



Western Australian Language Services Policy 2014

Frequently asked questions

What do you mean by language services?

Language services refer to actions taken by agencies to help people who have difficulty communicating in English, or who are Deaf or hard of hearing. They include services provided by interpreters and bilingual workers/language assistants, special telephone equipment for the Deaf and hard of hearing, and translation of signs and pamphlets. Language services in relation to the Western Australian Language Services Policy 2014 do not refer to language maintenance.

What is the aim of the policy?

The policy aims to ensure that all Western Australians have equitable access to information and services.

In a linguistically diverse community, the policy seeks to ensure that limited competence in the English language is not a barrier to accessing services or information. Western Australians who may require assistance to communicate effectively include Indigenous people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

Is this a new policy?

No. The Western Australian Government has supported the provision of language services since the mid-1980s. A manual on how to use interpreters was developed for the public sector as early as 1989. A *Language Services Strategy—A Model Implementation Plan and a Guide to Translating Information* was endorsed by State Cabinet in July 1992. A WA Interpreters Card Scheme was also introduced.

There is bipartisan support for the provision of language services in Western Australia. New editions of the policy were endorsed by State Cabinet in

2000 and 2008. The Western Australian Language Services Policy 2014 is a revision of the 2008 policy and was approved by the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests in April 2014.

What are the differences between the 2008 and 2014 policies?

The Western Australian Language Services Policy 2014 comprises only a short policy statement. Unlike the previous policy, it requires WA public sector agencies to:

- provide interpreters who are certified by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI), or tertiary qualified (preferably both) to clients where required, free of charge and taking into account the particular service provided and/or the level of risk to clients' rights, health or safety
- use multilingual communication strategies and the cultural and linguistic skills of employees where appropriate
- incorporate provision for meeting language services needs in contractual arrangements with service providers.

The short policy statement is accompanied by a set of comprehensive implementation guidelines.

These provide updated and more detailed guidance on issues such as:

- the importance of language services
- the importance of engaging tertiary qualified and National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) accredited interpreters and translators
- assessing the need for an interpreter and working with an interpreter
- accessing translating services.





They also provide information on:

- qualifications and accreditation of interpreters and translators, and practitioner ethics
- data collection and reporting
- quality control and quality assurance for interpreting and translating services
- complaints processes for clients, public sector agencies and practitioners
- processes for translating public documents
- choosing relevant multilingual communication formats.

Who pays the costs of interpreting/translating?

The Western Australian public sector agency pays—not the client.

To which public sector agencies does the Language Services Policy apply?

The policy applies to all Western Australian public sector agencies.

Do Western Australian public sector agencies have a legal responsibility to provide interpreting services?

State Government agencies have a responsibility to provide services that do not disadvantage any client due to language or cultural barriers. Not engaging an interpreter might pose a risk to the client and to the agency.

The Western Australian Language Services Policy 2014 states that Western Australian Government agencies will:

- plan for, fund and deliver language services that take into account relevant government policies, legal circumstances and the particular profile and needs of current and potential clients
- ensure clients who are not able to communicate in spoken and/or written English are made aware of:

- their right to communicate in their preferred language
 - when and how to ask for an interpreter
 - complaints processes
- provide interpreters who are certified by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI), or tertiary qualified (preferably both) to clients where required, free of charge and taking into account the particular service provided and/or the level of risk to clients' rights, health or safety.

The policy is underpinned by a range of legislation including the:

- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cwth)
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cwth)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cwth)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (WA)
- *Western Australian Disability Services Act 1993* (WA).

Is the agency responsible for promoting the service to its clients?

Yes. The policy states that WA public sector agencies are required to ensure clients who are not able to communicate in spoken and/or written English are made aware of:

- their right to communicate in their preferred language
- when and how to ask for an interpreter
- complaints processes.

Should staff be trained in working with interpreters, assessing customer needs for interpreters etc?

Yes. The policy states that WA public sector agencies are required to ensure all relevant staff are able to identify when to engage an interpreter and how to work with an interpreter.





Does the policy apply to the community and private sector?

No. The policy only applies to Western Australian Government public sector agencies. However, it also requires officers to incorporate provision for meeting language services needs in contractual arrangements with service providers.

How do I find an interpreter or translator?

The Department of Finance has developed a Common Use Arrangement (CUA) for Interpreting and Translating Services, CUAITS2017, to provide services to Western Australian Government agencies, Public Benevolent Institutions and other users approved by the State Supply Commission. Agencies and approved users may ‘pick and buy’ from the contractors on the CUA.

Agencies are strongly encouraged to use the CUA, however, where not practical or reasonable for operational purposes, agencies may buy off-contract.

Professional interpreting and translating services are also listed in the Yellow Pages.

Please refer to the Language Services Policy 2014 chapter on *Working with an interpreter on-site: Finding an interpreter* and the Chapter on *Translating—Accessing translating services for information and guidelines*.

Will the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) recommend or provide information or referrals to professionals/agencies providing training on working with interpreters/translators?

No. As a public sector agency, OMI is not in a position to recommend the services of particular providers of training. Agencies should ensure that training is delivered by competent interpreting/translating professionals. In the first instance, agencies may contact the following professional associations:

- Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT): Phone: 1800 284 181, Email: admin@ausit.org, Website: <http://www.ausit.org>
- Western Australian Institute of Translators and Interpreters (WAITI): Phone: 0432 832 036, Website: <http://www.waiti.org.au>
- Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association (ASLIA): Email: info@aslia.com.au, Website: <http://aslia.com.au>
- Information sessions and workshop sessions are also available through the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) WA Office, Phone: 9380 6330, Email: peroff@naati.com.au, Website: <http://www.naati.com.au>

Will the Office of Multicultural Interests recommend languages for translations?

No. The relevant languages for translations need to be determined by an agency on a case-by-case basis depending on the nature of the document to be translated and the target audience.

Please refer to the Language Services Policy 2014 Chapter on *Translating—Choosing languages for translations of public documents* which provides comprehensive information.

