Queensland
# Language Services Guidelines

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Queensland
Government

# Introduction

These guidelines have been developed to assist Queensland Government agencies to meet their responsibilities under the *Queensland Language Services Policy.* These guidelines may also be of assistance to local governments and other organisations developing and implementing their own language services policies.

Under the *Queensland Language Services Policy*, Queensland Government agencies are defined as:

- all Queensland government departments*, and

- government organisations that were covered by the preceding Language Services Policy**.

*Including non-government organisations that are funded to deliver services on behalf of those departments (funded services).*

*\*\*These include Hospital and Health Services, TAFE Queensland, Trade and Investment Queensland and the Queensland Mental Health Commission.*

## Client focus and risk management

The provision of language services, such as interpreters, to clients unable to communicate in English not only supports people during the period in which they are learning English, but can also:

- help them to overcome complex service systems

- ensure that substandard services are not provided due to misunderstanding of customers' needs

- ensure health and legal requirements are met (e.g. obtaining informed consent)

- reduce the potential for compensation claims and litigation related to inadequate service provision

- enhance the quality of program and service delivery, including potential cost savings resulting from a more effective and targeted approach.

There are also economic benefits to agencies in using language services in terms of better client understanding of services and programs resulting in less repeat appointments and visits. Creating a better understanding of legal and regulatory requirements by using language services, is also likely to reduce longer term costs to government in enforcement and compliance activities.

Working with accredited interpreters in the health context[1]:

- improves quality of care, clinical treatments are likely to be more effective as health care workers are able to get a better understanding of patients' symptoms

- improves client safety, reduces the risk of patient missing treatment appointments, inappropriately taking medication or following care instructions

- promotes access to health care

- reduces unnecessary health expenditure, including reducing non-attendance rates at clinics, unnecessary diagnostic investigations, admission rates and length of stay in hospital, and increases the likelihood of seeking early treatment and the use of preventive or early detection services

- reduces stress on families

- minimises the risk of legal complications.

A refusal to provide an interpreter could be potentially discriminatory and there are considerable risks to an agency in not using qualified interpreters particularly for obtaining informed consent in legal, police, health and other government agency contexts.

1    Foundation House: The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (2013) Promoting the engagement of interpreters in Victorian health services, http://www.foundationhouse.org.au/resources/publications_and_resources.htm

## Discrimination

In order to avoid complaints of discrimination in the provision of services, it is important that government agencies and funded services engage interpreters on appropriate occasions where clients have difficulty communicating in English.

Instances where a government agency or funded service refuses to provide their services to clients experiencing difficulties communicating in English may be considered **direct** discrimination under the *Anti-Discrimination Act (Queensland) 1991* (the Act). Providing a service without the use of an interpreter for clients who experience difficulties communicating in English may be considered **indirect** discrimination under the Act.

The following two case studies, supplied by the Anti Discrimination Commission Queensland, illustrate examples of complaints of discrimination because a qualified interpreter was not provided for a client with difficulty communicating in English. The first case study also illustrates the risk in using family or friends to interpret instead of accessing a qualified interpreter.

### *Case study one:*

A complaint was made to the Anti Discrimination Commission Queensland following the death of the complainant's teenage son in a car accident.

As it occurred late at night, the hospital was unable to locate an interpreter for him. The complainant's other son interpreted instead, but the lack of a professional, appropriate interpreter further increased the family's trauma in the process of identifying the body.

This matter was not resolved at conciliation and was referred to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

### *Case study two:*

A complaint regarding the failure of a government agency to engage interpreters was made to the Anti Discrimination Commission Queensland by a deaf woman who claimed that interpreting services were not provided to six profoundly deaf adults in an emergency situation.

As well as being deaf, the complainant was unable to read or write, so she required the services of not only Auslan interpreters but also a deaf relay interpreter.

At the conciliation conference, an agreement was reached that the government agency involved would work with the deaf community to ensure more effective communication in the future.

# Guidelines for working with interpreters

There must be flexibility in policies to cater for the language service needs of regional and remote area populations.

## Why use qualified interpreters

Using qualified interpreters means that the level of skill and quality of the interpreting meets certain standards.

Qualified interpreters are also trained to maintain confidentiality, impartiality and accuracy as part of their code of ethics.

Qualified interpreters remain impartial at all times which provides agencies with a level of certainty about the information they are being provided. This same level of impartiality cannot be guaranteed when using relatives, friends and advocates, or bilingual staff to interpret.

## Role of an interpreter

Interpreting is often thought of as a simple word-for-word translation from one language to another. However, interpreters often have to convey complex information for which there may not be an equivalent word or term in the other language. Interpreters may need more information to understand the context and select the most appropriate words to convey the meaning to the client.

Some interpreters develop specialist skills to work in particular fields, such as court interpreting and health services. That way they are more familiar with the terminology used in these contexts.

The following case study illustrates the benefits of using qualified interpreters to improve access to services for clients with difficulty communicating in English.

## *Case study*

"Windana is a refuge providing accommodation and intensive support to women and children escaping domestic and/or family violence.

Without access to interpreters, we would not be able to communicate with our clients on everyday issues such as the fire alarm system, the use of the pager for emergencies, the security system, where the shops are, the public transport system, how to apply for Centrelink payments, the immigration process, how to apply to schools and child care and a whole host of ordinary issues that we all take for granted.

