

Hon Steven Joyce

**Minister for Communications
and Information Technology**



5 November 2009

Media Statement

**Public consultation on telecommunications relay
and video relay services**

Communications and Information Technology Minister Steven Joyce today released a discussion document on the future of the telecommunications services for the deaf, hearing impaired and speech impaired communities.

The Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) was established in 2004 to meet the telecommunications needs of Deaf, hearing impaired, speech impaired and Deafblind communities by offering a range of nationwide text-based services.

Jointly funded by the government and an industry levy, the TRS is currently provided by Sprint International New Zealand Limited.

Sprint is also at present conducting a government-funded trial of a Video Relay Service (VRS). VRS enables people with hearing disabilities who use New Zealand Sign Language to communicate with voice telephone users.

“The government would like to hear from users of the TRS and VRS, and other interested stakeholders, on the future provision of communications services for Deaf, hearing impaired, speech impaired and Deafblind,” says Mr Joyce.

Mr Joyce also announced the extension of the current TRS for 12 months and that funding has been made available to allow the government to negotiate for an extension of the VRS for the same period.

“These extensions will allow for a re-tender of the TRS and for policy to be developed following feedback on the discussion document and the results of the VRS trial.

“These extensions will give certainty to current users while the government re-tenders for a telecommunication relay service provider.”

Submissions on *The Future of the Telecommunications Relay Service* discussion document should be made to the Ministry of Economic Development by **5.00pm, Wednesday 16 December 2009**.

The Ministry of Economic Development will be holding public briefings, with New Zealand Sign Language interpreters, on the issues covered in the discussion document in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch during early November.

The discussion document, a New Zealand Sign Language version of the executive summary of the discussion document, and information on the public briefings is available at www.med.govt.nz/trs.

Media contact: Anita Ferguson 021 243 1623

Public meetings

Auckland

Date: Monday 9 November

Venue: Auckland Deaf Society, 164 Balmoral Rd, Mt Eden

Time: Meeting 7.00 pm to 8.00pm. Doors open 6.00pm

Wellington

Date: Wednesday 11 November

Venue: Wellington Deaf Society, Marion St

Time: Meeting 7.00 pm – 8.00 pm. Doors open 6.30 pm.

Christchurch

Date: Friday 20 November

Venue: Christchurch Deaf Society, 232A Armagh St

Time: Meeting 6.50 pm – 7.50 pm. Doors open 6.00 pm.