

NSW Government Language Services Guidelines



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and Funded Organisations

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FOREWORD

New South Wales is an incredibly diverse multicultural society. You can see and hear our diversity through the many cultures and languages that thrive throughout the state. Each and every one of these languages and cultures helps make NSW the great place it is today.

The 2021 Census data shows that our diversity is continuing to grow. More and more people are wanting to live in our state to seek a brighter future for themselves and their families. As they come to our state looking to enrich their lives, so too do they enrich our state. They add to our diversity and help make us stronger.

We know that for some people that come to NSW, English is not their first language. In fact, according to the Census, over 30 per cent of people living here speak a language other than English at home—a more familiar language in which they can communicate and express themselves. As such, it's crucial that language isn't a barrier for people to access government services.

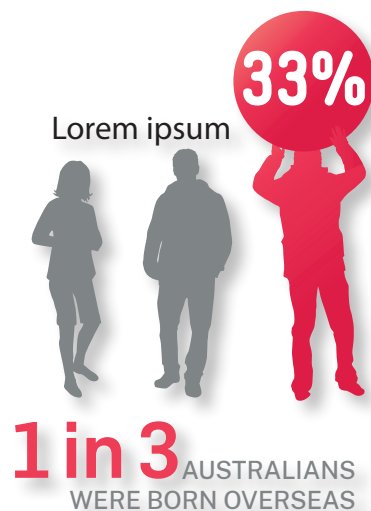
Translators and interpreters possess an important skill set that is used for the benefit of our diverse communities. I am proud to say the NSW Government has the strongest translating and interpreting cohort in the country. Each and every one of these language-services professionals diligently serve the people of NSW, breaking down barriers to access and opportunity.

My agency, Multicultural NSW, is the lead agency for implementing the policy and legislative framework to support cultural diversity and multiculturalism in NSW. It supports and engages with communities of all backgrounds to meet their unique needs.

This new edition of the Multicultural NSW Language Services Guidelines will help frontline workers, decision makers and government agencies use language services more effectively. By delivering world-class languages services, we are able to ensure that every person can have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in society.



The Hon Mark Coure MP
Minister for Multiculturalism
and Minister for Seniors



INTRODUCTION

THE NSW GOVERNMENT LANGUAGE SERVICES GUIDELINES

This document is designed to provide NSW Government agencies and funded organisations with clear guidance on how and when language services should be used in the provision of services. While the Guidelines provide an overarching framework for using language services, individual departments and funded agencies are also encouraged to develop language service policies relevant to their own operations.

The NSW Government Multicultural Principles, as outlined in the *Multicultural NSW Act 2000*, require that all individuals in New South Wales should have the greatest possible opportunity to:

make use of, and participate in, relevant activities and programs provided or administered by the Government of New South Wales.

The provision of language services makes services provided by NSW Government agencies and funded organisations more accessible to people who have limited English or prefer to communicate in a language other than English. This is in accordance with the Multicultural Principles.

WHAT ARE LANGUAGE SERVICES?

‘Language services’ are those services that are used by NSW Government agencies to assist in communication with people who have limited spoken and/or written English language skills, or who prefer to communicate in a language other than English. Language services also assist in communication with the deaf community in NSW. Language services include both translation and interpreting services, including the provision of Auslan (Australian sign language) interpreting.

WHAT ARE LANGUAGE SERVICES PROVIDERS?

Language service providers manage the provision of interpreting and translating services by certified interpreters and translators to organisations and individuals.

WHAT IS AN INTERPRETER?

A qualified interpreter is a certified professional who facilitates communication for parties conversing in different languages. Interpreters convert spoken words or sign language (Auslan) in one language accurately into another language.

There are a number of ways interpreting services can be delivered, including face to face, by telephone, or via videoconferencing.

THE PROVISION OF LANGUAGE SERVICES MAKES SERVICES PROVIDED BY NSW GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND FUNDED ORGANISATIONS MORE ACCESSIBLE TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE LIMITED ENGLISH OR PREFER TO COMMUNICATE IN A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH.

MODES OF INTERPRETING

There are three modes of interpreting: consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting and sight translation.

Consecutive interpreting is most common type of interpreting where the interpreter listens to larger segments, taking notes while listening, and then interprets while the speaker pauses.

Simultaneous interpreting is the technique of interpreting into the target language while listening to the source language i.e. speaking while listening to the ongoing statement. (In settings such as conference, business negotiations and court cases, whispered simultaneous interpreting is practised to keep one party informed of the proceedings).

Sight translation involves transferring the meaning of the written text by oral delivery (reading in one language, relaying message orally in another language). An Interpreter may be asked to provide sight translation of short documents.

WHAT IS A TRANSLATOR?

A qualified translator is a certified professional who converts written information in one language accurately into another language.

For the deaf community, translators may also convert written information in one language into a recorded film in sign language or vice versa.

Translation services should not be used in place of interpreter services, but may be used to support these services.

a certain standard. Compliance of NAATI certified interpreters and translators with professional codes of conduct requires them to be impartial at all times. This gives NSW Government agencies and funded organisations a level of certainty regarding the information that they are provided through interpreting and translation.

