



A phone solution for people
who are deaf or have a
hearing or speech impairment

National Relay Service Plan

2006–07



An Australian Government Initiative

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Introduction

The National Relay Service (NRS) is a national telephone relay service that allows Australians who are deaf, or who have a hearing, speech or communication impairment to communicate with anyone who uses a standard telephone and vice versa. This telephone access is provided on terms and in circumstances that are comparable to those which other Australians have access to a standard telephone service.

The NRS is an Australian Government initiative provided under contract with the Commonwealth. It is funded by a levy on eligible telecommunications carriers. Established under Part 3 of the *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999* (TCPSS Act), the NRS comprises:

- the relay service, which provides persons who are deaf, or who have a hearing and/or speech impairment with access to a standard telephone service—this service is provided by Australian Communication Exchange Ltd under contract to the Commonwealth; and
- the outreach service, which provides information on the NRS and support and training to users and potential users of the relay service, including a Helpdesk—this service is provided by WestWood Spice Pty Ltd under contract to the Commonwealth.

The NRS consists of a call centre where relay officers relay calls from people who are deaf or have a hearing, speech or communication impairment to other people plus an outreach service which provides activities to support awareness, training and usage of the NRS.

The NRS relay service provider is defined as an Emergency Call Person under the *Telecommunications (Emergency Call Person) Determination 2002*.

Service options

The following call relay options are provided 24 hours a day, every day of the year, in the English language. Appendix C contains the operational terms and conditions for use of the relay service.

Inbound			Call option	Call Type	Outbound	
TTY	Modem	Voice			TTY	Voice
		✓	Type and read	Voice-to-text relay	✓	
✓	✓		Type and read	Text-to-voice relay		✓
✓		✓	Type and listen	Hearing carry over (HCO)*		✓
✓		✓	Speak and read	Voice carry over (VCO)**		✓
✓		✓	Speak and read	VCO to VCO	✓	✓
		✓	Speak and listen	Speech-to-speech relay (SSR)		✓
✓	✓			Text emergency service		✓
	✓			Internet relay (to be introduced in 2007)	✓	✓

* Enables a user with a speech impairment to receive communication directly from the other party and to type their side of the conversation on a TTY, while a relay officer uses voice to communicate to the other party.

** Enables a user with hearing impairment to communicate directly with another party using natural speech and receive communication from the other party via text through a relay officer.

Privacy policy

The NRS complies with the *Privacy Act 1988*. Any information collected from users is used to provide a quality service. Appendix E contains the NRS privacy policy.

Feedback process

Appendix F contains information on the NRS complaint handling processes. Suggestions, complaints and comments are welcomed.

Access to the service

The NRS provides a relay service which operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Users can make as many calls as they wish. There is no limit on the length of calls or the number of follow-on calls to local, long distance or mobile numbers once connected to the relay service. Users are required to set up an account to make calls to international or premium rate numbers, as there are charging arrangements for these types of calls. Further details are given in Appendix D.

For information, instructions or training in the use of the relay service, visit the NRS website at www.relayservice.com.au or contact the outreach service. Contact details are given in Appendix A.

Service type	Number to call
Relay service	133 677 (133 NRS)
Relay service toll free number*	1800 555 677 (1800 555 NRS)
Relay service from other countries**	+61 7 3815 7799
Speech to speech relay (Speak and Listen)	1300 555 727 (1300 555 S2S)
Speech to speech (Speak and Listen) relay toll free number*	1800 555 727 (1800 555 S2S)
Speech to speech (Speak and Listen) relay from other countries**	+61 7 3815 8000
Text emergency call service***	106
Speak and Listen emergency call service	1300 555 727 and ask for 000
Reverse charge calls through the relay service	1800 555 722 (1800 555 RCC)

* 1800 access numbers can only be used for calling other toll free numbers.

** Calls to and from other countries via the NRS are restricted to the English language and require a pin number and account.

*** Speech-to-speech (Speak and Listen) relay callers in need of an emergency service may call 000 via Speech-to-Speech Relay.

