

Language Services Strategy Report Card



*Department for
Victorian Communities*



Message from the Premier



I am pleased to present this update on the Victorian Government's Language Services Strategy. Outlined are some of the major projects which have been undertaken so far, at the halfway mark of the Strategy.

The Victorian Government has committed \$2 million over four years to improve access to interpreting and translating services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in four principal areas:

- meeting demand;
- monitoring demand;
- the supply and quality of interpreters; and
- funding and purchasing arrangements.

I am confident that based on the success of the projects we have already completed and the strength of the partnerships we have developed, the Strategy will continue improving our language services and greatly benefit Victorians who require language assistance when using government funded services.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Bracks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hon Steve Bracks MP

Premier of Victoria



Government policy and procedures

Having policies in place and training staff on the need to use interpreters and how to work effectively with them, are central to providing high quality interpreting and translating services to the community.

The VOMA Whole-of-Government policy - *Improving the Use of Translating and Interpreting Services: A Guide to Victorian Government Policy and Procedures* - provides departments, agencies and local governments with an easy reference on:

- when to use interpreters and translators;

- the advantages of using accredited interpreters; and
- how to access interpreting and translating services.

The guide will be expanded soon to include:

- a set of contract standards to help departments and agencies tender for and purchase high quality language services; and
- a set of data standards to help departments and agencies collect and analyse information needed to better understand and plan for the needs of the non-English speaking community.



Interpreter Awareness Training Projects

Department of Human Services procedures - The LSS helped the Department identify ways to improve how it funds and monitors interpreting and translating services. As one of the largest government users of these services DHS is now implementing changes which will lead to better management and accountability.

Metropolitan Ambulance Service and Metropolitan Fire Brigade - These services have received funding to develop policies, procedures and training on working with interpreters.

Hospital staff training - In partnership with DHS, VOMA funded interpreter awareness training in 10 metropolitan and regional health services.

More than 1500 staff working at 21 different sites across the 10 health services received face to face training. Staff from management to clinicians, nurses and registrars to catering and cleaning staff were involved.

As a result there has been an increase in the use of language services including in after hours and emergency situations and in the amount of translated material available to patients with low English proficiency.



Family Violence Division of the Magistrates Court - The LSS has funded the Family Violence Division of the Magistrates Court to develop appropriate cultural diversity training for staff and guidelines for the use of language services.



Improving community access

Health Translations Online Directory
This directory, developed in partnership with DHS, is a powerful resource for health practitioners and agencies working with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families.

The website - www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au - is continuously being updated and currently searches and links to more than 10,000 items in 59 languages about a range of health issues from diabetes to women's health and nutrition.

The Department of Human Services and VOMA are promoting the directory to general practitioners and allied health professionals.

Supporting the language services sector

Monash University research into the language services sector, funded by the LSS, is the first of its kind looking at the barriers to attracting and retaining a pool of qualified interpreters in Victoria. The findings will help government and the sector to plan for future developments in the industry.

The Victorian Public Sector Language Allowance Program encourages and supports multilingual and bilingual public servants who use their language skills in their work with the public. The Allowance has been upgraded to enable multilingual and bilingual staff to gain NAATI accreditation at all interpreting levels.



Upcoming activities

- Release of a national interpreter symbol and Victorian Interpreter Card.
- Website linking to translated legal information from across government to increase community access to legal information and the legal system.
- Release of multimedia training tools in the education, health and justice sectors.
- Series of Regional Health Services Forums to discuss language services provision and encourage the sharing of information, ideas and resources.

Interpreter training

Year	Language	No. of scholarships
2003	Farsi	8
	Khmer	9
	Dari	1
2004	Amharic	6
	Timorese Hakka	4
	Somali	6

DVC Interpreter Scholarships

Introduced in 2002 the DVC Interpreter Scholarships are increasing the number of qualified translators and interpreters working in rare and emerging languages.

The program helps remove financial barriers for students from emerging and refugee communities to complete interpreting and translating qualifications and improve their employment prospects.

The program is run in partnership with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and there are currently 32 scholarship holders studying for a Diploma or Advanced Diploma.

Scholarships are being offered again in 2005 for students studying Amharic, Dari, Dinka, Nuer, Oromo, Pushto, Tigrinya, Khmer and Somali.

Information is available from the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs (VOMA) website - www.voma.vic.gov.au

Subsidising interpreter training

To date the Victorian Government has subsidised:

- Interpreter training courses at RMIT in Somali and Timorese Hakka with eight students studying Somali and 12 Timorese Hakka.
- English language and interpreter skills courses run by Northern Metropolitan Institute of TAFE (NMIT).
- Evaluation of NMIT course.
- Interpreter training course for 13 Arabic speakers in Shepparton.
- A bridging course at Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) to prepare Somali speakers for Interpreter training, with five students now progressing to study for professional qualifications at RMIT.

The Language Services Strategy (LSS)
is managed by the Victorian Office
of Multicultural Affairs.

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