



Meeting Minutes

Communications Accessibility Consultative Committee Meeting Three

Date: 15/08/2025 **Time:** 2:00PM – 3:30PM
Location: Virtual
Chair: Sam Grunhard, First Assistant Secretary, Communications Services and Consumer

Attendees

Name	Organisation/position
Sam Grunhard	First Assistant Secretary, Communications Services and Consumer 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
Jodi Cassar	Assistant Secretary, Australia's Disability Strategy Branch, Department of Health, Disability and Ageing
Melanie Chatfield	Senior Policy Officer, Blind Citizens Australia
Brent Phillips	Chief Services Officer, Deaf Connect
Phil Harper	External Adviser, Deaf Australia
Debbie Celenza	Business Development Manager – Service Delivery, Expression Australia
Ben McAtamney	National Policy and Advocacy Officer, Deaf Blind Australia
Hayley Stone	National Director, Policy and Advocacy, Deafness Forum Australia
Amelia Radke	Senior Policy Adviser, Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
Rosie Lane	Access and Inclusion Index Lead, Australian Disability Network
Melissa Norris	Deaf Australia
Emma Bloom	Inclusion Australia

Name	Organisation/position
Lincoln Blake	Director A/NZ Account Manager, Concentrix
Claire Rennie	Community Engagement Officer, Concentrix
Ross Cameron	Operations Manager, Concentrix
Rachel Tran	Director Consulting, Concentrix
Jess Sharp	President, Hear With Us

Apologies

Name	Organisation/position
Shirley Liu	CEO, Deaf Australia

Minutes

Agenda item 1: Introduction

- Sam Grunhard (Chair) opened the meeting, welcomed attendees and introduced new Committee members:
 - Kate McMullan (DITRDCA)
 - Melanie Chatfield (Blind Citizens Australia)
 - Emma Bloom (Inclusion Australia, for Tania Smith who is on leave)
- Sam noted there were action items from the previous meetings, and referred to Alan Chalmers to provide an update.

Agenda item 2: Action items from Meeting 2

- Alan reported the progress of the actions and noted that most had become agenda items for this meeting.
 1. Share contact information for further communication and coordination with Committee members for feedback on eLearning and outreach initiatives (out of session). Claire from Concentrix has been in contact with a number of members.
 2. Share information about the transition from Skype to a new communication platform for the NRS – Concentrix (agenda item 4).
 3. Provide further updates regarding the engagement plan and the establishment of standards for government communication with people with disability – Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (agenda item 3).
 4. Share Shirley Liu’s message about Auslan recognition with the Department of Home Affairs. This message has been shared with DHA.
 5. Provide an update with further information on international models for sign language access (agenda item 5).
 6. Provide an update on Disability Rights (agenda item 3).

Agenda item 3: Update on development of an Associated Plan for Information and Communications Services

- **Presenter:** Jodi Cassar, Department of Health, Disability and Ageing
- Jodi noted that the team working on Australia’s Disability Strategy had recently transferred from the Department of Social Services to the new Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

- Jodi highlighted the work being undertaken connecting with government departments, at Commonwealth, state and territory levels and the Australian Disability Strategy Advisory Council to develop an engagement plan.
- Key points included:
 - Ongoing conversations with the disability community and other agencies to ensure a unified approach to the communications and engagement plan for the creation of the associated plan.
 - To assist in increasing the Auslan workforce, ongoing engagement with the Department of Home Affairs, the Department of Employment and Workforce Relations and DITRDCSA.
 - The full Associated Plan is expected to take approximately 3 years to develop and the aim is to develop draft standards that will be provided for comment along the way.
 - Two working groups, Disability Communications Working Group and Accessible Communications Technical Advisory Group, have been established with representatives from key government departments to guide the development of the draft standards and the associated plan. The technical group is at present considering development of a draft standard on Easy Read.
 - In the process of procuring a provider to help create accessible standards and explore how we can use artificial intelligence as well to support the inclusive communications piece of work.
 - Currently working on a package to procure a training partner to help create a training package to give federal, state and territory government staff the skills that they need to implement best practice communications.
- Melissa Norris from Deaf Australia asked if there is an Auslan expert in the Communications Technical Advisory Group.
- Jodi noted that there is an Auslan expert in the working group.

Agenda item 4: Update on the National Relay Service

Concentrix provided an update on the National Relay Service

Presenter: Lincoln Blake – Concentrix

- Lincoln began the presentation with a general overview of what Concentrix does:
 - Concentrix is a problem solving business providing technology to private and government organisations.
 - The NRS provides a human experience service underpinned by technology.
 - A variety of NRS channels, including captions, chat, SMS relay and video relay and a help desk function, which they are seeking to expand.

Presenter: Ross Cameron – Operations Manager

- Currently 6500 NRS users.
- 30-35 new registrations a week.
- Increase in scammers attempting to register but there is a robust process for detection.
- Skype shutdown required an alternative platform and decision was made to use Microsoft Teams.
- Within 8 weeks the entire user base had transitioned to Teams.
- Concentrix still exploring alternative platforms and software for more permanent service
- Consultation has been underway for the last 6-8 months around youth registrations for the NRS.
- Aim to allow easier registration for youth who may otherwise not be able to access the service. New criteria have been developed to accept letters from schools or outreach offices.
- About 23 profiles a week are suspended through misuse. A large increase in potential scams and misuse have been identified which could be related to tax returns.