Emergency services

The 106 text emergency service provides a free, high quality and reliable text emergency call service—equivalent to 000—for use by TTY or computer with modem callers who need to contact an emergency service organisation. This service is for emergency situations requiring an immediate response from the police, fire or ambulance service.

Emergency calls using speech-to-speech relay can be made by calling 1800 555 727 (toll free) or 1300 555 727 and requesting '000'.

Internet relay users will not have access to the text emergency call service.

National Relay Service Plan

The National Relay Service Plan (NRSP) describes the NRS services, how they will be delivered and the standards users can expect. It contains policies, key priorities and strategies for the year and the performance standards users can expect. As such, it outlines the activities for the providers of both the relay service and the outreach service for 2006–07. With a commitment to continually improving the service, the focus in 2006–07 is on further enhancing the NRS to provide a new internet relay service and improving service level and quality.

A new customer consultative committee will be established to gain feedback and advice on quality of service, consumer benefits and consumer satisfaction related to the operation of the NRS. This consultation will assist in the development of future NRSPs.

Feedback

Anyone is welcome to comment on the content of the NRSP and make suggestions for improvement. Feedback can be provided by:

- contacting the Helpdesk by TTY on 1800 555 630
- contacting the Helpdesk by telephone on 1800 555 660
- contacting the Helpdesk by fax on 1800 555 690
- writing to the NRS outreach service at:
88 Darling Street, East Balmain NSW 2041
- emailing the NRS outreach service, at feedback@relayservice.com.au
- emailing the form on the website, at www.relayservice.com.au.

Performance standards

Under subsection 95(2) of the TCPSS Act, the NRSP must include timetables for the supply of the NRS and performance standards to be met by the providers. Under subsection 95(3), the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts arranges for the NRSP to be published. The NRSP is available on the NRS website, at www.relayservice.com.au.

The relay service performance standards for 2006–07 are listed in Appendix B. These performance standards are the target performance levels against which the relay service is delivered.

The contract for the provision of outreach service requires provision of services linked to performance measures and to funding levels provided for in the contract. The strategies used to achieve results (and the related performance indicators) are subject to annual review.

Priorities for 2006–07

During 2006–07, the NRS is seeking to improve user satisfaction in several areas. In particular, this will cover the efficiency of NRS calls placed by callers who are deaf or have a hearing, speech or communication impairment, and the effectiveness of ‘community’ callers to the NRS in reaching their target markets.

Improved satisfaction will be achieved through activities of both the relay service and the outreach service.

Relay service

Following successful implementation in late 2005, the relay service will be further enhanced to build on the strengths of the new technology platform. The planned enhancements are aimed at providing improved service levels and ensuring that users experience a high level of quality and consistency in their interactions with the relay service.

Enhancements program

A new program called ‘Call Centre Systems Enhancements Program’ (CCSEP) includes the development of system based intelligence to introduce priority routing to complement the existing skills based routing functionality. Priority routing allows the prioritising of critical work types (such as 106) and ensures the efficient and effective ongoing management of all call types.

Internet relay

The introduction of internet relay will allow users to access the service using a computer and the internet to communicate in text to anyone anywhere with a telephone number.

Emergency 106 will not be available via the internet relay service.

Quality management

Improved call quality management processes will be made possible with the technology platform enhancements, to ensure a higher standard of service for users.

Outreach service

The purpose of the NRS outreach service is for all users and potential users of the NRS to be aware of the service, know how it works and be able to use it effectively. The outreach service aims to increase awareness, confidence and knowledge, and acceptance of the NRS among key groups. This includes offering information, support and training for any person with an interest in the NRS. In turn, this is expected to increase call numbers handled by the NRS and to improve receptiveness of outbound calls made by the NRS. Target audiences are:

- people with a hearing impairment
- people with a speech or communication impairment
- people who are deaf
- people who have a combination of impairments which result in their speech, communication or hearing being affected
- people who act as intermediaries for the above groups

- members of the public including the business community.

