



ACT
Government

ACT Health

ACT Health Directorate Language Services Plan



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Introduction

Scope

The ACT Health Directorate oversees the territory's public health system and provides a strong policy and population health capability based on a foundation of world-leading health and medical research.

The ACT Health Directorate Language Services Plan (the plan) is the ACT Health Directorate's response to the [ACT Language Services Policy](#). It sets out how the Directorate will deliver on the ACT Government's commitments to people who have limited English proficiency, and the actions it is taking and will take to fulfil its responsibilities under the ACT Language Services Policy.

The ACT Language Services Policy was one commitment under the First Action Plan 2015 – 2018 of the [ACT Multicultural Framework 2015 – 2020](#). The [Multiculturalism Act 2023](#) is intended to replace the Multicultural Framework and is due to be enacted 1 September 2023.

The plan applies only to operations within the direct remit of the ACT Health Directorate and does not apply to the work undertaken by Canberra Health Services to deliver the ACT's public health services.

Timeframes

The plan will remain current for the duration of the [ACT Health Directorate Strategic Plan \(2020-2025\)](#) to ensure the Directorate's language focus aligns with agreed strategic directions. It will be updated intermittently to ensure emerging needs are met, and to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to accessible information.

Complementary ACT Government policies

The plan has been informed by and is aligned with other ACT Government directorates' language services plans including:

- [Canberra Health Services Language Services - Interpreters and Translated Materials Procedure](#)
- [Community Services Directorate Language Services Plan](#)
- [Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate Language Services Plan](#)

The plan forms part of the Directorate's work to improve health outcomes and access, with a focus on priority groups. This plan aligns with other strategic documents including the [ACT Health Directorate Strategic Plan 2020-2025](#) and the [ACT Health Services Plan 2022-2030](#).

Commonwealth Government Language Services guidance

The Commonwealth Government has published [Language Services Guidelines](#). The [guidelines](#) were developed for Commonwealth Government agencies with responsibility for developing policy and administering programs and services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with limited English proficiency.

Current state

The potential actions under each of the future activities sections demonstrates how the ACT Health Directorate may work towards additional activities to meet the recommendations for action in the ACT Language Services Policy. This is a living document that will evolve and be updated over time as activities are progressed.

Policy aims

The whole of government ACT Language Services 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 Voices 2012-2016*.

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|----------|--|----------|---|
| 1 | Continued funding for the 24-Hour Emergency Interpreter Service for Auslan speakers | 2 | Continued support for the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) |
| 3 | Engagement of certified interpreters and translators in individual circumstances for people who experience difficulties communicating effectively in English | 4 | Provision of translated information on government policies, services, and guidance into clients' preferred language in response to individual needs |
| 5 | Training for ACT public service staff on working with interpreters | 6 | Adoption of the National Interpreter Symbol |
| 7 | Providing opportunities for people to improve their English language skills by funding English language programs for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers | 8 | Supporting people who communicate using a language other than English to maintain and develop skills in their first language |

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Promoting language learning as a cross-cultural opportunity to develop understanding and appreciation of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds

10

Acknowledging and recognising the social and cultural challenges faced by culturally and linguistically diverse people when communicating in English as a second language

Policy implementation

People with limited English proficiency can face significant barriers when accessing government services and participating in community life. The ACT Health Directorate is committed to meeting the communication needs of all Canberrans, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, people who use sign language, and individuals with multiple and complex communication needs, so that they are able to improve and maintain their health and wellbeing.

The ACT Health Directorate understands the importance of creating a better service experience by ensuring all clients are provided fair access to all ACT Government information, services, and programs. While the Directorate's remit does not typically require direct client interaction, it recognises the importance of accessible health information. Community organisations funded to deliver programs and services directly to Canberrans are expected to have services and policies in place that reflect the ACT Language Services Policy and ACT Health Directorate's Language Services Plan.

The following section outlines current activities by the ACT Health Directorate against the actions in the ACT Language Services Policy. Potential future activities are also outlined against each action, demonstrating how the ACT Health Directorate may work towards meeting the ten actions set out within the ACT Language Services Policy.

1

Implementing a systematic approach to language services to deliver services to clients with a first language other than English.