On occasion, however, lower level NAATI certified interpreters and translators may be the only practitioners available. This may be the case for less common languages or where higher certification is not available. Table 1 below and Table 2 below outline the current NAATI interpreter and translator certification levels. (Tables 3 and 4 detail the accreditation system which operated prior to January 2018.)

CERTIFICATION

The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) provides assessment services and issues professional credentials for translators and interpreters in Australia. NAATI certifies interpreters and translators at various levels of competency.

The current NAATI certification framework is detailed in Tables 1 and 2 below.

NSW Government agencies and funded organisations should employ language services provided by interpreters and translators who are certified at the highest possible level available through NAATI.

Using a certified NAATI interpreter or translator means that the skills and quality of the service meets



Table 1. NAATI Interpreter Certification

Certified Conference Interpreter	<p>Certified interpreters include Certified Provisional Interpreter, Certified Interpreter, Certified Specialist Interpreter (available for Health and Legal) and Certified Conference Interpreter. These certifications are typically available between English and a LOTE (Language Other Than English) for which NAATI assesses all significant competencies directly and objectively.</p> <p>Commensurate with the level of certification, interpreters work in certain typical domains, situations and interpreting modes.</p>
Certified Specialist Interpreter – Health or Legal	
Certified Interpreter	
Certified Provisional Interpreter	
Recognised Practising Interpreter	<p>Recognised Practising is available between English and a LOTE for which NAATI currently does not offer certification testing, e.g. for emerging or low demand languages. NAATI directly assesses Language Competency (English or Auslan), Intercultural Competency and Ethical Competency, but is only able to indirectly confirm other competencies through evidence of work experience.</p> <p>In the absence of interpreters with certification for a language, Recognised Practising Interpreters may be asked to interpret in the same domains, situations and interpreting modes as certified interpreters.</p>

Table 2. NAATI Translator Certification

Certified Advanced Translator	Certified Translators includes Certified Translators and Certified Advanced Translators. These certifications are typically available between English and a LOTE (Language Other Than English) for which NAATI assesses all significant competencies.
Certified Translator	
Recognised Practising Translator	<p>Recognised Practising is available between English and a LOTE for which NAATI currently does not offer certification testing, e.g. for emerging or low demand languages.</p> <p>NAATI directly assesses Language Competency (English), Intercultural Competency and Ethical Competency, but is only able to indirectly confirm other competencies through evidence of work experience.</p> <p>In the absence of translators with certification for a language, Recognised Practising Translators may be asked to translate documents from the same domains and of the same types as certified translators.</p>

From 1 January 2018, NAATI transitioned from an accreditation to certification model. Certification is an acknowledgement that an individual has demonstrated the ability to meet the professional standards required by the translation and interpreting industry in Australia.

Certification supersedes the NAATI accreditation system, which has been in place for the last 40 years. After 1 January 2018, NSW Government agencies and funded organisations should give preference to employing language services provided by NAATI certified interpreters and translators wherever possible. However interpreters and translators that have not transitioned to the new certification system can still be engaged into the future.

NAATI will continue to assess translation and interpreting professionals against these standards so that English speaking and non-English speaking Australians can interact effectively with each other, particularly when accessing medical, legal, government and other services.

NSW GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND FUNDED ORGANISATIONS SHOULD GIVE PRIORITY TO EMPLOYING LANGUAGE SERVICES PROVIDED BY NAATI CERTIFIED INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

Interpreters and translators must comply with the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) *Code of Ethics* to maintain their accreditations. Similarly, Australian Sign Language (Auslan) interpreters are required to act in accordance with the Australian Sign Language Interpreters' Association (ASLIA) *Code of Ethics*.

Table 3. NAATI Interpreter Accreditation (prior to January 2018)

Professional Interpreter	This represents the minimum level of competence for professional interpreting and is the minimum level recommended by NAATI for work in most professional settings including law, health, social and community services. Professional interpreters are capable of interpreting across a wide range of semi-specialised situations and are capable of using the consecutive mode to interpret speeches or presentations.
Paraprofessional Interpreter	This represents a level of competence in interpreting for the purpose of general conversations. Paraprofessional interpreters generally undertake the interpretation of non-specialist dialogues.
Interpreter Recognition	This credential is an acknowledgment that at the time of the award the applicant has had recent and regular work experience as an interpreter, but no level of proficiency is specified. In order to be granted NAATI recognition, the applicant must provide proof of English proficiency and complete an introductory NAATI workshop or related activity. There is no NAATI testing of a recognition applicant.

