Policy

Policy Title	**Interpreting and Translation Guidelines**
Policy Number	CE009
Department	CHP, Habitat for Humanity Australia
Version	1.0
Authorised By	B Tasker
Ratified	February 2023

Objective

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for staff when working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities or individuals on the use of interpreters and translation materials.

These guidelines cover the use of spoken language interpreting services only. For information regarding sign language interpreters, information is available on the Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association's (ASLIA) website at asliansw.org.au.

Policy

These guidelines apply to all HFHA staff, including permanent and temporary staff, contractors and consultants undertaking corporate projects. Managers should ensure that all relevant staff members know about these guidelines and how to apply them.

Legislative Environment

These guidelines take into account HFHA's obligations under:

- The Principles of Multiculturalism in section 3 of the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000 (NSW)
- International Conventions on Human Rights to which Australia is a signatory
- State and Commonwealth anti-discrimination legislation
- HFHA's Customer Service Standards
- The HFHA Charter of Tenant Rights.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This is a corporate document is to be reviewed every three years by the Finance and Corporate Services.

Some content of these guidelines was adapted from the *Legal Aid NSW Guidelines on interpreting and translation* and the *Victorian Government Guidelines on Policy and Procedures: Using Interpreting Services and Effective Translations*.

Our Obligations

Greater Metropolitan Sydney is one of the most culturally diverse places in the world with more than 200 languages and dialects spoken. Over 34% of its population are overseas born and more than 32.5% speak a

language other than English at home.

At HFHA many of our residents are likely to speak a language other than English at home. We have committed to working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities to ensure that they have equitable access to community housing and are supported to provide feedback and input into our service delivery through the development of culturally appropriate communication in the delivery of our services.

This document sets out guidelines for staff as to how and when they should engage the services of an interpreter or a translator to support the delivery of our services.

Language spoken at home and the level of English proficiency are the most important factors to consider when planning for translations. Demographic data which can help identify which language groups may require translations can be accessed from various sources. A more accurate demographic picture can be obtained by combining different data sources:

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) website (www.abs.gov.au) provides data at a Local Government Area (LGA) level, which can be used for targeted demographic analysis.
- For the most recent data on newly arrived migrants, see the Department of Immigration's Settlement Reporting Facility at (www.immi.gov.au), which includes the number of migrants settling in New South Wales, their country of birth, languages spoken, English proficiency, religion and year of arrival.
- Welcome to Multicultural NSW Community Profile also provides information on migrant settlement

Using Interpreters

An interpreter is a qualified professional whose task is to assist the communication between people who speak different languages. Interpreters convert information and messages accurately and objectively from one language into another. Interpreters can assist in facilitating communication between staff and people from diverse backgrounds during meetings, interviews, mediation, workshops or other group situations.

Accredited Interpreters

In Australia, interpreters are accredited by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). As a condition of their ongoing accreditation, they are required to act in accordance with the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) Code of Ethics which includes competence, confidentiality, impartiality, avoiding advocacy or conflicts of interest, and remaining faithful to the meaning of source messages at all times.

When Do I Need to Book an Interpreter

Wherever possible the need for an interpreter should be determined prior to an appointment. Engaging an interpreter is recommended if:

- it is requested by the tenant or applicant
- the tenant or applicant cannot comprehend or respond to basic questions in English
- the tenant or applicant is difficult to understand, or can only respond in a limited way
- the tenant or applicant relies on family or friends to communicate
- the tenant or applicant prefers to speak in their own language
- the tenant or applicant speaks English as a second language, and is in a stressful, complex or unfamiliar situation.

To determine a tenant or applicants' level of English language proficiency, it may be useful to ask a simple question "Why are you here today?" or "How can I help". If the tenant cannot respond to the question fluently, or if the response is difficult to understand, an interpreter is recommended.

The Telephone Interpreting Service should be used wherever possible – this is particularly important when managing complex tenancy matters, such as where the tenancy is at risk and/or where the tenant is facing Tribunal action.

