National Relay Service
Performance report
2010–11
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Senator the Hon. Stephen Conroy
Minister for Broadband,
Communications and the Digital Economy
Suite MG70
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

National Relay Service Performance Report 2010–11

I am pleased to provide you with the Australian Communications and Media Authority’s (ACMA’s) annual report on the performance of the National Relay Service (NRS) providers.

Subsection 97(2) of the Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999 (the Act) requires the ACMA to give a written report to you about the performance by each NRS provider during the financial year against the provider’s obligations under an NRS Plan.

The enclosed report, on the performance of the Australian Communication Exchange Ltd and CPW Spice Pty Ltd (trading as WestWood Spice) under the NRS Plan of 2010–11, fulfills this requirement.

The NRS continues to be delivered effectively by the two contracted providers, and key performance outcomes are detailed in the introduction to the attached report.

Please note that subsection 97(3) of the Act requires you to table a copy of this report in each House of Parliament within 15 sitting days of receipt.

Yours sincerely

Chris Chapman
Chairman
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Introduction

This report has been prepared by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (the ACMA) in accordance with subsection 97(2) of the Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999 (the TCPSS Act). This requires the ACMA to give a written report to the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy on the performance of the National Relay Service (NRS) providers against the requirements of the NRS Plan as soon as practicable after the end of each financial year.

Subsection 97(3) of the Act requires the minister to table the report in each House of the parliament within 15 sitting days of receipt.

Scope and structure

This report has five parts:

> an overview of the service, which describes what it is and how it is delivered
> a statistical snapshot of the service
> a review of the performance of the relay service provider against obligations and commitments in the NRS Plan
> a review of the performance of the outreach service provider against obligations and commitments in the NRS Plan
> an appendix covering the impact of the January 2011 Brisbane floods on the delivery of the NRS.

Key performance outcomes in 2010–11

The ACMA considers the performances of both the relay service provider, Australian Communication Exchange (ACE), and the outreach service provider, WestWood Spice (WWS), are consistent with their obligations in the 2010–11 NRS Plan.

The relay service provider demonstrated a high level of performance against its three contract standards. Where the relay service provider did not meet required performance standards, rebates were applied in accordance with the contract. A two per cent rebate was applied against ACE’s revenue for delivering services in the second quarter, and a further one per cent rebate in the third quarter.

The outreach service provider’s performance was measured against 23 performance indicators in 2010–11, with minimum performance targets and aspirational performance targets set for each performance indicator. The outreach service provider met 18 out of 23 minimum performance targets, and 15 out of 23 aspirational targets.

While the outreach service provider did not achieve five of its 23 minimum performance targets, it exceeded the higher aspirational ‘stretch’ target for 15 of the performance targets. The ACMA considers that the overall inputs provided by WWS, and its activities undertaken throughout the year, do meet the contractual obligations required. This is confirmed by assessing WWS’s performance against an agreed framework to measure an ‘equivalence of effort’ across each of the set performance indicators. The 2010–11 NRS Plan for the outreach provider required a commitment of 1,850 Key Performance Indicator (KPI) units, but the final inputs delivered were equivalent to 2,014 KPI units, nine per cent more than the initial KPI unit target. Further details of the ‘equivalence of effort’ framework are discussed on page 11.

Table 1: Outreach service performance against minimum performance targets

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Number of minimum performance targets met</th>
<th>Number of minimum performance targets not met</th>
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Table 2: Outreach service performance against aspirational performance targets

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Overview of the National Relay Service

What is the NRS?
The NRS is a legislated consumer protection under Part 3 of the TCPSS Act.

The service provides people who are deaf or who have a hearing and/or speech impairment with access to a standard telephone service on terms and in circumstances that are comparable to the access other Australians have to a standard telephone service.

The NRS is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and operates as a communication bridge for deaf, hearing-impaired and speech-impaired people in the community.

Who delivers the NRS?
The NRS is delivered under contract to the Australian Government by two entities. ACE is responsible for delivering the relay service component of the NRS, and WWS is responsible for delivering the outreach service component. These contracts commenced on 1 July 2006 and now expire on 30 June 2013.

ACE is a not-for-profit company with a particular focus on the deaf sector. Its head office and call centre are located in Brisbane.

WWS is a Sydney-based specialist consulting group with particular experience and expertise in working in the community and public sectors.

Who can be contacted via the NRS?
Calls via the NRS can be made to anyone, anywhere, although suitable billing arrangements must be in place before calls can be made to overseas and premium-rate numbers. Otherwise, calls within Australia can be made for the cost of contacting the NRS using its 13 or 1300 number, which is generally around the cost of a local call. There are also 1800 NRS access numbers—for NRS users wishing to contact freecall 1800 numbers. Users of the Internet Relay service must have access to an operating internet connection to contact the NRS.

How does the relay service work?
The NRS most commonly involves a relay officer converting text communication to voice, and voice communication to text, to enable text and voice users to have a telephone conversation.

The relay service provider is also named as an Emergency Call Person in the Telecommunications (Emergency Call Persons) Determination 1999 and operates a text emergency service on the number 106.

There are a number of call options available to suit different users of the relay service. These options are described from the perspective of someone who is deaf, hearing-impaired or speech-impaired, and who generally uses specialist equipment such as a teletypewriter (TTY) or an internet connection. However, the relay service is also used by voice callers with a standard telephone handset to contact someone who is deaf or has a hearing or speech impairment.