Table 4. NAATI Translator Accreditation (prior to January 2018)

Advanced Translator	This represents the level of competence required to handle complex, technical and sophisticated translations in line with recognised international practice. Advanced translators operate in diverse situations and may choose to specialise in a particular area(s) –including translating technical manuals, research papers, conferences, high-level negotiations and court proceedings.
Professional Translator	This represents the minimum level of competence for professional translating and is the minimum level recommended by NAATI for work in settings including banking, law, health, social and community services. Translators at this level work across a wide range of subjects involving documents with specialised content.
Paraprofessional Translator	This represents a level of competence enabling the production of a translation of nonspecialised information (e.g. a birth certificate).
Translator Recognition	This credential is an acknowledgment that at the time of the award the applicant has had recent and regular work experience as a translator, but no level of proficiency is specified. In order to be granted NAATI recognition, the applicant must provide proof of English proficiency and complete an introductory NAATI workshop or related activity. There is no NAATI testing of a recognition applicant. Recognised translators are encouraged to obtain accreditation as it becomes available.

ROLE OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Family members and friends should not be used as interpreters. Using a family member or friend cannot guarantee the accuracy and impartiality of the interpreting.

In particular, it is never appropriate to use children or young relatives as interpreters, as some situations may lead to trauma and have an ongoing emotional and psychological impact on the child or young person.

A client may feel more comfortable if a bilingual family member, friend or worker is present during interpreting, along with a qualified interpreter.

FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS SHOULD NOT BE USED AS INTERPRETERS.

Where possible, NSW Government agencies and funded organisations should facilitate this if the client expresses this wish, however it is important that this direction has clearly come from the client themselves.

PLANNING

REPORTING AND DATA COLLECTION

NSW Government agencies and funded organisations should undertake regular and embedded client and service usage data collection to help inform and support planning for the use of language services. This data helps shape the profile of language needs amongst client groups.

Relevant data that may assist includes:

- Client information including country of birth, first language spoken, English proficiency (when established), language for which an interpreter is required
- Volume and frequency of requests for interpreters and translators
- Preferred or most appropriate modes of interpreting to suit client group needs
- Feedback from clients on satisfaction on availability of language services and quality of services provided.

Client demographic data is particularly valuable and can be accessed from a variety of sources that identify languages spoken at home.

It is important to remember that information on country of birth is not necessarily indicative of preferred language or English language proficiency.

- The Multicultural NSW Community Profiles tool allows users to access detailed demographic information, including key indicators such as language spoken at home. The tool can break down information to the level of Local Government Area and Electoral Division. It is available at multicultural.nsw.gov.au/community-profiles
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) website abs.gov.au provides a significant range of data sets that may be utilised to analyse demographics for populations or geographic areas
- The most recent information on migrants available from the Commonwealth Government may be found at data.gov.au/dataset/ds-dga-8d1b90a9-a4d7-4b10-ad6a-8273722c8628/details. Information provided includes place of settlement, country of birth, languages spoken, English proficiency, religion and year of arrival.

Reporting use of language services under the *Multicultural Policies and Services Program* (MPSP).

Section 3 (4) and (5) of the *Multicultural NSW Act 2000* states that each public authority must observe multicultural principles in conducting its affairs, and that it is the duty of the Chief Executive Officer of each public authority to implement the provisions of this section within the areas of his or her administration.

NSW Government agencies should report, in their multicultural plans, on the mechanisms they have in place for collecting data on the use of language services by the agency.

NSW GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND FUNDED ORGANISATIONS SHOULD INCORPORATE THE NSW GOVERNMENT LANGUAGE SERVICES GUIDELINES INTO THEIR CORE ORGANISATIONAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES.

Designated agencies that report within the Multicultural NSW *Multicultural Policies and Services Program* (MPSP) should also incorporate language services data in their MPSP plans and reports.



EMBEDDING THE GUIDELINES IN ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICES

In order to support the provision of inclusive services that enable equitable access, NSW Government agencies and funded organisations should incorporate the *NSW Government Language Services Guidelines* into their core organisational policies and practices. Agencies and organisations should take the following steps so that this is achieved:

- Incorporating the planning and provision of language services and multilingual information projects into core business and budgetary planning
- Collating and utilising data on languages spoken by clients to develop responsive customer services
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of what is and is not appropriate within contexts where communication is in a language other than English
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of the existence of language services, and are trained in how to engage with interpreting and translation accredited professionals
- Supporting eligible staff to obtain NAATI certification should they wish to do so.

Under the *Multicultural NSW Act 2000*, all NSW public agencies are expected to show how they are planning for and supporting access for people of culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds, including the use of language services.

Agencies are also expected to report on their progress in this area through the *Multicultural Policies and Services Program* (MPSP). Language Services is one of the current reporting themes.

TRAINING STAFF IN WORKING WITH INTERPRETERS

All NSW Government agencies and funded organisations that deliver services or provide information to members of the public are responsible for ensuring that staff at all levels are trained and supported to work effectively with interpreters. Working with interpreters requires specific skills, and staff need to be provided with adequate training and supporting tools (such as guidelines and fact sheets) to understand how to work with interpreters in the workplace.

Additionally, it is strongly advised that all NSW Government agencies and funded organisations should ensure that staff are skilled in working effectively with clients from culturally diverse backgrounds and can provide service in inclusive and culturally appropriate ways. This is sometimes referred to as cultural competency training.

