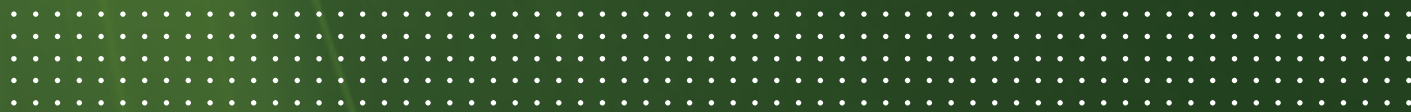


Cultural Diversity Queensland

Language Services Policy Review



2014

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1 Current situation in Queensland

1.1 What is the problem to be resolved?

The *Queensland Cultural Diversity Policy, 2013*, identified that a lack of English language proficiency is a significant barrier to accessing services, economic independence and participation within the community.

The *Queensland Cultural Diversity Policy* provides a commitment to delivering frontline services that are the most culturally responsive services in Australia. For services to be culturally responsive they should be accessible to all Queenslanders regardless of their English language ability. The provision of language services, such as interpreters, to customers unable to communicate in English supports people during the period in which they are learning English, as well as:

- helping them to overcome complex service systems
- ensuring that substandard services are not provided due to misunderstanding of customers' needs
- ensuring health and legal requirements are met (e.g. obtaining informed consent)
- reducing the potential for compensation claims and litigation related to inadequate service provision
- enhancing the quality of program and service delivery, including potential cost savings resulting from a more effective and targeted approach.

A report released in October 2012 by the Queensland Accessing Interpreters Working Group (QAIWG), a consortium of non-government organisations and community sector peak bodies, identified a number of areas across the Queensland Government where use of interpreters was not embedded in service delivery. The report also identified that delivering an effective service initially by engaging an accredited interpreter, often costs significantly less than the remedial costs incurred when a service is not delivered effectively due to language barriers.

It is acknowledged that new arrivals will ultimately be more successful in settling into Australian society and gaining economic independence if they are able to speak English. However, the reality is that not all new arrivals will be able to speak English and for those who have acquired English language skills, these may progressively diminish as they age. An inability to communicate can be one of the greatest forms of isolation for people from culturally diverse backgrounds. The availability of information in languages other than English can assist people's comprehension, as well as alleviating some of the disadvantage experienced by people unable to communicate in English.

To support the focus on *Language Independence* in the new *Queensland Cultural Diversity Policy*, the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs (DATSIMA) was tasked with conducting a review of the *Queensland Language Services Policy* (LSP). The purpose of the review was to determine whether the LSP was achieving its aim to enhance access to interpreters and translated information for people from culturally diverse backgrounds to enable equitable access to the full range of services. The review also considered whether there are cost-effective and streamlined measures which will achieve this objective more effectively (refer to section 1.7 for more information on the review process). More efficient processes will also support the development of the interpreter industry in Queensland.

Stakeholder consultation identified that the current LSP was good but that implementation was often ad-hoc across government and could be improved (refer Appendix 4).

1.2 Policy context

The LSP has been in existence since 1998 with amendments and revisions culminating in the version that was launched in July 2011. In November 2013, the Queensland Government approved the undertaking of a review of the LSP.

The policy is implemented by each department, through strategies funded within their operating budget. There are multiple arrangements in place to procure interpreters and translation services, to monitor and report on expenditure, quality and effectiveness of service delivery and training of staff.

Unlike some other jurisdictions, the Queensland Government does not operate an interpreter service. It does have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Australian Government's Translation and Interpreter Service (TIS National) in relation to the quality of services, reporting on usage and fees. This does not limit departments from accessing other service providers and there are many other companies offering these services which departments utilise. The MOU is administered by DATSIMA on behalf of the Queensland Government.

The LSP commits Queensland Government agencies to use professional interpreters and translators accredited through the National Accreditation Authority for Translating and Interpreting (NAATI). NAATI is the national body responsible for accreditation of interpreters and translators. The current LSP defines agencies as Queensland Government departments and the non-government organisations (NGOs) which these departments fund to provide services (funded services).

1.3 Summary of other jurisdictions

The Australian, Victorian, Western Australian, Tasmanian, Australian Capital Territory (ACT), and Northern Territory Governments also have language services policies. Some individual government agencies, in Queensland and other states, have individual language services policies detailing specific guidelines and procedures for their agencies. In the NGO sphere some have a language services policy for their organisation.

The South Australian, New South Wales (NSW) and Northern Territory governments operate an interpreter and translating service for state government agencies. The Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service (VITS) is a Victorian Government owned government business enterprise. They compete in an open market with other commercial language service providers. In Western Australia, the Kimberley Interpreting Service is a community controlled service funded jointly by the Western Australian and Australian governments to provide interpreter services in Indigenous languages.

1.3.1 Victoria

The Victorian Government's *Using Interpreting Services - Victorian Government Policy and Procedures* sets out the obligations of government service providers to provide language services and gives advice to assist in the practical planning and delivery of services to people with low English language proficiency¹. It also includes requirements for funded services. The policy includes Auslan, Australian sign language, but is silent on Indigenous interpreting.

1.3.2 New South Wales

The Multicultural Policies and Services Program requires each NSW government agency to have a current multicultural plan which shows how it will conduct its business within a culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse society². Agencies' multicultural plans must outline how agencies will ensure equitable access to services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds which may include the provision of interpreters and information in community languages.

While NSW does not have a specific language services policy, the Community Relations Commission for a multicultural NSW does operate an interpreter service for NSW government agencies and provides fact sheets regarding how to engage and work with an interpreter.

1.3.3 Australian Capital Territory

The ACT's *Many Voices: 2012-16 Australian Capital Territory Language Policy* includes commitments to English language programs, recognition of Indigenous languages and to use language services for people who do not speak English very well or are hearing impaired³. The policy also includes recognition of the role of English as the national language, as well as the economic benefit of teaching English to international students.

The policy encourages agencies to consider the need and process for engaging interpreters within their agencies and ensure that staff are adequately trained. In relation to translated resources, the policy goes a step further than a general commitment to translate information into other languages and stipulates that:

“... as a priority in the context of limited resources and need, the translation of essential public information in languages used by new non-English speaking arrivals to Canberra or other vulnerable groups rather than just according to the size of established communities.” (Many Voices: 2012-16 Australian Capital Territory Language Policy).

The ACT policy also includes a section on learning languages other than English, which encourages English speakers to learn another language and supports community language schools.

1.3.4 Northern Territory

The *Northern Territory Language Services Policy* outlines how and where language services can be accessed, why it's important to use these services and how they should be used⁴. It includes a commitment to use qualified interpreters and translators, as well as ensuring that staff are aware of the policy. The policy includes Indigenous interpreting.

1.3.5 Tasmania

The Tasmanian Government has recently reviewed and released a new *Tasmania Multicultural Policy 2014*, including *Multicultural Language Services Guidelines for Tasmanian Government Agencies* that was released in 2013⁵. The Guidelines reflect the Tasmanian Government's commitment to the development of whole-of-government communication strategies that address language barriers and aims to enhance access to interpreters and translated information for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to enable equitable access to the full range of services.

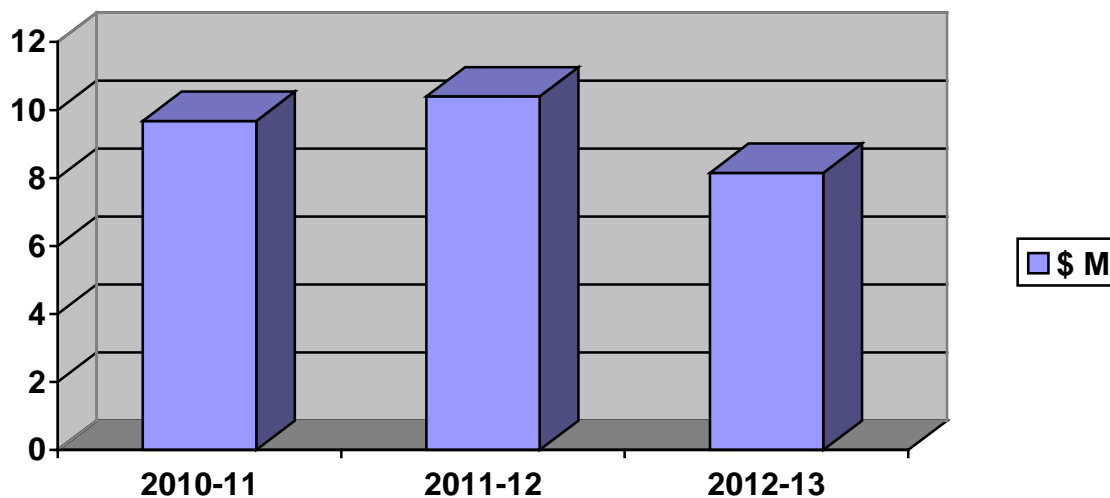
1.4 Queensland Government procurement of interpreters

Currently across government, the provision of language services is fragmented with agencies operating a range of different models to procure and engage interpreters and translators.

Current arrangements across Queensland Government (see Appendix 1 for further detail)

Type of arrangement	Description	Benefits and risks
In-house provision	Limited to some Hospital and Health Services with a high level of demand for certain languages within their local area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater chance of ensuring an interpreter is available when needed and means that the agency can have greater control on the quality of interpreter services provided. • Impractical for more than a few languages. There are currently more than 220 languages spoken in Queensland. • For some agencies the demand for interpreters would not warrant in house provision even in limited languages.
Whole-of-agency contracted interpreter service	Department of Health has a contracted arrangement with ONCALL to deliver interpreter services to publicly funded health services across the state.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of interpreters in multiple languages. • Contract provides some control over quality of services provided, mechanisms to resolve concerns and cost. • May not be viable for smaller agencies or agencies with limited public engagement and therefore less demand for interpreters.
Account code with TIS National	Ad hoc arrangement whereby if the need arises the agency can arrange an interpreter by providing a specific account code to TIS National and then be billed for the service provided.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows flexibility in engaging an interpreter if needed for agencies with low/limited demand. • Less control over quality of interpreter provided and cost.
Engaging individual interpreters or translators on an ad-hoc basis	This may be a mixture of TIS National or using the NAATI directory to directly engage interpreters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows flexibility in engaging an interpreter if needed for agencies with low/limited demand. • Less control over quality of interpreter provided and cost.

Figure 1: Queensland Government expenditure on interpreter and translation services



In 2010-11, the Queensland Government expenditure on interpreter and translation services was \$9.68 million. The 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census identified that 62,400 people in Queensland (1.4% of the population) do not speak English well or at all. This expenditure relates to approximately \$155 per person that does not speak English well or at all.

In 2011-12 this whole-of-government expenditure rose to almost \$10.4million. In 2011-12, the Queensland Government introduced reporting on core outcomes, which included the amount spent by departments on interpreters. This introduced more consistent and standardised reporting on interpreter spend. In 2012-13, the second year of core outcome reporting, the amount spent on interpreter services across the Queensland Government was at least \$8.15million. This figure indicated a lower overall spend from the previous year. However, as the largest purchaser of interpreter services, Queensland Health went through some administrative changes, Hospital and Health Services became statutory authorities, resulting in changes to how the department reported on this expenditure. The figure is therefore likely to be higher.

1.5 Accreditation of interpreters

In Australia accreditation of interpreters and translators is undertaken through the NAATI. The LSP includes a brief explanation as to the various credentials awarded.

The highest levels of NAATI credentials for interpreting 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 Interpreter¹.

¹ Recognition is an acknowledgement that at the time of the award the candidate had recent and regular experience as a translator and/or interpreter, but no level of proficiency is specified. Recognition is only granted in languages of very low community demand for which NAATI does not offer accreditation testing.

1.6 Interpreting in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and Auslan

Language services are 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).⁶

The LSP currently applies to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages as well as Auslan. NAATI provides accreditation for both Indigenous interpreting and Auslan.

Deaf Interpreting

NAATI accreditation in interpreting between Auslan and English is currently available at the following levels:

- Paraprofessional Interpreter
- Professional Interpreter

NAATI also provides Recognition as a Deaf Interpreter (DI) for the specialised interpreting and translation that DIs perform⁷. Recognition is granted on the basis of a direct application to NAATI with the required evidence and paperwork. It is an acknowledgement that at the time of the award the candidate had recent and regular experience as a translator and/or interpreter, but no level of proficiency is specified as part of this credential.

A DI is an individual who is usually deaf, fluent in Auslan, written English and may have additional familiarity with a foreign sign language or pidgin. DIs may work in tandem with Auslan-English interpreters and can provide a unique language or communication bridge for Deaf individuals whose communication mode cannot be adequately accessed by a standard Auslan-English interpreter (for interpreting between an Auslan sign language user and English speaker).

A DI is a native or native-like user of Auslan and understands the complex cultural experience of growing up Deaf. S/he is able to adapt his/her sign language style to accommodate the broad variety of Auslan users and users of gestural pidgins, or a sign language mixing strategy that may incorporate some features of Auslan.

Individuals benefit from a specialised Deaf Interpreter when they are Deaf and:

- use idiosyncratic non-standard signs or gestures such as those commonly referred to as “home signs” which are unique to a family or community
- have a cognitive disability (mild or more severe) or multiple disabilities that compromise communication and result in dysfluency
- are linguistically and/or socially isolated with limited conventional language proficiency
- deaf and blind or deaf with low vision, using tactile or visually modified sign language
- use signs particular to a given region, ethnic or age group that are inaccessible by other qualified interpreters, for example Indigenous Deaf people
- are experiencing complex trust issues where cultural sensitivity/comfort factor is paramount, for example, trauma counselling
- use a foreign sign language and there are no accredited or qualified foreign sign language interpreters available
- are users of a pidgin or contact variety of sign languages or a common international lingua franca known as “International Sign” (I.S.).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interpreting

As well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, also spoken amongst communities in Queensland are Aboriginal English, which differs depending on the local community, and Torres Strait Creole.

Currently, almost all professional Indigenous interpreters are accredited at the paraprofessional level. In 2009 three speakers were accredited at NAATI professional level⁶. Paraprofessional accreditation for Indigenous interpreters is obtained in one of the two following ways:

- completion of a NAATI approved course – this would normally be a Diploma of Interpreting course delivered by a TAFE college (in some instances, completion of the course can qualify a person for NAATI accreditation)
- delivery of intensive interpreter workshops by a reputable consultant or organisation (such as the Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service (NTAIS)) followed by NAATI testing in conjunction with a NAATI-approved consultant. This method is often utilised in the Northern Territory to accredit Indigenous interpreters, through funding made to the NTAIS by the Australian Government.

NAATI received funding from the Australian Government and the NTAIS to deliver two projects to assist in increasing the number of interpreters accredited at Professional and Para-professional level in Indigenous languages. Several activities were undertaken to achieve this goal including the development of appropriate testing material in Indigenous languages in Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia, where there is a high demand for interpreting services. These languages include:

- Kimberley Kriol
- Walmajarri
- Nyangumarta
- Yindjibarndi
- Ngaanyatjarra
- Wangkatha
- Mardu Wangka
- Wik Mungkan (Queensland)
- Yumplatok (Torres Strait Creole) (Queensland)
- Kala Lagaw Ya (Queensland)
- Pitjantjatjara.

An accreditation fund has been established within NAATI for Indigenous Interpreters. The fund can be used by eligible individuals to cover the costs associated with NAATI application fees and test fees for Indigenous interpreters.

1.7 Language Services review process

DATSIMA consulted with government, non-government and community stakeholders to gather feedback for the review of the LSP.

In February 2014, DATSIMA distributed the Queensland Government Language Services survey to all departments as well as a number of statutory authorities. The survey aimed to identify the many different systems, processes and strategies in place across the Queensland Government to engage and procure interpreter services. 24 departments and statutory authorities responded to the survey. Questions elicited both qualitative and quantitative data. Further details regarding the Government survey are included in Appendix 1.

