Analysis of Concentrix survey conducted with former CapTel™ hard of hearing users in May 2021 and comparisons with Sweden and the USA

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Data source - OIA request DOIA 2324-2041

1. The survey documents and responses to which Ms Hall refers (in DOIA 2021-1716) that hopefully have allowed MBIE to understand the needs of users and the reasons for non-use of the Concentrix captioned call service

2. Any resulting documents that contain requirements that Concentrix deliver a fit for purpose solution for Hard of Hearing persons or persons with multiple communications impairments and any associated communications plan

Survey Response Summary

- 48 survey responses were supplied (id 6 to id 54 inclusive)
- The survey contained 37 questions
- No responses were complete

Were you previously using the CapTel phone?

- All 48 respondents previously used the CapTel phone. Some still have it although captions are no longer delivered
- All have hearing challenges

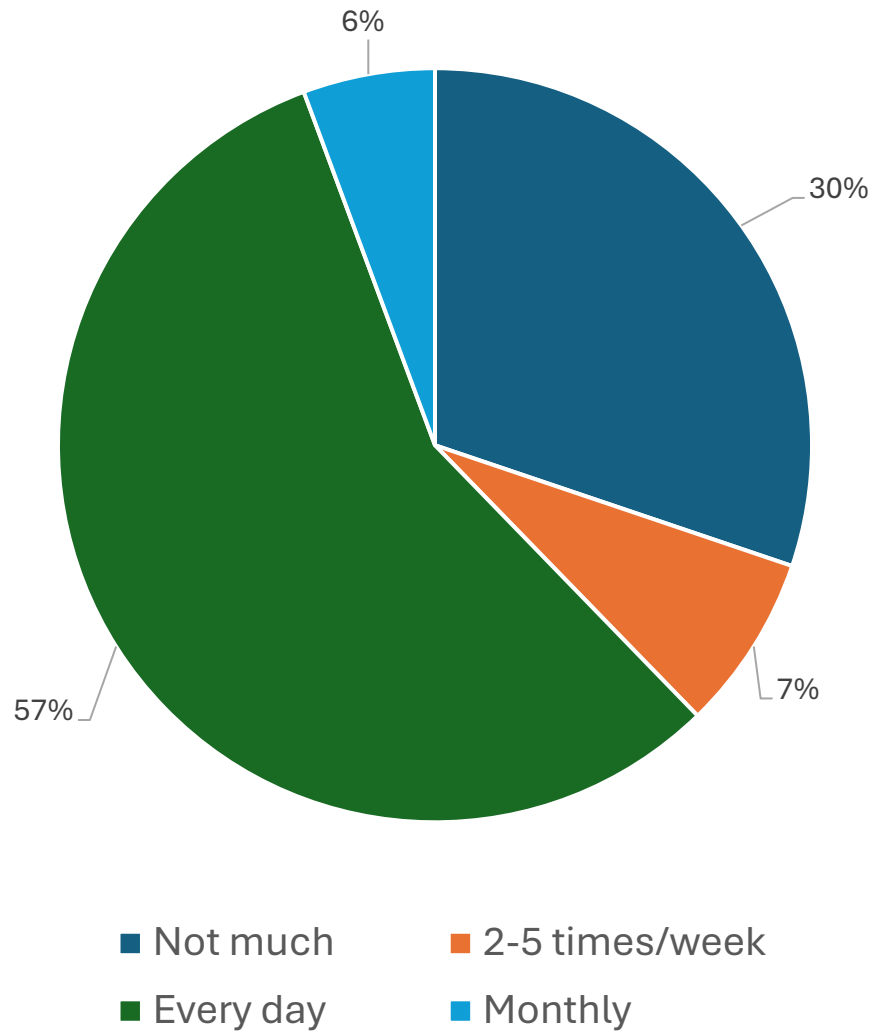
Were you aware the service was changing last February?

- None of the 48 people answered “Yes”

Do you know that you can receive a refund for your CapTel phone?