There are a number of training programs available that may be appropriate to the needs of NSW Government agencies and funded organisations. Further information may be obtained from Multicultural NSW.



PROCUREMENT AND PAYMENT

NSW Government agencies and funded organisations are responsible for budgeting and paying for language services. In the majority of cases, a client of a NSW Government agency or funded organisation will not be charged for the use of interpreting or translation services engaged by the agency or organisation.

There are a number of government and private language service providers from whom a NSW Government agency or funded organisation can purchase interpreting and translation services.

Alternately, some of the other pathways through which NSW Government agencies and funded organisations can find certified interpreters and translators include:

- The NAATI online directory at naati.com.au
- The AUSIT online directory (for spoken language interpreters) at ausit.org.

CONTEXTUAL SENSITIVITIES

There are a number of contextual sensitivity considerations to keep in mind when engaging language service providers.

Confidentiality is essential to the delivery of language services, especially in situations involving sexual assault, domestic violence or with humanitarian survivors of torture and refugee trauma. NSW Government agencies and funded organisations employing interpreters or translators should take care to ensure that the interpreter or translator understands their obligations to protect client confidentiality before any engagement, and that an agreement is signed that ensures the confidentiality of all information exchanged during the interpreting session or translation.

It is strongly recommended that in situations involving incidences or allegations relating to sexual assault or domestic violence, separate interpreters should be engaged for the perpetrator/alleged perpetrator and the victim complainant.

In small, emerging or remote communities where interpreters may know the parties involved in a matter, it may not be appropriate to engage an interpreter from that community. The use of a telephone interpreter is recommended for these situations.

It is very important to be mindful of gender, cultural, religious, political, historic issues, prejudices or sensitivities when engaging an interpreter. Some ethnic, national or cultural groups have experience of trauma involving members of other groups. Where possible, it is important to identify these issues and consider them when engaging an interpreter.

The fact that an interpreter speaks the same language or dialect and may even be from the same region as the client does not necessarily mean that these issues are absent.

It is also important to consider any gender requirements of an engagement, particularly in connection to sexual assault or domestic violence matters where the client may prefer a female interpreter.

CONFIDENTIALITY IS ESSENTIAL TO THE DELIVERY OF LANGUAGE SERVICES.

It may not always be possible to provide a female interpreter in person, especially for new and emerging languages. In these situations, it may be appropriate to engage a female interpreter via a telephone interpreting service. A male interpreter should only be engaged with a female client's agreement.



USING INTERPRETING SERVICES

GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH INTERPRETERS

Why engage a qualified interpreter?

Using the services of a certified interpreter means that the skills and quality of the interpreting service meets a certain standard. Compliance of certified interpreters with AUSIT and ASLIA codes that require professionals to be impartial at all times provides NSW Government agencies and funded organisations with a level of certainty regarding the information that they are provided with through interpretation. Use of non- professional interpreters such as family and friends, advocates or bilingual agency staff cannot give this assurance.

NSW Government agencies and funded organisations should make staff aware that interpreting services are available to clients who require language assistance. Staff should be made aware of the *NSW Government Language Services Guidelines for NSW Government Agencies* and any relevant agency language services policies or procedures.

Role of an interpreter

The role of an interpreter is to faithfully interpret, verbally or in sign language between NSW Government agency and funded organisation officers and their clients.

Interpreters often have to communicate complex information for which there may not be an equivalent word or term in the other language, and simple word-for-word equivalency may not be possible. Interpreters may need to be assisted and provided with more information to understand the context and select the most appropriate words to convey meaning to the client. It is advisable to provide the interpreter with preparation materials or briefing prior to the assignment. Some professional interpreters may develop specialist skills to work in particular fields, such as court interpreting or health services, and may therefore be more familiar with context-specific terminology. From January 1, 2018 NAATI established a specialist interpreter certification category for health and legal interpreting. Following this date, NSW Government departments and funded agencies are encouraged to engage NAATI certified interpreters and translators wherever possible.

Interpreters attached to Multicultural NSW must observe the *Multicultural NSW Code of Conduct* and *Code of Ethics for Interpreters and Translators*. Certified interpreters should remain impartial in the provision of services and not express opinions or support for any of the involved parties.

Guidelines for the use of bilingual staff

There are a number of staff within the NSW public sector who utilise their bilingual skills in the course of their employment.

THE ROLE OF AN INTERPRETER IS TO FAITHFULLY INTERPRET, VERBALLY OR IN SIGN LANGUAGE BETWEEN NSW GOVERNMENT AGENCY AND FUNDED ORGANISATION OFFICERS AND THEIR CLIENTS.

Bilingual staff in receipt of CLAS allowances

The Community Language Allowance Scheme (CLAS) is an allowance paid to selected NSW public sector employees who have a basic level of competency in a language other than English and who work in situations where their language skills can be used to assist clients. Multicultural NSW conducts examinations for nominated employees to assess eligibility for CLAS. Further information on these examinations may be found at multicultural.nsw.gov.au/services/clas-examinations.

