GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Department of **Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries**
Office of **Multicultural Interests**

Western Australian Language Services Policy 2020

How to engage interpreting services

How to find an interpreter

The Department of Finance (Government Procurement) provides all Western Australian public sector agencies and benevolent institutions with access to a **Common Use Arrangement (CUA) for Interpreting and Translating Services.** The CUA provides a list of contractors who have been assessed against criteria to deliver language services.

The CUA is non-mandatory, but its use is encouraged. The CUA includes service categories for CaLD languages, Aboriginal Australian Languages, and Auslan. The Government of WA website lists contractors, and includes pricing schedules for each service category, as well as an electronic booking form. These documents make it easy for users to identify which contractors can provide interpreters and translating services in the language/s required.

Booking an interpreter

When making a booking it is advisable to give the language service provider as much notice as possible. This includes the client's details, the location of the interpreting session, and any technical requirements.

Find out/establish client details including:

- name
- preferred language/dialect spoken: a client's country of birth or nationality does not determine the language they prefer to speak.

  To discover the client's preferred language, you can:

  - ask the client verbally what their preferred language is—they may be able to provide information if they have some level of Standard English language proficiency
  - provide the client with diagrams or visual aids that identify different languages (clients can point to their preferred language, see example **Department of Health, Multilingual poster)**
  - call a language service provider and seek their assistance to identify the preferred language
- cultural, faith and/or gender issues
- age
- (if relevant) their Aboriginal name/skin name, Country and/or language group, Aboriginal language to be interpreted (if known), and the name of the community the Aboriginal client comes from
- whether continuity is desirable (if so, request the same interpreter, if they are available).

Confirm interpreting session details such as:

- type of interpreting required (on-site face-to-face, telephone, video conference or video call)
- type of setting (interview, meeting, court appearance, medical examination, conference; also specify if a specialist interpreter is required to interpret complex medical or legal terminology/information)
- date and time
- location (address)

- working environment, (front-line service desk or reception, health/emergency department, legal/courtroom, educational/school)
- length of engagement (the length of time required generally doubles if engaging an interpreter)
- the names of any other parties involved (family/witnesses), so that they can be screened to ensure there is no cultural conflict
- technical and/or administrative requirements, such as:
  - the mode of interpreting required (consecutive or simultaneous)
  - availability of appropriate seating for interpreters and clients
  - microphone, system, platform or software for video conferencing/calls.

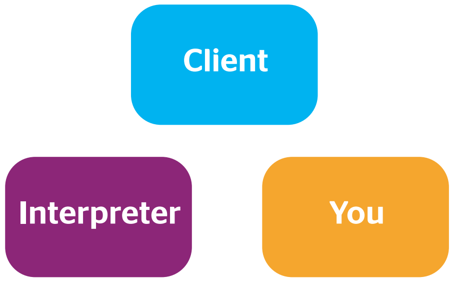
Preparing for the interpreting session

Before the session, check:

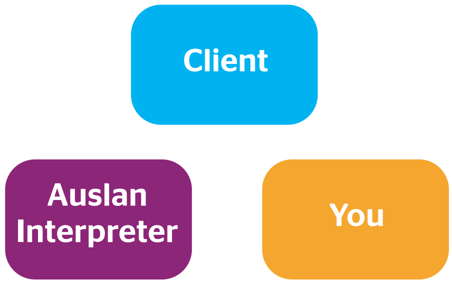
- when allocating an area in an office or booking a meeting room, allow sufficient time before, during and after the session
- brief the interpreter so that they are aware of the aim and nature of the interpreting session, and anything specific that may arise
- if the session is to involve complex matters, or if speeches are to be given, provide relevant written material to the interpreter before the session so that they can prepare
- assess the area/meeting room:
  - ensure the area chosen is quiet and private and the seating arrangement facilitates effective communication
  - while the room set-up will differ depending on the setting and situation (such as in court, or if there are cultural sensitivities such as avoiding direct eye contact), generally:
    - for spoken interpreting, use a triangle seating arrangement with the client positioned in front of the staff member and the interpreter positioned to the side, out of direct line of sight
    - for Auslan, the interpreter sits beside the staff member so that the client can see both the staff member and the interpreter communicating at the same time
- test all equipment required for the session, such as microphones, video conference applications and facilities
- provide drinking water and glasses for the group, and tissues if the discussion is likely to be emotional.