- 63% were aware that they could get a refund
- One person asked for advice on how to get the refund

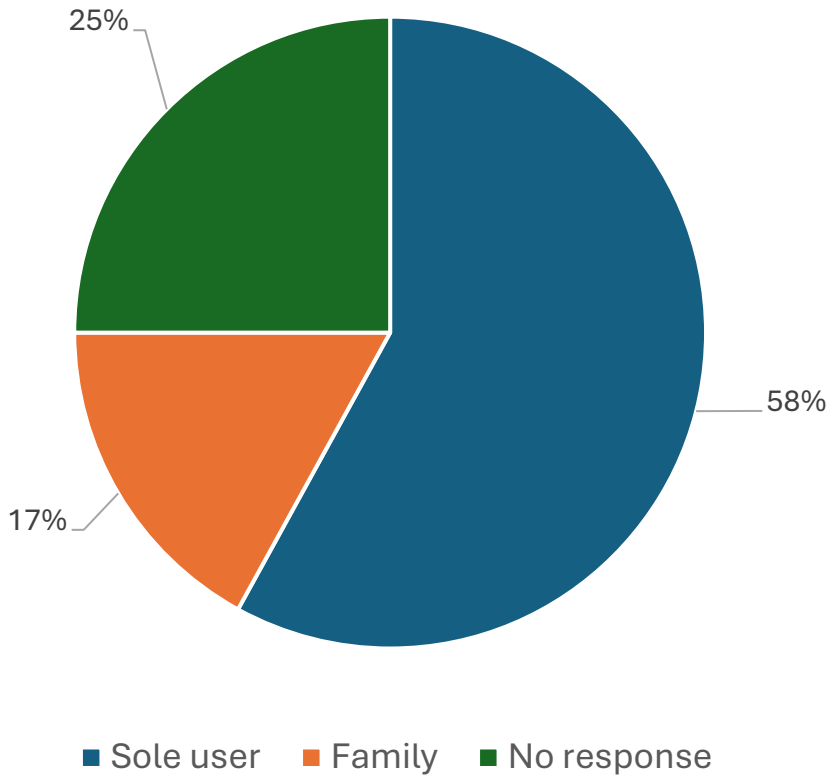
How often was that phone used in the house?



Reasons for “Not Much”:

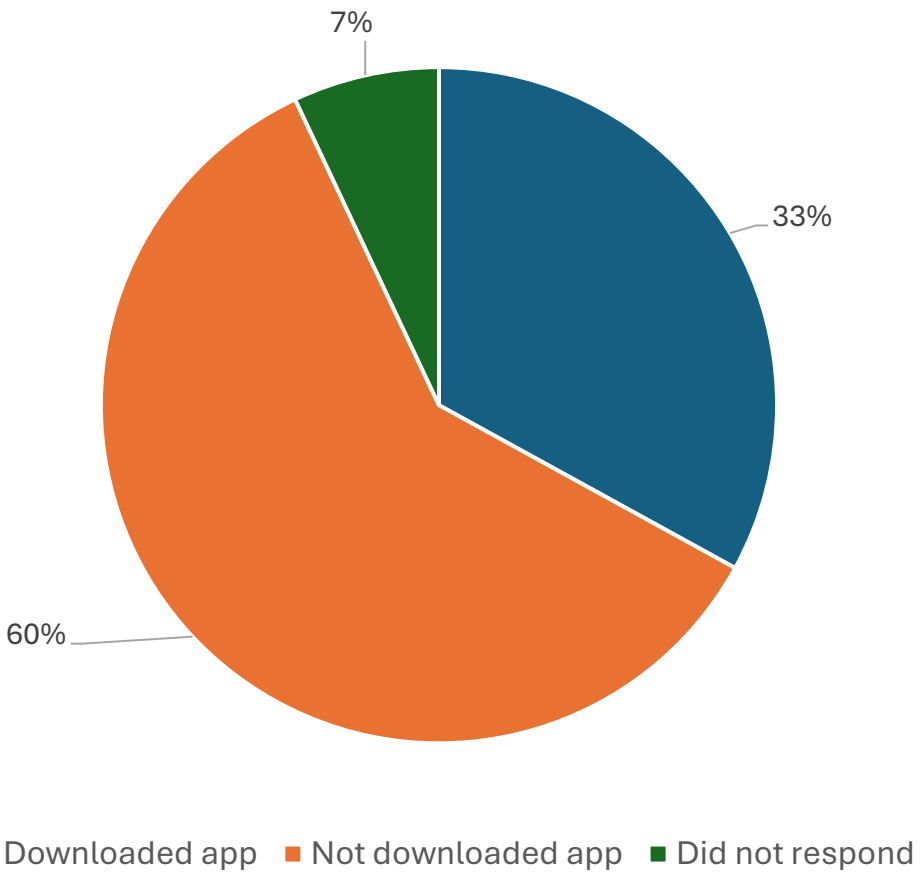
- Trouble setting up the phone
- Would not work on user’s network
- User had a stroke
- Frustration with delay of captions
- No sooner got it than service withdrawn
- Got a cochlear implant

Was the phone used by other members of the household?



- Use of the CapTel phone by non-hard of hearing family members increases the number of processed CapTel minutes
- Although the user had the option of turning off captions it is known that some hearing family members liked the novelty of seeing captions even when they didn’t need them

Did you (or the person you support) download the new NZ Relay app?