Throughout February and March 2014, DATSIMA met individually with funded services, peak bodies and interpreter industry stakeholders. DATSIMA also coordinated four stakeholder engagement forums during March. These forums sought input for the LSP review in addition to feedback on the draft Queensland Cultural Diversity Action Plan. The forums were held in Townsville (11 March), Rockhampton (13 March), Logan (24 March) and Cairns (28 March). Over 120 participants were involved in these forums. Participants were largely key stakeholders working with culturally diverse communities in the areas of service delivery, community development or policy advocacy roles. A number of regionally based local and state government representatives were also present at these forums.

Also during March, online submissions were sought via the Cultural Diversity Queensland (CDQ) website and other electronic means to encourage broader stakeholder engagement into the review. Online submissions were received from 14 organisations. Further details regarding the stakeholder engagement process are included in Appendix 3.

2 Challenges and opportunities

2.1 What can the Queensland Government do?

Scope of LSP

The current LSP applies to all Queensland Government departments and funded services. With recent changes to many departmental structures, a number of frontline services are now delivered by statutory authorities that are not specifically covered by the policy, such as Hospital and Health Services and independent (public) schools. The need for these frontline services to engage interpreters was raised by a number of stakeholders through the consultation process (refer Appendix 3).

Local governments are able to access free interpreting through TIS National for issues such as rates, garbage collection and urban services. Through the stakeholder engagement it was raised by a number of local governments present that they would also benefit from guidelines on language services provision.

Separate guidelines

The current LSP contains a brief policy section which outlines the commitment of the Queensland Government in the provision of language services and the responsibilities of Queensland Government agencies in implementing the policy. It also contains guidelines for agencies on how to implement the policy commitment. The majority of feedback provided from both government and stakeholder consultation (refer Appendix 3) related to the guidelines section of the LSP while the policy commitment section was still considered to be relevant and appropriate.

It is unlikely that in the future the policy commitment will require any substantive change, while the guidelines section may require regular updating to provide agencies with the latest information regarding best practice, use of technology and changes to community demographics impacting on the provision of language services. For these changes to be made more efficiently it would be beneficial to separate the policy commitment and guidelines into two separate documents.

Better systems

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 which agencies should consider include:

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

Few agencies have comprehensive systems in place to manage their interpreter usage. For some agencies this is considered unnecessary due to low interpreter usage (refer Appendix 1). 13 out of 24 agencies responded to the government survey that they did have systems in place. Eight had protocols for staff and/or an interpreter booking system, seven agencies had data collection mechanisms in place and five had reporting and feedback systems to provide feedback to interpreter service providers. Systems range from training and reference manuals available for staff, to individual service area policies, to scripted procedures for call-centre staff.

However if systems and processes are not in place, evidence demonstrates in the health context the nexus between the lack of using interpreters and adverse events and increased costs of treatment. In addition, the non-use of interpreters in health services is associated with:

- higher rates of unnecessary diagnostic testing and use of resources
- higher rates of medication incidents and errors
- higher rates of admission rate to psychiatric facilities
- lower rates of preventative strategies being used compared with the general population
- failure to be given information and explanation regarding diagnosis and treatment, and a failure to understand information given
- longer length of hospital stays (response to Queensland Government Language Services survey).

Reporting and performance monitoring

The proposed aim of the LSP is to enhance access to interpreters and translated information for people requiring language support¹¹ to improve access to the full range of government and government-funded services.

Currently Queensland Government agencies provide data against the following indicators in relation to access to interpreters:

- amount spent annually on interpreters engaged by department and government funded non-government organisations
- number of interpreters engaged annually by the department and government funded non-government organisations.

These indicators were part of the core outcomes reporting from the previous *Queensland Multicultural Policy, a multicultural future for all of us*. This data is easily collected through agencies' financial systems and also forms part of the annual reporting information through Open Data.

This data collected over time provides some information to identify trends in interpreter access. However, these indicators do not adequately measure the LSP's intended aim as outlined above.

Reporting on language services in other jurisdictions

Victoria

It is a requirement under the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* that all Victorian Government departments report annually on multicultural achievements and initiatives. In relation to language support, the Act requires each department to report on:

- the use of interpreting and translating services
- communications in languages other than English and communications in multicultural media.

The Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs developed a set of standards (the Victorian Government Standards for Data Collection on Interpreting and Translating Services) to guide departments on data collection in relation to language services. The standards cover four areas:

- client demographics
- expenditure on interpreting and translating
- in-house staff (who are interpreters or are bilingual)
- services provided by language service providers.

Furthermore, the newly released *Victorian Multicultural Policy, Victoria's Advantage*, includes a range of indicators to track Victoria's cultural responsiveness. One of the indicators relates to language services - percentage increase in whole-of-government expenditure to purchase interpreting and translating services (annual whole-of-government reporting on Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship).

¹¹ By language support we refer to the various types of language services which allow access to information and services for people with difficulty communicating in English, such as interpreters, bilingual or cultural liaison workers, and translated or multilingual resources.

New South Wales

The Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW sets out guidelines in the Multicultural Planning Framework to support agencies to put the principles of multiculturalism into practice. Outcome 5 of the Framework is Access and Equity: barriers to the accessibility of services for people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are identified, and programs and services are developed to address them. The Framework suggests a range of actions for agencies, including:

- range 1 actions (minimum compliance): Agency develops, and makes staff aware of guidelines on the use of interpreters. Agency uses the services of accredited interpreters onsite or by telephone as appropriate
- range 2 actions: Agency has a budget for interpreter services, and interpreter use is monitored and reviewed across the agency and its funded services
- range 3 actions (best practice compliance): Agency has developed strategies to enhance interpreter provision, including in regional and rural areas, and can identify occasions of interpreter use by language and areas.

Western Australia

The Western Australian *Language Services Policy* (2008) suggests for service providers to record where appropriate to their agency:

- clients' preferred language and interpreting needs
- expenditure on the various components of translating and interpreting services
- time required to deal with each client's needs
- appropriate data on bilingual workers and in-house interpreters.

The policy also suggests that agencies could undertake surveys or monitor complaints from clients to determine the success or otherwise of interpreting and translating services.

In 2013 the Western Australian Office of Multicultural Affairs released a *Guide to Cultural and Linguistic Data Collection for the Public Sector*. This guide suggests agencies collect the core set of data based on the ABS Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity (1999), including:

- country of birth
- main language other than English spoken at home
- proficiency in spoken English
- Indigenous status (used when the focus is not specifically on migrant and refugee backgrounds).

Australian Capital Territory

The ACT Government directorates report annually on the actions, strategies, resourcing implications (and levels) and the impacts on client services in the previous 12-month period in relation to the four key areas of the *Many Voices: 2012-16 Australian Capital Territory Language Policy*, which are:

- 'English' as the national language
- language Services
- learning other languages
- languages and economic development.

Australian Government

The *Multicultural Language Services Guidelines for Australian Government Agencies* (the Guide) suggests that data collection for the monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the delivery of language services could include:

- taking into account linguistic diversity in data collections, research projects, contractual arrangements, program and policy development
- considering the number of people provided with language services, the number of language services provided and the languages in which they were provided
- assessing the proportion of translators and interpreters who have NAATI credentials and the type of credential held by the interpreters and translators engaged
- addressing the percentage of staff who have received training on how to access language services and how to work with interpreters
- analysing details from client satisfaction surveys.

The Guide suggests that agencies should have an internal register or record management system to record:

- information about language services provided to people with limited English language proficiency
- the extent to which Australian Government agencies are meeting the access and equity needs of people with limited English language proficiency
- each individual's language service needs, including preferred language and dialect, any gender or other requirements, and the type of language service
- when an interpreter is offered but declined by the person with limited English language proficiency.

Additional information that agencies may wish to collect includes:

- the occasions when the language service was accessed
- the occasions when a language service was not available and why
- the way in which the language service was accessed
- the way in which the person with limited English language proficiency found out the language service was available
- the way the officer located or decided on the service
- the duration of the language service provided
- the cost of each language service used.

The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman requires staff to record each occasion when they engage the services of an interpreter or translator as a means of monitoring usage and acquitting invoices and expenditure. The information recorded includes:

- a booking code
- a job number
- the language, including dialect
- the interpreter details (name or, at a minimum, whether the interpreter was male or female)
- date, start and end time of call
- any relevant comments regarding the service provider or special needs of the client.

The Department of Human Services' (DHS) Centrelink system records a customer's language preference(s) as part of the initial information-gathering process. This provides a base line for management information. Centrelink also collects customers' preferred languages. This helps determine what languages are in demand and where, and what languages are hard to service and require further interpreter procurement action. DHS also reports in its annual report the details of the number of limited English language proficiency speaking contacts and other services that are in place.

Few agencies currently collect data on the unmet demand of interpreters or quality issues. It is also difficult for agencies to identify:

- instances when a customer requires an interpreter that is not provided and the reasons for this

- when customers do not access a service due to a lack of English language or lack of awareness of entitlement to the service because of language issues (refer Appendix 1).

Bilingual/multilingual workers

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)⁹. This is a significant potential resource to assist government services be responsive to clients and customers that have low English language proficiency.

The current LSP acknowledges that bilingual staff can be of assistance to customers speaking their common language but that they should not be used by departments in place of professional interpreters. Situations which may benefit from bilingual 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.

Careful consideration is needed in which particular roles and service areas use bilingual/multilingual staff. In particular, bilingual/multilingual staff should not be used to communicate information that is legally binding or puts at risk either the client or the agency, which can be common in the health context. In these circumstances a qualified interpreter should be engaged.

Qualified interpreters have qualifications and skills, including ethical and professional standards, as well as proficiency in both the client's language and English, which bilingual/multilingual staff may not. Qualified interpreters also provide a level of independence which may be of particular importance in legal situations.

It is vital that the tasks of bilingual/multilingual staff are clear to both clients and staff members, that arrangements are clearly incorporated in position descriptions and work plans to indicate appropriate situations in which bilingual/multilingual staff can be used. Bilingual/multilingual staff members should not feel compelled to take on these roles if it is not part of their position description.

Through the government survey (refer Appendix 1), seven agencies responded that they employed bilingual staff. Some agencies advised that the language skills of these staff were used for internal purposes only.

Hospital and Health services operating in regional areas currently use cultural liaison officers to support medical practitioners working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients. These cultural liaison officers are able to develop trust and relationships with local communities and are better able to support patients and communicate complex health information.

Bilingual staff are also used within funded services to communicate basic information such as booking or confirming an appointment, or in emergency situations where an interpreter cannot be engaged in time. Stakeholders advised that in some cases this was preferred by both the staff member and client. However, in situations where a third person is involved in the conversation an interpreter is always used.

Bilingual staff becoming interpreters

In 2002 the Queensland Government piloted a multi-agency partnership project aimed at providing professional development and recognition of communication skills in languages other than English to

public sector employees. The Language Aide Enhancement Pilot Project¹⁰ included 20 participants who were provided with training through the South Bank Institute of Technology and NAATI accreditation testing as a language aide (no longer available) or paraprofessional interpreter. The overall cost of the pilot was approximately \$14,500.

There are a number of benefits to encouraging bilingual/ multilingual staff to obtain NAATI accreditation as an interpreter.

Benefits for the government:

- increasing the pool of interpreters available to assist customers, particularly beneficial for frontline offices in locations with high cultural diversity. Agencies in regional locations may wish to consider pooling staff resources so that staff members with accreditation as an interpreter could work for multiple government agencies to assist customers with low English language proficiency
- reduces the costs associated with engaging an interpreter service
- improves frontline services through increased cultural responsiveness and customer focus by increasing the confidence and skill level of frontline staff in communicating with and supporting customers with low English language proficiency.

Benefits for industry:

- increasing the availability of accredited interpreters available
- raising the standards of interpreting in Queensland.

Any program which may be developed to encourage Queensland Government employees to become accredited interpreters will need to consider the following potential issues:

- *industrial relations* – whether acting as an interpreter an additional duty to the staff members normal role
- *incentive / financial support* – in order to encourage individuals to give up their time to gain and maintain accreditation as an interpreter (e.g. ongoing training and professional development, revalidation of accreditation) the program should consider paying for the initial costs of undertaking accreditation as well as an ongoing allowance. The NSW Government pays a Community Language Allowance Scheme to public sector employees who have a basic level of competency in a language other than English and who work in locations where their language can be used to assist clients. DHS (Centrelink) also provides a Community Language Allowance for bilingual staff that obtain NAATI Paraprofessional accreditation (Level 2) or Language Aide qualification through the University of Sydney
- *operational considerations* – if interpreting is not the sole duty of the staff member, 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 act as an interpreter when required (maybe with little notice), redistributing work when staff member is away acting as an interpreter).

2.2 Health

A scoping study commissioned by the St Vincent's Health Australia identified access to interpreters as a key barrier, amongst others, to health care for people with low English proficiency (specifically asylum seekers). The study noted that quality of care may be compromised by health workers' poor knowledge of asylum seeker health, language barriers, the absence of an accurate medical history, and inadequate use of interpreters¹¹. Access to health care can be improved through language services by:

- access to information on eligibility and availability of health services, including resources that are in the patients' languages and case workers to provide advice and referrals
- improving poor health literacy due to difficulties accessing and understanding health-related information which affects patients', with low English language proficiency, ability to make informed decisions
- improving cultural understanding amongst health workers and assist in explaining disease processes and treatment regimes so that patients are more likely to comply with treatment.

Quality of health care provided can also be improved through the use of qualified interpreters as errors are less likely to be made and any that are made are less likely to be of clinical consequence¹².

Working with qualified interpreters in the health context:

- 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 – reduced risk of patient missing treatment appointments, inappropriately taking medication or following care instructions
- promotes access to health care
- reduces unnecessary health expenditure – reducing non-attendance rates at clinics, unnecessary diagnostic investigations, admission rates and length of stay in hospital, and increasing the likelihood of seeking early treatment and increasing the use of preventive or early detection services
- reduces stress on families
- minimises risk of legal complications.

*“Specifically, Northern Health has found that since the Transcultural and Language Services Department was created in 2007, there has been a reduction in the average length of stay for low-English-proficiency clients from 9.14 days in 2007 to 5.9 days in 2012, which has resulted in significant cost-efficiencies for the hospital.” - The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture.*¹³

While research on the economic benefits of using interpreters is available in the health context, there is little available for other sectors. However similar economic benefits in terms of less repeat appointments/visits, better understanding of services, programs, legal and regulatory requirements are likely to reduce longer term costs for most areas of government.

Barriers for health organisations accessing interpreters have been raised in research¹⁴ and by stakeholders:

- need for improved access to interpreters throughout state and Commonwealth-funded health services - not all health professionals are entitled to access the TIS National for free (e.g. allied health practitioners including psychologists and social workers providing Medicare Benefit Scheme-funded mental health programs)
- reluctance from health professionals, poor understanding of how to work with interpreters, delays in accessing telephone interpreters, inappropriate use of family members as interpreters, and lack of awareness of eligibility and rights of the patient
- health services without fee-free interpreter services find this contributes substantial costs and so may be an inhibitory factor for seeing clients with difficulty communicating in English.

Similarly in the private health sector it was suggested that General Practitioners (GPs) are using volunteer community interpreters because they are unable to find qualified interpreters. The LSP does not apply to private organisations, such as GPs, or non-government organisations that are not funded by the Queensland Government. Private medical practitioners (defined as GPs and medical specialists) are able to access fee-free TIS National interpreting to provide medicare-rebateable services, arrange appointments and provide results of medical tests. As the LSP does not include private organisations it was considered outside the scope of the review.

Queensland Health currently works with their contracted language service provider to provide specialised training for interpreters in working within the health context.

2.3 Industry issues – supply and demand

Raising industry standards

For some time there have been concerns about the lack of recognition of interpreters as professionals working to minimum standards. Stakeholders all agreed that NAATI credentials ensured the minimum standards for the industry and should be retained as the benchmark. However, some stakeholders also raised that qualifications from reputable tertiary institutions in Australia and overseas should also be accepted as identifying quality interpreters and translators.

