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Tiny text phone helps the deafblind.

The world's smallest text-to-speech telephone, recently launched in the United States, has the potential to vastly improve the lives of some of the 40,000 West Australian's that are deafblind or blind with an additional disability.

The first apparatus of this type, to convert text to speech, was the size of a washing machine. In comparison the 'Reader' is a tiny device that fits in the palm of the hand. It combines innovative reading software with the Nokia N82 mobile phone to create the smallest text-to speech reading device in history.

The telephone or 'Reader' has been created by K-NFB Reading Technology, a joint venture between the US National Federation for the Blind and Kurzweil Technologies, led by world renowned inventor Ray Kurzweil, K-NFB's chief executive officer and key note speaker at the recent World Conference on Deafblindness in Perth.

The telephone works by taking pictures of most printed materials at the push of a button. Users who are **vision impaired** can then hear the contents of the document read in clear synthetic speech. User who are **hearing impaired** can read the screen and can enlarge, read, track, and highlight printed materials using the phone's large display.

The Senses Foundation is the primary advocate in Western Australia for people who are deafblind or blind with an additional disability. It provides a range of services including respite, physiotherapy and specialist communication services.

CEO, Debbie Karasinski, says the Reader could give people with speech and hearing disabilities much greater independence and open opportunities in employment, in school and at home.

"Carrying a cell phone is so common, so carrying this device is not obtrusive and it will give users immediate access to information previously not accessible without help, like menus and letters., Ms Karasinski said.

"Many people who are deafblind have some vision or hearing and, although this may be limited, it could well be sufficient to make use of this new mobile telephone."

For further comment please contact Debbie Karasinski on 9473 5400 or 04127 227 88. Picture shows Debbie Karasinski.

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For more information and articles please go to the (US) National Federation for the Blind website at <http://www.nfb.org> and follow the link to KNFB Reader Mobile.