



# Language Services Policy

## Acknowledgements

This policy has been developed through the valuable input of Department of Local Government and Housing 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 Justice (Northern Territory Government)
- Department of Justice (Victorian Government)
- Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission
- Department of Health and Families (Northern Territory Government)
- Deafness Association of the Northern Territory Inc.
- Australian Hearing
- Translating and Interpreting Service, Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Commonwealth Government)
- Multicultural Affairs Queensland
- Office of Citizenship and Multicultural Interests (Western Australia Government)
- Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs
- South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission

## Minister's Foreword



The Northern Territory is a diverse multicultural society and the Government is committed to retaining the cultural richness and the linguistic diversity of its residents.

Approximately 14% of our population is born overseas and an estimated 29% are Indigenous. Our Indigenous people speak a diverse range of complex languages and when combined with the considerable number of Territorians who use Australian Sign Language, we find that more than a third of people living in the Territory speak a language other than English.

The Northern Territory Government (NTG) is committed to delivering fresh ideas and real results for Territorians and the new Language Services Policy recognises the challenges faced by those who speak languages other than English. It acknowledges the importance for Government agencies to make the most of interpreter and translation services so the highest quality services are delivered to Territorians.

In coordination with the Aboriginal Interpreter Service (AIS) and Interpreting and Translating Service NT (ITSNT) guidelines, the Language Services Policy will establish a whole of Government approach to language service delivery. It will ensure that all Territorians who do not speak English as their first language have fair access to appropriate services.

This policy reflects the Government's commitment to developing and implementing better ways of serving all Territorians.

The Hon. Rob Knight, MLA  
Minister for Housing and Local Government  
April 2009

## Policy Statement

The 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.



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 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 the AIS or ITSNT poster 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 the Department of Local Government and Housing in developing the 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 Act 1992* (Cth), the *Anti Discrimination Act (NT)* and the *Health and Community Services 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 NTG Multicultural Policy and Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage, Generational Plan of Action.

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:

- NTG Interpreting and Translating Service NT - A Guide to Working with Interpreters and Translators.
- NTG Aboriginal Interpreter Services - A guide to Working with Aboriginal Interpreters.



## Definitions

The **Aboriginal Interpreter Service (AIS)** is based in the Northern Territory Government Department of Local Government and Housing. The AIS provides interpreting services in Indigenous languages of the Northern Territory.

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. For further information refer to AIS handbook.

**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 based in the Northern Territory Government Department of Local Government and Housing.

**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 accreditation is the only qualification officially accepted for the profession of translation and interpreting in Australia. NAATI also provides an online directory of accredited and recognised interpreters and translators.

**NABS** is the National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment Service funded by the Commonwealth Government.

**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 AIS, ITSNT and TIS.

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

## Definitions continued...

**Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)** is a National service provided by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) for people who do not speak English and for the English speakers who need to communicate with them. TIS National is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week 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 Commonwealth 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.



Interpreters and translators help agencies deliver services to Territory residents. L-R; Lea Aitken (French interpreter), Judith Ventic (Tagalog and Cebuano interpreter), Fung Rodgers (Indonesian interpreter and translator).

**More information about this policy or about language services can be found at:**

### **Interpreting and Translating Service NT**

Telephone: 1800 676 254 (NT landlines only)  
or (08) 8999 8506  
Fax: (08) 8999 8475  
E-mail: [itsnt@nt.gov.au](mailto:itsnt@nt.gov.au)  
Web: [www.nt.gov.au/itsnt](http://www.nt.gov.au/itsnt)  
Mail: Ground Floor, RCG House,  
83-85 Smith Street  
GPO Box 4450, Darwin NT

### **Aboriginal Interpreter Service**

#### **Darwin**

Telephone: (08) 8999 8353  
Fax: (08) 8999 8855  
Email: [ais@nt.gov.au](mailto:ais@nt.gov.au)  
Web: [www.nt.gov.au/ais](http://www.nt.gov.au/ais)  
Mail: Ground Floor, RCG House,  
83-85 Smith Street  
GPO Box 4621, Darwin NT 0801

#### **Alice Springs**

Telephone: (08) 8951 5576  
Fax: (08) 8951 5244  
Email: [ais@nt.gov.au](mailto:ais@nt.gov.au)  
Web: [www.nt.gov.au/ais](http://www.nt.gov.au/ais)  
Mail: GPO Box 1596,  
Alice Springs NT 0871

### **Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators Inc. (AUSIT)**

Telephone: (03) 9895 4473 (national).  
or 1800 284 181 (local)  
+61 3 9895 4473 (international)  
Email: [admin@ausit.org](mailto:admin@ausit.org)  
Web: [www.ausit.org/](http://www.ausit.org/)  
Mail: PO Box 193  
Surrey Hills VIC 3127

### **National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment Service**

Telephone: 1800 2469 45  
Fax: 1800 2496 14  
TTY: 1800 2469 48  
Email: [bookings@nabs.org.au](mailto:bookings@nabs.org.au)  
Web: [www.nabs.org.au](http://www.nabs.org.au)  
Feedback: [feedback@nabs.org.au](mailto:feedback@nabs.org.au)  
SMS: 0427 671 261  
Mail: 930 Gympie Road  
Chermside QLD 4032

### **National Relay Service**

Telephone: 1800 555 660  
TTY: 1800 555 630  
Fax: 1800 555 690  
Email: [helpdesk@relayservice.com.au](mailto:helpdesk@relayservice.com.au)  
Web: [www.relayservice.com.au](http://www.relayservice.com.au)  
SMS: 0416 001 350  
Mail: 88 Darling Street  
East Balmain NSW 2041

### **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)**

| <b>Service</b>  | <b>Contact</b>   |
|---|--|
| Telephone Interpreter Service (24 hours, 7 days per week) | Telephone: 131 450   |
| On-site Interpreter Enquiry Line (business hours)         | Telephone: 1300 655 082  |
| On-site Interpreter Bookings                              | Fax: 1300 654 151<br>Email: <a href="mailto:tis@immi.gov.au">tis@immi.gov.au</a>                 |
| Doctor's Priority Line                                    | Telephone: 1300 131 450  |
| Document Translation Enquiries                            | Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) at Charles Darwin University.<br>Telephone (08) 89466578    |
| TIS Client Liaison and Promotions                         | Telephone: 1300 655 820<br>Email: <a href="mailto:tispromo@immi.gov.au">tispromo@immi.gov.au</a> |