



Language Services Policy



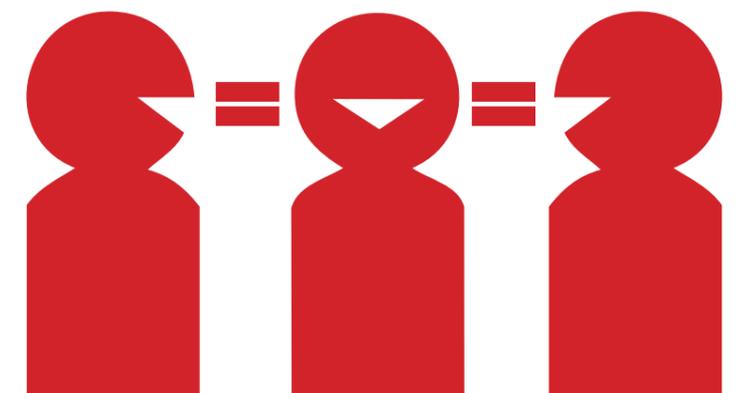


Acknowledgements

This policy has been developed through the valuable input of Department of Regional Development and Indigenous Advancement staff, assistance from other agencies and organisations and acknowledges references to related policies of other jurisdictions, including:

- Office of Multicultural Affairs (Northern Territory Government)
- Department of the Attorney General and Justice (Northern Territory Government)
- Department of Justice (Victorian Government)
- Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission
- Office of Children and Families (Northern Territory Government)
- Deafness Association of the Northern Territory Inc.
- Australian Hearing
- Translating and Interpreting Service, Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Australian Government)
- Multicultural Affairs Queensland (Queensland Government)
- Office of Multicultural Interests (Western Australia Government)
- Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship (Victorian Government)
- South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission

National Interpreter symbol:





The Language Services Policy outlines how and where language services can be accessed, why it is important to use these services and how they should be used.

Policy Statement

The Northern Territory Government (NTG) acknowledges that there are a significant number of people whose level of English acts as a barrier to accessing government services.

The Language Services Policy recognises the importance of providing culturally and linguistically sound services to overcome these obstacles. The development of the Language Services Policy will assist all NTG agencies in developing procedures and practices that ensure all of their clients, irrespective of their language background, are able to access services in a fair and equitable manner.

The Language Services Policy outlines how and where language services can be accessed, why it is important to use these services and how they should be used.

Objectives

The Language Services Policy aims to:

- Identify and provide services that will ensure all Territorians, irrespective of their language background, receive equitable access to NTG programs, services and information.
- Support NTG agencies to develop procedures and practices to ensure that speakers of languages other than English are not disadvantaged when accessing Government services.
- Develop and promote a unified NTG agency approach to language services ensuring all NTG clients have access to fair and equitable services.
- Enhance NTG agency use of interpreter and translation services to maximise service provision.

Policy Implementation

Each agency is to adopt a systematic approach to language services when delivering services to clients with a first language other than English.

All agencies will:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the agency's Language Services Policy and recognise that effective communication is integral to the delivery of all agency services.
- Acknowledge clients' entitlements/rights to the services of an appropriately qualified interpreter or translator and be aware of the situations in which an interpreter should be used.
- Commit to the appropriate use of qualified interpreters and translators in the delivery of all services for people who speak a language other than English.
- Be aware as to when interpreters must be used, taking into account the agency's obligations to their clients, the legislative requirements and risks that could impact clients' health, safety and/or human rights if an interpreter is not utilised.
- Ensure where necessary that agency documents are translated into languages appropriate to client groups' needs and promote the presence of the national interpreter symbol as well as available language services in all areas accessed by the general public.
- Attempt to recruit more staff with cultural and linguistic skills matching those of their clients and promote the use of the Community Language Allowance to bilingual or multilingual staff.
- Provide staff with guidelines to assist them in determining the appropriate language service for clients, ensuring that all staff are aware of how to access and use interpreters and translators.
- Provide all staff with appropriate training in cross cultural communication, deafness awareness and how to work with interpreters.
- Collect necessary data to guide an agency's language services. Data collection will include languages spoken, ethnicity, country of birth, English proficiency, and need for interpreter. The agency will ensure that the data collected is readily available to all staff.
- Acknowledge that the use of language services by staff is a justifiable and necessary expense – each agency has an obligation to plan and budget for interpreting services to ensure that these services will be available when the need arises. Staff and divisions will incorporate language services strategies into their budget, their human resource programs, and organisational planning.

Each agency is to adopt a systematic approach to language services when delivering services to clients with a first language other than English.

Legislative and Documentary Basis

'The provision of all NTG agency programs and services must comply with relevant and applicable legislation.

This includes, but is not limited to, the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth), the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth), the *Anti Discrimination Act (NT)* and the *Health and Community Services Complaints Act (NT)*.