We would also not be able to provide essential emotional support to the women and children when they need it. Women and children come into our refuge with a variety of behavioural and emotional needs and they exhibit distress, grief, anger, hyper vigilance etc.

If the *Queensland Language Services Policy* did not provide us with access to interpreters, we would find it financially impossible to use interpreters as often as we do.

This would have an enormous impact on our women as not only would we not be able to provide the same level of intensive emotional support, we would not be able to explain legal, Centrelink, immigration and other processes which can be quite complicated and confusing for women."

*Windana Support Centre.*

## Assessing the need for an interpreter

Agencies should provide an interpreter in situations where a person has difficulty communicating in English.

When a person requests an interpreter they should be provided with one. One way a client may request an interpreter is by showing a Queensland Interpreter Card (refer to Definitions on page 22).

Without a Queensland Interpreter Card, it may be difficult to assess whether a person needs an interpreter. The ability to converse in English does not necessarily indicate that a person comprehends the style of English spoken by doctors, nurses, magistrates, lawyers, police officers and others, or that the person understands written English. If there is any doubt about a person's ability to communicate in or comprehend English, an interpreter should be engaged.

Here are some simple ways to help you make your decision about whether an interpreter should be engaged or not:

- Ask a question that requires the person to answer in a sentence. Try to avoid questions that can be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' or a familiar question such as 'where do you live?'
- Give the person a message and ask them to repeat it back to you in their own words.

Engaging a qualified interpreter will be crucial in certain circumstances such as obtaining informed consent (health, mental health, aged care assessment), raising a record of interview (police), or for the swearing of affidavits or statutory declarations.

An agency neglecting to provide an interpreter may lead to costly mistakes, complaints or litigation.

An interpreter helps both parties to communicate effectively. It is acceptable to engage an interpreter to ensure clear communication even if the person, family member or carer considers that they do not need one.

When assessing the need for an interpreter, agencies should also consider factors such as gender, levels of literacy, cultural and religious needs, dialect and hearing impairment. Even when an interpreter is present, other factors, including the person's level of comfort in the interview environment, may create communication difficulties and impact on the communication outcome.

## Protocols for engaging interpreters

Agencies should engage a qualified interpreter as much as possible.

The highest levels of NAATI accreditation are Conference Interpreter (Senior) and Conference Interpreter. These levels are required if organising an international conference. However, for most public sector agencies the third highest level of accreditation is adequate (Professional Interpreter).

Depending on availability and the interpreting task, the recommended order of preference protocol for engaging qualified interpreters is:

1. NAATI accredited Professional Interpreter
2. NAATI accredited Paraprofessional Interpreter
3. NAATI Recognised Interpreter.

Other interpreters may have tertiary level qualifications or be a member of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), for conference interpreters.

Non-professional interpreters should not be used unless the situation is urgent and a qualified interpreter is unavailable.

In Queensland, the majority of NAATI accredited interpreters hold the Paraprofessional level of accreditation. There may be no accredited interpreters and/or only a small number of Recognised interpreters for the languages of small communities, particularly those who have recently arrived.

Access to qualified interpreters in rural and remote Queensland is often limited to interpreting by telephone. However, some interpreters are available for on-site work in regional centres. The availability of qualified interpreters can be checked through the relevant interpreter service provider. Additionally NAATI and the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) produce directories of accredited practitioners. Both directories are available on their respective websites.

In small communities, where people from the same cultural/linguistic group may know each other, an individual may feel embarrassed speaking through an interpreter from the same community, particularly about health-related issues. In this instance a telephone interpreter based outside the local community may be more appropriate.

Complex interpreting work, which may have serious implications for the person and the agency, should be undertaken by the most qualified interpreter available.

It is important to consider the gender and language (including dialect) preferences of the person, illustrated through the following good practice example provided by the Queensland Program of Assistance for the Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT).

## *Good practice example:*

"When engaging interpreters we try to make sure the interpreter is from the same region as the client (e.g. a Congolese women who speaks French does not speak the same dialect as a French speaker from France), the same gender (especially important if the client has experienced sexual or domestic violence), from the same or different ethnicity (particularly if there is a history of conflict within the country of origin between different ethnic groups), and that the interpreter is either experienced with the counselling content or comfortable working in a highly stressful situation. These considerations are necessary for the comfort of the client and to ensure that they can develop a trusting relationship with both the counsellor and interpreter."

*QPASTT.*

The category of interpreters and their preferred engagement within Queensland Government are summarised in the table below.

| Type of interpreter | Qualification status | Preferred engagement with Queensland Government |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Qualified interpreter | For languages where NAATI accreditation testing is available, NAATI issues accreditation at the following levels:<br><br>• Paraprofessional Interpreter (lowest level)<br>• Professional Interpreter<br>• Conference Interpreter<br>• Senior Conference Interpreter (highest) | Where accreditation exists, preferred order of engagement is:<br><br>1. Professional Interpreters<br>2. Paraprofessional Interpreters |
|  | For languages where NAATI accreditation testing is not available, NAATI issues a recognition level:<br><br>• Recognised Interpreter<br><br>Other qualifications include:<br><br>• Interpreters with Australian tertiary level qualifications<br>• conference interpreters who are member of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) | Where accreditation does not exist, preferred engagement is for Recognised Interpreters. |
| Other interpreter | No NAATI credentials | Not to be used unless the situation is urgent and a qualified interpreter is unavailable. |

The following good practice example, provided by Mater Health Services, demonstrates how these general protocols can be implemented within a service environment.

