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Visual description: A purple Whaikaha logo with a QR scan for the NZSL name.

Briefing

Date:	10 July 2025
For:	Hon Louise Upston, Minister for Disability Issues
File reference:	REP/WHK/25/7/048
Security level:	In-confidence

Disability Strategy - draft for feedback

Purpose

This paper seeks your feedback on the draft New Zealand Disability Strategy (attached). This draft incorporates feedback from Ministers and officials following the MDLG meeting of 23 June, and feedback from your office on the vision and principles. Substantive changes to the proposed actions are summarised for your information.

Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

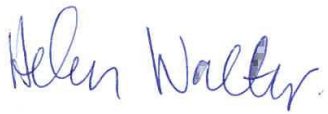
- Provide** any feedback on the attached draft NZ Disability Strategy (the Strategy) at the officials meeting on Monday 14 July 2025
- Note** that a date is being sought for the last week of July 2025 for the MDLG and the Minister of Justice to meet and approve the draft Strategy for consultation

- c) **Note** that public consultation on the draft Strategy is planned for 11 August - 28 September 2025.

Hon Louise Upston

Minister for Disability Issues

Date



Helen Walter

Group Manager Policy

10 July 2025

Actions for private secretaries:

Context

- 1 Following the discussion at the Ministerial Disability Leadership Group (MDLG) meeting on 23 June 2025 (REP/WHK/25/6/042), the Ministry has worked with other agencies to incorporate Ministerial and agency feedback. MDLG Ministers agreed to meet again to consider the final draft Strategy for public consultation.
- 2 We have developed the attached draft incorporating:
 - 2.1 Ministerial and agency feedback on the five outcome areas
 - 2.2 Feedback from your office on the draft vision and principles for the Strategy (REP/WHK/25/6/044).

A draft Disability Strategy is attached for your feedback ahead of Ministerial approval to start public consultation

- 3 The Ministry recommends that you provide any further feedback on the attached draft Strategy at your officials meeting on Monday 14 July 2025. We have worked with other agencies to reflect Ministers' feedback, and the most significant changes are outlined in the sections below on each outcome area. We have also simplified and streamlined language across the strategy.
- 4 Once we have incorporated your feedback, we will provide an updated Strategy for Ministerial approval to undertake public consultation, planned for 11 August to 28 September 2025. Approval will be needed from MDLG and the Minister of Justice. In addition, as a result of feedback on the education section, there is now one action focused on tertiary education (Education Action 5). The Ministry of Education will ensure that the Minister for Vocational Education and the Minister for Universities are briefed on this action and have an opportunity to signal their support.
- 5 Your office is seeking a further meeting of MDLG for late July to approve the Strategy. We will share this draft of the Strategy with other government agencies for final consultation ahead of the final draft being circulated for Ministerial decisions.

Education actions

- 6 We have worked closely with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to redraft the education chapter to align with the Minister of Education's policy direction and the language now being used in the education context.
- 7 Action 1 recommended that inclusive teaching theory and practice was made mandatory in teacher education and professional development. This action has been redeveloped in consultation with MoE, and now proposes provision of curriculum resources and practical guidance for teachers, to help them tailor their teaching and assessment for students with additional learning needs.
- 8 Action 2 on requirements for school boards to develop disability action plans has been redrafted to focus on including learning and achievement outcomes for

students with additional learning needs in schools' regular planning and reporting processes.

- 9 Action 4 on collecting and improving data about disabled students' enrolment and attendance has been redrafted to focus on collecting consistent data about learners with additional needs (including enrolment, attendance, achievement, and learning support efficacy) to align with MoE's approach to data collection.
- 10 s9(2)(g)(ii) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. It has been replaced with a separate action, which asks that the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) consult with disabled students' representative groups on the implementation of a mechanism to review disability action plans in tertiary education. This was formerly included as part of Action 2, but MoE and the TEC support this as a separate action, clearly focused on the tertiary education sector, and we agree.
- 11 MoE has advised us that they are confirming senior level support for the updated actions, as part of final cross-agency consultation on the full draft Strategy prior to MDLG consideration in late July. This may result in further updates to the final draft. We'll keep your office informed.

Employment actions

- 12 We have removed the action related to minimum wage exemptions (Action 7).
- 13 Other changes are minor in nature to ensure plain language that clearly express the intent of the actions. Updates to note are:
 - 13.1 Action 4 on creating best practice guidance and resources for employers is now framed as creating practical information and resources. This is to reduce any risk that voluntary guidance could be seen as creating mandatory expectations and considerations for employers.
 - 13.2 Action 2 has been redrafted and now focuses on reviewing employment supports to improve disabled people's outcomes.