NAATI is undertaking the Improvements to NAATI Testing (INT) project designed to improve its credentialing model. The project is currently in phase 2, consultation with stakeholders, which should be finalised by mid-2014, with commencement of the new scheme being around mid-2016. The current recommendations, from a report prepared by the University of New South Wales, being considered by NAATI include:

- aligning NAATI terminology with the international standard – certification or credentialing is the preferred terminology
- improvements in pre-requisites to NAATI testing, validity and reliability of testing instruments, assessment methods and training of examiners
- compulsory pre-test education and training and availability of specialist credentials
- introducing a new Specialist level credential initially in health and legal interpreting and translating. This might be available only by completion of new specialists Approved Courses which would probably be subject but not language specific. This level of credential would probably require tertiary qualifications as mandatory pre-requisites
- current generalist credentials of professional and paraprofessional would be retained but with changes. It is proposed to re-position the generalist levels to encourage articulation upward through in-career training and/or education

- new provisional entry level credential to be designed to encourage new entrants to the profession to engage with the system. This would be similar to the current Recognition credential and as with Recognition, training would be required in place of testing. The Provisional Credential would not be language-specific and might be limited to certain language groups
- removing the Advanced Translator and Conference Interpreter credentials, in their present form, as well as the accreditation pathways of overseas qualifications, membership of international associations and advanced standing. NAATI will examine further how a Conference specialisation can be introduced in this model.

Raising industry standards through training and providing a pathway for interpreters to move through the potential new levels of interpreter and translator credentials will take time. It will involve an incremental implementation of changes to the NAATI system so as not to create disincentives for interpreters and translators to remain or for new people to enter the industry.

Quality and standards for interpreters was raised by stakeholders including concerns over the ethics and professionalism of some interpreters and how to ensure that standards are maintained following accreditation. The possible changes to the NAATI accreditation model may go some way to resolve these concerns.

Regulation

Regulating the language services industry (specifically relating to service providers) was identified by some stakeholders as a possible means to address standards and quality within the industry while ensuring adequate remuneration for community interpreters.

Most language service providers operate nationally and the development of national legislation would provide a more consistent approach. Alternatively the Queensland Government could develop legislation to regulate interpreter and translation service providers, and private enterprises operating in Queensland. A licensing system for private providers could include that they demonstrate certain standards regarding workforce training and professional development, pay rates and quality control systems. Unlicensed providers would not be able to operate in Queensland.

An alternative to legislation may be a voluntary licensing system, administered by an industry association, demonstrating compliance with a similar standards system. Government, being one of the largest purchasers of interpreter services, particularly community interpreting, would be required under the LSP to only contract with licensed service providers, thereby creating a strong incentive for private providers to apply for a license. Licenses would need to be renewed on an ongoing basis (e.g. every 3 years) to ensure continued compliance with licensing standards. License fees should provide revenue for the continued operation of the system.

The Queensland Government priorities are to reduce red tape and regulation, stimulate Queensland's economic growth, and improve job creation. Introducing new legislation to regulate an industry currently unregulated is unlikely to contribute to these priorities and could potentially impose additional costs on the industry.

Remuneration and working conditions for community interpreters

Low levels of remuneration for community interpreters was raised by a number of stakeholders as a contributing factor to both the lack of quality and supply of interpreters. Stakeholder feedback included that experienced interpreters were leaving the industry as they cannot make a suitable living and that the poor rates of pay encourage the use of unaccredited interpreters.

One interpreter consulted stated that she had been offered \$45 for the first hour and \$8 for subsequent 'blocks' from one interpreting service provider. It was also mentioned that there is little differential in pay based on level of qualification, experience or type of work undertaken (e.g. court interpreting should be higher paid than some other types of work). There is also no compensation for travel time or access to superannuation contributions.

NSW is currently the only state that has an industry award for interpreters:

- Health employees' interpreters' (state) award¹⁵ – Grade 1, 1st year interpreter \$41,765 per year.
- Crown Employees (Interpreters And Translators, Community Relations Commission) Award – base hourly casual rate for a 1st year interpreter \$33.63¹⁶.

Better procurement strategies may provide an opportunity to improve remuneration and working conditions for community interpreters providing interpreting services to the Queensland Government (refer section 2.5).

Limited supply

Stakeholder consultation also identified a lack of supply of interpreters and translators in the languages of new communities, such as Karen and Chin refugees, and in regional locations. For new and emerging community languages, there are often not enough interpreters within the community who have the required qualifications, experience or language ability to be recruited by interpreter service providers. The cost and time involved in the accreditation process through NAATI, as well as the limited remuneration, also inhibits some community members from considering interpreting as a potential career path. In some community languages there is no accreditation available. Feedback from TIS National indicated that for new and emerging community languages the demand for interpreting services may outweigh the ability to supply services.

Many interpreters are based in Australia's capital cities and in some instances there may not be an interpreter in the required language physically located where an on-site interpreter is required. These supply issues compound the barriers to accessing services for some communities.

Feedback from one stakeholder advised that it reviews un-met demand data and actively recruits interpreters in areas and languages where there is an identified high need. However, a lack of interpreter training programs in Queensland may also contribute to the limited supply of accredited interpreters in the state.

NAATI's New Interpreters Project (NIP) provides financial support for people to undertake a preparatory workshop and to apply for Recognition as an interpreter, or Paraprofessional Interpreter testing, including in Queensland (generally in metro-Brisbane).

The only tertiary level courses available in interpreting in Queensland are post-graduate level interpreter courses at the University of Queensland, in Chinese, Mandarin, Japanese and Korean. Southbank Institute of Technology (SBIT) previously ran a Diploma of Interpreting course in a few languages, but these are reliant on student demand.

The Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, through the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship (OMAC), provides scholarships of up to \$2,000 to students enrolled in the RMIT University Diploma of Interpreting. Students who complete the course with a grade of 70% or higher become eligible for NAATI Paraprofessional accreditation. OMAC also covers the costs of obtaining NAATI accreditation.

There are currently limited training pathways in Queensland for interpreters, particularly for new and emerging languages. In order to increase the supply of interpreters in Queensland training will need to become a priority.

2.4 Policy awareness

The stakeholder engagement process raised, as a significant issue, the lack of staff awareness of the LSP across all areas of government including procedures on how to engage and work with interpreters. Other areas which could improve with staff training include awareness of:

- the role of interpreters and the complexity of interpreting (e.g. often thought of as a simple word for word translation)
- specialist skills needed for interpreting in particular fields, such as court interpreting and health services
- the risks in not providing access to an interpreter, including a potential complaint under the *Anti-Discrimination Act (Queensland) 1991*.

The DATSIMA website contains interpreting factsheets for Queensland Government staff, <http://www.datsima.qld.gov.au/culturaldiversity/resources/translating-and-interpreting-services/using-the-interpreter-card>.

TIS National also has a Frequently Asked Questions section on its website including an overview of the 'Role of the Interpreter' and 'Tips for getting the most out of your interpreting session.' TIS National has also developed promotional material which may be downloaded directly from the TIS National website and includes brochures on 'Bridge the Communication Gap' and 'A guide to services'.

Responses to the Queensland Government Language Services survey indicate that most departments have policies and procedures in place for the use of interpreters even if the department rarely has the need to use them. The disparity appears to be that frontline service staff are not aware of these departmental policies and procedures, either due to turn-over of staff or a lack of adequate induction or training. This is especially noticeable in regional areas where staff are not aware of head office policies.

The Queensland Government website (www.qld.gov.au) refers customers needing help in their language to contact telephone interpreters either through TIS National or another interpreter service provider (links to the NAATI website are included). All Queensland Government websites contain a link to these pages.

Queensland Government customers who have difficulty communicating in English can then contact TIS National services directly, to initiate an interpreter and transfer the call to the relevant Queensland Government agency the customer would like to speak to.

It was raised during stakeholder consultation that as this page is generic for all Queensland Government departmental websites it is difficult for people with difficulty communicating in English to know which department to be referred to when contacting an interpreter and which department should be paying for the service. Feedback from stakeholders was that some customers are ending the call when they are told that they will need to pay for the interpreter and that the cost can be prohibitive for people who are often on very limited incomes.

The current LSP is clear that it is the Queensland Government agency that is responsible for budgeting and paying for interpreters, including client initiated contact and that clients of Queensland Government agencies do not pay for interpreters.

2.5 Procurement

Although the Queensland Government has a MoU with TIS National, agencies are not committed to engaging TIS National for the provision of interpreter services. The MOU does not stipulate costs and while it does set requirements in terms of NAATI accreditation for interpreters there is no guarantee these are provided. The quality of interpreters, availability and rising fees continues to be issues raised by departments and funded services. While not a binding document the MoU may inadvertently result in departments favouring the use of TIS National thereby reducing the ability to go to the market for the best deal possible. The Queensland Government has renewed the MoU with TIS National over a number of years, however, there may no longer be any particular benefit in continuing this arrangement.

Queensland Procurement Policy

The *Queensland Procurement Policy* (June 2013) includes six principles which guide government procurement including:

- *Principle 2: We act as ‘one government’, working together across agency boundaries to achieve savings and benefits* – the Director-General Council may, in consultation with agencies, nominate agencies to manage categories of procurement expenditure common to multiple agencies, or the whole-of-government.
- *Principle 4: Procurement that advances government’s economic, environmental and social objectives and support long-term wellbeing of our community* – consistent or standardised procurement arrangements across government may also support the economic sustainability of the interpreter industry. A stronger interpreter industry provides more jobs for Queenslanders particularly migrant, refugees and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with sought after language skills.

Procurement of interpreter services across the Queensland Government is currently ad hoc with each department responsible for their own arrangements. A significant majority of departments use an account arrangement with TIS National, which allows direct billing back to the agency (refer Appendix 1). Queensland Health currently has a Standing Offer Arrangement with ONCALL Interpreters and Translators and utilise them for the majority of their interpreting needs. A number of Hospital and Health Services also use other service providers and employ in-house interpreters as needed. Other interpreter service providers used by the Queensland Government include:

- Queensland Interpreting and Translating Service
- MultiLink Community Services
- National Auslan Booking Service
- National Interpreting and Communications Service
- Deaf Services Queensland (Auslan)
- Griffith University Language Services.

One agency also identified that they used the directory available on the NAATI website and contracted interpreters directly.

Under the current LSP departments are also responsible for meeting the costs of interpreters for the non-government organisations they fund. Different arrangements are in place for this as well. Within the DCCSDS separate arrangements exist for services funded by Disability Services, through the Support with Interpreting, Translating and Communication (SWITC) program, and other community services funded by the department, through TIS National. Queensland Health funded services are able to access the department’s state-wide interpreter service while other services funded by other departments are reimbursed for the cost of interpreters.

The current Queensland Government expenditure on interpreter services is at least \$8.15million (in 2012-13) (refer to section 1.4 for more information). This is a significant expenditure for government. The provision of interpreters is a whole-of-government concern and more efficient procurement across government, including the streamlining of processes, may result in cost-savings. Improved procurement arrangements may also support the efficient operation of the interpreter industry in Queensland.

Demand for interpreter services fluctuates across agencies depending on the type of services provided and the diversity of the location. It is also influenced by the level of English language proficiency of clients. Therefore any whole-of-government procurement arrangements will need to ensure a level of flexibility to meet the divergent needs of services in regional areas and the different language needs of customers.

Additional costs associated with engaging interpreter services which are absorbed by departments include (refer Appendix 1):

- staffing to administer and/or coordinate booking arrangements
- information systems to collect and report on relevant data
- administration of contract arrangements, including payment of invoices
- training and information to frontline service staff on how to work with interpreters and to promote the organisation's policies and procedures.

These additional costs are difficult to quantify as most departments absorb them as business as usual and not separate expenses. Often the administration of contract and booking arrangements form a part of staff members' range of duties.

Improved procurement arrangements could also consider other issues such as:

- quality of interpreters and provision of performance feedback to the service provider to enable improvements
- additional training or experience required by interpreters (e.g. experience in legal/court interpreting etc.)
- working conditions of interpreters including regular breaks, briefing/debriefing sessions (especially in highly stressful circumstances)
- rates paid to the interpreter (not just the hourly rate of the service provider)
- hourly/ additional rate if assignment goes over time scheduled
- cancellation fees and conditions
- travel expenses for interpreters (if required).

Options for procurement of interpreter services

Option	Benefits	Disadvantages
Whole-of-government contract with a specific interpreter service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More legal weight than an MoU. • Provides more structure to conditions for the delivery of the service. • Potential cost savings (economy of scale). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single contracted provider is unlikely to be able to meet the demand for interpreters across the Queensland Government. • Coordination of interpreter services across a range of different departments.
Whole-of-government Standing Offer Arrangement (SOA) for interpreter services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility to engage multiple service providers depend on availability and other needs (preferred provider list). • Opportunity to assess quality and other important criteria for services as part of the SOA process. • Provides more structure to conditions for the delivery of the service. • Potential cost savings (economy of scale). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not mandatory that departments use only services on SOA.
Continue MoU with TIS National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures key people are aware of the expectations of TIS National services and requirements of both parties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May inadvertently restrict the use of other interpreter service providers if TIS National is viewed as the preferred provider due to the MoU. • Does not guarantee quality or cost of services provided.
Departments to individually develop procurement arrangements for interpreter services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows flexibility for agencies to make individual arrangements that suit their needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements are likely to be ad hoc and duplicated across government (current situation). • Costs are likely to be higher for individual departments, particularly smaller departments with less buying power.

2.6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and Auslan

As previously discussed the current LSP includes access to interpreters for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and Auslan (Australian sign language). Part of the review was to consider whether it is appropriate to include these languages in the LSP or whether they are more appropriately dealt with under different government policies. Consultation on these issues included with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Participation (within DATSIMA), Disability Services (within DCCSDS), Auslan interpreter service providers, and through the regional engagement forums. All stakeholders consulted agreed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and Auslan interpreting should continue to be included in the LSP, as access to interpreters is a consistent issue across all language groups.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages

There is a significant lack of accredited interpreters in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in Queensland. The Courts Innovation Programs (CIP) engages two interpreters for the Aurukun court sittings. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) commenced this project in 2006 to

provide an Indigenous interpreter service. In conjunction with NAATI, DJAG provided training for Indigenous interpreters in the Wik Mungkan language. In August 2008, three Aurukun community members completed the training and were accredited at the paraprofessional level. There are only two of these interpreters that continue to support the monthly Magistrates Court Sitting.

During the regional engagement forums a number of stakeholders raised difficulties experienced in communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples often from remote communities. Due to the current lack of qualified interpreters in these languages, cultural liaison/support workers are most commonly used to communicate between Queensland Government service providers and speakers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. These workers are trusted by the local community and are therefore better able to support and communicate complex information. Some agencies have specific policies in place to assist with culturally appropriate service delivery in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (refer Appendix 2).

Other options for interpreters in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages include:

- Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreting Service - www.ais.nt.gov.au
The service has more than 400 registered interpreters, making it one of the largest employers of Aboriginal people in Australia, covering more than 100 languages and dialects of the Northern Territory.
- Kimberley Interpreter Service (Western Australia) - www.kimberleyinterpreting.org.au
Kimberley Interpreting Service provides interpreters accredited by NAATI in more than 18 Kimberley and central desert Indigenous languages to clients anywhere in Australia.
- 2M Language Services - www.2m.com.au
Can provide translation services in some Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. 2M has also provided interpreters in Kala Lagaw Ya.

Aboriginal languages in Queensland are distinct languages, different from those in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Like Torres Strait Islander languages they are unique to Queensland, making it unlikely that services in other states are able to provide an interpreter in required languages.

Meriam Mir, a distinct language, is spoken on the Eastern Torres Strait Islands. While in the Western Torres Strait, Kala Lagaw Ya and Kala Kawaw Ya are two dialects spoken. These two dialects are similar to each other but completely different to Meriam Mir. It should also be noted that most Torres Strait Islanders (eastern and western) either speak or understand Torres Strait Islander Creole.

Torres Strait Islanders live in all states and territories in Australia with a significant population in the Northern Territory, mostly in Darwin, and Western Australia. In most states there are Torres Strait Islander cultural groups or organisations that may be able to assist with interpreting needs.