Full-time, part-time, permanent and temporary NSW Government agency employees nominated by their agency are eligible for CLAS, provided they:

- Pass the CLAS examination conducted by Multicultural NSW, or
- Have NAATI certification, or
- Have a language recognition award from NAATI.

People in receipt of the CLAS allowance may be used within the context of low-risk communications where interpreting is not necessary but may assist with service provision. Examples include giving directions or explaining how a form should be filled out. Interactions that appear simple but have significant decision-making implications, such as asking a client to sign a consent form, are considered high-risk and are situations where a certified interpreter should be employed.

Unless they are appropriately certified, people in receipt of the CLAS allowance should never replace qualified interpreters when the need for an interpreter has been identified.

Other bilingual employees

The CLAS allowance is not payable to employees who are employed as interpreters or translators or who work in positions where particular language skills are an essential requirement of the position.

A number of different terms are used to describe this group of workers. They include *language aides*, *general bilingual staff* and *ethnic support officers*.

Bilingual staff employed by a NSW Government agency or funded organisation should not provide interpreting and translation services to clients unless they are appropriately qualified. Bilingual staff members who are not NAATI certified may not be adequately skilled in either the interpreting or translating practice.

NSW Government agencies should also consider the need for impartiality when using staff members, particularly in relation to health, personal safety or legal issues.

NSW Government agencies and funded organisations should only utilise language bilingual staff whose skills in both English and the language other than English have been verified. NSW Government agencies and funded organisations should maintain a database of identified bilingual staff, whose skills have been verified.

The National Interpreter Symbol

The National Interpreter Symbol is endorsed by Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and is recognised across Australia. The symbol provides an easy visual indication to people that interpreting services are available. NSW Government agencies and funded organisations should display the National Interpreter Symbol, where possible, in public areas such as shop fronts or service desks to alert clients to the availability of interpreting services.



PREPARING FOR ENGAGING AN INTERPRETER

Assessing the need for an interpreter

If possible, NSW Government agencies and funded organisations should seek to assess a client's need for the use of interpreter services before a scheduled interaction takes place.

If the client directly requests an interpreter, interpreting services should always be provided. It is also recommended that an interpreter be engaged if the client's English language skills appear to be limited. For example, if the client is difficult to understand or cannot answer questions in English, or if they are using a family member or friend to assist with communication.

IT IS ALSO RECOMMENDED THAT AN INTERPRETER BE ENGAGED IF THE CLIENT'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS APPEAR TO BE LIMITED.

It is important to remember that a person who is able to use conversational English may not have the skills to fully understand complex language (such as legal terms) or written documents, and may therefore require an interpreter. An interpreter is required if:

- The client prefers to communicate in a language other than English, or
- The client is unable to answer basic questions in Plain English or relies on the help of family and friends to communicate, or
- The client is difficult to understand or can only provide short responses in English, or
- The client speaks English as a second language and is in a difficult or complex situation.

Even when a client appears to have a good understanding and ability to communicate in English, stressful, complex or difficult situations may affect their ability to do so. For a client who speaks English as a second language, some situations such as making statutory declarations or giving informed consent must involve an interpreter.

To assess a client's English language proficiency and ability to clearly communicate in the given context, the following questions may assist agency officers.

If a client struggles to clearly respond in English to these questions, it is recommended that an interpreter be engaged.

- What can I help you with?
- Is English your first language?
- In which language would you prefer to communicate?

Refusal of interpreter assistance

A client may refuse the services of the offered interpreter services during or before the appointment. If this happens, it is necessary to understand why. There are a number of reasons a client may refuse to use the services of an interpreter. For example, the client may not understand why they need an interpreter, may be confident in their English language skills, or may prefer to rely on a friend or family member rather than an unknown interpreter. A client may not understand that there are guidelines for the use of interpreter services or that they are not required to pay for language services.

A client cannot be forced to use an interpreter service. If after identifying the reason for their refusal and addressing this issue, the client still refuses an interpreter, it is important to decide whether to proceed with the client interaction. Where interpreting services have been refused and an appointment proceeds, it is also important to document the decision to refuse an interpreter and any associated concerns. Remember that the English speaker needs to be able to understand the client well in order to render his/her services adequately. This needs to be stated to the non-English speaker in cases where they refuse an interpreter. The interpreter needs to be there for the benefit of the English speaker.

If interpreting is refused?

If a client refuses the services of an interpreter during or before the appointment it is important to clarify why they have done so. Possible reasons may include:

- The client is confident in their ability to communicate in English
- The client knows the interpreter personally and feels uncomfortable communicating in their presence

- The client prefers that a family member or friend acts as an interpreter but does not understand that for them to do so would be in breach of NSW Government agency best practice
- The client does not understand the reasons why the Department or funded agency engaged an interpreter
- The client expects to pay for interpreting services
- The client may not understand that the English speaker needs the services of an interpreter to adequately provide the relevant services
- The client is uncomfortable with the gender of the interpreter.

If after addressing any of the above or other possible issues, the client still refuses an interpreter and the appointment continues, it may be wise for NSW Government agency officers to document their concerns regarding the lack of an appropriately qualified interpreter.

