

New Zealand Telecommunications Relay Services Beyond 2019: Submission template

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

You can make a submission by emailing 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:

Your name:	Catherine Greenwood, Daniel Greenwood, Rachel Coppage, Eric Coppage
Your email address:	

Is your submission on behalf of an organisation?

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

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No

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

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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:

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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:

Personal calls, business calls, and interpretation for face-to-face discussions with hearing people i.e. meetings or appointments, or on-the-spot conversations with hearing people.

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

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?)

In relation to NZVIS

- Generally, it is good to see 5 VIs on Skype; sometimes all are available, and sometimes all are busy. It (their availability) is highly variable.
- Deaf people experience two queues - one waiting for a VI to become available, and then one for when calling the government agency or business. So effectively we are waiting twice the time as compared to a usual hearing caller.

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

In relation to NZVIS

- Have given up plans to make a call because no NZVIS available at the time, or have resorted to using Internet Relay or Mobile Text Relay, which is fine in my case because proficient in English, but other Deaf callers may not have the same privilege.
- Called an available VI, but did not answer and later wrote message in Skype that the VI did not hear my call coming in?

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

In relation to NZVIS

- A queue system of some sort, to know where in the NZVIS queue we are, i.e. 2nd in line, or 15 minutes waiting.
- In relation to previous point - perhaps the Skype platform needs to be ditched and a dedicated app built for NZVIS (or for all applicable relay services such as NZVIS and Mobile Text Relay), which would then have a queue system built in.
- See patterns of historical calls to determine peak calling times and allocate more VIs to those time slots.
- Allow VIs to work from home or another location, other than the current NZ Relay/CSD call centre in Auckland CBD. This would increase availability of VIs, and diversify the VI workforce, i.e. have interpreters from the South Island who would be able to offer more southern-specific NZSL vocabulary thus reducing misunderstanding between the southern Deaf caller and the northern VI.

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?

Relating to NZVIS

- Whose responsibility is it to promote the relay service? Just the TRS provider? Or also Deaf people themselves? Perhaps Deaf people could help with promoting it more, i.e. explain to Deaf users how hearing callers can contact them, then we Deaf people can promote it ourselves when meeting with hearing people who want to call us.
- Is the number for hearing callers promoted widely enough to the Deaf community? I.e. should we be encouraged to include the hearing number in our email signatures, business cards, etc.?

We have however one reservation about doing this - we do not "hear" or know the call is coming through for us, unless we are by our computer/device and signed into Skype. Could the NZVIS provider look into a text messaging system of some sort? So when we do not answer the call from a hearing person, we get a text alert from NZVIS, then get onto Skype to receive the call or call back to the hearing caller.

- Would like to see the tips presented on NZVIS Facebook page to continue, as we find them helpful. I.e. how to improve calling strategies, make the call connect quicker etc. However, don't only have them on Facebook as not everyone has that - a mail-out and a website with these tips would be useful.

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?

NZVIS

- Have no preference - we use both fixed and mobile devices, depending on the situation.

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

- Currently the services used by us are available on both fixed and mobile devices (NZVIS, Internet/Mobile Text Relay). Would like to see this continue - available on both.

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?

- Skype has recently had an update, which now no longer has the 'Favourites' as an option for displaying contacts, so now can no longer have NZVIS VI at the top and easy to see etc. - to tidy up.
- Have a system in place to alert Deaf users when hearing caller is calling through NZVIS.
- Allow to have two Skype accounts signed in at same time - business and personal. So do not miss any calls to either account, no matter what device signed in on.
- Perhaps time to reconsider the use of Skype. Move to a dedicated app (website/software for computers/laptops) built for this purpose. To include a queuing system, knowing how far away from a call we are (i.e. 2nd in line).
- Using NZVIS and mobile data - some places i.e. doctors do not have wifi, only Internet via ethernet cable, so have to resort to using mobile data. However at one doctor the signal drops down to 3G, making the video pixelated/laggy.
- Other issue with mobile data - costs/usage quickly depletes the monthly data allocated.

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

- With the increasing use of hearing people no longer having landlines, and only mobile phones, this is an access issue for Deaf callers. We have to pay to call mobile phones via NZVIS, yet many of us have talk minutes bundled in our mobile phone plans (prepaid or pay-monthly). I would like the relay provider to look into a way to access each of our talk minutes, perhaps a code to call and access the minutes then have this detracted from our account while we use the relay to call mobile phones.
- The above issue could perhaps be eliminated by the introduction of the dedicated app, which telcos could then identify as this app being used, then apply the voice minutes/apply zero data costs to the use of this app.
- Can we have access to real-time or weekly or monthly usage patterns, to help us plan our calls better, or our VIS bookings better?
- Consider the use of Deaf Interpreters for NZVIS. Especially for grassroots Deaf users. Would increase their access to NZVIS.