## *Good practice example:*

"Mater Health Services has a detailed policy on the use of interpreting services including guidance around what to do in emergency situations when an accredited interpreter is not available. The policy also covers the use of bilingual staff and makes it clear to staff that using an interpreter is a matter of patient safety and professional practice.

Interpreters are booked through the central Queensland Health Interpreter Service Information System accessed through the Mater Intranet or through an Interpreter Bookings Coordinator. Arrangements are also in place for emergency and after hours' requests.

The policy provides guidance about identifying the appropriateness of an interpreter, such as pre-empting the information being provided by the health professional.

Posters and other information are available in clinical areas of the hospital and all staff are provided with a wallet sized card outlining key points in using an interpreter, many of our staff attach this to their lanyards."

*Mater Health Services.*

## Practices to be avoided

Friends and family members should not be used as interpreters and children and young relatives are not appropriate interpreters in any context.

Clients and family members may be embarrassed or uncomfortable when family members act as interpreters. In these situations communication may be distorted or changed because of a lack of competence in English or the other language or bias on the part of the family member or advocate. However, the client may feel more comfortable with a family member, bilingual associate or worker present for support, along with the qualified interpreter.

Using bilingual staff as interpreters is not recommended, unless they are suitably qualified. Bilingual staff members that have not received NAATI credentials may not be adequately skilled in the language. The impartiality of bilingual staff may also be brought into question particularly in sensitive health or legal situations where conflict of interest issues may arise. Refer to Guidelines for bilingual/multilingual staff (page 16) for information about when it is appropriate to use bilingual/multilingual staff.

Use of other (non-professional) interpreters, such as local community elders, or people working in the industry that are yet to receive accreditation, should be avoided as much as possible.

*Note: While it is acknowledged that circumstances may require the use of non-professional interpreters, for example, during an emergency, a non-professional interpreter may compromise or misinterpret important information. Any agency using the services of a non-professional interpreter should develop strategies to mitigate any risk to clients and/ or the organisation. Accordingly, the use of qualified interpreters is recommended.*

## Selecting the most appropriate interpreting mode

An interpreter assists effective communication. Communication comprises both verbal and non-verbal channels. The following provides a brief overview of the advantages and disadvantages of three modes of interpreting.

**On-site interpreting** is where the interpreter attends in person and provides access to both verbal and non-verbal communication channels. On-site interpreting should be used in situations when complex or lengthy matters will be discussed including where documents and consent forms are involved (i.e. when an interpreter orally provides a sight translation of a written document).

**Telephone interpreting** can be a cost-effective option for simple communications that are not lengthy. Telephone interpreting mainly involves verbal communication and is therefore not as detailed a communication option compared to on-site interpreting. Telephone interpreting may be more suitable in circumstances where a client's confidentiality can be better preserved (e.g. in small communities) and where an on-site interpreter is not available. It can also provide more immediate access to interpreters (e.g. in circumstances where pre-booking is not an option).

**Video conference interpreting** provides both verbal and non-verbal communication channels and is an alternative to telephone interpreting where agencies have access to video conferencing facilities. Video conference interpreting provides a practical option when sign language interpreters are not available locally.

## Procurement arrangements

### Paying for interpreting services

Agencies are responsible for budgeting and paying for interpreters (including client initiated contact). In line with relevant legislative requirements, clients of Queensland Government agencies do not pay for interpreters.

The Queensland Government website at www.qld.gov.au refers clients to interpreter service providers for assistance with information in their language.

Agencies should regularly audit their websites and other information resources to ensure information relating to interpreters, including contact information, is up to date.

Front-line service staff should be aware that client enquiries may be generated through interpreters.

Agencies should have mechanisms in place to ensure that invoices for such calls are paid within a suitable timeframe.

Subject to Australian Government approval, some non-government, community based or non-profit organisations are eligible for free interpreting services. General practitioners and Members of Parliament are also entitled to free interpreting services.

Further details about eligibility for free interpreting services can be obtained from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection website at www.immi.gov.au.

Queensland Government funded services must be provided with adequate arrangements to engage interpreter services for service delivery (delivery of the service or program for which the organisation is funded). The relevant funding department is responsible for informing funded services of the process and arrangements for accessing interpreter services.

For employers to support employees who are deaf in the workplace, the Australian Government's Employment Assistance Fund may be available to provide assistance. For more information visit www.jobaccess.gov.au.

## Arranging an interpreter

Interpreting services may be provided over the phone or when the interpreter is physically present (on-site). Audio-visual access to interpreters may be available through video conferencing networks.

### Who to contact?

1. Some agencies have established internal arrangements to engage interpreter services. In this circumstance, staff should refer to the agency's internal guidelines on requesting and booking interpreter services.

2. If your agency does not have an internal arrangement in place, a list of interpreter service providers is located on the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs website at www.datsima.qld.gov.au.

