

Language service needs of women in regional and rural Queensland – survey findings



See also

QCOSS, 2015, *Directory of migrant and refugee women's groups*

QCOSS, 2014, *Issues Paper: Developing a framework for the implementation in Queensland of the Australian Government's regional dispersal policies for the re-settlement of refugees in regional Australia*

QAIWG, 2014, *Blueprint for a Queensland Language Services Provider*

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Introduction

The Queensland Accessing Interpreters Working Group (QAIWG) is made up of a number of non-government bodies concerned with equitable service provision for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Queensland. The working group has released several position papers and reports since 2008 drawing on key stakeholders from the community, social services sector and languages services industry. It has provided significant input to the development and review of the Queensland Government's Language Services Policy and continues to undertake work to improve the delivery of quality language services in Queensland.

The working group would like to thank the many organisations which completed the survey openly and willingly. In doing so the respondent organisations have contributed to our better understanding of the language needs of vulnerable women in regional and rural Queensland.

In addition their feedback provides a better understanding of the needs of community social service organisations which every day provide much needed supports and services to culturally and linguistically diverse communities across Queensland.

The working group acknowledges the support of the Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) in distributing the survey to its member organisations and promoting the survey through its website.

Purpose of the survey

As part of its work in 2015, the QAIWG has undertaken a survey of non-government community social service organisations in regional and rural parts of the state to gather information on the language needs of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, migrant and refugee women and women with a disability.

The survey results contribute to evaluation of the impact of the *Queensland Government's Language Services Policy and Guidelines 2014* and the Australian Government's *Access and Equity Policy* and associated *Multicultural Languages Services Guidelines*. The survey results also contribute to the ongoing assessment of the accessibility of language services in regional and rural communities.

The Queensland Context

One in five Queenslanders are born overseas, more than a third are either overseas born or have at least one parent born overseas. Queenslanders speak more than 220 languages and approximately one in 10 Queenslanders speak a language other than English at home.

Overseas migration continues to be the largest contributor to the state's growing population. In 2013-14, Queensland received 10,610 permanent settlers from other than mainly English-speaking countries. From 2011 to June 2014, almost 7000 new humanitarian entrants have settled in Queensland (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014).

It is estimated that there are approximately 203,000 persons of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background in Queensland and many reside in remote communities retaining their own language.

This data confirms the continuing need for access to professional interpreters and translators in Queensland.

Under the current arrangements of the *Queensland Government Languages Services Policy and Guidelines 2014*, and the Australian Government's *Access and Equity Policy* and associated *Multicultural Languages Services Guidelines*, community social services are able to access the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) managed by the Australian Government. The Queensland Government funds Support with Interpreting, Translating and Communicating (SWITC) as a language service provider through the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services specifically for support to disability services.



Discussion of the findings

Validity of the data

Approximately two thirds of the Queensland population resides in the south east corner of the state and the location and reach of social service organisations generally mirror these demographic concentrations. Consequently, survey returns from 37 community service organisations in regional and rural areas of the state are considered to provide a reasonable level of response upon which to draw findings of significance.

High level of awareness of the linguistic diversity of their communities

Community social service organisations across regional and rural Queensland appear very aware of the considerable linguistic diversity present in many of the communities which they service.

The survey responses highlight not only linguistic diversity but the very small numbers of speakers of a range of new and emerging languages across Queensland occurring as a result of the regional dispersal policies for humanitarian resettlement.

High level of need for language services for vulnerable groups

A significant number of organisations highlighted the language needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women with a disability.

Very limited awareness of the availability of funded interpreter services

Most respondent organisations receive state and/or commonwealth funding. This means that most organisations would be able to access free interpreting services for their clients under the *Queensland Government Languages Services Policy* arrangements or under the language services arrangements for organisations funded by the Australian Government.

However, only 12 of the respondent organisations indicated that they are aware they can access funded interpreter services for their clients.

Limited access to professional language services

Responses to survey questions and comments provided by respondent organisations indicate that onsite interpreters are not available to them in most regional and rural areas of the state. Only four organisations indicated that they have been able to access face-to-face (onsite) interpreters for their clients. While access to telephone interpreting does occur, only 12 organisations indicated that they can access a telephone interpreter when needed. Based on the numbers supplied by the respondent organisations, it can be estimated that regional and rural community service organisations which predominantly use the TIS National account for approximately only five per cent of use of the service by non-government organisations in Queensland. This needs to be further investigated with regard to a number of contributing factors.

