

Summary of submissions – tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori feedback

Whakarāpopototanga o ngā tāpaetanga - tāngata
whaikaha Māori, tāngata Māori hoki mō te
Rautaki Hauātanga o Aotearoa

**New Zealand
Disability Strategy
2026 - 2030**

December 2025

The Ministry would like to thank all those who took the time to submit feedback on the draft strategy.

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1 Whakarapōpototanga Mātua: Executive Summary

This report reflects feedback received from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori during public consultation on the draft New Zealand Disability Strategy (the strategy) over the period 11 August - 28 September 2025.

We received submissions from individuals, groups and organisations through a feedback form, written submissions by email, video, and a series of hui both in-person and online. Hui were either hosted by the Ministry, or in collaboration with community organisations.

Overall, feedback 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.

Māori submitters supported many of the concerns raised by other submitters and also raised some distinct points. Of submissions received from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori people and organisations, high-level overall themes included:

- A desire to see the aspirations of the strategy transformed into meaningful actions which respond to the needs of tāngata whaikaha Māori, Māori and their whānau.
- There is some hope in the overarching vision of the strategy, but low trust and confidence that it will be delivered and implemented in five years.
- Tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters want to see Māori-led solutions prioritised to address inequities – submitters reference 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 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.
- There is too much focus on the individual with the disability in the draft strategy (i.e., person-centred). Tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters wished to see whānau and communities at the centre, including hapū and iwi.
- Tāngata whaikaha 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.
- Some submissions also raised concerns about the lack of a specific action plan for tāngata whaikaha Māori.

- Other themes of feedback from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori included: the potential of rongoā Māori; the importance of support to access te ao Māori; and concerns about Māori data sovereignty.
- Quantitative data from the feedback form showed a high level of agreement with the goals, success descriptions and most actions in the strategy. There was also a high level of agreement on the proposed principles. In contrast, there was a low level of confidence that the proposed vision would lead to meaningful change, this was also the case for feedback on the strategy overall.

2 Te tikanga: Approach to strategy refresh and consultation

The refresh of the New Zealand Disability Strategy was undertaken in several phases. Firstly, targeted consultation took place with the disability community on the Vision and Principles of the strategy. Secondly, working groups made up of disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori, industry/sector experts, and officials from government agencies proposed goals, success descriptions and actions for each of the five outcome areas included in the strategy.

Following Ministerial consultation, a draft strategy was prepared for public consultation. Consultation on the draft strategy took place from 11 August to 28 September 2025. The Ministry sought feedback from the public to gauge support for aspects of the draft strategy and identify gaps and emerging priorities. Feedback was received from a wide range of stakeholder groups, individuals and whānau, including from tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau, representative roopū, and organisations.

During consultation, feedback, comments and suggestions were sought on:

- Clarity, alignment and confidence in the vision
- Importance of the principles
- Agreement with the goal, success description and actions in each outcome area
- Overall agreement with and confidence in the strategy.

Feedback was sought in a range of ways including:

- an accessible online feedback form
- a Word feedback form, which respondents could fill in and return via email or post
- a 3-minute video with videomail.io
- online and in-person hui and
- email submissions.

Many tāngata whaikaha Māori led roopū and community leaders promoted the consultation opportunities to their networks and the Ministry developed a range of resources to support consultation.

In-person, Māori-focused hui were also held in rohe with high tāngata whaikaha Māori representation and where lower engagement in previous consultations was noted. These locations were:

- Kaitāia
- Kaikohe
- Whangārei
- Tāmaki Makaurau ki te Tonga, South Auckland
- Tairāwhiti, Gisborne
- Whanganui.

2.1 Analysing the feedback from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori

After consultation ended, all feedback including submissions from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori, were analysed and used to inform changes to the final strategy. This document summarises key themes raised by tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters during the consultation period.

Analysing the data

The quantitative data used in this report comes from respondent feedback provided via the online or Word feedback forms.

Respondents were asked to answer questions using 5-point Likert scales:

- **Agreement scale** (1 = strongly disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = strongly agree) for the vision, strategy, and five outcome areas.
- **Importance scale** (1 = not at all important, 3 = neutral, 5 = very important) for the principles.

In addition, respondents were asked who they were providing feedback on behalf of (themselves, another person, a group or an organisation).

Demographic information was collected for individuals, including ethnicity, gender, age, disability status, impairment type, and carer status.