Alternatively agencies can look for a qualified interpreter via:

- **NAATI online Directory** at www.naati.com.au

- **AUSIT online Directory** at www.ausit.org

- **for conference interpreters** – The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) – Australian members on 02 6633 7122 or website www.aiic.net or email swehov@nor.com.au

- **Yellow Pages** under Interpreters

- **for Auslan interpreters** – Deaf Society Queensland. Pre-book online or by fax on an Interpreter Request Form on 07 3392 8511, or phone 07 3892 8500 (office hours) or tty on 07 3892 8501. More information is available from www.deafservicesqld.org.au.

### What to consider when requesting an interpreter

When requesting an interpreter:

- give as much notice as possible

- brief interpreters on the nature of the assignment and provide relevant documents where appropriate

- establish language, gender, and cultural background preferences for interpreters and request these from the provider

- request the same interpreter where continuity and client confidence is important

- ensure you check the qualifications of the interpreter (i.e. evidence of NAATI accreditation or recognition).

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language interpreting

There are very few accredited interpreters in Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs website includes a list of interpreter service providers for Aboriginal languages but the majority of these operate outside of Queensland and are unlikely to have expertise in Queensland specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

Some Queensland Government agencies employ cultural liaison/support workers to support with communication between speakers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and services.

Information for Queensland Government employees regarding Community Specific Profiles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is available via the Cultural Capability Portal at http://datsima.govnet.qld.gov.au.

## Interpreter quality

To maintain confidentiality, accuracy and impartiality, qualified interpreters observe the professional code of ethics.

The AUSIT Code of Ethics for Interpreters and Translators can be obtained from AUSIT.

### *Good practice example:*

"When necessary, QPASTT will arrange extra time at the end of a counselling session to provide an opportunity for the counsellor to debrief with the interpreter. This allows the interpreter to debrief and provides a form of professional support for the interpreter."

*QPASTT.*

When working with interpreters, staff should always check the interpreters' NAATI identity cards and accreditation details before commencing the session.

## Skilling staff in working with interpreters

Communicating with people through an interpreter can be a difficult skill to learn. Agencies should provide adequate training and access to information, such as fact sheets and checklists, for staff who may need to work with interpreters.

The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs website contains information about working with interpreters, how to obtain an interpreter and procedures for locating a qualified interpreter.

Agency staff will benefit from training in working with interpreters in their workplace. Organisations specialising in cross-cultural training often include courses in working with interpreters.

The following good practice example, provided by the Multicultural Development Association, demonstrates an innovative approach to training staff on working with interpreters.

### *Good practice example:*

"The Department of Human Services (Centrelink) has produced a 30-minute DVD including eight scenarios demonstrating poor and problematic face-to-face interpreter engagement, and a good practice scenario. The scenarios are specific and relevant to Centrelink's day to day work. Three of the scenarios use BYO interpreters (such as relatives, friends and minors) to demonstrate the importance of booking qualified interpreters to ensure impartiality, confidentiality and competence.

Other scenarios focus on checking the correct language, cultural competence and considerations (including considering the gender of the interpreter), roles and seating, style of language and pace, and maintaining control of the interview. The DVD also includes a short section on tips for working with phone interpreters.

The DVD is intended to be used as a training resource followed by discussion of the scenarios to unpack and understand the features that constitute good and poor practice."

*Multicultural Development Association.*

# Guidelines for using technology

Interpreter services are very much a human focused industry, however with Queensland's highly decentralised population and a lack of qualified interpreters in particular languages, it is often very difficult for services in regional areas to engage on-site interpreters.

Use of technology in the provision of language services could improve access to government frontline services, making it easier for clients, and help to reduce the costs of using interpreter services for government agencies.

The following table summarises the benefits and risks associated with technologies currently being used.

| Technology type | Benefits | Risks |
|---|---|---|
| Skype | • benefits of an on-site interpreter without the need for the interpreter to be in the same room as the client <br><br> • widely accessible – can be downloaded onto any computer with a webcam and internet connection <br><br> • able to access a wider range of languages as interpreters can be sourced from around Australia | • requires a strong/ fast internet connection which may be lacking in some regional or remote areas in Queensland <br><br> • limited usability – most webcams will not allow for all parties to be visible at the same time. This makes it difficult for interpreter to see both client and staff non-verbal cues <br><br> • assumes all parties have access to technology including computer with a webcam and internet connection |
| Video conferencing facilities | • benefits of an on-site interpreter without the need for the interpreter to be in the same room as the client (of particular benefit in the regions) <br><br> • able to access a wider range of languages as interpreters can be sourced from around Australia | • limited availability to agencies with facilities <br><br> • requires a strong/ fast internet connection which may be lacking in some regional or remote areas in Queensland |

| Technology type | Benefits | Risks |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Multilingual information lines – pre-recorded information in languages other than English | • able to provide most commonly sought after information in multiple languages<br>• likely to resolve majority of callers information needs<br>• cost-effective as the agency is not engaging an interpreter to provide the same information to multiple clients<br>• caller can be transferred to an interpreter if the pre-recorded information does not meet their needs<br>• pre-recorded information is accessible 24 hours, 7 days a week<br>• less time spent by call centre staff determining clients' needs<br>• inclusive of people illiterate in their first language | • only limited general information can be provided<br>• does not allow for specific questions/circumstance of client to be addressed |
| Machine/ automated translation | • cheap alternative for small translations<br>• almost instantaneous translation | • more difficult to ensure the quality of translation provided as not NAATI accredited<br>• not practical for larger translation projects such as multiple page documents<br>• current technology varies in accuracy and quality<br>• don't reflect specific terminologies (e.g. used in legal, health or technical sectors) or local community's context |
| Video/You Tube clips in languages other than English (e.g. Australian Tax Office vox pop video, Looking to our multicultural future) | • information can be made widely available to stakeholders/clients through uploading on website<br>• inclusive of people illiterate in their first language | • requires clients to have internet access<br>• only of use for general information which may not meet specific need of individuals |

## Video conferencing facilities

A number of agencies now use video conferencing technology to aid service provision in regional centres.