At an initial glance it appears that Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, migrant and refugee women and women with a disability with language service needs in regional and rural areas of the state are significantly disadvantaged in their access to language services. Responses to survey questions and comments provided by respondent organisations indicate a paucity of available translated materials for women and reinforce that their funding does not enable them to meet the costs of professionally translated materials.

Limited support to organisations to implement a language services policy

Fifteen organisations indicated that they have policies and procedures for their staff on engaging interpreters while only eleven organisations indicated that their staff feel confident working with interpreters.

Key findings – a snapshot

Of 37 organisations:

- 13 organisations indicated that Auslan is a language of their community and nine organisations indicated that women who access their services have a need for an Auslan interpreter
- 24 organisations indicated that Aboriginal languages are part of their community and nine organisations indicated that women who access their services had language needs in Aboriginal languages
- 14 organisations indicated that Torres Strait Islander languages are part of their community and four organisations indicated that women who access their services had language needs in Torres Strait Islander languages

Of 21 organisations:

- 12 organisations indicated that they believe that they have access to funded interpreter services
- 15 organisations indicated that they can access credentialed interpreters by phone when they need them
- four organisations indicated that they can access credentialed interpreters face to face when they need them
- 15 organisations indicated that they have policies and procedures in place for their staff for working with interpreters
- 11 organisations indicated that their staff feel confident working with interpreters
- 12 organisations indicated that staff know how to determine when a credentialed interpreter should be used
- 11 organisations indicated that staff understand the benefit of using credentialed interpreters
- eight organisations believe women are not confident to ask for an interpreter when they need one, five organisations believe the women are confident and seven organisations are unsure or do not know
- six organisations indicated that women do not prefer to be supported by friends and family rather than credentialed interpreters, four organisations indicated that women would prefer to be supported by friends and family but 11 organisations are unsure or do not know
- 10 organisations indicated that women prefer to use telephone interpreting from another community rather than someone from their local community

Of 20 organisations:

- Very few organisations felt confident of the availability of quality translated material to support women in many of the service types in which they work

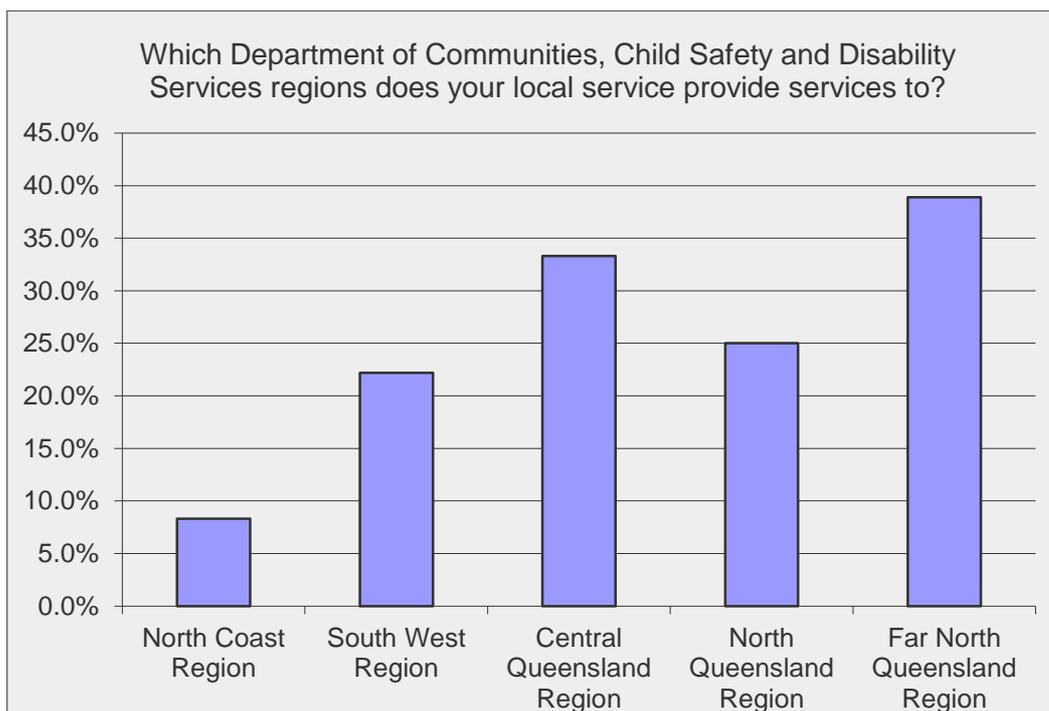
Recommendations

1. That state and commonwealth agencies which provide funding to community services ensure that funded services are made aware of arrangements in place to enable provision of free interpreter services to clients.
2. That state and commonwealth agencies develop and provide translated materials for funded services to access and use with clients in those program areas, prioritised through consultation with non-government community services.
3. That the Queensland Government support the development of policies and procedures and training that can be accessed by small community service organisations to guide their staff's understanding of when interpreters should be accessed and how to work with interpreters.
4. That the procurement of language services through the Queensland Government take account of the critical need for credentialed interpreter services for services to women in regional and rural areas of the state.

