

Health Policy: Disability Issues

Disability affects one in five New Zealanders. There are many hundreds of voluntary, non-government, public and private organisations that support the sector.

National is committed to working with people with disabilities to achieve their aspirations and goals and to ensure they receive good quality services and care. We will listen to the sector to ensure their expertise and experience is involved in decision-making.

National instigated the 2007 Select Committee Inquiry into 'Disability Services and How They Might be Improved'. The findings demonstrated widespread problems in disability services. In Government National will work to implement the report's recommendations, where they are practical and affordable.

LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY

Disability services are funded through 11 different government agencies. There is a need for improved collaboration between these agencies and the services they provide, to ensure funds are not tied up in bureaucracy and are instead focused on frontline services for people with disabilities. There is also a need for strengthened advocacy services to ensure people with disabilities do not fear repercussions from making complaints.

National will:

- Support the views expressed in 'Pathways to Inclusion' and the philosophy of 'Nothing About Us Without Us' as drivers of disability policy.
 - Support the 'New Zealand Disability Strategy' and develop a pathway for implementation within the resources available, with a particular focus on choice and frontline services.
 - Require collaboration between the various Government agencies involved with disability services to ensure:
 - Better alignment and integration of disability services as a whole.
 - Reduction of unnecessary bureaucracy.
 - Improved information sharing.
 - Improved lines of accountability.
 - Require regular Cabinet-level collaboration on disability issues.
 - Improve advocacy services for people with disabilities including investigating the establishment, within the Office of the Health
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and Disability Commissioner, of a Deputy Commissioner (Disability Issues) solely dedicated to disability issues.

- Encourage an environment where people with disabilities are involved with policy decision-making.

FUNDING, CHOICE AND WORKFORCE ISSUES

CCS Disability Action has described New Zealand's disability services funding system as "low trust, over audited and over standardised".

National wants less bureaucracy in disability services. We want to assist more people with disabilities to manage their own personal support services in the way they believe best meets their needs. We seek to move to a "citizenship" funding model that provides disabled people improved choices and individualised funding where appropriate.

There are more than 30,000 carers involved in the disability sector. Many who do this work carry out incredibly challenging tasks, with great compassion, skill and commitment. However, turnover rates are up to 50% and there is a lack of professional qualification pathways. More needs to be done to support this vital workforce.

National will:

- Empower more people with disabilities to manage their own personal support services by, where appropriate, expanding the choice of individualized funding. We would also pilot a system of 'local area coordination' like that used in Western Australia. This would give disabled people increased choice over the combination of government, community and/or

voluntary services that might best meet their needs, and would be overseen by local area coordinators acting as facilitators and information providers.

- Work towards establishing multi-year funding contracts for Non Government Organisations providing disability services.
- Review auditing and monitoring of disability service providers to ensure a move away from a bureaucratic 'tick box' approach towards a focus on improving individual quality of life, as advocated by the Standards and Monitoring Services Trust.
- Investigate the development of a more user-friendly process through Needs Assessment Agencies, by introducing greater coordination of health, welfare and housing services.
- Work towards consistent national criteria for provision of disability equipment and streamlining of its distribution.
- Work with the sector to address staffing issues over time, including improved training and career pathways.
- Not force carers to belong to a union.
- Actively work with individuals, families, providers and agencies to identify service needs and improved solutions.
- Work with organisations such as the Halberg Trust and Special Olympics New Zealand to help remove barriers and promote opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in sport.
- Work to ensure improved employment and community participation opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Improve Special Education over time – see further details in our [Education Policy](#).