and ongoing performance improvement</li> </ul>
<b>OTHER</b>		

GROUP 5	CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
<b>REMUNERATION</b> (Rates, minimum allocation, travel allowance...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Varied rates private v public</li> </ul>	Social Enterprise Not for profit org. Holiday pay/insurance indemnity Fair pay rate. Good cancellation Minimum minutes phone/policy. Trained & assess ongoing PD for a token fee
<b>EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS</b> (Cancellations, nature of contracting...)	Non-standardised cancellation policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Payment for cancelled bookings within reason</li> <li>- Collective agreement? Could there be a national one.</li> </ul>
<b>INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL</b> (pay rates, accreditation...)	Use untrained bilinguals	Qualified, prerequisite (NAATI)
<b>OTHER</b>		

GROUP 6	CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
<b>REMUNERATION</b> (Rates, minimum allocation, travel allowance...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rates for phone int. can be fairer than in-person</li> <li>- In-person bookings need to be for longer period</li> <li>- Big variance between LSPs on paying for travel</li> <li>- Depending on where interpreter lives, min. period for in-person may need to be longer to be affordable/worthwhile</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase min</li> <li>- Parking + fuel allowance</li> <li>- Increase min. period e.g. 3 hours for court, 2 hours hospital.</li> </ul>
<b>EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS</b> (Cancellations, nature of contracting...)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 24 hour cancellation period ideally</li> </ul>
<b>INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL</b> (pay rates, accreditation...)		
<b>OTHER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low use languages have challenge of maintaining CPD &amp; investing in training with low return in for of pay</li> </ul>	

GROUP 7	CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
<b>REMUNERATION</b> (Rates, minimum allocation, travel allowance...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Variable demand (by language, by region etc.)</li> <li>- Huge discrepancies in qualifications</li> <li>- ROI</li> </ul>	
<b>EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS</b> (Cancellations, nature of contracting...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No price dubbing/procurement driven</li> <li>- Standard criteria for cancellations for all LSPs</li> <li>- Employment vs contractors</li> </ul>	
<b>INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL</b> (pay rates, accreditation...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Audits</li> <li>- Explore training</li> </ul>	
<b>OTHER</b>		



GROUP 8	CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
<b>REMUNERATION</b> (Rates, minimum allocation, travel allowance...)	*Lack of transparency -> “code of silence” Multiple agencies Work in isolation Remote interpreting harder	Standardized SU Including IC superannuation UF -> Should be paid more
<b>EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS</b> (Cancellations, nature of contracting...)	Lack of standardized Employment standards	Standardised template for accom/travel *Training re: employment rights (fair or legal [illegible]@workplace)
<b>INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL</b> (pay rates, accreditation...)	Agency opting for non qualified interpreters + pay less Various levels of education / on language	Certification & Recert. Training PD
<b>OTHER</b>	Government agency choose lowest fee tendered	*Govt to set standards for tenders *Govt agencies to be supported to get funding (TREASURY) for interpreters services

GROUP 9	CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
<b>REMUNERATION</b> (Rates, minimum allocation, travel allowance...)	- Standards (lack)	-> Payment stages Up to 3 hours x 3-6 hours x+2 +6 hours x+2
<b>EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS</b> (Cancellations, nature of contracting...)	- Breaks 30’ per law - Last minute cancellations (unpaid) - Mental strain - Pay depends on language - Sign language - Te Reo = +pay - Minimum hourly rates	Union - Minimum pay - Minimum time  Standards
<b>INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL</b> (pay rates, accreditation...)		- Reviews /feedback by clients. - Level of experience - + 1000 hours = gold - 500-1000 hours = silver - 0-500 hours = bronze
<b>OTHER</b>		

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## Slido anonymous posts

In addition to the questions and suggestions raised by the workshop attendees who took the microphone and voiced the ideas of their group, attendees were also able to submit questions and comments anonymously by using the online application Slido on their personal device during the session. The workshop facilitators were able to read aloud most of these anonymous comments. Screenshots of the original comments as posted on Slido are included at the end of the report. The questions and comments posted anonymously during the session—as well as any respective answers from the facilitators—have been reproduced below for this report.