Bi-lingual staff may act as interpreters under the following conditions:

- where the tenant has agreed that a staff member can assist
- to assist with simple communication matters such as general enquiries regarding the tenancy or tenant accounts and in situations where there are low levels of risk to the tenant, residents or the staff members, and
- where the staff member has confirmed that they are able to assist.

Determining The Preferred Language

A tenant's language cannot be determined reliably from their country of birth as some languages have a number of dialects. For example, a person from China may speak Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka or another Chinese dialect, while an Arabic speaker may speak with an Egyptian, Iraqi, Lebanese or Syrian dialect. Speakers of different dialects often cannot understand each other. The following steps may help to determine a tenant's preferred language:

- if a tenant speaks sufficient English, ask what their preferred language is, especially if they have used interpreting services previously
- ask a tenant to point to the language they speak using the Languages commonly spoken by clients card. While staff will attempt to arrange a suitable interpreter, tenants or applicants should be advised that this is not always possible, especially for the languages of newer communities.

If Interpreting is Refused

If a tenant or applicant refuses the offer of an interpreter, it is important to try to clarify and address the reasons. For example, explain to the tenant that interpreters are bound by the duty of confidentiality, or that the tenant will not have to pay for the interpreter's services. If the tenant continues to refuse an interpreter, staff may proceed with the appointment and document the client's refusal of interpreting services on SDM.

Family and Friends

Family and friends can play an important role in providing support to tenants or applicants. However, they may not always have the required language competence and interpreting skills required to interpret accurately. In addition, they will not be bound by any standards of conduct as accredited interpreters and will be unable to remain impartial. For these reasons, family members or friends, especially children, should not be asked to interpret in situations involving critical information and decision making, as it will be difficult for them to remain impartial, maintain confidentiality and accurately interpret all that is said.

CASE STUDY

Q: Miriam is from Afghanistan and speaks a limited amount of English. She made an appointment to see Kelly, a family lawyer, regarding divorce and custody of her 11 year old daughter Mina. Miriam brought Mina to the appointment and insisted on having Mina as her interpreter. She explained that the Afghan community is small and she didn't want people to talk behind her back. Even though Kelly could see that Mina was fluent in both English and Dari, she explained to Miriam about an interpreter's duty of confidentiality and engaged the service of a telephone interpreter to assist with communication. Was this the right decision?

A: Yes. It is not acceptable for children, family or friends to interpret complex or sensitive information. In this particular situation, Mina who is a child, was also the subject of discussion and it would be inappropriate to place her in such a situation. The potential risks to the client, the child and the family lawyer were significant.

For HFHA Community Events and Block Meetings

Interpreters should be provided for:

- Block meetings where it has been determined that there are at least 3 or more speakers of a particular language group who are likely to attend the meeting.
- Events – for larger social events such as the Tenant End of Year Party interpreters should be booked if there are significant clusters of a language group attending. Bi-lingual staff can be used where available for social events
- Workshops and forums – for events where the discussion is of a technical nature, professional interpreters should be booked through Multicultural NSW according to needs identified through the RSVP list.
- Phone invitation process – sometimes it is necessary to invite people to significant workshops or forums by engaging an interpreter to invite people over the phone in their own language – this is particularly useful for hard to engage communities.

All project and event plans should include reference to translation and interpreting as a component of the project and outline the reason for actions taken or not taken. Your plan should also include costs for any interpreter or translation services required as part of the project/event budget.

Booking an interpreter

For core business activities:

- Telephone interpreting is operated by the Telephone Interpreting Service (TIS) National. Staff and clients can initiate a TIS session immediately by calling:
    - TIS National Contact Centre on 13 14 50 and speak to an operator to arrange an interpreter
    - You will need the HFHA account number which can be obtained from Reception
    - For more information, visit www.tisnational.gov.au/Agencies/Help-using-TIS-National- services/Telephone-interpreting.
- Onsite interpreting (face-to-face) is recommended when very complex or lengthy matters need to be discussed in relation to a tenancy matter or for community events organised by HFHA. Bookings must be made in advance.

