

# New Zealand Telecommunications Relay Services Beyond 2019: Submission template

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The closing date for submissions is **5.00pm, Friday 13 April 2018**.

You can make a submission by emailing [RelayConsultation@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:RelayConsultation@mbie.govt.nz) or by posting your feedback to:

NZ Relay Project Team  
ICT Policy & Programmes  
Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment  
PO Box 1473  
Wellington 6140  
New Zealand

If you post your submission, please also send it electronically if possible (as a PDF or Microsoft Word document).

New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) users are also able to make video submissions in NZSL. For further information please visit <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/sectors-industries/technology-communications/communications/telecommunications-relay-service/>.

**Please complete the following contact details:**

<b>Your name:</b>	<b>Liz Fairgray</b>
<b>Your email address:</b>	

**Is your submission on behalf of an organisation?**

*✓ - copy and paste this symbol to mark your answer if completing on a computer*

✓	Yes
	No

If yes, please write the name of the organisation and your position here:

Expert Advisor on Children with Hearing Loss & Cochlear Implant New Zealand Speech language Therapists' Association
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If you or your organisation do not wish your name to be included in any summary of submissions that the Ministry may publish, please advise here:

No, I do not want my name / organisations name published in any summary of submissions

If you or your organisation object to the release of any information contained in this submission, please advise here:

Release of Information is permitted.

**If completing as an individual, which region do you live in?**

*√ - copy and paste this symbol to mark your answer if completing on a computer*

	Northland		Wellington
	Auckland		Tasman
	Waikato		Nelson
	Bay of Plenty		Marlborough
	Gisborne		West Coast
	Hawke's Bay		Canterbury
	Taranaki		Otago
	Manawatu-Wanganui		Southland
	Outside New Zealand. Please specify location:		

**If completing as an individual, which age bracket do you (or the person you are completing the form on behalf of) fall into?**

*√ - copy and paste this symbol to mark your answer if completing on a computer*

	Under 18		45 – 54
	18 – 24		55 – 64
	25 – 34		Over 65
	35 – 44		Prefer not to disclose

If you are comfortable doing so, please tick any communications disabilities that apply to you, the person you are completing this submission on behalf of, and/or the body of people you or your organisation represents:

√ - copy and paste this symbol to mark your answer if completing on a computer

√ -	Deaf
√	Hearing Impaired
√	Speech Impaired
	Deafblind
	Other (please specify)
	Prefer not to disclose

**Are you a hearing recipient of relay calls, or user of the VIS?**

√ - copy and paste this symbol to mark your answer if completing on a computer

	Yes
√	No

**Are you a user of New Zealand Sign Language?**

√ - copy and paste this symbol to mark your answer if completing on a computer

√	Yes
	No

**Are you a user of any of the relay services? If so, please tick which services, and the frequency with which you use them, below:**

√ - copy and paste this symbol to mark your answer if completing on a computer

	Every day	Several times a week	Once a week	1-3 times a month	Less than once a month
Teletypewriter to Voice					
Voice Carry Over					
Hearing Carry Over					
Mobile Text Relay					
Internet Relay					

CapTel					
Web CapTel					
Video Interpreting Service					
Speech to Speech					
Video-Assisted Speech to Speech					

If you are a user of the relay service, please describe the purposes for which you use it. For example, for social/personal calls, to conduct business, to use interpretation services for appointments:

If you are not a user of the relay service, please describe your interest in this public consultation:

Expert Advisor NZ Speech language Therapist' Assn. Many clients use this service due to their hearing impairment and-or speech intelligibility challenges. These are secondary to conditions such as cerebral palsy, cleft palate, down syndrome, stroke, parkinsons etc... These people rely on the amazing service provided by the Relay Service and I would like to support them in their wish for this service to be maintained and even extended.

**Which of the current services were you aware of prior to completing this submission? Please tick the services below:**

*√ - copy and paste this symbol to mark your answer if completing on a computer*

√	Teletypewriter to Voice	√	CapTel
√	Voice Carry Over	√	Web CapTel
√	Hearing Carry Over	√	Video Interpreting Service
√	Mobile Text Relay	√	Speech to Speech
√	Internet Relay	√	Video-Assisted Speech to Speech

**Availability of Services – Please let us know if your comments relate to a specific service**

1. What is your view of the current availability of the relay service (i.e. are you able to access the relay service when you need it?)