DATSIMA provides Queensland Government agencies with community specific information through the Cultural Capability Portal. This information includes details of the languages spoken within local communities and community leaders that can provide more information or assistance.

The lack of interpreters in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages was recognised by the previous federal government as a national issue with work to develop a National Framework for Indigenous Interpreters. Becoming an accredited interpreter could provide additional employment opportunities for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Auslan interpreting (Australian sign language)

Consistently, through the stakeholder engagement process, feedback was received that access to Auslan interpreting is more widely available than other forms of interpreting. Auslan interpreters are more highly paid and therefore quality and standards of interpreting were more consistent than for other language groups.

Feedback also included that budget concerns often overrode engaging an Auslan interpreter, particularly when more than one was needed. It was also identified that access to Auslan interpreters for clients who are deaf was inconsistent across government with some regional Hospital and Health services more unlikely to engage Auslan interpreters for patients who are deaf, despite having policies in place. This can be very distressing for patients.

Accessing Auslan interpreters through video remote interpreting, when on-site interpreters are not available, was one suggested option to address access issues particularly in remote and rural areas. However, it was also mentioned that some regional agencies do not have adequate internet capabilities making use of such technologies difficult.

Lack of awareness by agencies of the number of Auslan service providers available in Queensland was also identified as an issue. Access to different service providers could improve the availability of interpreters, particularly for after-hours jobs.

2.7 Demographic issues

The *ABS Perspectives on Migrants, 2007*¹⁷ included information regarding English proficiency of migrants born in a non-main English speaking country. People born in Southern and Eastern Europe had wide ranging responses with regard to their spoken English skills, 23.9% indicated they were proficient in spoken English while 34.9% were not proficient in spoken English. 21.6% of people born in South-East Asia were proficient in spoken English, while people born in North-East Asia tend to have lower levels of English proficiency (28.9%).

Brisbane has a broader range of cultures and languages represented than other capital cities in Australia, with this trend likely to continue¹⁸. According to the 2011 Census there are more than 220 languages spoken in Queensland. These language speakers range from those that migrated from Europe following the Second World War, Vietnamese refugees arriving in the late 1970s and early 1980s, people fleeing the Bosnian crisis in the 1990s, to more recent arrivals from Africa, the Middle East and Myanmar. While people are more likely to develop English language skills the longer they live in Australia, some factors such as age, social isolation, stress and illness, lack of access to education and experiences of trauma will impact on their level of English language ability and their capacity to learn English.

2.7.1 Ageing population

People often revert to their first language as they age even if they are considered proficient in English¹⁹. Language can be an isolating factor for some older culturally diverse Queenslanders. They may find it more difficult to communicate in English preferring to stay within their home as a result. Even within aged care facilities language can be a barrier to participating in activities or even interacting with facility staff. Illnesses associated with ageing, such as dementia, can further exacerbate difficulties with English language.

By 2026 one in every four people aged over 80 will be from culturally diverse backgrounds²⁰.

VITS predicts a shortage of interpreters in the language groups needed to meet the needs of an ageing culturally diverse population in the next 20 years²¹. The populations that are ageing, with higher than average numbers of 55-64 year olds, are Italian, German, Polish, Dutch and Russian. Beyond 2020, ageing populations amongst Vietnamese and Chinese communities are more likely to require access to language services.

Qualified interpreters in the above language groups are also ageing, retiring from the industry and creating a shortfall in available interpreters. Younger interpreters (born after 1970) exist in the new and emerging language groups such as Nuer, Dinka, Persian and Dari.

As people age they are likely to need culturally appropriate services including health services, planned activities, home care services (e.g. Meals on Wheels) and transport. Language services are a key component of ensuring that these services are culturally appropriate and accessible for older people from culturally diverse backgrounds and reduce the risk of social isolation.

In 2004 the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare published a report *Diversity Among Older Australians in Capital Cities 1996-2011*. The report noted that for Brisbane the greatest rise in numbers of older people from culturally diverse backgrounds was projected to be amongst the German-born community. The report also noted:

“... in percentage terms the South African-born older population is projected to increase the most rapidly, more than doubling in 15 years. Brisbane communities born in Vietnam and the Former Yugoslavia (not further defined) will also see large percentage increases in their older populations (by 111% and 91% respectively) while the older Indian-born population will grow by 61%.” (Diversity among older Australians in capital cities 1996-2011, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare)²²

Some older people from culturally diverse backgrounds may not understand medical terminology even if interpreted. Interpreters working in the health sector, as well as health professionals, need to receive specialised training with regards to working with older clients.

2.8 Regional interpreter access

The draft Queensland Plan includes a target of 50% of Queensland's population to be residing outside South East Queensland in 30 years. Humanitarian arrivals are currently being settled in Townsville, Cairns and Toowoomba and skill shortages within the agricultural and mining sectors have also resulted in increased new arrivals to other regional areas, such as Rockhampton, Emerald and Gladstone.

Increased migration to regional areas will require adequate social infrastructure and service delivery to support these increasingly diverse populations. Traditionally accessing interpreters in regional Queensland has been especially difficult due to a lack of qualified interpreters locally and the additional cost associated with transport arrangements to bring in interpreters from other areas. Strategies currently in place by Queensland Government agencies to access interpreters in regional areas, where an on-site interpreter is not available, include:

- telephone interpreting
- video remote interpreting or video conferencing
- source an interpreter from a nearby location.

Despite these strategies, lack of interpreters in regional areas was a consistent issue raised throughout the stakeholder engagement, including for funded services.

If population increases in migrants and refugees continue in regional areas, programs designed to increase the availability of interpreters should be considered.

2.9 Technology

Language 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 very difficult for services in regional areas to engage onsite interpreters. A better use of technology is needed to ensure continued access to services for people with limited English language proficiency now and into the future.

The Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts' Queensland Digital Economy Strategy states:

“Rural and remote Queenslanders and those facing economic and social disadvantage are potentially most at risk in the digital age. Making the right decisions on digital infrastructure capability and service delivery can help to address the tyranny of distance and disadvantage by better connecting people and their communities, interest groups, family and friends. Digital technologies and mobile coverage also enable better access to government, community and human services.”

A better 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.

Benefits and risks of types of technology currently available

Technology type	Benefits	Risks
Skype	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits of an on-site interpreter without the need for the interpreter to be in the same room as the client. • Widely accessible – can be downloaded onto any computer with a webcam and internet connection. • Able to access a wider range of languages as interpreters can be sourced from around Australia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires a strong/ fast internet connection which may be lacking in some regional or remote areas in Queensland. • 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. • Assumes all parties have access to technology including computer with a webcam and internet connection.
Video conferencing facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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). • Able to access a wider range of languages as interpreters can be sourced from around Australia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited availability to agencies with facilities. • Requires a strong/ fast internet connect which may be lacking in some regional or remote areas in Queensland.
Multilingual information lines – pre-recorded information in languages other than English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to provide most commonly sought after information in multiple languages. • Likely to resolve majority of callers information needs. • Cost-effective as the agency is not engaging an interpreter to provide the same information to multiple clients. • Caller can be transferred to an interpreter if the pre-recorded information does not meet their needs. • Pre-recorded information is accessible 24 hours, 7 days a week. • Less time spent by call centre staff determining clients' needs. • Inclusive of people illiterate in their first language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only limited general information can be provided. • Does not allow for specific questions/circumstance of client to be addressed.
Machine/automated translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheap alternative for small translations. • Almost instantaneous translation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More difficult to ensure the quality of translation provided as not NAATI accredited. • Not practical for larger translation projects such as multiple page documents. • Current technology varies in accuracy and quality. • Don't reflect specific terminologies (e.g. used in legal, health or technical sectors) or local community's

Technology type	Benefits	Risks
		context. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excludes people illiterate in their first language.
Video/You Tube clips in languages other than English (e.g. Australian Tax Office vox pop video, <i>Looking to our multicultural future</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information can be made widely available to stakeholders/clients through uploading on website. Inclusive of people illiterate in their first language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires clients to have internet access. 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 (e.g. Queensland Health, Queensland Corrective Services, DETE, and Legal Aid Queensland).

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 -

www.legalaid.qld.gov.au/legalinformation/Pages/ServicesMap.aspx?fat=false&map=qld&infoscreen=video+conf

The Independent Commission of Audit's final report²³ noted the need for wider use of video conferencing technology in the criminal justice system as a means of reducing costs (e.g. NSW achieved savings of \$47 million by introducing video conferencing for prisoners). Wider use of videoconferencing technology when working with clients with limited English language 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 and some forms of technology are not ideal for some patients, such as videoconferencing for patients with mental health issues can be problematic.

Multilingual information lines

VITS has developed a multilingual information service supported by superior interactive voice response (IVR) technology and custom built software that manages content, reporting including call statistics and connection time and invoicing. 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. See more at:

<http://www.vits.com.au/multilingual-information-lines#sthash.ghP0VYFg.dpuf>

Video/YouTube 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

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. 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 only has Swahili, Afrikaans, Somali and Zulu). Using this technology in a more systematic and widespread way may result in legal liability issues 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 and where literacy levels within the language community are low.

Memory translation or collaborative translation, provides a seemingly cost-effective and practical solution to translating volumes of information. While professional translation is the standard under the LSP 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.

Some translation services are using memory 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 translations.

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 translations 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, qualified translator was involved in the development and ongoing quality control of the machine/automated translation system
- engaging 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 qualified 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 systems²⁴.

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

Technology should only be used to supplement the use of qualified interpreters and translators and not replace them. Given the concerns that still 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 individuals involved.

Use of technology risk matrix

	High risk	Low risk
Two-way information exchange	Video-conferencing	Skype
	Qualified	Bi-lingual/bi-cultural
One-way information exchange	interpreter/translator	staff member
	Video/You Tube clips	
	Multi-lingual information lines	Electronic/online translation database/ apps

2.10 Interpreter access for Queensland Government funded services

Since 2008, Queensland Government funded services have been provided access to interpreters through their funding arrangements. Governments are increasingly looking to non-government organisations to deliver client-focused and innovative services on its behalf. Therefore the inclusion of funded services within the scope of the LSP will continue. Queensland Government agencies should consider the LSP requirements when re-commissioning service delivery and in negotiating service agreements with funded services.

DCCSDS, Queensland Health and the Department of Housing and Public Works are amongst the largest funders of community services.

All funded services consulted through the stakeholder engagement process agreed that being included in the LSP had improved their access to interpreter services. Given the different arrangements in place across government to provide access for funded services the views regarding how these arrangements were working were very diverse.

Services in Brisbane that only access telephone interpreters found the arrangement from DCCSDS with TIS National convenient, efficient and effective. This view changed for some regional services and those needing to arrange on-site interpreters. Because of these arrangements local funded services are unable to access different interpreters that may be available locally, without paying for services up front and seeking reimbursement from the funding body (a process that may take some weeks).

With Queensland participating in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) from 2016, funding arrangements for disability support services will be administered differently.

Stakeholder consultation also identified that many funded services were not aware of the arrangements in place by their funding body to access interpreters. It was raised a number of times at different forums that staff in funded services often contacted TIS National to find out if they had an account code.

2.11 Multimedia translations

Best practice language services also include written and multimedia information translated into other languages. Most agencies undertake an ad hoc approach to translating information as an additional consideration following development of the resource, or in response to requests for information already available in English. Similarly, funded services find it difficult to find the budget for translating resources, unless a specific grant request is made.

The cost of translating resources, including the potential need to maintain and update information as legislative or policy changes occur, is a primary consideration for many agencies. Few Queensland Government agencies undertake a planned approach to translating resources as part of a communication or community engagement strategy (refer Appendix 1).

Stakeholder feedback regarding appropriate strategies for ensuring quality translations was mixed. Most stakeholders advocated the need to involve community members in the development, quality control and promotion of any translated resource, including in the initial writing stage to ensure that content was culturally appropriate prior to translation. However, one stakeholder advised that using a community member to check a qualified translator's work may result in significant distortions of the intended message as they may not have the linguistic skills or awareness of the importance of style or grammatical structures.

Some of the factors resulting in poor quality translated resources include:

- poor quality of the original source material prepared for translation
- poor use of existing resources
- poor quality assurance processes in managing the translation project, from procuring to vetting
- lack of awareness of cultural differences impacting the transfer of messages and meaning to the relevant community.

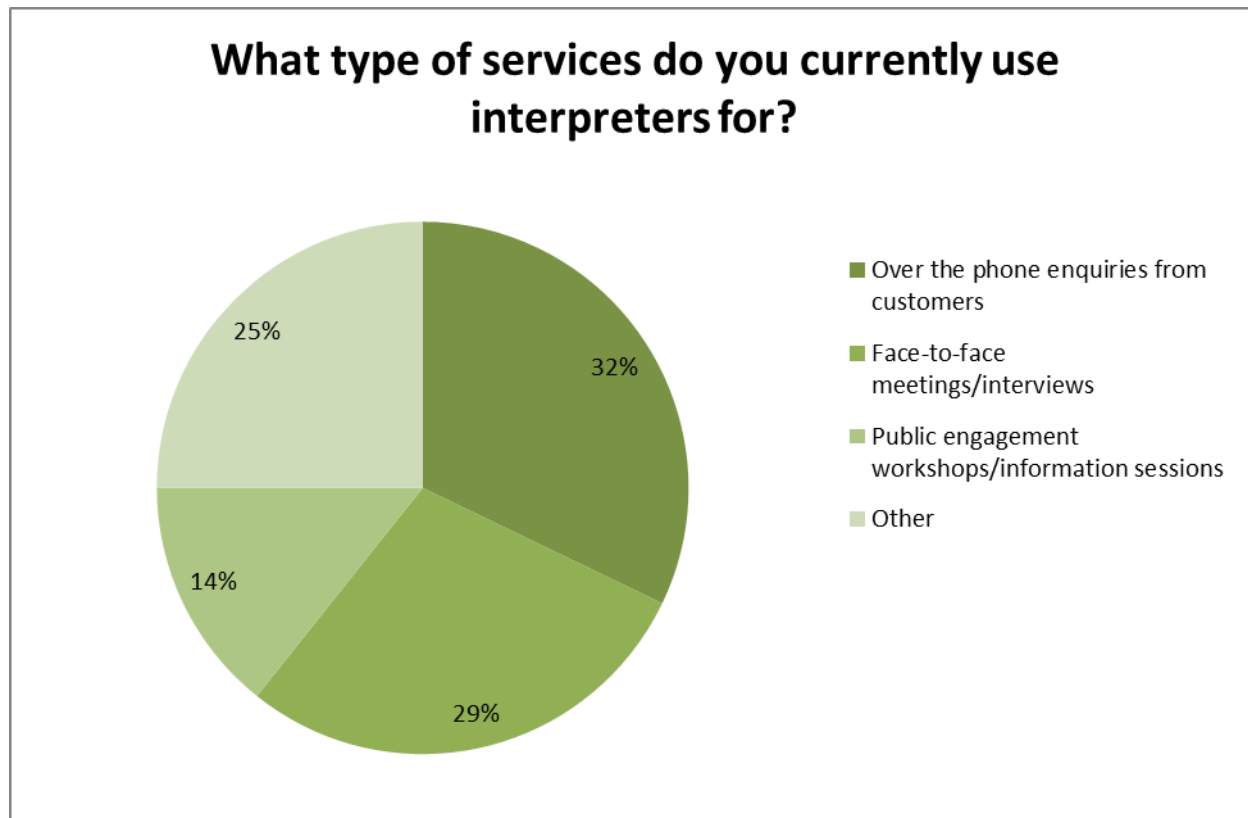
In order for translated resources to be cost-effective and client focused, agencies need a thorough understanding of the community that their communication strategy is targeting. For example, many languages are oral only, meaning there is no written form to translate material into. Similarly, literacy 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).

Appendix 1 – Results of Government Survey

24 departments and statutory authorities had responded to the Queensland Government Language Services survey. Questions elicited both qualitative and quantitative data.

