

# VOMIA

## Victorian Government Standards for Data Collection on Interpreting and Translating Services



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It is Victorian Government policy that people not able to communicate through written or spoken English should have access to professional interpreting and translating services:

- when required to make significant decisions concerning their lives; or
- where essential information needs to be communicated to inform decision making.

2001 ABS Census data shows that 21% of the Victorian population, or 909,847 people, use a language other than English at home. Of these 177,460 do not speak English well or at all and may require the assistance of an interpreter or translated information when interacting with government departments and agencies.

The Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs has developed the *Standards for Data Collection on Interpreting and Translating Services* to assist government departments, program areas and funded agencies that regularly use interpreting and translating services to:

- improve their own understanding of the needs of their client group; and
- monitor the accessibility of the services they provide to people who use other languages.

The Standards cover four areas:

- client demographics
- expenditure on interpreting and translating
- in-house staff
- service provided by language services providers

Questions and classifications have been developed specifically for their relevance to interpreting and translating services. If you are interested in collecting data on the broader topic of cultural and linguistic diversity refer to the Australian Bureau of Statistics *1999 Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity*, Cat No. 1289.0, ABS, Canberra.

The *Standards for Data Collection on Interpreting and Translating Services* have been developed to:

- introduce accurate measurement of demand, supply and expenditure;
- enable the compatibility and comparability of data across Government and over time;
- facilitate the setting of standards and targets for service provision; and
- be consistent with the Whole of Government Reporting on Responsiveness to Cultural Diversity, Women, Youth and Indigenous Affairs.

These Standards will facilitate a better understanding by departments, program areas and agencies of the needs of their clients and the effectiveness of their current response.

# Implementing Victorian Government Standards for Data Collection on Interpreting and Translating Services

## Stage 1: Audit Existing Data Collection Practices

Identify where information is already being collected and what is missing. Many agencies already collect data on cultural diversity and in some cases little or no change will be needed.

## Stage 2: Understand Privacy Principles

The collection of sensitive information about people – such as ethnic background - has special protection under the *Information Privacy Act 2000*. Generally, consent should be sought from the client explaining why the data is collected and the implications if they do not provide the information. Information should be kept accurate, complete, up-to-date and secure. For more information visit Privacy Victoria at [www.privacy.vic.gov.au](http://www.privacy.vic.gov.au).

## Stage 3: Identify Opportunities to Implement Changes to Data Collection

Opportunities to implement changes to data collection include IT system changes, funding program changes, re-tendering of services, redesign of client information forms and program reviews. Funding bodies can also incorporate the Standards into service charters or funding agreements.

### **Area 1: Client Demographics**

Amendments may be required to printed forms or data systems used to collect and store client information. Training may also be required for client services staff to ensure they identify clients who need interpreters and accurately record the preferred language.

### **Area 2: Expenditure**

This information should be available from either internal financial systems or from language services providers. Having separate cost centres for interpreting and translating services will facilitate the easy collection of this information.

### **Area 3: In-house Staff**

Information about in-house interpreters and bilingual staff may be available from your human resource area or may require a separate audit of staff.

### **Area 4: Language Services Providers (Optional)**

Language services providers can be asked to generate reports for regular clients on interpreting and translating services, providing details of the accreditation of practitioners used, the number of assignments, complaints and unmet requests for assistance. If your organisation is regularly using interpreting and translating services you should arrange to receive these reports. You should discuss your exact requirements with your language services provider.

Depending on the volume of service you receive, you may want to receive reports monthly, quarterly or annually. Detailed, regular reports on the provision of interpreting and translating services enable agencies to analyse the extent to which demand is met by supply. (This section does not apply if your agency has low and irregular usage of translating and interpreting services.)

## **Stage 4: Develop Timeline and Implement Standards**

Once existing data collection practices have been audited and opportunities to implement changes to data collection have been identified, agencies should develop a timeline and milestones for implementation. For large organisations, rollout may be staged. Staff training and liaison with language services providers may also be needed. While the implementation will require time and resources, it will improve the quality of information and assist in a better understanding of the delivery of interpreting and translating services.

## Area 1: Client Demographics

| TOPIC  | RATIONALE   | QUESTION  | CODING  |
|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Main language other than English spoken at home</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chosen for its strength as a measure of language use</li> <li>Consistent with the ABS Census, allowing for comparability of language data</li> <li>Provides a good indicator of the language with which a person will be most at ease</li> </ul> | Do you/does the person speak a language other than English at home? (If more than one language, indicate the one that is spoken most often) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No, English only</li> <li>Yes, please specify...</li> </ul> Or <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No, English only</li> <li>Yes, Italian</li> <li>Yes, Greek</li> <li>Yes, Vietnamese</li> <li>Yes, Cantonese</li> <li>Yes, Arabic</li> <li>Yes, Mandarin</li> <li>Yes, Macedonian</li> <li>Yes, Turkish</li> <li>Yes, Croatian</li> <li>Yes, Spanish</li> <li>Yes, other – please specify...</li> </ul> |
| <b>Need for an interpreter</b>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chosen for its strength as a measure of interpreter need</li> <li>Easy to categorise</li> </ul>  | Do you/does the person need the assistance of an interpreter?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes, please specify language ...</li> <li>No, speaks English</li> </ul>  |