<b>Anonymous (via Slido):</b>
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<i>When you mentioned a 'complaints mechanism', do you mean for interpreters and their work conditions, or for the user/client about interpreting services?</i>
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<b>Live reply from workshop discussion:</b>
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The complaints mechanism would be for all parties involved in the interpreting industry. Clients, interpreters and LSPs could use this tool to raise their concerns. This could also assist the government with better industry regulation and insights of complaints raised.
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<b>Anonymous (via Slido):</b>
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<i>What would be a 'fair and reasonable' rate for interpreters? Given the nature of the work (e.g. gig economy) and the requirement to be NAATI certified.</i>
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<b>Live reply from workshop discussion:</b>
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That is what we are trying to figure out together here
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<b>Anonymous (via Slido):</b>
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<i>Is there a union for interpreters?</i>
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<b>Live reply from workshop discussion:</b>
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No, there isn't
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<b>Anonymous (via Slido):</b>
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<i>MSD often tells customers that their preferred option is to get a family member to interpret</i>
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<b>Live reply from workshop discussion:</b>
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[Attendees loudly agreed with the comment and raised their disapproval at this practice]
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<b>Anonymous (via Slido):</b>
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<i>How can we work together to ensure the worth and value of professional interpretation are communicated and understood? Value = more work = better rates</i>
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<b>Live reply from workshop discussion:</b>
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[The comment was not read / not answered]
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<b>Anonymous (via Slido):</b>
<i>I suggest building an online database that compares and contrasts interpreters' working conditions across different LSPs eg hourly rates, cancellation etc.</i>
<b>Live reply from workshop discussion:</b>
This comment was submitted after the workshop had finished

<b>Anonymous (via Slido):</b>
<i>Is it a good idea to ask different political parties about their budget for interpreting services? This will help us support the right party</i>
<b>Live reply from workshop discussion:</b>
This comment was submitted after the workshop had finished

<b>Anonymous (via Slido):</b>
<i>As with the suggested online database, each agency, DHB, etc can be asked to provide this info otherwise the database can say: LSP refused to provide the info</i>
<b>Live reply from workshop discussion:</b>
This comment was submitted after the workshop had finished

<b>Anonymous (via Slido):</b>
[CHALLENGES] <i>No consistency in payments among LSPs Low rates Mileage, meals payments</i>
<b>Live reply from workshop discussion:</b>
[Added to the live table created during the workshop and shared with attendees on the screen]

## Closing remarks

Throughout the workshop, the demand for minimum pay rates, regulated working conditions, and better recognition of interpreter qualifications and experience was loud and clear. In fact, the level of engagement and the feedback received during and after the workshop foregrounded the importance of the topics discussed and the need for urgent action to overcome challenges and create true harmony in the industry. Attendees made an explicit appeal for government intervention to set clear standards for interpreting service tenders, provide funding to public agencies for language support, and monitor interpreters' and LSPs' performance. There were also several references to collective action and unionisation. By jointly addressing these issues, Aotearoa New Zealand can ensure the longevity of the language assistance services profession by guaranteeing fair compensation for interpreters, better employment standards, and consistent, high-quality interpretation services to support New Zealand's culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

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# Author Bios

## Workshop facilitators

**Carolina Cannard** is a French-Greek interpreter and translator (NAATI certified, member of NZSTI and co-founder of SINZ). In July 2022 she launched a petition to advocate for fair pay for interpreters in New Zealand, collecting over 1,595 signatures to date. She is currently undertaking PhD research at AUT exploring the experiences of refugee women with interpreters in New Zealand.

**Agustina Marianacci** is an English-Spanish freelance translator and interpreter from Córdoba, Argentina. She is currently based in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), where she works as a linguist, researcher and educator in various settings. She has been a community and conference interpreter since 2018, working on-site and remotely. Her passion for intercultural communication and community development resulted in her joining the NZSTI Auckland branch committee and co-founding Simultaneous Interpreters New Zealand (SiNZ) to help promote and further develop professional interpreting in Aotearoa.