Outreach activities

Key features of the 2006–07 outreach activities will be:

- Provision of core education and information through a community education team who are located across Australia. The team will undertake a range of activities including:
 - initial response to inquiries via a free Helpdesk (TTY, telephone, fax, email, web);
 - information sessions/presentations;
 - TTY and NRS training/instructional sessions; and
 - participation in networks related to specific target groups.
- Provision of information and training support in relation to specific improvements in the relay service, such as the introduction of internet relay and automated call function.
- A focus on new NRS users, including older people with an acquired hearing impairment.
- Tailoring of outreach service activities to the needs and communication patterns of all target groups (current users, new users, intermediaries and members of the public), which will become clearer through market research activities undertaken during the first two quarters of 2006–07.
- A clear emphasis on performance monitoring which will work towards longer term behavioural objectives evidenced at the relay service interface, while recognising intermediate objectives related to inputs and throughputs (for example, increased call numbers to the relay service by people who are deaf or have a hearing, speech or communication impairment; increased call numbers to relay service by businesses and community members seeking to talk with people who are deaf or have a hearing, speech or communication impairment).
- An ongoing pattern of research/pilot projects to better understand the needs of particular NRS user groups or potential user groups).

Responding to consumers

Consultation, input and complaints processes

The relay service provider and the outreach service provider have a sustained commitment towards delivering the best NRS service possible. They encourage and welcome suggestions, complaints and input from people who use the NRS.

They have developed particular policies aimed at understanding what NRS users are thinking and are concerned about.

What people think of the outreach service

The outreach service will be sponsoring some independent research during 2006–07 to find out the views of users (and potential users) of the NRS. The results of this research will be reported in quarterly reports as well as the annual outreach service performance report. Key findings will be reported on the website at www.relayservice.com.au.

What works best to help people with the NRS

The outreach service will be undertaking various market research activities during 2006–07. Some results of these activities will be reported in quarterly reports as well as the annual outreach service performance report. Key findings will be reported on the website at www.relayservice.com.au.

Customer consultative committee

There is a customer consultative committee which provides feedback and advice to the NRS providers on quality of service, consumer benefits and consumer satisfaction related to the NRS. The relay service provider facilitates the activities of this committee and the outreach service provider is a member of this committee.

Appendix A – Contact information

NRS relay service provider (Australian Communication Exchange)

General enquiries: +61 7 3815 7600

Open 9.00am to 5.00pm AEST, weekdays. Closed on public holidays.

Account payments: 1300 300 551 (voice and TTY)

Fax: +61 7 3815 7601

Website: www.relayservice.com.au

Mail: 295 Logan Road (PO Box 473)
Stones Corner QLD 4120

NRS outreach service provider (WestWood Spice)

Telephone: 1800 555 660

TTY: 1800 555 630

Fax: 1800 555 690

Email: feedback@relayservice.com.au

Website: www.relayservice.com.au

Mail: 88 Darling St
East Balmain NSW 2041

Appendix B – Performance standards

NRS relay service provider

- No more than five calls per 100 into the relay service will receive a busy signal (quarterly average).
- No more than 0.5 per cent text emergency calls into the relay service will receive a busy signal (quarterly average).
- At least 99 per cent of text emergency calls will be answered by a relay officer within ten seconds (quarterly average).

NRS outreach service provider

The outreach service links its performance to improving awareness, confidence and knowledge, and acceptance of the NRS among key groups; and offering information, support and training for any person with an interest in the NRS.

During the first quarter of 2006–07, the outreach service will establish baseline data on some key measures so that targets can be set for the subsequent three quarters. The outreach service has performance indicators which relate to improvements in three areas:

- awareness of the NRS;
- confidence and knowledge about the NRS; and
- acceptance of the NRS.

In turn, this focus is intended to increase call numbers handled by the NRS and to improve receptiveness of outbound calls made by the NRS. These demonstrable changes may take some time to become apparent and will include establishing baseline measures. To this end, current performance indicators also have a stronger focus on inputs, throughputs and outputs.