Type and Read
The Type and Read service (also known as ‘text-to-voice’) is for users who cannot hear and do not use their voice. The relay officer ‘becomes their voice’ and reads aloud what the user has typed (on a TTY or via internet connection) to the recipient of the call, then listens to what the recipient says in reply and types it back for the user to read.

Internet Relay
The Internet Relay service, introduced in 2007, is a form of Type and Read service. It allows people to make NRS calls from some internet-enabled mobile phones or a computer, using an internet browser or chat applications such as MSN or AOL Messenger. Since its introduction, Internet Relay has grown in popularity and, at the end of 2010–11, accounted for more than 47 per cent of call minutes made through the NRS.

Speak and Read
The Speak and Read service (also known as ‘voice carryover’) is for users who have a hearing impairment but prefer to use their voice to speak their side of the conversation, rather than type it. They can speak directly to the person they have called via the relay service. The relay officer listens to what the recipient of the call says in reply and types it back for the user to read.
Type and Listen
The Type and Listen service (also known as ‘hearing carryover’) is for users who have difficulty speaking or communicating but can hear. The user types their side of the conversation and the relay officer reads it aloud to the person they have called. The user can then listen directly to the other person’s reply.

Speak and Listen
The Speak and Listen service (also known as ‘speech-to-speech relay’) is for users who may have trouble having their speech understood over the telephone. The relay officer, who is experienced in listening to people with speech impairments, will re-speak all or part of the conversation as required. No specialist equipment is required to use this service.

How is the outreach service delivered?
WWS has established a national network to undertake training and information activities, raise awareness through marketing campaigns and commission research studies, with the Australian Federation of Deaf Societies and specialist social marketing consultants as subcontractors. The network includes:

> seven information and education officers across Australia who provide face-to-face information and training sessions
> three customer service officers, who staff a national helpdesk for NRS users, assisting with information, troubleshooting and managing the NRS presence at conferences
> a project coordinator and marketing coordinator, to help plan outreach events and distribute information and promotional material.

What is the ACMA’s role in the management of the NRS contracts?
The ACMA continued to undertake contract management responsibilities for both NRS contracts in 2010–11. This included:

> maintaining relationships with both contractors
> monitoring and assuring contract compliance
> providing necessary approvals under the contracts (including the approval of government branding on all NRS materials and the approval of the NRS Plans)

> developing appropriate performance standards.

The ACMA also maintained certain legislated responsibilities for the NRS in 2010–11, including collecting the NRS levy, monitoring the performance of the two providers and reporting to the minister annually on their performance. Further details of these functions are set out below.

Who pays for the NRS?
The NRS is funded through a levy on eligible telecommunications carriers. Carriers holding a carrier licence, with gross telecommunications revenue of $10 million or more and covered by the ACMA’s most recent annual eligible revenue assessment, are liable to pay the levy each quarter. The proportion of the levy costs payable by each eligible carrier is calculated based on its share of total eligible revenue in the relevant year.

The ACMA is responsible for collecting the NRS levy on behalf of the Australian Government. The quarterly NRS levy is based on a forward estimate of providing the relay and outreach services in the current quarter, adjusted by the actual cost of providing the NRS in the relevant preceding quarter.

The total cost of providing the NRS in 2010–11 was $18.2 million (including GST). This was an increase of about five per cent on $17.3 million in the previous financial year. The annual relay service cost varies, as it is based on a set rate for every outbound call minute delivered in the year.

The payment to WWS for outreach activities was within the capped 2010–11 budget of $3 million (including GST) for the outreach program.

What is the NRS Plan?
Subsection 95(2) of the TCPSS Act requires each NRS provider to prepare an NRS Plan that must include at least the following:

> timetables for supply of the NRS
> performance standards to be met by the NRS provider.

Before preparing its NRS Plan, each NRS provider must consult with the ACMA about the content, including the nominated performance standards. Each NRS Plan must then be submitted to the ACMA for approval.
The NRS Plan is compiled annually by the ACMA from these component NRS Plans, and is available on the NRS website at www.relayservice.com.au. Each NRS provider gives the ACMA quarterly reports on its performance, which the ACMA uses to regularly review and discuss the delivery of the NRS with both providers. The ACMA also prepares this annual report on the NRS providers’ performance under the NRS Plan.

**Snapshot of the NRS**

**Call minutes**
The total cumulative time duration of successful outbound calls made from the relay service each year is a key element in monitoring the demand for and delivery of the service. In addition, call minutes are the basis of payment to the relay service provider, where a fixed amount is paid for each call minute relayed. The use in Australia of the number of call minutes relayed by the provider is the standard method of payment for such services in other parts of the world.

Use of the NRS has remained at a consistent level over the last five years. The number of call minutes (3,204,383) relayed in 2010–11 was 1.4 per cent greater than in 2009–10 (3,160,003) and only 4.2 per cent below the peak call minutes in 2007–08 (see Figure 1).

By the end of 2010–11, about 47 per cent of outbound call minutes were generated by users who contacted the NRS via Internet Relay. This demonstrates the continued growth in the take-up of this part of the service, up from about 40 per cent in 2009–10. However, the increased use of Internet Relay appears to be a substitute for other methods of access (such as TTY), as the overall call minutes relayed by the NRS have remained relatively stable during the increased take-up of the Internet Relay service. The increasing popularity of the Internet Relay service since its inception in 2007 is tracked in Figure 2.

