

Short report:

Summary of submissions – tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori feedback

**New Zealand
Disability Strategy
2026 - 2030**

December 2025

Introduction

The Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha (the Ministry), consulted on the draft New Zealand Disability Strategy 2026 - 2030 ('the strategy') during August and September 2025. This short report summarises feedback from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori individuals, whānau, groups, and organisations. Qualitative and quantitative feedback was gathered through an accessible feedback form, email, video, and both online and in person hui held in the community.

This short report summarises key themes and issues raised by **tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori** submitters during the consultation process.

The following reports are also available at whaikaha.govt.nz:

A more detailed summary report of submissions received from **tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori**

A more detailed summary report of submissions received from all submitters.

Strategy overall

Overall, feedback from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori focused on the need for Māori-led solutions and partnering with Māori in the implementation and monitoring of the strategy, and the importance of whānau at the centre, rather than individuals.

Submitters supported many aspects of the overall strategy but lacked confidence it will deliver meaningful change. Some felt it does not reflect what matters most to them. Submitters called for the strategy to move beyond aspiration into action, with clear implementation plans, accountability, and resourcing.

Submitters wanted to see Māori-led solutions prioritised to address inequities – many submissions referenced the compounding disadvantage that tāngata whaikaha Māori experience, including at the intersections of systemic racism and ableism.

Tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters call for increased funding and resourcing to kaupapa Māori services and supports across the strategy's priority areas. There is a strong belief in the success of te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori-informed services, information and care.

There is strong belief that engagement and partnership with Māori (including hapū and iwi) is integral in the development, implementation and monitoring of the strategy, underpinned by Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters echoed concerns from all submitters regarding inequities in supports funded by DSS compared to ACC,

with particular concern about the need for whānau navigation roles to support tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau to navigate complex systems and access services.

Other overall themes of feedback from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters included: the potential of rongoā Māori; the importance of support to access te ao Māori; and concerns about Māori data sovereignty.

The vision

The vision proposed in the draft strategy was: *New Zealand is an accessible and fair society for disabled people and their whānau, a place where disabled people thrive, lead, and take part in all aspects of life.*

Submitters generally supported the intent of the vision but wanted it strengthened to better reflect Māori aspirations and rights. Feedback called for explicit reference to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, human rights, and Māori worldviews. Some recommended naming 'tāngata whaikaha Māori' and using 'Aotearoa New Zealand' in the vision.

While the vision was seen as positive and aspirational, submitters emphasised that its success depends on clear mechanisms for implementation and accountability.

The principles

The draft strategy proposed seven principles: *Accessibility, Choice and control, Equity, cultural inclusion and intersectionality, Human rights, Participation and inclusion, Respect and dignity and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.*

All principles were considered important, but many submitters argued Te Tiriti o Waitangi should not sit as a principle but as a foundational commitment woven throughout the whole strategy. Feedback also called for principles to better reflect Māori concepts such as manaakitanga and aroha and inclusion of accountability and Māori data sovereignty principles.

There was strong support for the Enabling Good Lives principles to underpin implementation, alongside calls for clearer language and more focused principles.

Education

Submitters emphasised the importance of whānau involvement in all decisions affecting ākonga whaikaha Māori. They called for investment in kaupapa Māori education settings, culturally safe supports and workforce development.

Key concerns included inequities in learning support, long wait times for assessment, and lack of Māori-led providers. Submitters wanted inclusive

education grounded in te ao Māori and highlighted the need for teacher training in cultural safety, anti-racism, and disability awareness.

Early intervention was strongly supported, but submitters stressed that funding constraints and reliance on mainstream systems perpetuate inequity.

Employment

Feedback highlighted the need for culturally safe, Māori-led employment pathways and stronger recognition of valuable unpaid mahi, such as caregiving and community roles. Submitters called for stronger protections against discrimination, measurable targets and government leadership in modelling inclusive practices.

They also stressed the importance of mentoring, employer education, and kaupapa Māori employment initiatives. Barriers such as racism, ableism, and inaccessible recruitment processes were seen as major obstacles. Submitters wanted employment actions to reflect whānau wellbeing and collective contributions, not just paid work.

Health

Submitters described the health system as complex and inequitable, with long wait times and barriers to access. They called for Māori-led governance, kaupapa Māori health services and better recognition of holistic wellbeing.

Whānau involvement in health decisions was seen as critical. Feedback also emphasised data sovereignty concerns and Te Tiriti-based governance opportunities. Submitters wanted more Māori in leadership roles and culturally safe care embedded across the health system. Mental health and rongoā Māori were also highlighted as priorities.

Housing

Submitters called for urgent action to address the shortage of accessible housing and recommended mandatory accessibility standards. They wanted housing solutions co-designed with Māori, whānau-centred models such as papakāinga, and targeted investment in kaupapa Māori housing initiatives.

Concerns included inequities in social housing and barriers for renters. Submitters stressed the need for housing policies that uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi and reflect Māori aspirations for collective living.

Justice

Feedback on the Justice section stressed the need for systemic change, Māori-led justice solutions and safeguarding frameworks. Submitters called for early intervention, culturally responsive restorative justice and workforce training in disability and cultural competence.

They emphasised upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi and eliminating institutional racism. Submitters highlight that success should be measured by how well the system supports people before they reach crisis points, not just by punitive responses.

Conclusion

Feedback on the strategy from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori underscored the need for a strategy that is culturally grounded, action-focused and upholds Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Submitters want accountability to be strengthened by ensuring tāngata whaikaha Māori and iwi involvement in implementation and monitoring.

Submitters called for Māori-led solutions, whānau-centred approaches and sustained investment particularly for kaupapa Māori service options, to ensure the strategy delivers meaningful change for tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau.

They wanted rights to be protected, inequities for disabled people tackled at a system level, and sustained commitment and resourcing across governments to ensure the strategy delivers lasting change for all disabled people and their whānau.

Impact of submissions on the final strategy and next steps

The submissions received as part of this consultation process informed the development of the final New Zealand Disability Strategy 2026 – 2030. This includes amendments to goals, descriptions of success, cases for change, actions, and adding emphasis and explanatory information.

The submissions received will also help inform implementation and monitoring of the strategy. The Ministry will develop an implementation plan for the strategy in early 2026.

Disabled people thriving in New Zealand

