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Briefing

Date:	18 July 2025
For:	Hon Louise Upston, Minister for Disability Issues
File reference:	REP/WHK/25/7/050
Security level:	In confidence

Ministerial Disability Leadership Group meeting on the New Zealand Disability Strategy

Purpose

- 1 This paper seeks your agreement to circulate the attached Report and draft New Zealand Disability Strategy for the Ministerial Disability Leadership Group (MDLG) meeting on 28 July 2025.

The MDLG is meeting on 28 July to approve the draft Strategy for consultation

- 2 You are chairing the Ministerial Disability Leadership Group (MDLG) meeting on Monday 28 July 2025. The Minister of Justice has also been invited. At this meeting, the MDLG and the Minister of Justice will decide whether to approve the draft New Zealand Disability Strategy (the Strategy) for public consultation.
- 3 A report has been prepared for MDLG and the Minister of Justice which:
 - 3.1 gives an overview of the draft Strategy and the process to develop it, including the proposed vision and principles
 - 3.2 informs Ministers of implications and the consultation we've undertaken with their agencies
 - 3.3 describes next steps, including when and how public consultation will happen.
- 4 We seek your agreement to circulate this report and draft Strategy to MDLG Ministers and the Minister of Justice ahead of the next MDLG meeting.

We have consulted with agencies on the full draft Strategy

- 5 Core agencies involved in the Strategy refresh have provided further feedback on the full draft Strategy that was provided to you on 10 July (REP/WHK/25/7/048 refers). We have incorporated their feedback on the attached Strategy.
- 6 We have also informed other agencies, including Treasury and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, that approval is being sought to release the draft Strategy for public consultation.

Next steps

- 7 If you agree, your office will circulate the draft Strategy and accompanying Report to MDLG Ministers and the Minister of Justice by Tuesday 22 July.

Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| a) Agree to circulate to MDLG Ministers and the Minister of Justice: | Agree / Disagree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Report for the meeting of the Ministerial Disability Leadership Group on 28 July 2025: New Zealand Disability Strategy refresh – approval for public consultation, and</i>• <i>Draft New Zealand Disability Strategy</i> | |

Hon Louise Upston

Minister for Disability Issues

Date



Helen Walter

Group Manager Policy

18 July 2025

End

Author: Celia Painter, Policy Analyst, Policy and Insights

Responsible manager: Sohini Smith, Policy Manager, Policy and Insights



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Report for the meeting of the Ministerial Disability Leadership Group on 28 July 2025

Date:	18 July 2025
For:	Ministerial Disability Leadership Group Minister of Justice
From	The Ministry of Disabled People
Security level:	In Confidence

New Zealand Disability Strategy refresh – approval for public consultation

Purpose

- 1 This report seeks your agreement to undertake public consultation on the draft New Zealand Disability Strategy 2026-2030 in August and September 2025. The draft Strategy is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Executive Summary

- 2 On 23 June 2025, the Ministerial Disability Leadership Group (MDLG) considered the proposals from Working Groups for the five outcome areas of the refreshed New Zealand Disability Strategy (the Strategy). MDLG Ministers agreed to meet again to consider the final draft Strategy for public consultation.
- 3 The Ministry of Disabled People has worked with other agencies to incorporate Ministerial and agency feedback and has updated the proposed actions in the outcome areas (education, employment, health, housing and justice).
- 4 The full draft Strategy is attached at **Appendix 1** for your consideration and approval to start public consultation. The Strategy includes a proposed vision and principles, which were developed in consultation with the disability community.
- 5 Subject to your approval, the Ministry of Disabled People will undertake public consultation - planned for 11 August - 28 September 2025. The Minister for Disability Issues intends to seek Cabinet agreement to the final Strategy by November, for release in December 2025.

Background

- 6 The cross-agency New Zealand Disability Strategy (the Strategy) will set clear priorities for government action to improve the lives of disabled people over the

next five years. Disabled people make up 17 percent of our population and experience much poorer outcomes compared to other New Zealanders, particularly in the five outcome areas of the new Strategy - education, employment, health, housing, and justice. These outcome areas are aligned to the Government's Targets and social sector priorities.

- 7 On 11 March 2025, as part of agreeing to the refresh of the Strategy, Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee (SOU) authorised the Ministerial Disability Leadership Group and the Minister of Justice to approve the Strategy for public consultation [SOU-25-MIN-0017 refers].
- 8 Working Groups made up of officials, disability community and relevant sector representatives have developed proposals for the five outcome areas of the refreshed Strategy.

The draft NZ Disability Strategy 2026-2030 is attached for your approval to commence public consultation

- 9 On 23 June 2025, the Ministerial Disability Leadership Group (MDLG) discussed the goals, outcomes and actions recommended by Working Groups for the five outcome areas of the new Strategy.
- 10 The Ministry of Disabled People has worked with other agencies to redevelop the proposals for the Strategy's outcome areas, in response to Ministerial and agency feedback. A full draft Strategy is attached at **Appendix 1** for your consideration and approval to start public consultation.
- 11 The Ministry of Disabled People expects that further minor changes to ensure consistency and plain language will be required prior to public consultation on the Strategy. We will make these changes in consultation with the office of the Minister for Disability Issues.

The draft Strategy includes a vision and principles

- 12 The attached draft Strategy includes an overarching vision and principles to set clear expectations about what it aims to achieve, and to guide the work of government. The vision and principles were developed through 11 workshops with disability community groups and tāngata whaikaha Māori (Māori disabled).
- 13 The Ministry of Disabled People has incorporated feedback from the Minister for Disability Issues on the recommended vision and principles for the Strategy.
- 14 The proposed vision for public consultation is *'New Zealand is an accessible and equitable society for disabled people and their whānau – a place where disabled people thrive, lead, and participate in all aspects of life'*.
- 15 The proposed principles outline the key values and commitments that underpin the Strategy and support the focus of making a tangible difference in disabled people's lives. Seven principles are included for consultation.

