

## Telecommunications Relay Services Beyond June 2019

### The New Zealand Audiological Society

The New Zealand Audiological Society (NZAS) was incorporated in 1976 and is a self-governing body representing over 550 Audiologist, Audiometrist and provisional members in New Zealand. Society members work in public and private sector audiology, as well as in University programmes, Deaf Education Centres, Cochlear Implant Trusts, and research in the field of Audiology.

NZAS members adhere to agreed Standards of Practice issued by the Society and are required to maintain their proficiency through continuing education and regular peer reviews.

Members are also required to uphold the Society's Code of Ethics. NZAS has an independent Complaints Board who investigate complaints from consumers, the public and NZAS members themselves regarding possible breaches of the Code of Ethics.

NZAS has a vision of people with hearing loss fully participating in their communities and supports this by promoting excellence in hearing care through leadership, advocacy and setting professional standards of practice for all members.

### Comments on the Consultation Document

The New Zealand Audiological Society fully endorses the following statement as the guiding principle for considering the future telecommunication services available for deaf, hearing impaired, deafblind and speech impaired people.

*.... the Government's objective in providing a relay service from 1 July 2019, agreed in consultation with NZRAG members, is to ensure that the relay service meets the needs of users in facilitating the access of deaf, hearing impaired, deafblind and speech impaired people to New Zealand society and the economy. Specifically, we want to ensure that the relay service is:*

- **Available:** to those who need it, when they need it, regardless of where they live
- **Accessible:** widely known, easy to access and straightforward to use
- **Affordable:** for users whilst offering value for money for the Government
- **Fit for purpose:** compatible with mainstream technologies and networks and keeps pace with technological advancements.<sup>1</sup>

Specifically, the NZAS would like to highlight the following points:

#### Availability

- Relay Services should be available 24/7 – in particular, the limited availability of the VIS service is an issue for some service users.

#### Accessibility

- While New Zealand is developing its Broadband infrastructure programme with the aim of 87% of the population having access to UFB by 2022, there is still a significant proportion of the population who will not have access to UFB and consideration of users in this group should not be overlooked.

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<sup>1</sup> Telecommunications Relay Services and Beyond June 2019 Public Consultation Document – page 6

- The promotion of Relay services is supported by consultation and engagement with the organisations that work with, support, and represent the needs of deaf, hearing impaired, deafblind and speech impaired people. As noted in the consultation document, service users report a lack of awareness of services available to them. Ongoing promotion and engagement with individual service users and the organisations that represent their interests is important.

#### *Affordable*

- That services and technology are affordable – while prices have declined in recent years and many people have access to smart phones, tablets and the internet, cost will still be an issue for some service users. The ongoing running cost of mobile phones and internet will be an issue for those service users on very limited incomes.

#### *Fit for Purpose*

- That the full range of new technologies are considered – Relay services going forward should take advantage of the full range of telecommunication technologies available to support this community of service users whilst also maintaining access for those service users who would struggle to adapt or change to new technology.