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER
THAT A CLIENT'S PREFERRED
LANGUAGE CANNOT BE DETERMINED
SOLELY BY THEIR COUNTRY OF BIRTH
OR NATIONALITY.**

Identifying the client's preferred language

To help determine the client's preferred language, the following approaches should be used:

- Ask the client verbally what their preferred language is – they may be able to provide this information if they have some level of English language proficiency
- Provide the client with diagrams or visual aids that identify different languages (clients can point to their preferred language)
- Call a language service provider and seek their assistance to identify the preferred language through a telephone interpreter.

It is important to remember that a client's preferred language cannot be determined solely by their country of birth or nationality.

Identifying the best channel for interpreting services

The delivery of interpreting services may include verbal or non-verbal communication channels. There are three key methods of delivering interpreting services.

- **Face to face interpreting** involves an interpreter who is present in person, who may make use of verbal or signed communication. Face to face interpreting should be used when discussing complex matters or where there is a need to sight documents or other artefacts.
- **Telephone interpreting** relies on verbal communication only and can be used for emergency situations or for non-complex matters that are unlikely to require lengthy discussion. This option may also be appropriate where there is a need to protect the identity of a client, if one of the parties is in a remote location, or if a face-to-face interpreter is not available.
- **Video conference interpreting** allows for the provision of interpreting services to remote areas and is an effective option where appropriate facilities are available. This mode uses both verbal and signed communication channels and is required when Auslan interpreters are not available for face to face interpreting. Video-conference interpreting is also a good alternative when face to face interpreting is not available.
- **The National Relay Service** is an Australia-wide phone service for people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment. The system uses relay officers to convert verbal communication to written communication remotely, using computers, tablets, mobile phones, an ordinary phone or a Text Telephone (TTY).

Booking an interpreter

It is important to collect relevant information prior to contacting a language service provider to book an interpreter. For face to face services, providers will require the following information:

- Client name and language/dialect spoken
- The time and date of the services, and the address at which the services will be delivered
- Details about the engagement (context, nature of the subject to be discussed, sensitivities, etc.)
- Preferred gender of interpreter if specified by the client
- Contact details for the person who the interpreter will report to within the agency.

Language service providers who will deliver services by telephone or video conference will also need to be provided with information on the system,

platform or software that will be used for the call or video conference, and the location of the video conferencing facilities (if required).

It is important to obtain the name of the interpreter where possible in order to ensure that the client does not know the person who will deliver the services prior to the engagement. In small communities, the interpreter and client may be known to each other. This may create a conflict of interest.

Briefing the interpreter before the session

NSW Government agencies and funded organisations must fully brief interpreters before the engagement and communication with the client commences to ensure that the interpreter understands the context of the communication and is able to decline the engagement if they wish.

INTERPRETING, AT TIMES, CAN BE A STRESSFUL AND DIFFICULT ROLE...

Agencies and organisations should be mindful of the importance of briefing interpreters, particularly in any situations where there is a risk of vicarious trauma as a result of the engagement. Any potential conflicts of interest or connections to the client should also be discussed during the briefing and if confidentiality is a concern, interpreters may be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement.



Interpreting at times can be a stressful and difficult role, NSW government departments and funded agencies should ensure that the interpreter has access to professional debriefing services or employment assistance programs, either through the language service provider or departments own program.

Preparing the interpreting space

To prepare the space for the interpreting session, ensure that the room chosen for the interpreting engagement is quiet and private and that seating is arranged in a way that will facilitate the interpretation. For example, seats should be arranged in a formation which allows the interpreter to be seated between the two interlocutors, or in the case of Auslan, to face the client. This arrangement may not be suitable to all settings, e.g. court. Some other points to consider include:

- The health and safety of the client and the interpreter
- Establishing an environment for effective communication (for example, using a quiet and private room for interpreting services)
- Reading the situation and dynamics. For example, direct eye contact may not be appropriate for some cultures.

Out of hours interpreting

NSW Government agencies and funded organisations that deliver services out of hours or in emergencies should ensure that access to certified interpreters can be arranged at any time. Staff should be made aware of the process for engaging an interpreter out of hours and be provided with guidance as to which service providers offer this support.

DURING THE INTERPRETING SESSION

There are a number of things to be aware of during any session where you are communicating with a client through an interpreter. In any interpreted discussion, it is important to undertake the following.

- **Provide introductions:** Introduce yourself and the interpreter to the client and explain the interpreter's role. The following is a suggested wording: 'This is a certified interpreter who will faithfully interpret everything that is said. The interpreter is an impartial professional who will keep strict confidentiality. Please do not ask the interpreter for any advice. Speak directly to me. If there is anything you do not understand, please ask me.'
- **Set the context:** Explain the purpose of the interview and that the client may ask questions at any time during the session.
- **Engage with the client:** Look at the client (not the interpreter) while speaking and maintain eye contact, and always use the first person when speaking to the client (i.e. 'you' instead of 'he').