**Extended contract arrangements**
The ACMA undertook successful negotiations with each of the current NRS providers to enter into extended contract arrangements over a two-year period. The extension of these contracts now allows for an ongoing delivery of the service from 1 July 2011 until 30 June 2013.

The ACMA (on behalf of the Commonwealth) exercised an option to extend the contract with ACE and made a variation to the contract with WWS.

**Brisbane floods, January 2011**
The delivery of the NRS was seriously interrupted for nearly 24 hours on 12–13 January 2011 because of extensive flooding in the Brisbane area, which prevented staff from safely accessing the relay facilities. Further details of the interruption and improvements to arrangements under consideration can be found in the Appendix to this report.

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**Figure 1: Call minutes relayed 2006–11**

![Graph showing call minutes relayed from 2006-07 to 2010-11.](chart)
Access to emergency services via the NRS

The relay service provides access to emergency services in four ways (see Figure 3, page 6):

> Emergency calls received via the 106 text emergency service—from TTY users

The relay service provider is named as an Emergency Call Person in the Telecommunications (Emergency Call Persons) Determination 1999 and operates a text emergency service on the number 106. The 106 text emergency service is only available for users with a TTY.

In 2010–11, there were 175 genuine calls to Emergency Service Organisations (ESOs) via the 106 text emergency service. This compares to 227 genuine calls in 2009–10 and 333 in 2008–09. This reduction may reflect the increasing popularity of the Internet Relay service.

> Emergency calls received via requests for Triple Zero (000)—from TTY users

The NRS also relays call requests from TTY users seeking access to the Triple Zero (000) emergency number. In 2010–11, there were 146 genuine calls to emergency services seeking access to Triple Zero for TTY users. In these circumstances, TTY users are contacting the NRS via normal access numbers and requesting the call be relayed to Triple Zero, rather than dialling the 106 text emergency service number that is designated for emergency purposes.

> Emergency calls received via requests for Triple Zero (000)—from Internet Relay users

Calls to Triple Zero are also relayed for Internet Relay callers, as such users are unable to access the 106 service. There were 177 genuine emergency calls from Internet Relay users in 2010–11.

> Emergency calls received via requests for Triple Zero (000)—from Speak and Listen users

There were 13 genuine requests to access Triple Zero services from Speak and Listen (speech-to-speech relay) users in 2010–11.

Total emergency calls relayed in 2010–11

In total, 511 genuine emergency calls were relayed to ESOs by the NRS in 2010–11, with only 34 per cent (175) made via the specially designated 106 number.

The increasing reliance of NRS users (both TTY and internet relay) on Triple Zero to reach emergency services led to discussions between the relay service provider and the ACMA in 2010–11 about improving future arrangements in handling such calls. A project is underway to investigate the upgrading of ACE’s internal systems to allow for calls from TTY and Internet Relay users requesting connection to Triple Zero to receive greater priority. TTY (to 106) and Speak and Listen (to Triple Zero) calls already receive priority answering in the relay service provider’s internal network.
A significant number of non-TTY calls—95,464 in 2010–11—are still made in error to the 106 number, virtually the same as in 2009–10 (95,425). These non-genuine calls do not unduly compromise the handling of genuine emergency calls, as the relay service provider’s systems help to identify non-genuine calls to the 106 text emergency service and prevent them from proceeding further. Mobile network enhancements have also contributed to limiting the number of non-genuine calls reaching the 106 number.

Number of NRS users
It is not necessary to register to use the NRS, meaning the actual number of users is unknown. ACE estimates that each month between 6,000 and 10,000 Australians use the NRS. The estimated number of users is derived by analysing unique calling line identification (CLI) data and other complementary techniques for Internet Relay users.

Inbound call types
Inbound calls are those made by users of the relay service—in effect, either someone with a hearing and/or speech impairment or someone wishing to contact a person with such an impairment. Relay officers then make an outbound call to the individual or business the NRS user wishes to contact.

Outbound call types
Outbound calls are those placed by the relay service on behalf of users, primarily to businesses, government organisations, friends and family. There were 608,896 outbound calls relayed in 2010–11. Voice calls (where the relay officer speaks the text received from the user via TTY or the internet) comprise nearly nine in every 10 outbound calls made by the NRS.

Figure 3: Breakdown of genuine emergency calls via the NRS in 2010–11

*Prioritised call answer time
The predominance of voice calls in outbound calls from the NRS has not changed in recent years, reflecting the nature of the service as a communication bridge between the deaf, hearing-impaired or speech-impaired communities and the wider public.

Access to all 13, 1300 and 1800 numbers via the Internet Relay service
Organisations that utilise a 13, 1300 or 1800 number may, as part of their business practice, place geographic restrictions on calls to these numbers, to ensure that products and services only available in certain locations in Australia are not generally accessible to all callers nationally.

As the relay service provider places outbound calls from the Brisbane call centre, some Internet Relay users may experience difficulties being connected to the correct calling point for a 13, 1300 or 1800 number.

A solution to the same problem for TTY users was implemented a number of years ago and, given the increasing popularity of the Internet Relay service, a broader solution was investigated during 2010–11. This has required changes to both internal and external networks used in placing outbound NRS calls, with the final rollout of the solution expected to be implemented in 2011–12.