Presenter: Claire Rennie – Community Engagement Officer

OFFICIAL

- 111 engagements across a variety of organisations to educate about the NRS in the last 6 months– combination of virtual and in person.
- Will continue with training and education to improve the service.
- Contributed to 6 different publications and some Victorian government e-newsletters.
- Continue to develop different marketing material and have recently created 2 new posters focusing on First Nations people.
- Reprinted brochures and translated braille version of the brochure.
- E-learning model has gone out to 84 organisations.
- Refreshed 32 websites.
- Attended 8 different events – a range of exhibitions, festivals, presentations and a workshop with First People Disability Network and different corporate workshops.
- Conducted youth workshops (based on Phil Harper’s suggestion).
- Will continue to attend more events in the future.

Presenter: Rachel Tran – Director Consulting

- Concentrix conducts a number of user research workshops – most recently in Brisbane (July) and, prior to that, Sydney (March).
- The Sydney workshop focused on the registration process and how this could be easier; the material produced to support use of the service; and how the video relay service could be improved to meet the needs of the community.
- The Brisbane workshop sought to understand initial sentiments from users of the service around augmentative and assistive technology that can help supplement the existing channels and provide additional support to those users who have speech communication or cognitive disabilities.
- Conducting twice yearly ‘voice of the citizens’ surveys. Survey 8 just completed and now in process of translation into an accessible report. Will be shared on AccessHub.
- User surveys have been positive.
- Reviewing technology to support more voice relay users.

Melissa Norris from Deaf Australia asked if Rachel could provide an update on any improvements made to emergency calls and triple zero (000) calls with the NRS.

Rachel stated the research and assessment Concentrix has been undertaking of the video relay platforms has been around the ability to prioritise emergency calls.

Ross added that Concentrix is currently working alongside Telstra who are moving their Triple Zero platforms to a new system to ensure the data sharing from Telstra in relation to Triple Zero and 106 calls. This will continue once Telstra have migrated to their new platform. That's an ongoing project and will take another couple of months.

Phil asked Ross what was the age range of youth that were involved in the youth registrations? **Ross** noted previously parental consent was required for anyone under 18 and they are still considering what the age limit will be.

Phil followed up with a question about how are young people learning and training to use the NRS and what opportunities are provided for NRS regardless of age.

Claire Rennie said that Concentrix has had some engagement with the Shepherd Centre/Hear For You who are based in Queensland and NSW. The service provides a mentor/mentee program and Concentrix have conducted some workshops with youth initially in Queensland and Sydney. This has highlighted the need to create a self-directed learning module. In the coming 6 to 12 months we will ideally create an early e-learning module with some sort of youth-based activity at the end.

Phil suggested also asking Deaf Youth Australia because they are a strong community with a very diverse cohort including Auslan users who would be happy to advise. Phil offered to give more details.

Phil asked about feedback from the users of the NRS and frustration posted online in July relating to Internet Relay Services, particularly lags.

Ross explained these lags were due to a piece of software needing an update and that has recently been completed.

Phil asked how these types of problems are announced to the users.

Ross replied that the NRS can send messages to relay officers and interpreters and make announcements on AccessHub. Lincoln added that the issues were intermittent and connectivity was not lost.

Agenda item 5: International models for sign language access

Alan Chalmers provided an update on this action item from meeting 2.

- Overview and update on the role of AI and machine learning in expanding accessibility options.
- International models for sign language access
 - UK – Sign GPT has been provided funding to build a sign language AI.
 - USA – Omni Bridge software development kit to enable real time communication between Deaf and hearing people.
 - Ntouch App – US mobile app that provides VRS.
 - Hand Talk App – translates text and audio in American Sign Language and Brazilian Sign Language using animated 3D interpreters.
- Australian developments (less advanced) include Queensland Uni of Technology's Auslan Assist project to create a digital avatar for Auslan versions of public transport announcements and Auslanweb, a Uni of Queensland/ Australian National University proposal for a large language model.
- Challenges of automated AI include accuracy, cultural nuances and social cues, privacy and standardisation.

Phil Harper commented that Deaf Australia are members of the World Federation of the Deaf which has access to many technology working groups in similar areas who would be open to engagement. Finally noting this could ensure diverse feedback to the creation of this new technology.

Melissa Norris welcomed and supported this comment and offered additional assistance establishing links with the community.

Brent Phillips from Deaf Connect noted they had received numerous requests to partner with different organisations in the AI space in regards to sign language. Brent commented that it would be important that perhaps the government establish some minimum standards for appropriate usage and inappropriate usage.

Agenda item 6: Captions please everywhere

Presenter: Jess Sharp – President, Hear with Us

- Focusing on employment the presentation illustrated the tangible differences in the everyday experiences of people with hearing issues when engaging with standard telecommunication services and public broadcasts that can be resolved with the adoption of fit for purpose captioning.

Agenda item 7: Other business

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

Action items

No action items were recorded.

OFFICIAL