Rewriting the AUSIT Code of Ethics

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The Code of Ethics for interpreters and translators in Australia was originally devised by AUSIT (the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators – the national professional body) after long consultations in 1996. Like other professional codes of ethics, it was developed to mark Translating & Interpreting [T&I] as a profession, and to give guidelines to practitioners who were members of AUSIT in major ethical issues faced.

While at the time it was intended to provide a standard of conduct for members of ASIT and the basis of any potential disciplinary or investigative action of these members, it has never served this function. On the other hand, it has had wide currency, with a number of major suppliers of language services, and major users of these services stipulating it as the standard of conduct for all interpreters and translators – whether they are members of AUSIT or not. It also is used by NAATI [National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters] as the basis for its ethics examination in its accreditation texts. When AUSIT decided to look at rewriting the code (financed initially by Monash University) it has had to take on board these very wide interests that refer to this code as a standard of practice – not AUSIT members alone.

The original impetus for rewriting was the perceived gaps and shortcomings in the code, but the process of rewriting has led to very broad discussions of role, responsibility and the increasingly complex contexts of T&I work, which will be explored in this presentation.