- **Be clear:** Avoid using slang, idioms, or colloquial language as these are difficult to interpret accurately. Clarify information or meaning for the interpreter if they require it. Do not ask the interpreter to change the information you have conveyed to suit the client's cultural background, level of education, gender or age.
- **Avoid rushing:** Address one point at a time, pause at the end of each sentence and summarise the discussion at appropriate moments to ensure the client has understood what has been discussed.

Be sure to take regular breaks during the session, where necessary.

For longer and complex sessions a break for the interpreter should be provided after 45 minutes (consecutive interpreting) and after 15 minutes (simultaneous interpreting).

For particularly long engagements, it may be beneficial to engage two interpreters. It is preferable for both interpreters to be in the room for the whole session to ensure consistency, even if only one is working at a given point. Interpreters can take turns at interpreting, usually at approximately 45 minute intervals.

A LEVEL OF DISCRETION IS USED
WHEN DETERMINING HOW MANY
INTERPRETERS ARE REQUIRED.

When utilising an Auslan service, two interpreters may be employed to work in tandem to reduce physical and mental fatigue. A level of discretion is used when determining how many interpreters are required. Factors to consider include length of appointment, speed and content of interpretation, number of scheduled breaks, and number of deaf and hearing-impaired clients.

AFTER THE SESSION

Following the provision of interpreting services, it is important to:

- Summarise the key points discussed for the client and check that the client has understood these
- Ensure that the client and interpreter leave the interview separately
- Arrange to meet with the interpreter to debrief and discuss any issues regarding the information conveyed or the interpreter's role, and to provide positive constructive feedback to the interpreter
- Be careful to avoid expressing or asking the interpreter to express any opinion regarding the content of the session or the client.

USING TRANSLATION SERVICES

GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH TRANSLATORS

Why engage a qualified translator?

Using a certified translator means that the skill and quality of the service provided meets a certain standard. Compliance of certified translators with the AUSIT code that requires professionals to be impartial at all times provides NSW Government agencies and funded organisations with a level of certainty regarding the quality of the translation. Use of non-professional translators such as bilingual agency staff cannot give this assurance.

Where possible, NAATI certified translators should be employed. It is not recommended that translators be employed from overseas, as it is very difficult to accurately assess and ensure their level of skill and they may have a limited understanding of Australian English, community issues or government systems and structures.

Be aware that translation certification is classified by language direction (for example, English into Italian). While some professional translators may be certified to translate in both directions (for example, English into Italian and Italian into English), most are not. It is important to be mindful of this when procuring a translation service.

Role of a translator

The role of a translator is to assist with written communication between NSW Government agencies and funded organisations and their clients. Translators often have to communicate complex information for which there may not be an equivalent word or term in the other language and simple word for word equivalency may not be possible. Translators may need to be assisted and provided with more information to understand the context and select the most appropriate words to convey meaning to the client.

Some professional translators may however develop specialist skills to work in particular fields, and may therefore be more familiar with context-specific terminology.

Accredited translators should remain impartial in the provision of services and not express support for any of the involved parties, nor an opinion.

Translation tools

It is NSW Government policy that certified translators be used by NSW Government agencies and funded organisations to translate official information.

SOME PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATORS MAY HOWEVER DEVELOP SPECIALIST SKILLS TO WORK IN PARTICULAR FIELDS, AND MAY THEREFORE BE MORE FAMILIAR WITH CONTEXT-SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY.

Online automated translation tools such as Google Translate should not be used as they can be inaccurate and the risk of mistranslation is high. These translation tools are unable to take into account:

- Idioms and metaphors
- Unique variations in dialect and language nuances such as politeness level, tone, etc.

Plain English

NSW Government agencies and funded organisations should consider using Plain English translations of relevant materials. Plain English takes complex language and makes it as plain as possible without changing meaning, by using simple language and diagrams. Plain English versions of source information may be helpful in situations where there is limited literacy or where the client has only a basic level of English proficiency. Plain English is not suitable for communicating with clients or groups with no English language proficiency.

PREPARING FOR ENGAGING A TRANSLATOR

Assessing the need for a translator

According to the Multicultural Principles as outlined in the *Multicultural NSW Act 2000*, all individuals in NSW should have the greatest possible opportunity to make use of NSW Government activities and programs. When engaging with communities who have limited English or prefer to communicate in a language other than English, NSW Government agencies and funded organisations should arrange for the translation of important documents into a client's preferred language.

Translated documentation can be used for:

- Communicating complex or comprehensive information to people who have limited written English or prefer to communicate in a language other than English
- Providing information about government activities or programs to communities who have limited written English or prefer to communicate in a language other than English
- Removing the necessity for interpreting services.

Designing the translation

Be aware that the translated text may be longer or presented in different dimensions to the original document, whether this was in English or another language. Ensure that any templates provided to the translator or presentation styles requested take this into consideration.

