



**THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP**  
Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

**MEDIA RELEASE**

3 October 2019

**Government takes action to support National Relay Service transition**

The Morrison Government has today registered a formal legal instrument to give it additional powers to compel the outgoing provider of the National Relay Service (NRS), Australian Communications Exchange (ACE), to support CapTel captioned telephone handset users to transition to alternate services.

The *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) (National Relay Service Rules) Determination 2019* requires ACE to provide information to the Department of Communications and the Arts on request to help transition CapTel users to the new NRS provider, Concentrix, including information about current CapTel users. Despite repeated requests from Government, ACE has not provided details of CapTel users to the Commonwealth.

“It is surprising and disappointing that it is necessary to take this step” the Hon Paul Fletcher, Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

“I would have expected greater cooperation from ACE in either providing the information or seeking it from other parties, to allow the Government to give comprehensive information to CapTel users about the wide range of service options they will have under the NRS as we transition from ACE to a new provider”.

The contract with ACE was originally negotiated by the Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency (TUSMA), established by then Labor Communications Minister Stephen Conroy in 2013. TUSMA failed to include a contractual provision giving the responsible Minister, or the Commonwealth, critical information detailing the location of CapTel handsets and contact details for current CapTel users.

Concentrix was chosen as the new provider following a competitive selection process in which ACE also participated.

“The Morrison Government is committed to maintaining a world-class relay service that meets the needs of key user groups amongst the hearing and speech impaired communities – those who speak, those who text and those who communicate through Auslan” Minister Fletcher said.

The Determination also provides that the Commonwealth may request ACE to communicate to CapTel users about the handset being discontinued as part of the NRS from 1 February 2020 and to recommend they contact the NRS Helpdesk to explore alternatives to meet their individual needs.

The Government encourages all NRS users to contact the NRS Helpdesk with any queries about the coming transition to the new provider. The helpdesk is available Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm AEST except for national public holidays via phone (1800 555 660), TTY (1800 555 630), SMS (0416 001 350) or email ([helpdesk@relayservice.com.au](mailto:helpdesk@relayservice.com.au)).

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**Additional Information:**

The National Relay Service (NRS) is a vital part of the lives of many Australians and the program remains fully funded by the Australian Government at \$22 million per annum.

The existing contract between the Commonwealth and Australian Communications Exchange Limited (ACE) entered into on or around 25 January 2013 under section 13 of the TUSMA Act was for the purpose of making the NRS reasonably accessible to all persons in Australia who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment.

In June 2019, the Department of Communications and the Arts (the Department) announced the successful tenderer for ongoing provision of the NRS was Concentrix Services Pty Ltd (Concentrix).

Concentrix was selected after a competitive and technology agnostic tender process focused on the broad and varied needs of the many users of the NRS.

Service provision will be transferred from the incumbent NRS provider, ACE, to the new contractor, Concentrix, over a three month period, commencing 1 November 2019.

The Department requested information about CapTel handset users of the NRS from ACE on 26 June 2019 and again on 2 July 2019, and the Minister wrote to ACE on 11 July 2019 encouraging ACE to provide the Department with the information it reasonably required to assist NRS users with the transition to the new provider. The Minister also wrote to ACE on 29 August 2019 consulting on the making of this instrument. At the time of making the instrument, ACE had not provided the information that has been requested.