**Dr Alejandra González Campanella** completed her PhD in Translation Studies as a UoA scholar in 2023. Her doctoral research explored interpreting in refugee contexts under a trauma-informed paradigm. She also holds MA and BA degrees in the field of Translation and Interpreting from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain) and Universidad de la República (Uruguay). A member of the New Zealand Society of Translators & Interpreters (NZSTI), Alejandra has several years of experience as a professional translator and interpreter.

# Photographed tables

A) Photos of workshop tables with attendees' original notes & ideas

## GROUP 1

GROUP 1		CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
REMUNERATION (RATES, MINIMUM ALLOCATION, TRAVEL ALLOWANCE...)	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- different rates / rates vary                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no consistency / standard</li> <li>- new interpreters getting more</li> </ul> </li> <li>- rates don't include travel, resources, tools</li> <li>- rates don't take into consideration quals, training, credentialling, preparation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- recommended rates based on experience &amp; quals</li> <li>- remuneration should include call-out rates</li> <li>- standardising?</li> </ul>
EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS (CANCELLATIONS, NATURE OF CONTRACTING...)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- last minute cancellation means interpreters don't get paid <del>for</del> even though they have set aside considerable time for the job.</li> <li>- interpreting at some places can involve physical work such as carrying bags, taking people around.</li> <li>- mileage sometimes not included or not at HKD rates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cancellation should be 2 days before</li> <li>- minimum time for jobs (for example, "3 hours")</li> <li>- unionise</li> <li>- legal advice from ... NZSTI? union? government?</li> <li>- employment &amp; contractor agreements <u>in writing</u></li> <li>- presentation from MBIE about legal requirements re: employment &amp; contractor agreements.</li> </ul>
INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL (PAY RATES, ACCREDITATION...)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- rare languages can't be NAATI credentialled</li> <li>- what can they do?</li> </ul>	
OTHER			

## GROUP 2

GROUP 2		CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
REMUNERATION (RATES, MINIMUM ALLOCATION, TRAVEL ALLOWANCE...)	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hospitals pay way less than court.</li> <li>city councils, police, etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hospital stops acting as LSPs (and other public agencies)</li> </ul>
EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS (CANCELLATIONS, NATURE OF CONTRACTING...)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Too high ACC levies for T/I</li> <li>Get interpreters as Employee instead of Vendor/contractor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NZSTI to voice the issue to ACC</li> </ul>
INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL (PAY RATES, ACCREDITATION...)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No overseeing/governing bodies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>T/I council to oversee</li> <li>NZSTI to act as an active representative.</li> <li>Union</li> </ul>
OTHER			

**GROUP 3**

GROUP 3		CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
REMUNERATION (RATES, MINIMUM ALLOCATION, TRAVEL ALLOWANCE...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low rates, mileage, lunch</li> <li>- Commitment to pay full booked job</li> <li>- No minimum payment</li> <li>- No consistency btw LSPs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimum payment per job</li> <li>- Pay scales / yearly inflation ↑</li> </ul>	
EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS (CANCELLATIONS, NATURE OF CONTRACTING...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "On call" time unpaid</li> <li>- Cancelled jobs unpaid</li> <li>- Complex tax situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Government agencies should guarantee same rates for interpreters</li> <li>- Cancellations: paid within 6hrs</li> <li>- Transparency</li> <li>- Recognition of casual/unpredictable nature of work for tax purposes</li> </ul>	
INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL (PAY RATES, ACCREDITATION...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unpaid required education / accreditations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paid mandatory education hours</li> </ul>	
OTHER			