A complaint about this issue was investigated by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) in 2010–11. The case was closed by the AHRC in November 2010, following reporting by the NRS providers on the development of the proposed solution and the complainant no longer wanting the AHRC to continue its investigation.

Relay service provider performance in 2010–11
The ACMA considers that the performance of the relay service provider, ACE, is generally consistent with its obligations in the NRS Plan in 2010–11. ACE’s performance against each of the three performance standards is detailed below.

Performance standards for receiving standard relay service calls
The performance standard applies to answering of inbound calls. The contract utilises a system of quarterly incentives or rebates, where high levels of specified performance attract incentive payments and low levels of specified performance may cause reduced payments to the relay service provider for the relevant quarter.

The performance standard for standard inbound calls is based on ‘call abandonment’ rates. A call is considered to be abandoned after spending more than 60 seconds in a call queuing system or receiving a busy signal if call queuing is not in operation.

There are two components to the performance standard for call abandonment—a quarterly average and a daily rate.

Performance standard one—quarterly average call abandonment (standard calls)
The contract sets the maximum call abandonment rate as an average of no more than two calls per 100 over the quarter. This was met in quarters one and four, but not met in quarters two and three (see Figure 4).

A payment rebate of one per cent was applied for the performance in quarter two. A payment rebate was not imposed in quarter three due to circumstances (the Brisbane floods) that were considered to be outside the control of the relay service provider and caused the higher abandonment rate.

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1 A standard call refers to an ordinary call made through the NRS—it does not include 106 text emergency service calls or Speak and Listen calls.
Specifically, the Brisbane floods impacted the relay service provider’s ability to meet the performance standard for the month of January 2011, with a major disruption to its capacity to fully deliver the service over a five-day period. The average call abandonment rate recorded for that month, 5.84 per cent, led to an overall total of 2.73 per cent in quarter three, despite a significant decrease in the rate of average call abandonment recorded in February and March 2011.

The breach of the performance standard in quarter two (2.1 per cent against the target of 2.0 per cent), is considered of a marginal nature, where the rebate was a sufficient contractual response. The relay service provider advised that there were a number of factors that affected its ability to maintain required service levels in that quarter, including:

> higher call volumes throughout this period than originally forecast

> unusually high sick leave among the pool of relay officers

> significant isolated spikes in call patterns that did not form any logical or natural patterns and trends, making resource planning difficult.

The average call abandonment rates of 1.52 per cent in quarter one and 1.38 per cent in quarter four are considered to provide a more reliable indicator of performance, noting that the quarterly call abandonment rates in 2009–10 varied between 1.55 and 1.86 per cent.

**Performance standard two—daily call abandonment rate (standard calls)**

ACE reported to the ACMA that there were seven days during 2010–11 when the call abandonment rate for standard NRS calls exceeded five per cent. This figure is reasonably comparable with the 2009–10 result of five days with a call abandonment rate exceeding the performance standard. Under the contract, the ACMA applies quarterly payment rebates against the relay service provider if it exceeds the five per cent abandonment rate on two or more days in a quarter:

> **Quarter 1 performance**—the abandonment rate was exceeded on one day and therefore no rebates were applied.

> **Quarter 2 performance**—the abandonment rate was exceeded on two days and a one per cent rebate was applied.

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**Figure 4: Quarterly average call abandonment rate 2010–11**

![Graph showing quarterly average call abandonment rate 2010–11](image)
Quarter 3 performance—
the abandonment rate was exceeded on four consecutive days (11–14 January). However, the relay service provider is able to seek consideration of the application of payment rebates where a natural disaster has impacted performance, and the ACMA granted exemptions for the days of 12, 13 and 14 January due to the effect of the Brisbane floods. The ACMA did not grant an exemption for 11 January as delivery of the service was not directly affected by the Brisbane floods. Call volumes on 11 January appear to have increased due to anticipation within the community of possible flooding impacts, resulting in a higher demand on call centre resources that was not fully anticipated. Therefore, with the exemptions applied by the ACMA, ACE exceeded the call abandonment rate on only one day in quarter three, so no rebates were applied for the quarter.

Quarter 4 performance—
the abandonment rate was not exceeded on any day and so no rebates were applied.

Performance standard three—106 text emergency service and Speak and Listen calls
Performance standards for 106 text emergency and Speak and Listen (speech-to-speech calls) are based on a call blockage performance standard that measures the availability of the service and call answering times. This standard was set because of the need to promptly answer calls that could be seeking access to emergency services and it dictates that:

> no more than 0.5 per cent of combined text emergency calls and Speak and Listen (speech-to-speech) calls into the relay service receive a busy signal (are blocked) on the day (quarterly average)

at least 99 per cent of 106 text emergency calls and Speak and Listen (speech-to-speech) calls (combined) on any day are answered by a relay officer within 10 seconds.

The relay service provider’s performance against these performance standards in 2010–11 is set out below.

Call blockage—106 text emergency service and Speak and Listen relay service
No calls were blocked in 2010–11—that is, zero per cent was recorded against this performance standard for each quarter. This is the first year that a zero call blockage rate has been recorded, but it is noted that calls to emergency services via the Internet Relay service are increasing and are not included in this metric.

