



Meeting Minutes

Communications Accessibility Consultative Committee Meeting Five

Date: 11/06/2026 **Time:** 2:00PM – 3:30PM
Location: Virtual
Chair: Sam Grunhard, First Assistant Secretary, Connectivity

Attendees

| Name | Organisation/position |
|-------------------|---|
| Sam Grunhard | First Assistant Secretary, Connectivity Division, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA) |
| Kate McMullan | Assistant Secretary, Consumer Safeguards Branch, DITRDCA |
| Alan Chalmers | Director, Communications Accessibility, DITRDCA |
| Andrew Johnson | Assistant Secretary, Custodian Operations Branch, DITRDCA |
| Jayden Pollard | Assistant Director, Custodian Operations and Engagement, DITRDCA |
| Melanie Chatfield | Senior Policy Officer, Blind Citizens Australia |
| Brent Phillips | Chief Services Officer, Deaf Connect |
| Brett Casey | CEO, Deaf Connect |
| Ben McAtamney | National Policy and Advocacy Officer, Deaf Blind Australia |
| Amelia Radke | Senior Policy Adviser, Australian Communications Consumer Action Network |
| Rosie Lane | Access and Inclusion Index Lead, Australian Disability Network |
| Shirley Liu | CEO, Deaf Australia |
| Rebecca Adam | CEO, Expression Australia |
| Jonathon Craig | Policy and Advocacy Manager, Vision 2020 Australia |
| Anita Herbert | Communications and Media Manager, Inclusion Australia |

| Name | Organisation/position |
|----------------|--|
| Amanda Charles | A/g Assistant Secretary, Australia's Disability Strategy Branch, Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) |
| Hayley Stone | National Director, Policy and Advocacy, Deafness Forum Australia |
| Anthony Melhem | Captions Connect |
| Lincoln Blake | Director A/NZ Account Manager, Concentrix |
| Claire Rennie | Community Engagement Officer, Concentrix |
| Scott Nibloe | Concentrix |
| Ross Cameron | Operations Manager, Concentrix |
| Daniel Brennan | Help Desk Manager, Concentrix |
| Stephen Gamble | Associate Director, Concentrix |
| Angela Walters | Stakeholder Engagement Lead, National Messaging System Taskforce Emergency Response Coordination, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) |
| Bron Sparkes | National Messaging System Taskforce, NEMA |

Apology:

Jodi Cassar, Assistant Secretary, Australia's Disability Strategy Branch, Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Maeve Kennedy, Deputy CEO, Inclusion Australia

Minutes

Agenda item 1: Introduction

- Sam Grunhard opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

Agenda item 2: Triple Zero Review

Presenter: Andrew Johnson, DITRDCA

- Andrew Johnson provided an update on the review of Triple Zero (000) legislation and regulations, outlining the review's objectives, timelines, and the process for public submissions.
- **Review Objectives and Timeline:** Andrew explained that the review, announced by the Minister for Communications, will focus on the laws and rules supporting Triple Zero, aiming to ensure they remain effective and responsive to future needs. An interim report is expected by September 2026, with a final report due by March 2027. Public submissions on the consultation paper are open until 22 June, and the paper is available on the department's website. Link to the paper is here: [Triple Zero Legislative and Regulatory Review](#) .
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Submissions:** Andrew explained that after receiving public submissions, the team will meet with stakeholders to discuss issues raised, which will inform the interim report. Further consultation will occur after the interim report to shape the final recommendations to government. The review seeks input from a wide range of stakeholders, including disability groups.

- **Federal and State Government Roles:** In response to Shirley Liu's question, Sam Grunhard clarified that while state governments deliver emergency services, the federal government controls the telecommunications law governing Triple Zero calls. The review will focus on telecommunications aspects, not on how emergency services engage with communities. Andrew added that the review aims to ensure calls connect efficiently to the right services.

Agenda item 3: Emergency Alerts

Presenters: Angela Walters, Bron Sparkes, NEMA

- Angela Walters, supported by Bron Sparks, provided a comprehensive update on the rollout of the AusAlert public warning system, detailing its technology, accessibility features, stakeholder engagement, and testing plans.
 - **System Overview and Technology:** Angela described AusAlert as a cell broadcast-based public information and warning system, enabling the Australian Government or emergency services agencies to send messages to the entire country or targeted regions without needing phone numbers. The system is compatible with a range of devices, including mobile phones, tablets, smartwatches, and CarPlay devices, and will operate alongside the existing Emergency Alert system until July 2027.
 - **Alert Levels and Functionality:** AusAlert introduces two alert levels: a critical alert, which is intrusive and overrides silent/do not disturb modes, and a priority alert, which is less intrusive and can be opted out of. Both alert types are designed to ensure maximum reach during emergencies, with critical alerts reserved for imminent threats to life and property.
 - **Accessibility and Cohort Engagement:** Angela highlighted extensive engagement with diverse cohorts, including people with disabilities, older Australians, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, First Nations people, and those experiencing domestic and family violence. Materials are available in Auslan, Easy Read, and multiple languages, with stakeholder kits tailored to specific needs. Workshops and ongoing feedback have informed the development of accessible resources.
 - **Assistive Technology Testing:** Bron Sparks reported on recent laboratory testing of AusAlert compatibility with assistive technologies, including cochlear implants, hearing aids, and refreshable braille readers. Results showed varying levels of compatibility, with some devices playing alert tones directly and others relying on phone speakers. Personal safety alarms did not react to AusAlert, and further data collection is planned during community trials and the national test.
 - **Community Trials and National Test:** Community-based trials began in the ACT and will continue across nine locations, including regional areas. The national test is scheduled for 27 July, using the critical alert. Public awareness campaigns are being conducted locally and nationally, with information and stakeholder engagement coordinated through the AusAlert website at [Community testing | ausalert](#).
 - **Stakeholder Feedback and Future Enhancements:** Hayley Stone, Jonathan Craig, Melanie Chatfield, Rebecca Adam and Amelia Radke raised questions about testing participation, notification timing, and the inclusion of video-based communication for the deaf community. Angela confirmed ongoing efforts to enhance accessibility, including the potential for more Auslan content and mechanisms for collecting feedback from users during trials. Information about accessibility is available through the AusAlert website at [Disabilities & extra support | ausalert](#).