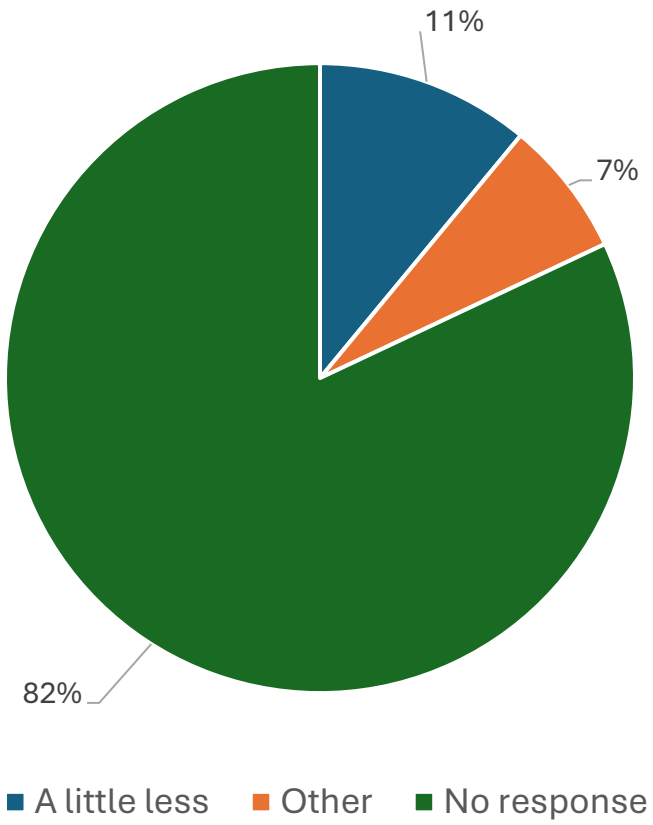


Reasons for not downloading app:

- 17% didn’t know about it
- 13% found it too complicated
- 5% had got a cochlear implant and no longer needed captioned telephone service
- 4% had no suitable device
- 3% were blind and/or had a severe dexterity disability
- 60% gave no reason

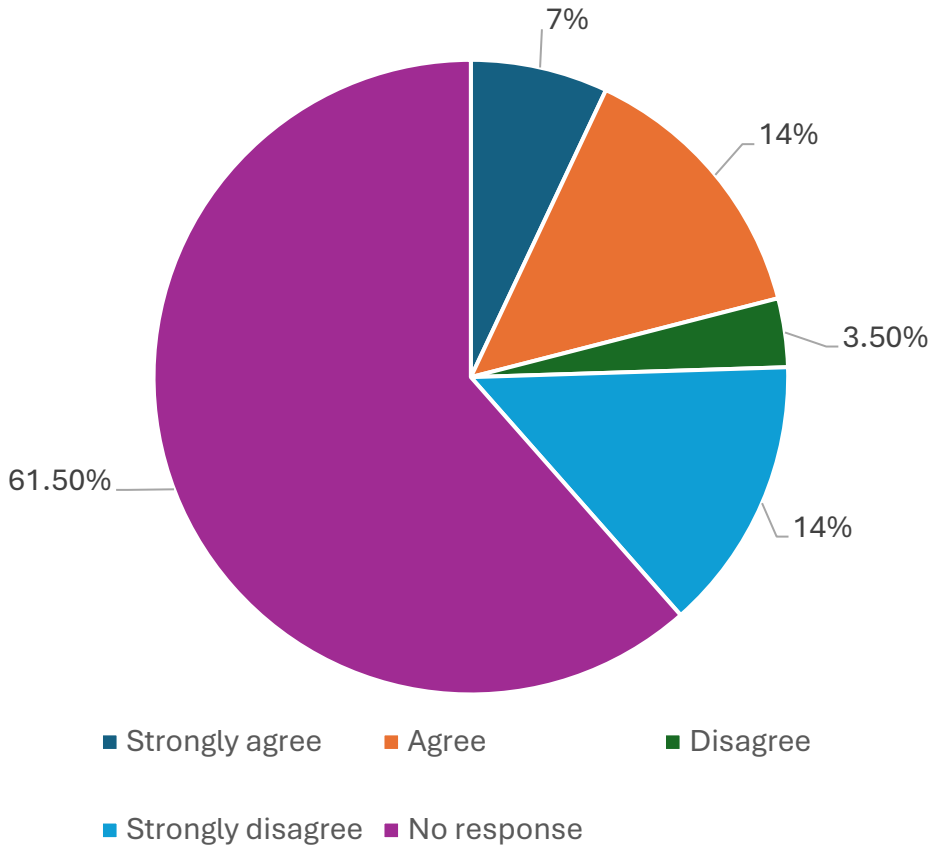
Since moving across to the new system to what extent has your usage changed?

