



Tip Sheet

About the National Relay Service

People who are Deaf, hearing-impaired or speech-impaired are unable to access telecommunications without specialised equipment and services. Since 1995, the Australian Government has overseen a [National Relay Service](#) (NRS) which enables people with these disabilities to conduct real-time conversations with other people. The funding for the NRS is provided by a levy on eligible telecommunications carriers.

The NRS offers a number of different relay services allowing greater communication options for people who are Deaf, hearing impaired or speech impaired. These include:

- Type and Read (for people who are Deaf and use a Teletypewriter (TTY))
- Type and Listen (for people with speech impairment who use a TTY)
- Speak and Read (for people who are hearing-impaired or Deaf and use a TTY)
- Speak and Listen (for people with speech impairment who do not use a TTY)
- Internet relay (a form of Type and Read which uses the internet rather than a TTY)
- Video relay service (for people who prefer to use Auslan)
- Captioned relay (for people who are hearing-impaired but can speak)
- SMS relay (for people who are unable to make a voice call on a mobile)

The NRS also has a [mobile app](#) which can be used to make a number of different call types from a mobile phone or tablet.

Crucially, the NRS also provides an emergency call service, 106, which is mandated alongside 000 and 112 as Australia's emergency service numbers. The 106 service can only be used by NRS customers who use a TTY (that is, it is not available to Speak and Listen or internet relay customers).

While it is possible to make emergency service calls using SMS relay it is not recommended as the only way to request emergency assistance and should be used in conjunction with other call types.

The NRS is currently provided by two separate organisations under contract to the Australian Government: the Australian Communication Exchange (ACE) which provides the relay call centre and WestWood Spice which provides the outreach aspect of the NRS, including training, helpdesk function and marketing.

What is a TTY?

Also known as telephone typewriter or textphone; a specialised telephone which includes a keyboard and screen.

[Australian Communications Consumer Action Network \(ACCAN\)](#)
Australia's peak body representing communications consumers

PO Box 639, Broadway NSW 2007

Tel: (02) 9288 4000 | Fax: (02) 9288 4019 | accan.org.au | via the [NRS](#)

What is internet relay?

A type of NRS call in which the user contacts the NRS using the internet from a computer or smartphone (via the NRS website or instant messaging) and the NRS relay officer relays the call to a landline, mobile phone or TTY.

What is captioned relay?

A type of relay call in which the user makes a call using a landline and the relay operator re-speaks the other parties conversation which appears as text on a computer or phone screen a few seconds later.

What is video relay?

A type of relay call where the user communicates with the relay operator in Auslan and the relay operator interprets the conversation to the hearing party.

What is SMS relay?

A type of relay call where the user communicates with the relay operator by SMS text and the relay operator speaks to the hearing party.

For more information on these services, visit the [National Relay Service website](#).