Strategy 1: Inputs by targets		Performance Target
Indicator 1.1	Number of information sessions (by target group by geographic location)	200 sessions [160 metro:40 non-metro]
Indicator 1.2	Number of training sessions (by target group by geographic location)	415 sessions [300 metro:115 non-metro]
Indicator 1.3	Participant rating of effectiveness of information sessions and training sessions	75% of info session participants rate session as 'helpful' or 'extremely helpful' 90% of training session participants rate session as 'helpful' or 'extremely helpful'
Strategy 2: Throughputs		Performance target
Indicator 2.1	Number of participants at information sessions (by target group by geographic location)	2500 participants [2000 metro:500 non-metro]
Indicator 2.2	Number of website hits	Track data [no target]
Strategy 3: Outputs		Performance target
Indicator 3.1	Number of print products distributed (by product by target group by geographic location)	Track data [no target] for print products
Indicator 3.2	Numbers of non print products distributed (by product by target group by geographic location)	Track data [no target] for radio ads, journal placement

Appendix C – Terms and conditions

Terms and conditions for the use of the NRS are under development and will be published on the website when completed.

Cost of using the NRS

Calls from within Australia

Call type	Charges by telephone company	Charges by the relay service provider
106 text emergency service	Nil	Nil
Free access numbers, e.g. 1800 or 013 (directory assistance)	Nil	Nil
Local or long distance numbers in Australia	About the same as a local call**	Nil
Any mobile number in Australia	About the same as a local call**	Nil
Any international number*	About the same as a local call**	Cost of the international call from Australia
Premium rate information service in Australia*	About the same as a local call***	Cost of the premium rate call

* Requires an NRS account.

** The actual cost depends on the cost of ringing a 13 number agreed with your telephone company. Timed calls from mobiles and payphones may incur a higher rate.

*** The actual cost depends on the cost of ringing a 13 number agreed with your telephone company. Timed calls from mobiles and payphones may incur a higher rate.

Calls from outside Australia

Call type	Charges by telephone company	Charges by the relay service provider
106 text emergency service	N/A	N/A
Free access numbers, eg. 1800 or 013 (directory assistance)	Time charged by telephone company	Nil
Local or long distance numbers in Australia	Time charged by telephone company	Nil
Any mobile number in Australia	Time charged by telephone company	Nil
Any international number	N/A	N/A
Premium rate information service in Australia	N/A	N/A

Appendix D – Credit management policy

NRS relay service provider

Policy applies to

This policy only applies to relay service users who open an NRS account to make chargeable calls – currently international numbers, premium rate services and reverse charged calls.

Introduction

Most calls made through the NRS are billed through the user's telecommunications service provider (see Charges in Appendix C). The relay service provider only charges for calls made to international destinations or premium rate services. Users are required to establish an account with the relay service provider in order to make these types of calls and to make or receive reverse charged calls through the relay service.

Credit control

When establishing new accounts or reactivating existing accounts, the relay service provider may request prepayment and deposits where appropriate. Under certain circumstances, access may be restricted to just the standard relay service, without access to international calls or calls to premium rate services.

Credit management

The relay service provider sends out monthly relay service bills showing details of time of calls made, the numbers called, the length of the calls and the amounts charged. The total amount payable and the due date are also shown.

Payments can be made by cheque, money order or credit card (Mastercard, Visa or Bankcard) by mailing or using a 'pay-by-phone' service with your credit card.

If a user fails to make a payment by the due date, the relay service provider will send a reminder notice after which the account may be disconnected on the extended due date if payment is still not received. Any outstanding amount must be paid before an account can be reconnected. The disconnection of an account only restricts access to chargeable calls. Users can continue to access the relay service for emergency, free and local rate calls.

The relay service provider will take necessary steps to collect any outstanding debts and may refer the user to a credit rating agency to be default listed.

If there are any disputes about outstanding amounts, the provider will endeavour to resolve these in a fair and timely manner.

Fairness, Equity and Hardship

The relay service provider ensures that credit and related debts are managed fairly and equitably. This policy maintains that parties who incur debts do so in full expectation of meeting the repayment terms prescribed.

The service provider acknowledges that circumstances can change. If users have problems paying a bill by the due date, they must promptly contact the service provider.

Appendix E – Privacy policies

NRS relay service provider

Collection of personal information

The NRS only collects information from you that we need to provide the relay service to you. This information might include your name, address, telephone, fax and email address when you open an account with us.