Current activities

Activities	Reporting and data collection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ACT Health Directorate offers and promotes the use of professional and accredited interpreting and translating services through the national Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National). The ACT Health Directorate complies with the <i>ACT Language Services Policy (2018)</i> guidance, <i>Engaging Canberrans (2011)</i> and the Canberra Health Services <i>Language Services- Interpreters and Translated Materials Procedure (2020)</i>, which covers the use of interpreters for clinical and non-clinical activities. The ACT Health Directorate has been actively involved in the First Action Plan 2015 – 2018 of the <i>ACT Multicultural Framework 2015 – 2020</i>, of which the Language Services Policy was one commitment. 	<p>Nil.</p>

Current activities

Activities	Reporting and data collection
The ACT Language Services Policy is publicly available on the Community Services Directorate website.	Nil.

Future potential activities

Activities	Actions	Implementation by
Assist staff to feel confident in their ability to provide effective language services through the promotion of the ACT Language Services Policy and ACT Health Directorate Language Services Plan within the ACT Health Directorate.	<p>The ACT Health Directorate will promote the ACT Language Services Policy and ACT Health Directorate Language Services Plan to ensure all staff understand the ACT Government's commitment to ensure all Canberrans are able to access government information, services, and programs.</p> <p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop ACT Health Directorate specific messaging on the ACT Language Services Policy and ACT Health Directorate Language Services Plan and ensure accessibility of both documents for all staff. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Health Policy and Strategy Branch</p>

Current activities

Activities	Reporting and data collection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ACT Health Directorate offers and promotes the use of professional and accredited interpreting and translating services through the national Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National). • Interpreters and translators are made available in any situation where interactions occur with individuals or groups where spoken English is not the first language (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and deaf and deaf/blind people) such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – developing or delivering health promotion initiatives – environmental health, food safety and other regulatory activities – conducting surveys – consulting on policy or service planning, and other community engagement. 	Nil.

Future potential activities

Activities	Actions	Implementation by
Promote the availability of Interpreter services on the ACT Health Directorate website.	Update the ACT Health Directorate website to provide information on all interpreter services available. <i>Actions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update ACT Health website to include information on the ACT 24 Hour Emergency Interpreter Service, National Auslan Interpreter Booking Service, the national Translating and Interpreting Service, and National Relay Service in all areas accessed by the public. 	Ongoing Health Policy and Strategy Branch

Current activities

Activities	Reporting and data collection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ACT Health Directorate offers and promotes the use of professional and accredited interpreting and translating services through the national Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National). The ACT Health complies with the ACT Language Services Policy (2018) guidance, Engaging Canberrans (2011) and the Canberra Health Services Language Services- Interpreters and Translated Materials Procedure (2020), which covers the use of interpreters for clinical and non-clinical activities. 	Nil.

Future potential activities

Activities	Actions	Implementation by
Develop guidance for stakeholder engagement strategies to ensure equity and access for the community.	<p>Public consultations on health-related issues should be accessible by the entire community. Options will be explored to ensure consultations are culturally appropriate and inclusive, including the use of new and novel media for information sharing.</p> <p><i>Actions</i></p> <p>Investigate additional opportunities for engagement in public consultations, such as the use of focus groups in language, translation of surveys and utilisation of alternative language channels to distribute information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop guidance documents for staff on inclusive engagement opportunities. 	Ongoing Health Policy and Strategy Branch.

5

Being aware when interpreters must be used, taking into account legislative requirements and risks that could impact clients' health, safety, security and/or human rights if an interpreter is not utilized.

Current activities

Activities	Reporting and data collection
The ACT Language Services Policy is publicly available on the Community Services Directorate website .	Nil.

Future potential activities

Activities	Actions	Implementation by
Consider the development of new training opportunities for staff regarding language policies and the importance of language access.	<p>All ACT Health Directorate staff need to be aware of the importance of accessible information and the use of appropriate language.</p> <p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current training available to staff to determine appropriateness and depth of information. • Update current training or develop additional training as needed. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Health Policy and Strategy Branch.</p>

Current activities

Activities	Reporting and data collection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACT Health Directorate published resources include accessibility information, including directions for contacting the national Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) for people who require it. • Documents for targeted multicultural communities are available in appropriate languages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To ensure that important food safety information is available to all food handlers, the Health Protection Service has prepared a food safety guide and a range of food safety posters translated into key community languages. Food safety guidelines for the National Multicultural Festival are also available in key community languages. – COVID-19 information has been made available on the COVID-19 website in all languages, and ACT Health developed specific materials for culturally and linguistically diverse audiences and translated a large number of resources in a variety of languages. – The foraging and consumption of death cap mushrooms has been identified as a particular risk for certain multicultural groups. Posters on death cap mushrooms have been translated for identified at risk groups, and flyers on the dangers of death cap mushrooms in the ACT are translated into key community languages. – Publishing promotional materials in a variety of languages that includes positive and valued visual representations of target groups, and health service factsheets on breast screening, cervical cancer screening and public health advice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All ACT Health Directorate publications include an accessibility statement referring people to the national Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National). • Download numbers of documents available on the ACT Health website. • Monitoring the number of printed copies of hard copy guidelines and posters requested by businesses for each language.