Legal Aid Queensland has a video conferencing facility locator on its website which indicates organisations, including community legal services, that have video conferencing facilities in particular locations visit www.legalaid.qld.gov.au.

Wider use of videoconferencing technology when working with clients with limited English proficiency would reduce the cost associated with booking on-site interpreters and increase availability of a wider range of languages as interpreters could be accessed from wherever they are around Australia.

Some challenges that are specific to the health setting require the physical presence of an interpreter (i.e. on-site) to fully support the patient and clinician. Some forms of technology are not ideal for all patients, such as videoconferencing for mental health patients which can be problematic.

## Multilingual information lines

Some agencies, through an interpreter service provider, operate a multilingual information service supported by superior interactive voice response (IVR) technology and custom built software that manages content and reporting including call statistics and connection time and invoicing.

With these services pre-recorded information is provided in the most relevant language groups for client services and a dedicated phone number for each language, or access via a single number, can be provided. If the information provided does not meet the client's needs they are then automatically forwarded to an interpreter and the relevant agency.

An example of this type of service is available at: www.vits.com.au

## Video/You Tube clips

The Australian Tax Office's YouTube channel includes videos with captions available in Chinese, Vietnamese, Turkish, Arabic, Japanese, Khmer, Korean and Thai on the Goods and Services Tax (GST). These videos include simple and practical information to help people manage GST in their business. They also show how to complete and lodge business activity statements, better ways to keep good records and how to manage GST debt.

## Machine / automated translation

While use of qualified translators is the standard under the *Queensland Language Services Policy* for the translation of government publications and information resources, this is very expensive and often time consuming. It therefore limits the amount of information accessible to people with limited English language proficiency.

There are a number of web and application based translation products (e.g. Google Translate) widely available to assist overseas travellers and other people needing to communicate small amounts of information in another language.

While these technologies are convenient and cheap they vary considerably in quality and provide only a limited translation (i.e. they translate one word for another without consideration of the context in which the word is used which may result in a different meaning). They also only provide translations for a limited number of languages and rarely the new and emerging languages spoken by refugee communities (e.g. for African languages Google Translate currently only has Swahili, Afrikaans, Somali and Zulu).

*"False Friends are one of the reasons why 'direct translation' between languages is not possible. False Friends can be defined as words which sound the same and usually have a common origin but which have different meanings.*

*False Friends have long been recognized for English and French (faux amis) where a word takes on different meanings in languages over time. In the long history of contact between English and French, many French loan words into English have acquired different meanings in English and modern French, for example French chariot which can mean 'shopping trolley'."*

*(NAATI News Vol.27, Issue 1)*

Using this technology in a more systematic and widespread way may result in legal liability and be dangerous to clients. Using a web or application based translation product in place of an interpreter will also be of limited use for oral languages where there is no written form or where literacy levels within the language community are low.

Machine or automated translation, such as Memory Translation and collaborative translation, provides a seemingly cost-effective and practical solution to translating volumes of information.

Some translation service providers are using machine translation for particular clients. This involves establishing a database of previously translated information by a qualified translator that can be utilised to assist in future translations for the same client. As it is client specific, the database can accommodate particular terminology used by the client, business or industry, reducing the risks associated with machine translation.

When using machine translation agencies must have mechanisms in place to ensure the quality of the translation, including engaging a qualified translator to check finalised translation and a community language speaker to ensure cultural appropriateness of the translation.

If providing machine/automated translation programs on websites agencies should be responsible for ensuring the quality of the particular program used. Some factors agencies should consider include:

- whether the system includes a feedback and corrective action system so that errors are identified and rectified
- whether a skilled and qualified translator was involved in the development and ongoing quality control of the machine/ automated translation system
- engagement with community language speakers to test the translation provided through the system for accuracy and cultural appropriateness.

Levels of use of translation according to risk can be described as below:

- critical, legal and health content should be provided through high-quality translation channels (human)
- large volume product-related knowledge content may be processed via customised machine translation with post-editing by a qualified translator (human)
- random comments and social media feedback could be processed by customised machine translation systems[2].

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2    Valeria Cannarina & Anna Fellet (2011) LTAC Language and Translation Automation Conference - Proceedings, www.lulu.com.

## How and when to use technology to support clients with limited English proficiency

Technology should only be used to supplement the use of qualified interpreters and translators and not replace it. Given the concerns that exist regarding the quality and accuracy of machine/ automated translation, it should not be used in legal, health or technical fields. Other forms of technology may be more appropriate in these circumstances.