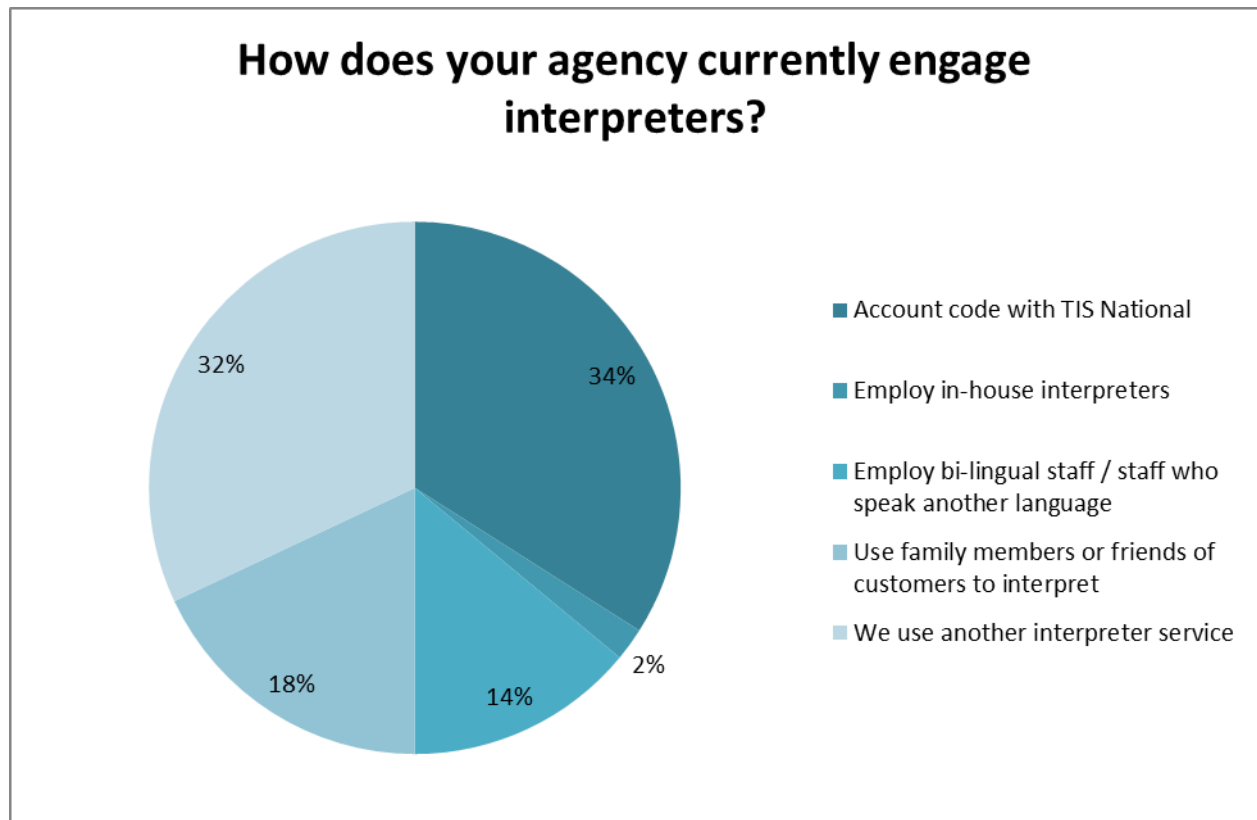
Q1



Other types of services that interpreters are used for include:

- public health services including acute care services, non-inpatient services (e.g. mental health, oral health, community health and pathology services) and state government residential aged care facilities
- court proceedings after the relevant court order has been made
- inspections, audits and investigations (Mines Inspectorate)
- providing Land Titles Registry information
- internal employee assistance, police investigations and support
- phone enquiries and appointment bookings for the Queensland Public Trustee services (e.g. Will making)
- Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland training, and community engagement meetings
- Residential Tenancies Authority dispute resolution teleconferences
- Queensland Civil and Administration Tribunal (QCAT) proceedings.

Q2



Most agencies advised that they engage NAATI accredited or recognised interpreters for bookings. Some agencies acknowledged that non-professional interpreters or family members were used but only in urgent situations when a qualified interpreter is unavailable.

Other arrangements include:

- ONCALL Interpreters and Translators
- Queensland Interpreting and Translating Services (QITS)
- Multilink Community Services
- National Auslan Booking Service (NABS)
- National Interpreting and Communications Services (NICSS)
- Deaf Services Queensland (AUSLAN)
- Client own preferred interpreter
- NAATI website
- Griffith University Language services
- Use of volunteers.

Q3 Does your agency provide access to interpreters for funded services?

There was some confusion and misunderstanding by respondents regarding what was meant by funded services. For the purposes of the survey funded services referred to non-Government organisations that are funded by a Queensland Government department to deliver services or programs on its behalf. It does not refer to services directly delivered by departments.

After removing responses which did not meet this definition, three agencies responded that they provided access to interpreters for funded services.

Q4 What is the cost to your agency annually in engaging interpreters other than the cost of the interpreter?

A number of responses advised that additional costs to the agency were absorbed as 'business as usual' and could therefore not be identified separately or were unquantifiable. Most agencies do not employ staff whose sole duties relate to coordinating interpreter services, with the exception of Queensland Health. For the majority of agencies this role is undertaken by staff as one of a number of duties.

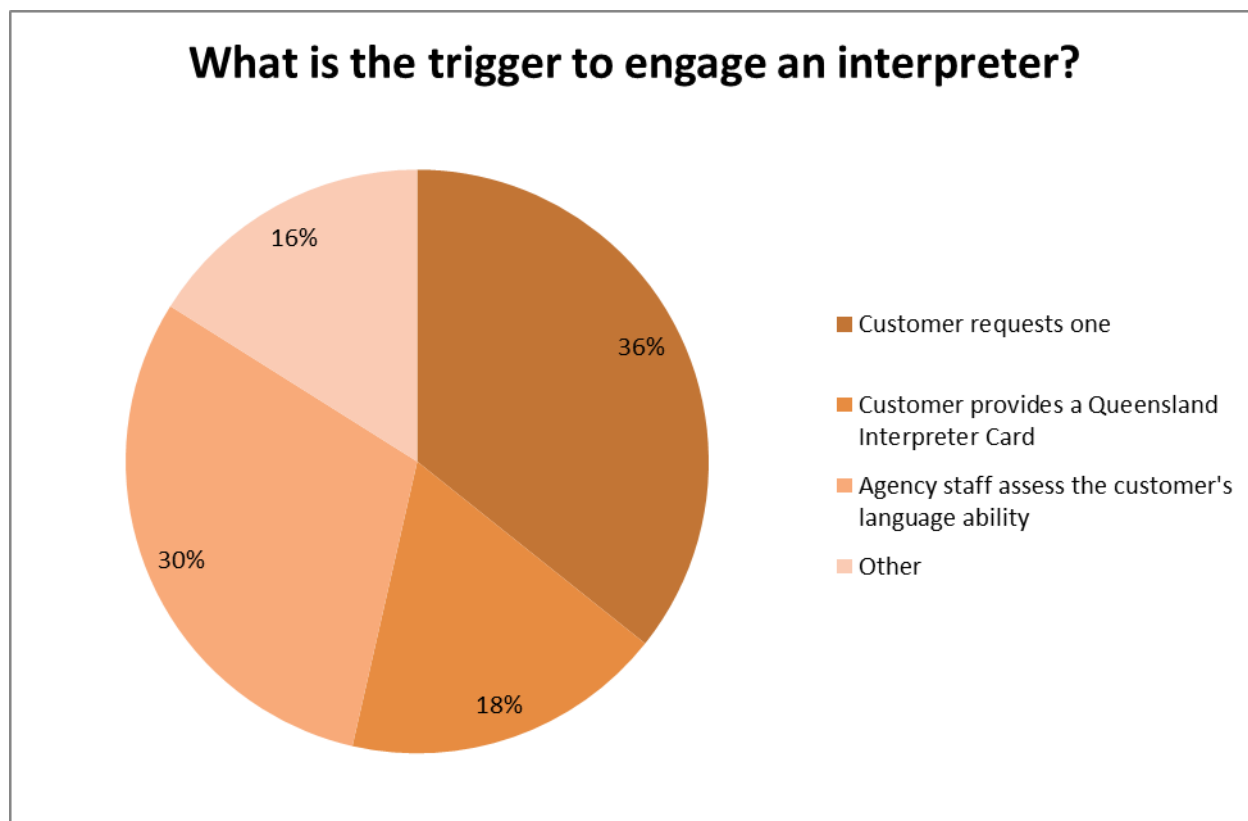
Other resources identified included data collection and information technology systems as well as training and information sessions for staff.

Q5 How often does your agency need to engage an interpreter?

Frequency of interpreter use across the Queensland Government varies significantly from agency to agency. Some agencies advised interpreter use was very infrequent or nil and others were unable to identify frequency as this data is not recorded by the agency.

The biggest users of interpreter services across the Queensland Government are the DETE, the Queensland Courts, Queensland Police Service, and the QCAT, with Queensland Health being the biggest by far.

Q6



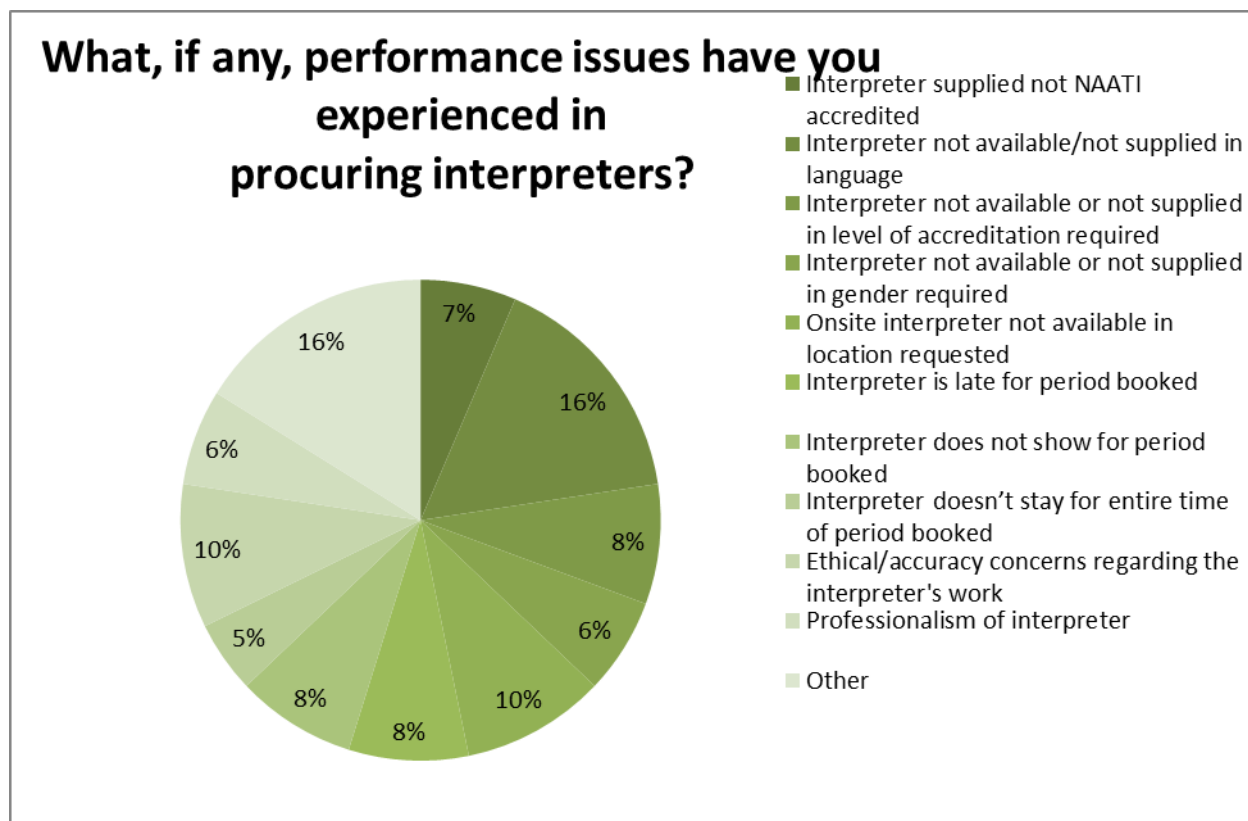
Other triggers include:

- building inspections and safety assessments primarily for illegal budget accommodation premises when the occupant/s is/are from a non-English speaking background
- family or friends request an interpreter
- GP or referring doctor stipulates on referral that the patient requires an interpreter
- file notes and daily reports
- language difficulties during court proceedings may result in a court order being made by a judicial officer for an interpreter
- during the conduct of inspections/audits and investigations where it is known that some of the customers involved may not be able to speak or write English
- other agencies may request the use of interpreters when working with the Queensland Police Service
- customer contacts TIS National directly.

The Queensland Government website (www.qld.gov.au) directs customers looking for government information and services to the following services if they require them:

- Telephone interpreters - Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), Department of Immigration and Citizenship (www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/help_with_translating/index.htm) TIS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and is accessible from anywhere in Australia for the cost of a local call on 131 450
- Directory of Accredited Practitioners of Translating and Interpreting National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (<http://www.naati.com.au/>) NAATI Hotline 1300 557 470 within Australia
- Yellow Pages - Translators and interpreters can be found in the Yellow Pages (<http://www.yellowpages.com.au/>) under 'Interpreters' and/or 'Translators'.

Q7



Although not specifically a performance issue, one department identified a lack of interpreters in Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Other performance issues identified include:

- travel costs for on-site interpreters attending outside of Brisbane and in languages that cannot be accessed at all in south-east Queensland
- cultural practices limiting the ability of some interpreters to travel
- some interpreters providing their own 'spin' on clients responses, influencing victims to keep 'community issues within their community', talking inappropriately to clients after interpreting work is over, stating personal opinions and giving advice to clients
- the interpreter has interrupted the presentation to the extent that it can detract from or redirect discussions for all other participants
- interpreter may not be available to attend a remote field location such as a mine or quarry site
- interpreters' accent has been very difficult to understand.

Q8 If you identified any performance issues in Question 7, please detail what action your agency took to resolve your concerns?