(Only data of those who had downloaded the app is included)



- By the time the survey was conducted captioned telephone service usage was falling precipitously
- Prior to MBIE's public consultations that introduced uncertainty over the service's future, it ran at 360,000 minutes per year for several years
- It fell from 290,113 minutes for the last year of the Sprint contract to 14,653 in the first year of the Concentrix service
- It fell to 4,233 in the 2nd year and 1,587 in the 3rd year
- Hard of hearing users have clearly given up trying to use the complicated and cumbersome Concentrix app

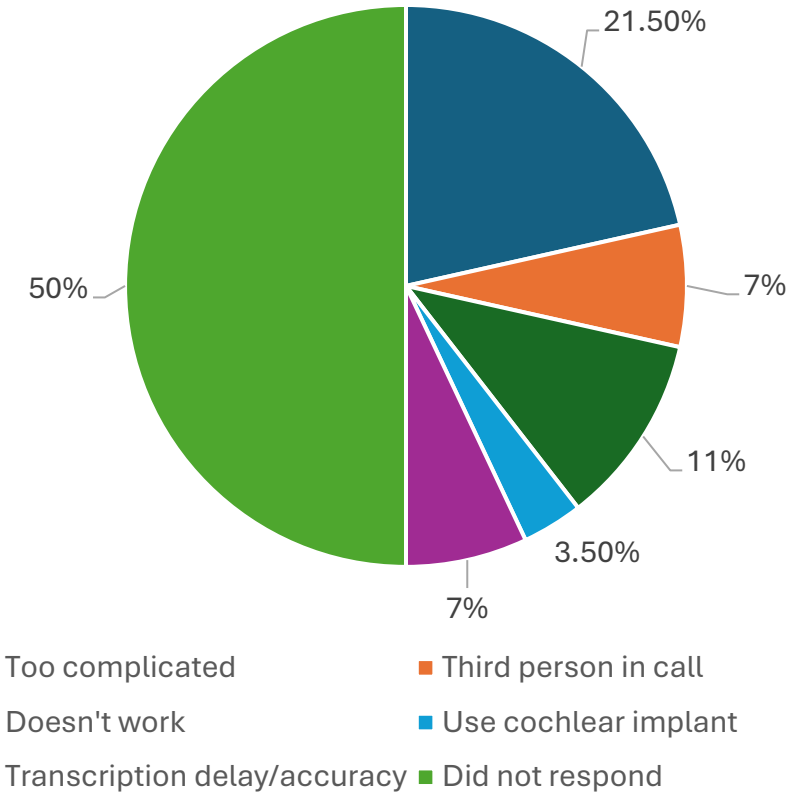
I tried to use the app for making calls



- 21% Agree or strongly agree
- 17.5% Disagree or strongly disagree
- 61.5% did not respond

The lack of responses indicates lack of engagement

Why have you decided not to use the service?



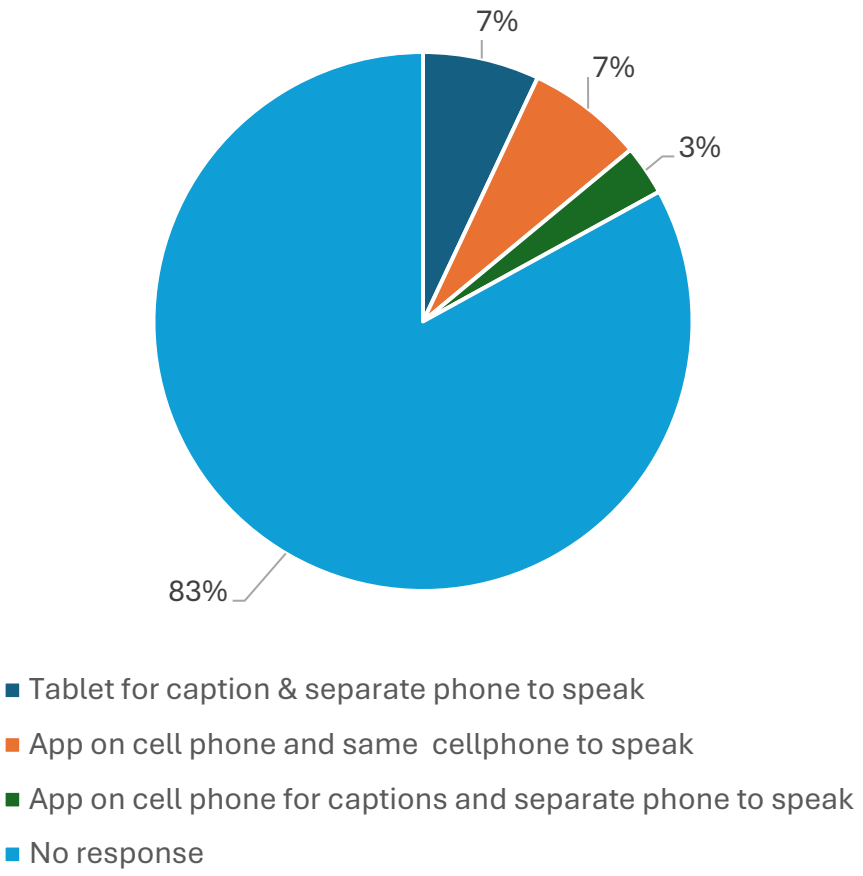
Some comments from respondents:

- My few friends are 80-90 years old. I and they preferred the CapTel service – very easy. With the minimal hearing I have it is always nice to hear a voice when you are alone and elderly
- Too difficult. To receive a captioned relay call I need to sprint up a flight of stairs, receive a notification, tap to accept, receive the call on the specified number, answer the call, speak, listen and read captions, hang up or follow further options. By this time the caller has usually hung up. To make a call is even more complicated
- Time taken for call to connect. Process very complicated. Did not like having a third person in the call

Do you have any suggestions on how we could make it better?

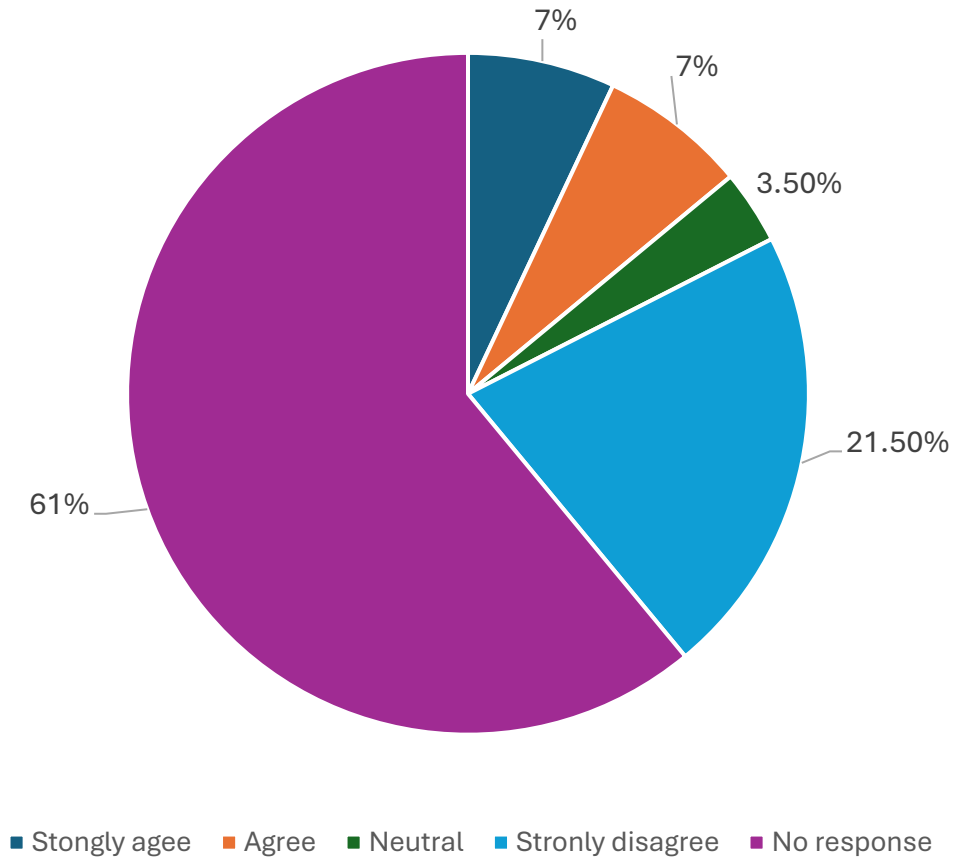
- The process is so confusing. Could it be made easier? Can we get insights from other users as well?
- No suggestions as hasn't been able to make it work so doesn't know how it could be improved. Likes CapTel because it was automatic and attached to his landline and could just read along with it
- Having to have a special phone number other than normal cell phone is a big issue. I have a work phone and work number, no way to link up the relay app phone number to work phone number. Only works for people that know the individual number. In work situation that is the difficult thing, can't just pick up the phone. There are a lot of steps involved to set up phone vs CapTel when you pick up the phone and all ready to go
- Perhaps a bit of training from someone like Life Unlimited, someone to take her through it. SeniorNet as a provider for support
- Respondent did not have the appropriate light/alerts on to alert for calls. Feels that something louder similar to CapTel alerts could be used to improve the service – if that kind of thing is possible (It is!)
- Why was CapTel discontinued?

