



## **Implementation of a statewide Video Remote Interpreting service to improve access to interpreters within Queensland Health, Australia. A Telehealth success story.**

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The implementation of the Queensland Health Interpreter Service (QHIS) in 2007 resulted in significant improvements to service delivery and over 200% increase in the use of interpreter services statewide. With this increase in demand came a number of challenges including access to onsite interpreters in outer metropolitan, regional and remote Queensland generally. In addition there is a national shortage of Auslan (Australian sign language) interpreters accredited in Australia with interpreters (both spoken and sign language) primarily living in the larger metropolitan centres.

Queensland Health has an extensive telehealth network with more than 800 videoconference units in facilities across the state that are used for a variety of clinical and non clinical purposes. In a collaborative program between Statewide Telehealth Services and the QHIS, Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) was successfully trialled and implemented in 2009 / 2010. The introduction of VRI as an option for the provision of interpreters is addressing a significant patient safety issue and is a logical progression in providing a quality interpreter service in a statewide context.

A hub and spoke model has been established using a mix of existing (shared) and new dedicated equipment to provide access to interpreters statewide via videoconference technology. ONCALL Interpreters and Translation Agency, Queensland Health's external service provider have installed video booths and provide interpreters from their Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane offices increasing access to video remote interpreters across the state.

Queensland Health is the first government department within Australia to successfully deliver VRI statewide. More importantly, as Queensland's first Statewide government interpreting initiative, the model is increasing interpreters' preparedness to undertake interpreting assignments in health care contexts and their availability to provide quality services in regional and remote areas through videoconferencing. QHIS is now being investigated for possible transferability to a whole of government service.

As part of the VRI service implementation, a comprehensive suite of resources and training programs were developed. These programs continue to be delivered to Queensland Health staff, interpreters and the community.

This paper provides an overview of: the technology; VRI implementation processes; supporting resources; training and awareness raising programs; and an overview of the evaluation of the service in the live clinical environment.