

Queensland Language Services Policy

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Introduction

“The Queensland Language Services Policy reflects the Queensland Government’s commitment to the development of whole-of-government communication strategies that address language barriers.”

A lack of English language proficiency can be a significant barrier to economic participation and access to services. Although it is acknowledged that new arrivals will ultimately be more successful in settling into Australian society and gaining economic independence if they can speak English, the reality is that access to interpreters and translated information will continue to be necessary for those individuals who need assistance to communicate effectively with government services and participate in other aspects of the community.

The Queensland Language Services Policy incorporates migrant and refugee languages, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and Auslan (Australian sign language).

Why are language services important?

In 2011, 423,838 Queenslanders identified that they spoke a language other than English at home. This represents more than 9 per cent of the state’s population.¹ Also, 62,404 Queenslanders (1.4 per cent of the state’s total population) identified that they do not speak English, or do not speak it well.

Language services aim to provide people who have difficulties communicating in English with the same access to effective and efficient services and programs as English-speaking Queenslanders.

¹ Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, Diversity Figures 2011, <http://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/products/reports/diversity-figures/index.php>

Queensland Government Language Services Policy

Policy statement

The Queensland Government recognises that a significant number of people do not speak English well enough, or are not able to communicate adequately with Queensland Government staff and Queensland Government funded non-government organisations.

Clients of the Queensland Government should be provided with fair access to services that are responsive and high quality.

Queensland Government agencies will:

- take a client focus to the delivery of services including clients' specific language needs
- make interpreters available for clients who need assistance to communicate effectively with services and to participate in other aspects of government
- work with qualified interpreters as much as possible and develop a plan to ensure that services can still be delivered in circumstances where a qualified interpreter is not available
- adopt a planned approach to producing and disseminating information about services, policies and activities in forms accessible to Queenslanders who experience language barriers (following consultation with these groups)
- plan for language services, within the specific agencies' context, by incorporating interpreting and multilingual information needs into agency budgeting, human resource and client service program management and delivery
- make maximum use of the cultural and linguistic skills of employees in the planning for and implementation of language services
- incorporate provision for meeting the language services needs of funded non-government organisations.

In all circumstances the needs of the client should be the primary consideration. A non-qualified interpreter is not to be used unless the situation is urgent and/or life threatening and a qualified interpreter is not available.

Policy aim

The policy aims to enhance access to interpreters and translated information to improve access to the full range of government and government-funded services for people requiring language support.

The policy will be delivered through:

- engagement of qualified interpreters in circumstances where people experience difficulties communicating in English
- provision of multilingual information
- training of staff in how to work with interpreters.

Policy implementation

Queensland Government agencies will implement this policy by:

- establishing appropriate measures and systems to improve service responsiveness for people with difficulty communicating in English
- ensuring staff, especially front-line service staff, are aware of and act on the obligation to provide effective, efficient and inclusive services through appropriate use of interpreters for people that are not proficient in English
- acknowledging the entitlement to qualified interpreter services or to linguistically appropriate information by people who experience language barriers
- establishing protocols for engaging qualified interpreters and protocols for when they are not available, including responsibilities of front-line staff
- ensuring that language services are culturally and linguistically acceptable by taking into account gender and ethnicity preferences (including dialect), additional training or experience required (e.g. court interpreting) and the appropriateness of telephone as opposed to on-site interpreting
- developing staff who are trained in cross-cultural skills and how to work with interpreters
- implementing appropriate arrangements for funded non-government organisations to engage interpreter services for service delivery, including ensuring that funded services are aware of how to access this assistance
- ensuring seamless service delivery regardless of agency responsibility for engaging interpreters, through the development of specific protocols and procedures across agencies and/or sharing of appropriate client information such as interpreter need and languages spoken.

Role of Multicultural Affairs Queensland

Multicultural Affairs Queensland (MAQ), within the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, is responsible for coordinating the implementation, monitoring and reporting on the Queensland Language Services Policy.

In this context, MAQ provides advice to Queensland Government agencies on implementation of the Queensland Language Services Policy, accessing interpreter and translation services, and the planning of multilingual strategies.

Language Services Guidelines

To assist agencies to implement the Queensland Language Services Policy effectively, the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services has published the Language Services Guidelines, available at <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/multicultural/policy-and-governance/language-services-policy>.

Reporting and performance monitoring

Queensland Government agencies will monitor and report on the implementation of this policy through the following measures:

| Measure | Data required ² | Data source |
|--|---|---|
| Percentage of Queensland population with limited proficiency in English compared with percentage of Queensland Government clients with limited proficiency in English. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Census data regarding percentage of Queensland population that do not speak English well or at all.Number of clients that require language support for the year. | ABS Queensland Government agencies |
| Use of interpreters across the Queensland Government. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Amount spent annually on interpreters engaged by agencies.Number of occasions interpreters are engaged annually by the agency. | Queensland Government agencies |

Agencies will also document reasons for any variations or fluctuations in the above.

Queensland Government agencies are required to provide information relating to the performance measures (as indicated above) through their annual reporting process.

Reporting is only required if interpreters and/or translators have been engaged by an agency.

Agencies requiring further information

Please refer to the Language Services Guidelines online or contact Multicultural Affairs Queensland. Phone: **13 QGOV** (13 74 68)

Visit: <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/multicultural>.

² All data collected by the Queensland Government must comply with the *Information Privacy Act 2009*, Information Privacy Principles 1-3, Collection of Personal Information.

Complaints

If a client is denied access to an interpreter to access a service provided by a Queensland Government agency or a funded service they may make a complaint in the first instance to the Queensland Government agency or organisation providing the service.

If the situation is unable to be resolved, clients may wish to contact:

For complaints relating to unlawful discrimination:

Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland

Offices are located in Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns

Phone: 1300 130 670 (statewide) 1300 130 680 (TTY)

Email: enquiries@adcq.qld.gov.au

Web: www.adcq.qld.gov.au

For any other complaint regarding denial of services:

Queensland Ombudsman

Level 17, 53 Albert Street, Brisbane QLD 4000

Phone: 07 3005 7000 or 1800 068 908

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au

Web: www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au

Definitions

Language services

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

Language services include:

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

Interpreter

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

In this policy, qualified interpreters are:

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

Translator

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

Bilingual/multilingual staff

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

Multilingual information management

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

Queensland Interpreter Card

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

Interpreter Card for staff

Complements the Queensland Interpreter Card and assists Queensland Government agency staff to respond to a request for an interpreter. Multicultural Affairs Queensland distributes this card.

National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI)

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

Accreditation

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

Recognition

Where there is low community demand for a language and no accreditation available, NAATI provides a recognition credential.³

Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT)

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

The Australian Sign Language Interpreter Association (ASLIA)

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

Agencies

In this policy, agencies refers to:

- all Queensland Government departments*, and
- government organisations that were covered by the preceding Language Services Policy**.

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

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

³ NAATI provides 12 months for Recognised Interpreters to obtain accreditation after a test is introduced for a language.

Contact

Multicultural Affairs Queensland

Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

Postal address:

PO Box 15397, City East Qld 4002

Phone: 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

Fax: (07) 3224 5691

Email: MAQ@communities.qld.gov.au

Facebook: www.facebook.com/multiculturalqld

Twitter: [@multiculturalQ](https://twitter.com/multiculturalQ)

Web: <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/multicultural/multicultural-affairs-queensland>



Do you need an interpreter?

If you need an interpreter to assist you in understanding this document, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on **131 450** and request to be transferred to Multicultural Affairs Queensland on **13 QGOV** (13 74 68).