These Acts require that:

- All agency programs and funded services provide equitable access to services to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including people with disabilities.
- Agencies must not directly or indirectly discriminate against people on the basis of their language ability.

The Language Services Policy recognises the principles and objectives of the government's multicultural policies and other plans and guidelines that help facilitate this.

The following guidelines have also been developed to compliment this plan and it is recommended that NTG language service users refer to these guidelines for more information:

- 'A Guide to Working with Interpreters and Translators', published by the Interpreting and Translating Service NT (ITSNT).
> Visit www.nt.gov.au/itsnt to download.
- 'Working with Interpreters', published by the Aboriginal Interpreter Services (AIS).
> Visit www.nt.gov.au/ais to download.



Definitions



The **Aboriginal Interpreter Service (AIS)** is the main provider of interpreting services in Indigenous languages of the Northern Territory. The AIS is funded by a Northern Territory Government funded service.

The **Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT)** is the National Association for the translating and interpreting profession.

The term **Auslan** means Australian Sign Language. Auslan is a true linguistic system with grammatical rules.

Community Language Allowance (CLA) - Northern Territory Government employees who use bilingual communication skills under the direction of their Chief Executive are entitled to a CLA. Human Resources units of NTG agencies can provide further information.

Deafness is a medical term described as significant hearing loss.

The word **Indigenous** refers to people of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.

An **interpreter** is a person who transfers messages verbally from one language to another.

Interpreting and Translating Service NT (ITSNT) is a Northern Territory Government service providing translating and interpreting services in foreign languages.

LOTE stands for language(s) other than English.

National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) sets and monitors the standards of Translating and Interpreting in Australia by accrediting translators and interpreters at a number of levels of competence. NAATI also provides an online directory of accredited and recognised interpreters and translators.

NABS stands for National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment Service, a service provider which provides interpreters anywhere in Australia for deaf people who use sign language.

National Relay Service (NRS) is an Australia wide telephone access service. People who are deaf or hearing impaired can access anyone in the wider telephone network through NRS, and vice versa. Conversations between two parties can be relayed from text to voice, or voice to text.

The **NT Interpreter Card** is issued to people who require the services of an interpreter. The card identifies the specific language the person speaks and provides contact details for ITSNT.

A **qualified interpreter** is a person accredited by NAATI.

Definitions...(continued)

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) is a national service provided by the Australian Government for people who do not speak English and for the English speakers who need to communicate with them. TIS National is available 24/7 for any person or organisation in Australia requiring interpreting services.

A **translator** is a person who transfers written material from one language to another.

AIS, ITSNT, NABS, NRS and TIS are Territory, State and Australian government funded language service providers.

The term **language services** used in this document refers to the following mediums for communicating with people who do not speak English as a first language and for people whose first language is Auslan:

- Provision of accredited interpreters and/or translators.
- Presentation of information in first languages through the production of translated material.
- Employment of bi-lingual staff who have the ability to communicate in the client's language.
- Training of staff to provide services to clients who speak a language other than English.

Government Language Services are necessary to cover a broad range of cultural and linguistic communication situations.



For more information or to book language services:

Interpreting and Translating Service NT (ITSNT)

Phone 1800 676 254 or (08) 8999 8506
Fax (08) 8999 8475
E-mail itsnt@nt.gov.au
Address Ground Floor, Pella House,
40 Cavenagh Street
GPO Box 4621, Darwin NT
www.nt.gov.au/itsnt

Aboriginal Interpreter Service (AIS)

Phone (08) 8999 8353
Fax (08) 8999 8855
Email ais@nt.gov.au
Address Ground Floor, Pella House,
40 Cavenagh Street
GPO Box 4450, Darwin NT 0801
www.nt.gov.au/ais

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National

Telephone interpreter service:
Phone 131 450 (24hrs/7days)

On-site interpreter enquiries:
Phone 1300 655 082 (business hours)

On-site interpreter bookings:
Fax 1300 654 151
Email tis@immi.gov.au

Doctor's priority line:
Phone 131 450

Client liaison and promotions:
Phone 1300 655 820
Email tispromo@immi.gov.au

Document Translation Enquiries:
Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)
Charles Darwin University
Phone 1800 019 119 or (08) 8946 7518

National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment Service (NABS)

Phone: 1800 246 945
Fax: 1800 246 914
TTY: 1800 246 948
Email: bookings@nabs.org.au
SMS: 0427 671 261
Mail: 930 Gympie Road
Chermside QLD 4032
www.nabs.org.au

National Relay Service (NRS)

Phone: 1800 555 660
TTY: 1800 555 630
Fax: 1800 555 690
Email: helpdesk@relayservice.com.au
SMS: 0416 001 350
Mail: 21A Elliott Street
Balmain NSW 2041
www.relayservice.com.au

Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT)

Phone: 1800 284 181 or (03) 9895 4473
Email: admin@ausit.org
Mail: PO Box 193
Surrey Hills VIC 3127
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