**GROUP 4**

GROUP 4		CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
REMUNERATION (RATES, MINIMUM ALLOCATION, TRAVEL...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- per minute charge</li> <li>- low rates</li> </ul>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">LACK OF TRANSPARENCY</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- minimum of engagement</li> <li>- legislate minimum rate / condition</li> </ul>
EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS (CANCELLATIONS, NATURE OF CONTRACTING...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- casualisation of employment</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cancellation fee policy</li> <li>- strong professional body</li> <li>- Connecting with colleagues</li> </ul>
INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL (PAY RATES, ACCREDITATION...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no measures historically</li> <li>- minimum level of pay does not reflect demands of the work / skills</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- government procurement policies</li> <li>- accredit compliance audits of contracts</li> <li>- guidelines and ongoing performance improvement</li> </ul>
OTHER			

**GROUP 5**

GROUP 5		CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
REMUNERATION (RATES, MINIMUM ALLOCATION, TRAVEL...)		varied rates private v public	Social Enterprise Not for profit org - Holiday Pay / Insurance Indemnity Fair pay rate: Good cancellations Minimum minutes plus policy - Trained nurses and nursing PD for infection pa
EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS (CANCELLATIONS, NATURE OF CONTRACTING...)		non-standardised cancellation policies	• Payment for cancelled bookings within reason - collective agreement -> could there be a national one.
INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL (PAY RATES, ACCREDITATION)		use untrained bilinguals	qualified, no prerequisite (Needs)
OTHER			

**GROUP 6**

GROUP 6		CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
REMUNERATION (RATES, MINIMUM ALLOCATION, TRAVEL...)		Rates for phone int. can be higher than in-person bookings in the same period. In for longer period. Big variance between 1st & 2nd on paying for travel Depending on where interpreters live, and period for in-person may need to be affordable/workable	Increase min allowance - Payment + fuel - Increase min period e.g. 3 hours for out 2 hours hospital.
EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS (CANCELLATIONS, NATURE OF CONTRACTING...)			• 24 hour cancellation period ideally
INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL (PAY RATES, ACCREDITATION...)			
OTHER		Low use languages have challenge of maintaining PD & involving in training jobs for return in form of pay	

## GROUP 7

GROUP		CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
7	REMUNERATION (RATES, MINIMUM ALLOCATIONS, TRAVEL...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- variable demand (by language, by region, etc.)</li> <li>- huge discrepancies in qualifications</li> <li>- ROI</li> </ul>	
	EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS (CANCELLATIONS, NATURE OF CONTRACTING...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No price biddings/procurement driven</li> <li>- Standard criteria for cancellations for all LSPs</li> <li>- Employment vs Contractors</li> </ul>	
	INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL (PAY RATES, ACCREDITATION...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Audits</li> <li>- Explore training</li> </ul>	
	OTHER		