15.1 **Accessibility**, as this is fundamental to participation and inclusion.

- 15.2 **Choice and Control**, recognising disabled people have the right to self-determination and their decisions have often been made by others.
- 15.3 **Equity, cultural inclusion and intersectionality**, acknowledging the diversity of the disability community.
- 15.4 **Human rights**, to anchor the Strategy in international human rights frameworks, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
- 15.5 **Participation and inclusion**, recognising disabled people have the right to be active participants in all aspects of life.
- 15.6 **Respect and dignity**, to emphasise that everyone deserves to be treated with respect and acknowledging that societal attitudes can present barriers.
- 15.7 **The Treaty of Waitangi (te Tiriti o Waitangi)**, to acknowledge the relationship between Māori and the Crown, recognise the unique position of Māori as tāngata whenua, and ensure partnership, participation and protection for tāngata whaikaha Māori (Māori disabled).

Officials have finalised the recommended actions for the Strategy's outcome areas

- 16 The Ministry of Disabled People has worked with other agencies to finalise the actions, ensure that they align with government priorities and are realistic to deliver within five years. We have also simplified and streamlined language across the strategy.
- 17 Each outcome area has a proposed goal, outcomes for success, case for change, and up to seven priority actions. The draft Strategy also discusses three important cross-cutting themes that have emerged from the work on the five priority outcome areas:
 - 17.1 **Accessibility** for disabled people is crucial to support participation in society. This includes access to physical spaces, services and information.
 - 17.2 The need for better quality **data** about disabled people's outcomes and access to services, to improve the evidence base and inform decisions.
 - 17.3 **Workforces** that are capable and understand disability are needed to ensure disabled people can access services on an equal basis with others.
- 18 Throughout development of the strategy, proposed actions have been assessed against the following criteria:
 - 18.1 Feasible to deliver, aligned with government priorities and affordable
 - 18.2 Tangible and specific to deliver and measure
 - 18.3 Clear links with the goals and outcomes, and good evidence base for impact on the lives of disabled people

18.4 Advancing the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti o Waitangi, including addressing equity gaps for tāngata whaikaha Māori (Māori disabled)

18.5 Value for money and cost-effective.

Public consultation is planned for August and September, and Cabinet will consider a final Strategy in November 2025

- 19 Subject to approval by Ministers, the Ministry of Disabled People is planning for a 7-week public consultation period between 11 August and 28 September 2025.
- 20 The Ministry of Disabled People will run consultation via several channels, including an accessible online feedback form, an email option, an option to send NZ Sign Language videos, as well as online and some in-person meetings. Documents will be provided in alternate formats to ensure disabled people can have their say.
- 21 Following public consultation, the Ministry of Disabled People will analyse feedback, and work with other agencies to develop final recommendations.
- 22 The Ministry of Disabled People will advise the Minister for Disability Issues on public consultation outcomes in October 2025.
- 23 The Minister for Disability Issues will seek Cabinet approval of a final Strategy in November 2025, for release on 3 December 2025 (International Day of Persons with Disabilities).
- 24 Once confirmed by Cabinet, officials will undertake detailed implementation planning to sequence and deliver the Strategy's actions by 2030.

Financial, legislative and other implications or risks

- 25 The proposals in this paper do not have direct financial implications.
- 26 There are no direct legislative implications arising from this paper. Justice Actions 4 and 5 propose to review the application and effectiveness of current legislation, but any legislative changes proposed as a result of these reviews would be subject to future Cabinet decisions and regulatory impact analysis requirements.
- 27 The timeframe for the Strategy is tight. It allows for a 7-week consultation period in August-September. If public consultation starts later than mid-August, it may not be feasible to launch the Strategy as planned by 3 December 2025.

Agency and disability community consultation

- 28 The following agencies have been consulted on the draft Strategy and participated in the outcome area Working Groups: Ministry of Health, Health New Zealand, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Kāinga Ora, Ministry of Justice and New Zealand Police. The Ministry of Disabled People has also consulted with other agencies with an interest in, or impacted by, some proposed actions: Oranga Tamariki, ACC,

Department of Corrections, and the Executive Board for the Elimination of Family Violence and Sexual Violence.

- 29 The following agencies have been informed: the Treasury, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Public Service Commission, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, Ministry of Māori Development - Te Puni Kōkiri, Ministry of Youth Development, the Office for Seniors, and Statistics NZ, and the Ministry for Ethnic Communities.
- 30 The disability community has been involved in the development of the draft Strategy through workshops to develop the vision and principles, and participation on the Working Groups for the outcome areas.

Communications

- 31 The Minister for Disability Issues will issue a press release announcing public consultation on the draft Strategy.
- 32 The Ministry of Disabled People will use a range of communication channels to seek public consultation feedback. Alternate formats will also be used so people in the disability and Deaf communities are well placed to engage with the process (e.g. Easy Read, NZ Sign Language).

Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

- a) **Approve** the draft New Zealand Disability Strategy 2026-2030 attached at **Appendix 1** for public consultation in August and September 2025
- b) **Note** that, in consultation with the office of the Minister for Disability Issues, the Ministry of Disabled People will make minor editorial changes to the Strategy prior to public consultation
- c) **Note** that the Ministry of Disabled People will report to the Minister for Disability Issues on the outcomes of public consultation in October 2025
- d) **Note** that the Minister for Disability Issues expects to seek Cabinet approval to a final Strategy in November, for release in early December 2025.

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Appendix 1: Draft New Zealand Disability Strategy for public consultation in August - September 2025