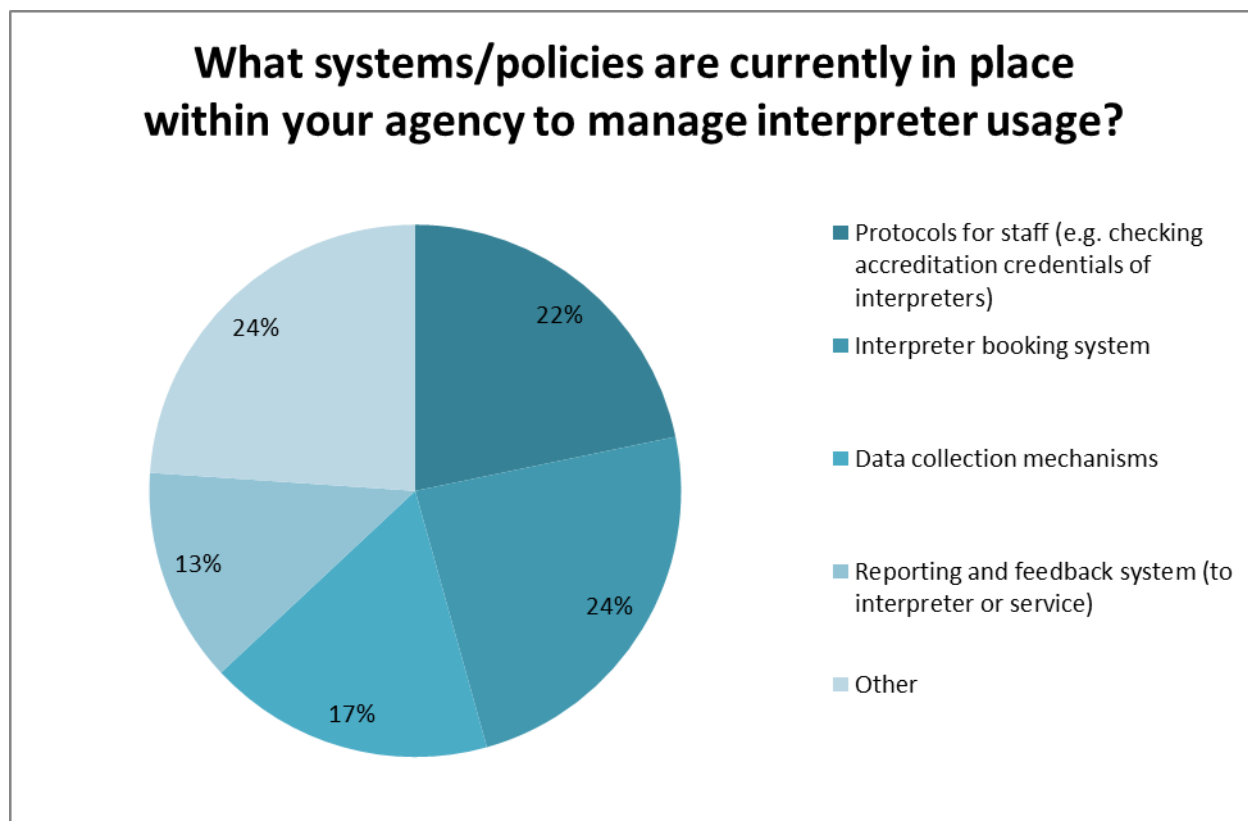
Many agencies did not identify any action either because none was taken or data mechanisms did not capture this data. Other agencies have raised particular performance issues directly with the language service provider. Other actions taken to address performance issues include:

- refer matter to state coordination and management for assistance in attaining an outcome
- work with contracted service provider to conduct recruitment campaigns to try to access more interpreters
- discussion about performance issues with the contracted service provider in six-monthly and annual performance reviews, based on key performance indicators that are measured by data generated, qualitative and some quantitative feedback provided by staff, and additional information provided by the contracted service provider (e.g. recruitment, training, and accreditation of interpreters)
- court matters maybe adjourned due to performance issues with interpreters
- develop a work around when interpreters are not available such as on the phone or at a location nearby
- reports of issues to central reporting unit
- regional staff implement risk management strategies including using bilingual staff as monitors when professional interpreters MUST be used. As some work is time critical, staff will often use the skills of unaccredited interpreters supplied by agencies and recheck the accuracy of the interpreting at a later time if needed
- use another interpreter service or engage interpreters directly through NAATI website
- need to remind interpreter of the need to convey only the utterances of each party
- when the interpreter was not available in the language required, a client decided that she would proceed without an interpreter as she was able to understand and speak English. Had to ensure that the English skills were sufficient to be able to effectively engage in the process and had to test her understanding at various times during the process including speaking slowly/clearly and using plain and simple words to ensure understanding and allow time for client to speak. The client was also supported by her partner who spoke her first language.

Q9 What, if any, strategies do you have in place to ensure access to interpreters for regional or rural clients?

Telephone interpreting is by far the strategy most agencies use to engage interpreters in regional and rural areas if an on-site interpreter is not available locally. Only two agencies identified that they are currently using Video remote interpreting or Video-conferencing, although another agency is looking into adopting this approach in regional service delivery. Other options were to use alternative local providers or source an interpreter from a nearby location (requiring travel costs).

Q10



Other systems or policies in place:

- training handbooks and reference/desk manuals, resources on departmental intranets
- approval procedures
- staff are instructed to always accept calls from interpreter assisted clients
- training for ‘Working with Interpreters’ and ‘Booking interpreters’, education sessions to staff members
- departmental / service area interpreting policies
- interpreting cards to attach to staff lanyards distributed to current and new staff with key messages about how to access an interpreter during business hours and after hours
- practice directions issued by various court jurisdictions
- finance systems used to track interpreter expenditure
- scripted procedural information on how to engage with an interpreter is accessed by all staff to ensure correct billing
- Domestic Violence Protocol provides guidance for staff on assessing the need for an interpreter
- policies and procedures on engaging interpreters on the departmental intranet.

Q11 How can these be improved?

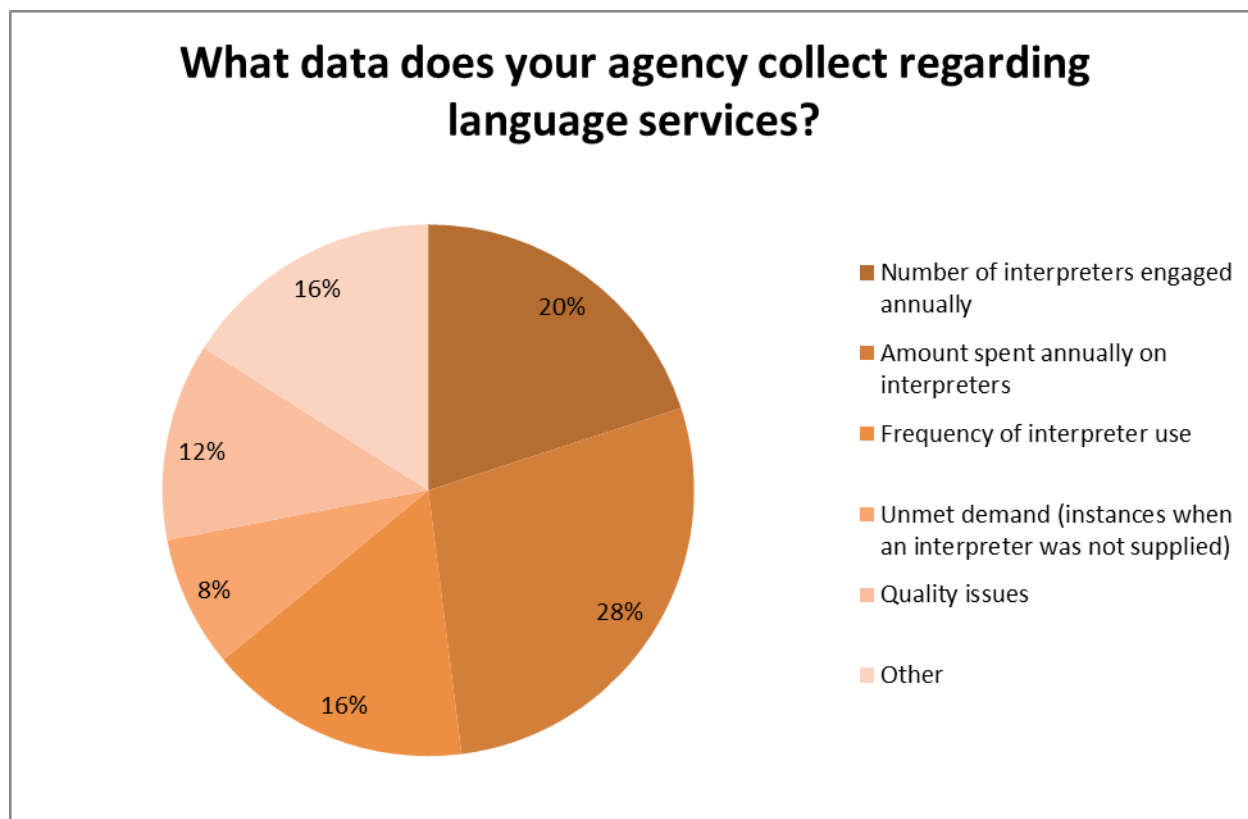
A number of agencies indicated that current arrangements were adequate including resolving issues as they arise. Some agencies identified improvements to their internal systems including:

- enhancements to information systems and improving data collection and reporting
- better training and more resources for staff and interpreters
- more accountability by interpreters (penalties for lateness, etc.) as the current system charges a health service a minimum booking for a certain duration even if the interpreter arrives late (i.e. there is no deterrent to interpreters for unpunctuality or unprofessional behaviour etc.)
- encourage and follow up feedback from staff
- developing formal protocols on using interpreters.

Other suggestions included:

- working with NAATI and agencies to improve supply of qualified interpreters particularly in new and emerging languages
- advocating use of qualified telephone interpreters rather than unaccredited on-site interpreters
- increasing awareness of services by people from culturally diverse backgrounds
- expanding regional coverage through video conferencing and potentially link in with other options already in the community
- developing a centralised feedback and reporting system (to collect data to pass on to service provider).

Q12

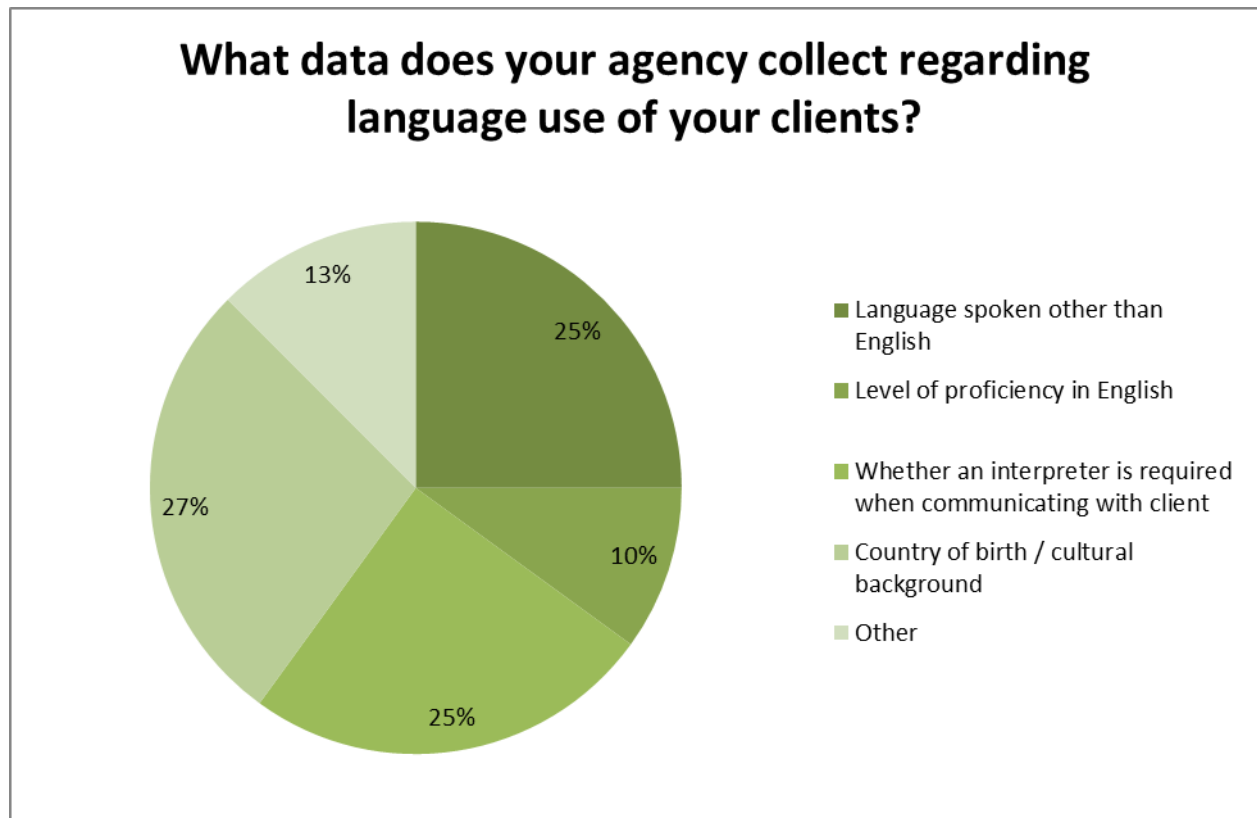


All agencies collect data on the amount spent and number of interpreters engaged as these indicators are part of the core outcomes reporting from the previous *Queensland Multicultural Policy, a multicultural future for all of us*. This data is easily collected through agencies’ financial systems and also forms part of the annual reporting information through Open Data.

Few agencies collected data on the unmet demand of interpreters or quality issues. It is also difficult for agencies to identify instances when a customer requires an interpreter and is not provided with one, or the reasons for this, or when customers do not access a service due to a lack of English language or lack of awareness of entitlement to the service because of language issues.

Other data collected on language services included most requested languages for translation purposes.

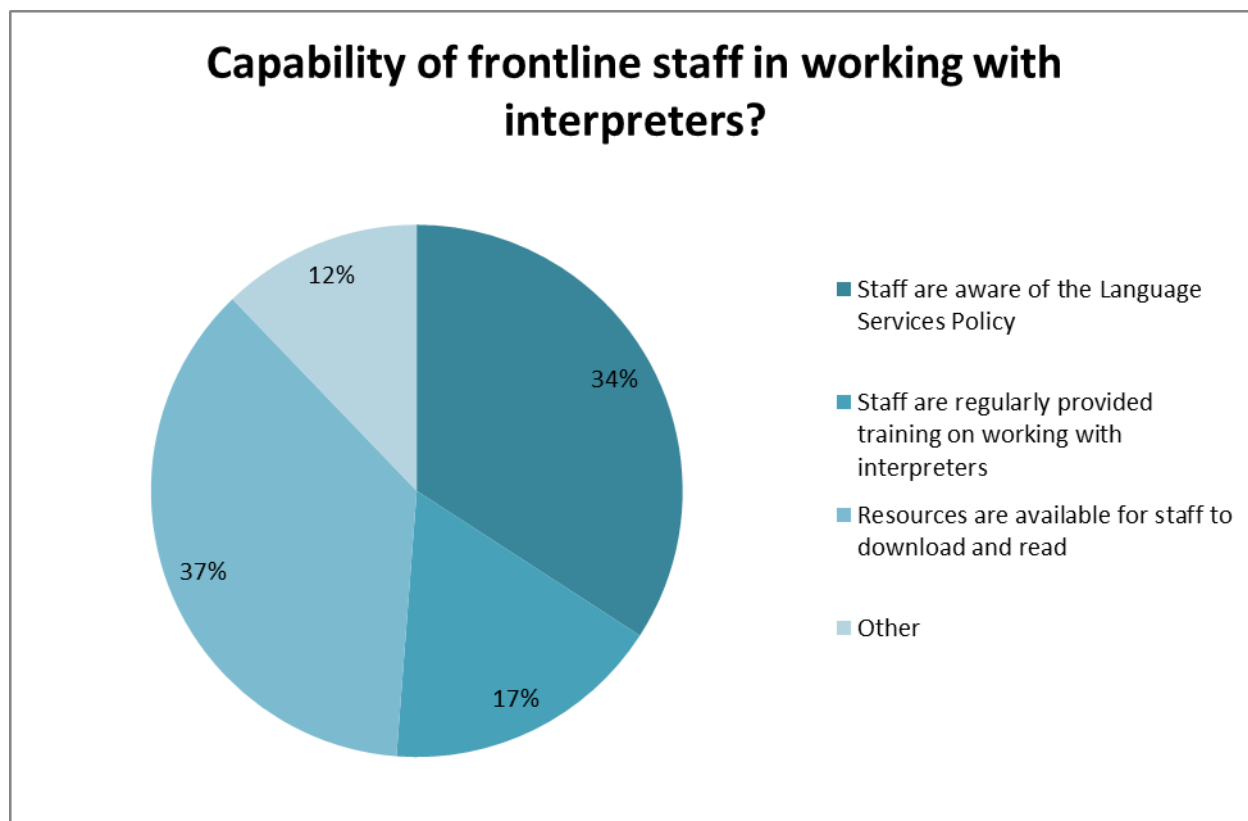
Q13



Other data regarding language use of clients includes:

- academic results
- patient's preference of gender of interpreter
- religion
- whether parents require interpreter for a child
- comments sections for special requirements.

Q14



Other mechanisms to ensure capability of frontline staff in working with interpreters:

- Interpreter Services Information System Manual
- education sessions to frontline administration staff on the importance of data collection
- frontline administration staff members have the interpreting card
- practice directions issued by various court jurisdictions
- interpreter use included in induction training
- scripted procedures and Helpline scripts.

Q15 How can the Language Services Policy assist your agency to better engage and procure interpreter services?

Some agencies stated that the current LSP met their needs. Despite the majority of agencies responding to question number 14 that staff were aware of the LSP, awareness of the policy was also raised as a potential improvement opportunity.

