

**WESTERN CAPE LANGUAGE POLICY**  
NOVEMBER 2001

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Compiled by the Western Cape Language Committee, a statutory body of the Western Cape Provincial Government

## 1. PURPOSE

To give effect to

- sections 6 and 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996);
- section 5 of the Constitution of the Western Cape (Act 1 of 1998);
- the Western Cape Languages Act (Act 13 of 1998);
- the Pan South African Language Board Act (Act 59 of 1995);
- the Batho Pele principle;
- the promotion and realisation of provincial and national unity, and
- the development of the provincial and national economy.

## 2. GOALS

- 2.1 To support the Batho Pele initiative of impartial service delivery by promoting equal access to public services and programmes by removing communication or language barriers.
- 2.2 To promote multilingualism amongst the people of the Western Cape.
- 2.3 To promote the use of the three official languages of the Western Cape, namely Afrikaans, Xhosa and English, by the provincial and local governments<sup>1</sup> of the Western Cape.
- 2.4 To give increasing effect to the equal constitutional status of the three official languages of the Western Cape.
- 2.5 To elevate the status and advance the use of those indigenous languages of historically diminished status used by the people of the Western Cape, such as the Khoi and San languages.
- 2.6 To promote and ensure respect in the Western Cape for the section 6 (5) ancestral (heritage) languages provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996).
- 2.7 To foster respect for and protect the language rights of the people of the Western Cape, thereby avoiding the use of any language for exploitation and domination.
- 2.8 To develop language resources by enabling and supporting the training of language professionals.

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<sup>1</sup> Provincial Government refers to the executive, legislative, judicial and administrative functions of the provincial government.

### **3. POLICY PROVISIONS FOR THE USE OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF THE WESTERN CAPE BY THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT**

- 3.1 The official languages of the Province are Afrikaans, Xhosa and English. These languages may be used in any debates and other proceedings of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament and its committees. The Western Cape Parliament must make provision for interpreting services for members from and into the three official languages during sittings of the Provincial Parliament and any of its committees. Sign language interpreting must be provided where necessary.
- 3.2 The official record of debates of the Provincial Parliament must be kept in the official languages in which the debates took place. Translations of any sections of the record into any of the relevant official languages must be made available by the Secretary to the Provincial Parliament within a reasonable period after the debate.
- 3.3 All legislation, official reports and resolutions of the Provincial Parliament and its committees must be made available in all three official languages. The Provincial Parliament may make practical arrangements to cause legislation, official reports and resolutions drawn up in one official language to be available, within a reasonable period, in the other two official languages.
- 3.4 A bill introduced in the Provincial Parliament must upon introduction be available in at least two official languages. A system must be implemented which rotates the choice of two languages equitably amongst the three official languages of the Province. The Secretary to Parliament must keep a centralised register in order to regulate the rotation of the languages in bills to be introduced to the Provincial Parliament.
- 3.5 A notice of motion or a formal motion in the Provincial Parliament must be available in all three official languages. The Provincial Parliament may make practical arrangements to cause motions drawn up in one official language to be available, within a reasonable period, in the other two official languages.

### **4. OFFICIAL NOTICES AND ADVERTISEMENTS**

- 4.1 All official notices issued by the provincial government for general public information, must be issued in Afrikaans, Xhosa and English. Local government must give due consideration to the language preferences of their residents in this regard.
- 4.2 All official notices and advertisements published by provincial and local governments must, in case of publication in the Provincial Gazette, be published in Afrikaans, Xhosa and English. When published in other newspapers, it is sufficient to publish such documents, notices or advertisements only in the language in which the newspaper concerned appears. If there is no newspaper published in a particular language, such notices or advertisements must be published in that official language in another newspaper.

## 5. COMMUNICATION WITH AND SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC

- 5.1 Every organ or institution of the provincial or local government must, in its oral, written and electronic communication with and rendering of services to the public, ensure that these are carried out in the most appropriate manner, with the assistance of interpreters and translators and other technical means such as simulcast and subtitling, in any of the three official languages of the Western Cape, depending on the language usage and needs of the residents.
- 5.2 Any member of the public in the Western Cape may
- (a) use any one of the three official languages of the Western Cape in his or her communication with any institution of the provincial or local government, and
  - (b) be served in any of the three official languages at or by any institution of the provincial or local government where there is a substantial need for communication and services in that language based on the language needs and preferences of the community, and it can reasonably be expected of the institution concerned to communicate and render services in that language, with due consideration to the National Education Language Policy.
- 5.3 In the case of written and electronic communication between the provincial and local governments and residents, the provincial official language of the residents' choice must be used. If the provincial or local government initiates the communication, the language profile of the *target audience* will determine the languages to be used. Subject to periodic language audits, provincial and local government publications shall be issued in the language/s of the target audience.
- 5.4 International communication on the part of provincial and local governments will usually be in English or in the preferred language of the country concerned.

## 6. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

- 6.1 Provincial and local governments must in their various structures each reach sufficient consensus on their working languages for internal **oral** communication, intra- and inter-departmentally, subject to the proviso that no person shall be prevented from using the language of his or her preference, at any given time.
- 6.2 Provincial and local government structures must in their various structures each reach sufficient consensus on their working languages for internal **written** and **electronic** communication, intra- and inter-departmentally, provided that every effort be made to comply with the language code of conduct.

## **7. LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Local governments must determine the language usage and preferences of their communities within the enabling provincial language policy framework.

Upon the determination of the language usage and preferences of the residents, local governments must, in consultation with their communities, develop, publicise and implement language policies.

## **8. PRIVATE SECTOR**

8.1 Provincial and local governments shall encourage and advise private enterprises to develop and implement their own language policies in accordance with the framework of the Provincial Language Policy.

8.2 Provincial and local governments shall endeavour to promote the most important languages of trade and tourism such as German, French and Japanese. Provincial and local governments shall advise non-governmental organisations and the private sector in this regard, e.g. in regard to planning and the formulation of policy.

## **9. IDENTIFICATION SIGNS**

Where an organ or institution of the provincial or local government uses signage and directions to identify any of its offices or facilities, such signage and directions must be in the three official languages of the Western Cape. The three official languages of the Western Cape must be used equitably on road signs and direction signs on roads which do not form part of the RTRN. As far as local road signs, direction signs and street names are concerned, due consideration must be given to local communities' language use and preferences.