The following matrix provides an outline of which technologies should be used in relation to the type of communication required; two-way information exchange (e.g. police interviews or engagement workshops) and one-way information exchange (e.g. promotion of new programs or regulation); and the level of risk to the organisation and individual involved.

| | HIGH RISK* | | | LOW RISK** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TWO-WAY** INFORMATION EXCHANGE | Qualified interpreter/ translator | Video conferencing | | Skype | | |
| | | | | Bi-lingual/ bi-cultural staff member | | |
| **ONE-WAY** INFORMATION EXCHANGE | | Video/You Tube clips | Multi-lingual information lines | | Electronic/ online translation database/apps | |

*\* High risk situations are those which may require the translation of critical information, such as health or legal information pertaining to an person's individual circumstances.*

*\*\*Low risk situations are those which may require translation of general product or service related information which is not dependant on individual circumstances.*

## Guidelines for bilingual/ multilingual staff

The Queensland Government employs approximately 228,597 people (as at June 2013). Of this total approximately 23,132 are from a non-English speaking background (people who have migrated to Australia and whose first language is a language other than English, and the children of those people)[3]. This is a significant potential resource to assist government services be responsive to clients and customers that have low English language proficiency.

Bilingual/multilingual staff can be of assistance to customers speaking their common language but they should not be used by agencies in place of qualified interpreters.

Situations which may benefit from bilingual/ multilingual workers include:

- a Mandarin-speaking staff member promoting a government product to a group of Chinese business people
- a French-speaking staff member assisting a French speaking client from West Africa to fill in a form for public housing
- a Vietnamese-speaking government employee providing community recovery outreach to areas with a high number of people from a Vietnamese background.

Cultural liaison/support workers may also support communication between agencies and clients. These workers are able to develop trust and build relationships with local communities to better support clients. There is also a potential cost saving for agencies in reducing the need to engage an interpreter service where they are not specifically necessary.

Bilingual/multilingual staff can also help to improve front-line services through increased cultural responsiveness and customer focus through increasing the confidence and skill level of all staff in communicating with and supporting customers with low English language proficiency.

Agencies using the skills of bilingual/ multilingual workers will need to consider the following potential issues:

- operational considerations – is using their language/cultural skills part of the staff members role or an additional duty? Management will need to consider operational requirements to ensure that the staff member is able to take on these additional duties (e.g. allow time out of their work day to provide communication support when required (maybe with little notice), redistributing work when staff member is away)
- bilingual/multilingual workers and other staff are aware of when a qualified interpreter is required and that bilingual/ multilingual workers are not to take on the role of an interpreter.

Bilingual/multilingual staff should never be used in place of a qualified interpreter.

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3     Public Service Commission, Queensland Public Service and sector wide profile data, www.psc.qld.gov.au.

# Guidelines for multilingual information planning

To ensure translated resources are cost-effective and client focused, agencies need a thorough understanding of the community that their communication strategy is targeting. For example, many languages are oral only, meaning there is no written form to translate material into. Similarly, literacy levels may be very low for some communities including in their first language. When developing communication strategies for clients identified as requiring language support, a range of communication mechanisms should be considered, including:

- translated written information (available in hard copy or online), including posters, fact sheets, brochures, post-cards, etc.
- audio or video clips in languages other than English
- pre-recorded multilingual information accessed via the telephone
- information sessions conducted with interpreters (these could also be recorded or streamed online)
- employment of bilingual/bi-cultural workers
- pictorial representations (for basic information).

## Media

Communication strategies which include components in English and languages other than English may be in one, or a combination of, the following:

- in print – translated brochures and booklets, factsheets, business cards, advertising flyers and postcards, poster slogans, forms and papers, and advertisements

- electronically – translated or original language messages on the internet, intranet or by email
- audio-visually – subtitled, dubbed, voice-overed or original language videos, audio- cassettes, multilingual telephone information lines, ethnic radio or television scripts and audio clips on websites
- bilingual/multilingual workers – focus groups or information sessions
- Auslan Video Translations.

## Planning

Multilingual communication requirements need to be planned based on market research and the use of client profile data which identifies language spoken, literacy levels, age, gender and how recent arrival in Australia was. Planning also includes dissemination strategies and evaluation and feedback mechanisms.

1. Language choices should be based on in-house locally-researched data as well as external data sources such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census and other demographic data.

2. The choice of media used to communicate with clients also needs to be carefully considered. For example, only 73.7 per cent of people who do not speak English well or at all have access to the internet[4]. Literacy levels as well as some languages not having a written form are also key considerations.

...............................
4    Department of Immigration and Border Protection (2014) People of Queensland-statistics from the 2011 Census.

3.  Checking for cultural appropriateness is a vital part of any multilingual communication strategy and will include feedback on the appropriateness of photography and artwork (e.g. cartoons) as well as language. Lack of awareness of cultural differences can impact the transfer of messages and meaning to the relevant community. Cultural diversity networks may be available to give feedback on a draft multilingual product.

4.  Distribution – Ethnic communities, business associations and peak agencies should be included in decisions about information needs, formats and dissemination strategies. Agencies should organise their own networks with the assistance of the Queensland Multicultural Resource Directory and/or with the advice of Cultural Diversity Queensland, or through contacting services.

Key considerations:

-   agencies need to balance the imperatives of getting information to large identified groups with the information requirements of smaller or emerging groups and regional/ isolated communities

-   the marketing of government products and services in multilingual form to international destinations requires sensitivity to local acceptability factors. Queensland's multicultural community is an ideal resource for product testing

-   ensure that the original source material is written in plain English and is of good quality as this will help ensure a quality translated version

-   agencies need to ensure good quality assurance processes for managing the translation project from the procuring of a translator to vetting the final product.

