



# Free Interpreting Service for non-government organisations

The Free Interpreting Service aims to provide equitable access to key services for people with limited or no English language proficiency.

Non-government organisations (NGOs) can access the Free Interpreting Service to provide approved casework and emergency services, where the organisation does not receive substantial government funding to provide these services.

## Why should non-government organisations engage an interpreter?

Australia has rich cultural and linguistic diversity. The 2021 census revealed that over 5.5 million Australians speak a language other than English at home. Further, Australians represent over 250 different ancestries and speak more than 350 languages.

Non-government organisations provide a range of casework and emergency services and can engage a credentialed interpreter to communicate with people who have limited or no English language proficiency. This is particularly important when communicating complex or technical information and can help to establish a relationship and communicate effectively with these clients.

Using the Free Interpreting Service is easy and convenient. It is quick and simple to register and you will be connected to a phone interpreter within a few minutes of calling.

## Services available to non-government organisations

Non-government organisations can use the Free Interpreting Service to access interpreting services delivered by TIS National, including:

- immediate phone interpreting
- Automated Telephone Interpreting Service (ATIS)
- pre-booked phone interpreting
- on-site interpreting
- video remote interpreting.

Immediate phone interpreting is most useful for unplanned interactions. It provides:

- access to more than 2700 interpreters in more than 150 different languages
- interpreting services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- connection to an interpreter within a few minutes of calling.

Pre-booked phone interpreting is useful for planned interactions, such as community events or ongoing appointments, or if you need to request a less common language.

When phone interpreting is not suitable, TIS National can arrange for an interpreter to arrive on-site for a face to face appointment. This may be important when you have a group of people needing the same language interpreter, when you are discussing complex ideas, or when you anticipate that the appointment will last for an extended period of time.

Video remote interpreting complements TIS National's existing phone interpreting services and allows agencies to connect with an interpreter via a video conferencing platform.

## Eligibility

Non-government organisations are eligible to access the Free Interpreting Service if they are:

- a not for profit, non-government and community based organisation
- delivering services to anyone in Australia who is eligible for Medicare
- providing approved casework or emergency services (see below)
- not receiving substantial government funding for the delivery of the service.

The Free Interpreting Service can be used for providing approved casework or emergency services that are essential to economic or social participation (provided they are not listed as an ineligible activity). This includes services that manage issues arising from health conditions, housing, employment, personal or family safety, and financial crisis. These services may include but are not limited to:

- information, referral, support and advice for people with chronic disease, acute health conditions or a disability
- services that facilitate community engagement, including:
  - referral services to third party agencies
  - mentoring programs
  - respite care.
- crisis intervention services, including for:
  - domestic violence, homelessness, unemployment
  - severe financial difficulties
  - legal matters.

The Free Interpreting Service cannot be used by non-government organisations for:

- government funded services (organisations delivering government funded services should discuss access to interpreters with their government funding body)
- clinical medical services (see 'private medical practitioners category')
- recreational activities or programs
- political and media advocacy or lobbying
- vocational training
- immigration advice
- child care services.

## Register for the Free Interpreting Service

To register for the Free Interpreting Service you will need to complete the [NGO application for the Free Interpreting Service](#) form located on the TIS National website.

Your application will be assessed for eligibility and you will be notified of the outcome. If access is approved, a Free Interpreting Service account will be set up for your use.

If you require assistance with your application or have any questions about the application process, please contact TIS National on 1300 575 847 or [tis.freeinterpreting@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:tis.freeinterpreting@homeaffairs.gov.au).

## To access the Free Interpreting Service

1. Call TIS National on 131 450 to access immediate phone interpreting.
2. Provide the operator with the language and gender (if specified) of the interpreter that you need.
3. Provide your client code and the name of the non-government organisation to the operator.

You can easily request and manage all of your pre-booked phone, video remote, and on-site interpreter bookings through TIS Online. All agencies registered with a TIS National account are automatically registered to use TIS Online.

## More information

- **Read:** about the Free Interpreting Service: [tisnational.gov.au/FIS](https://tisnational.gov.au/FIS)
- **Read:** about how to access TIS National's online booking system [TIS Online](#)
- **Watch:** videos about TIS National services and how to work with interpreters: [tisnational.gov.au/videos](https://tisnational.gov.au/videos)
- **Order:** free promotional materials from the online TIS National catalogue: [tisnational.gov.au/promomaterials](https://tisnational.gov.au/promomaterials)
- **Contact:** TIS National Free Interpreting Service Team on 1300 575 847 or [tis.freeinterpreting@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:tis.freeinterpreting@homeaffairs.gov.au)

**24 hours a day, every day of the year**