

## Urban Futures Symposium

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**Presentation:** Translators as Ear Witnesses:

**Towards Best Practice in Forensic Translation and Transcription**



Forensic speech evidence refers to audio recordings covertly captured by law enforcement through methods of intercepting conversations, using listening devices, such as bugs or wiretaps (Fraser, 2017). These audio recordings are used as direct evidence in a wide range of criminal cases; however, when they contain exchanges in languages other than English, investigating police officers summon translators and interpreters as ear witnesses to give their opinion and translate the recording directly into English for the benefit of the jury (Gilbert & Heydon, 2021).

Despite this, there is a lack of established guidelines in Australia for the forensic transcription and translation (FTT) process to explain the involvement of translators and interpreters and the production of transcripts that meet evidentiary and admissibility criteria for the court.

The best practice method recommended by the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT, 2019), involves a two-step process (transcription and translation), yet its applicability to the Australian context has not been tested. The purpose of this research is to examine the status of FTT practices in Australia, identify shortcomings, and evaluate the recommended best practice through an experimental design, by comparing it to the Australian practice of directly translating the audio evidence.