

# Language Services Policy

*This policy will enable clients to access services fairly and equitably  
and ensure service delivery is responsive and high quality*

*October 2009*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General delivers a range of services to the Queensland community. These include courts, tribunals, prosecution services and human rights protection services for children and guardianship for adults. The department also provides a range of community services including births, deaths and marriages registration, mediation, justices of the peace administration, penalties enforcement and services that ensure safe, fair and productive work environments.

Our strategic vision is for a just, safe and fair Queensland. We recognise that a significant number of our clients or potential clients are from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and do not speak or read English well enough to communicate with our staff or to understand our processes and services. The policy also applies to clients who are deaf or hearing impaired and communicate through sign language. This Language Service Policy reflects a whole-of-Government commitment to the development of appropriate communication strategies.

This policy will enable clients to access services fairly and equitably and ensure service delivery is responsive and of a high quality.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

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, and
- make maximum use of the cultural and linguistics skills of employees in the development and implementation of this planning.

## 3. AUTHORITY

Queensland Government [Language Services Policy](#).

## 4. DEFINITIONS

A **Translator** deals with written text from one language to another. A translator is needed for documents like Birth Certificates, Affidavits and other written documents.

An **Interpreter** deals with the spoken word and interprets what someone says into another language. An interpreter is needed when you need help in understanding what someone is saying or to help someone else understand what you are saying.

The [Translating and Interpreting Service \(TIS\) National](#) is established under the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and provides a national interpreting service for people who do not speak English and for English speakers who need to communicate with them. TIS National is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for any person or organisation in Australia.

The [Queensland Interpreter Card](#) assists non-English speakers to inform Queensland Government agency staff that they require an interpreter. The card is similar in size and quality to a credit card and identifies the language for which an interpreter is required.

The [Queensland Interpreter Card Kit](#) complements the Queensland Interpreter Card and assists Queensland Government agency staff to distribute and respond to the card and to access professional interpreters. The kit contains the Queensland Interpreter Card and information on its usage, procedural checklists for agency staff and TIS National information.

## 5. GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH AN INTERPRETER

### 5.1 Assessing the need for an interpreter

The department will generally provide an interpreter in situations where a non-English speaking client has difficulty communicating in English or where they produce a Queensland Interpreter Card.

Engaging a qualified interpreter/translator will be crucial in certain circumstances such as the swearing of affidavits and statutory declarations.

An ability to converse in English does not mean that a person can understand what is being said or the language used in the Courts or Justice system. If there is any doubt as to a person's ability to communicate in English, an interpreter/translator should be engaged.

A useful checklist for engaging an interpreter is attached.

**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.**

## 5.2 Using Professional Interpreters

If an interpreter/translator is required, an accredited interpreter/translator should be engaged. They must be accredited through the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd (NAATI).

A professional interpreter can usually be engaged immediately on the telephone through TIS. It is better to organise a face to face interpreter if time permits.

As far as practicable, friends and family members should not be used as professional interpreters.

Children and young relatives are not appropriate interpreters in any context.

Both clients and family members may be embarrassed when family members act as interpreters and communication may be distorted or inadvertently changed. Professional interpreters are trained to maintain confidentiality, impartiality and accuracy as part of their code of ethics.

## 6. ENGAGING AN INTERPRETER

Staff who believe an interpreter is required for a client should first discuss the matter with their manager.

Care should be taken to ensure that the interpreter is appropriately accredited to undertake the work required.

The division or branch engaging the interpreter is responsible for the cost of the interpreter service.

### 6.1 Telephone and on site Interpreters

Telephone and on site interpreting services can be accessed through TIS National. TIS can be contacted on:

Telephone interpreting:	131 450 (24 hours a day 7 days a week)
On site:	On site booking form on the below weblink
Website:	<a href="http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/help_with_translating">www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/help_with_translating</a>

TIS is the Department's preferred supplier. Other accredited interpreting services can be found through Yellow Pages. Please ensure if TIS is not available that the translator/interpreter is accredited through NAATI.

## 6.2 Sign Language

Interpreters in Auslan and other sign languages can be arranged through Deaf Services Queensland on:

Telephone: 1300 123 752

Email: [slc\\_qld@slcommunications.com.au](mailto:slc_qld@slcommunications.com.au)

Website: <http://bookings.deafservicesqld.org.au/index.htm>

## 7. INFORMING CLIENTS OF INTERPRETING SERVICE

To promote the availability of the interpreting services the department will:

- provide links to other languages on the department's internet homepage
- provide [\*Queensland Interpreter Cards\*](#) at key service delivery points
- engage with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

## 8. MULTILINGUAL INFORMATION PLANNING

The department will deliver tailored communication strategies to reach culturally and linguistically diverse communities regarding their rights, the services offered by the department and how to access them.

Client groups including ethnic communities, business associations and peak agencies will be included in decisions about information needs, formats and dissemination strategies.

## 9. FURTHER INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

For further information and assistance regarding this policy please contact the Human Resource and Governance Branch on 3237 1837.