The sample of respondents in this report consists of respondents who provided feedback on behalf of themselves or another individual, and who selected at least **one** of the following:

- 'Yes' when asked '*do you identify as tāngata whaikaha Māori*'
- 'Māori' when asked '*what ethnic group do you belong to.*'

In this report, we refer to this group as '*tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori*' submitters / respondents. The data in the report are presented descriptively and only represent the views of those who completed the form.

A summary of results from the online feedback form for tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents is provided in **appendix 1**.

Analysis of written feedback

A large amount of written feedback was received through the feedback form, hui notes and email submissions. Specialist software called nVivo was used to identify themes for further analysis. It also allowed us to identify and separately extract feedback and themes from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori individuals and groups.

The objective of this Māori-focused analysis was to capture and understand the feedback received from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori, including how, and to what extent, the views of tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori compare with overall feedback on the draft strategy. This report will inform future work to implement the strategy, to support tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau to thrive, lead, and participate in all aspects of life.

The qualitative analysis provided in the following sections of this report encompass all feedback types received during consultation from tāngata whaikaha Māori, Māori groups, organisations, whānau and individuals. Direct quotations have been used to capture feedback in the submitters' own words.

Summary of tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents

Of individual respondents who completed the feedback form, 61 identified as tāngata whaikaha Māori and/or Māori. Among these:

- Most identified as tāngata whaikaha Māori (43 respondents), 38 respondents identified as disabled, and 14 respondents did not identify as tāngata whaikaha Māori or disabled.
- Most respondents were female (41), 12 were male, and a small number were another gender or preferred not to answer.
- Almost half (28 respondents) were a carer or family member of a disabled person.
- A large range of age groups were represented including rangatahi, pakeke and kaumātua (7 respondents were aged under 15 years, 5 were aged 15-29 years, 17 were aged 30-44 years, 22 were aged 45-64 years, and 6 were aged 65 years and over).
- A large range of impairment types were represented, including physical impairments (30 respondents), learning impairments (25 respondents), speech impairments (14 respondents), visual impairments (11 respondents), hearing impairments (9 respondents), and other (8 respondents).

This does not include information for submitters who provided feedback another way e.g. attended a hui, sent a video or email. It also does not include demographic information from people who submitted on behalf of a group or organisation.

3 Whakahoki kōrero mō tēnei rautaki: Feedback on overall strategy

On the strategy overall, tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori raised many of the same concerns as other submitters but also highlighted some distinct points.

3.1 Summary of data: Strategy overall

There was support for proposed actions, but lower confidence that the strategy will lead to meaningful change

While tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori showed support for many aspects of the strategy, including the proposed actions, there was low confidence that the strategy will deliver meaningful change, and some disagreement that the strategy captures what matters to disabled people and their whānau. The quantitative analysis showed that for tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents:

- 65 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the draft strategy reflects what matters most to disabled people and their whānau (70 percent for all respondents)
- 39 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the strategy will lead to meaningful change (34 percent for all respondents).

3.2 Common themes and insights: Strategy overall

There is a strong desire for the strategy to move from aspiration to action

Feedback from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori closely aligned with overall feedback that the draft strategy is too aspirational and does not acknowledge the lived realities or address the pressing needs of disabled people and their whānau.

Some tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters noted that the strategy did not reflect their values or what matters most to them, and that they struggle to see themselves represented in the draft strategy.

Some submissions conveyed a feeling of hope that the strategy may lead to positive change. One group was hopeful that there would be meaningful change that *'fully supports the wellbeing and upholds the mana of tāngata whaikaha and their whānau'*. Another group believes that *'this strategy has the potential to lead to positive change'*, but importantly, they note that the strategy's impact *'will depend on the Crown's commitment to upholding te Tiriti o Waitangi both in principle and practice'*.

Some tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters highlighted that the strategy alone would not lead to positive change without a clear pathway towards implementation and appropriate resourcing:

'Across all domains, the Strategy must move beyond aspiration into action—embedding tangata whaikaha Māori leadership, whānau voice, and Te Tiriti accountability at every level.' (Māori group submission)

This desire for action also included the need to see structural commitments and accountability embedded in the strategy, as one group submission noted:

'While the Strategy gestures toward transformation, it often lacks the structural commitments, cultural responsiveness, and relational accountability needed to truly honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the lived realities of tāngata whaikaha Māori, Pacific people with disabilities, and diverse whānau.'

