



Meeting Minutes

Communications Accessibility Consultative Committee Meeting Two

Date: 5/03/2025

Time: 2:00PM – 3:30PM

Location: Virtual

Chair: Sam Grunhard, First Assistant Secretary, Communications Services and Consumer Division

Attendees

Name	Organisation/position
Sam Grunhard	First Assistant Secretary, Communications Services and Consumer Division, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
Kathleen Silleri	Assistant Secretary, Consumer Safeguards Branch, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
Jasmin Fielder	Director, Australia's Disability Strategy Branch, Department of Social Services
Nicole Donaldson	Director, Australia's Disability Strategy Branch, Department of Social Services
Ben Saint	Adviser, Office of the Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications
Hayley Stone	National Director, Policy and Advocacy, Deafness Forum Australia
Shirley Liu	Interim Chief Executive Officer, Deaf Australia
Phil Harper	External Adviser, Deaf Australia
Debbie Celenza	Business Development Manager – Service Delivery, Expression Australia
Rebecca Adam	Chief Executive Officer, Expression Australia
Amelia Radke	Senior Policy Adviser, Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
Ben McAtamney	National Policy and Advocacy Officer, Deafblind Australia

Name	Organisation/position
Catherine Dunn	Senior Advisor – Policy and Government Relations, Deaf Connect
Brent Phillips	Chief Services Officer, Deaf Connect
Jonathan Craig	Policy and Advocacy Adviser, Vision 2020 Australia
Rosie Lane	Access and Inclusion Index Lead, Australian Disability Network
Tania Smith	Communications and Media Manager, Inclusion Australia
Jackson Reynolds-Ryan	Senior Policy Officer, Blind Citizens Australia
Claire Rennie	Community Engagement Officer, Concentrix (Guest) Email: claire.rennie@concentrix.com
Sharon Diep	Captioner, Bradley Reporting
David McQuiggin	Auslan Interpreter, Deaf Connect
Dan Hatley	Auslan Interpreter, Deaf Connect

Apologies

Name	Organisation/position
Jodi Cassar	Branch Manager, Australia’s Disability Strategy Branch, Department of Social Services

Minutes

Agenda Item 1: Introduction

- Sam Grunhard (Chair) opened the meeting, welcomed attendees and introduced new Committee members:
 - Amelia Radke (ACCAN, replacing David Swayn)
 - Claire Rennie (National Relay Service, Concentrix) presenting as a guest
 - Shirley Liu (Deaf Australia, replacing Debra Swann)
 - Phil Harper (Deaf Australia)
 - Hayley Stone (Deafness Forum Australia, replacing Steve Williamson)
- Sam addressed previous concerns regarding difficulties with pinning camera windows on Webex and confirmed that a guide had been circulated on how to do this. Live captioning and Auslan interpreters were available with interpreters present in separate windows.

Agenda Item 2: International advancements in accessible communications

- **Presenter:** Kathleen Silleri, Assistant Secretary, Consumer Safeguards Branch, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
- Kathleen began the presentation by highlighting developments in accessible communications services technologies, particularly those emerging in the US and becoming available in Australia.
- Key points discussed:
 - Apple Innovations:

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- Live Captions to assist users who are d/Deaf and hard of hearing.
- Personal Voice for synthetic voice creation.
- Emergency Live Video for enhanced communication with responders.
- Eye Tracking for device operation via eye movement.
- Google Innovations:
 - Live Captions on Pixel devices.
 - Lookout for visually impaired users.
 - Emergency Sharing for real-time location sharing.
- Samsung Innovations:
 - Bixby Vision for object recognition and text to speech conversion.
 - Enhanced screen reader and colour adjustment tools.
- Victoria's Vic Emergency Plus App:
 - Translates emergency information into non-English languages, making emergency alerts more accessible.
- RapidSOS Platform:
 - Bridges the gap between emergency responders and callers by enabling real-time emergency data sharing to provide improved situational awareness.
- ACCAN's Accessible Telecoms Website:
 - A government supported website that provides information about accessible devices across Australia.
- Kathleen invited Committee members to share their thoughts on the effectiveness of these technologies and the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in improving communication accessibility, as well as the government's involvement in promoting these services.
 - Jonathan highlighted the importance of understanding the motivations behind recent accessibility developments. He pointed out that many initiatives have been driven by government recognition of the need for accessible products, citing that Apple's introduction of VoiceOver was influenced by the pursuit of government contracts in the US. He noted that legislation in both the US and Europe, such as the European Accessibility Act, has encouraged businesses to prioritise accessibility. Jonathan emphasised that Australian businesses should consider these global trends to remain competitive and suggested that the government play an active role in fostering an environment that promotes accessibility innovation.
 - Ben M. praised iOS accessibility but highlighted issues with frequent updates disrupting communication. Ben emphasised the need for emergency apps to support older devices and warned against overreliance on AI for translation without human oversight.
 - Catherine asked about international models for sign language access. Kathleen acknowledged differences in sign language communication availability between countries and affirmed the need for qualified interpreters alongside AI. Kathleen noted that she would provide further information on international models for sign language access in the next meeting.
 - Hayley highlighted concerns around affordability gaps in accessible communications devices.
 - Shirley supported co-design to ensure user-friendly models and called for a standardised approach to accessibility across government departments and services.
 - Phil discussed the potential for AI avatars for real-time Auslan to English translation in the future but stressed the need for human interpreters, especially for critical communications and announcements. Phil highlighted the interpreter shortage and the need for tailored training.

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- Amelia asked about the implications of the Government's announcement for the Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation, particularly regarding its potential impact on text to Triple Zero services for emergency communications.
 - Sam responded that the government is exploring the availability of SMS in previously inaccessible areas with the introduction of low Earth orbit satellite services which could enhance communication capabilities. Sam noted that while there are challenges with implementing video relay services over satellite due to limited data capacity, the government is closely monitoring the situation and will keep the group informed on developments.