Availability overall is very good, especially with the 24 hours service, seven days per week including Christmas etc. People find this helpful for family contact with other members who work during the day, so contact needs to occur in the evenings. Improvements could include:

1. Increase availability of Video Interpreting Service.

Extend to include weekends as this is the time when there is maximum social interaction. Relay Services such as “mobile text” or “speech to speech” etc are ideal for people who need to convey shorter messages or who do not fluently use NZSL as their primary mode of communication. However, for people and families who use NZSL, more sophisticated interactions and conversations require fluent NZSL. Longer and more social types of interactions may be more likely to occur at weekends or when people have free time.

2. If you have encountered problems, what are these and what impact have they had?

Occasionally, clients have found that a NZSL user for the relay service does not have highly fluent skills. This has the impact of frustration being experienced by the person trying to communicate a complex message.

3. What changes could be made to relay services to improve their availability, and why?

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**Accessibility – Please let us know if your comments relate to a specific service**

4. What additional measures or initiatives could be introduced to increase awareness of the relay service and its benefits to users of the service and the wider community?

Advertise to organisations such as:

RECREATE NZ,	Parkinsons Society,	NZ Audiological Society,
Hospital Audiology Depts,	ENT Clinic waiting rooms,	Community Nurses,
GPs	Southern Cochlear Implant Programme.	

The Hearing House which holds contract for adult cochlear implants , so many users of NZSL

5. If you had the choice between accessing a relay service from a fixed device at home or from your mobile, laptop or tablet, which would you prefer and why?

A device which can be accessed outside home would be preferable as this same device can also be used inside the home.

A mobile device such as a tablet-lpad or smart phone allows greater levels of access to the relay service. People with communication challenges are becoming more and more integrated into mainstream life, increasingly active socially and reaching higher levels of employment. There are increasing amounts of time spent outside the home. The previous isolation experienced by people is diminishing and the Relay Service can assist with continuing this positive trend.

6. What specific relay services would you like to see available on your mobile, laptop or tablet and why?

As many of the services as possible; particularly those involving the use of NZSL.

The reason for this is that NZSL is an official language of new Zealand. As such, it is important that the government follows through on its obligations to support access to and active use of the language it has recognised as an official language. Designating NZSL as an official language is only worthwhile if people can have access to the language.

7. For those relay services that are available on your mobile, laptop or tablet already, are there any improvements that could be made that would make them easier to use and why?

If possible, some type of agreement with Sprint , Spark or Vodaphone etc could be implemented. This could be an agreement by which uses of NZSL could be allocated extra data instead of talking minutes as these people will not be able to use the talking minutes. Consumers have commented that the extra data they need is expensive and they feel that the cost for the speaking minutes is wasted.

8. Are there any other issues related to ease of access and use with the current relay service that we should consider?

Continue with the wonderful service you offer, and extend if possible for weekend cover of Video Interpreting Service.

This should be advertised widely to District Health Boards etc, so that this service can be used more often when patients who Use NZSL are attending hospital appointments or admitted for

in patient care.

Feedback from nurses and doctors within the Auckland area indicates that many are not aware of this service option.

**Affordability – Please let us know if your comments relate to a specific service**

9. Are the costs of connectivity a barrier to you accessing and using the relay service?

The costs seem reasonable as many aspects of relay Service are free of charge. The \$323.00 one off cost with Captel seems reasonable and many hearing people incur similar costs or more when purchasing communication devices.

10. If so, what are the specific problems you have encountered and what impact has this had?

None that I am aware of, but there will undoubtedly be some individuals who have found the cost prohibitive.

11. What changes could be made to the relay service to improve its affordability and why?

If there are specific individuals who have a particular issue with financial hardship, would there be a support grant from a government agency who could assist? Possibly, Ministry of Social Development or a Disability support group might be able to assist with funding.

As a nation, we do have an obligation to assist all citizens exercise their basic human right to communicate. We also have an obligation to provide NZSL interpreters for as many hours of the day as possible as it is one of our three official languages.

**Fit for Purpose – Please let us know if your comments relate to a specific service**

12. Are there any particular features or changes that you think should be made to the relay service to ensure it continues to offer a good experience to users and why?