Planning can include professional development of bilingual/multilingual staff to encourage them to attain NAATI accreditation and use their language skills in the workplace.

The following good practice example illustrates how an agency can work with translators to improve the quality of the product provided.

## *Good practice example:*

The Department of Transport and Main Roads uses accredited interpreters and translators. Overseas translations of driving licences are not accepted by the department, which ensures consistency of produced translations is maintained, as well as providing opportunities to local translators. In addition, the department communicates its expectations in the area of translating to NAATI which disseminates this information to translators, assisting in improving the quality of translations."

*AUSIT.*

## Contracting out work

Multilingual material (including translation work) used in any of these strategies should be obtained through professional sources. In Queensland the majority of translation and audio-visual work is contracted out to private organisations. Agencies should ensure that translators are accredited through NAATI.

## Organising translations

Using qualified translators provides agencies with more confidence that the product will be accurate, professional and appropriate.

Agencies should use NAATI accredited translators. NAATI levels of accreditation include Paraprofessional Translator, Professional Translator and Advanced Translator. A NAATI Recognised Translator can be used for new and emerging languages in which accredited translators do not exist.

Staff should be aware that translators are accredited either to translate:

- from English into another language, or
- from another language into English.

Verification through a stamp may be required for legal documents, such as translations of birth certificates and driver's licences which are used to prove a person's identity.

The NAATI accredited translators' stamp includes:

- the accreditation level
- the language of accreditation
- NAATI number.

Ensure that you leave enough time for the translation. The translator may need to check with you regarding particular terms or intended meaning and this may increase the time taken for the translation.

It is recommended that translations are either checked by a second translator or tested with the particular language group to ensure the most accurate translation in terms of context and intended message.

## Distributing information

Agencies should consider which distribution methods are most effective for the communities they wish to target.

Options to consider include:

- using ethnic media outlets such as radio station 4EB and community newspapers
- providing information to settlement service providers, ethnic community organisations and peak bodies such as the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland and/or Deaf Services Queensland (for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities). Visit the Queensland Multicultural Resource

Directory on the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs website (www.datsima.qld.gov.au) for contact details for culturally diverse organisations

- providing information through local churches, mosques, temples and cultural clubs.
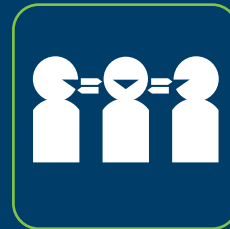


## National Interpreter Symbol

The National Interpreter Symbol is a national public information symbol developed as a joint partnership between Australian Commonwealth, state and territory governments. It provides a simple way of indicating where people can ask for language assistance.

The Queensland Government encourages the use of this symbol when distributing information.

More information about the symbol, including artwork and guidelines for use is available on the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs website at www.datsima.qld.gov.au

# Guidelines for data collection and reporting

Agencies are required to report annually on the performance measures identified in the *Queensland Language Services Policy*.

Agencies may also need to collect other data to inform the delivery of culturally responsive services.

Efficient systems can assist agencies to be more responsive to customer needs, identify emerging trends, develop an evidence base so that solutions can be implemented, and save both time and money.

Systems to be considered include:

- interpreter booking systems
- data collection for service usage and customer profile
- reporting and feedback systems.

Not all agencies will need to develop extensive systems, however, how interpreters and the services they provide can be better integrated into service delivery for the benefit of clients should be considered by all agencies.

## Identification of client language service needs in the agency

Agencies may need to consider collecting additional data regarding the language needs of clients, including ensuring that:

- ethnicity data collection mechanisms, including country of birth, first language spoken, English proficiency/need for an interpreter and language for which an interpreter is required (is part of agency market research and client profile descriptors). Cross-linking with other agencies/sections on data is encouraged for a standard approach

- requests for interpreters and languages are recorded
- agency is aware of appropriate mode of interpreting for its client base (on-site only, telephone only, on-site and telephone, personal computer or site-based video conference)
- agency has installed conference or dual handset telephones in public contact areas and interview rooms
- agency has researched information needs of its non-English speaking clients
- procedure is in place to flag a client's interpreter needs through agency services (e.g. by noting a client's file and records)
- procedure is in place to obtain and record feedback from clients on levels of satisfaction in terms of both access to, and quality of, service delivery through the increased use of interpreters.

## Interpreter use

Agencies may collect data regarding interpreter use, cost and languages requested and accreditation status of interpreters used. This data can help agencies to budget for future interpreter costs and effectively meet the needs of people who experience language barriers.

Other indicators to inform agencies' performance in working with interpreters includes ensuring that:

- policy, planning and front-line staff are aware of and understand the desirability of working with qualified interpreters for effective communication, and have been trained to do so
- staff members know when to engage qualified interpreters
- procedures are available for staff to obtain interpreters in planned and unplanned (emergency) situations and staff know how to respond to and distribute the Queensland Interpreter Card

- budgeting arrangements have been made for the payment of interpreters by the agency
- policies guide staff not to use friends and relatives as interpreters
- staff are aware that a refusal to provide an interpreter could be potentially discriminatory and understand the importance of qualified interpreters in obtaining informed consent in legal, police, health and other government agency contexts
- funded services are aware of their responsibilities to use interpreters and the arrangements in place to facilitate their use.