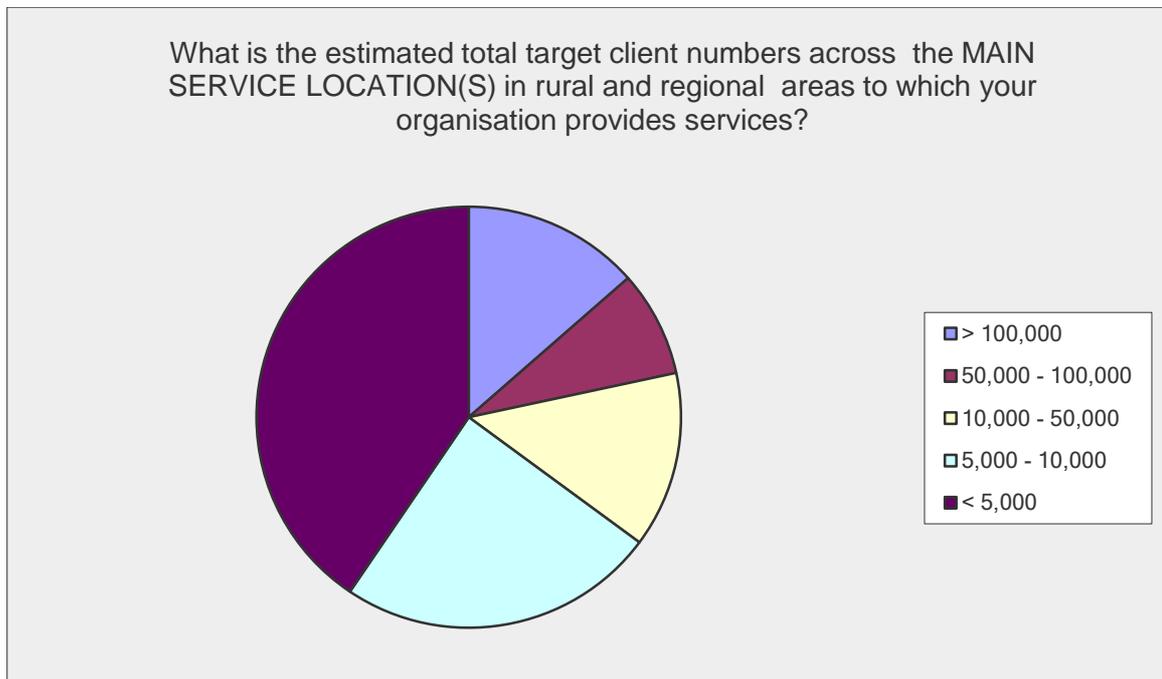
Survey responses

Who responded to the survey

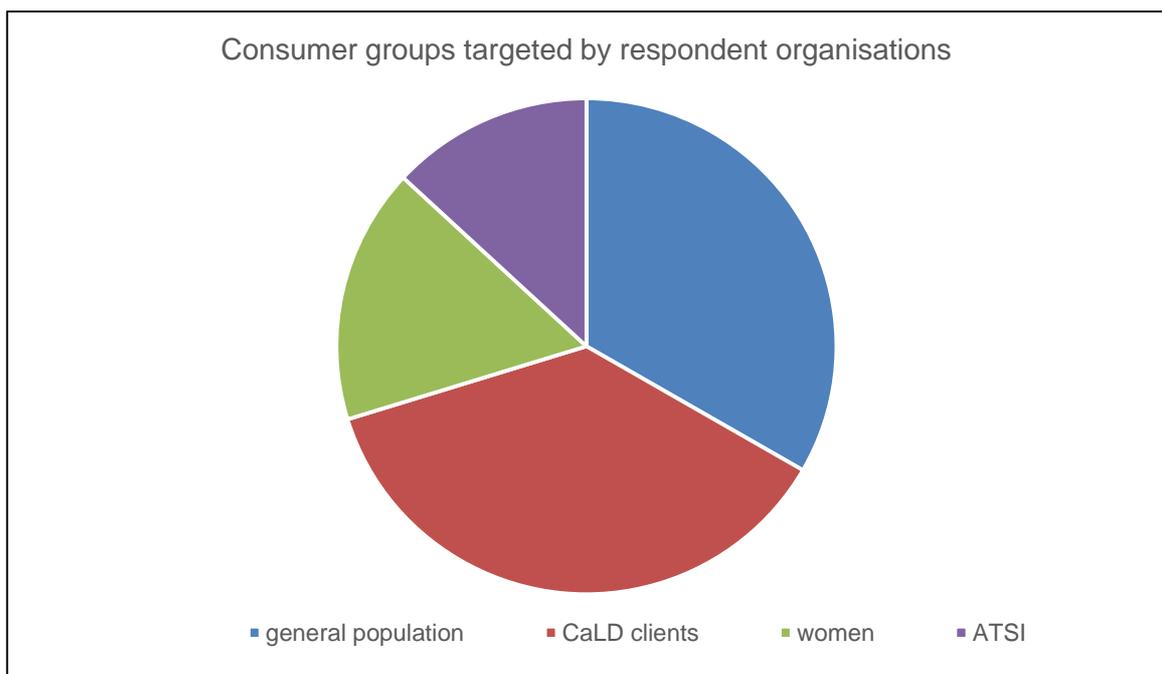
Of the 37 fully completed surveys received, the majority of responses were from organisations in Far North Queensland (39 per cent), Central Queensland (33 per cent) and North Queensland (25 per cent). Fewer were received from the North Coast and South West West regions.