Health actions

- 14 s9(2)(g)(i), s9(2)(f)(iv)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Housing actions

- 15 We have worked with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) to clarify the wording of Action 1 on definitions of accessible housing. The updated wording makes the distinction between Action 1 (definitions) and Action 5 (guidelines) clearer.
- 16 We have worked with HUD to clarify Action 3 on initiatives and incentives to increase accessible housing, in response to feedback from the Minister of Housing. This action now focusses on identifying the possible barriers to increasing the supply of accessible houses in the private market and investigating existing opportunities to remove those barriers.
- 17 We have broadened Action 4 on housing modifications to respond to feedback from MSD. The updated action is broad enough to capture current and future DSS work related to housing modifications for disabled people over the next few years.
- 18 MBIE has clarified that the delivery of Action 5, on the development of voluntary accessibility guidelines for residential dwellings, would sit with them and the Minister for Building and Construction. Minister Penk has been briefed and has agreed to this work. This action has been retained in the attached draft.
- 19 s9(2)(f)(iv)

Justice actions

- 20 We have redrafted several actions in consultation with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and justice sector agencies, as well as Oranga Tamariki (OT) and HUD. These changes are:

20.1 Action 1, on developing a safeguarding framework for residential settings, now focusses on DSS funded residential facilities and long-term detention settings (prisons and youth justice). MoJ, OT and MSD support this action.

20.2 Action 3, on social investment to reduce youth offending, has been simplified to more clearly focus on reducing the number of disabled young people entering the youth justice system.

We have tested this action with other agencies. OT is supportive and is undertaking work that aligns with the action, as part of their work on Government target 3, to reduce child and youth offending. HUD is interested in being involved in this work. MOH has work underway on early identification and assessment of FASD and neurodiversity, which may align to this action, but does not have capacity to be involved in the development of a broader plan.

20.3 Action 4 on reviewing compulsory care legislation - we have worked with MoJ to clarify that this action is focused on a planned review by the Law Commission of the Criminal Procedure (Mentally Impaired Persons) Act 2003 and references its relationship to other relevant legislation including

the Intellectual Disability (Compulsory Care and Rehabilitation) Act 2003 and Mental Health (Compulsory Assessment and Treatment) Act 1992.

20.4 Action 5 on strengthening family law and human rights protections has been tightened in consultation with MOJ to focus on 3 key pieces of legislation that MOJ can undertake to review, as work programmes allow.

20.5 Action 6 on strengthening interagency work to prevent violence against disabled people has been updated in consultation with Te Puna Aonui. It now focusses on integrating lessons from the Safeguarding Adults from Abuse approach into multi-agency responses to family violence, to strengthen outcomes for disabled people experiencing violence and abuse.

Implications, risks and issues

- 21 Completion of the final strategy is on a tight timeframe. The current timeframe allows for a 7-week consultation period from 11 August through to 28 September. If consultation starts later than mid-August, it may not be feasible to launch the Strategy as planned by 3 December 2025. We will liaise closely with your office on next steps to mitigate this risk.
- 22 The proposed actions for several outcome areas have changed substantially compared to what Working Groups initially proposed. We have been transparent with Working Group members that there would be changes needed to respond to Ministerial priorities, but some Working Group members may be critical of the final outcome area content during public consultation. To mitigate this risk, we are keeping Working Groups updated on changes, and we will share the final draft strategy with them in confidence prior to public consultation.

Engagement with government officials and the disability community

- 23 Officials from MoE, MSD, MoH, Health New Zealand, MBIE, HUD, Kāinga Ora, MoJ, and Police have participated in the Working Groups and have been consulted on the changes reflected in this draft. We have also liaised with other agencies impacted by the proposed actions, including ACC, Te Puna Aonui, and Oranga Tamariki.
- 24 The disability community has been involved in the development of the draft Strategy through the Working Groups and the workshops about the vision and principles.

Next steps

- 25 We will incorporate your feedback and provide an updated draft along with a cover report for MDLG and Ministerial approval to undertake public consultation.
- 26 The Ministry will make minor editing changes to the Strategy prior to Ministerial consideration. Following MDLG decisions, the Ministry, in consultation with your office, will:
- 26.1 finalise the Strategy to reflect Ministerial or agency feedback,

26.2 make final editorial changes to ensure the Strategy is clear and uses plain language, and commission alternate formats for public consultation.

27 Following approval by MDLG and the Minister of Justice, the key next steps for the refresh of the Strategy are:

27.1 Public consultation from 11 August to 28 September 2025 (7 weeks). We will liaise with your office on public communications and key messages before public consultation goes live.

27.2 Advice to the Minister for Disability Issues, and MDLG Ministers if required, on the outcomes of public consultation and agencies' recommendations – October 2025

27.3 Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee consideration in November 2025

27.4 Public launch of the final Strategy – 3 December 2025.

28 If you wish to meet with the Working Group Chairs following Ministerial decisions on the draft Strategy, we will work with your office to organise a meeting. This would be an opportunity to thank the chairs for their work and get their insights on engagement on the Strategy.

End

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Attachment: Draft New Zealand Disability Strategy