

# Bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) Community Liaison Officer - Trial Outcomes

Tuesday, 7 May 2024  
City Community Services and Culture Committee

Strategic Alignment - Our Community

**Program Contact:**  
Steve Zaluski, Associate Director  
Regulatory Services

Public

**Approving Officer:**  
Iliia Houridis, Director City  
Shaping

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a review of Council's Bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) Community Liaison Officer (BCLO) service, which supports extending the role for a further 12 months as currently proposed in the draft 2024/25 Annual Business Plan and Budget.

The BCLO service was initially trialed from October 2022 to May 2023 following a Council resolution. The service was implemented as a central contact point for traders and community members, providing connections with relevant service providers and promoting community safety awareness-raising activities.

Following the positive feedback during the trial, Council endorsed the role to continue for a further 12 months.

In 2023/24, the BCLO service has continued to evolve, broadening the scope of proactive interactions with the community, with increased engagement and alignment to Council's objectives of a connected and inclusive community, rather than solely focusing on safety and compliance matters.

Should the service be extended for a further year as currently proposed, it will continue to evolve in providing the proactive support. It is also noted an extension will enable greater collaboration with SAPOL, following the recent announcement of their plans to recruit a BCLO.

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## RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendation will be presented to Council on 14 May 2024 for consideration.

THAT THE CITY COMMUNITY SERVICES AND CULTURE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL

THAT COUNCIL

1. Notes the outcomes and future opportunities for the Bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) Community Liaison Officer as contained in this report.
  2. Endorses the extension of the Bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) Community Liaison Officer service for a further 12 months, to 30 June 2025, noting final approval will be confirmed as part of the draft 2024/25 Annual Business Plan & Budget.
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## IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2024-2028 Strategic Plan	<b>Strategic Alignment – Our Community</b>
Policy	Not as a result of this report
Consultation	Not as a result of this report
Resource	A 12 month extension of the role (1.0 FTE at a cost of \$99,000) is currently proposed in the draft 2024/25 Annual Business Plan & Budget.
Risk / Legal / Legislative	Not as a result of this report
Opportunities	Continue to offer a Bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) Community Liaison Officer as a service to the community.
23/24 Budget Allocation	\$88,640 was expended for the continuation of the position following the trial in the previous 2022/23 budget.
Proposed 24/25 Budget Allocation	A budget proposal for 2024/25 has been prepared for this item, noting the position is currently unfunded. Any required funding for this item is subject to, and needs to be considered in the context of, the prioritisation of projects, initiatives and service enhancements for the development of the 2024/25 budget, and within the parameters of the LTFP to ensure long-term financial sustainability.
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	Not as a result of this report
23/24 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	Not as a result of this report
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	Not as a result of this report
Other Funding Sources	Not as a result of this report

# DISCUSSION

## Background

1. Chinese-Mandarin is the most commonly spoken language other than English by city residents. Approximately 20% of the City of Adelaide's population is of Chinese heritage, with nearly 14% speaking Mandarin at home.

2. At the 14 June 2022 Council meeting, the following was resolved:

### *That Council*

- 1 *Requests Administration commence of a pilot by August 2022 to trial a bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) community safety officer position to act as a central contact point for traders, particularly in and around Gouger and Grote Street, to deliver a range of community safety awareness-raising activities, including providing connections with relevant service providers.*
- 2 *The cost of this pilot will be funded from existing vacancy management budgets in 2022/23 with any ongoing funding to be sought in the first quarter budget review for 2022/23.*
- 3 *The outcomes of the trial, including findings and a recommendation for future options, is provided to Council at the conclusion of the trial period.*

3. Following the trial, a report [Link 1](#) was presented to Council in June 2023 sharing the outcomes of the service.

4. At the 13 June 2023 Council meeting, the following was resolved:

### *That Council*

1. *Approve the continuation of the Bilingual Community Liaison Officer at 1.0 FTE to 30 June 2024, to continue developing the service to provide value to the community.*

5. The initial focus was on promoting the service with businesses and stakeholders and establishing communication methods, such as a WeChat account exclusively for point-to-point enquiries.

6. Stakeholder engagement was also undertaken to create links with SAPOL for cross-agency support for the community.

7. Early interactions centred on assisting business owners with concerns about safety, educating them on the differing responsibilities of SAPOL and Council, and explaining how people can contact the most appropriate service for their enquiry.

8. As the service has evolved, safety-related enquiries have lessened, with more communication and support provided in areas such as developing relationships with Chinese media outlets that support and target the Chinese-speaking community, translating documents to Mandarin across several areas of Council, and engaging with the community regarding construction and capital works projects, often via WeChat.

## Outcomes during 2023/24 – Quantitative

9. From July 2023 to March 2024, a total of 200 initial enquiries were received. This is an increase from the 103 enquiries managed in the initial six-month trial.

9.1. This figure represents the number of 'initial enquiries' – many of which involved further contact and follow-up. Please see at [Link 2](#).

10. Of the 200 enquiries, 175 were related to Council services across a wide variety of functions. The most common topics were matters regarding.

10.1. Community Safety

10.2. Permits & Approvals

10.3. Marketing/media and communications enquiries

10.4. Environmental Health

10.5. Project Delivery & Consultation

11. Non-Council enquiries were also varied, with the most common relating to SAPOL matters regarding security and reporting of criminal behaviour i.e. theft and damage, anti-social behaviour.

12. In April 2024, a stakeholder survey was conducted to assess perceptions from those who had accessed the BCLO service.