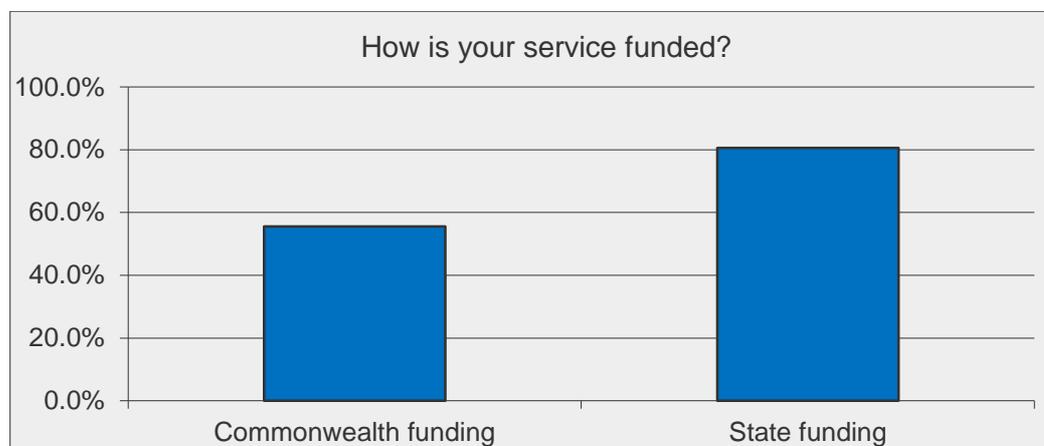
Most organisations indicated that they provide services to areas with client populations of between <5000 (40 per cent of organisations) and 5000-10 000 (24 per cent of organisations).



While 28 per cent of organisations indicated that they provide services to the general population, 31 per cent indicated they target people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, 14 per cent indicated they provide services to women (particularly those experiencing or affected by domestic violence), and 11 per cent indicated they target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