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?

- Yes - if we use mobile devices such as smartphone & tablets not connected to a wifi, we are effectively using our data - which if using NZVIS will run out quickly. Why should we pay more to use this service?
- Calling mobile numbers - hearing callers can call mobile phones for free usually. Need a way to access our talk/voice minutes which we've already paid for, to make calls to mobile phones for free. We shouldn't be paying extra.

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

- Increasing number of hearing callers with mobile phone only so unable to contact them. Impacts business/personal use.

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

- Change the agreement in place with telecommunication providers to allow the talk minutes to be used, or the data allocation to NOT be used for relay calls.
- Am aware that the telco companies seem reluctant to provide a data-only plan/increased data at no additional cost for Deaf users. So perhaps instead focus on asking for zero data usage when the TRS is used?? They have that this in place - i.e. 0.facebook.com provided by 2degrees a few years ago - if you accessed this website you did not use your data.

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?

- Have more soundproof rooms available. Confidential calls have been made using this room, but once it was unavailable so had to use a normal booth, and the hearing participants could hear the other VIs talking (and actually could identify who the other off-screen VI was) - it was distracting for hearing meeting participants - and also raises question if the other party could hear this confidential discussion.
- CSD call-centre manager has confirmed via email correspondence that the regular booths used by NZVIS are NOT sound proof. This is concerning, as the NZ Deaf community is small - it does not have to be like any other call centre such as IRD, Vodafone etc. which she has said. Those help desk operators 99% of the time will not socialise with/know the hearing callers so it is “alright” if conversations are overheard by other helpdesk operators. But the VIs working for NZVIS will 99% of the time be living and/or working in the Deaf community and will in most cases identify who the Deaf caller is.
- Deaf to have the choice of choosing the VI, just like with face-to-face interpretation in most cases we can choose who the interpreter is. Why does this not apply for NZVIS?
- Quality of the VIs are not consistent. Do the VIs have professional development? Where is the feedback mechanism from Deaf to help VIs improve their interpretation?

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?

- TTY use is obsolete - do not know anyone who has one!

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

- We still use Internet Relay sometimes, lesser since NZVIS available.
- Never used the TTY.

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?

- There is no information about who the current VIs are. Interpreter agencies have this information available for face-to-face interpreters. Interpreter agencies can also advise when interpreters are possibly available to work. This should be available for NZVIS too - so Deaf can have the choice of which interpreter to use for their VIS call.
- The NZVIS booking form needs massive improvements:
 - does not allow choice of preferred interpreter
 - Why are other countries listed? NZ should be by default the only country available, thus rendering this choice redundant. Remove it
 - Why is Test Call an option?
 - Why is physical address required?
 - Why is there a phone number required?
 - Why are hearing callers' names not requested, yet Deaf people's are. Why are Deaf people's names needed?

- There needs to be a backup in place for when Skype has outages. Consider other software providers such as Skype for Business. Or a dedicated app. Or providing choice of platform.
- Can the calls be recorded, for review purposes - both Deaf use, and interpreter use.
- Would like the call centre to be available for "open days" to allow Deaf/hearing people to have a walk through and understand the layout how it works etc.
- Where is the Deaf input in a everyday perspective? Yes, have advisory group - more focused on bigger picture stuff. but still need the actual consumers view/feedback. Deaf consultant would be good for this.
- Have redirection in place so any hearing callers to Deaf people's mobile numbers get redirected to NZVIS, then the VI interp call the Deaf person.
- Create and use a dedicated app - then the telcos can identify if the app is being used, therefore apply no data charges, or apply the voice minutes, when not connected to a wifi.
- Consider the use of a landline number 09 XXXXXX which we can then put down as our number, which actually will go the relay call centre, as some may not accept the hearing callers number (0800) as a valid personal phone number on some forms (too long, does not fit the 09 XXX XXXX format)
- Helpdesk should be more receptive of feedback/questions - not defensive. Previously asked about the layout of the call centre, was questioned why this information is useful for Deaf people. It is not up to them to decide what Deaf people consider to be useful information.

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

Publication of submissions

Written submissions may be published at www.mbie.govt.nz. We will consider you to have consented to publication by making a submission, unless you clearly specify otherwise in your submissions.

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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