Agenda Item 3: Community Engagement – National Relay Service (Concentrix)

- **Presenter:** Claire Rennie, Community Engagement Officer, Concentrix (Guest)
- Claire discussed her role as the Community Engagement Officer which began in January 2024.
- Claire noted that significant progress has been made in community presence through exhibitions and educational initiatives aimed at improving corporate engagement with users of the National Relay Service (NRS).
- Claire is focusing on the following areas for 2025:
 - Community outreach: Develop strategies to raise awareness of the NRS among stakeholders, including participation in events, expos and festivals.
 - Feedback integration: Review and update the eLearning module based on community and corporate feedback to ensure it remains fit for purpose. Seek ongoing feedback from community members to inform NRS enhancements.
 - Workshops: Host NRS-focused user workshops in Melbourne and Sydney aimed at user feedback and improving registration and guides.
 - Skype retirement: Exploring a new communication platform while ensuring the community is central to the decision-making process, with discussions to feature prominently in the upcoming March workshop.
 - Exhibitions and sponsorships: Aim to participate in 8-10 exhibitions, with a focus on Northern Australia and Western Australia. Collaborate with organisations for event sponsorships and to develop promotional materials in accessible formats.
- Phil emphasised the importance of including d/Deaf and hard of hearing children in the NRS eLearning platform training as they are potential future users. He noted the significant number of children with hearing loss in schools and offered support for outreach initiatives.
- Phil and Shirley raised concerns about the NRS platform's migration from Skype, which will be made redundant by Microsoft in May. He inquired about the actions being taken regarding this transition and whether the NRS user community, including Deaf Australia, will be consulted by Concentrix during the consideration of the new platform.
 - Claire assured that once a platform has been selected and the community has been consulted, training resources would be provided. She also mentioned that there is an extensive help desk team available to support users in understanding the new platform.
- Shirley highlighted the need for information to be accessible and compatible with Auslan. She suggested dedicated outreach training for schools and the wider Deaf community.
- Claire agreed to share her contact information for further communication and coordinate with organisations for feedback on eLearning and outreach initiatives.

Agenda Item 4: Update on the development of an Accessible Plan for Information and Communications Services

- **Presenter:** Jasmin Fielder, Director, Australia's Disability Strategy Branch, Department of Social Services (DSS)
- Jasmin provided an update on the Associated Plan for Information and Communications Services.
 - DSS is developing an engagement plan to facilitate ongoing conversations for people with disability. An update on the engagement plan is expected at the next meeting.
 - A new working group has been established including representatives from key government departments with a focus on developing standards for government communications with people with disability.
 - The full plan will take about three years, but some standards will be developed and implemented this year.
 - A time-limited technical advisory group will be formed, consisting of people with expertise in accessible communications and lived experience of disability. Invitations will be sent out shortly, incorporating suggestions made by group members in previous meetings.
 - A training package is being developed for public servants to help improve service delivery and communication strategies for people with disability. Collaboration with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is under way to support this initiative.
 - DSS is collaborating with state, territory and local governments to ensure a unified approach to communication and engagement with people with disability.
- Jasmin noted that DSS will provide further updates at the next meeting, including priorities for standards development.
- Hayley expressed interest in contributing to the development of best practice resources and noted inconsistencies in accessibility across different government departments.
- Tania also expressed interest in joining the technical advisory group and related working groups.

Agenda Item 5: Auslan's recognition as a language across government agencies for data collection

- **Presenter:** Shirley Liu, Interim CEO, Deaf Australia
- Shirley highlighted the need for consistent recognition of Auslan across government services.
 - Shirley noted that Auslan is not currently recognised as a language in many government contexts which affects the community's ability to engage with policies, programs and services.
 - Shirley mentioned that the Deaf community identifies as a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) group, with Auslan as their first language.
 - Shirley highlighted gaps in the provision of Auslan interpretation services and information dissemination.
 - Shirley called for government agencies to embed Auslan in data collection processes.
- Ben noted that inclusivity meant not just access to information but also the ability to use Auslan in interactions, such as submitting inquiries.
- Hayley highlighted limited access to Auslan interpreting services and disadvantages to those unable to afford the high costs of these services.
- Jasmin noted the associated plan's focus on developing an Auslan workforce strategy.
 - Shirley requested a follow up meeting with Jasmin to discuss this further.

- Sam acknowledged Shirley's points and assured her that her message would be passed on to relevant government departments, including Home Affairs, which oversees multilingual content on government services and websites.

Agenda Item 6: Other business

- Jonathan expressed enthusiasm for reforming the Disability Discrimination Act and emphasised the need for improved audio description services.
- Phil proposed adding the development of the Disability Rights Act to the agenda for the next meeting.
 - Sam agreed to gather information and provide an update at the next meeting.
- Sam thanked all participants for their contributions, especially the interpreters and captioning services that facilitated the meeting. Sam noted that the next meeting is scheduled for three months' time.

Action Item	Due date	Responsibility
1. Share contact information for further communication and coordination with Committee members for feedback on eLearning and outreach initiatives.	Out of session (between meetings)	Claire (Concentrix)
2. Share information about the transition from Skype to a new communication platform for the NRS.	Out of session (between meetings)	Claire (Concentrix)
3. Provide further updates regarding the engagement plan and the establishment of standards for government communication with people with disability.	Next meeting	DSS
4. Share Shirley's message about Auslan recognition with the Department of Home Affairs.	Out of session (between meetings)	DITRDCA
5. Provide an update with further information on international models for sign language access.	Next meeting	DITRDCA
6. Provide an update on Disability Rights.	Next meeting	DITRDCA