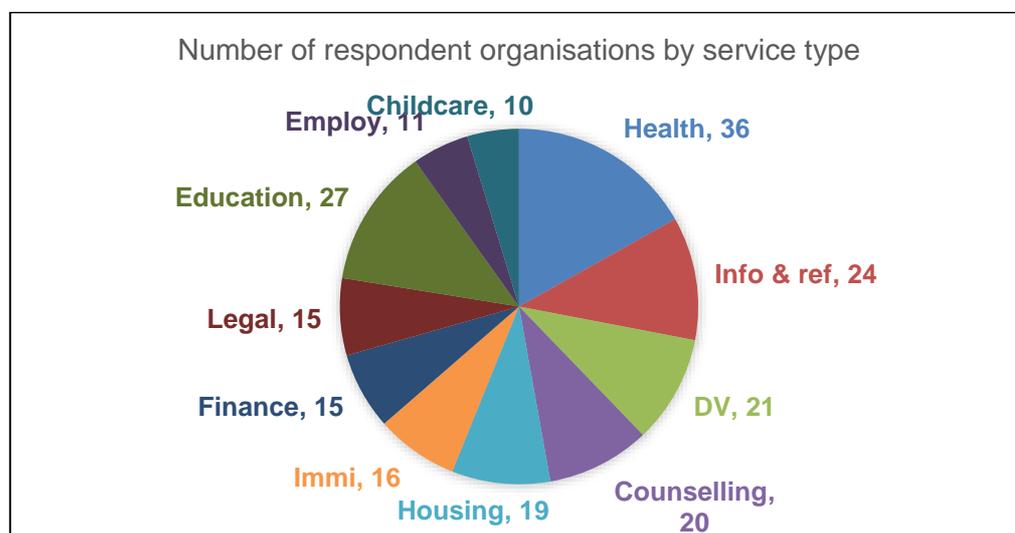


Many organisations receive a combination of both state and commonwealth funding with 81 per cent of organisations receiving state funding and 56 per cent receiving commonwealth funding.



Of the 30 organisations that indicated they use credentialed or non-professional interpreting support for women, they indicated the service type/purpose as:

- health for self (20 organisations)
- health for other family members (16 organisations)
- information and referral (24 organisations)
- domestic and family violence (21 organisations)
- counselling (20 organisations)
- housing and accommodation (19 organisations)
- immigration matters (16 organisations)
- finance matters (15 organisations)
- legal matters (15 organisations)
- education and training for self (14 organisations)
- education for children (13 organisations)
- employment (11 organisations)
- childcare (10 organisations)
- child protection (one organisation)



Of the 28 organisations that indicated they use translated material for women, they indicated the service types/purpose as:

- health for self and for other family members (17 organisations)
- counselling (11 organisations)
- immigration matters (10 organisations)
- information and referral (nine organisations)
- domestic and family violence (eight organisations)
- legal matters (six organisations)
- education and training for self (five organisations)
- housing and accommodation (three organisations)
- finance matters (three organisations)
- employment (three organisations)
- childcare (three organisations)

Language service needs

All but one of the surveyed organisations indicated that they are aware of languages other than English spoken in their target communities. The community languages most often identified are:

- Aboriginal
- Arabic
- Farsi (Afghan)
- Farsi (Persian)
- Auslan
- Cantonese
- Dari
- Hindi
- Italian
- Nepali
- Spanish
- Tamil and
- Torres Strait Islander.

Indigenous languages specified by organisations included:

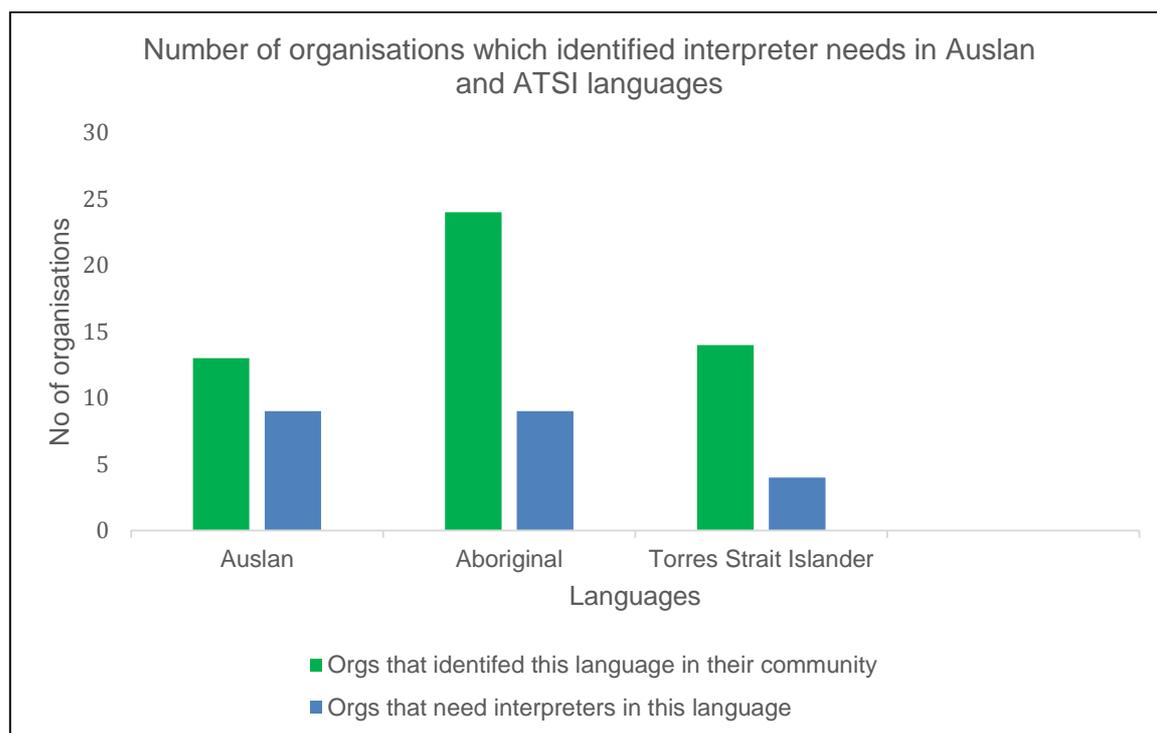
- Kuku Yalanji
- Aboriginal Kriole
- Torres Strait Creole
- Deaf Indigenous Sign Language and
- Pitjantjatjara.

