



**Manager  
Communications Accessibility**

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Via Email: [accessibility@communications.gov.au](mailto:accessibility@communications.gov.au)

**Re/ Communications Accessibility: 2016 and Beyond**

Deafness Forum of Australia thanks the Department for the opportunity to respond to the Communications Accessibility: 2016 and Beyond consultation.

We are writing to you because we are concerned about the options proposed in the discussion paper and their implications for people with disability. Given our limited resources we are unable to make a full submission, and therefore lend our support in full to the Australian Communications Consumer Action network (ACCAN) submission.

Our organisation represents one in six Australians who have a hearing loss and their families.

We understand that since the introduction of new relay services there has been an increase in the use of the National Relay Service. Any improvements in the provision of greater access to communications for people with disability provide benefits for all Australians. The advancement of digital technologies has undoubtedly provided more accessible and usable communication channels for many people who are unable to use standard voice telephones. However, these new technologies do not provide adequate alternative communication in all instances hence the continued essentiality of the National Relay Service.

- There must be additional funding over and above the \$20 Million (excluding GST) cap to maintain full access to the NRS over the current contract and into the future. This will ensure NRS users continue to have equitable access to telecommunications as provisioned under the Universal Service Obligation.
- Guarantee all current relay services are available on a 24/7 365 basis, including video relay.
- Guarantee all relay services provide 24/7 365 access to 000 or 106 emergency services.
- Review the current Disability Equipment Programs to ensure they are fit-for-purpose in today's communications environment.

We strongly encourage the Government to consider the ongoing essential nature of the NRS as the equivalent communication channel for people who are unable to use mainstream communication equipment and services.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Williamson', written in a cursive style.

Stephen Williamson  
Chief Executive

3 May 2016