Agenda item 4: Budget announcement: expanded video relay

Presenter: Kate McMullan, DITRDCSA

- Kate spoke about the allocation of \$15 million over three years in the federal budget to extend the National Relay Service's video relay capability to 24/7, with implementation details discussed, including interpreter supply challenges and stakeholder engagement plans.
 - **Funding and Implementation Plans:** Kate explained that the new funding increases the NRS budget to \$25 million per year, starting from 1 July 2026. The implementation involves extending operating hours and upgrading the video relay platform to prioritise emergency calls. The department is working with Concentrix, the contracted provider, to prepare for the rollout.
 - **Interpreter Workforce Challenges:** Hayley raised concerns about the limited supply of qualified Auslan interpreters, noting fewer than 700 interpreters nationwide. Kate and Lincoln Blake acknowledged this challenge, stating that recruitment and careful phasing of the rollout are planned, and that ongoing consultation with interpreters and users will be essential to address workforce constraints.
 - **Stakeholder Engagement and Subgroup Formation:** Kate invited interested group members to join a time-limited dedicated subgroup to provide feedback during the rollout. The department is aiming for monthly meetings to ensure user needs are addressed. Amanda Charles from DHDA noted its study on the Auslan workforce, emphasising the need for a joined-up approach across sectors.

Agenda item 5: Mainstream adoption of captioning

Presenter: Hayley Stone, Deafness Forum Australia

Hayley led a discussion on the need for consistent accessible communication across government, presenting statistics, barriers, and a demonstration of Caption Connect's AI-powered captioning and translation tool, with Anthony Malham providing technical details and participants discussing implementation and quality assurance.

- **Barriers to Accessible Communication:** Hayley outlined the prevalence of hearing loss in Australia and argued for reframing accessibility as a mainstream issue. Despite existing guidelines and resources, inconsistent implementation across government remains a challenge. Hayley proposed a dialogue to identify and address barriers to compliance, including organisational and systemic factors.
- **Caption Connect Demonstration:** Anthony demonstrated Caption Connect, a cloud-based captioning and translation tool developed for education and now used in various sectors. The tool offers real-time captioning, translation into multiple languages, accessibility customisation, transcript generation, and integration with platforms like Teams and Zoom. It supports both one-way and two-way translation, with features for privacy and user control.
- **Testing, Accuracy, and Adoption:** Anita Herbert and Amanda asked about the tool's accessibility, accuracy, and quality assurance. Anthony explained that Caption Connect is based on Microsoft's language model, further trained in-house with input from interpreters and users. The system allows for custom glossaries, live editing and is already in use by several state government agencies and educational institutions.
- **Encouraging Broader Adoption:** Hayley and Anita emphasised the benefits of normalising accessible technology, reducing the need for special requests, and supporting privacy and inclusion. The discussion highlighted the potential for such tools to improve government communications and the importance of user testing and feedback.

Agenda item 6: Other business

- **Australia's Disability Strategy and Accessible Communications Plan:**

Amanda Charles updated the group on Australia's Disability Strategy's development of an accessible communications plan, including work on national standards, Auslan interpreter workforce impacts, and AI, with Anita advocating for Easy Read resources and their timely publication. Amanda encouraged participants to reach out for more information.

Anita advocated for the development and publication of Easy Read resources alongside standard information, noting that Easy Read benefits a wide audience beyond people with intellectual disabilities. She suggested including this topic in future meetings and aligning it with the national standards work.

- Sam thanked all participants for their contributions, especially the interpreters that facilitated the meeting. Sam noted that the next meeting will be scheduled for later in the year.

Action items

1. **AusAlert Community-Based Testing Participation:** Distribute the link to the NEMA website listing all community-based AusAlert testing locations to relevant organisations to facilitate timely participation and feedback. Link: [Community testing | ausalert](#)

The community test schedule:

Duffy, ACT 10:30 am Wednesday 10 June 2026 – complete

Launceston, TAS 11:00 am Monday 15 June 2026

Coastal townships (Cooya Beach, Newell and Wonga Beach), QLD 2:00 pm Tuesday 16 June 2026

Liverpool, NSW 4:00 pm Wednesday 17 June 2026

Tennant Creek, NT1 0:00 am Thursday 18 June 2026

Geelong, VIC 2:00 pm Thursday 18 June 2026

Goomalling, WA 12:00 pm Friday 19 June 2026

Port Lincoln, SA 11:00 am Saturday 20 June 2026

Queanbeyan, NSW/ACT border 2:00 pm Sunday 21 June 2026

2. **National Relay Service Video Relay Expansion Feedback:** Contact Alan Chalmers, Director, Communications Accessibility Section, to express interest in participating in the proposed subgroup for feedback on the rollout of the expanded 24/7 Auslan video relay service.

Contact Details: Email: Alan.Chalmers@INFRASTRUCTURE.gov.au Phone: +61 (2) 6136 6582

3. **Easy Read Standards and Publication Timing:** Include the development of national standards for Easy Read and the practice of publishing Easy Read resources as a topic for the next CACC meeting.