

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

# INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS GUIDE

## Policy overview

South Australian Government agencies are required to use Aboriginal languages interpreters and translators where communication in the English language will be a barrier to understanding, accessing and contributing to government services.

## What are the benefits of using interpreting and translating services

- Ensures that Aboriginal people have equal access to information about government processes and services.
- Supports informed decision-making on critical matters which will have a significant impact on a person's life.
- Builds better relationships between governments and Aboriginal people and communities.
- Improves government service delivery and programme development.
- Demonstrates the Government's respect for Aboriginal languages and culture.

## When should an interpreter or translator be used?

An interpreter or translator should be used when it is apparent that the English language is a barrier for an Aboriginal person or group in communicating with government. This includes both where a person or group is unable to understand a communication and where a person is unable to express themselves or respond to a communication. Broadly speaking:

- **Translation services** are used for the provision of written documentation.
- **Interpreter services** are used for assistance with oral communications.

It is particularly important that interpreter and/or translation services are provided where informed consent is required or where there is the potential for a decision or action to have a critical impact upon a person's life. This would include, for example, decisions around a person's health, issues of child protection, discussion of legal matters, or participation in government consultation processes. If in doubt, it is always best to ask a customer or client directly if they require the provision of interpreting or translating services.

## Assessing the need for an interpreter or translator

- Make sure the client is aware of the availability of Aboriginal languages interpreters and translation services.
- Assess the client's ability to communicate in English. While a client may be able to participate in everyday conversations, this does not always mean a client can understand complex information in English.
- Consider what else might impact upon the client's capacity to participate meaningfully in a communication that is conducted entirely in English. For example, is the client in pain, particularly stressed or frustrated?
- If in doubt, ask the client if they require the provision of interpreting or translating services.

## Preparing

- Identify whether you require an interpreter or a translator or both.
- Agree payment of service in advance, including any additional expenses associated with travel and accommodation.
- Provide a brief with any relevant background information, the reason for the communication, explanation of any technical words or phrases and the purpose of the communication.
- Support all parties to understand and respect individual cultural values and relationships.
- Consider whether the gender, status or family relationships of a particular interpreter or translator will impact upon how comfortable the client is to participate.
- Be sensitive to the subject matter and any potential impacts this may have for interpreters or translators.
- Check any internal agency guidelines on the use of interpreters and translators.

## The meeting

- Ensure the venue is easy to access and is not intimidating or threatening.
- Set up the meeting place in a way so that all parties feel as relaxed as possible.
- Ensure all parties understand that the interpreter can only interpret what is said; they cannot provide cultural advice, offer their personal opinion or talk about the meeting with others.
- Always speak directly to the client, do not direct your questions to the interpreter.
- Use clear language, short sentences, and as far as possible, avoid using jargon.
- Pause regularly to allow for interpretation.
- Provide summaries of the discussion at regular intervals to ensure all parties agree on what is being communicated.
- Provide parties with the opportunity for regular breaks.
- At the end of the communication, summarise the key points and decisions for agreement.

\* For translations, provide all relevant material and clear instructions to the translator

## Follow-up

- Debrief with the interpreter or translator following the assignment; and provide any necessary support services.
- If you have any concerns or complaints about the interpreter or translator, report them to the service provider.

# checklists

## How to obtain an interpreter or translator

State Government agencies should, where possible, at all times use professionally accredited Aboriginal languages interpreters and translators. The following organisations are being used by a number of state government agencies:

Organisation	Telephone	Email	Service description
Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service (Interpreting only)	1800 334 944	ais@nt.gov.au	Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and other Central Australian languages
ABC International Pty Ltd	(08) 8364 5255 (Business Hours)	bookings@abcinternational.com.au	Pitjantjatjara language

### WHERE TO GO FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE OR INFORMATION

#### Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation

Postal address: GPO Box 2343 Adelaide SA 5001

**FREECALL: 1800 127 001**

**Website: [dpc.sa.gov.au/aar](http://dpc.sa.gov.au/aar)**