How have you set up the captioning service? (Do you use the app on a mobile phone and use headphones to talk and read captions at the same time OR do you speak on a landline and read captions on the app)



- The use of two devices to be able to make or receive a call is complicated and cumbersome
- Devices and software exist to provide a fast and accurate captioned telephone service using Artificial Intelligence on one device that is user friendly and intuitive to use
- Apple and Google do not allow developers of such apps access to their native telephony functions. Hence a new telephone number is always required for the app

I tried to use the app for receiving calls



- 14% Strongly agree or Agree
- 3.5% are neutral
- 21.5% Strongly disagree
- 61% Did not respond

The lack of responses indicates lack of engagement

What do you like about the app caption service?

- Nothing
- It is easy for me to read when I call someone on the phone or receive calls (This from the sole respondent who liked every aspect of the service)
- Throw away to deep ocean
- Not much
- I don't. I have no control over my phone call at all. I think it might depend on the operator - have had 0800 numbers disconnected - others have persisted

Other comments

- Used CapTel all the time at work based in retail situation where need to be able to answer the phone. Loved the CapTel system, it worked really well. Could be delayed but that was really helpful when collecting details, address, phone numbers, things like that. Really sad when it was discontinued. System so easy to use. Pick up the phone and ready to go. New app system so many things you have to do to connect up. Did not need changing. It was a point of frustration and I'm sure for some people it is. One of the biggest concern how the elderly are going to use the app system. Really sorry for that group of people. CapTel system simple and straightforward to use compared to the app system. Fine finger motor hands movement to select buttons etc and I imagine that a lot of elderly people who would battle with that
- Caller is frustrated about the changes to the captioning service as he relied heavily on his CapTel device
- Cause I was brassed off at the relay service being stopped I complained to audiology at the hospital and my MP. The Relay phone gave me independence. I did not have to rely on other people being around to assist me

Other comments

I find the new system fails me on several counts. I have seen a demonstration and these are my observations:

1. I have to purchase a new tablet and cell phone as both of ours are Android V4.4 and Android V7 is the minimum.

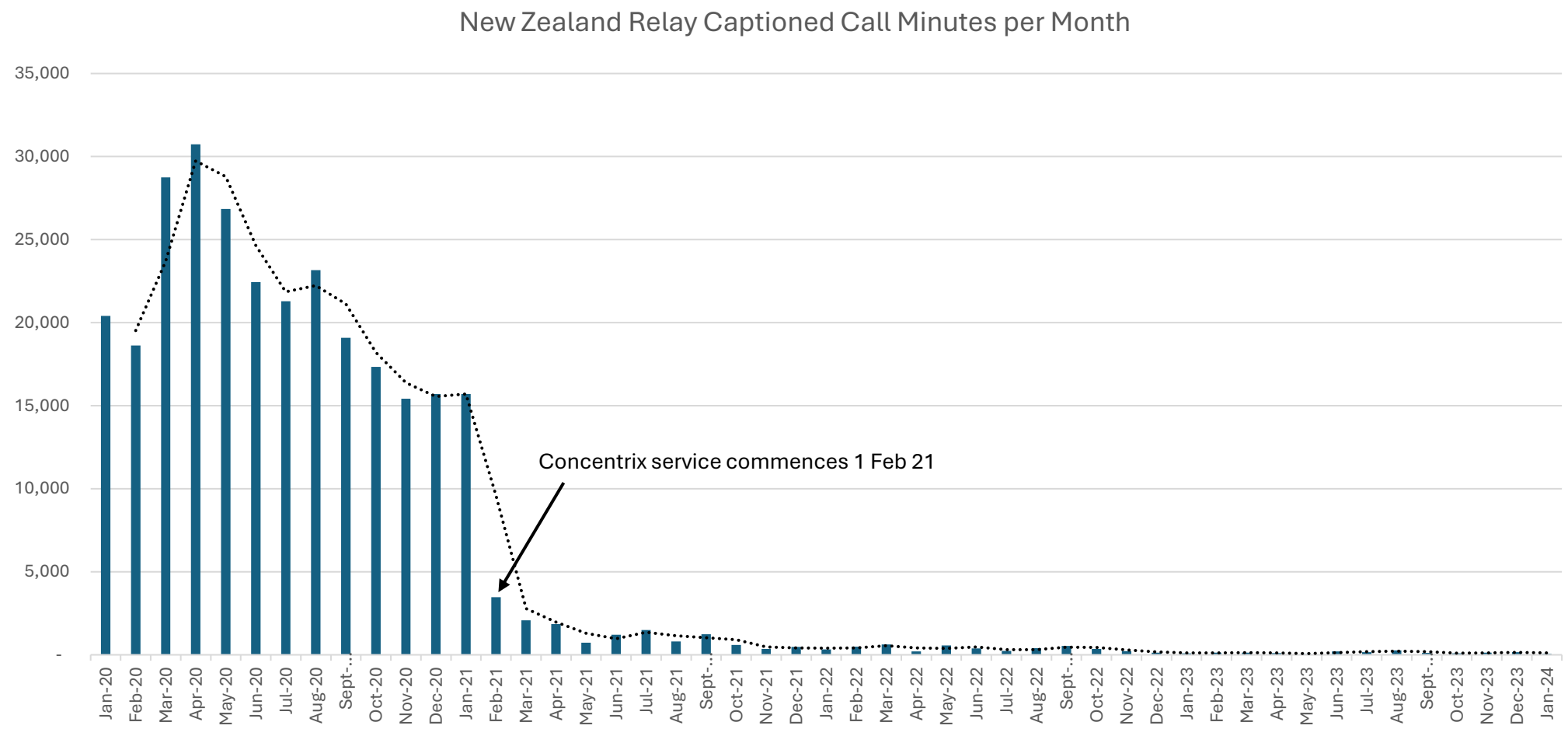
2. The small screen on the cell phone or tablet offers only limited vision

