



Royal New Zealand Returned and Services Association

New Zealand Telecommunications Relay Services Beyond June 2019 Submission

9 April 2018

This submission on the public consultation document released by the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment in February 2018 is made by the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association, it follows the general outline of the submission template shown in the public consultation document.

Contact person

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Who is the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association?

The Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association (RNZRSA) was formed in 1916 by returning Anzacs during World War One to provide support and comfort for service men and women and their families. These initial goals still form the basis of our functions 101 years later. There are 180 local RSAs around the country with over 100,000 members, each of these is a legal entity. Local RSAs are managed by their own executive committee while being united with the RNZRSA in our strategic pillars, vision, and values. The RNZRSA believes in a nation joined by a heartfelt connection to the Anzac spirit of courage, commitment, comradeship and compassion.

Operating through a network of volunteer support advisors, RNZRSA is one of the largest voluntary welfare organisations in New Zealand and one of the oldest ex-service organisations in the world.

Membership of RNZRSA is open to war veterans, ex-servicemen and women, their families and friends, serving members of the New Zealand Defence Force, sworn New Zealand Police officers, as well as men and women without military connections who share the ideals of the RSA movement.

RNZRSA delivers on its goals by providing:

1. Financial Assistance: By needs-based grants, to alleviate financial, medical and education hardship - available for all who serve or have served. And their dependents.
2. Advocating for service benefits: We recognise the rigors of domestic and overseas service and advocate for Government recognition, assistance and redress.
3. Connections and comradeship: We link people with government, corporate, community and other ex-service groups, to provide information, mentoring, support and opportunities.

RNZRSA has strong working relationship with several Government Departments and agencies such as the Ministries of Defence and Veteran Affairs.

Our comments

1. The need for relay services

The people we support have wide backgrounds and age range. We believe that the relay service must be available to all those who need it regardless of where they live or the cause of the disability that has resulted in them using the service.

2. Accessibility

With communication been a significant component of today's world the need for services such as the relay service is only going to increase, nobody should be denied access to this. If a person has a disability that requires them to use the relay service, then it must be available and easy to access for them.

The availability of the service must be promoted wider outside of the traditional service provider field. Promotional material must be provided to those community organisations such as RNZRSA for them to use in the field. In this respect we acknowledge and support the comments made in paragraph 40 of the consultation document.

3. Ease of access and use

Whilst acknowledging that technology has changed the way people communicate with each other advances in technology should not be a reason to deny people their fundamental right to communicate with each other in a manner that the person is comfortable with. Technology should be a means to make communication a rewarding experience for as many people as possible without creating barriers for some.

4. Affordability

It is not possible to put a real value on the human need to communicate, nobody should be denied access to this service just because they choose to use a naked broadband service over a traditional landline.

For people who wish to access any services of this kind the cost is always going to be an issue, especially when this is must be juggled against over costs, such as the of transport, home help and medical assistance.

Paragraph 4 of the consultation document suggests there are approximately 500,00 people within New Zealand that endure day to day limitations on their activities due to one or more sensory impairment. This number suggests there is a role for telecommunication providers to show initiative to help people who need the relay service by providing access to the service at minimal, or no additional cost, regardless of the telecommunication platform over which the person elects to use.

5. Fitness for purpose

RNZARSA agrees that any service such as the relay service must be, and remain, fit for purpose. It must keep pace with changes to technology as far as practical. Regular reviews of the services available must be undertaken in conjunction with the service providers and end users.

6. Other comments

RNZARSA provides support for many people with disabilities ranging from age related to those who have experienced a traumatic experience that limits their day-to-day ability to get on with life. For many of our customers the ability to communicate in a timely and efficient way is paramount, often it is just knowing that a friend or colleague is available on the other end of a phone or computer link can make a difference, we see the relay service as a tool to helping us, and all New Zealanders, provide this link.

7. Official Information Act 1982

We have no objection to this submission being made public.