For events and activities not eligible for Free Interpreting Service through TIS:

- Prior to booking an onsite interpreting service you must obtain approval from your Line Manager to ensure that an onsite service is needed.
- Interpreters can be booked through Multicultural NSW Language Services. Bookings can be made by downloading the Interpreting Request Form via the Multicultural NSW website at multicultural.nsw.gov.au/our_services/interpreting_translation/
- You must email the form to Language Services Team at Multicultural NSW languageservices@multicultural.nsw.gov.au or by calling 1300 651 500.
- You can also log your appointment directly on the website. Login details are available from the HFHA Reception Team.

Making The Booking

Provide the booking agency with as much information as possible including:

- language and dialect required
- preferred gender of the interpreter (for sensitive matters such as domestic violence or sexual assault)
- date, time and location the interpreter is required – ensure briefing time prior to the appointment
- Interpreting context, any preparatory materials and the setting in which the interpreting will take place, and the topic of the matter to allow the interpreter to prepare adequately.

Where the tenant has had to wait for some time for their appointment, call the tenant beforehand to confirm the appointment when the interpreter is booked.

Getting The Most Out Of Your Work With Interpreters

Working effectively with interpreters can significantly enhance communication with, and services provided to, tenants from diverse backgrounds.

Preparation

- Where possible, meet with the interpreter at least 15 minutes early to explain what will be covered, specific terms to be used, what needs to be achieved, and give them copies of the materials.
- For a community event or workshop provide copies of the agenda, speakers' notes and other relevant materials to the interpreter, but ensure that they interpret the spoken presentation and not the notes.
- Allocate more time for sessions or interviews where interpreters are involved.
- Be attentive to the interpreter's needs. Provide a glass of water.
- Consider their placement in the room, for example, the best position for the interpreter in a tenant interview is on the side, in a triangular configuration, so that you and your tenant can face each other.
- During group discussions, permit only one person to speak at a time.
- Interpreting is a highly demanding task. Provide a break at least every 45 minutes.
- For telephone interpreting, check how the telephone system works beforehand. Brief the interpreter before the interview commences. Establish the protocol to be used by participants, for example, state name before speaking if there are multiple speakers.

During The Appointment

- Introduce yourself and the interpreter to the tenant. Explain that the interpreter's role is to interpret everything accurately and impartially, not to make comments or add or omit anything. Explain that interpreters are obliged to interpret everything, even if it is unpleasant material.
- Speak directly to the tenant, not the interpreter. Do not say to the interpreter, "tell him/her" or "does she understand?". Encourage the interpreter to speak in the first person.
- Speak clearly and in a normal tone. Do not rush through a speech. If reading text verbatim, give a copy of the text to the interpreter and read slowly.
- Use clear language. Avoid using slang, puns, jokes or idioms. Explain all jargon.
- Make one point at a time. Keep questions and statements short. This allows the interpreter to understand and remember what is being said and to interpret in stages.
- Allow the interpreter to clarify information. If there is a need to clarify, ask the interpreter to explain this to the tenant first.
- If there are questions about the tenant's cultural background, ask the tenant directly and not the interpreter.
- If the interpreter gives personal opinions, makes inappropriate comments, has a side conversation with you or the tenant, or discusses anything unrelated to the interpretation assignment, ask them to refrain from doing so.
- Interpreters perform better with more preparation and less surprises. As interpreters are bound by confidentiality and impartiality, HFHA staff should prepare the interpreters as much as possible prior to the session or interview.
- Tenants sometimes regard their interpreter as an ally. Appropriate seating arrangements and avoiding unnecessary conversations may assist to preserve the interpreter's impartiality.

After The Interview/Appointment

- Do not ask the interpreter to express an opinion about the tenant or what they have said.
- Where a change of interpreter is required due to a potential conflict of interest, this should be done without disclosing the reasons to the interpreter.

External Agencies

Tenants or applicants may also be dealing with other agencies, for example the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT), or support partners. These external agencies may have their own policies with respect to the use of interpreting services. You should contact the organisation to determine how best to use interpreters in this context.