3. The now defunct system allowed ALL incoming calls to be captioned; thus calls for me could be filtered out and viewed, whilst calls for my husband, with normal hearing could be answered by him in the usual non-visual way. It also enabled me to respond to any calls on behalf of my husband if he was not available

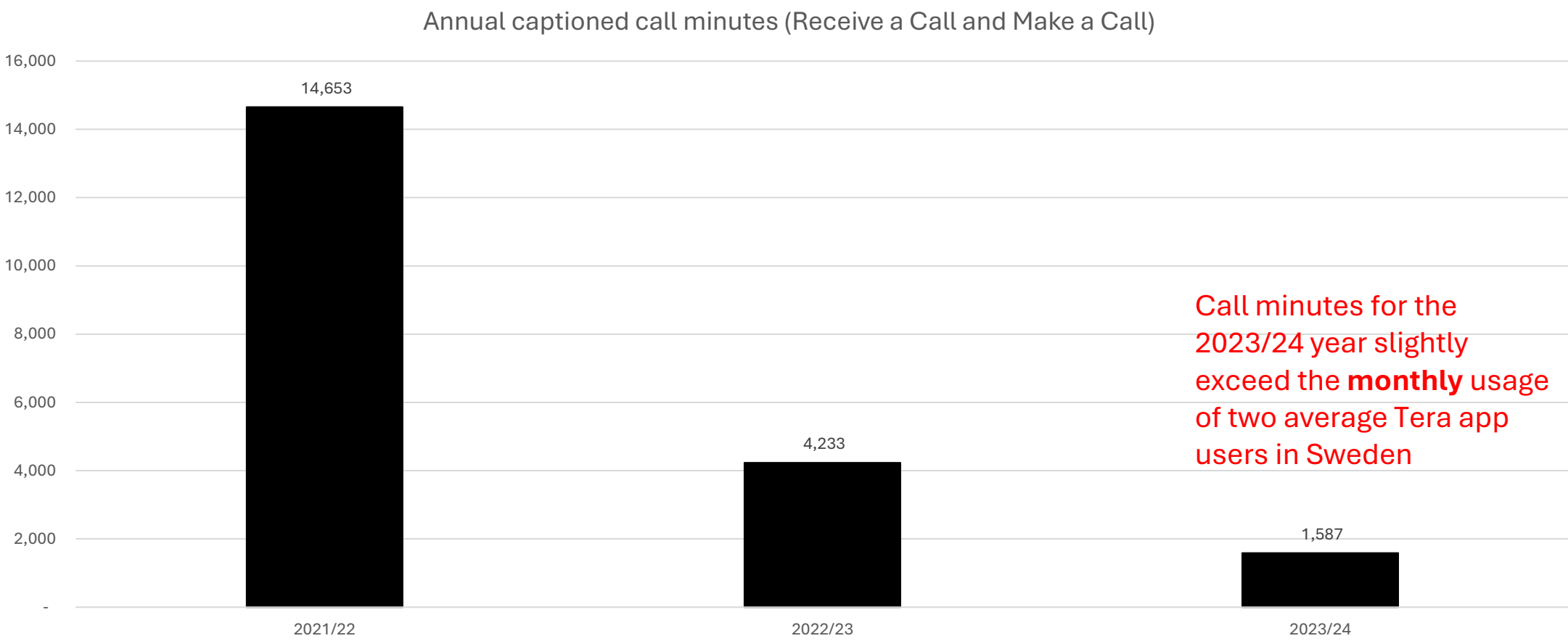
Do you have any ideas about how the caption service can be improved?