Future potential activities

Activities	Actions	Implementation by
<p>Consider the needs of children and young people when developing information and handouts specially developed for this audience.</p>	<p>Health information (including planning and strategies) focused on children and young people should be provided in a language appropriate for the target group.</p> <p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the use and development of specific documents for children and young people, with consideration to language, content, and visuals, as appropriate for the audience. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Health Policy and Strategy Branch.</p>
<p>Investigate access to mental health services for the Deaf community in the ACT.</p>	<p>To support equity of access to inclusive health and mental health services, ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services commits to working with ACT Deaf community stakeholders to identify opportunities for improving access to health and mental health services for this community.</p> <p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the ACT Disability Health Strategy and the Disability Action and Inclusion Plan, ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services will work with stakeholders to identify and explore options for better access to health and mental health services for the Deaf community. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Mental Health Policy and Strategy Branch</p>
<p>Consider new and alternative non-text-based formats for distribution of information to meet consumer needs.</p>	<p>Changes in technology and availability of information requires constant awareness of new opportunities to communicate with the community.</p> <p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To investigate new and alternative ways of providing information to the community as they emerge. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Directorate-wide</p>

Using the National Interpreter Symbol and promoting the ACT 24 Hour Emergency Interpreter Service (EIS), the National Auslan Interpreter Booking Service (NABS), the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) and National Relay Service (NRS) in all areas accessed by the general public.

Current activities

Activities	Reporting and data collection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ACT Health Directorate offers and promotes the use of professional and accredited interpreting and translating services through the national Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National). • The National Interpreter Symbol is included in all new published material. • Translating and Interpreting Service information is included on most publicly accessible documents. Any documents which undergo update or development will include this information in the future. • Language service guidance (including the National Interpreter Symbol and contact details for the TIS translated into key community languages) is available on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Most hard copy and electronically generated food business/infection control inspection reports – All legal notices – Standard letter templates – Registration and license application/renewal forms – Licensing/registration factsheets. • All ACT Health Directorate webpages are compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 to ensure they are fully accessible to users. • The only frontline service that the ACT Health Directorate provides is the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. Given the nature of this service and its clients the ACT Health Directorate does not actively promote the ACT 24 Hour Emergency Interpreter Service number. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ACT Health Directorate website can track the number of clicks through its pages and track how many people click through to the 'Need an Interpreter' page or access content through Google Translate. • Google Translate can be used to translate information on the ACT Health Directorate website into 106 languages.

Future potential activities

Activities	Actions	Implementation by
<p>ACT Health Directorate policy and procedure developed to clearly define processes and interpreter services available, including the ACT 24 Hour Emergency Interpreter Service (EIS), the National Auslan Interpreter Booking Service (NABS), Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) and National Relay Service (NRS).</p>	<p>Develop ACT Health Directorate procedure for interpreter services.</p> <p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop procedure for staff to know how to book interpreter services (including the ACT 24 Hour Emergency Interpreter Service, National Auslan Interpreter Booking Service, the national Translating and Interpreting Service, and National Relay Service). • Explore means for recording the number of engagement activities utilising interpreters within ACT Health Directorate. • Investigate the possibility of tracking usage of the ACT 24 Hour Emergency Interpreter Service, National Auslan Interpreter Booking Service, Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) and National Relay Service websites, noting this is not currently available as these are external websites. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Health Policy and Strategy Branch.</p>

Current activities

Activities	Reporting and data collection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural competence training is available to all staff through Human Resources Information Management System (HRIMS) Learning, face to face or as eLearning. Engaging with Different Cultures, Unconscious Bias, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness, Disability Awareness and Working with Diversity training is available through ACT Public Service training providers. Training on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness is available to all staff and highlighted as part of ACT Health Directorate orientation training. This work is overseen by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Partnerships Team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A report can be obtained from HRIMS Learning to identify staff who have completed training. The cultural awareness and health orientation training is mandatory for all ACT Health Directorate staff. Reporting of cultural awareness and health orientation training is also provided at the Elected Body Hearings and through the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement. The eLearning training package for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and cultural awareness is mandatory for all ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services staff.

