

Media release

*** Click here to [view this release in Auslan](#) ***

For immediate release Friday 11th March 2011

Queensland flood highlights need to fix Triple Zero accessibility

A new report about emergency services during the Queensland floods says major issues with the National Relay Service (NRS), based in Brisbane, left some people with hearing or speech impairments unable to contact emergency services.

Both the NRS main call centre and emergency site were unable to be used due to flooding, meaning only emergency calls on the 106 number were able to be transmitted and only then after a coordinated effort by the ACMA and technical assistance provided by Telstra.

“The swift action taken by Telstra in getting the 106 emergency number operational meant that while the main NRS number was down, Deaf or hearing-impaired people with a TTY were able to reach police, fire and ambulance services,” said ACCAN CEO Teresa Corbin.

“But unfortunately, two groups who normally use the NRS via the internet, or via its specialised Speak and Listen service, weren’t able to seek emergency help at all for almost a 24-hour period.”

The report, ‘*The Queensland flood disaster: Access for people with disability to phone services and emergency warnings*’, submitted to the regulator, the Australian Communication and Media Authority, calls for urgent action to ensure the guaranteed access to emergency services for all NRS users at all times.

The report also calls for greater commitment from State and Territory emergency agencies to ensure all televised emergency announcements are simultaneously interpreted into Auslan (Australian Sign Language).

“During the Queensland floods we had a situation where some television networks included the Auslan interpreter in emergency information broadcasts, and, unfortunately, some who chose not to,” said Ms Corbin.

“The ACMA needs to work with Free TV, the ABC and the SBS to ensure Auslan interpretations and open captions are included in all emergency broadcasts so that all Australians have access to this vital information.”

Release can be found here: <http://bit.ly/fiHMI4>

Full report can be found here: <http://bit.ly/enr5Uv>

See accompanying [Fact Sheet](#) for further information about the National Relay Service

Media contact: Elise Davidson **M:** 0409 966 931 **TTY:** 02 9281 5322

About ACCAN

ACCAN (Australian Communications Consumer Action Network) is Australia's peak communications consumer organisation. ACCAN's goal is available, accessible and affordable communications that enhances the lives of consumers. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Australian government.