The NSW Civil & Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) can arrange an interpreter free of charge to allow people to participate at their hearing. For more information go to: www.ncat.nsw.gov.au/ncat/access_support/interpreter_translator.html

Translation Services

About Translation

Translation is the process of converting written information from one language into another. Translated information can be used to supplement interpreting, but not to replace it.

A translator is a professional qualified to convert written information accurately and objectively into another language. As with interpreters, translators are also accredited by NAATI and are required to act in accordance with the AUSIT Code of Ethics. They are qualified to translate into one language direction only (e.g. English into Arabic) or into both directions, depending upon their accreditation. Always check that you are using a NAATI accredited translation service.

> It is advisable to avoid using web-based translation tools such as Google Translate for complex matters. These services are not reliable – especially for non-European languages.

Do You Need To Translate Your Document?

HFHA is committed to being accessible to culturally and linguistically diverse communities. We will generally translate:

- Important brochures particularly those relating to important tenant rights or responsibilities that could affect tenancies
- Important fact sheets
- Letters outlining significant policy changes
- Invitations to significant events.

Translations required should be

determined:

- in reference to demographic data outlined in the introduction on p2.
- in consultation with your team and the General Manager or Director for your area of work.

All project plans should include reference to translation and interpreting as a component of the project and outline the rationale for actions taken/not taken in this area; and include costs for any services required as part of the project budget.

Quotes for translations can be obtained from the following agencies:

Organisation	Contact Details
Straker Translations (For Account details contact the Community Team)	W: www.strakertranslations.com T: 02 8015 2744 E: sydney@straker.com.au
Multicultural NSW	W:multicultural.nsw.gov.au/our_services/interpreting_tr anslation/
CTC Translation	W: www.ctc4.com T: 02 9954 4376 F: 1300 234 345 E: mail@ctc.com.au
Aussie Translations	W: www.aussietranslations.com.au T: 02 8324 7439 E: office@aussietranslations.com.au
Associated Translators & Linguists	W: www.atl.com.au T: 02 9231 3288 F: 02 9221 4763 E: atl@atl.com.au

Preparing for Translations

Translation Projects

Planning should be integral to organising translations. Taking time to plan before undertaking a translation project can ensure that the process runs smoothly, meets timelines and remains within budget.

When preparing a text for translation:

- Use plain English and write in the active voice. Avoid idioms, metaphors, acronyms and jargon.
- Keep it short. Consider a summary version for translation rather than the full version.
- Consider the level of pre-existing knowledge in the target group. Be alert to cultural sensitivities about particular topics. Ensure that any images or graphics used are culturally appropriate.
- Review or test the translation before submitting for print
- Review the printers proof prior to printing.

The translation may take up more or less space than the English text. Text expansion and reduction should be taken into account when creating the design template for a publication.

Options Other Than Written Translations

Some migrants may not be literate in their native language. Also, some communities with a strong oral language tradition may not be used to written communication. There are alternative ways of providing multilingual information including CDs, DVDs, podcasts, and picture stories. Not everyone will have access to these mediums, so consult relevant community organisations for advice on the best way to deliver the information.

Easy English

Easy English is a style of writing that has been developed to provide understandable, concise information for people with low English literacy. It involves simplifying complex language without changing the meaning. The key features of Easy English include simplified language and grammar, minimal punctuation, simplified font, layout and design, and images that illustrate headings and key messages. Easy English is to be distinguished from "plain English" which is a communication style aimed at average readers and emphasising clarity, brevity and the avoidance of technical language. The following organisations provide services for the production of Easy English publications:

Organisation	Contact Details
Message Matters	W: www.messagematters.com.au T: 0414 482 021 E: julie@messagematters.com.au
Scope's Communication Resource Centre	W: www.scopevic.org.au T: 03 9843 2000 F: 03 9843 2033 E: crc@scopevic.org.au

Finalising the Translation – DO NOT MISS THIS STEP

All translations should be checked by a bi-lingual member of staff or a tenant prior to release.

Printers proofs should also be checked again as fonts may be used incorrectly and result in incorrect or meaningless text.