Feedback also highlighted that the aspirational language of the strategy misses the mark for some communities on the ground, one comment read:

'The strategy is aspirational, but it doesn't reflect the reality of disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori. it is written at such a high strategic level that it appears to be more aimed at government agencies rather than the community, so the language used needs to be simplified and resonate with ALL people.' (feedback from respondent).

There was also criticism that the strategy is too focused on individuals, and that it could better encompass a collective worldview and emphasise the importance of whānau and communities to tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori. Some comments also criticised the lack of te reo Māori in the strategy, some wanted to see '**Aotearoa** New Zealand' in the strategy title. Submitters shared that using 'Aotearoa' and other kupu Māori in the strategy affirms the principle of partnership articulated in te Tiriti o Waitangi, supporting equitable participation from tāngata whaikaha Māori.

Tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori want Māori-led solutions

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

'Ensure the strategy moves beyond high-level acknowledgment to concrete, enforceable action. This requires embedding Māori leadership and whānau-centred approaches, committing to anti-racism and intersectional equity, strengthening funding and visibility for kaupapa

Māori services, and establishing genuine co-governance and accountability structures.’ (Māori group submission)

Submissions also recommended ring-fencing disability funding for existing and effective kaupapa Māori services, and many support Māori-led disability frameworks, growth of Māori participation in workforce, leadership, and policy-making roles across the sector.

Tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori want to see clear plans for implementation with strong lines of accountability

Tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters conveyed low trust and confidence that the strategy will be delivered and implemented in a five-year timeframe. They called for a clear plan for implementation of the strategy with accountability and transparency about the agencies who are responsible for delivering on actions.

Further, submitters highlighted the need for clear monitoring commitments to ensure the strategy leads to progress and improvements for disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau. Submitters said:

‘This is because the strategy is too bogged down with unnecessary detail and is overly complex, and lacks tangible, concrete monitoring indicators.’ (individual submission)

‘Maybe the actions could be more quantitative? Looking at targets rather than just words.’ (consultation hui notes)

A few group submissions received also raised concerns about the lack of a specific action plan for tāngata whaikaha Māori, and in turn the decision not to renew Whāia Te Ao Mārama.

Better partnership and collaboration with tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori is needed to ensure the strategy is successful

Submitters raised concerns that the draft strategy was developed without collaboration with tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau. One group submission highlights this:

‘We do not see evidence of true partnership in the proposed New Zealand Disability Strategy. Specifically, we are concerned that offers to ‘consult’ with us and other tāngata whaikaha Māori are being conflated with a commitment to work together and jointly identify policy priorities and solutions.’ (Māori group submission)

Feedback also raised concerns that some voices may be missing from the draft strategy and recommendations that certain groups should be more central in the strategy and actions. In particular, people with experience of FASD (Fetal

Alcohol Spectrum Disorder), deaf, blind, low vision people and whānau Māori with tamariki who have high needs were highlighted as missing.

Many submissions emphasised that engagement and strong partnership with tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori (including with hapū and iwi) is integral in the development, implementation and monitoring of the strategy that is underpinned by te Tiriti o Waitangi:

'Better engagement and accountability through the five-year term... there should be clear mechanisms outlined in the strategy to ensure ongoing engagement with Māori. This should include transparent feedback processes, dedicated Māori advisory panels, regular wānanga, and measurable accountability to iwi, whānau, and tāngata whaikaha Māori...'
(Māori group submission)

'Strengthen Māori leadership and partnership: While the strategy mentions iwi and hapū, there is limited detail on how iwi Maori partnership will be operationalised in governance, implementation, and monitoring.'
(Māori group submission)

Monitoring and data must work for tāngata whaikaha Māori

Submissions recommended co-designing monitoring tools with tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau to ensure accountability to te Tiriti o Waitangi and real-life whānau experiences. This point was highlighted in the submission from a Māori group:

'...success must be measured not only by system-level indicators but by the lived experiences and aspirations of tangata whaikaha and disabled communities, with transparent reporting and ongoing opportunities for whānau and community input.'

Submitters also considered it was important to ensure that data used for monitoring is disaggregated for Māori. One group expressed concerns about the lack of detail provided in the strategy about how progress for tāngata whaikaha Māori will be measured through data. The group also raised that the strategy doesn't currently acknowledge the data issues that impact tāngata whaikaha Māori including incomplete, inadequate and lack of culturally meaningful data sets.

4 Te Matakite me ngā Mātāpono: Vision and Principles

The draft strategy included a vision and principles to describe the future that disabled people want, set the course for the strategy, and guide work across government for disabled people.

4.1 Te Matakite: Vision

The proposed vision was: *'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'*.