Overall, the service is fit for purpose because it provides a service by which people with hearing and-or speech difficulties can communicate with wider society and also with family members.

Communication with family members is important as many people with hearing loss live in families where other members have full hearing. In many situations, the immediate family may learn NZSL, but not extended family or cousins etc...

Links to family are important for emotional wellbeing, psychological health and overall quality of life. In NZ there are very high rate of mental health challenges and we have one of the highest suicide rates in the western world. Isolation and separation from community are key players in this problem, so all government measures to assist with improved mental health will be of value.

13. Are there any relay services or equipment that you consider are no longer relevant and could be phased out or discontinued? If so, what measures or support would need to be provided to transition users to other services or mainstream devices?

The TTY equipment seems to be used less and less. Some older members may still wish to use this device. However, this could be gradually phased out as there are more efficient modes of technology available now.

During the transition time, would it be possible for staff on the Relay Service to conduct a survey to ask how many people actually use the TTY. It is likely that this number is quite small. Could these individuals (plus one family member) receive a one-one appointment with a Health Board Audiologist or Hearing Therapist to provide instructions about how to access another service provided by NZRelay so that the person is not deprived of a mechanism to communicate with others.

14. Have you ever discontinued use of any of the relay services? If so which service or services, and why?

No

**Any Other Comments – Please let us know if your comments relate to a specific service**

15. What other comments do you have about New Zealand Telecommunications Relay Services?



The NZ Relay Service is a very valuable services for New Zealanders with hearing loss and-or significant speech impairments. The provisions of such a wide range of options for communication are excellent examples of how the government meets its obligations to support people with disabilities. This is important as NZ is a signatory for the ratification of the United Nations Convention for Persons with Disabilities.

The percentage of individuals over the age of 65 is increasing in NZ. Our aging population will include more individuals who experience progressive and sometimes severe hearing loss. Discrimination due to age is illegal, so it is right and proper that the NZ Government (Via NZ Relay) supports the aging population of people with hearing loss and-or speech impairments which may occur with Strokes, Parkinsons etc..

The Relay Service is also a great example of how the NZ Government is meeting its obligations to provide access to NZSL, an official language. It is a service which is also essential not only for people with hearing loss, but also hearing and speaking family members & friends. Many people with communication disabilities live in families in which other family members have no difficulties with hearing or speech. A straight forward easy way to interact with all family members is important. Inclusion and celebration of diversity are increasingly important in today's society. It is therefore crucial to recognise and provide for diversity of communication mode as communication is a basic human right.

NZSL is one of NZ's three official languages. The government must therefore continue to, and extend upon, its obligations to support those who use NZSL as their primary mode of communication. It must also support those who have difficulty with spoken communication but do not use NZSL. The Relay service does this already with Speech-Speech services from the Relay Assistant.

Communication is a basic human right. The 2014 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides details of this. More information can be found in the work of Louise Carolle, former President of National Foundation for the Deaf. Legitimacy, voice and visibility are therefore given to people with disabilities in NZ.

The convention is aimed at protecting the rights and dignity of people with disabilities and ensuring their equal treatment under the law. This includes the right to health services, education and employment. NZ has ratified this convention and therefore has a legal obligation to respect, promote and fulfil the requirements of the Convention. This is overseen by the Office of Disability Issues in the Ministry of Social Development.

In the light of this legislation I believe that this service should be extended to incorporate other situations when accurate information needs to be communicated to people with hearing loss. This includes:

Captioning and concurrent NZSI for all Televised News reports.

Captioning of all Television Programmes

Captioning & simultaneous NZSL video of safety briefings such as those heard on aeroplanes.  
NZSL Video explaining & showing common procedures which occur in hospitals, dental offices etc

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment for this submission.

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this submission. Your feedback is appreciated.**

## **Publication of submissions**

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In any case, all information provided to the Ministry in response to this discussion document is subject to the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA). **Please advise if you have any objection to the release of any information contained in a submission**, and in particular, which part(s) you consider should be withheld, together with reason(s) for withholding the information.

**In particular, please clearly indicate in your submission if you do not wish your name and any other identifying details to be included in any summary of submissions that the Ministry may publish, or in any responses to OIA requests.**

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