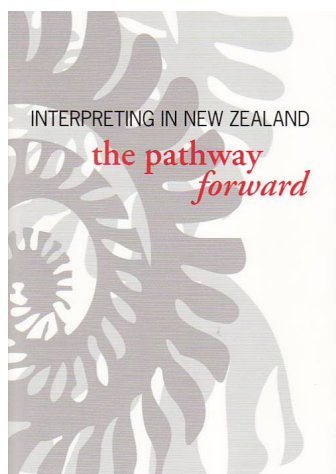




Interpreting in New Zealand, the pathway forward

Diana Clark and Caroline McGrath (eds). Published by [Language Line](#): The Office of Ethnic Affairs (NZ Govt, Wellington), 2009. ISBN 9780478294613. Contains 207 pages. Available from language.line@dia.govt.nz

What health professional in New Zealand has no agreed training, no agreed qualification and no registration authority? The answer is interpreters for people with limited English proficiency.



I suspect many doctors have not thought this was needed for interpreting, it is common practice to use family members, but a moment's thought should suggest otherwise.

Where important health decisions are being made it is essential that the interpreter can be relied upon to interpret accurately, to respect confidentiality and to convey where necessary any relevant cultural practice or belief.

Without a professional structure the doctor has no idea whether this task is being done to a satisfactory standard.

Language Line, the Government unit that supplies telephone interpreting services, has produced a book which supplies useful information for all those who take part in the interpreting communication chain.

Whether it is the health professional, government official, professional interpreter, the interpreting educator or those patients and clients who require and use interpreting, *Interpreting in New Zealand, the pathway forward*, is packed with information from overseas as well as local stakeholders. It is particularly welcome as it fills a niche where there is very little literature available.

For the health professional, while the chapters on health interpreting education and sign language are of obvious interest, the experience and analysis around codes of conduct, ethics and standard setting will also shed light. Ann Corsellis and Jan Cambridge, two gurus of interpreting in the UK look at ways of formalising change both strategically and through formal academic paths. From the Dutch public service comes a comparison of the contents of the codes of conduct of several EU countries. In New Zealand, there's analysis from Duncan Webb now the first Legal Complaints Officer but at the time of writing an ethics professor at the University of Canterbury law school. Daniel Hanks writes incorporating many years of experience in the Deaf community/New Zealand Sign language/mental health arena.

There is also an understanding that this change is not coming about in a vacuum. The book has chapters from those whose experience in a parallel field may help. Among

those included are: the New Zealand Translation Centre or te Taura Whiri i Te Reo Māori, the Māori Language Commission and the NZ Society of Translators and Interpreters.

All will help those of us who realise the days are gone when we could say ‘Please bring one of the children, Mrs X’ without niggling concerns about risk, informed consent, and confidentiality. A professional interpreting structure with accredited trainers, agreed standards, a code of ethics and a registration body has been developed in other countries. This book sets out the arguments as to why New Zealand needs to set such a structure up to enable health practitioners to ensure all New Zealanders have equity of access to the information and services provided to all by our healthcare system.

One contribution of this book will be that it raises awareness of both the need for neutrality, confidentiality and for clarity in order to address issues of cultural difference. The secondary contribution will be to provide fodder for debate and discussion which it is hoped will lead to improved standards of all interpreting in this country.

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