Summary of data: Vision

Of tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents to the feedback form, 61 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the vision aligns with the values and aspirations of disabled people and 58 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the proposed vision is clear and easy to understand.

However, only 35 percent of tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident that the vision would lead to meaningful change.

Common themes and insights: Vision

Written feedback on the vision was mixed, some submitters strongly supported the vision and its focus on disabled people thriving, leading and participating in all aspects of life, while others believed the vision could be strengthened in different ways.

Some submitters considered that the vision should better encompass human rights, disability rights and Indigenous rights under te Tiriti o Waitangi, with one submitter stating; *'if Te Tiriti and the rights of disabled people were upheld, then the vision will be achieved'* (online feedback form submission).

One group submission recommended the vision could be strengthened by referencing safety – which they see as an important concept underpinning all priority areas for disabled people and their whānau. Other submitters also recommended that the vision should include social justice and safeguarding.

An iwi group submission recommended the vision should include reference to **'Aotearoa New Zealand'**, to better acknowledge Māori as tāngata whenua and demonstrate the Crown's obligation as a Treaty partner.

Several submitters suggested changes to the vision statement such as the order of words, shortening it, and giving more focus to specific aspects such as accessibility, the need for urgency, systemic change, removing systemic barriers and ableism, and ensuring dignity and choice. Some submissions called for tāngata whaikaha Māori to be named explicitly in the vision:

'A stronger vision might be: 'Disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau thrive, lead and participate in an accessible Aotearoa New Zealand.' (feedback form respondent)

Many tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters viewed the vision statement as aspirational, noting that its potential to drive meaningful change would depend on the mechanisms in place to ensure accountability for its

implementation, commitment from government, and adequate resourcing. This is a strong recurring theme from feedback both in relation to the vision and to the strategy overall.

4.2 Ngā Mātāpono: Principles

The draft strategy proposed 7 principles, which outline the key values and commitments that underpin the strategy: Accessibility, Choice and Control, Equity, Cultural inclusion and intersectionality, Human rights, Participation and inclusion, Respect and dignity, and the Treaty of Waitangi (te Tiriti o Waitangi).

Summary of data: Principles

In total, 56 tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents provided feedback on the principles through the feedback form, where they were asked to rate the importance of each principle. All principles received a high level of support. The Treaty of Waitangi (te Tiriti o Waitangi) principle had the least support, with 86 percent of tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents rating it as important or very important, this is discussed below. Each of the remaining principles were rated as important or very important by at least 95 percent of tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents.

Common themes and insights: Principles

The key themes raised in the qualitative feedback from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori are summarised below.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi does not belong as a Principle

Another prominent theme of feedback from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters related to the Treaty of Waitangi (te Tiriti o Waitangi) principle. Some submitters expressed support for its inclusion as a principle, and argued that it aligned well with whānau Māori aspirations:

'We are very supportive of Te Tiriti o Waitangi being included in the principles. It is important for tāngata whaikaha Māori that disability is understood through a te ao Māori lens, including concepts of collective identity as tāngata hauā and from whakapapa.' (Māori group submission)

In contrast, many submissions argued that te Tiriti o Waitangi did not belong in the list of principles and needed to be more prominent in the strategy. For example:

'ToW [Te Tiriti o Waitangi] is not a principle, it's a commitment to a relationship with tangata whenua. It should be at the front and threaded through this strategy.' (feedback form respondent)

Some feedback on the Treaty of Waitangi (te Tiriti o Waitangi) principle also highlighted the importance of differences between the English and Te Reo Māori text. One submission highlighted:

'I think that it's really important to be clear about the fact that Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and The Treaty are two very different documents that have two very different visions and ultimately have had one very inequitable and disabling outcome for tangata whenua.' (feedback form respondent)

Further, feedback on the Treaty of Waitangi (te Tiriti o Waitangi) principle also recommended that stronger links be made throughout the strategy, with one submitter wanting to see clearer links to how te Tiriti principles have been woven through the strategy.

Opportunity for te ao Māori framing of existing principles

One submitter discussed how the principle of Respect and Dignity aligned with te ao Māori concepts of manaakitanga and aroha. They suggested strengthening it by incorporating this framing in the strategy, highlighting the need for a culture of care and lifting each other up while confronting negative attitudes, stereotypes and discrimination that disabled people face.

Suggested additional principles

A strong theme of written feedback on the principles was the desire to see the strategy embrace the Enabling Good Lives (EGL) principles.