Use and disclosure of information

We only use your personal information or disclose it to third parties in the following circumstances:

- to provide the relay service to you
- with your permission
- when the disclosure is required or permitted by law
- in relation to legal proceedings or the orders of a court or tribunal
- for account management and credit management.

Security of Information

We take reasonable steps to ensure that all information we collect is stored in a secure environment and accessed only by authorised persons. We do not retain any information for any longer than required except to fulfil our legal obligations.

Access and update of information

The Privacy Act 1988 allows individuals to request access to records containing their personal information. You may request that information about you be corrected. Please contact us if you wish to make a request for access to your information.

Confidentiality of relay conversations

Confidentiality is one of the most important features of the relay service. We are committed to respecting your personal privacy and the confidentiality of calls at all times. We will not disclose your identity or the content of conversations relayed through the service, unless required or permitted by law. Conversations made through the relay service are not recorded. The only exceptions are for calls made through the 106 text emergency service or as required or permitted by law.

Changes to this privacy policy

This privacy policy may be amended from time to time with new developments in the law relating to privacy.

NRS outreach service provider

What information do we collect about you?

In order to provide you with services, the outreach service asks you to give us certain personal information including your name, address, the nature of your disability and your contact details including TTY, phone and fax numbers and your email address. We may also collect other information like the type of equipment you use; your preferences in using the

relay service; and any training or support which helps you use the relay service more easily. The relay service may collect additional information in some circumstances, like your NRS account or your PIN number.

National privacy principles

The relay service and the outreach service must adhere to the Australian Government's National Privacy Principles which are set out in the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). The privacy principles control the way in which we may collect, store, use and disclose your personal information. The relay service must also comply with confidentiality and privacy matters set out in Part 13 of the *Telecommunications Act 1997*.

Collecting your personal information

We only collect your personal information when it is needed for us to provide a good service to you. We only collect this information by lawful and fair means - generally, we will only collect personal information from you directly, and not from a third party. We keep your personal information either in hard copy form or electronically (on our computer).

Using your personal information

We may use the personal information we collect from you to:

- Provide you with a better relay service
- Provide you with the outreach service activities that you have requested such as training about your telecommunications equipment
- Respond to your enquiries or send you information about the NRS
- Investigate any complaints you have about the NRS
- Improve our customer service to you
- Gain your feedback on the service we have provided to you
- Bill you for chargeable services that you use (including overseas telephone calls, and special information services)
- Enable us to prepare internal reports and statistical data on the services we provide to NRS users.

We take all reasonable steps to protect your personal information from misuse and loss, and from unauthorised access, modification or disclosure.

Storing your personal information

We keep all personal information in safe storage. Hard copy notes, forms and files containing personal information are kept in locked filing cabinets and can only be accessed by NRS employees. All computer generated correspondence and emails are created and stored on password-protected computers, ensuring that no unauthorised access can occur.

Disclosing your personal information

We will not pass your personal information to a third party without your permission, unless required by law to do so.

Access to your personal information

The NRS takes all reasonable steps to ensure that the personal information we collect about you is accurate, complete and up-to-date. You have the right (with some exceptions) to

access the personal information that we hold about you. Access to your information can be arranged by contacting our helpdesk (see details at end of this policy). You can also ask us to check and correct any of your personal information. No fee will be charged for these purposes.

Recording telephone / TTY contact with the NRS

When contacting the outreach service by phone, the conversation will not be recorded in any way. If you contact the outreach service by TTY, the conversation may be recorded via a TTY printer. If the contents of the conversation are to be recorded for a message or kept on file, they will be handwritten as would be the case in a voice conversation and the printout will be discarded. No records are kept of any conversations through the relay service, except where required by law, for example, 106 emergency calls.

Internet security

If you are submitting personal information to us over the Internet that you wish to remain private, you should be aware that there is the possibility that the information you submit could be observed by a third party while in transit.

Do you believe that the NRS has breached your privacy?