Call answer time—106 text emergency service and Speak and Listen calls
The call answer performance standard for 106 text emergency and Speak and Listen (speech-to-speech calls) requires that at least 99 per cent of these calls (combined) are answered by a relay officer within 10 seconds on any day. Under contractual arrangements, the ACMA applies payment rebates where this level of performance is not met on any day.

On one day, 12 January 2011, the call answer time was only met for 90.37 per cent of 106 text emergency and Speak and Listen calls. This was due to the impact of the Brisbane floods (refer to the Appendix for more information).

ACE has advised that the performance drop for 12 January 2011 resulted from a total of 34 Speak and Listen calls that were disconnected by the user while waiting in the call answer queue. All genuine calls to the 106 text emergency service were answered within the specified time frame.

2 Call blockage refers to when an inbound caller to the NRS receives a busy signal.
ACE did not seek an exemption from the rebate applied for 12 January 2011 (despite the impact of the Brisbane floods on this day). A one per cent rebate was applied for quarter three due to the delivery of the 106 text emergency and Speak and Listen services not meeting the required standard on this day.

The NRS Customer Consultative Committee
The relay service provider’s contract with the Australian Government requires it to establish an NRS Customer Consultative Committee and for it to meet at least twice a year. The role of the committee is to provide feedback and advice to the NRS providers on quality of service, consumer benefits and consumer satisfaction relating to the operation of the NRS. New technologies and their effect on how the NRS is delivered, as well as their impact on consumer expectations, are also discussed.

The relay service provider is responsible for chairing the committee and providing a secretariat function. The committee currently has nine members, including representatives of the relay and outreach service providers. The other seven members are drawn from community organisations whose membership encompasses users and potential users of the NRS. Representatives from the ACMA and the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy also attend the meetings as observers.

Two meetings of the committee were held in 2010–11, as required.

Outreach service provider performance in 2010–11

The ACMA considers the performance of the outreach service provider in 2010–11 is consistent with its obligations in the NRS Plan. The outreach service provider, WWS, has 23 key performance targets against which the delivery of the outreach service is measured, and nine further measures upon which it is also required to report.

The process of establishing and adjusting the targets (where necessary) for the key performance indicators was enhanced in 2010–11, by agreement between WWS and the ACMA. The changes included:

> a more comprehensive breakdown of the performance indicators designed to monitor and track the delivery of different components of the outreach service

> the introduction of a further level of aspirational targets for each key performance indicator, as ‘stretch’ targets above the minimum performance required.

The contract for delivering outreach services in 2010–11 is based on a fixed maximum payment of up to $3 million (including GST). Where additional demand may drive delivery of more of one type of outreach service, a trade-off generally needs to be made, with less of another service type being delivered. This approach acknowledges that some variation may be required during the course of each year in the delivery of outreach activities due to variances in the patterns of demand for particular services (for example, demand for training and information sessions is prone to fluctuations).
It was also agreed to establish a framework to measure ‘equivalence of effort’ across each of the key performance indicators. The framework forms an agreed basis for the outreach provider to adjust the target for one activity being measured with another target, should that be warranted and supported by the ACMA. The framework is based on the resourcing (personnel, time and associated other costs—expressed as KPI units) applied to core tasks and can be used to more broadly compare the effort applied and adjust targets accordingly.

The 2010–11 NRS plan for the outreach provider required a commitment of 1,850 KPI units, but the final outputs delivered were equivalent to 2,014 KPI units, nine per cent more than the initial target.

**Performance targets**

Performance targets for 2010–11 were set for the 23 key performance indicators, which cover a number of core outreach activities and outcomes, including:

- information sessions
- training sessions
- intense practice sessions for participants in the Continuing Professional Development unit
- attendance at relevant conferences or exhibitions
- participant satisfaction with the information or training provided
- the depth of knowledge held by different groups of current and potential users about the range of relay services
- the number of website visits, video views and helpdesk activities.

In summary for 2010–11, the outreach provider met or exceeded 18 of the 23 minimum performance targets, and met or exceeded the (higher) aspirational targets for 15 performance indicators. Additionally, eight of the nine data and information collection measures were reported on for the year.

The five targets that were not achieved were related to:

- performance indicator 1.2.1—number of training sessions held in metropolitan areas
- performance indicator 1.3.2—number of metropolitan expos/exhibitions
- performance indicator 2.4.1—number of website visits
- performance indicator 2.4.2—number of views of the 10 most popular video clips on the NRS website
- performance indicator 4.1.2—level of awareness of the availability of Internet Relay by Type and Read respondents to the relay provider user survey.

Explanations for achievement or non-achievement of targets are detailed below. It is considered that the overall inputs provided by the outreach provider and the activities undertaken do meet the contractual obligations.
Table 3: Performance indicators 1.1.1 and 1.1.2

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Both performance targets were met, with the aspirational target exceeded for indicator 1.1.2.

Table 4: Performance indicators 1.2.1 and 1.2.2

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<tr>
<td>Indicator 1.2.2</td>
<td>Number of training sessions held in non-metro areas</td>
<td>90 sessions</td>
<td>99 sessions</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicator 1.2.1 was 10 training sessions below the targeted 215 sessions to be held in metropolitan areas for 2010–11; however, the aspirational target for training sessions in non-metropolitan areas (indicator 1.2.2) was exceeded. The ACMA is satisfied with the total number of training sessions held across metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, with 308 sessions held against the required 305. It is further recognised that delivering training sessions in non-metropolitan areas is more resource-intensive than those in metropolitan areas.