Some submitters also identified additional principles they believed should be included. A Māori group submission suggested the inclusion of 'Accountability' as a principle, to reinforce the need for measurable actions, regular reporting, and responsiveness to feedback.

Submitters suggested adding a principle about data, reflecting that methods of data collection and analysis should be co-designed with disabled people and with recognition of Māori data sovereignty, noting that:

'Data is included in cross-cutting themes, but co-design and data sovereignty are important to include as principles.' (Māori group submission)

5 He whakahoki kōrero mō ngā wāhanga mātua: Feedback on priority outcome areas

The sections that follow share themes from feedback on the five priority outcome areas for the strategy: education, employment, health, housing and

justice. Submitters were asked to provide feedback on the proposed goal, description of success, and actions for each priority outcome area.

5.1 He mātauranga: Education

Summary of data: Education

We received a total of 317 feedback form responses on the education outcome area, 48 of these were from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori. Of these, 79 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed goal for education and 67 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the description of success.

There was mixed support for the proposed education actions, with the proportion of tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with each action ranging from 60 percent to 89 percent. This includes 68 percent who agreed or strongly agreed with action 7,¹ which also featured prominently in the written feedback.

Common themes and insights: Education

Submitters shared their thoughts beyond the goal and actions and spoke of their system-wide experiences. Feedback recognises the importance of identity, belonging, and equitable access to quality education for ākonga whaikaha Māori.

Whānau are central to all decisions relating to ākonga whaikaha Māori

The overarching theme is the importance of the Ministry of Education collaborating with whānau in all decisions that affect learning for ākonga whaikaha Māori across all levels and places of learning. This collaborative approach builds on responsibilities to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The quote below was submitted by a parent and suggests the importance of systemwide education capability building to increase equitable outcomes for all learners including tamariki whaikaha Māori:

‘I have used Māori traditional knowledge and moved to have my son attend kura to support his social challenges with his autism. He has thrived ... My son was predetermined in outcomes at (his) old school. You could see it in expressions, hear it in sentence structures. The lack of trust meant my son wouldn’t engage - he could sense. Also they didn’t get to see his amazing skills or realise he heard every conversation.’ (feedback form respondent)

¹ Education action 7 - ‘Support kaupapa Māori settings, within the existing Education budget, to access the resources, knowledge and capability to deliver high quality kaupapa Māori educational programmes that meet the needs of disabled ākonga (students) in a kaupapa Māori setting.’

Other themes identified from the submissions about Education are summarised below.

Equity for ākonga whaikaha Māori is not achievable within current funding levels

In education, the gaps for Māori begin early. Many submitters expressed disappointment about action 7 which had a caveat of funding within the existing Education budget. Another submission states:

'this constraint... appears discriminatory and cannot be based on data and evidence as there is none that shows tāngata whaikaha Māori need for these supports in kaupapa Māori settings is even close to being met.'
(Māori group submission)

To close the gaps, submitters suggested there needs to be tangible investment into Māori education settings, developed with tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori. This should include a workforce development plan, a multi-year investment plan to build capability and capacity, and a commitment to embedding te ao Māori tikanga, and kaupapa Māori principles across all education environments and not just kura kaupapa Māori.

Inclusive education is a valuable goal for ākonga whaikaha Māori and ākonga Māori

Submitters suggested the strategy should emphasise culturally safe disability supports in all settings with a clear commitment to bicultural practice and te ao Māori integration for ākonga whaikaha Māori. Feedback from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori stated that supports should affirm Māori identity and not expect ākonga whaikaha Māori to “fit into” Pākehā norms of disability or schooling. Ākonga whaikaha Māori may face compounded disadvantage, including disability, poverty and rural isolation. These further magnify inequity.

Submissions suggested that continued investment in the current special education system, including resource teachers, learning support coordinators, trauma informed schools, Positive Behaviour for Learning and Kahui Ako, has not yielded effective results. The increased reliance on assessments and diagnoses based on the medical model is also raised as a concern. Submitters want new processes that enable development of inclusive education environments where ākonga whaikaha Māori feel safe, culturally valued, and are provided with reasonable accommodations based on universal design for learning to ensure access to quality education. Schooling should provide all whānau with a sense of belonging and safety within the school community.

All teachers need ongoing training that must include cultural safety, anti-racism, and understanding of te Tiriti o Waitangi so they can effectively support ākonga whaikaha Māori and their whānau

Submitters stated that it is critical that disability education, cultural understanding, and intersectional inclusion is included in all initial teacher training and ongoing funded professional development. How to teach with compassion and empathy also needs to be actively taught.