## Area 2: Expenditure

| TOPIC              | RATIONALE  | QUESTION   | CODING   |
|--------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Expenditure</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Indicates expenditure on interpreting and translating services from all sources of funding</li><li>• Allows comparison over time or between services</li><li>• Enables identification of economies of scale in the purchasing of interpreting and translating services</li><li>• May be identifiable through organisational accounts systems, if interpreting and translating expenditure are separately coded</li></ul> | What was expenditure on interpreting and translating in the last financial year? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Expenditure on interpreting in financial year</li><li>– Expenditure on translating in financial year</li></ul> And <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Total expenditure on Interpreting and Translating in financial year</li></ul> |

## Area 3: In-house Staff

| TOPIC                        | RATIONALE   | QUESTION   | CODING  |
|------------------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>In-house interpreters</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-house interpreters are one way in which agencies respond to the needs of people who use another language</li> <li>In-house interpreters are people who are employed as interpreters. They are <b>not</b> people employed in a client services role who also use their language skills</li> </ul>  | <p>How many in-house interpreters are employed in the agency?</p> <p>What numbers of in-house interpreters hold the following interpreting qualifications and in what languages? (If more than one qualification, list each qualification separately)</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total number of in-house interpreters (EFT)</li> <li>NAATI Paraprofessional Accreditation</li> <li>NAATI Professional Accreditation</li> <li>No qualification</li> <li>Other, Please Specify...</li> <li>List languages cross tabulated by level of qualification</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Bilingual staff</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bilingual staff are people primarily employed in a client services role who also use their language skills in their daily work</li> <li>Bilingual staff are one way in which organisations can meet the needs of clients who use another language</li> <li>For government departments information on bilingual staff receiving the Victorian Public Service Language Allowance will be available from human resources areas</li> <li>Bilingual staff are <b>not</b> people employed full time as interpreters</li> </ul> | <p>How many bilingual staff who use their language skills in their daily work are employed in the agency?</p> <p>What numbers of bilingual staff hold the following interpreting qualifications? (If more than one qualification, list each qualification separately)</p> <p>What numbers of bilingual staff use the following languages? (If more than one language, list each language separately)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total number of in-house bilingual staff (EFT)</li> <li>NAATI Language Aide Qualification</li> <li>NAATI Paraprofessional Accreditation</li> <li>NAATI Professional Accreditation</li> <li>No qualification</li> <li>Other, Please Specify...</li> <li>List languages cross tabulated by level of qualification</li> </ul> |

## Area 4: Services provided by Language Services Providers (OPTIONAL)

| TOPIC  | RATIONALE   | QUESTION   | CODING  |
|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Number of occasions of service – interpreting</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An “occasion” of service is a single interview or meeting that is attended by an interpreter. A single two hour block-booking with an interpreter may involve four or more “occasions” of service with different clients</li> <li>Language services providers may also be able to report on number of assignments or hours of service</li> <li>Indicates demand from different languages and when compared with client demographics can provide a broad indication of whether demand is being met</li> <li>Enables agencies to identify whether suitably accredited interpreters are being provided</li> </ul> | How many occasions of interpreting service were provided in time period? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total number</li> <li>Number of telephone/ on-site/other</li> </ul> And <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of occasions of service by language and NAATI accreditation level of interpreters</li> </ul> |
| <b>Number of translations</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Translations are generally measured by their length in English</li> <li>Translations can be compared to the client demographic of your clients to ensure that information is being translated as needed</li> </ul>   | How many translations were performed in the time period?                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of translations</li> <li>Languages of translations</li> </ul> And <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NAATI accreditation level of translators</li> </ul>  |

| TOPIC                              | RATIONALE  | QUESTION  | CODING   |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| <b>Number of unmet assignments</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unmet assignments may indicate problems with the booking process or problems with the supply of interpreters and translators</li> </ul>   | <p>What number of requests for assistance could not be met during the time period?</p> <p>Why were requests for assistance unable to be met (if more than one reason, list main reason)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total number</li> <li>Number of interpreting assignments by language</li> </ul> <p>And</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of translating assignments by language</li> <li>Insufficient notice given to language services provider</li> <li>Insufficient number of accredited practitioners in that language</li> <li>Request for practitioner of specific gender could not be satisfied</li> <li>Other, please specify...</li> </ul> |
| <b>Cancellations</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cancelled assignments may indicate a problem with the booking process</li> <li>Often cancellations by the agency will still be charged, particularly if made at short notice</li> </ul> | <p>How many assignments were cancelled during the time period?</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total number</li> <li>Number cancelled by the language services provider cross-tabulated by reason</li> </ul> <p>And</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number cancelled by the agency and reason</li> </ul>  |

| TOPIC             | RATIONALE  | QUESTION  | CODING  |
|-------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>Complaints</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides an indication of problems between your agency and the language services provider</li> <li>Complaints may be administrative (e.g. lost bookings) or related to the service (e.g. translations not accurate)</li> <li>In some instances, complaints may indicate that additional training of your staff is needed (e.g. staff expecting interpreters to perform other function) or changes need to be made to administrative arrangements (e.g. incorrect invoicing procedures)</li> <li>Details of complaints may only be available on an annual basis</li> </ul> | <p>How many complaints were received by the language services provider during the time period?</p> <p>What was the nature of the complaint received?</p> <p>How were complaints resolved?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total number of complaints</li> <li>Failure to provide practitioner</li> <li>Lost interpreter booking/translation</li> <li>Lost/incorrect invoice</li> <li>Poor service provided by practitioner</li> <li>Other, please specify</li> </ul> |