

# CALD Co-Design Impact Report

# INTRODUCTION

Australia's greatest asset is its cultural diversity. Home to the world's oldest continuous culture, we have evolved into a melting pot of **over 270 ancestries**, 120 faiths and 230 languages. Engaging diverse communities and creating **meaningful connections** are the key to unlocking our potential.

With almost **30% of Australia's population born overseas**, we are a truly diverse nation. The use of language services in medical, legal and other settings is common place in Australia, however, the pandemic has **exposed many systemic cracks** in how we communicate with some of our most vulnerable Australians. Many communities report lack of relevant and culturally appropriate resources which in turn can lead to misinformation and poor outcomes for entire sections of the population.

Whilst this evidence is still only anecdotal, there are many examples of inaccurate translations of COVID-19 information. Even if the translations are correct, they are commonly not tailored to specific target audiences' needs and preferences or are not easily accessible.

Polaron Language Service is providing this report to highlight potential communication challenges, how to overcome these barriers and how the co-design process can be implemented to better support multicultural communities and help organisations share their message.

# ADDRESSING THE ISSUE

Polaron Language Services presented the CALD Co-Design interactive forum as an opportunity to discuss how the translation industry can better serve the communities who rely on it. We heard insights from translators, interpreters, community leaders, engagement officers, communication officers, social workers and academics. The discussion particularly focused on community translation and co-design.

Co-design proposes a different approach to the traditional translation model. It's a participatory process that involves designing a resource collaboratively with stakeholders and end users' input in mind. It takes the lived experiences of the target audience and combines it with the traditional design process facilitated by communications experts.

The final outcome aims to create a translation that meets the needs of all those who participate. In the context of translation, it means including translators, interpreters and intended recipients of the message in the process of actively creating a resource.

Facilitated by Eva Hussain, Director of Relationships and Growth at Polaron and herself a certified translator and interpreter, the forum panellists included Aurelie Sheehan from NAATI, Erika Gonzalez from AUSIT and RMIT University, and Tina Hosseini from Victorian Multicultural Commission.

In total, the forum had over 60 participants and this report is based on their feedback and discussion on the day, as well as a survey sent out following the forum.

# WHAT DOES THE COMMUNITY THINK?

Keep educating government and non-government agencies about the importance of communicating with community groups in their preferred language

## - Interpreter

Sending (translation) work overseas further breaks down communication between the government and the community

## - AUSIT Branch Delegate

I think if we could share these types of stories across our organisations we may be able to lobby for increased funding and services. We need to be advocates for diverse communities to be listened to and to participate fully.

## - Refugee Health Physician

Checking translations can be expensive but producing a document that cannot be understood is pointless.

## -Translator

Translation of COVID-19 government resources were pushed through too fast, resulting in poor quality translations. Local governments focused on translations for large or emerging CALD communities only. As a result, even basic information on bushfires and COVID-19 was not readily available in all languages.

## - Community Leader

# FEEDBACK FROM PANELISTS

A lot of community members don't read or write in the language or they have limited literacy. It's important to share information on multiple platforms, not just traditional media.

**Tina Hosseini**

**Victorian Multicultural Commission**

We're seeing some translations in very poor quality in very popular languages. That's unacceptable.

We have one of the best certifications in the world but something isn't working.

**Erika Gonzalez**

**AUSIT and RMIT**

In a lot of organisations, translations are not part of the strategy so when translations are done as an afterthought, the final outcome is not going to be highest quality.

**Eva Hussain**

**Director of Polaron**

Educating the end users is very important, as well as raising awareness that translators and interpreters are skilled professionals. Making sure that organisations understand what is needed for (translators and interpreters) to deliver the best message.

**Aurelie Sheehan**

**NAATI**

# EFFECTS OF MISTRANSLATIONS



Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of dollars have been spent by the governments in an attempt to communicate key messages to CALD audiences. Despite this, some communities report feeling left out, misinformed and disengaged.



There are calls for translations to be more accurate, timely, culturally appropriate and accessible. Everyone seems to agree that now more than ever, language services are an essential part of reducing communication barriers.

## So what can happen if a translation goes wrong?



- Important health or safety advice may be misunderstood or missed, putting entire communities at risk.



- People may be unable to access the necessary support in health care, education or other services.



- There can be a mistrust of the organisation that sent out the mistranslated or culturally inappropriate resource. Thus, the organisation's future messaging may not elicit the required response.



- Families, children or friends are forced to translate or interpret important messages which can lead to further misinformation and a lack of privacy.



All Australians need access to resources in a range of accessible formats, regardless of their cultural background or language spoken.

