



# ACMAsphere

## Internet Relay takes National Relay Service to another level

**A new communication option that allows people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment to make phone calls from their computers was launched in Parliament House, Canberra, by Special Minister of State Gary Nairn MP on 3 September 2007.**

Mr Nairn said that, while other advances in technology such as mobile phone texting had given people with a disability more independence, Internet Relay was the next big advance in communication.

The National Relay Service, an Australian Government initiative funded by Australia's major telecommunications carriers and administered by ACMA, enables people who are deaf or have hearing or speech impairment to use telecommunications services. Telecommunications carriers pay a quarterly levy, providing more than \$15 million a year to cover the cost of the service.

Until now, the National Relay Service has provided a service for users with a TTY text telephone, which is connected through a fixed landline. Internet Relay allows users to make calls from work computers, computers in friends' houses, internet cafés or internet-enabled mobile phones, allowing more mobility and flexibility.

Like other National Relay Service phone calls, Internet Relay allows the user to make calls to anyone, anywhere, anytime, with complete confidentiality. Connection can be through the National Relay

Service website or through msn or AOL instant messaging. To use Internet Relay, a person connects with the National Relay Service through an internet connection and provides the phone number of the person he or she wishes to contact. A relay officer 'relays' the conversation from text into voice then returns the responses to the user's computer. Internet relay allows the user to make a doctor's appointment, conduct a workplace phone call from their computer or just chat with friends.

At the launch, Carla Anderson from Able Australia—an organisation representing Australians who are deaf and blind—endorsed the new service. She said that, with Internet Relay, 'We can call anywhere. Whether I'm in the city or in the country I'm going to be able to do that. I have that freedom and the flexibility, as do other deaf, deaf/blind and speech-impaired people.'

Part-time ACMA Member Johanna Plante explained that, each year, more than 2.9 million call minutes are delivered by the

National Relay Service, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and the launch of Internet Relay meant another forward step in expanding any-to-any connectivity through the telephone system.

Internet Relay is accessible through the website at [www.relayservice.com.au](http://www.relayservice.com.au). More information about the National Relay Service is on ACMA's website at [www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au) (go to For the public: Consumer & community advice > Telecommunications: Your rights & safeguards > Essential & emergency services > Access to disability services > Disability services – National Relay Service).



SEAN KIDNEY OF THE NRS OUTREACH SERVICE SETS UP A CALL USING INTERNET RELAY FOR PART-TIME ACMA MEMBER JOHANNA PLANTE AT THE PARLIAMENT HOUSE LAUNCH