

# Office for Disability issues

Te Tari Mō Ngā Take Hauātanga  
*Administered by the Ministry of Social Development*

## **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – New Zealand’s report**

### **Discussion document**

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## ***Introduction***

The United Nations has a Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A Convention is like a law or set of rules that countries can agree to follow and be bound by. The New Zealand Government has signed and ratified the Convention and has, therefore, committed to implement it. It is this Convention we are talking about in this booklet.

The United Nations (UN) checks regularly on the progress the Government of New Zealand is making in implementing the Convention. It does this by requiring the Government to provide it with a report.

## ***What is the New Zealand report about?***

This is the first time New Zealand has had to report to the UN about how well it is implementing this Convention. It is a baseline report, which means future reports will be compared against it.

The report has information in it about our laws and if they work well for disabled people. It tells the UN how well disabled people are doing compared to other New Zealanders and if they are treated fairly or less well because of their disability. It also tells the UN what the New Zealand Government has been doing to improve this, and what it plans to do.

## ***Can I see the draft report and have my say?***

Yes. The draft report is 60 pages long. It will not be sent to the United Nations until we have heard what disabled people and others think about it.

You can email or send in submissions, attend face-to-face meetings and also join an online discussion. Details are at the end of this document.

To assist us to get your views, we have written this document to explain some important things the draft report says, and to ask you some questions.

You may not want to read all of the full report. That is alright – if you can respond to the questions that we have written in this document, or talk to us about what you think, that is also very helpful for us.

## ***What's in the document?***

We have picked three areas in the draft report that we think the UN will focus on, and have asked you some questions about improving them:

- jobs
- mobility and accessibility
- supports for living (called 'living independently' in the Convention).

These are also areas the Government is concentrating on as it develops a disability action plan. The government would like to know what specific actions you would like to see in the plan for each of these areas. What do you think are the actions that need to be taken first and be part of the Government's disability action plan? The Government would like to include key actions from its disability action plan in its final report to the UN.

## ***Background***

The Convention says disabled people should be able to enjoy or experience the same rights as other people do, and have the same access to opportunities to live a good life. This does not mean disabled people have extra or special rights. But it does mean we may need to provide more support, or think of different ways to do things, to make sure disabled people can have their rights on an equal basis with others.

There are many barriers to disabled people being able to fully experience their human rights. Governments must do what they can to remove these barriers. For example, the Government has provided a telephone relay service so that those people who could not previously use the telephone to communicate, because it relied on them being able to hear or speak clearly, can now do so.

It may take a long time to remove all the barriers, but the UN is interested in what practical actions New Zealand is taking to do this.

### ***First area of focus: Supports for living***

The Government funds a range of supports through different agencies to help disabled people to live a good life at home and in their communities. Current supports include things such as:

- housing modifications to help disabled people to live safely and independently at home
- equipment to help disabled people to communicate, move around, and be independent
- personal and household assistance, and other support to help disabled people to live independently and participate in their communities
- help with additional disability-related costs, such as transport costs.

The Government is changing the way that supports are provided, to make it easier for disabled people, and their families, to have more choice and control over the supports provided to them.

### **What do you think?**

1. What works well to support disabled people in living independently?
2. What changes would make the biggest difference for disabled people living independently?
3. How would you make this happen?

## ***Second area of focus: Mobility and access***

When we talk of mobility and access we are meaning how easy, or not, it is for disabled people to find out about things and to get to, and into and around, places so they can participate. You can't work if you can't get to the job, and you can't enjoy a concert if you can't find out about it in the first place or if you can't get into the building where it is being held.

There are laws that say that buildings, public areas and transport services should be accessible for disabled people. Government agencies also provide some supports to help disabled people better move around. However, we know the reality for many disabled people is that they still cannot easily move around and access what they need to live the lives they want to lead.

What we do not always know is what the biggest barrier is, and what would be best to try to change first. The Government has made improving mobility and access a priority, but everything cannot be done at once so your views on what to start with or concentrate on are important.

### **What do you think?**

1. What works well to support disabled people making choices in moving around your community?
2. What could be changed to make it easier for disabled people to move around?
3. How would you make this happen?
4. What else would you like to see happen?

### ***Third area of focus: Jobs***

Disabled people have the same rights, responsibilities and protections in employment as others.