Submitters suggested actions that would support all teachers to achieve successful outcomes for all ākonga whaikaha Māori include a co-designed approach to curricular planning, and whānau-led Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that reflect cultural, relational, and emotional goals, not just academic metrics.

Ākonga whaikaha Māori are particularly marginalised by a learning support system that is not fit for purpose

Tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters told us that the learning support system is not working for them and there needs to be greater oversight to ensure it works better for ākonga whaikaha Māori. Some said that the Strategy does not give any level of assurance that these issues will be addressed.

Suggestions for change include making whānau aware of what help is available for their tamaiti; schools providing clear answers to whānau questions; ensuring accessible information on school and Ministry of Education websites; and a commitment to including whānau as co-designers of education pathways for their tamariki.

Māori providers of assessment and diagnosis are needed to address systemic inequities

Reducing wait times for assessment and diagnosis is highlighted as important and is needed at all ages, including disabled adults engaging in higher learning. Long wait times may mean delays in disabled learners getting the support they need to learn. However, submitters urge caution as outsourcing may not address systemic inequities or uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations unless Māori-led providers are prioritised and resourced. Genuine engagement with Māori is identified as critical when outsourcing to private providers or non-government organisations. For many submitters, growing and strengthening the public sector is a priority.

More investment is needed for kaupapa Māori early intervention services

Investment in early intervention services is welcomed as early intervention is seen as critical for equitable outcomes, especially for tamariki Māori who often experience delays in accessing support. Feedback highlights that investment must ensure culturally appropriate, whānau-led approaches and equitable access for ākonga whaikaha Māori. Submitters emphasised targeted investment is needed for kaupapa Māori early intervention services, including additional parallel investment in training and retention of specialists.

Some schooling options are driven by a system that is not meeting the needs of ākonga whaikaha Māori

There was ambiguity on the meaning of action 4². Some submitters suggested an increase in charter schools offering varied and tailored learning environments could be part of a solution to better meet the needs of ākonga whaikaha Māori. However, many submitters stated that any alternatives to mainstream community schooling would be acceptable only if they were available in rural settings and reflected Māori values and aspirations.

Some submitters were concerned that adding classrooms to schools that are not inherently inclusive would create spaces where ākonga are withdrawn and further excluded within the school environment. Submitters wanted to see plans for the closure of residential specialist schools, replacing these schools with wrap-around supports for tāngata whaikaha Māori so that ākonga can learn and succeed close to their whānau.

It is important that learning support systems work for all ākonga whaikaha Māori regardless of where they live and learn

Not all ākonga whaikaha Māori are in kaupapa Māori settings. It is important to submitters that all learning support systems, data gathering processes, staff skillsets and learning environments have the capacity to meet the needs of all Māori learners:

'It becomes inequitable and doubly disabling if a tamaiti whaikaha and their whānau are having to overcome barriers in English medium schools because there aren't people available to meet their cultural needs as Māori.... The idea of inclusive education being a core competency is a good one. Still, in practice, teacher training, resourcing, support, culture of schooling, assessment systems, and curriculum rigidity are entrenched and hard to shift.' (feedback form respondent)

5.2 Te whiwhinga mahi: Employment

Summary of data: Employment

We received 296 survey responses on the employment outcome area overall, including 42 responses from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori.

Among tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents, 70 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed goal for employment, and 80 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the success description.

² Education action 4 - 'Invest funding in additional learning support classrooms to provide choice for parents'.

There was support for all employment actions, with the proportions of tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with each action ranging from 70 percent to 80 percent.

Common themes and insights: Employment

Equal career opportunities, employment and self-employment are fundamental to ensuring economic security, dignity, self-determination and choice for tāngata whaikaha Māori, Māori and their whānau.

Written feedback stressed that employment goals must go beyond paid work to reflect the full spectrum of contributions disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori make to whānau, communities and society. To achieve this, improving existing supports and developing targeted, culturally inclusive employment support for employers, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau have been identified as critical enablers.

All types of employment and community contribution carry mana, and financial security means dignity and self-determination

Similar to the overall feedback, tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori highlighted that the proposed employment actions centred the perspective of an 'able-disabled person'. They noted that some disabled people may never enter paid employment. Submitters considered that the employment section of the strategy lacks a framework for recognising lifelong care, community contributions, or the inherent dignity of individuals without paid employment.