Setting up

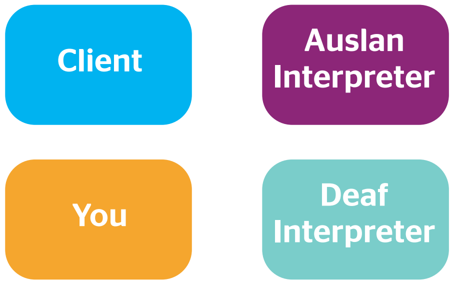
For spoken languages, the client should be positioned in front of you and the interpreter. It is preferable to use a triangle arrangement, as below.



For Auslan interpreters, the interpreter should be seated beside you so that the client can see both you and the interpreter.



For Deaf interpreters, the following seating arrangement should be used:



How to work with an interpreter

1. Brief the interpreter before the interpreting session and negotiate the time and duration of breaks (for sessions longer than one hour). Debrief them afterwards.
2. Introduce yourself and the interpreter to the client. Explain the role of the interpreter.
3. For onsite interpreting, follow the seating/ standing arrangements.
4. Speak directly to the client, for example “How are you?” instead of saying to the interpreter “Ask him/her how he/she is”.
5. Use plain English—avoid industry-specific jargon where possible, for example medical jargon, acronyms, slang and colloquialisms.
6. Use short sentences. Speak a few sentences at a time so the interpreter can remember and interpret accurately.
7. Don’t ask the interpreter to assume duties other than interpreting (for example, filling in forms) or allow the interpreter to answer a client’s questions directly.
8. Do not engage in direct conversations with the interpreter to the exclusion of the client. The interpreter will interpret everything you say.
9. Maintain control over the interpreting session at all times.

Completing the session

- Check that the client has understood the key information.
- Provide time for questions.
- It is not recommended that a client and an interpreter leave the meeting at the same time as this may impact on the appropriate professional distance between the interpreter and client.
- Debrief the interpreter/s after the session and clarify any questions you may have, but not to ascertain further information about the client.
- Document any relevant issues or follow-ups required.

Tips for working with a telephone interpreter

Before the interpreting session

- Determine whether the subject matter to be discussed can be appropriately dealt with by telephone.
- Phone your language service provider and explain your request.
- Be clear about the information to be provided or sought before beginning so that this can be communicated clearly to the interpreter.
- Organise appropriate equipment and a suitable room.
- Ensure that you are in a quiet environment with minimal noise and other distractions.
- If you have the client with you and are engaging a telephone interpreter, ensure that appropriate handsets, speaker phone or dual handsets are organised.
- Allow adequate time for the interpreting to take place.

During the session

- The procedure for getting an interpreter on the telephone may take only a few minutes. Once contact is made, the operator will create a three-way conference link. You will then be able to conduct your three-way conversation over the phone.
- Introduce yourself to the interpreter.
- Brief the interpreter about the aim, context and situation for the telephone call.
- Let the interpreter know if you have a:

  – single handset telephone

  – dual handset telephone

  – conference telephone.
- Describe where you are—for example, counter, office, hospital ward.
- When beginning the conversation, introduce yourself and the interpreter to the client and explain what will be discussed.
- Ask direct questions and speak in short sentences. Avoid using colloquialisms, idioms, technical language and acronyms.
- Speak clearly and at a moderate pace.

Completing the session

- Clearly indicate to all parties when the session is complete.
- Debrief the interpreter after the session and clarify any questions you may have, but not to ascertain further information about the client.
- Document any relevant issues or follow-ups required.

Telephone interpreting can take place when none of the three parties are together and operates as a three-way telephone conversation. If this is the case, ring the interpreter first and use the time to introduce yourself and the context for the telephone call so that they are ready to relay the information to the client once they are on the line.

Further reading

- **Western Australian Language Services Policy 2020 and Guidelines**
- **How to work with an interpreter (PDF)**
- Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT)—**Best Practices and Guidelines**
- What not to do, common mistakes—**YouTube** example
- Australian Government, Department of Communications and the Arts **Accesshub**—includes access to the National Relay Service (NRS)

I need an interpreter card

- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) national **promotional materials catalogue**
- OMI website information cards for communities: **https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/languages/translating-and-interpreting**

- Example Western Australian Government agency promotional poster: **https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/~/media/Files/Corporate/general%20documents/Multicultural/PDF/MultilingualPoster.ashx**
- The Australian Government through the Department of Social Services (DSS) offers a **Free Interpreting Service** for eligible groups. Delivered by **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National**, it aims to provide equitable access to key services that are non-government funded for people with limited or no English proficiency.
- Aboriginal Language Services—information kit
- Blurred Borders—**'Ask for an Interpreter'** poster