# Submission: Sustain the National Relay Service and improve communications accessibility for people with disability: 2016 and beyond

## This submission can be published on the World Wide Web

Yes.

## Date of submission

6 May 2016

## Logo of organisation—if an organisation making this submission

## Name and contact details of person/organisation making submission

Mrs Julie McKenzie

## General comments

I have a deaf brother who relies on the services of the National Relay Services. My brother has 10% hearing in one ear and four years ago received a cochlear implant in that ear because he had lost what hearing he had due to an ear infection. He uses sign language to communicate with other deaf people and to communicate with medical people with the help of an interpreter. He was schooled during the Oral Deaf era so wasn’t taught sign language at school but picked it up when mixing with other deaf people who used sign to communicate. Because my brother didn’t learn sign we his family also didn’t learn to sign but rely on his ability to lip read and speak (sometimes have to ask him a few times what he is saying). Because he lives on his own in a rural community (more affordable when on a disability pension) my brother is reliant on communicating with deaf friends and other services using the video relay service or Skype. Unfortunately in the area he lives he cannot access enough data to be able to communicate with his friends using Skype, which impacts his social communication as well as other services, and NBN is at least one to two years away as yet and will be wireless when it does come. He finds the Video Relay Service unsuitable because of limited internet data and it breaks up. My brother has poor English skills and finds texting and typing his messages onerous – his family help him out by using text messages and speaking to business people etc on his behalf. We often have difficulty understanding what he is trying to tell us in text messages. Extra internet data and text messaging for people in his situation is imperative to even come close to what we all take for granted today in the way of communication.

## Response

### Should a specific funding allocation from the TIL available for the delivery of the NRS be removed – i.e. funding from the TIL to be used on a fully cost recovery basis, reflecting the actual level of use of the NRS in each financial year?

Yes

### Should a specific funding allocation from the TIL available for the delivery of the NRS be increased by a set amount? If so, what amount?

No

### Should changes to the current $20 million allocation (excluding GST) available for the delivery provision of the NRS from the TIL be allocated for specific purposes? I.e. for delivery of specific service options.

No

### Should capping arrangements be put in place for one or more service access options delivered through the NRS?

Yes

### Which service access options could be capped (while maintaining access to calls to emergency services on a 24/7/365 basis) for users of the NRS?

Those which are heavily used.

### Should limited hours of operation be put in place for any other service access options delivered through the NRS, apart from the current arrangements in place for video relay?

No

### Which service access options could have limited hours of operation (while maintaining access to calls to emergency services on a 24/7/365 basis) for users of the NRS?

None

### Should caps be considered on a per-user basis as part of ‘fair use’ controls?

Yes

### Should account or compulsory registration requirements be expanded to cover access to all service options available through the NRS?

Yes

### Should the establishment of any account or registration process require appropriate independent confirmation of the disability which requires the account holder to use the service?

Yes

### Should the establishment of any account or registration process require account holders to appropriately self-declare the disability which requires them to use the service?

Yes

### Should appropriate fair use policies be introduced for account holders with the NRS?

Yes

### Should the current follow-on call options available for some types of inbound connections to the NRS be removed?

No

### How could the NRS outreach programme be refocussed to assist in broadening awareness of service options and aiding the sustainability of the NRS?

### What sort of transition process would be appropriate in phasing out legacy proprietary technologies such as the TTY access to the NRS?

Unsure

### Are there options such as limiting inbound connections generated by specific technologies that could be introduced?

Unsure

### What are the likely circumstances in which people may choose use the NRS over other communication options?

When they do not have access to adequate data allowance plans from service providers

### How can reliance on the NRS as a communication option be reduced?

Lobby service providers to increase data allowances on some plans specifically for the deaf and hearing impaired to allow video skyping

### Which are the service access options to favour when providing primary access to the NRS through non-proprietary mainstream technology options?

Video relay

### Should the Telecommunications (Equipment for the Disabled) Regulations 1998 be repealed?

Unsure

### If the regulations were repealed, would an additional safety net, beyond compliance with requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, need to be implemented?

Yes

### Can more affordable data‑rich plans be developed by restricting voice call allowances in such plans?

Yes

### Can such plans be provided on both a pre-paid and post-paid basis?

Yes

### Should plans of this nature be generally available to all communities?

Yes

### What level of support is necessary to encourage the take up of devices and plans of this nature by people with disability?

Dissemination of availability through Deaf and Hearing Impaired organisations

### What are options to consider in how to provide necessary support?

Distance from main town centres

### What skills and support are needed to encourage people to use mainstream technologies?

Enabling current deaf organisations to improve skill levels of clients

### Are there existing industry, government or community programmes which could be utilised?

Unsure

### How can the broadening of the availability and promotion of mainstream text- and video‑based communication options by businesses and service providers be encouraged?

Promotion via service providers and deaf organisations

### How can Australians with disability be supported to increase their use of direct text and video communication options?

Having reasonably priced access to text based plans on mobiles and data based plans over the internet in regional areas.