## Multilingual information planning and management

Agencies may consider additional measures in multilingual information planning, including ensuring:

- communication plans are made before the agency produces multilingual (including English) information for clients with difficulty communicating in English
- choices on media, languages and cultural appropriateness of information and its packaging are based on relevant data
- evaluation of past and present multilingual projects is used as part of planning to inform future information/promotion strategies
- effective dissemination links are in place through ethnic media and community networks
- bilingual staff members are involved in supporting effective information provision to clients.

## Integration of language services policy into organisational processes

A culturally responsive service will have integrated the *Queensland Language Services Policy* with the organisations business processes and activities. Some of the actions that agencies can take to more fully integrate the policy include:

- data on languages spoken by clients is used as an important part of building responsive client services
- language services initiatives including interpreter use and multilingual information projects are part of core business planning and budgetary processes
- a register of qualified and non-qualified bilingual/multilingual staff is available and policy exists relating to their role in liaising with culturally diverse communities
- language services-related initiatives (such as providing staff access to NAATI credentials) are incorporated as part of agency enterprise bargaining, Equal Employment Opportunity and selection and recruitment processes
- the agency has centralised its interpreter booking and recording functions where appropriate for greater efficiency in budgeting and data collection
- the agency provides its staff with access to training in cultural capability, cross-cultural communication, working with interpreters and planning multilingual information strategies as aspects of its management of cultural diversity internally and externally
- the agency has trained its front-line staff in product knowledge for an accurate response in either English or languages other than English (through interpreters) to information requests.

# Definitions

## Language services

Services provided by agencies which address communication issues affecting people with limited proficiency in English. This may include speakers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and Auslan (Australian Sign Language).

Language services include:

- engagement of interpreters via the telephone, videoconference or on-site
- employment of bilingual or multilingual staff
- accreditation of bilingual or multilingual staff
- use of multilingual information strategies.

## Interpreter

A person who conveys oral messages, concepts and ideas from one language into another language (including sign language), with a high degree of accuracy, completeness, objectivity and sensitivity to the cultures associated with the languages of expertise.

In this policy, qualified interpreters are:

- interpreters certified by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) at the Professional, Paraprofessional, Interpreter or Conference Interpreter Levels, or with NAATI Recognition
- interpreters certified by NAATI in Auslan
- conference interpreters who are members of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC)
- interpreters with tertiary level qualifications in interpreting.

## Translator

A person who makes a written transfer of a written message or information from one language into another language to provide complete and accurate text reflecting the original material.

## Bilingual/multilingual staff

People who are fluent in two or more languages but their language skills have not been formally assessed. They should not be employed in the capacity of a qualified interpreter and thus are not expected to provide interpreting services as described above. They can act as liaison for the culturally diverse communities (e.g. provide information directly in languages other than English or limited cultural advice). The community sector also employs bilingual workers to provide specialised information services and/or personal assistance within targeted communities.

## Multilingual information management

Planning and developing information in languages appropriate for a client group to meet their information needs. Information is provided in English and in languages other than English.

## Queensland Interpreter Card

Assists non-English speakers to inform Queensland Government agency staff that they require an interpreter. The card is similar in size and quality to a business card and identifies the language for which an interpreter is required. Cultural Diversity Queensland distributes this card.

## Queensland Interpreter Card Kit

Complements the Queensland Interpreter Card and assists Queensland Government agency staff to respond to a request for an interpreter. It includes a series of fact sheets which are also available on the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs website at www.datsima.qld.gov.au.

## National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI)

The national standards and certifying body for translators and interpreters in Australia. The following explains how NAATI credentials work.

- **Accreditation**

  Where there is sufficient community demand for a language, NAATI develops a language test that candidates need to pass to be awarded the credential of an accredited interpreter.

- **Recognition**

  Where there is low community demand for a language and no accreditation available, NAATI provides a recognition credential[5].

## Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT)

The national independent association for the translating and interpreting profession. Members of AUSIT are mainly practising translators and interpreters and membership is voluntary.

## The Australian Sign Language Interpreter Association (ASLIA)

The national peak organisation representing the needs and interests of Auslan/English interpreters and Deaf Interpreters (DIs) in Australia.

## Agencies

Under the Queensland Language Services Policy, Queensland Government agencies are defined as:

- all Queensland government departments*, and

- government organisations that were covered by the preceding Language Services Policy**.

*Including non-government organisations that are funded to deliver services on behalf of those departments (funded services).*

***These include Hospital and Health Services, TAFE Queensland, Trade and Investment Queensland and the Queensland Mental Health Commission.*

5    NAATI provides 12 months for Recognised interpreters to obtain accreditation after a test is introduced for a language.

## Contact

**Cultural Diversity Queensland**

Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs

Phone:   13 QGOV (13 74 68)

Fax:       3224 5691

Web:      www.datsima.qld.gov.au

Postal:   PO Box 15397
          CITY EAST QLD 4002

Email:    CDQ@datsima.qld.gov.au

### Do you need an interpreter?

If you need an interpreter call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on **131 450** and request to be transferred to Cultural Diversity Queensland on **13 74 68**.