- Yes, take it back to the CapTel method
- Very dissatisfied
- Go back to CapTel system PLEASE!
- In its present format useless and messy in my opinion. CapTel was the best thing in 66 years being deaf. Bring it back
- My biggest complaint would be receiving calls. By the time I've found my iPad, opened it, the phone stopped ringing. I just don't respond now. I have to admit I found CapTel easy to use and I had total control of my phone calls

Graphic decline in call minutes



Annual captioned call minutes for hard of hearing people through Concentrix app 2021 - 2024



Contrast with Tera speech to text and text to speech app usage in Sweden

Average usage per user

- Year 1: 300 minutes/month
- Year 2: 500 minutes /month
- Year 3: 720 minutes per month
- Year 3: top 3-5% of users 7,200 minutes/month each

- 45% hard of hearing
- 45% speech impaired
- 10% hard of hearing and speech impaired

Usage during last 12 months

- 488,000 minutes average per month overall
- Equates to 5,856,000 minutes per year
- Tera usage is more in a month in Sweden than CapTel was for a year in NZ at its peak
- Adjusting for population difference and ignoring funding limitations, if Tera had been deployed in New Zealand the usage would now be > 4 million minutes per year
- Tera works 24/7/365 and enables direct calling to 111 emergency services
- The Tera app is demonstrably fit for purpose and fulfils users' needs be they young through to elderly

Contrast with the USA

- Captioned Telephone Service has had huge growth in the USA over the past several years where there are now at least 8 certified providers, all of whom provide Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) captioning reimbursed from the Federal Communication Commission's TRS Fund
- For 2023/24 the TRS Fund was USD 1.28bn. For 2024/25 it is USD 1.49bn, an increase of 16%. U.S. legislation mandates that the TRS Fund be fully funded to meet forecast demand for the service by a levy on telcos. In addition, there is state funding for intrastate calls and Equipment Distribution Programmes
- For further information on funding see FCC document DA 24-620 relating to CG Docket Numbers 03-123 and 10-51 adopted and released 24 June 2024

Danger of uninformed official advice

- Based on the call data for New Zealand there is a risk that MBIE officials may advise Ministers that there is no longer any demand for captioned telephone service and that it should be discontinued
- The data included in this presentation, including demand for the service in two other first world economies, proves that there is clear demand for a service that is easy to use and that is supported by an Equipment Distribution Programme and relatable in-person support nationally
- Demand for captioned telephone service will increase as the population ages and the impact of early hearing loss in young people from the playing of loud music using headphones and earbuds becomes more evident

Response to 2nd request in DOIA 2324-2051

- Request: Any resulting documents that contain requirements that Concentrix deliver a fit for purpose solution for Hard of Hearing persons or persons with multiple communications impairments and any associated communications plan.
- Response: Please note that no further requirements were placed upon Concentrix Services as a result of the survey responses. We have therefore not been able to identify any communications plan created by MBIE regarding the Concentrix captioned call service. This is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as the information requested does not exist or cannot be found.

Conclusions

1. There were more questions in the survey but so few responses that analysis of them adds little to what is already presented
2. The Concentrix technology and unrelatable support has led to near total collapse of a service that the largest communications disabled group, the hard of hearing, needs
3. This situation was all foreseeable had MBIE officials engaged properly with the relay user communities through first principles consultation rather than treating consultation as a poorly designed box ticking exercise undertaken by officials and contractors with no subject matter expertise or experience of the real needs of the communications disabled sectors
4. No budget work had been done even though there was an RFI process in late 2017 that could have sought the necessary funding information. This was compounded by a deeply flawed RFP process, selection of the cheapest proposal from an inexperienced provider and MBIE's cancellation of a previously Cabinet approved Equipment Distribution Programme
5. MBIE has done nothing to correct the performance of its failed contract with Concentrix or take any steps to implement a recovery contract leaving a large part of the communications disabled communities in a worse position than they experienced with the previous contractor
6. MBIE obviously do not care about the impacts on communications disabled people of an unusable service