



Title: Community Language Policy

Category: Operating – Service Delivery - Policy

Key words: Accessible services; social justice; customer service

File number: L-103-1

Policy owner: Director Corporate Services (Community and Recreation)

Authorisation: First introduced as a voluntary LEAPS program by Council in 1988. Adopted as a formal policy in 2001 in response to Clause 12 of the Local Government (State) Award.

Review date: June 2018

Modification history: Amended policy approved by Director Corporate Services 18 March 2009; Policy reviewed December 2013; Policy reviewed February 2016;

Related legislation: Clause 12 Use of Skills of the Local Government (State) Award and Clause 21 of the Local Government (State) Award

Related policies: Advocacy in Community Services; Customer Service; Community Engagement; Code of Conduct

Related procedures:

Related forms: Duties and Responsibilities of Language Aides; Language Aide Data Collection form

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe the requirements for the management of Council's Language Aide Program which aims to provide accessible services to residents of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) requiring assistance in a community language.

Background

This program was first introduced with the adoption of Council's Local Ethnic Affairs Policy Statement (LEAPS) in 1988. Over the years, Council has appointed over 40 bilingual staff as Language Aides speaking priority community languages. The co-ordination of the Language Aide Program is undertaken by Council's Diversity Officer. In July 2000, Clause 12, 'Use of Skills' of the Local Government (State) Award was varied to provide for the payment of employees undertaking community language and signing work as an adjunct to normal duties. Clause 12B (i) of the Award provides that employees are entitled to be paid the allowance when undertaking community language or signing work. Clause 12B (vi) requires that employees record their use of a community language according to an established policy. Clause 21 of the Award states that Council must provide the employees with the opportunity to obtain accreditation from a language aide accreditation agency and appropriate training for Language Aides must be included in Council's training plan and budget.

Rationale

At the 2011 Census 45% of residents of the City of Canterbury were born in non-English speaking countries and almost 20% of all overseas-born residents arrived in Australia within the last 5 years.

The number of people from a non-English speaking background increased by 9.3% since the 2006 Census and 14.7 % of all overseas born residents spoke English poorly or not at all. The provision of language assistance is critical to reaching these residents and providing accessible services and information.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Assist non English speaking customers to access all Council services;
- Provide information in a community language about Council services;
- Ensure the relevance of Council services to the changing needs and changing demographics of the local community;
- Protect non English speaking customers from discrimination;
- Promote participation of residents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in local government;
- Provide professional support to staff accredited as language aides;
- Provide guidance to staff on the role of language aides at Council;
- Define the scope and limits of our participation in language aide services and payment of allowances under the Local Government (State) Award.

3. Scope

This policy applies to accredited language aides in all Council Divisions who use community languages as an adjunct to their normal duties to assist non English speaking customers to access Council services or information and to staff who request assistance from a language aide to respond to a resident enquiry.

4. Definitions

A language aide is a staff member who has been nominated, accredited (tested) in their community language and approved by the General Manager or Director of Corporate Services to assist in basic Council enquiries. A language aide does not replace or substitute the role of a professional interpreter or translator when required.

5. Principles

5.1 Access and Equity

We will take action to achieve equitable access to our services and programs by all customers including non-English speaking background residents.

5.2 Advocacy

We will offer each non-English speaking customer the opportunity to request language assistance to be able to advocate for their needs.

5.3 Building Capacities within local communities

We will ensure residents of non-English speaking backgrounds have access to all necessary Council information and resources to support and inform their decision making and increase and improve their wellbeing whilst they reside in our City.

6. Responsibilities

Corporate Services Division/Capacity Development and Human Resources/ Language Aides to be responsible for the following aspects of the policy implementation:

6.1 The Capacity Development Team will co-ordinate the program, collate quarterly data, receive and process new language aide nominations, arrange language testing for new candidates as approved by the Director Corporate Services, provide induction to successful candidates, maintain an up-to-date language aide listing in the telephone directory and review the policy every two years for endorsement by the Executive.

6.2 Human Resources will develop and deliver periodic training programs for all language aides and oversee the payment of a statutory weekly language allowance to accredited staff.

6.3 Language aides will assist with face to face or telephone enquiries by non-English speaking customers regarding simple and general Council matters during working hours, review and comment on any translated Council information, assist in conducting Council's citizenship ceremonies, attend necessary training and record interpreting data.