Table 5: Performance indicators 1.2.3 and 1.2.4

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 1.2.3</td>
<td>Number of intense practice sessions held in metro areas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 1.2.4</td>
<td>Number of intense practice sessions held in non-metro areas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of intense practice sessions, held as part of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) unit for audiologists and speech therapists in 2010–11, was significantly higher than anticipated due to greater than expected demand. In metropolitan areas, the aspirational target of nine intense practice sessions was exceeded by 100 per cent, with a total of 18 sessions delivered in 2010–11. In non-metropolitan locations, the aspirational target of three intense practice sessions was exceeded, with four sessions delivered. The CPD will continue to be a major focus of outreach activities in 2011–12.
Table 6: Performance indicators 1.3.1, 1.3.2 and 1.3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3.1</td>
<td>Number of major national conferences, expos/exhibitions</td>
<td>8 major events</td>
<td>9 major events</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.2</td>
<td>Number of metro expos/exhibitions</td>
<td>23 metro regional expos/ exhibitions</td>
<td>25 metro regional expos/ exhibitions</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.3</td>
<td>Number of non-metro expos/exhibitions</td>
<td>8 non-metro regional expos/ exhibitions</td>
<td>9 non-metro regional expos/ exhibitions</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The outreach provider met the minimum performance target for indicator 1.3.1 and met the aspirational target for indicator 1.3.3. The target for indicator 1.3.2, requiring 23 metro expos or exhibitions to be attended, was not achieved. The outreach provider considers attendance at such events against a number of criteria, including:

- the nature of the likely audience and the expected number of attendees
- the ‘fit’ of the NRS with the theme of the event
- the ways in which the NRS can be promoted at the event.

The underperformance against the performance targets for such metropolitan events reflects WWS’s ongoing assessment of how to achieve the best return possible on delivering information, training and intense practice sessions within the fixed annual budget for the program. There was a particular focus in 2010–11 on intense practice sessions as part of the CPD unit for audiologists and speech therapists, with the aspirational target for metropolitan areas exceeded by more than 100 per cent (indicator 1.2.3). This reflected an increasing demand for the delivery of such units in 2010–11 and a judgement by WWS that its resources would be better utilised in meeting that demand. This had the flow-on effect of influencing the number of suitable metropolitan expos and exhibitions that were able to be considered.

It is also noted that WWS exceeded the targets set under performance indicators 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, which focus on the number of direct exposures with conference/expo/exhibition attendees. This indicates that more than the required number of people were exposed to the NRS through this method of promotion and engagement.

Table 7: Performance indicators 1.4.1 and 1.4.2

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4.1</td>
<td>Participant rating of information sessions as ‘helpful’ or ‘extremely helpful’</td>
<td>90% of participants</td>
<td>98% of participants</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.2</td>
<td>Participant rating of training sessions as ‘helpful’ or ‘extremely helpful’</td>
<td>90% of participants</td>
<td>98% of participants</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance against indicators 1.4.1 and 1.4.2 exceeded the aspirational targets set for the year.
Table 8: Performance indicators 2.1.1 and 2.1.2

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.1.1</td>
<td>Number of participants at information sessions in metro areas</td>
<td>2,020 metro participants</td>
<td>2,220 metro participants</td>
<td>2,934</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.1.2</td>
<td>Number of participants at information sessions in non-metro areas</td>
<td>405 non-metro participants</td>
<td>445 non-metro participants</td>
<td>1,034</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance against indicator 2.1.1 exceeded the aspirational target by 32 per cent, and performance against indicator 2.1.2 exceeded the aspirational target by 132 per cent. The significant level of demand in non-metropolitan regions in 2010–11 reflects WWS's efficient use of resources when travelling to areas outside the metropolitan bases of outreach staff. For example, when outreach staff travel to non-metropolitan areas to conduct training, they also plan information sessions in those same locations to provide greater exposure of the NRS.

Table 9: Performance indicator 2.2

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.2</td>
<td>50% of training sessions should average more than one participant</td>
<td>50% of sessions</td>
<td>80% of sessions</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance against indicator 2.2 exceeded the aspirational target.

Table 10: Performance indicators 2.3.1 and 2.3.2

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.3.1</td>
<td>Number of conferences/expos/exhibitions direct contact exposures without request for follow-up</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>2,057</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.3.2</td>
<td>Number of requests for follow-up at conferences/expos/exhibitions</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance against indicator 2.3.1 exceeded the aspirational performance target by 21 per cent and the minimum performance target by 37 per cent. Performance against indicator 2.3.2 exceeded the aspirational target by 15 per cent and the minimum performance target by 26 per cent.

Table 11: Performance indicators 2.4.1 and 2.4.2

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.4.1</td>
<td>Number of website visits</td>
<td>268,726</td>
<td>295,000</td>
<td>157,018</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.4.2</td>
<td>Views of the 10 most popular video clips on the NRS website</td>
<td>7,110</td>
<td>7,465</td>
<td>5,167</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The minimum performance targets for both the number of website visits and views of the 10 most popular video clips on the website were not met. These were new performance targets for the outreach service in 2010–11 and were established based on data collected by the outreach provider in the previous financial year, 2009–10.