## GROUP 8

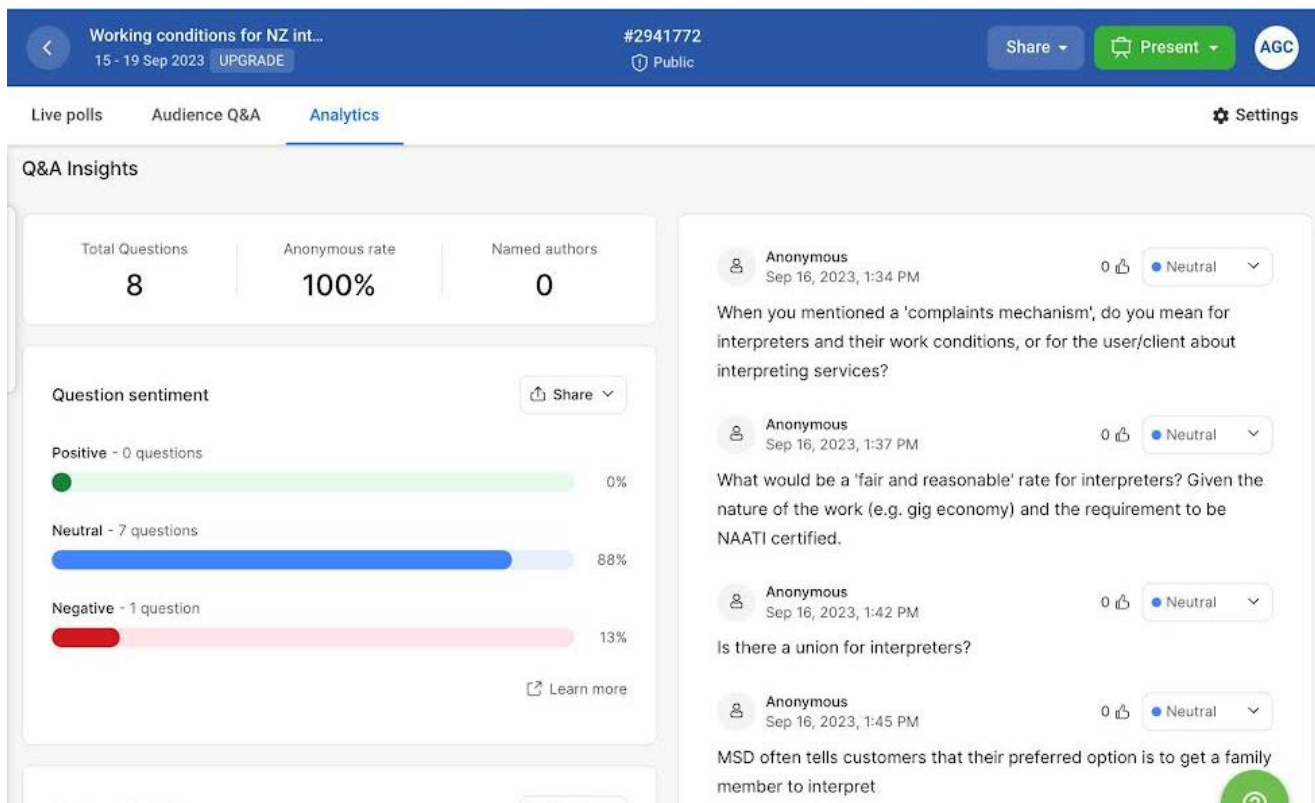
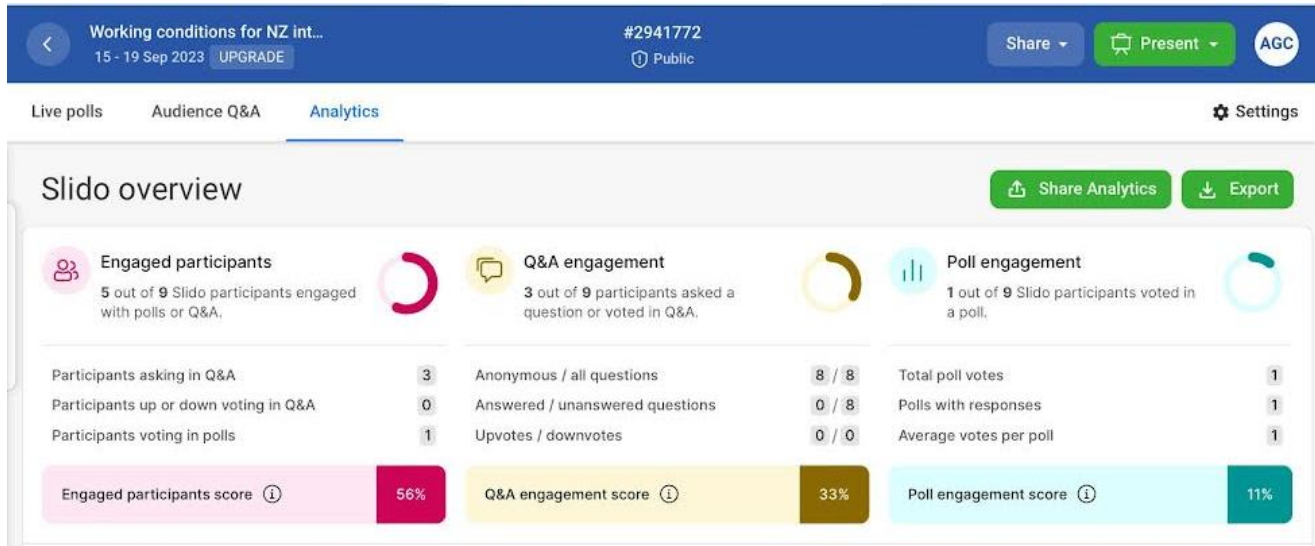
GROUP		CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
8	REMUNERATION (RATES, MINIMUM ALLOCATIONS, TRAVEL...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* lack of transparency → "code of silence"</li> <li>multiple agencies.</li> <li>work in isolation</li> <li>Remote interpreting market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>standardised <del>for</del> so including i.e. superannuation OF</li> <li>* should be paid more.</li> </ul>
	EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS (CANCELLATIONS, NATURE OF CONTRACTING...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lack of standardised employment standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>standardised template for accom/travel</li> <li>* Training re: employment rights (fair or legal <sup>rights</sup> @ workplace)</li> </ul>
	INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL (PAY RATES, ACCREDITATION...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ag's opting for non qualified interpreters + pay less</li> <li>various levels of education ↓ on language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certification &amp; Recertif.</li> <li>Training</li> <li>PD.</li> </ul>
	OTHER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ag's choose lowest fee tendered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* G to set standards for tenders</li> <li>* G agencies to be supported to get funding (Treasury) for interpreters services</li> </ul>