Preparing the text to be translated

The text for translation should be prepared in such a way as to optimise the quality and usefulness of the translated product. Where possible, the following key points should be considered when preparing the original material for translation:

- The text should be appropriate for the audience
- The language should be simple and in Plain English. It should utilise the active voice and should be free of any idioms, metaphors, slang or jargon
- The text should be succinct but should convey meaning accurately. Providing summaries of documents for translation can improve ease of reading
- The accuracy of the material for translation should be confirmed.

Other considerations

When planning for translations, NSW Government agencies and funded organisations should be aware of the different writing systems that may be used within certain languages (e.g. different types of characters may be used in written Chinese language texts). Agencies should work with the language service provider to identify the appropriate writing system for the target language and audience.

THE TEXT FOR TRANSLATION SHOULD BE PREPARED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO OPTIMISE THE QUALITY AND USEFULNESS OF THE TRANSLATED PRODUCT.

Bilingual documents that provide transcripts in both English and the language other than English can help other parties to be able to review the text with the target audience. This may be particularly relevant if the information is provided for the assistance of older people.

Options other than written translations should be considered, particularly when seeking to communicate to a group of people. This approach may be helpful where there is a low level of literacy within communities that speak a language other than English.



Possible alternate approaches for conveying information include:

- Information represented visually (e.g. diagrams, posters or storyboards)
- Television segments or advertisements
- Telephone interpreters
- Pre-recorded telephone messages
- Broadcasts
- Community information sessions or seminars
- Audio-visual channels, e.g. podcasts, YouTube video clips or DVDs.

Briefing the translator

Before engaging a translator, it is important to collate the information needed for the language service provider to develop a quote and to identify the best professional to deliver the translation. The following information should be sought before translation services are provided:

- The language of the original material and the language into which it will be translated
- The purpose of the translation
- The audience for the translation, e.g. age group, gender and any other details that may impact the appropriate language style to employ
- How and where the translated material will be used, e.g. on a website, television, radio, written correspondence or for internal information purposes
- Any technical requirements for receiving the original documents and producing the translation, e.g. word processing systems with capability in a specific alphabet
- The required level of certification for the translator.

Once the translator has been engaged, it is important to provide them with additional information to facilitate the development of the translation product. Information should include:

- A glossary of any relevant applicable technical or context specific terms
- Provisions for independent checking by another translator – it is strongly recommended that NSW Government agencies and funded organisations provide for this, either through the service provider or another accredited party

- Certification requirements for the translation
- Confidentiality requirements
- Requirements as to any text that should be provided in English on the final translation document – it is strongly recommended that the title and language of translation are identified in English on the document.

AFTER A DOCUMENT HAS BEEN TRANSLATED

After a document has been translated, it is important to ensure that it complies with best practice filing and layout styles.

AFTER A DOCUMENT HAS BEEN TRANSLATED, IT IS IMPORTANT TO ENSURE THAT IT COMPLIES WITH BEST PRACTICE FILING AND LAYOUT STYLES.

Agencies are encouraged to engage a translator to proofread the final document to check for spelling mistakes, grammatical errors and formatting errors.



COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK

All accredited interpreters and translators must comply with the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) or Australian Sign Language Interpreters Associated (ASLIA) *Code of Ethics*. If an interpreter or translator fails to comply with the relevant *Code of Ethics*, NSW Government agencies and funded organisations should direct any complaints to the language service provider.

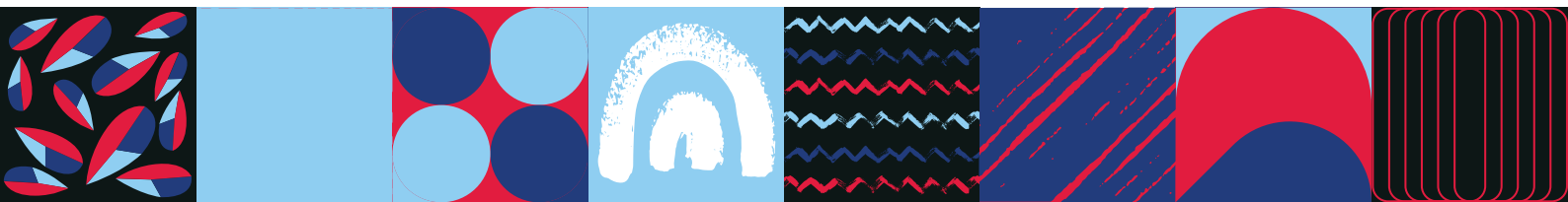
In the first instance, any issues with the performance of an interpreter or translator should be raised with the interpreter or translator concerned. If this does not resolve the issue, a formal complaint should be made to the language service provider, as should any other issues with the engagement (such as non-attendance, inappropriate level of certification, etc.).

Language service providers offer interpreters and translators an opportunity to provide feedback or formally complain about any aspect of the service provision (e.g. about the way they were treated or if they were asked to overstep their role).

ALL CERTIFIED INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS MUST COMPLY WITH THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS (AUSIT) OR AUSTRALIAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS ASSOCIATED (ASLIA) CODE OF ETHICS.

NSW government agencies and funded organisations are encouraged to provide feedback to language services providers about the performance of interpreters and translators to assist with continual improvements.





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