Many community languages were identified by organisations in smaller numbers, including:

- Amharic
- Arakanese
- Bangla,
- Bemba,
- Burmese,
- Cebuano,
- Chin
- Dinka,
- Gujarati,
- Hazaragi
- Kachin
- Karen S'gaw
- Kinyarwanda
- Kurdish
- Melanesian Pidgin/Melpa
- Rohingya
- Somali
- Swahili
- Tagalog
- Tedim
- Tigrinya and
- Tok Pisin.

Organisations indicated that, over the last 12 months, women presented to their services with language service needs (interpreting/translation) mainly in languages including:

- Aboriginal
- Arabic
- Auslan
- Farsi (Afghan)
- Farsi (Persian)
- Nepali
- Somali
- Spanish
- Swahili
- Tamil and
- Torres Strait Creole.



Level of language service needs which were met

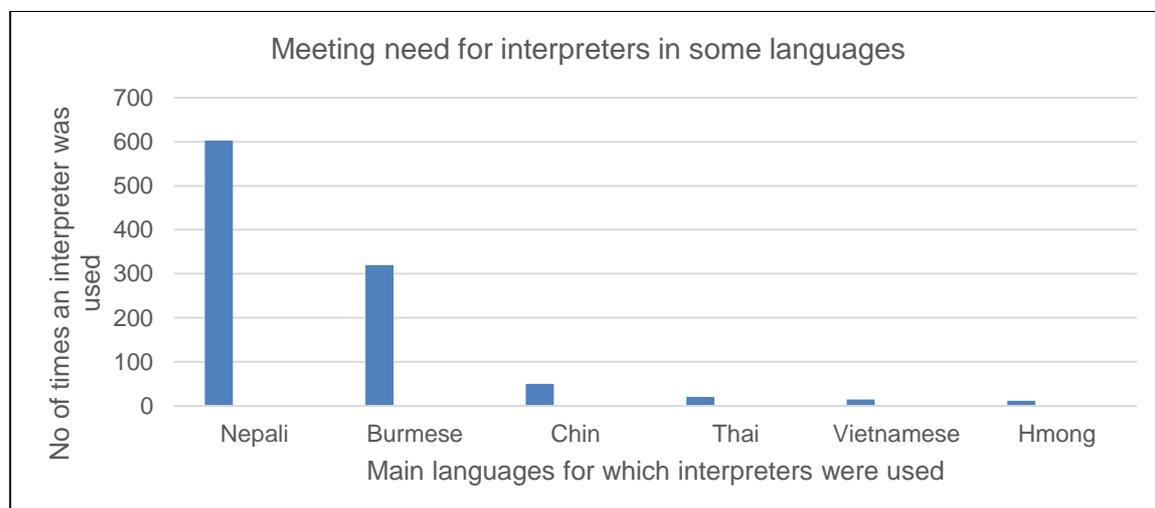
Of the 33 organisations which revealed ways in which they meet the language needs of women as clients, they indicated that:

- eight organisations use an adult family member about half of the time
- 12 organisations use a friend while 25 organisations seldom or never use a friend
- 22 organisations seldom or never use a child (<18 years) while seven organisations have used a child
- 19 organisations seldom or never use a bilingual worker for formal and complex interpreting requirements
- 12 organisations indicated that they use bicultural/bilingual workers for simple and transactional communications like making appointments
- 18 organisations indicated that they are seldom or never comfortable supporting clients without interpreting support
- 17 organisations used TIS National, four organisations used Oncall, three organisations used SWITC and three organisations used another private provider of interpreter services

Of the 21 organisations that indicated they used a (National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) credentialed interpreter in the past 12 months, the following number of engagements were indicated:

- Amheric—12 (from one organisation)
- Arabic—11 (from four organisations)
- Arakanese—one (from one organisation)
- Auslan—two, *a few* (from three organisations)
- Burmese—320+ (from one organisation)
- Cambodian—two (from two organisations)
- Cantonese—two (from two organisations)
- Cebuano—three (from one organisation)
- Chin—50+, *countless* (from two organisations)
- Farsi (Persian) —16, *quite a few, numerous times* (from four organisations)
- French—four (from two organisations)
- Filipino—three (from one organisation)
- Hazaragi—two, *numerous times* (from two organisations)
- Hmong—11 (from one organisation)
- Indonesian—five (from one organisation)
- Kachin—more than five (from one organisation)
- Kinyarwanda—six (from one organisation)
- Mandarin—one (from one organisation)
- Nepali—*countless, countless times, two, 450+, 150+, one* (from six organisations)
- Rohingya—*numerous times* (from one organisation)
- Somali—five (from two organisations)
- Spanish—one (from one organisation)
- Sudanese—five (from two organisations)
- Tagalog—three (from two organisations)
- Tamil—*numerous times* (from one organisation)
- Thai—20 (from one organisation)
- Timorese—one (from one organisation)
- Vietnamese—14 (from four organisations)

Total number of engagements of credentialed interpreters indicated in the past 12 months by 21 organisations is a minimum of 1107 (not accounting for data indicated as *a few, quite a few, numerous times, countless times and “+”*)



Of the 14 organisations that indicated they used translated materials in the past 12 months, the following number of uses was indicated:

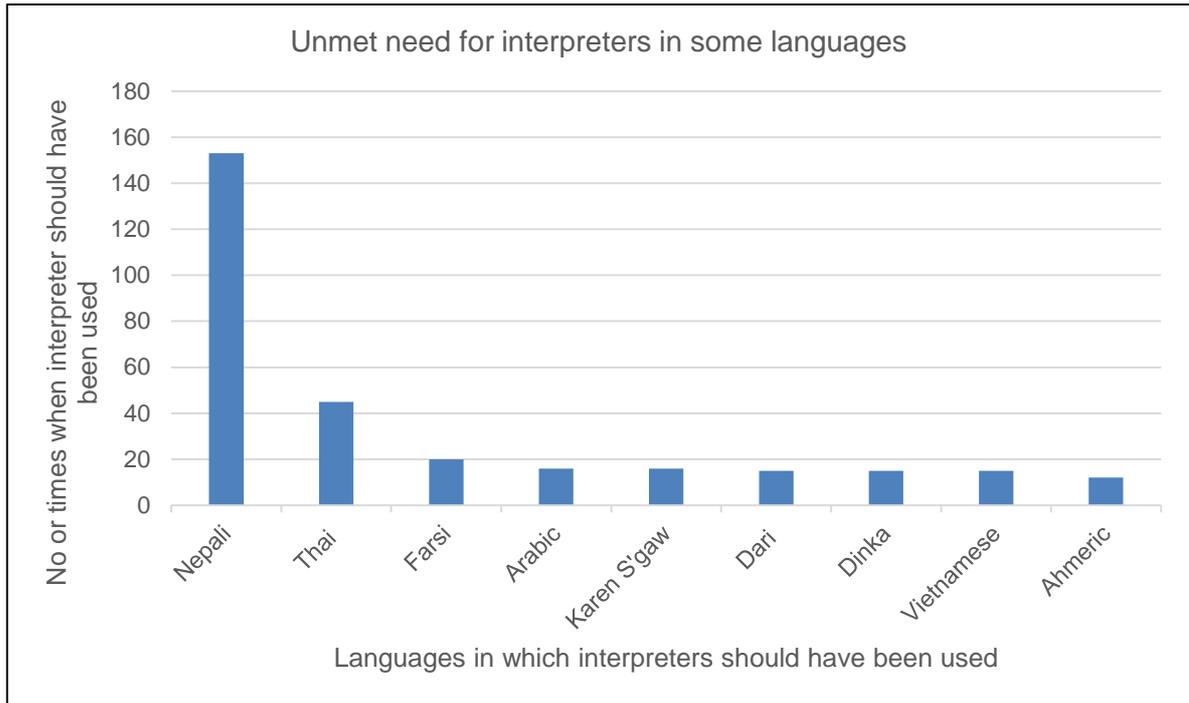
- Arabic—10 (from two organisations)
- Chinese—24 (from three organisations)
- Dari—12 (from two organisations)
- Farsi (Persian) —10 (from one organisation)
- Hazaragi—10 (from one organisation)
- Nepali—150+ (from one organisation)
- Tamil—10 (from one organisation)
- Thai—50 (from one organisation)
- Vietnamese—20 (from one organisation)
- Indonesian—10 (from one organisation)
- Tagalog—15 (from one organisation)