GROUP 9


<p>GROUP 9</p> <p>OTHER</p>	<p>INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL (PAY RATES, ACCREDITATION...)</p>	<p>CHALLENGES</p>	<p>SOLUTIONS</p>
	<p>REMUNERATION (RATES, MINIMUM ALLOCATIONS, TRAVEL...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Standards (lack)</li> </ul>	<p>EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS (CANCELLATIONS, NATURE OF CONTRACTING)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Breaks 30 per law</li> <li>- last minute cancellations (capital)</li> <li>- Mental strain</li> <li>- Pay depends on language</li> <li>- Sign language</li> <li>- Teo</li> <li>- Pay</li> <li>- Minimum hour/row</li> </ul>	<p>Payment stages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>up to 3 hours X</li> <li>3-6 hours X x 2</li> <li>+ 6 hours X x 2</li> </ul>
	<p>INDUSTRY QUALITY CONTROL (PAY RATES, ACCREDITATION...)</p>		
			<p>Union</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- minimum pay</li> <li>- minimum time for cancellation</li> </ul> <p>Standards</p>
			<p>- reviews, feedback by clients.</p> <p>Level of experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1000 hours = gold</li> <li>- 500 - 1000 hours = silver</li> <li>- 0 - 500 hours = bronze</li> </ul>


## B) Screenshots of Slido anonymous comments & questions



Working conditions for NZ int... #2941772  
 15 - 19 Sep 2023 UPGRADE Public Share Present AGC

Live polls Audience Q&A Analytics Settings

Negative - 1 question  
 13%  
[Learn more](#)

Q&A word cloud  
 Share

Anonymous Sep 16, 2023, 1:47 PM 0 Neutral  
 How can we work together to ensure the worth and value of professional interpretation are communicated and understood? Value = more work = better rates

Anonymous Sep 17, 2023, 5:30 AM 0 Neutral  
 I suggest building an online database that compares and contrasts interpreters' working conditions across different LSPs eg hourly rates, cancellation etc.

Anonymous Sep 17, 2023, 5:32 AM 0 Neutral  
 Is it a good idea to ask different political parties about their budget for interpreting services? This will help us support the right party

Anonymous Sep 17, 2023, 5:36 AM 0 Negative  
 As with the suggested online database, each agency, DHB, etc can be asked to provide this info otherwise the database can say: LSP refused to provide the info

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Working conditions for NZ int... #2941772  
 15 - 19 Sep 2023 UPGRADE Public Share Present AGC

Live polls Audience Q&A Analytics Settings

Challenges  
 Open text poll 1 response 1 participant  
 Anonymous  
 No consistency in payments among LSPs Low rates Mileage, meals payments