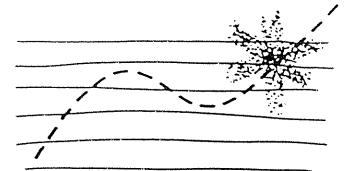


Postal Address  
P O Box 7229  
Cloisters Square  
Perth, Western Australia 6850

Street Address  
2nd Floor Dumas House  
2 Havelock Street, West Perth

Telephone: 09 222 7700  
Facsimile: 09 222 7777

Our Ref: 2-1-29/003  
Enquiries: Helen Thomas



Department of Productivity  
and Labour Relations

### **CIRCULAR TO DEPARTMENTS AND AUTHORITIES NO 5 OF 1994 - LANGUAGE ALLOWANCE**

The introduction of a Language Allowance is a part of the Language Services Strategy for the public sector. The Language Allowance is a special allowance payable to employees who provide interpreting or translating services for their employer in addition to their normal duties.

There are three main purposes for the Allowance:

1. To assist agencies in becoming more self-sufficient in providing language services through the use of in-house resources;
2. To recognise the contribution and skills of employees who provide language services in addition to their normal duties; and
3. To give multilingual staff an incentive to upgrade their language skills.

The Allowance is not payable to persons recruited into positions where language skills are an essential criterion and the use of these skills is part of the normal duties of the position.

The Allowance is generally payable with respect to languages for which the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters [NAATI] provides accreditation for interpreters and translators. This includes some Aboriginal languages and languages for the deaf.

The amount payable under the Allowance varies, depending on the employee's level of accreditation.

Agencies are to pay the Language Allowance from within existing budgets as no additional funding will be made available. The Language Allowance will be payable from 1 July 1994.

Details regarding eligibility for the Allowance, payment of the Allowance and its implementation are contained in the attachment to this circular.

  
NOEL WHITEHEAD  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

26 April 1994

## LANGUAGE ALLOWANCE

### ELIGIBILITY FOR THE LANGUAGE ALLOWANCE

#### Accreditation

One of the underlying principles of the Language Services Strategy relates to the use of accredited language skills. Policy Statement 7 [Use of Accredited Language Skills] of the Strategy states that "it is the agency's responsibility to ensure that all persons used to provide language services to its clients are accredited". Therefore, in order to be eligible for the Allowance, an employee is required to be accredited as an interpreter or translator in the relevant language by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters [NAATI]. The only exception to this requirement is where it is not possible for a NAATI accreditation test to be set. Under these circumstances, a supervisor may certify that the staff member has a satisfactory standard of competence in order for the employee to qualify for the Allowance. However, it would be expected that attempts to attain NAATI accreditation would be taken as soon as such accreditation were available.

NAATI is in the process of revising its classification levels. Formerly, the accreditation levels for both interpreters and translators ranged from level 1 [lowest] to level 5 [highest]. NAATI no longer provides Level 1 accreditation. Translators are accredited at levels 2 and above. Interpreters equivalent to level 2 are now known as "Interpreter [para - professional]" and at level 3 simply as "Interpreter".

The Allowance will still be payable to those who obtained Level 1 accreditation while it was available and if they are called upon to undertake an interpreting or translating task appropriate to that level. As Levels 4 and 5 relate to the requirements of professional interpreters and translators, only Levels 1 to 3 for translators and their equivalent for interpreters are incorporated into this Allowance. Eligible employees who are accredited at the higher levels should be paid at the Level 3 rate.

If an employee, with the agreement of her/his employer, applies for NAATI accreditation in order to provide work related interpreting services, then her/his employing agency should meet the costs involved. As a guide, for the 1993/94 NAATI program a Level 2 interpreter's test cost \$115 and Level 3 cost \$155. There is also a one off application fee of \$25.

#### Frequency of Language Use

In order to be able to claim the Language Allowance, an employee must:

- spend at least 10 per cent of their time in a week on interpreting or translating [this applies to both full time and part time employees]; or
- carry out at least 3 separate interpreting or translating assignments over a week for full time employees, and for part time employee the equivalent of 3 assignments over a full time week [e.g. a half time employee would be required to perform 3 assignments over a two week period].

An employee who is being paid the Allowance on the basis of at least 3 assignments per week [or equivalent for part time employees], is not entitled to any additional Allowance for the fourth or subsequent assignment during that period.

Agencies can determine their own system of recording frequency of language use to establish eligibility. This is in keeping with Policy Statement 1 [Agency Responsibility] of the Language Services Strategy which places the responsibility for monitoring and recording the time spent by staff in interpreting or translating tasks with supervisors. Agencies are advised, however, that these records would need to be available for audit purposes.

### Restriction on Eligibility

The Allowance is payable only to staff at or equal to Public Service Level 5 [\$38,600 to \$42,815 p.a. as at April 1994] or below.

This Allowance is payable **only** for the use of **actual skills utilised**. Therefore, for example, an employee who is on leave or otherwise absent from work would not be eligible for the Allowance during the period of absence.

## PAYMENT OF THE ALLOWANCE

### Rates

The Allowance is to be paid at the following rates corresponding to the accreditation levels set by NAATI:

- Translator/interpreter level 1 - \$19 per fortnight [\$9.50 per week]
- Translator level 2 / Interpreter [para-professional] - \$39 per fortnight [\$19.50 per week]
- Translator level 3 / Interpreter - \$57 per fortnight [\$28.50 per week]

Note that for the purposes of superannuation calculations, this Allowance is to be included as salary as defined in the Government Employees Superannuation Act 1987.

### Applying for the Allowance

In order to be paid the Language Allowance, an employee is required to apply for it. Agencies, however, should ensure that relevant employees are aware of the availability of the Allowance and how to submit an appropriate claim.

### Methods of Payment

Agencies are free to determine their own method of payment. This is also in keeping with Policy Statement 1 [Agency Responsibility] of the Language Services Strategy.

Some options which an agency may wish to consider in determining the method of payment include:

- Fortnightly payments based on the employee submitting a claim supported by the records of the supervisor; or

- An annual payment of the Allowance in the case of staff who are frequently called upon to interpret or translate. Agencies should be careful before adopting this method, however, as it could result in payment for some periods when no interpreting or translating is actually performed. As previously stated, the Allowance should not, for example, be payable during periods of paid or unpaid leave.

### **Part Time Employees**

Payment of the Allowance to part time employees will vary according to how the Allowance is calculated. If the Allowance is paid on the basis of 10 per cent of working time spent on interpreting or translating tasks, then it should be paid on a pro rata basis to part time employees. This is because, in order to meet the 10 per cent requirement, a part time employee would be required to spend fewer actual hours on this work than a full time employee and the amount paid should reflect the proportion the employee's part time hours bear to full time hours.

If, however, the Allowance is paid on the basis of 3 or more assignments per week or equivalent, it should be paid at the same rate as for a full time employee. If a part time employee meets the same minimum tasks as required for a full time employee it is equitable that they receive the same Allowance for that number of tasks.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LANGUAGE ALLOWANCE**

So that agencies can make provision for the Allowance, payment of the Language Allowance will be introduced from the beginning of the 1994/95 financial year, i.e. 1 July 1994.

### **CONTACT POINT FOR ENQUIRIES**

Enquiries regarding the Allowance should be directed to the DOPLAR Industrial Officer responsible for your agency, or to Helen Thomas, Policy Branch, tel. 222 7905.

Enquiries regarding the Language Services Strategy should be directed to the Office of Multicultural Interests, tel. 222 0246.

Enquiries regarding the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters [NAATI] and its accreditation process should be addressed to that organisation, tel. 322 7874.