**ACT Government**

**LANGUAGE SERVICES PLAN**

**Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate**

Date: November 2019

**CMTEDD LANGUAGE SERVICES PLAN**

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (the Directorate) is committed to ensuring all Canberrans can access information, programs and services delivered or funded by the directorate.

This language services plan details how the directorate is delivering on the actions committed to under the ACT Language Services Policy.

# **PART 1 – POLICY AIMS**

The ACT Language Services Policy (the Policy) aims to improve access to the full range of government and government-funded services for Canberrans requiring language support or who communicate using a language other than English by building on the work done under the ACT’s former policy, *Many Languages 2012-2016*.

Through the implementation of the Policy, the ACT Government will work towards improvements and refinements in language services by delivering on the following aims:

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| 1. **Continue to fund the 24-Hour Emergency Interpreter Service for Auslan speakers** |  | 1. **Provide continued support for the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI)** |
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| 1. **Engage certified interpreters and translators in individual circumstances for people who experience difficulties communicating effectively in English** |  | 1. **Provide translated information on government policies, services and guidance into clients’ preferred language in response to individual needs** |
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| 1. **Train ACT public service staff on working with interpreters** |  | 1. **Use of the National Interpreter Symbol** |
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| 1. **Provide opportunities for people to improve their English language skills by funding English language programs for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers** |  | 1. **Support people who communicate using a language other than English to maintain and develop skills in their first language** |
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| 1. **Promote language learning as a cross-cultural opportunity to develop understanding and appreciation of difference cultural and linguistic backgrounds** |  | 1. **Acknowledge and recognise the social and cultural challenges faced by culturally and linguistically diverse people when communicating in English as a second language** |

# **PART 2 – POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

This part of the Plan sets out the actions CMTEDD is taking to implement the Policy.

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| **Directorate policies and protocols for the use of language services** | | |
| **Guideline(s)** | **Implementation** | **Reporting and data collection** |
| 1. Have a systematic approach to language services to deliver services to clients with a first language other than English that acknowledges the use of language services by staff is a justifiable and necessary expense. | * CMTEDD uses the ACT Language Services Policy as the framework for its delivery of language services. Through its implementation of the guidelines outlined in this plan, the directorate achieves appropriate baselines in language service delivery with a view to improving on service delivery into the future. | * The data collection and reporting mechanisms in use by the directorate are outlined in this plan. |
| 1. Acknowledge clients’ rights to the services of an interpreter or translator and commit to the appropriate use of these services (using NAATI accredited translators when suitable), taking into account legislative requirements and risks that could impact the clients’ health, safety, security and/or human rights if an interpreter or translator is not utilised. | * Directorate staff ask clients about assistance they need when accessing programs and services, including whether interpreters or translators are required including websites and documentation such as the Arts Funding Handbook. This may result in staff engaging an interpreter to support a person from a culturally and linguistically diverse background to apply |  |
| 1. Ensure where necessary, in response to individual needs, documents and information are translated into languages appropriate to client needs. | * Examples used within the directorate include: Signs for festivals such as the Canberra Moon Festival are translated into other languages to accommodate attendees. |  |
| **Promotion of interpreting services** | | |
| **Guideline(s)** | **Implementation** | **Reporting and data collection** |
| 1. Use effective language service guidance, including:    1. use of the National Interpreter Symbol;    2. promotion and funding of the  ACT 24 Hour Emergency Interpreter Service (EIS); and    3. promotion of the National Auslan Interpreter Booking Service (NABS), National Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) and National Relay Service (NRS) in all areas accessed by the general public. | * Directorate websites use the National Interpreter Symbol and links to information to support those who require EIS, NABS, TIS and NRS. * All Access Canberra Service Centres and Shopfronts display signage including the National Interpreter Symbol. * Access Canberra Service Centres displays translation service information in 16 languages on the TV screens within the centres. | * Annual confirmation of the display of relevant symbols on directorate websites * Annual confirmation of translation display within Access Canberra Service Centres. * Tracking how many people click through to the ‘Translation’ page using the National Interpreter Symbol on directorate websites. |
| **Staff awareness, training and development** | | |
| **Guideline(s)** | **Implementation** | **Reporting and data collection** |
| 1. Ensure all staff are aware of the  ACT Language Services Policy and recognise effective communication is integral to the delivery of all services. | * All staff in the directorate, including frontline staff, are aware of the ACT Language Services. | * Annual confirmation of mechanisms used to communicate the aims and deliverables of the Languages Policy and Plan. |
| 1. Promote appropriate training in cross-cultural communication, deafness awareness and how to work with interpreters. | * The directorate’s website has information available to staff about web accessibility. * The directorate’s staff have access to a range of training in workplace diversity and inclusion through the CMTEDD Training Calendar, including: * Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness * Respect, Equity and Diversity (RED) training – General, and Manager training * In addition, training is available to staff via the ACTPS Training Calendar includes: * Engaging with Different Cultures; * Working with Diversity; * Unconscious Bias * Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness; and * Disability Awareness. * All Access Canberra Service Centres and Shopfronts have hearing loops. Several Access Canberra Staff are trained in AUSLAN. Access Canberra Service Centres and Shopfronts also have a very diverse workforce. Staff are fluent in languages such as: Arabic, Russian, Maltese, Greek, Croatian, Pidgin English, Krio, Hebrew, Sri Lankan and French. Other staff also understand Spanish, German and Gaelic. Staff are often able to assist customers with interpretation of information. The list of languages spoken changes from time to time as staff move in and out of the team. * The Revenue Office contact centre has a culturally and linguistically diverse staff and generally a speaker of the language of the customer can be identified to assist. Where no one is available, interpreter services are used. | * Information on the number of courses provided and number of attendees |
| **Language education and support** | | |
| **Guideline(s)** | **Implementation** | **Reporting and data collection** |
| 1. Provide opportunities and support for people to improve their English language skills or maintain and improve skills in their first language. | * Training available to staff via the ACTPS Training Calendar includes: * Essential Writing Skills; * Persuasive Communication; and * Application Writing Skills & Interview Skills. | * Information on the number of courses provided and number of attendees |
| **Data improvement** | | |
| **Guideline(s)** | **Implementation** | **Reporting and data collection** |
| 1. Collect data to guide the development of future language services including languages spoken, ethnicity, country of birth, English proficiency, and need for interpreter. | * Each year, Access Canberra undertakes a survey to assess the community’s awareness of and satisfaction with Access Canberra Services. Access Canberra also collects feedback from its stakeholders through the website, service centres and contact Centre to ensure a clear understanding of the evolving needs of the Canberra community | * Data collected via annual survey and analysed. |

