

# 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>	Collective Submission by Deaf Community Members
<b>Your email address:</b>	

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

√

<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?**

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	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?**

√

	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:

√

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Deaf
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hearing Impaired
<input type="checkbox"/>	Speech Impaired
<input type="checkbox"/>	Deafblind
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to disclose

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

√

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

Are you a user of New Zealand Sign Language?

√

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	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:

√

	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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Internet Relay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

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:

We are profoundly Deaf users of New Zealand relay. We use a range of services, such as Video Relay, Mobile Text relay, Internet relay. We use these for various purposes, such as for employment matters (Staff meetings), or Parent teacher interviews (Deaf parent / Deaf teacher etc), we often use it for Social calling as well. Making Appointments, contacting government agencies, or non government agencies for business or personal reasons.

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:**

✓

✓	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)?

We feel that the current accessibility is quite limited. I say accessibility because availability is great, the times of availability is pretty good, BUT it is not availability that is the issue, its accessibility. Such as only 1 or 2 VRS operators and no scope for increasing for “surge” calling - but that is because you do not know what the demand is as there is no indicator.

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

- VIS not available on the spot - Urgent appointments etc.
- Captel captions behind a couple words
- Mobile text relay not allow spelling errors to be fixed which can make or break a conversation, especially when ID is being asked.
- Interpreters being known to person, and unable to change due to not many interpreters available on site, or the alternative is also known to the caller - yes there is acknowledgement of the privacy act and interpreter ethics, but sometimes that is still not sufficient.

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

- One Stop Shop - being able to call using VIS - but if the call is unable to be connected due to no interpreters, then it is automatically transferred to a Internet / Mobile relay service, so there is ease of communications. Or allow for a ‘call back’ capability, where the caller can request the VIS person to establish the call when available.
- Clarity over opening hours - what exactly is available and when?
- Better promotions and not biased towards one service.

**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?

- Proper inclusion in business handbooks, especially for government services or core services such as Banks etc as there is always high turnover, and it is almost every 2nd or 3rd call to a service that encounters someone who has never used New Zealand Relay before and requires explaining, and/or approval from above.
- Regular and consistent promotion - for ALL services, not just one or two, as it has been seen there is bias towards some services, such as for a year or two, all promotions went onto Captel, and now it is back to Video Relay, but where are the promotions for Internet Relay, Speech Impaired etc etc
- Ads on TV apart of deaf awareness weeks.
  - Such promotion could have Shortland Street using relay in a call for example
  - Using Deaf People to promote the services.

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?

The world is heading towards a very mobile planet, as a nation we are dropping landlines as fast as we could - heading to either Mobile use or 'Naked' connectivity. New Zealand Relay as a whole needs to catch up to this technology advance and FAST, as I do not understand why we still promote and have services that require a landline in some shape or form, we need to move away from this.

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

All services, we need to be catering for all consumer groups, not just the Deaf or the Hard of Hearing. We need to investigate and employ people who are innovative and are able to do what would be the perfect solution, a one stop shop all services and is consistent across platforms, so what you see on a Mac or a Android are the same as Apple and a Windows, sure the lay out may be slightly different but the services and how to use, are identical as we need consistency.

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?

We need to throw out what we currently use, because they are not easy to use at all.

- Textmee, you CANNOT correct mistakes, which is a nightmare when it comes to entering vital information such as Date of Birth, you need to type it again fast hoping the RA has not already passed on the incorrect information.
- WebCaptel - the worst internet platform I have ever come across, and is not user friendly - the concept is great but you need a user friendly platform.
- Use the consumer groups to try before you buy, or try before you mass produce a app, use the groups that are actually going to use the services, dont rely on the head honchos who are biased towards their own software/systems.
- We do not know the demand for VIS, and there is often talk of "we need 24/7" or "we need more interpreters" for VIS, because we are often seeing a red 'not available' light or a not online light for VIS, but there is no queue therefore no indication of how many people waiting for an available interpreter, or a true representation of data, this statement is not to imply we are keen for 24/7, but we are keen for a queue, so we know the demand, and know the true representation of users and when.

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

We need to consider access especially for emergency services and after hours. The majority of Deaf users that have been approached, spoken to, or heard from have all complained about not being able to access an interpreter at 2am in the Police Station or Hospital, they need to be able to know there is an interpreter or two on call for these events.

When we speak of emergency services, we do not just refer to Police / Fire / Ambulance, but also Healthline, Samaritans, youthline etc.

These calls need to be able to be made 24/7, as well as being able to be accessible by the services when we are on the side of the road, or in hospital. We are Deaf 24/7, we are not only Deaf in the operating hours of VIS, we need to be able to access emergency services when we need them. We acknowledge that they have arrangements for 'in person' interpreters - but this can be a more economical method, especially if it is a checkpoint, or a roadside breath test, then we can do it on the spot, rather than delaying both the Deaf person, and the police officer as access can be immediate.

**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. Mobile Data in New Zealand is very expensive, yes its acknowledged that prices are coming down and plans are getting bigger, but this is causing a social and technology divide. We have Deaf community members who can afford good data packs therefore is always accessible via Relay Services on their mobiles, then you have those who are not, so their accessibility is limited to when they can find free wifi or go somewhere they have reliable consistent access.