WWS has advised that, as part of the launch of the redeveloped website in December 2010, there was a change in the statistical package it used to monitor visits to the website. This may have changed the way in which the data is recorded because of possible variations in the algorithms used. It appears that meaningful comparisons with the data previously collected may have been compromised in the redevelopment process.

One of the key factors motivating the redevelopment of the website as a key priority in outreach activities in 2010–11 was to present information online in a more useful way. WWS has confirmed that the pattern of site usage has generally remained similar to that from previous years, with the most visited pages after the home page being those outlining call options for the service. However, the provider also considers that some of the decline in visits to the site may be attributed to users finding information they want more quickly and thus visiting fewer pages overall.

Table 12: Performance indicator 2.5.1

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Requests for outreach action received via the helpdesk</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>2,090</td>
<td>2,031</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance indicator 2.5.1 achieved the set minimum performance target.

Table 13: Performance indicators 4.1.1 and 4.1.2

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of awareness of the availability of Internet Relay by respondents to the relay service provider user survey</td>
<td>65% of respondents</td>
<td>70% of respondents</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of awareness of the availability of Internet Relay by Type and Read respondents to the relay service provider user survey</td>
<td>80% of Type and Read respondents</td>
<td>85% of Type and Read respondents</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These two key performance indicators focused on the level of awareness of the Internet Relay service, both generally among NRS users and specifically with Type and Read users (who have traditionally used a TTY to make NRS calls). This information was sought as a part of the annual relay service provider user survey in 2011. Measurement of the awareness of the Internet Relay service among NRS users has been tracked each year since its rollout in 2007.

The aspirational target of 70 per cent awareness among respondents to the relay service provider user survey was met in 2010–11. However, the minimum target for awareness by Type and Read users was not achieved. An awareness level of 81 per cent for Type and Read users was found in the 2010 survey process, but some variation in the way that different categories of users were identified in the 2011 survey may have also affected meaningful comparisons with data previously collected.
Table 14: Performance indicators 4.1.3 and 4.1.4

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 4.1.3</td>
<td>Increased awareness of participants at information sessions of the full range of NRS offerings when averaged across five items</td>
<td>55% of participants</td>
<td>60% of participants</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 4.1.4</td>
<td>Increased awareness of participants at information sessions of the availability of Internet Relay</td>
<td>60% of participants</td>
<td>65% of participants</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance against indicators 4.1.3 and 4.1.4 exceeded the set aspirational targets.

**Data collection activities**

The outreach service provider was required to collect data against nine indicators in 2010–11. While data is collected, there are no attached performance targets. It is envisaged that the data collected be used to set a target in the future or as part of a review of particular initiatives. Data collection activities are included in the NRS Plan and are subject to annual review.

WWS was successful in collecting required data and information for eight of the nine activities identified in the NRS Plan. An intention to formulate more comprehensive data in the categorisation of new users of the NRS (indicator 4.2.1) was unable to be achieved based on data collection arrangements currently in place. Measurement of this matter will be the subject of further consideration by both NRS providers in 2011–12 (see some further comments on this matter in the Outcomes column for indicator 4.2.1 in Table 15 below).

Table 15: Performance of the outreach service provider against performance data collection obligations in 2010–11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reportable measure</th>
<th>Detail</th>
<th>Data collection achieved</th>
<th>Outcomes 2011–12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Indicator 1.1.3 | No. of information sessions by target audience | Audience by sector target ✓ | > Ageing/hearing impairment: 52%  
> Government (including emergency services): 16%  
> Deaf: 12%  
> Business: 10%  
> Speech-impaired/complex communication needs: 7%  
> Other: 3% |
| Indicator 1.2.5 | No. of training sessions by target group | Participant by disability ✓ | > Ageing/hearing impairment: 70%  
> Speech-impaired/complex communication needs: 18%  
> Deaf: 12% |
| Indicator 1.3.4 | No. of conferences/expos/exhibitions by target audiences | Major conference audience by sector ✓ | > Ageing/hearing impairment: 49%  
> Speech-impaired/complex communication needs: 37%  
> Deaf: 9%  
> Business/government: 6% |
<p>| Indicator 2.3.3 | No. of inserts in conference participant packs | No. of NRS inserts in conference participant packs ✓ | &gt; 9,242 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reportable measure</th>
<th>Detail</th>
<th>Data collection achieved</th>
<th>Outcomes 2011–12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.5.2</td>
<td>Customer service activity</td>
<td>No. of trigger tasks by different helpdesk call types</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. of cases by complaints, compliments, feedback</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. of cases related to outreach, relay, general</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of cases related to Internet Relay</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Timeliness of complaints resolution</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 3.1</td>
<td>No. of print products distributed (by product)</td>
<td>No. of particular product name</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Factsheets: 13,000</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Booklets: 5,010</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flyers: 500</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Postcards: 3,500</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Caller cards: 12,250</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brochures: 17,350</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Posters: 1,500</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stickers: 4,000</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 3.2</td>
<td>No. of other products distributed (by product)</td>
<td>No. of particular product name</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DVDs: 1,500</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lolly bags: 4,000</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Video clips: 5</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 4.2.1</td>
<td>Change in the no. of particular target groups that use NRS</td>
<td>No. of new Speak and Read users</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. of new voice users</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. of new Speak and Listen users</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Indigenous users</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Change in NRS awareness of intermediaries for Indigenous users</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 4.2.2</td>
<td>Change in no. of businesses that increase internal NRS awareness to support NRS customer access</td>
<td>No. of call centres and contact staff who are exposed to NRS during Hearing Awareness Week</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outreach service highlights for 2010–11

