

WASLI Paris

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This was my second WASLI Conference (after Durban in 2011). I received generous sponsorship from Tourism New Zealand as part of promoting New Zealand's bid for the WFD 2023 congress (which sadly was not successful, but we gave it our very best shot).

Paris is a long way away, and even with the obvious appeal of soaking up some summer sun in one of the world's great cities, you might wonder whether a conference, no matter how good, is worth the expense of flights, registration and 23 + hours travel time each way.

There is more to WASLI than just the conference though. The WASLI Paris programme included:

- a day of pre-conference workshops (on including Deaf people in interpreter training, both as participants and as teachers, and on supervision).
- Regional Meetings - an opportunity to plan and reflect with our interpreting neighbours. The Oceania region escaped the university halls where larger regions were meeting, and instead discussed our priorities over croissants and coffee in a cafe. Very civilized!
- The General Meeting, where membership organisations (including SLIANZ) get a chance to help shape WASLI, to hear about the committee's work and to hold elections. A nice tradition is that the two representatives from each member organisation get a little country flag to show their status - in Durban we had ended up with an Australian flag but Paris got it right :-)
- Poster presentations in the foyer at all break times.
- Opening and closing events - often an opportunity for a cultural showcase of national costumes and dance, this was less prominent in Paris but I still enjoyed seeing some amazing dances and was especially thrilled to spot a Dutch colleague on clogs :-)

The conference itself was a real mixture of presentations, and Alan and myself were busy posting potted summaries on SLIANZ Facebook and Twitter.

The main reason to be at WASLI is to make contact with colleagues from all over the world and to find so much common ground even when the contexts in which we do our work can be so different. I had some fruitful discussions with interpreter association board colleagues as well. All this, lots of quality time with New Zealand friends (I think I saw more of them in a week than I do at home in a year!) and celebrating my birthday in style - amazing ice cream! - made this a trip to remember. Start saving for Seoul 2023!