Some submitters suggested that '*employment*' should be replaced with '*engaged in community*' – to capture other ways disabled people contribute to society and communities meaningfully. This can ensure that the meaningful work disabled people are doing at home, in whānau, businesses or marae is acknowledged.

Current laws and policies undermine the proposed employment goal

Tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori expressed scepticism about the strategy's implementation, and the impact of the proposed employment goal. They emphasised that actions should be clearly assigned to relevant government agencies to ensure accountability and effective delivery.

Submitters were concerned about the lack of laws and policies that safeguard employment rights of disabled people. They considered that existing laws, such as 90-day trials and minimum wage exemptions contradict the intent and actions set out in the employment area of the strategy. This is because these laws do not ensure dignity, fair pay, or allow tāngata whaikaha Māori to be assessed fairly on their capability, especially if they require accommodations and have intermittent health needs.

Government leadership and incentives are key to advancing employment goals.

Tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori feedback aligns with overall feedback which suggested the inclusion of measurable employment targets; incentivising the employment sector and employers, procurement eligibility, and inclusive employment benchmarks. Tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori suggest that employment opportunities embodying te Tiriti o Waitangi can foster cultural safety, where employees are able to bring their full selves to work and bring out their best.

Submitters called for government to act as a model of an inclusive employer and also to support disabled entrepreneurs and whānau-led, kaupapa Māori and Pacific social and private enterprises.

Systemic barriers and societal attitudes limit employment opportunities for tāngata whaikaha Māori

Tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters emphasised the need to shift employer attitudes and raise awareness that disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori can make valuable contributions to society. This echoes overall feedback from all submissions.

Submitters noted that there are significant and compounding barriers for tāngata whaikaha Māori as they can face ableism and racism in employment and these need to be addressed.

'...to fully realise equity and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the goal should explicitly acknowledge the need for culturally safe, Māori-led employment pathways, and the removal of systemic barriers that disproportionately affect tāngata whaikaha'. (Māori group submission)

Tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters also wanted communities to be proud of the contribution of disabled workers.

Employers need to be supported and enabled to develop inclusive and culturally safe practices and employment/workplace conditions

Submitters suggested there should be stronger networks of information for employers to understand access needs for specific types of impairments (such as access needs for employees who are deaf, blind, wheelchair users, neurodivergent, etc.).

Submitters also recommended that success stories (action 6³) should highlight Māori leadership and achievements.

³ Employment action 6 - 'Implement a targeted, ongoing awareness campaign publicising guidance and resources for employers and employees on accessibility and inclusion, relevant data and reports, and highlighting the positive impact disabled people have had on workplaces'.

There was emphasis that employer resources (action 4⁴) should include guidance on te Tiriti o Waitangi, cultural safety, and the unique needs and strengths of Māori employees.

Employment and transition support is crucial for disabled people and whānau, and transition support is crucial in enabling employment and professional development

Submitters highlighted that action 2⁵ (the review of employment support) is just the first step and suggested that further improvement and expansion of existing employment support, and development of new supports should follow. Tāngata whaikaha Māori were seen as crucial in informing these reviews.

'Reviews must also specifically include tāngata whaikaha Māori voices and providers. It is important that employment supports are culturally safe, responsive to whānau needs and address systemic barriers faced by Māori in employment'. (Māori group submission)

Submitters also made suggestions to:

- provide funding to support regional employment navigators with lived experience;
- develop accessible multi-lingual employment platforms;
- develop intersectional initiatives that fund Māori- and Pacific-led employment programs centred on disabled people and their whānau;
- offer targeted support for Rainbow disabled communities, disabled migrants, and people with psychosocial disabilities; and
- embed intersectionality across all employment policy design and evaluation processes.

Better supports for transitions and employment pathways are needed

Submissions stressed the importance of supported employment pathways in all sectors and at all levels of employment. Submitters would like to see further focus on vocational training and action on 'early careers pathways or development'.

Submitters also supported peer advocacy networks which can challenge discrimination and promote rights-based employment pathways. For tāngata whaikaha Māori, it is important that mentorship programs are Māori-led with Māori mentors and are grounded in kaupapa Māori approaches.

⁴ Employment action 4 - 'Partner with disabled people and support providers to create a centralised, accessible repository of practical information and resources for employers and employer networks so they can support disabled people throughout the employment lifecycle and share knowledge and success stories.

⁵ Employment action 2 - 'Review specialist employment supports to improve employment outcomes, in consultation with disabled people'.

Some submissions highlighted gaps in data and research.