Here are three examples of the sorts of support or services that exist to help disabled people get into and stay in work:

- support to get into work (like through Workbridge)
- financial assistance for travel to work
- adapting workplaces to better suit a disabled person's needs.

But the reality is that disabled people are more often unemployed or not actually looking for work than other people. We know this may be due to different kinds of things, such as family and teacher expectations, employers' attitudes, a lack of opportunities to get work experience, difficulties of adapting workplaces, and the unavailability of personal assistance when its needed to make it possible for disabled people to work.

### **What do you think?**

1. What works well to support disabled people in work?
2. How can we provide better work opportunities for disabled people?
3. What would you like to improve?

## ***What other reports are being done?***

Government is doing a lot to make things better for disabled people. You may have been asked your views on other things recently. Examples include:

- the review of special education
- the development of a campaign to change public behaviours and attitudes to disability and has been asking disabled people what needs to improve.

The Government report is not the only report that goes from New Zealand to the UN. There are many chances to have your voice heard at the UN.

## **Disabled people's monitoring report**

Disabled people's organisations have been finding out for themselves how disabled people's rights are being met. You or someone you know may have spoken to them. The Government wants the voice of disabled people to be heard, and has funded disabled people's organisations to interview disabled people and to write a report. We expect that the organisations may send a report to the UN.

So, when the New Zealand government finally goes to the UN to speak about its report, probably in 2012, the voices of disabled people themselves will be there in the report that the disabled people's organisations are writing.

There may also be other disabled people's 'shadow' reports.

## **The Human Rights Commission report**

The Human Rights Commission is also writing a report. Their report will be ready later in 2011.

## ***Conclusion***

Keep in touch.

Thank you for reading this. If you do not want to comment now, remember there are many groups and people who will be interested in hearing what you think now and in the future. We have noted a few contacts for you below so you can keep in touch with what develops as the Government finalises an action plan for disabled people in New Zealand and reports to the UN on progress implementing the Convention.

## ***Ways to give feedback***

You can comment any time from 3 November 2010 up to 17 December 2010.

There are different ways for you to comment:

- by sending feedback through an electronic process
- by attending meetings
- by sending in a submission .

## **If you want to join the electronic feedback process**

All you need to do is go to this website: <http://haveyoursay.odi.govt.nz>

Register and then you can comment online. You can write as little or as much as you like and make comment as an individual, a family member, or an organisation.

## **If you want to attend a meeting**

We have arranged meetings with different groups of people and in different places. You are welcome to come, but you will be able to send us your views whether you get to a meeting or not.

**Wellington region** Monday 15 November, 9:30 to 11:30 am,  
Level 3, Ministry of Social Development, Bowen Street, Wellington

**Pacific disabled people** Tuesday 16 November, 9:30 to 11:30 am,  
Pataka conference room, Porirua

**Canterbury region** Thursday 18 November, 9:30 to 11:30 am  
Christchurch Netball venue, Christchurch

**Otago and Southland region** Friday 19 November, 9:30 to 11:30 am  
Otago museum, Dunedin

**Mental Health consumers** Wednesday 24 November, 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm,  
Freeman's Bay Community Hall, Auckland

**Māori disabled people** Thursday 25 November, 9:30 to 11:30 am  
Auckland Airport marae, Auckland

**Auckland region** Thursday 25 November, 1:30 to 3:30 pm  
Western Springs Garden Hall, Auckland

**Intellectually disabled people** Monday 29 November, 9:30 to 11:30 am, Level 3,  
Ministry of Social Development, Bowen Street, Wellington

### **If you want to send a submission**

Write whatever you wish to – it can be on one part of the report, respond to the questions in the booklet or give detailed comments on the full report.

The submission can come from you as an individual, your family or whānau, or an organisation of which you are part. Whatever works for you.

Write to: Attention: Gail Cooper

Office for Disability Issues

P O Box 1556

Wellington

Or email: [odi@msd.govt.nz](mailto:odi@msd.govt.nz)

### **You have up to Christmas to make your comments**

You can comment any time from 3 November 2010 up to 17 December 2010. After that, all the comments from the public discussions, and all the additional comments from government departments are collated into the final report. This report then has to go back to Cabinet for approval before being sent to the United Nations.

### **Further information**

To read all the background material on the Convention please visit: Website: [www.odi.govt.nz](http://www.odi.govt.nz)

For general queries please email: [odi@msd.govt.nz](mailto:odi@msd.govt.nz)

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