



Media statement

Friday 22 May, 2009

TRIED IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE - CALL FOR A FAIR GO

The Indigenous Implementation Board has come out strongly in support of the provision of adequate Indigenous translator and interpreting services.

Board Chairman Lieutenant General John Sanderson said there is a link between the overrepresentation of Indigenous Western Australian in the legal and health systems and the lack of a comprehensive translator and interpreter services.

“In Western Australia people from other countries who speak little or no English can access an interpreter or translator when in court or visiting a doctor,” General Sanderson said.

“It is incorrect to assume that people who speak Indigenous languages are getting the same level of service as other non-English speaking minority groups.”

“For many Indigenous Western Australians English can be their second, third or fourth language. For some, English is a foreign language. There are far too many circumstances where Indigenous people are unable to access the use of an interpreter or translator in the health and justice systems in our State.”

“How is it that we can provide more effective translator and interpreter services to those who speak languages other than the first languages of our nation?”

A statement from the Board’s May meeting asserted there was an urgent need to train and accredit Indigenous translators and interpreters across WA to ensure this systemic issue is addressed.

Lieutenant General Sanderson also said the provision of adequate translator and interpreter services would be a critical success factor in any strategy designed to address Indigenous disadvantage.

“The Board believes that the State and Commonwealth Governments should commit adequate funding immediately to provide Aboriginal Australians with health and legal services in a language they can understand. With this it should also provide funding to train and accredit Indigenous translators and interpreters.”

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IIB STATEMENT ON INTERPRETER AND TRANSLATOR SERVICES

There is clearly a link between the over-representation of Indigenous people in the WA legal and health systems and the lack of adequate translator and interpreter services in the State.

The establishment of adequate Indigenous translator and interpreter services is identified as a priority by the Department of Indigenous Affairs, the Equal Opportunity Commission, Office of Multicultural Interests, Department of the Attorney General and Department for Communities. The Department for Indigenous Affairs has also promoted the need for a national policy framework to guide the adequate provision of Indigenous interpreter and translator services.

The Indigenous Implementation Board (Board) recognises that the provision of adequate translator and interpreter services will be a critical success factor in any strategy designed to promote health and wellbeing or address Indigenous disadvantage.

It supports that adequate services can only be delivered if there is a strategy and funding for training and accreditation of more Indigenous translators and interpreters. Additionally, accountability mechanisms will need to be established to ensure that people's rights to access translators and interpreters are being met.

State and Commonwealth Governments should commit adequate funding immediately to provide Aboriginal Australians with health and legal services in a language they can understand. With this it should also provide funding to train and accredit Indigenous translators and interpreters.

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