Specific changes recommended to the LSP include:

- providing more guidance on how many languages materials should be translated into
- increase awareness of using qualified interpreters rather than family members, friends or a child, and that refusal to provide an interpreter could be potentially discriminatory and/or breach of legislative requirements specific to the agency
- clearer and more precise phrasing to define urgent situations to provide direction to staff when it is acceptable to use non-professional interpreters
- include a decision-making flow chart to assist with complex interpreting work, which may have serious implications for the person and the agency

- advice for the health context about on-site interpreters being more appropriate than telephone interpreters for physical assessments (e.g. if a clinician can justify that an unaccredited onsite interpreter is more beneficial to assist with visual cues rather than a qualified telephone interpreter)
- include minimum requirements of interpreters dependent on duties.

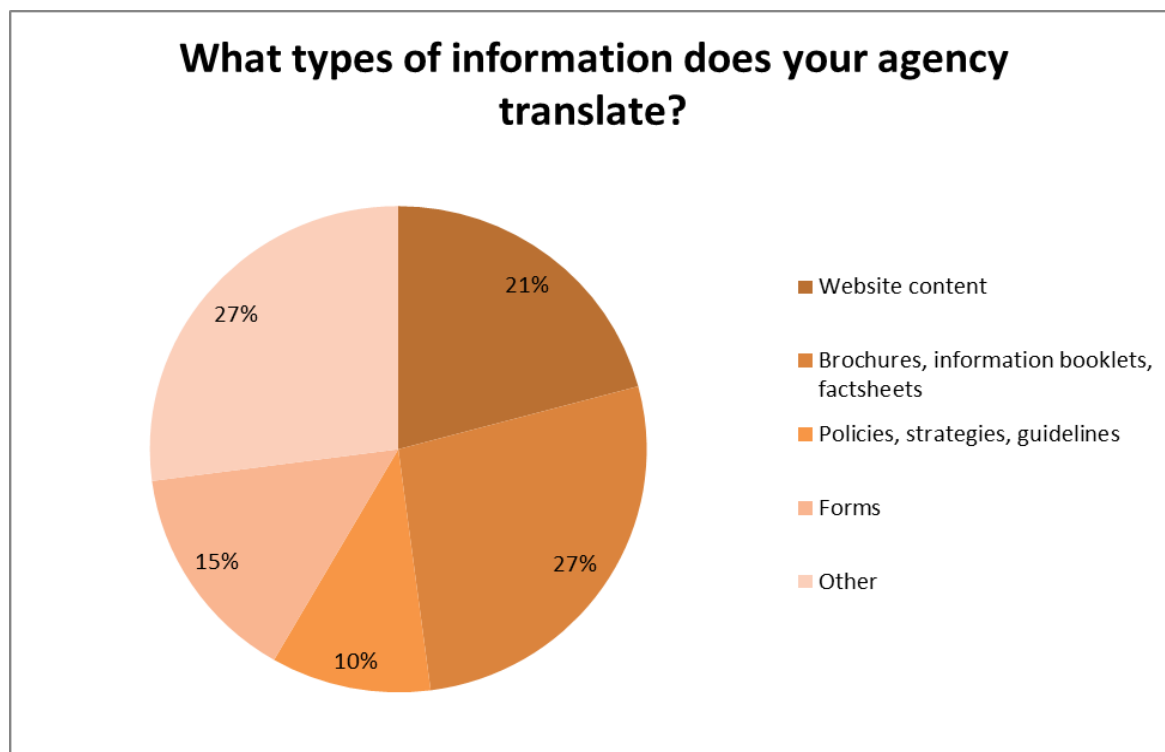
Other suggested improvements include:

- compulsory annual online training
- easy to use tools/checklists which are current
- range of options and services for engaging interpreters. There are many interpreter services available, some better known than others. A link on website to the services would assist.

Q16 What changes can be made to the Language Services Policy to improve outcomes for culturally diverse clients?

- inclusion of school-related scenarios
- should be mandatory for all staff to engage an interpreter when coming into contact with a patient who is not proficient in English
- random audits of records to see whether an interpreter was engaged
- stronger direction concerning accountability if staff are not adhering to the policy
- there should be a balance which allows departmental staff to make decisions about the provision of language assistance through bilingual staff, interpreters or even other persons present, based on the task at hand and the best outcomes. That is not to say that there is no place for qualified interpreters, only that sometimes, timeliness of interactions, providing an ongoing staff member interaction (building a rapport) can be vital considerations
- less focus on interpreters and more focus on the provision of multicultural services and resources
- more accessibility of interpreters, particularly in more remote regions
- promoting the Queensland Interpreter Card more widely and used or, an alternative be found. There needs to be more focus on consistency between the Interpreter Card and promotional items developed by TIS National. The TIS National interpreter symbol appears to be more recognisable for clients.

Q17



Other types of information translated:

- letters and medical records
- Land Titles Information and the need for a client to seek their own independent legal advice
- community presentations, news articles etc.
- Anti-Discrimination complaints lodged in other languages are translated into English
- translated videos and publications both for distribution in information packages and uploading on the website
- information about public libraries in 46 languages
- access to newspaper and radio services in hundreds of languages
- My Language website an online interactive space.

Q18 How does your agency manage translation projects?

Most agencies undertake an ad hoc approach to translating information as a once-off. Generally these are managed through corporate communications branches which assess the request and take any relevant action (e.g. quotes and procurement processes). On occasion staff members may liaise with the contracted service provider directly about translating material.

Requests from members of the public for translated information may be assessed on the basis of cost and ongoing relationship of customer to the department. One department identified that they engage with members of their community to complete the translation project on a voluntary basis. Another agency employing in-house interpreters utilise them for translations upon request. Yet another agency uses community and or bilingual staff to do the initial translation and then have the final product overviewed by a qualified interpreter (for formal documents).

Only four agencies identified a planned approach to translating information including quality control processes. Some of the key steps and processes used include:

- planning:
 - languages to translate content identified using market research and the use of client profile data, internal interpreter usage data, Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data, settlement data from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, and advice from relevant networks
 - research into the type of media and content most appropriate for different cohorts of culturally diverse clients (e.g. recent humanitarian arrivals, established communities etc.)
 - consultation with peak community organisations where possible.
- organising culturally appropriate content, and translations:
 - developing and building a great working relationship with one company to ensure the technical content continues to be translated correctly
 - translated content is cross checked by the Queensland Government Trade Office (in the country of interest), or government personnel fluent in relevant language, to ensure the technical translations are correct and comments passed back to translator for discussion before the translation is finalised
 - sourcing three translation quotes and ensuring they are NAATI accredited with a solid background of achievement in translating documents for government services
 - seeking feedback on both the translations and imagery within the resources through community consultations.
- distribution:
 - publicising the availability of the translations through key networks (i.e. Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland mailing list, Community Action for a Multicultural Society (CAMS) network, Brisbane City Council Access Team newsletter)
 - mail-outs to culturally diverse communities
 - face-to-face visits and presentations to settlement services and other community forums throughout Queensland
 - keeping a record of feedback and of orders of resources for future reference.

Q19 What is the cost to your agency annually to provide and maintain translated resources?

Nine agencies responded with translator expenses in 2012-13. Most responses were small amounts and/or for one-off projects. The DETE, Queensland Police Service and Smart Service Queensland responded with the most translation costs.

There is also an ongoing cost to maintain and further develop translated resources as information changes or new client languages are identified.

Staff time and other resources relating to translation projects are generally absorbed as 'business as usual' and could therefore not be identified separately or were unquantifiable. For the majority of departments these translating resources are part of a project or role undertaken by staff.

Other resources included:

- budget allocation for translations
- conducting a client survey which includes country of origin and language spoken at home
- providing staff training
- guidelines for staff.

Q20 What, if any, arrangements are in place for funded services to translate information?

Only one agency advised that they provided funded services with funding for translations.

Appendix 2 - Departmental policies relating to language services

Queensland Health

All states and territories engage interpreter services as part of their patient safety strategy and it is a requirement under the Australian Charter for Healthcare Rights.

Queensland Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework 2010-2013

The *Queensland Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework 2010 – 2013* (the Framework) provides overarching principles of culturally capable health service delivery to guide the skills, knowledge and behaviours that are essential for all levels of Queensland Health employees to provide culturally appropriate health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders²⁵.

One of the overarching principles relates to communication and Queensland Health achieves this principle through engaging:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander hospital liaison officers
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers
- interpreter services when needed for safe and meaningful communication.

The Framework also notes that there is a shortage of interpreter services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples which has been repeatedly identified by clinical staff, particularly in regional and rural parts of Queensland. This is a complex and chronic issue due to the diversity of languages and dialects, and the shortage of suitably qualified interpreters.

Hospital and Health Services

In 2012, Queensland Health published the Guideline for multicultural health policy implementation which provides recommendations to Hospital and Health Services and Department of Health Divisions regarding best practice for the implementation of the *Queensland Multicultural Policy 2011 and Queensland Government Language Services Policy*.

Mater Health Services

Mater Health Services policy and practices relating to using interpreters was raised by a number of stakeholders as an example of best/good practice.

Mater Health Services' has a detailed policy on 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, for urgent requests. 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 have been provided with a wallet sized card outlining key points in using an interpreter.

Department of Justice and Attorney-General

“Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is dissatisfaction about the state of court interpreting from the courts and tribunals as well as from the practising interpreters themselves, especially from those who are highly qualified.”^{III}
Interpreter Policies, Practices and Protocols in Australian Courts and Tribunals – A National Survey

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General’s (DJAG) *Language Services Policy* (2009)²⁶, ensures that wherever possible, the department will:

- establish coordinated measures which address clients’ communication difficulties and improve equitable access to programs, services and information
- work with professional interpreters to improve communication with people unable to communicate in English
- adopt a planned approach producing and disseminating information about services, policies and activities in English and other languages after consulting client groups
- plan for language services by incorporating multilingual information needs into agency budgeting, human resources and client service program management
- make maximum use of the cultural and linguistic skills of employees in the development and implementation of this planning.

This policy also states that under Queensland legislation the state (i.e. the Queensland Government) is only required to provide an interpreter for court proceedings if ordered by the court in criminal and domestic violence related matters. This does not include civil matters, such as small claim proceedings. However a judicial officer may order an interpreter if they believe natural justice is not being served.

The various courts have specific practice directions to guide judicial officers regarding who engages and pays for an interpreter:

- Magistrates Court Practice Direction No. 7 of 2010²⁷, Interpreters – Magistrates Court criminal proceedings
- District Court of Queensland Practice Direction number 1 of 2010, Interpreters: District Court
- The Queensland Supreme Court’s Equal Treatment Bench Book (2005)²⁸.

In relation to civil proceedings, where a party requires the services of an interpreter they are responsible for engaging and bearing the cost of the interpreter.

^{III} Hale, S. Prof (2011), *Interpreter Policies, Practices and Protocols in Australian Courts and Tribunals - A National Survey*, The Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration Incorporated, Melbourne, ppxi.

Department of Education, Training and Employment

The Department of Education, Training and Employment's *Policy Statement: English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) learners*, outlines the requirements to support students enrolled in state schools who are learning Standard Australian English, as a new language, while simultaneously learning the school curriculum in English²⁹. EAL/D learners include:

- Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander students
- students with Maori or Pacific Islander backgrounds
- students of Australian South Sea Islander background
- immigrants to Australia and temporary visa holders from non-English speaking countries
- students with a refugee-background
- children born in Australia of migrant heritage where English is not spoken at home
- Australian-born students returning from abroad having lived for extended periods of time in countries where their schooling was not in English
- children of adults who are deaf and who use Auslan as their first language
- international students from non-English speaking countries.

The department also has *Guidelines for using interpreters in schools* on the website - <http://education.qld.gov.au/student-services/inclusive-cultural/esl/interpreter-guidelines.html>

Interpreters should be used for:

- enrolments
- parent-teacher interviews/School Report Interviews
- information dissemination about specific school programs
- individual student issues or to assist with an educational assessment

Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

Support with Interpreting, Translating and Communication (SWITC)

Disability Services' (DS) funded non-government organisations (NGOs) can access interpreting services through SWITC. Managed by Deaf Services Queensland, SWITC assists funded NGOs to provide appropriate service responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally diverse backgrounds (including Australian South Sea Islanders), and people who are hearing impaired and/or visually impaired.

Appendix 3 - Results of stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder consultation process

In addition to seeking feedback from government agencies on the *Queensland Language Services Policy* (LSP) review, Cultural Diversity Queensland (CDQ), within the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, engaged with a range of other stakeholders to determine (where relevant):

- whether the LSP has improved access to interpreting and translating services for clients
- what funding and procedural arrangements are in place with funding bodies to access interpreters
- what barriers or gaps currently exist in the provision of language services broadly
- what barriers or gaps are currently experienced by clients in the provision of language services
- best practice examples in delivering language services
- key considerations for government agencies in procuring quality interpreters and translators
- the extent of data collection on language services.

Meeting with key stakeholders

Throughout February and March 2014, CDQ arranged meetings with key stakeholders to seek input on the LSP review, including funded services, language service providers and industry associations.

Stakeholder forums

CDQ coordinated four Stakeholder Engagement Forums during March 2014. These forums sought input for the LSP review in addition to feedback on the draft Queensland Cultural Diversity Action Plan. Forums were held in Townsville (11 March), Rockhampton (13 March), Logan (24 March) and Cairns (28 March). Over 120 participants were involved, largely key stakeholders working with culturally diverse communities in the areas of service delivery, community development or policy advocacy roles. A number of regionally based local and state government representatives were also present at these forums.

Written submissions

Online submissions were sought via the CDQ website and other electronic means during March 2014, to provide a broader perspective for the review. Online submissions were received from 14 organisations and individuals.

Key findings from stakeholder engagement

The stakeholder engagement process provided CDQ with rich data to inform the review of the LSP. Key themes that emerged from the stakeholder consultations are discussed below.

Inconsistent implementation across government and community agencies.

Stakeholders acknowledged that the existence of a LSP has led to some improvements in access to interpreters for some government and funded community agencies but that an update is necessary.

Some of the reasons for the policy-practice implementation gaps raised by participants include:

- lack of incentives to implement the LSP
- perception that there is no departmental budget for interpreting and translating services
- lack of staff training
- lack of awareness of the policy amongst government agencies and funded community agencies.

A number of stakeholders raised concerns that the LSP is written in a way that enables agencies to 'self-select' whether or not to engage an interpreter. It was suggested that the policy should be 'more prescriptive about the use of interpreting services in both government and community services, particularly for specialist services such as health, counselling and the justice system. It was further suggested that access to interpreters should be integrated in service delivery across government from a risk management, client/staff health and safety perspective.

Stakeholders also pointed out that although the LSP makes a strong commitment to language services, government agencies have to implement the policy within existing budgets. Some government agencies routinely do not engage interpreters, including Auslan, due to budgetary constraints. Government stakeholders present at the engagement forums, stated that they regularly engage interpreters (paid out of a regional budget), others had to check with central office before they can arrange for an interpreter. Stakeholders reported that some schools are routinely not engaging interpreters as there is a perception amongst teaching and administration staff that there are no funds for interpreters.

Stakeholders also highlighted that Magistrates' Courts regularly do not engage interpreters for domestic violence cases. Stakeholders reported that although courts are aware of the need for qualified interpreters, the reluctance to engage them stems from budgetary concerns and a lack of clarity about who is responsible for organising and paying for the interpreter (e.g. between police and courts).

Feedback suggested that some government and community agencies are unwilling to engage interpreters due to the extra time it takes to work with them and a reluctance to reduce service outputs. In some cases, agencies have even turned away clients who are not proficient in English because they do not want to engage interpreters.

The LSP is not adequately promoted

A significant number of community and government stakeholders consulted were not aware of the current LSP. Some stakeholders pointed out that many community agencies were not aware of the provisions by their funding bodies for them to access interpreting services. There is also a perception amongst agencies that interpreters can only be accessed for service delivery purposes, not for consultative or planning processes.