Highlights of the outreach service provider’s service delivery in 2010–11 included:

> redevelopment of the NRS website to present information in a more useful way

> the commencement of a social media strategy, with a focus on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube

> initial “soft” release of a YouTube video, *Quiet Signs of Love*—a cutting-edge approach to the promotion of an Australian Government initiative

> an extension of the innovative approach of providing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) modules about the NRS to involve both audiologists and speech therapists

> marketing design focused on improving the user experience, contextualising awareness and acceptance of the NRS, and simplifying how to access help when needed. Outputs included the distribution of nearly 65,000 print, audio/DVD and other promotional items; over 40 advertisements in relevant journals; seven radio interviews and 33 free print articles

> ongoing strategic engagement via conferences and expos linked to target markets, accompanied by strong post-event follow-ups. Achievements included:

  > over 9,000 items distributed in conference participant packs

  > direct contact with over 2,000 people at conferences

  > presenting a paper in a conference program and running a lunchtime workshop at another.

Helpdesk support

Provision of a helpdesk support function and handling of complaints and feedback about the service are other key activities undertaken by the outreach provider. WWS reported 4,706 contacts or requests handled by the NRS helpdesk in 2010–11, five per cent down on the total of 4,943 in 2009–10. Included in this total figure are 271 complaints handled by the outreach service in 2010–11, consistent with the total of 276 complaints dealt with in 2009–10.

The proportion of complaints compared to the total number of outbound NRS calls remained at a very low level of 0.046 per cent in 2010–11 (0.044 per cent in 2009–10).

More than 40 per cent of the complaints related to matters outside the direct responsibility of both NRS providers. Such issues largely arise from users of the Internet Relay service, and may be generated by software and network issues not directly related to the delivery of the NRS. The impact of the Brisbane floods, interrupting the provision of the NRS, also generated a number of complaints in January 2011.

*Quiet Signs of Love* video

During 2010–11, the outreach provider finalised an innovative short film to promote the NRS. The title of *Quiet Signs of Love* reflects the story told in the movie, which focuses on the development of a relationship between a member of the deaf community and a hearing person who are enrolled in the same course at university. The film explores the difficulties the couple face in a relationship that doesn’t always run smoothly. The Internet Relay service plays a vital role in establishing a workable communication option between the two main characters. The video breaks new ground in telling a fictional story as a way of promoting an Australian Government initiative.
Appendix

Impact of the January 2011 Brisbane floods on the delivery of the NRS and subsequent initiatives to improve its resilience

ACE’s national call centre operations are based in Brisbane and supported by a disaster recovery centre (DRC) in the same city. The DRC provides alternative call centre facilities that are to be accessed at times when the delivery of the NRS from the national call centre may be interrupted in some way.

The call centre and DRC are located on different sides of the Brisbane River, providing access to different electricity grids and telecommunications networks. This degree of independence between the two sites was a key factor in the ACMA agreeing to the current business continuity arrangements with ACE. The DRC has been used on a limited number of occasions and the arrangements have generally resulted in minimal downtime for the NRS.

The delivery of the NRS was significantly interrupted for nearly 24 hours on 12–13 January 2011. This arose from the impact of the severe floods in Brisbane on those days. The call centre was evacuated at 1 pm on Wednesday 12 January due to concerns about staff safety and access during the floods. The premises were reopened on Thursday 13 January at 12 pm, with services progressively resumed over the next four days. During the evacuation period, the DRC also could not be used due to similar staff safety and access concerns.

The ACMA and ACE liaised with Telstra to quickly relocate the handling of the 106 text emergency service to a Telstra exchange in Brisbane, which ensured a dry environment with uninterruptible power supply and other appropriate technical requirements. The NRS relayed all emergency 106 calls received during the 23-hour evacuation period. No other call types were operational in this period.

Matters arising from the service interruption as a result of the Brisbane floods were the subject of a complaint investigated by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) in 2010–11. The AHRC confirmed that the case was closed in August 2011. Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN), the peak consumer advocate body on communications issues, also published a report in March 2011 on issues arising from the floods. A number of government agencies and departments considered a series of recommendations from ACCAN.

In March 2011, the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee commenced an inquiry into the capacity of communication networks and emergency warning systems to deal with emergencies and natural disasters, in response to issues arising from the Brisbane floods and other natural disasters that occurred throughout Australia in early 2011. The committee was to report in November 2011.

The ACMA has worked with ACE on the following two initiatives to help reduce future interruptions to the delivery of the NRS:

- **Additional disaster recovery site**—ACE has been investigating options to provide additional sites in the event of disaster scenarios where both the main NRS and DRC call centres are non-operational.

- **Internal priority for all emergency calls**—the ACMA has requested that ACE prioritise all NRS calls to emergency service numbers within its internal systems. Currently only emergency 106 TTY calls receive priority in the call queuing system. This project involves establishing priority routing where a user has entered Triple Zero (000) for Internet Relay, TTY and other emergency calls. Subject to agreement being finalised between the ACMA and ACE on this matter, internal prioritisation of all emergency calls to the NRS is expected to be in place in 2011–12.
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