# KEY LEARNINGS

- A consistent theme of the forum was the belief that community buy-in from the beginning was the best way to create effective translations.
- At a bare minimum, organisations should only work with NAATI-certified Australian translators and work must be checked by a second language professional to produce translations that are accurate, culturally sensitive and useful to the target audience.
- The main drawback of co-design was the cost and time constraints. However, this highlights the need to allocate proper budgets for translating important information.
- Over 93% of survey respondents stated that a lack of cultural awareness by organisations is the biggest hindrance to effectively communicating with culturally and linguistically diverse groups.
- This was followed by translated content not reflecting how media is consumed by CALD communities (67%) and that translated content has not been made easily accessible to the relevant communities (53%).

# 93%

of survey responders, believed a **lack of cultural awareness** by organisations is the **biggest hinderance** to effectively communicating with culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

## WHY RESOURCES NEED TO BE TRANSLATED

- According to the ABS (2017), 1 in 5 (21%) people speak a non-English language at home
- English is not the first language for 15% or 3.5 million people
- Australia is a highly multicultural country and everyone should be included in the conversation,

# WHAT WE RECOMMEND

## 1

### **Involve CALD communities from the start**

By co-designing translations with the community, organisations can ensure the translations created are culturally safe and tailored to each community's needs. Now more than ever accurate, timely and accessible language services are essential to reducing barriers and providing respectful care. This approach requires developing and maintaining close links with the multicultural communities so that organisations can consult with them.

## 2

### **Allocate a budget and time for worthwhile translations**

Forum participants consistently shared stories of cheap or quickly-made translations which were not culturally sensitive or included grammar and spelling mistakes. By allocating a budget towards translations and planning ahead, organisations can effectively communicate and connect with the target CALD audience.

## 3

### **Work with NAATI-certified Australian translators and interpreters**

Whilst overseas-based can work for less, they do not have the necessary knowledge about Australia's culture, language and context and do not hold NAATI certification. This often leads to low quality translations that may not be useable or relevant to the needs of local communities. Engaging NAATI-certified Australian translators also means that the local workforce is being supported.

## 4

### **Training**

Organisations that work with multicultural communities should aim to employ staff who are involved in the community. It is also important to deliver training and workshops on cultural awareness and specific barriers that multicultural communities may face and how to overcome them. 80% of survey respondents stated they were involved in training or educational activities and this should be continued. Information dissemination should also be high on the training agenda.



# WHAT WE RECOMMEND

## 5

### **Share information with CaLD communities through multiple platforms**

Traditional media is no longer the only way content is consumed. Therefore, resources should be created in a range of mediums including video, audio and other visuals which can be distributed across a range of platforms and locations, including WhatsApp groups, local supermarkets, libraries and other community spaces.

## 6

### **Identify sub-groups of a community and understand their specific needs**

The messaging and resource created for a teenager will be different from the messaging created for their grandparent. This is regardless of their language or cultural background. Therefore, different demographics should be communicated with during the co-design process.

## 7

### **Timely and quality translations**

Participants stated that many organisations lacked CaLD engagement strategies and that translations were sometimes done as an afterthought. By including translations as a focus of the communication strategy from the beginning, organisations can focus on delivering timely and quality translations in a resource that will actually be beneficial to their target community. And of course, having a strategy in the first place helps!

## 8

### **Use technology intelligently**

Technology can be useful when communicating across cultures and languages but needs to be used cautiously. Automated translation platforms are not a reliable tool to convey important messages and poor translations can lead to mistrust and inaccurate information. Always work with a professional translator.

# WHO WE ARE

Polaron Language Services is a social enterprise based in Melbourne, with over 20 years of experience working in partnership with governments, not-for-profits, multicultural communities and the language services industry to deliver multilingual projects.

We play an active part in connecting communities, developing relationships and creating messages that resonate. We aim to create a more inclusive Australia, one translated word at a time.

# CONTACT US

Phone: 1300 88 55 61

Email: [translations@polaron.com.au](mailto:translations@polaron.com.au)

## DIRECTOR, RELATIONSHIPS & GROWTH

Eva Hussain

Email: [eva.h@polaron.com.au](mailto:eva.h@polaron.com.au)

Phone: 0412 221 031

## COORDINATOR, RELATIONSHIPS & GROWTH

Hasara Liyanage

Email: [hasara.l@polaron.com.au](mailto:hasara.l@polaron.com.au)

Phone: 61 3 9847 7831

## TEAM LEADER, LANGUAGE SERVICES

Marcus Mazzocchi

Email: [marcus.m@polaron.com.au](mailto:marcus.m@polaron.com.au)

Phone: 61 3 9981 0439