Feedback suggests that awareness of the LSP is generally higher amongst government and funded community agencies that regularly provide services to culturally diverse communities. Although there are some government and community agencies that have been engaging interpreting services as part of service delivery with limited awareness of the LSP.

Some agencies have their own policies in place relating to engaging interpreters, however, stakeholder feedback suggests that many frontline staff are also not aware of these policies.

There was also feedback that some staff have little or no understanding about the difference between qualified and unaccredited interpreters and translators.

Stakeholders strongly suggested that the new LSP should be better promoted across government and funded community services, particularly amongst frontline staff. Suggestions were made to increase the uptake of the LSP, including simplifying the LSP document and lifting out the 'guidelines' section into a separate document, to include examples of templates and best practice.

Current procurement arrangements limit access to other language service providers

The majority of funded community agencies access interpreter services through TIS National, via accounts established by their funding department. Most stakeholders were generally content with TIS. Other departments have arrangements in place through another provider. There were concerns raised regarding the provision of unqualified interpreters, even for specialist services.

In cases where a funded community agency has been unable to arrange an appropriate interpreter through their nominated provider, they have had to engage and pay for an interpreter through another source. This requires reimbursement through their funding bodies which is reportedly cumbersome and prohibitive. It was therefore suggested that the procurement arrangements for interpreting services be reviewed to include more 'preferred providers' so agencies are able to access a wider range of interpreters in a more streamlined manner.

Similar feedback was provided in relation to Auslan interpreting, particularly that agencies tended to engage one service provider and had difficulties accessing interpreters after-hours despite other service providers being available.

Limited scope of the LSP to departments and their funded services

Some stakeholders raised the need for the coverage of the LSP to be extended to include other government entities and statutory bodies that have a public interface, such as independent schools, the Office of Adult Guardian and the Queensland Public Trustee.

Lack of clarity in the LSP about the need for funded community agencies to implement the policy

Stakeholders acknowledged that while the LSP states that government agencies should 'implement appropriate budgets and assistance for funded community agencies to engage interpreting services for service delivery, it is not apparent whether funded community agencies should comply with the LSP.

Stakeholders suggested that the LSP make clear that government-funded community agencies should also use interpreters. While multicultural focused community agencies may have specific interpreter funding or access to fee-free interpreting, many mainstream community agencies do not always engage interpreters, making them inaccessible to people who need language support. The LSP needs to be promoted amongst mainstream community agencies to encourage these services to become more accessible to people who have difficulty communicating in English.

Stakeholders also suggested that the LSP be further clarified regarding the provision of access to interpreters for Queensland Government funded programs and projects only, and that this arrangement does not apply to the organisation generally.

Some community agencies that have multiple programs funded by one or several departments have multiple processes for arranging interpreters. While it is not necessarily a prohibitive issue, it can create confusion for staff and clients.

Further guidance needed for agency staff on how to work with interpreters

Stakeholders suggested there needs to be clearer and more prescriptive guidelines on how government and funded community agency staff should work with interpreters. The guidelines should clearly articulate good practices such as:

- how to book an interpreter and check their accreditation prior to commencing the assignment
- explaining the role of the interpreters to the clients before the start of the session
- factoring in extra time after a session to provide an opportunity to debrief with the interpreter.

Lack of awareness by clients that they are able to ask for an interpreter

Several stakeholders mentioned that the Queensland Interpreter Card was useful, however needed to be more readily available in reception areas of government and community agencies, and clients provided with information on how to use them. Moreover, clear, obviously-displayed promotional material in multiple languages with simple statements, such as "Interpreters available here – please ask us", will assist clients to feel empowered to ask for interpreters when required.

Stakeholders also identified a need to ensure government websites clearly direct people to translated webpages or information through use of translated wording or the National Interpreter Symbol on homepages. Also needed is more clarity on government websites regarding how clients can access interpreters (e.g. do they go through the department or can they phone an interpreter and then connect with the government agency). Stakeholders also suggested that local or regional government services such as libraries, visitor centres and council offices could be better used to promote the LSP.

Stakeholders repeatedly raised issues about the lack of promotional material available in government agencies in particular, such as visual cues (e.g. posters, signs in different languages) in public waiting areas to remind staff and clients that they are able to access interpreters.

Lack of staff training

A significant part of implementing the LSP is in relation to staff training on how to work effectively with interpreters. Stakeholders suggested that the LSP should be more prescriptive in requiring agencies to allocate budgets for cultural competency training, including training on how to work with interpreters. Agencies should also be required to actively audit their own compliance with the policy.

A common issue raised by stakeholders was the lack of awareness of service providers on how to work effectively with an interpreter, including knowing when to engage an interpreter, how to arrange for one, and how to converse with the client through an interpreter. Stakeholders pointed out that there is a lack of incentives, drive and available resources to enable staff to access cultural competency training.

It was also noted that interpreter engagement in some agencies fluctuated with staff turn-over. It was suggested that implementing consistent inductions and training could address this issue.

There is also a lack of understanding amongst agencies about the interpreter's role, leading to situations where interpreters are asked to perform duties that are beyond their job scope, such as making coffee. Stakeholders also identified that often agencies have unrealistic expectations of interpreters' availability which could be alleviated with better planning and management of appointments. There is also a lack of understanding of the AUSIT Code of Ethics (as implemented by NAATI) by staff using interpreter services, which often results in some distrust that the interpreters are not providing an accurate interpretation.

Ongoing inappropriate use of friends and family members including children as interpreters

One stakeholder conducted a survey of 15 community leaders and found that 14 (93%) reported knowing of instances where friends and family were used as interpreters. Ten (66%) reported that children and young relatives were used as interpreters. These instances occurred across a range of services including GPs, hospitals, schools, courts, child safety and housing services³⁰.

Even though the use of friends and family, particularly children, as interpreters is identified as inappropriate in the LSP, stakeholders raised concerns about it still occurring. Of particular concern is the practice of using children as interpreters. GPs, some community agencies and government agencies such as hospitals, police, schools, child safety and housing services were raised as areas that commonly use friends and family members as interpreters instead of engaging qualified interpreter services. Stakeholders also raised concerns about the use of family members in domestic violence cases including family of the victim or even of the perpetrator.

Use of bilingual / cultural support workers for communication support

Some stakeholders suggested that members of ethnic community groups could be better used as a resource for general communication support. However, other stakeholders advised that they were already providing this kind of support without being paid and that there was an expectation amongst some service providers that they should volunteer their time and language skills.

Some stakeholders advised that they do employ people as bicultural or cultural support workers to provide general communication support. These stakeholders did make a clear distinction between the role of these bicultural/cultural support workers and qualified interpreters. For example, a bicultural worker may assist a client to make an appointment at a doctor's surgery, but do not interpret in the medical consultation (unless it is an emergency).

Regional stakeholders in particular raised the need for individuals from ethnic community groups to be provided support to access training to become an accredited interpreter.

Lack of availability of qualified or appropriate interpreters

A common issue raised by stakeholders was in relation to difficulties accessing interpreters from small language groups, particularly those from new and emerging languages. This may be due to the rate of growth of new and emerging communities, and little or no qualified interpreters in these languages. Increasing demands for interpreters from established migrant groups as the population ages was also raised.

Lack of availability of interpreters is particularly an issue in regional areas. For instance, the regional office of one government department noted that Brisbane-based interpreters do not accept jobs in Logan due to the distance they have to travel (considering travel and travel time are not paid).

One stakeholder pointed to a recent RMIT initiative to train refugees to become interpreters and highlighted a number of difficulties including keeping up with the emergence of new and emerging languages. A potential solution to address this complex issue is through more collaboration between government, tertiary bodies, the language service providers and community services sector.

Good quality interpreters leaving the industry

Feedback from stakeholders identified that increasingly good quality interpreters are leaving the industry while there are a growing number of unaccredited interpreters being contracted by major language service providers. Reasons provided included:

- casualisation of work
- poor remuneration
- poor work conditions.

The interpreter workforce exists within a highly competitive and unregulated market dominated by a few language service providers. Because the market is unregulated, tenders for language services are largely driven by price. Prioritising cost effectiveness tends to result in service providers cutting costs to win government tenders through poor remuneration of and not paying out-of-pocket expenses for interpreters. Quality is also impacted as many service providers use unaccredited interpreters that cost less.

It was suggested that government tenders for interpreter services should include conditions regarding standards such as minimum hourly rates of pay for interpreters. It was noted that as Queensland is moving towards a modern award process, it will become more obvious that interpreters and translators are a group of workers who are disadvantaged as they are 'award free'.

As there is little or no difference in the pay rates for interpreters of different levels of accreditation, there are no incentives for unaccredited interpreters to gain or upgrade their qualification. This reinforces the poor quality in the workforce.

Professional indemnity and public liability insurance amongst interpreters

Anecdotally a lot of interpreters aren't aware of the potential risks in not having their own professional indemnity and public liability insurances, particularly when interpreting in private homes etc. The cost of both professional indemnity and public liability insurance can be prohibitive resulting in many community interpreters choosing to work without this protection. Most language service providers do not provide insurance for contracted interpreters and the need for such is rarely dealt with in training programs.

Lack of training available for interpreters

Stakeholders repeatedly raised the lack of available training for interpreters in Queensland. Current courses only exist at a post-graduate level in Chinese, Japanese and Korean.

While the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) provides workshops to assist with testing for recognition or accreditation in a number of languages, regional stakeholders consistently raised challenges with accessing this training due to distance. NAATI tests are usually only done in Brisbane, making it difficult for people in regional areas to attend. The cost of NAATI testing has also been raised as a prohibitive factor for those wanting to gain credentials.

Stakeholders identified the need for more accreditation pathways for interpreters and some suggestions included interpreter training available at Certificate level courses and forming partnerships with Victorian-based training institutes that currently provide similar courses.

Lack of professional development for interpreters

As most interpreters are independent contractors, there is little or no professional development, apart from informal support from other interpreters. This can result in some interpreters feeling very isolated. Stakeholders also pointed out that there is a sense of reluctance for interpreters to share information as they are competing for the same jobs.

Stakeholders identified that it is important to provide more avenues for interpreters to receive ongoing training and professional development, particularly those working in specialist fields such as health, legal or counselling.

Lack of ongoing support for interpreters

Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of providing opportunities for interpreters to debrief following an interpreting session, particularly if the matter is of a serious, sensitive or traumatic nature. Some stakeholders regularly provide debriefing for the interpreters they engage due to the nature of their work with vulnerable clients. These stakeholders stress the importance of debriefing and support for the interpreters. They pointed out that in some cases the interpreters have come from the same background as the client, and may have had their trauma retriggered through the interpreting session.

It was pointed out, however, that service providers may not be funded or have the capacity to provide preparatory briefings for interpreters to clarify requirements, nor to provide de-briefing sessions or professional supervision. Stakeholders suggested that language service providers should consider exploring how they can provide this support and supervision for the interpreters they contract.

Unreliability of language service providers

While some stakeholders were generally happy with the quality of interpreting services, a number of stakeholders did express concerns about the unreliability and inconsistency of some language service providers. They pointed out that even though an on-site interpreter is booked, sometimes several weeks in advance, it is not uncommon to be notified that the interpreter is no longer available on the day of the appointment.

Other feedback included:

- lack of professionalism of staff and interpreters
- technical and quality issues
- lack of understanding of culture or context of clients
- unwillingness to accommodate the services' or clients' needs or requests for specific interpreters
- providing unqualified/unaccredited interpreters.

Feedback regarding individual service providers or programs was mixed with some stakeholders complaining of cumbersome and lengthy processes, while others spoke highly of services' willingness to respond to feedback and accommodate client needs.

While some staff routinely check the credentials of an interpreter prior to commencing the session, most do not, as they assume that all interpreters provided through the major language service providers are accredited. In reality this is not always the case.

Quality issues of interpreters

The poor professional ethics of some interpreters was raised several times by stakeholders. For instance, some interpreters engage in discussion with the client midway through the interpreting session; provide additional explanation; and summarise instead of interpret. In other instances stakeholders noted that the English language skills of the interpreter was poor.

Varying requirements of police and other checks for interpreters

While there is a perception amongst government and community agencies that police and working with children checks are important for interpreters, there is no consistent requirement by the language service providers to undergo these checks. There is a view that interpreters work directly with agency staff and would generally not be alone with clients, limiting the need for personal checks on the interpreter. NAATI's view is that these checks should be part of the contracting arrangement with the language service provider rather than part of the accreditation process.

Increasing difficulties arranging a specific, suitable interpreter

For some stakeholders requesting a specific interpreter, such as one that had worked with the service or client previously, or with a particular characteristic (e.g. gender, cultural background) is becoming increasingly difficult. This is of particular importance in counselling to develop trust with clients. However, stakeholders noted that some interpreter service providers are increasingly reluctant to accommodate these requests as it is seen as favouring one interpreter over others. In making this point stakeholders highlighted that it is important to ensure that the provision of services, including language services, should be client focused, not interpreter focused.

Lack of use of interpreters in essential services such as allied health, medical specialists and real estate agents.

Stakeholders highlighted that the most notable and consistent gaps in interpreter service provision are in private allied health care such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech therapy, podiatry, optometry, mental health care, psychology, dietetic advice and diabetes education, as well as dental care and private medical specialists. As these services would have to pay for interpreters themselves it was raised that they are rarely made available. It is therefore extremely difficult, sometimes impossible, for clients with difficulty communicating in English to access these essential services. It was also suggested that in some cases family members or friends are used as interpreters.

The Real Estate Agencies' Interpreting Pilot project was raised as a good example. However, access to interpreters is only limited to real estate agencies in refugee settlement areas, not in other areas where there may be high migrant populations.

Use of technology

Stakeholders emphasised the need to have up-to-date equipment that facilitates successful telephone and video conference based interpreting, to meet shortages in interpreting particularly in regional and rural areas.

While some stakeholders suggested and supported more use of other forms of technology (such as smart phone apps), others were concerned that some clients will not engage well with technology, for instance those who do not have access to or are unfamiliar with smart phones and the internet, or who are illiterate.

Stakeholders acknowledged that use of good quality and reliable technology has the potential to address supply-and-demand issues and aid communication where interpreter services are not practicable. However, they cautioned against using technology in place of human interpreters, particularly in settings such as health, counselling or for legal matters.

Uncertainty about interpreter access following implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Stakeholders working with culturally diverse clients with a disability are concerned about whether recipients of funding through the Australian Government's NDIS will still be able to access fee-free interpreter services through state government and state funded agencies. Stakeholders have sought advice from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) but they are also not aware of future arrangements.

Better use of data

While some community agencies collect a range of data in relation to interpreting services, others do not. The community agencies that service a significant proportion of people from culturally diverse backgrounds tend to have their own systems in place to gather a wide range of data on client demographics and language service provision, such as:

- occasions of interpreting service
- non-supply
- unmet demand
- quality of service
- languages used.

Generally community agencies collect more data than what is required by their funding bodies.

While some agencies have been able to request data on usage from the interpreter service provider, others have reported that this is a difficult process.

Limited access to translation services

Community agencies generally don't have the funds to translate resources, unless it's through a separate grant (e.g. Gambling Community Benefit Fund). Only one arrangement with funding bodies for some community agencies appeared to allow access to translation services.

While some community agencies may find the need to translate documents into multiple languages, feedback from stakeholders stressed the importance that these are in simple, layman language. It was also pointed out that translated materials have limited use for some communities as many are illiterate in their language or they are only oral languages.

Some community agencies support their clients to have their documents translated, for education, medical and legal purposes, out of their own budgets. For instance, one agency spent up to \$300 (from emergency funds) to support one client to have her documents translated. This agency is not specifically funded to provide access to translation services. Given the high cost of translation; this agency is only able to support a very limited number of clients to have documents translated.

Lack of a coordinated statewide approach

A number of stakeholders highlight the complexities that exist in relation to language service provision in Queensland, due primarily to the lack of a whole-of-government approach to procuring and coordinating quality language services. It was suggested by a number of stakeholders that consideration should be given to examine the feasibility of a more coordinated and efficient approach to the provision of interpreting services, such as a state based and operated language service provider.

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