

29 April 2026

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Our ref: OIA 131367

Tēnā koe P Peach

### **Official Information Act request: Interpreting services**

Thank you for your email of 27 March 2026 to the Ministry of Justice (the Ministry), requesting information about interpreting services, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Specifically, you requested:

#### **SECTION A: SUBCONTRACTING ARRANGEMENTS**

- 1. Whether MOJ's interpreting and translation providers are permitted to subcontract assignments to third parties, including overseas-based agencies or individual contractors located outside New Zealand.*
- 2. Any conditions or restrictions in MOJ's contracts with interpreting and translation providers regarding the use of subcontractors, including any requirements that subcontractors be based in New Zealand or hold an appropriate New Zealand work visa.*
- 3. Whether MOJ requires providers to disclose the identity, location, or credentials of individual interpreters or translators — including subcontractors — who carry out assignments on MOJ's behalf.*
- 4. Whether MOJ has any knowledge of, or has sought information about, assignments being routed to interpreters or translators located outside New Zealand.*
- 5. Any instances where MOJ became aware that an assignment was conducted by a person located outside New Zealand or by an uncredentialed subcontractor, and any action taken as a result.*

#### **SECTION B: NAATI CREDENTIAL COMPLIANCE**

- 6. What mechanism, if any, MOJ uses to verify that individual interpreters and translators carrying out assignments on its behalf — including those engaged through subcontracting arrangements — hold a valid NAATI credential or Working Towards NAATI (WTN) status.*
- 7. Whether MOJ requires its interpreting and translation providers to maintain and supply a current register of credentialed practitioners working under MOJ contracts, and if so whether MOJ has received and reviewed such registers.*
- 8. Any audits, spot checks, or compliance reviews conducted by MOJ on its interpreting and translation providers since 1 July 2024 to verify NAATI credential compliance, including the methodology and findings of any such reviews.*

9. *Any instances since 1 July 2024 where a provider was found to have used an interpreter or translator who did not hold the required NAATI credential or Working Towards NAATI (WTN) status, and any consequences or remedial action taken.*
10. *Any complaints received by MOJ since 1 July 2024 from staff, clients, or members of the public regarding the qualifications or conduct of an interpreter or translator engaged through MOJ's services.*

#### SECTION C: INTERPRETER AND TRANSLATOR PAY VISIBILITY

11. *Whether MOJ has any information about the rates or fees paid by its providers to individual interpreters or translators for assignments conducted on MOJ's behalf.*
12. *Whether MOJ has ever sought, as part of contract negotiations, tendering processes, or performance reviews, any information about the pay or working conditions of interpreters or translators engaged through its provider contracts.*
13. *Any internal policies, briefings, risk assessments, or correspondence within MOJ regarding the fair remuneration or employment conditions of interpreters and translators working under its contracts, including any concerns raised about the margin between rates paid to providers and rates passed on to practitioners.*
14. *Whether MOJ's tendering or procurement criteria for interpreting and translation services include any consideration of whether providers pay practitioners at or above a minimum rate, living wage, or industry standard.*

Due to the size of your request, the information will be provided to you in two tranches. This letter is tranche one and covers questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. Tranche two will contain the remaining questions and will be sent to you as soon as possible, or no later than 12 May 2026. Thank you for your patience while we complete this process.

We have interpreted your request to relate to information the Ministry holds regarding interpreters in court proceedings.

Most courts and tribunals in New Zealand conduct their hearings in the English language. English is not a first language for some participants, and this can create a linguistic barrier that could disadvantage them in a court or tribunal proceeding. To enable fair access to justice, a person needs to be able to sufficiently understand and comprehend what is happening in a court or tribunal proceeding and respond to questions.

The interpreter service ensures participants can communicate with others by translating what legal professionals, and court and tribunal staff say in English, to the participants preferred language and vice versa. Further information on what an interpreter does can be found here: [What an interpreter does | New Zealand Ministry of Justice](#).

Regarding questions one and two, interpreters are not able to subcontract their services to third parties. The standard terms and conditions interpreters must abide by can be found here: [Standard Terms and Conditions | New Zealand Ministry of Justice](#).

Regarding question three, the Ministry needs to understand where interpreters are located in relation to the nearest court. The Ministry holds a list of interpreters that includes their language, location and if they are Language Service Provider (LSP) or individuals. The

Ministry contacts the LSP to seek availability from potential interpreters for the proceedings. Available interpreters will confirm their availability to accept the request.

In response to questions four and five, the Ministry has previously engaged LSP's that had interpreters located outside of New Zealand. These interpreters are usually based in New Zealand and were overseas for a limited period of time. These interpreters had previously provided services to the Ministry on multiple occasions. Their engagement was agreed due to this established and trusted working relationship. The Ministry does not engage with uncredentialed subcontractors.

In response to question six, the Ministry's expectation is that interpreters engaged directly, or through LSP's, hold appropriate National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) credentials or are actively working towards them. The Ministry also recognises the value of retaining interpreters with extensive relevant experience, including where an interpreter does not intend to pursue NAATI accreditation. Eligibility requirements for interpreters include:

- be a New Zealand citizen or hold a permanent resident visa, or an appropriate working visa,
- be proficient speaking English (including commonly used medical and legal terminology), and
- hold or be working towards an appropriate interpreting credential or credentials, as set out in qualification or certification requirements.

A list of qualifications for interpreters is available here: [Tertiary-Qualifications-Accepted-by-National-Accreditation-Authority-for-Translators-and-Interpreters.pdf](#). Further information on responsibilities and credentials is also available in the Quality services Framework: [Interpreter Services Quality Framework | New Zealand Ministry of Justice](#).

As mentioned above, the remaining questions will be responded to in tranche two of this response.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website at: [Official Information Act responses | New Zealand Ministry of Justice](#).

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman under section 28 of the Act. The Office of the Ombudsman may be contacted by phone on: 0800 802 602, by email at: [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz), or via the webform: [Make a complaint \(for members of the public\) | Ombudsman New Zealand](#).

Nāku noa, nā



Louisa Carroll  
**Acting Group Manager, National Service Delivery**