7. Procedures

- 7.1 Employees identified as speaking priority languages and offering to become accredited language aides with Council will be selected for language testing according to the following criteria:
- There is a demand for language services in the language in which staff member is to be tested as per the current demographic profile.
 - The nature of staff member's position and duties allows for them to be available to assist with general enquiries.
 - The staff member agrees to the duties of language aides prior to being tested and demonstrates effective customer service skills.
 - Testing positions will be allocated to a range of languages and from a cross-section of Divisions.
 - Allocation of testing positions will be determined by Director Corporate Services.
 - There will be no more than 4 language aides accredited for each high priority language, 3 per medium priority language and one in low priority language with a maximum number of language aides in total limited to 24
- 7.2 Language aides will be accredited by a recognized accreditation agency such as the Community Language Allowance Scheme (CLAS) of Multicultural NSW.
- 7.3 Staff members accredited as language aides will receive basic induction training within a week of being accredited and more comprehensive training within two years.
- 7.4 Language aides will reserve the right to refer the resident or the Council officer to the Telephone Interpreter Service or on-site interpreter from Multicultural NSW where the enquiry is of legal or highly technical nature.
- 7.5 Language aides will maintain statistical records of language assistance in a council log and submit these records monthly to the Diversity Officer.
- 7.6 When a language aide is not available the Translating and Interpreting Service (131 450) will be used instead.
- 7.7 This policy will be reviewed every two years including the range of languages and number of staff accredited in any given language to address the changing needs of the local community.

8. References

- Attachment A: Duties and Responsibilities of Language Aides
- Attachment B: Guidelines for Staff on the Use of Language Aides
- Attachment C: Language Aide Data Collection Form
- Attachment D: Application for Language Aide Accreditation

Attachment A

Duties and Responsibilities of Language Aides

1. To provide basic assistance with communication in a community language and English between a Council Officer and resident during face-to-face or telephone inquiry, regarding simple and general Council matters during working hours.
2. To assist residents and Council Officers in completion of Council forms and providing an oral version of simple documents in relevant community languages.
3. To assist in conducting citizenship ceremonies and interpreting for applicants and their families when on roster but no more than twice a month after hours.
4. To explain to the person requiring language assistance that you are conveying information to the best of your ability.
5. To look over and comment on any translated material that Council wishes to distribute.
6. To advise the Council Officer you are assisting that an interpreter is required when the matter is complex and involves technical or legal matters. In this situation assistance is provided through the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS-131 450) or on-site interpreters through the Language Services Division of Multicultural NSW (Fax No.8255 6711) or TIS on-site interpreters (1300 655 082).
7. To adopt a sensitive and positive attitude towards residents, recognising their language difficulties and respecting their cultural background.
8. To participate in appropriate training for Language Aides as organised by Council.
9. To maintain statistical records of language assistance provided and submit monthly.
(Language Data Collection Form)

I agree to abide by these terms and conditions.

Name:

Division:

Signed:

Date:

*** Booking is essential for CRC or TIS on-site interpreters and a fee is charged with a minimum call out of two hours.**

Attachment B

Guidelines for Staff on the Use of Language Aides

Language Aides are available to provide basic assistance with communication in a community language and English between a Council staff member and resident during either a face-to-face or telephone inquiry regarding simple and general Council matters.

1. An accredited Language Aide should be the first point of contact called upon by Council staff to provide information in a community language.
2. Language Aides are available to be used by all Divisions but those within one's own Division to be approached first. Where an inquiry outside of the Division is expected to take longer than 10 minutes, approval should be sought from the Manager of the Language Aide.
3. Language Aides are available to assist residents with completing Council forms, and provide oral version of simple documents in either English or a relevant community language as required.
4. Language Aides may be called upon to look over and comment on any translated information that Council wishes to distribute. However, they are not accredited to translate material from English into a community language.
5. When a matter becomes complicated, or involves technical or legal issues, a professional interpreter should be arranged either through the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS-131 450) or on-site through the Language Services Division of Multicultural NSW (Fax 8255 6711) or TIS (1300 655 082).
6. When a Language Aide is not available the Translating and Interpreting Service should be used 131 450.
7. Staff should adopt a sensitive and positive attitude towards residents, recognising their English language difficulties and respecting their cultural background.

*** Booking is essential for CRC or TIS on-site interpreters and a fee is charged with a minimum call out of two hours.**



Attachment D

APPLICATION FOR LANGUAGE AIDE ACCREDITATION

To be completed if you speak a community language fluently and are interested in becoming a language aide.

Please complete a new form for each language spoken

NAME:

DIVISION:

BRANCH:

EXTENSION:

POSITION:

LANGUAGE:

LEVEL OF FLUENCY

Please circle the appropriate number of the statements which best describe your level of language skill in speaking, reading and writing your community language.

Reading and writing

Speaking

1. Read and write fluently

5. Speak fluently

2. Read and write reasonably well

6. Speak reasonably well

3. Read but don't write

4. Don't read or write

Do you have National Authority for the Accreditation of Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) qualifications?

YES / NO If so what level?

My supervisor.....supports my application for a language aide

Supervisor's Signature:

Date:

Applicant's Signature:

Date:

*Please forward to the Diversity Officer