

1 December 2014

Secretariat  
Premier's Special Taskforce on Domestic and  
Family Violence  
Email: [dfvtaskforce@premiers.qld.gov.au](mailto:dfvtaskforce@premiers.qld.gov.au)

### **A Submission from the Queensland Accessing Interpreters Working Group**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the work of the Premier's Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence.

The Queensland Accessing Interpreters Working Group (QAIWG) is a cooperative of non-Government organisations across the social services and health sectors. Membership includes:

- Amparo Advocacy
- Centacare, Cairns
- Immigrant Women's Support Group
- Mater Health Services
- Multicultural Development Association
- Nambour Community Centre and
- Queensland Council of Social Services.

The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) also participates in the Working Group in an advisory role.

The Working Group advocates the use of credentialed interpreters to ensure equitable access to services and fair outcomes for people of non-English-speaking (NES) backgrounds across Queensland.

The Working Group supports the *National Plan to reduce violence against women and their children to 2022*, noting that the National Plan promotes as a fundamental principle that everyone has a right to access and to participate in justice processes that enable them to achieve fair and just outcomes.

Strategies included in the National Plan recognise barriers to equitable participation by Aboriginal, refugee and immigrant women who have low English language proficiency. This requires that mainstream and universal services improve their cultural competence in working with women and their children experiencing violence in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. A culturally responsive service must engage credentialed interpreters when needed.

The demands for cultural competence in dealing with domestic and family violence cases should require that police and the courts, as well as government and funded service providers, engage credentialed interpreters when working with women and children experiencing violence. Friends and family members are not a substitute for credentialed interpreters in these contexts.

The impact of not using credentialed interpreters in domestic violence cases in NES background families is driven home by a series of case studies included in *A Matter of Interpretation*, published by the Queensland Accessing Interpreters Working Group.



A Matter of Interpretation (2008)

These case studies highlight the isolation, confusion and distress for women who are victims of domestic violence. In one case a victim of domestic violence, unable to speak English, feels that the only option she has is to use one of her young children to describe her injuries and her relationship with her husband to the Police.

A further publication of the Queensland Accessing Interpreters Working Group, *Still a Matter of Interpretation* <https://www.qcoss.org.au/still-matter-interpretation-report-0> , may also be useful.

While the Queensland Government has recently published very good, comprehensive *Language Services Policy* and *Language Services Guidelines 2014*, the reality is that access to credentialed interpreters in many sectors remains limited across Queensland, except in the health services sector.

The Working Group would like to call for more support for the establishment and development of community Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language services. This is essential state-wide and particularly in Far North Queensland, Cape York and the Torres Strait.

The Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Services is exemplary in its work across the criminal justice system. The Northern Territory service, over a number of years, has invested in the development of a workforce of credentialed interpreters in community Aboriginal languages.

Having regard for the success of the Aboriginal Interpreter Services in the Northern Territory and the effectiveness of other inter-state language services providers that meet the high demand for interpreting services from police and the courts, the Queensland Accessing Interpreters Working Group has developed and submitted to the Queensland Government a proposal for the establishment of a Queensland State-based Language services provider.

It is envisaged that a Queensland-based language services provider would respond more effectively to the specific needs of those requiring interpreting services, particularly for the

more vulnerable population groups for whom access to interpreters is a matter of equity and fairness.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission. I look forward to the Taskforce's report. Your office can contact me on email [graziac@qcooss.org.au](mailto:graziac@qcooss.org.au) for any further assistance in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Grazia Catalano  
Convenor,  
Queensland Accessing Interpreters Working Group  
[graziac@qcooss.org.au](mailto:graziac@qcooss.org.au)