# **PART 3 – PLANNING TO IMPROVE**

The Policy contributes to creating a better service experience by ensuring all clients, irrespective of their language background, are provided fair access to all ACT Government services and programs. This Language Services Plan assists CMTEDD to measure its performance against the practical guidelines developed to implement the Policy. The following outlines priority areas in which further action is required to improve language services and contribute to the inclusion and participation of all Canberrans.

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| **Priority area(s)** | | **Planned implementation** | **Implementation by** |
| 1 | Assist staff to feel confident in their ability to provide effective language services by promoting the ACT Language Services Policy and the guidelines in this plan. | CMTEDD will continue to promote the ACT Language Services Policy to ensure that all staff have an understanding of the ACT Government’s commitment to ensuring all Canberrans are able to access government programs and services. The directorate will also promote the information contained in this plan.  Actions   * Reiterate the importance of the ACT Language Services Policy to all staff * Following the publication of this plan, ensure that the plan is circulated to all staff to improve their knowledge of the language services available in the directorate. | March 2020 |
| 2 | Ensure staff have received training in cross-cultural communication. | The directorate will ensure that all staff, particularly client service staff, have received sufficient training in cross-cultural communication to ensure they can communicate effectively with relevant stakeholders. This will be achieved by implementing bi-annual audits of the cross-cultural communication training delivery and completion rates and encouraging those staff who are yet to undertake the training to do so.  Actions   * Promote training available on cross-cultural communications | March 2020 |
| 3 | Promotion of interpreting services | Actions   * Work to include information about available translation/interpreter services of the web versions of publications including the monthly Our Canberra newsletter and Our Canberra e-newsletter. * Seek advice on the potential use of Google translate (which has the potential to translate into 106 languages). * Include links in ACT Government social media channels to information to support those who require EIS, NABS, TIS and NRS. | July 2020 |
| 4 | Promote training in cross-cultural communication, deafness awareness and how to work with interpreters. | Actions   * Access Canberra will investigate training in deafness awareness and how to work with interpreters as well as developing a register of staff who are trained in AUSLAN. | July 2020 |
| 5 | Data improvement | Actions   * Access Canberra will review the potential to include additional questions in annual survey for the sample group to identify, country of birth, if English is second language and/or accessibility of services. * The directorate will collect anecdotal data from the ACT Government social media channels about languages spoken by our audiences. * Communications and Engagement will look at reviewing questions for the YourSay Community Panel relating to languages and how this data (with relevant permissions) can be used to aid this plan. | July 2020 |