Future potential activities

Activities	Actions	Implementation by
Development of a new eLearning training package for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and cultural awareness.	<p>The ACT Health Directorate is working to increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and culture. The development of a new eLearning package for staff would assist this awareness.</p> <p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the development of a new eLearning package for staff. Develop content and eLearning package. Roll out the eLearning package to all staff. Promotion of the eLearning package. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Partnerships Team</p>
Promote appropriate training in cross-cultural communication, deafness awareness and how to work with interpreters.	<p>The ACT Health Directorate will promote staff training opportunities on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness, cross-cultural communication, plain/Easy English, deafness awareness and how to work with interpreters.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships Team</p>

Activities	Actions	Implementation by
	<p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop ACT Health Directorate specific messaging on staff training opportunities. 	<p>Communications & Engagement Branch</p>
<p>Promotion of the Translating and Interpreting Service to GPs and eligible allied health professionals in private practices in the ACT.</p>	<p>To support access to inclusive health services and information across the territory, the ACT Health Directorate will promote the use of the national Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) to GPs and allied health professionals across the ACT.</p> <p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write to GPs and eligible allied health professionals in private practices across the ACT to promote the use of the national Translating and Interpreting Service. Liaise with Capital Health Network to promote the use of the national Translating and Interpreting Service through their networks. Future community sector contracts with non-government organisations funded by ACT Health Directorate to contain a requirement for community organisations to work towards and align services with both the ACT Language Services Policy and ACT Health Directorate Language Services Plan. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Health Policy and Strategy Branch</p>

Collecting data to guide the development of future language services including languages spoken; ethnicity, country of birth, English proficiency, and need for interpreter.

Current activities

Activities	Reporting and data collection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epidemiology collects or curate administrative datasets that include cultural and linguistic demographics. Other administrative datasets that we access and use routinely (but do not control) also contain markers for country of birth, such as Admitted Patient Care and Emergency Department. • The Canberra Hospital Birth Outcomes System also has a model of care referred to as CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) mothers. • Epidemiology also commissions several population surveys which monitor health, wellbeing and associated risk factors and collects demographic information from these surveys. 	<p>Datasets include ACT Cancer Registry, Maternal Perinatal Data Collection and Mortality, ACT General Health Survey, the ACT Year 6 Physical and Nutrition Survey and the Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol & Drug Survey.</p>

Future potential activities

Activities	Actions	Implementation by
<p>Explore including additional questions in surveys to gather demographic information including where respondent and/or parents are born, language and ethnicity.</p>	<p>The ACT Health Directorate collects data from the community on a variety of health-related topics.</p> <p><i>Actions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the inclusion of additional questions on demographical information in surveys. 	<p>Ongoing Epidemiology</p>

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Acknowledging the use of language services by staff is a justifiable and necessary expense. Each Directorate has an obligation to plan and budget for interpreting services to ensure services are available when the individual need arises.

Current activities

Activities	Reporting and data collection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ACT Language Services Policy is available for all staff to access on the Community Services Directorate website. 	Nil.

Future potential activities

Activities	Actions	Implementation by
Assist staff to feel confident in their ability to provide effective language services through the promotion of the ACT Language Services Policy and ACT Health Directorate Language Services Plan within the ACT Health Directorate.	<p>The ACT Health Directorate will promote the ACT Language Services Policy and ACT Health Directorate Language Services Plan to ensure all staff understand the ACT Government's commitment to ensure all Canberrans are able to access government information, services, and programs.</p> <p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop ACT Health Directorate specific messaging on the ACT Language Services Policy and ACT Health Directorate Language Services Plan and circulate both documents to all staff. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Health Policy and Strategy Branch</p>
Consider the development of new training opportunities for staff regarding language policies and the importance of language access.	<p>All ACT Health Directorate staff need to be aware of the importance of accessible information and the use of appropriate language.</p> <p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current training available to staff to determine appropriateness and depth of information. Update current training or develop additional training as needed. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>People Strategy and Culture Branch</p>

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

Accessibility

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81.



If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.

For further accessibility information, visit: www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility

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