Unmet need

14 organisations indicated that in the past 12 months they should have engaged an interpreter with women on a number of occasions but did not. The number of occasions is indicated as:

- Aboriginal—*maybe for at least 50 per cent of clients would have been useful* (from one organisation)
- Ahmeric—12 (from one organisation)
- Arabic—16 times (from two organisations)
- Auslan—eight times (from three organisations)
- Cantonese—nine times (from four organisations)
- Cebuano—five (from one organisation)
- Dari—15 times (from one organisation)
- Dinka—15 (from one organisation)
- Farsi (Persian) —20 times (from one organisation)
- French—one (from one organisation)
- Filipino—two (from one organisation)
- Hazaragi—two times (from one organisation)
- Hindi—two times (from one organisation)
- Indonesian—10 times (from one organisation)
- Karen S'gaw—16 times (from one organisation)
- Kinyarwanda—six times (from one organisation)
- Mandarin—one time (from one organisation)
- Nepali—*countless times*, 153+ times, (from four organisations)
- Somali—six times (from three organisations)
- Sudanese—three times (from one organisation)
- Swahili—10 times (from one organisation)
- Thai—45 times (from one organisation)
- Torres Strait—*at least for 25 per cent of clients* (from one organisation)
- Vietnamese—15 times (from one organisation)

Total number of occasions in the past 12 months when 14 organisations indicated that they really should have engaged an interpreter is a minimum of 372 times.



Thirteen organisations indicated that they should have used translated materials with women on a number of occasions but did not. The number of occasions is indicated as:

- Aboriginal—four times, *at all times* (from two organisations)
- Arabic—*always*, 16 times, (from three organisations)
- Hindi—one time (from one organisation)
- Nepali—*countless times*, 156+ times, (from four organisations)
- Somali—four times, *always*, (from two organisations)
- Swahili—*always* (from one organisation)
- Torres Strait—*at all times*, two times, (from two organisations)

Survey comments

Literacy levels amongst those who require translated materials is not very high. For example a woman may speak Arabic but she may not be able to read Arabic, therefore translated materials are redundant.

More translated materials are especially required by service providers in the legal, family law and domestic violence areas

Women who need language support also need to be provided with workshops about their rights to an interpreter.

Despite the many costs associated with accessing interpreter services, our service is committed to do so.

There are no face to face interpreters here.

Our major problems relate to the issues arising from lack of on-site interpreters, even in languages that are not uncommon such as Spanish. Sometimes we cannot get an onsite interpreter at all, with any amount of notice, at any day of the week or time of the day. Where we are assisting clients with documents, it is very hard without an onsite interpreter.

ALL services should be taught to use interpreters for clients and not just when the service thinks they need one.

I consider it important that all mainstream service providers have access to and confidence to utilise interpreting services and the knowledge to know when to use interpreters.

I have tried to get interpreter information when following up with clients and have been told to use family or friends due to costs associated with professional interpreter services.

We would love to provide translated material but we do not have funding to enable us to.

I do not allow children to provide interpreting services regardless of the client's preference.

We do not ask the client to bring a friend or family member to act as an interpreter to access services at our organisation.

Note:

The author notes that languages listed as Farsi (Afghan) and Farsi (Persian) are more commonly referred to as Dari and Persian. Refer to the explanation below.

Dari [prs] Western, Central, Northern, and Northeastern Afghanistan; Kabul Province. 7,600,000 in Afghanistan (2011 census), increasing. Population total all countries: 9,600,000. Ethnic population: 7,600,000. L2 users: All other language groups have Dari speakers, especially those who live in the city of Kabul. *Status:* 1 (National). Statutory national language (2004, Constitution, Article 16 (1)). *Alternate Names:* Afghan Persian, East Farsi, Farsi, Parsi, Persian, Tajik, Tajiki *Dialects:* Darwazi, Tangshew (Tangshuri). Radio Afghanistan broadcasts promote a standardized pronunciation of the literary language based on the old dictional tradition of the country, with archaic phonetic characteristics. Phonological and lexical differences between Iran and Afghanistan cause little difficulty in comprehension.

<http://www.ethnologue.com/country/AF/languages>



Queensland Accessing Interpreters Working Group is made up of representatives from:

- Amparo Advocacy
- Immigrant Women's Support Service
- Multicultural Development Association
- Mater Health Services
- NAATI, Queensland Manager (in an advisory role to the working group)
- Centacare, Cairns
- Nambour Community Centre
- QCOSS



For more information contact QCOSS on (07) 3004 6901.