13. Of 31 business stakeholders who provided feedback:
  - 13.1. 100% 'Strongly Agreed' that:
    - 13.1.1. The BCLO was easy to deal with.
    - 13.1.2. They were happy with the support provided.
    - 13.1.3. They would use the BCLO service again.
  - 13.2. Approximately 60% of survey respondents indicated that the main reason they contacted the BCLO was for street upgrade projects, including Field and Gouger Streets.
  - 13.3. The most common way respondents became aware of the BCLO service was through a direct visit from the BCLO, followed by a promotion from a Council Member.

#### **Outcomes during 2023/24 – Qualitative**

14. Similar to the findings of the report during the initial trial, basing value purely on the volume of 'initial enquiries' may not appear significant, however, it is noted that any initial enquiries lead to further contacts and ongoing communication and support for community members.
15. It is also noted that the volume and quantitative analysis may not reflect the context and value of individual engagements with the community and Council, which if not for the BCLO can be difficult given the language barriers faced.
16. The examples detailed within [Link 3](#), provide some additional context of the type and value of BCLO engagements with the community.

#### **Performance Measures**

17. The following performance measures were taken into consideration when assessing the success of the BCLO service:
  - 17.1. An increase in the number of direct enquiries made to the BCLO.
    - 17.1.1. The data shows the number of direct enquiries has increased both internally and externally.
  - 17.2. Internal feedback from teams across the organisation highlights that the current service is valued, and there is an opportunity to evolve further regarding support in community engagement, activations, and projects.
  - 17.3. Positive feedback from stakeholders using the service – evidenced by the recent survey feedback.
  - 17.4. The variety of outcomes continues to broaden as the service evolves.
  - 17.5. Clear and distinct responsibilities, ensuring there is minimal duplication with existing services.
    - 17.5.1. If the service continues for another 12 months, the current position description will be reviewed to more accurately reflect the broader service now being delivered.
  - 17.6. Regular updates are provided to traders and the broader community.
    - 17.6.1. Collaboration with Chinese media groups has resulted in communication updates for the community on upcoming events, activations and projects.
    - 17.6.2. WeChat communications continue to keep relevant stakeholders informed on a more 'business as usual' basis – e.g. a change of cardboard collections schedule.
  - 17.7. Continued collaboration with SAPOL and other relevant agencies.

#### **Broader Context and Future Opportunities**

18. The above outcomes highlight the service's success, including its evolving nature of becoming more proactive in providing value to the community.
19. More recently, the BCLO has made steps to connect with the Chinese-Mandarin speaking international student community. It is anticipated that this will add another important aspect to the role, linking students to relevant services and promoting suitable events for them to network and engage with the community.
20. More broadly, the City of Adelaide (CoA) recently hosted a Civic Function in recognition of SAPOL's newly recruited bilingual Police Officers.
21. At the function, SAPOL announced the upcoming recruitment of a dedicated Bilingual Community Liaison Officer role of their own.

22. While not yet in place, SAPOL and CoA remain in discussion about this and how each of the roles can collaborate to maximise value to the community once SAPOL's BCLO has been appointed.
23. Future opportunities exist to provide further support through translation services and proactively informing the Chinese community via regular updates of initiatives such as the current Central Market Arcade development, other future developments, local activations and events in the Grote and Gouger Streets Precinct.
24. The BCLO is a unique role that has built strong relationships with the community.

### Summary and Next Steps

25. The original intent of the BLCO was to:
  - 25.1. Improve Council's connection and engagement with the Chinese-Mandarin speaking members of our community.
  - 25.2. Increase understanding of safety, compliance, and legislative matters, particularly for businesses, by linking the community to external supporting agencies where appropriate.
26. While beginning with a safety focus which increased community understanding regarding compliance matters through overcoming language barriers, the service is now increasing community understanding regarding many other Council services, growing from its original remit.
27. A range of options have been considered based on the data and feedback, including:
  - 27.1. Continuing the service due to the success and value the BCLO role provides in supporting our Chinese-Mandarin speaking community, building closer connections and stronger relationships with Council. This could be via a 12-month extension or making the role permanent.
  - 27.2. Periodic engagement with Grote and Gouger Street traders and the Chinese-Mandarin speaking community through the use of a contractor to continue engagement and connection relevant services.
  - 27.3. Continuation of the WeChat account with monitoring by an external organisation.
  - 27.4. A free interpreting service, similar to City of Sydney, delivered through TIS National ([Get help in your language - City of Sydney \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.tisnational.com.au)).
  - 27.5. As an alternative model to a dedicated BCLO, evaluating whether bilingual skills can be embedded into specific teams across Council through targeted recruitment strategies (this model is still being investigated).
  - 27.6. Ceasing the service and approach.
28. As the service is now more established in the community and continues to evolve, ceasing or altering it at this point, particularly without anything to directly take its place, would negate the outcomes delivered so far.
29. For this reason, it is proposed to continue the role for a further 12 months as we continue to evaluate the model along with other approaches, as detailed in the draft 2024/25 Annual Business Plan and Budget.

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## DATA AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

**Link 1** - Bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) Community Liaison Officer - Trial Outcomes – Report to Council June 2023

**Link 2** - Bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) Community Liaison Officer Statistics COA - June 2023

**Link 3** - Bilingual (Chinese-Mandarin) Community Liaison Officer Example Engagements

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## ATTACHMENTS

Nil