If you believe that the NRS may have breached your privacy, you should contact our helpdesk to discuss your issues or concerns and we will try to resolve them in consultation with you. The best way to help us answer your concerns is to tell us honestly, completely and accurately about what has happened. Tell us quickly about your concerns – do not sit on your problems.

TTY: 1800 555 630

Telephone: 1800 555 660

Fax: 1800 555 690

Email: helpdesk@relayservice.com.au

Mail: 88 Darling Street, East Balmain NSW 2041

The NRS has a complaints policy which seeks to ensure a fair and effective response where anyone has a concern or complaint about the NRS. If you remain dissatisfied with our response to your concerns about privacy at the NRS, you have a right to complain in writing to the Privacy Commissioner:

TTY: 1800 620 241

Telephone: 1300 363 992

Fax: 02 9284 9666

Email: privacy@privacy.gov.au

Mail: GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001

Appendix F – Complaints handling processes

The NRS has a complaints policy which seeks to ensure a fair and effective response where anyone has a concern or complaint about the NRS. The policy also helps us to listen to customers, learn from customers and improve our service to you.

Anyone can make a complaint about the NRS. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, concern or frustration with NRS services.

There are no charges for making a complaint.

If a user has a problem or complaint, the NRS will make every effort to resolve the issue. Users can expect that the NRS will:

- Treat them with respect
- Tell them what will happen while their complaint is being looked at, and keep them informed of progress
- Tell them who will deal with the complaint
- Be fair and open in the way their complaint is handled
- Deal with their complaint in a timely manner and give them reasons for the decision made about the complaint
- Protect their privacy.

The NRS invites comments and feedback, to improve their services. People should:

- Tell them honestly, completely and accurately about what has happened.
- Tell them quickly about any concerns.
- Treat their staff with courtesy.

How to make a complaint

Lodging a complaint

Concerns or complaints can be lodged in a number of different ways:

- By phone—call 1800 555 660 and speak to the Helpdesk officer who will take initial details of the concern or complaint.
- By TTY—call 1800 555 630 and the Helpdesk officer will take the TTY call and note initial details of the concern or complaint.
- By fax—to 1800 555 690 to lodge a complaint by fax.
- In writing—to:
NRS Complaints Coordinator
88 Darling Street, East Balmain NSW 2041
- By email—to feedback@relayservice.com.au
- Online—on the online complaints form at www.relayservice.com.au

- In person—to any staff person in the NRS, or by making a time to meet the complaints coordinator.

Making a complaint

The NRS outreach service will offer assistance, if needed, to make a complaint; and the NRS can also be used to make a complaint against another party, with privacy assured.

