

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: | James Pole |
| 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

| | |
|---|-----|
| | Yes |
| √ | No |

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

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

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 – not hearing but a VIS user |
| | 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:

I use Internet Relay mainly for personal calls to organisations such as banks. I use Mobile Text Relay for personal calls to e.g. roadside assistance service providers. I use the Video Interpreting Service for work-related meetings.

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?)

I find the availability of the Internet Relay and Mobile Text Relay to be of a high standard. It is rare that I am unable to access either services. As I generally only use the Video Interpreting Service in the workplace, I have been happy with the current availability however I think I would potentially use that service more for personal use (e.g. communicating in NZSL with sales people in shops) if it was available on the weekends.

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

Internet Relay used to be a Java applet which caused issues on modern computers that did not come with Java. This caused quite a lot of headaches (especially in situations such as workplaces where Java is forbidden for security reasons). This has now been resolved with the outcome being I can now use Internet Relay on a wider range of computers including those at my workplace as well as any of my family/friends computers should I not have access to my own.

Mobile Text Relay uses the Texmee app. On the iPhone that application can be slow and cumbersome to use. The iPhone version of the application has an usual keyboard setup which does not reliably support the usual autocorrect function available in other iPhone applications. The lack of autocorrect support makes it difficult to type quickly and fluidly and resulting in a high level of spelling errors and subsequent corrections. This has the result of confusing the other party and generally extending the time taken on the call. I also found that sometimes switching to a different application (e.g. to find information relevant to my call) would result in the termination of the call. For that reason I use MTR as a last resort only if I am unable to, for example, tether my laptop with my mobile phone.

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

Look at delivering MTR in a different way. Could MTR perhaps be delivered over SMS for example? This would leverage the existing support for SMS available in all mobile phones giving a good experience for users without needing another application installed on phone. Another approach could be to provide access through Skype (which is already used for video relay) for text relay. This would mean Deaf people have the option to use video (VIS) or text (TRS) through a single application.

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?

I would like to see TV commercials during the 6pm news to promote the service. The goal would be to raise awareness of the relay services a whole so people are more aware about it.

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?

I would prefer to access the text relay service from a computer since I feel more comfortable accessing the service using a proper keyboard (rather than an onscreen one). However I would also want to have the option to access it through my mobile in case of emergencies and other situations where it is impractical to use a computer.

For video relay I prefer the use of a laptop computer due to the larger screen and ease of placement when using the VRI for meetings with the hearing person in the same place as me. However as above I also would like mobile access as well in certain situations where using a computer is impractical.

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

On my laptop I would like to see both Internet Relay and the VIS. On my mobile I would like to see MTR and VIS.

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?

Mobile Text Relay—Would like to see it be delivered in a different way that does not present the issues currently presented by the current Texmee application. Skype could be a good option to provide this service alongside the existing VIS service delivered over Skype.

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

Video Relay—Currently the service is delivered by using a number of Skype accounts. One has to wait for one to become 'Available' and try and beat others to call the interpreter. I have heard that overseas other video interpreting systems have a queue system. For example a user could request a VI through a single account dedicated to receiving requests. When they are next in the queue then the available VI would call them directly. The implementation detail is up to the provider but I think the concept would make it more fair (i.e. first come first served) and also reduce frustration waiting because people can make the request and carry on with their work until interrupted by the call from a VI.

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?

As relay calls are free to non-mobile numbers this has not been a barrier. However mobile numbers and service operator services (such as Voicemail) is such a huge barrier I cannot recall any time in all the time the relay services have operated that I have called a mobile number or my own voicemail via the relay service. I have described in detail below my frustrations below.

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

The most frustrating issue for me at the moment is that I am unable to use any of my voice minutes to call mobile phones—and worse I cannot even access my own voice mail via any of the relay services without paying for this. I am fortunate that I am on an pay monthly plan so I am able to divert all my calls to my hearing partner which helps lessen the impact of this issue but my partner should not have to have the burden of being my answerphone. This should be a priority issue to be addressed given the (1) inequitable access to one's own mobile voicemail and (2) the increasing prevalence of people who only have mobile phones.

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

1. Either make calls to mobile phones free (with the costs absorbed 100% by the mobile phone carrier where the relay-to-mobile call terminates) OR have the mobile phone carriers (i.e. Vodafone, Spark and 2degrees) establish accessible systems at their own cost to allow relay users with mobile plans to easily use their included minutes via the relay service (with the cost 100% absorbed by the relay user's carrier).

2. Mobile phone carriers to, at their own cost, establish an accessible and easy-to-use system for all relay users to access their own voicemail at no cost in a way that is easy to use.

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?

The relay service has historically been excellent at providing access where the call is originated by the relay user. However a significant issue remains with calls terminating at a relay user (e.g. hearing person wants to call a Deaf person). This is something that is either impossible (calls via the internet relay can only originate from a Deaf person which means calls cannot terminate at a Deaf person) or impracticable (the VIS can contact a Deaf person by Skype but this presumes the Deaf person is always signed into Skype which is not the case for some if not many). This is in my opinion the second priority area that needs to be looked at.

One suggestion I have could be to establish a phone number range specifically for terminating calls to Deaf relay users. Let say (to make a example) that NZ Relay had the 0209 xxx xxx range and calls to (for instance) 0209 123 456 would connect the caller to the relay service which would then contact the Deaf relay user (via either VIS or MTS or whichever) registered under that number and connect them to the hearing caller. This would make calling Deaf relay users much more transparent and user friendly for hearing users calling Deaf relay users.

Another option could be for the Deaf relay users' to be able to have their own phone number diverted to the relay service—however I am not sure if this would be a practicable option. Perhaps worth investigating though.

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?

All equipment specifically for Deaf users should be phased out with IP-based service (i.e. MTR, Internet Relay and VIS) becoming the only services available to Deaf users.

Note: I make no comment regarding other user groups who may or may not require specialist equipment. I only suggest that the needs of the Deaf user group (and not, for example, Deafblind or other user groups) is met by standard consumer communications equipment (e.g. smartphones, tablets and computers).

My only concern is the lack of access for calls terminating at a Deaf person. TTY calls can terminate at a Deaf user so the withdrawal of TTY would require a replacement service allowing calls to terminate at a Deaf user.

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

I have discontinued use of the TTY service after returning my TTY. I now use Internet Relay, MTR and VIS as a replacement as per my above comments.

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?

I find the service to be very useful as a Deaf person and would like to see it continue and improve taking into account the changing landscape of telecommunications in New Zealand.

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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