Video relay calls can use high data, up 2gb a hour depending on definition of video, so being on a 3gb a month plan is going to wipe you out after a 90 minute call. Should users be only making 90mins worth of Video relay calls a month?

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

High data calculations for Video Relay - up to 2gb a hour if using high definition, this restricts the number of calls that can be received while on mobile data, so the impact can be severe if you are waiting on an important call, or if you've missed a call that could be telling you a loved one is in hospital. Barriers need to be removed.

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

It has been recommended so many times through NZ Relay advisory group meetings, that NZ Relay needs to become a Zero Data service, so that all access to NZ Relay are data free, it is acknowledged that with Skype this is not possible, but with the app development recommended in this submission, it can be possible. We have Ministry of Social Development proving this with their websites and apps for Work and Income.

Deaf only Data/Text plans is another alternative. We currently have to be approved by Deaf Aotearoa to be registered for Text 111, perhaps the same process can be used to be approved for a 'Deaf Plan' through any NZ Telecommunications company - but this is not just for the Deaf, but Deaf Blind can get approval through Foundation for the Blind and so on.

**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?

Platform, which in turn will enhance accessibility, and ease of access.

We have to use almost 3-4 different platforms to access NZ Relay in some shape or form (TTY/Internet/Captel/Skype/Mobile) we need to trim this down and have a "one stop shop" whereas we can download a app and have all services available, or a app for laptop, and also have the capability to plug in braille or text enlarger - the technology is out there, we need to embrace it or risk being left behind.

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 - consider this to be discontinued, but need solid evidence that these are no longer used, as elderly in NZ tend to hold onto old technology - either by not understanding technology advances, or the cost. Need to identify true numbers before removing the service.

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

TTY - No longer have one anymore.

Captel - Stopped recently as only got fibre (naked) no landline, so no use of Captel.



Captel - Prior to going naked broadband, there was hesitation of using Captel due to the delay in captioning, as once you go too far delayed, the call gets really messed up.

**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?

- Based on communications with other Deaf people, and being aware of what is available in NZ, and knowing what is happening world wide, we need to be investing with a company that will be innovative, challenging, honest and is a proven supplier of Relay services, both platform and services.
  
- New Zealand Relay is one confusing system, as we have Sprint International being contracted by MBIE to provide New Zealand Relay, but Sprint has subcontracted to CSD (Communications Services for the Deaf) for the Video Relay Services. There is also another subcontract agreement with MERGE for promotions using NZ Sign Language Interpreters. In saying that, are they actually doing any work? We are concerned that all these subcontracting to external agencies is diluting the quality of service that New Zealand Relay could be providing if everything was through one company with their internal promotions agency.
  
- We do not want New Zealand Relay to be run by a company that is NOT in telecommunications. New Zealand Relay is a very valuable platform and service for every consumer user in New Zealand, and we do not want it run by disability organisations, as it is believed they will all start fighting over who's service to promote more, and whose service is to get more money. We need a neutral business that provides all services equally with equal promotion BASED on the consumer base, so if Captel Users are higher then obviously promotion will be lower, but increases if the user base drops, same with other services.
  
- We need New Zealand Relay Advisory Group to stay a true representation of the consumer base, by using REAL consumers, not the organisation that represents the consumer, or supposedly represents the consumer. Organisations that supposedly represent their disability group are widely known to do a poor job, Deaf Aotearoa are currently going through massive image issues with the Deaf community, and we do not want them representing us towards New Zealand Relay, other people say the same about the Blind Foundation. The current relay advisory group have engaged with their communities more than the NZ Relay service themselves have, and we have been able to build a rapport with the community which demonstrates the value that this advisory group brings to New Zealand Relay.

- It also has to be said that there are many members of different disability groups that have said if New Zealand Relay is under the control of disability organisations in New Zealand, we will see a significant drop in Relay users. Why? you may ask? these organisations are not always focused on their consumers, but also the privacy of the callers can be at risk, the world is currently going through scandals of Privacy through facebook, google and other internet services, but imagine our calls being taken by someone working for the disability organisation I am registered with - sorry but no thank you.
  
- New Zealand Relay made the mistake of obtaining services of a company without trialling it, or investigating what their true innovative thinking could bring to New Zealand as well as having a restrictive agreement with Sprint International. Why do we say this? Sprint in the United States have apps, standalone apps for Relay services, why are they not bringing this to New Zealand? whoever bids for the tender for 2019 onwards need to be providing demos for users to try out before the tender is agreed and signed for, and given the opportunity for a long term agreement so they can be innovative and bring the future to new zealand for access for all users, disabled or not.
  
- There also needs to be more transparency between the Relay Service provider and also the Advisory group, there have been many odd decisions made, that has raised questions amongst the Advisory group users, but because the decisions were already made, acted on, we were only able to express our thoughts despite some decisions impacting users negatively.
  
- Bring a motivated, innovative company to New Zealand, do not just stick with the status quo if people are afraid of change, but make sure the change is done ethically, morally and suitable for the consumers, and yes suitable for the government, but that SHOULD NOT be the only reason, and please involve the Advisory group deeper in the Tender process.

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

This is a COLLECTIVE submission made by many members of the Deaf community who has provided thoughts and feedback to two NZ Relay Advisory Group members. This collective submission is agreed by many members, who have verified their agreement by signing here.

NAME	SIGNATURE		NAME	SIGNATURE

## 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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