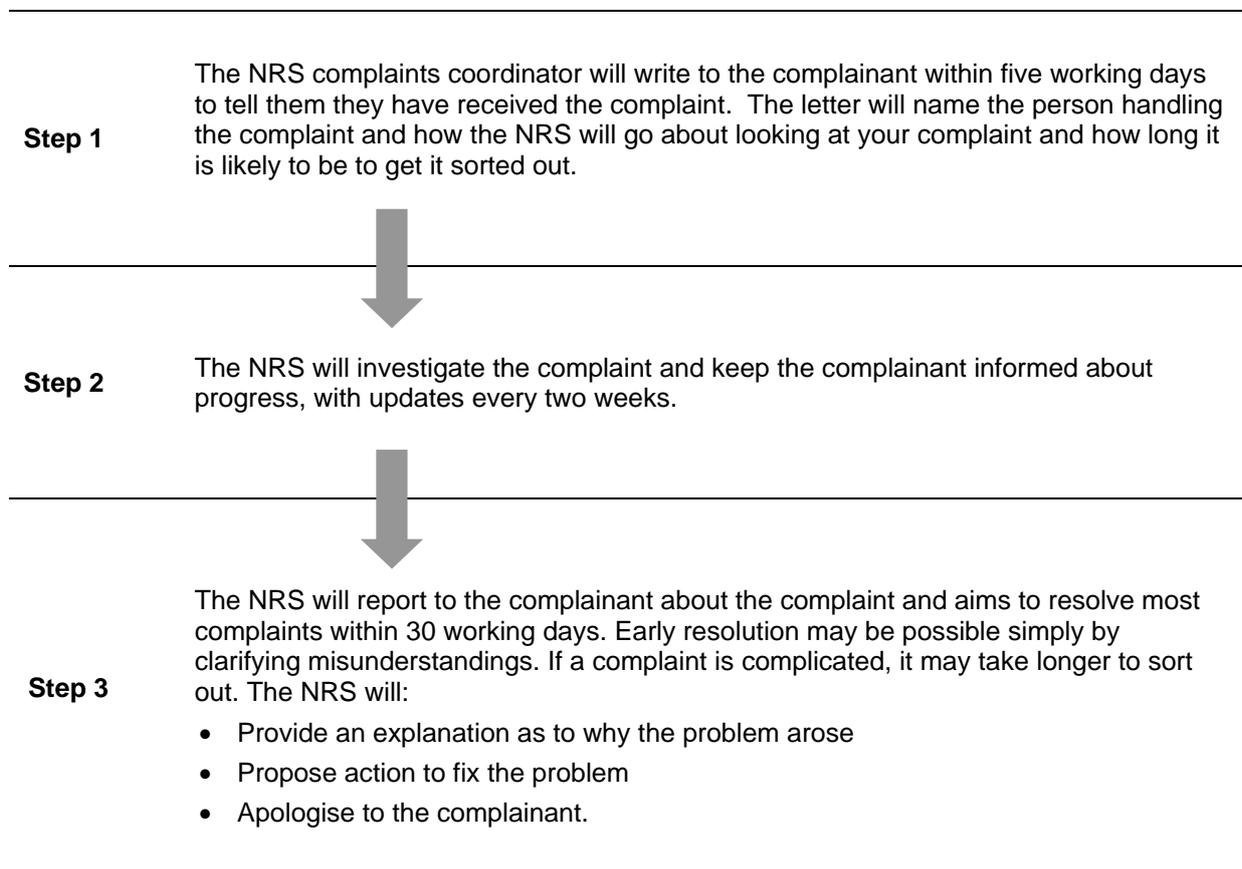
A third party can also make a complaint on a user's behalf.

It is useful to have as much detail as possible about the complaint. The complainant will be asked for their name and contact details, so that the NRS can keep them informed of the progress of the resolution of the complaint.

Next steps

The NRS will give careful attention to complaints. A complaints coordinator is responsible for ensuring that complaints are resolved.

The steps in the complaints handling process are:



Sometimes it is not possible to sort out a complaint completely. If so, our Complaints Coordinator will work with you to look at other way to address your concerns.

Outcome of the complaint

If a complainant is not happy with the outcome of a complaint, they can ask the NRS to check the decision about the complaint, or the way it was handled. This request should be in writing to the complaints coordinator.

If the complaint is about the NRS relay service, complainants can contact the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO). The TIO provides a free and independent service to consumers with complaints about their telephone or internet service.

Freecall: 1800 062 058

Freefax: 1800 630 614

TTY: 1800 675 692

Email: tio@tio.com.au

Website: www.tio.com.au

Mail: PO Box 276 Collins Street West, Melbourne VIC 8007

If the complaint is about the NRS outreach service, complainants can contact the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission (ACCC) or the Office of Fair Trading. The ACCC can provide advice to consumers and businesses about their rights and obligations under the *Trade Practices Act 1974* and can assist in resolving a dispute by directing parties to appropriate complaints resolution options. The consumer protection work of the ACCC complements that of the state and territory offices of fair trading which administer similar legislation within their state or territories.

ACCC

Telephone: 1300 302 502 (local call costs)

Mail: Level 7, 123 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Offices of Fair Trading

- Australian Capital Territory: (02) 6207 0400
- Northern Territory: 1800 019 319 or (08) 8999 6260
- New South Wales: 133 220 or (02) 9895 0111
- Queensland: 131 304 or (07) 3246 1589
- South Australia: 131 882 or (08) 8204 9777
- Tasmania: 1300 654 499 or (03) 6233 4567
- Victoria: 1300 558 181 or (03) 9627 6444
- Western Australia: 1300 304 054 or (08) 9282 0777