

## Annamaria Arnall

---

**From:** Hellander, Paul (Multicultural SA) [hellander.paul@saugov.sa.gov.au]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 20 November 2007 2:39 PM  
**To:** Annamaria Arnall  
**Subject:** FW: Public Sector Week: A day in the life of...

---

**From:** Maguire, Jerome (AGD)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 20 November 2007 3:26 PM  
**To:** DL:AGD All Email Users  
**Subject:** Public Sector Week: A day in the life of...

**INSIDEOUT<sup>07</sup>**  
**PUBLIC SECTOR WEEK**  
**17 - 25 NOVEMBER**

A day in the life of...

**Paul Hellander**  
 Manager of the South  
 Australian Government's  
 Interpreting and Translating  
 Centre (ITC)



As Manager of the South Australian Government's Interpreting and Translating Centre (ITC), Paul Hellander still takes a hands-on approach when needed.

While managing two full-time and 400 casual interpreters and translators (as well as a six-person call centre) - on behalf of dozens of regular clients and hundreds of non-English speaking members of the public - Paul is occasionally called on to interpret or translate in his accredited language, Greek.

He also speaks, in varying degrees of fluency, French, German, Spanish, Norwegian and Italian, takes photos and for 10 years wrote travel guidebooks for Lonely Planet Publications. He has even been spotted watching a DVD of his beloved *Fawlty Towers* on his laptop while perched high up in the Andes in Peru.

Earlier this year, Paul was awarded the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) Excellence Award for South Australia to mark its 30th anniversary.

---

Here is a day in the life of.... Paul Hellander

My day begins with switching on my home computer and, as the overnight emails pour in, I pour my first coffee of the day and return to the office - affectionately known as the bunker - to respond to as many emails as possible before the household awakes.

Arriving at my office in the beautiful heritage-listed former Attorney-General's Building at 24 Flinders Street, I drop in to the call centre ... a staff member is off sick and a client has a particularly complex request.

Some Federal election candidates need their letters to constituents and How To Vote Cards translated into other languages. This morning, one candidate has asked for Hindi, Italian, Greek, Vietnamese and Chinese.

We get cracking tracking down the original artwork and lifting the text to de-format and then send to the translators, most of whom work from home. Meanwhile we prepare a template for each new language.

As a 24/7 operation, the ITC can usually organise interpreting in one of 112 languages within a few hours, and translations within a few days, but sometimes tight deadlines are just not achievable.

I leave my staff to get on with it and join the NAATI Board of Directors, who are meeting in Adelaide, for a working lunch. I give them my perspective on how interpreting and translating is going in South Australia.

They are already aware of the need for accredited interpreters in many of the languages new to the State, where, because accreditation is not yet available, would-be interpreters are carefully screened and trained over four and a half days to at least offer a basic level of service.

The NAATI Board also knows that there has been a significant demographic shift in some communities. Take for example my accredited language, Greek. The majority of our Greek interpreters are now at an average age of 65, looking to retire but with no younger Greeks training to take over. As our Greek interpreters have aged, so has the rest of the Greek community, and interpreters are in high demand in aged care. The ITC is trying hard to recruit more interpreters in these ageing population languages.

I also tell the NAATI Board that they should consider modifying the testing structure, that instead of using static tape recordings, they should be using interactive DVD video.

Back at my desk, I field a complaint from a client, a hospital administrator who says an interpreter turned up late and was 'rude'.

I organise a consultation with the interpreter, who is culturally-inclined to talk loudly and vociferously and use his hands a lot when speaking. He tells me the patient he was interpreting for did not think he was rude, only the hospital staff. I visit the hospital and explain to the administrator that in some cultures, the patient would be surprised if the interpreter did not talk in the same loud, passionate way and gesticulate. Feathers are unruffled and everyone's understanding of this tricky business of interpreting has been enhanced.

Next is a meeting about implementation of our new Interpreting and Translating Centre Management System (ITCMS), an interactive website for staff, interpreters and clients to monitor assignments and interpreter requests. We are also testing video interpreting options using the Internet. We're getting there.

Eventually we'd like to have all interpreters' and all clients' computers set up with microphones, cameras and a free web-dialogue program like Skype so they can interpret directly online when needed.

It's a different matter with translations, however. We strongly advise against using web-based computerised translations as they are invariably inaccurate, often inadvertently offensive and possibly even dangerous.

I'm excited about the unlimited possibilities of technology for interpreting and translating services.

At 4.50pm a client comes in with an important document needing translating within 24 hours. I request the job to be entered onto the system, call up the translator to see if they can do it while someone stays behind to scan the document and send out a PDF version to the translator. Faxes went the way of the dodo a long time since.

On the tram on the way home, I whip out my laptop, log into the system once more and continue the dialogue with the client.

At home I fire up Skype and chat with colleagues, clients and even one or two of our experienced interpreters in far-flung parts of the world.

I am slightly nostalgic as I chat to Michael in California, Angeliki in Greece and Zafiris in Beijing - but I tell them it won't be long till I'm off travelling again myself.

Have office, will travel!