



Greater Dandenong Policy

Language and Communication Policy

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1. Purpose

The City of Greater Dandenong is committed to improving access to Council information that supports residents', organisations' and visitors' English fluency, literacy and abilities.

This Language and Communication Policy aims to address the language needs of all people in the municipality, to enhance participation in community life and deliver services that are responsive and equitable for all.

The policy provides a framework for a range of language communication strategies, all directed toward the goal of building a more informed and engaged community, whilst ensuring effective use of public resources.

2. Background

Council acknowledges that:

- Access to information is the right of all people in Greater Dandenong.
- There are a significant number of people within the municipality for whom language and/or literacy is a barrier to accessing or receiving Council information and services.
- When dealing with Council, some people in the municipality also prefer to use a language other than English, therefore language and communications need to be fit for purpose and tailored according to audience needs.

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- Key groups in the municipality with language barriers include those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people living with a disability, older residents, early school leavers, women and the long-term unemployed.
- Translated materials are simply one of a range of strategies required to communicate effectively with people with limited English abilities.
- Partnerships and community engagement are key strategies that Council has successfully adopted to communicate effectively with many of Greater Dandenong's culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

3. Scope

All Council staff and volunteers will be covered by this policy.

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Language and Communication Framework 2015 and Language and Communication Action Plan 2015.

4. Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter – Compatibility Statement

All matters relevant to the Victorian Human Rights Charter have been considered in the preparation of this Policy and are consistent with the standards set by the Charter.

In relation to Council's Language and Communication Policy, relevant matters include the right to:

- freedom of expression
- vote and to participate in public life
- a fair hearing
- be free from discrimination and be equal before the law
- privacy.

As required by the Charter, this policy is therefore based on a human rights approach and designed to facilitate access to Council information and services for all people.

5. References

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Victorian Multicultural Act 2011
- Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs: Whole of Government Report 2002

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- Victorian Government: Community Languages Online: Current Practice And Future Directions Of Multilingual Information On Victorian Government Websites 2007
- Victorian Government Guidelines on Policy and Procedures: Using Interpreter Services
- Victorian Government Guidelines on Policy and Procedures: Effective Translations
- Centre for Culture, Ethnicity & Health: Infosheets, accessed at www.ceh.org.au/resources/publications#LSinfosheets
- Superseding Policy Language and Communication Policy: adopted by Council 10 February 2003, last endorsed by Council 14 June 2005.

6. Definitions

Language Services

- A range of interpreting, translation, visual, audio and conversational tools to provide effective communication for communities where English is not the first language.

Interpreting

- The oral translation of speech between two different spoken languages.
- An interpreter is a professional who is qualified to convert speech accurately and objectively into a language other than English, acting in accordance with a code of ethics.

Translation

- Converting written information from one language to another. Conversion is not restricted to written text and can involve CD, DVD or sound file.

7. Council Policy

Council will adopt a planned and consultative approach and, where possible, will work with key community partners to prepare and disseminate information and facilitate effective communications, for example with ethnic media, peak ethno-specific organisations, community leaders and service providers.

Multicultural communities, especially new and emerging communities, tend to rely on ethnic media sources and conversation to receive information. By identifying relevant partners that are experts with their community's language, culture and needs, Council will reach broader range of people and communities.

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Council will consider providing tailored language services according to the differing needs of new, emerging and established communities and will endeavour to provide qualified interpreters and translated materials as necessary.

People should have access to professional interpreters and translators when required, to make significant decisions about their lives, be informed of their rights and/or where essential information needs to be communicated to inform decision-making. Council will investigate and implement the most appropriate communication and language options to communicate effectively. For example, materials can be presented in a range of formats such as written, pictorial, audio and audio-visual styles. These approaches are most effective when they are concise, simple and pictorial, regardless of a person's cultural and linguistic background.

Council staff will be assisted to adopt best practice when in responding to the complexity of language and literacy issues in Greater Dandenong.

Staff will be encouraged to use 'plain English' consistent with Council's Style Guide, Australian Standards universally understood symbols and to think creatively about the best medium to use to reach a target audience.

Language support and cultural competency are key elements of success in multicultural communications. Council will therefore support its multilingual staff and identify and develop best practice for them as language aides.

The following criteria will be used to determine which materials to translate:

- Any compliance, statutory and/or legal documents will be in English only
- Priority will be given to Council services
- Importance to community and the level of impact
- Level of interest and demand by the community
- Level of engagement according to Council's Community Engagement Policy and Framework.

8. Related Documents

- City of Greater Dandenong Council Plan 2013-17
- City of Greater Dandenong Community Wellbeing Plan 2010-13
- City of Greater Dandenong Community Engagement Policy 2013-17
- City of Greater Dandenong Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Action Plan 2014-17
- City of Greater Dandenong Disability Policy 2005
- City of Whittlesea Multicultural Communications Plan September 2014.
- City of Greater Dandenong Language and Communication Framework 2015
- City of Greater Dandenong Language and Communication Action Plan 2015