One group noted that the impacts of ableism and racism have not been well researched nor documented. Similarly, one hui highlighted gaps in data and suggested that the government should collect employment data from private entities as well as the public sector and gather information from employers — not solely data from disabled individuals.

5.3 Te hauora: Health

Summary of data: Health

We received 349 survey responses on the health outcome area, including 52 from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori. Of these, 82 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed goal for health and 75 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the description of success.

There was strong support for the proposed health actions, with the proportions of tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with each action ranging from 80 percent to 94 percent.

Common themes and insights: Health

Tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submissions have similar themes to submissions from all respondents, but some areas are more prominent, including references to the below.

- Health as a holistic concept - health and wellbeing do not stand-alone.
- The health system is complex and inaccessible and there are unmet health needs due to wait times.
- The importance of support from whānau and self-determination in healthcare decisions.
- The need for a Māori-led governance model, and improvements to ensure data sovereignty.
- The opportunity for kaupapa Māori and Pacific-led health initiatives to provide choice and cultural supports.

There was support for the strategy actions and aspirations. However, as with broader feedback, there is significant doubt about whether the strategy will lead to positive change and uplift and enable tāngata whaikaha Māori to live better lives.

'The goal could be strengthened by explicitly referencing the need for culturally safe, Māori-led health pathways and the removal of systemic barriers that disproportionately affect Māori.' (Māori group submission)

Currently the health system is complex, difficult to engage with and inequitable

Many submissions from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori described personal accounts of poor experience and the inaccessibility of systems due to administrative difficulties, cultural or communication barriers, and barriers to physical or digital access.

'All medical information needs to be given in an understanding language for Maori and Pacific disabled people.' (individual submission - email)

'The most vulnerable people in our society who will suffer the most amidst this NZ health sector crisis are tāngata whaikaha Māori. Will all the good intentions in this strategy address this?' (individual submission)

Submitters described the inequities in the health pathways of disabled people supported by ACC, Disability Support Services (DSS-MSD) and with long-term chronic health conditions. There is strong support for a culturally supported, unified system where type or cause of impairment does not result in inequitable supports.

Submitters described the need for whānau navigation roles to support tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau to navigate complex systems and access services. A Māori health group submission suggested expanding access to assistive technologies and supports, including funding a wider range of assistive technologies, communication supports and sensory tools. Submitters also commented on the importance of human rights and decision-making in healthcare:

'We are encouraged by actions to embed self-determination and supported decision-making, especially for those with complex communication needs.' (individual submission)

Submitters also noted the need for more tāngata whaikaha Māori in key roles, for example:

'... we need more Whānau Haua - Disabled peoples at the front, and across key decision making roles to inform, lead and shape the hauora sector/services/spaces and workforce development fields.' (feedback form respondent)

Health and wellbeing are broader than described by the draft strategy and the te ao Māori view is essential

Tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submissions described health as something that encompasses a huge part of human life, and that health and wellbeing is influenced by and comprised of many facets including physical health. Te ao Māori worldviews and approaches must be recognised and embraced, as described by two submitters:

'People need to be educated on the level of relevance one's cultural world view will be foundational in health and wellbeing - for Māori in times of pressure the worldview they most identify with despite what you know of them day to day will be dominant ...' (feedback form respondent)

'It would be [good] to see the implementation of Māori perspectives on health and rongoā Māori. The ideologies of Māori regarding health are based around holistic wellness which theoretically will work for all cultures.' (feedback form respondent)

One submitter considered mental health should also be included:

'... providing safer and better access to mental health as through my own personal experiences there is not enough suitable accessible mental health services throughout NZ leading disabled people to be turned away when support is needed.' (feedback form respondent)

The role of whānau is essential and the key to enabling good health outcomes

Many submissions called for whānau and support people/carers of tāngata whaikaha Māori and disabled people in health settings to be explicitly mentioned in the strategy. Whānau provide critical supports for many disabled people, especially those with high or complex needs:

'I suggest this [sentence] says - 'Disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori are recognised in the context of family, whānau and community and can involve whānau in their health in the ways they want.' (feedback form respondent)

However, there was also concern about whether the strategy actions would be sufficient to strengthen the role of whānau:

'While te ora o te whānau is referenced, there's no mechanism to embed whānau in health decision making' (Māori group submission)

There are often gaps when rangatahi transition to adult health services

Several submissions described challenges about continuity of care, especially when a young disabled person is interacting with multiple health services. People raised concerns about transitions from paediatric to adult health support, including lack of navigation or coordination support once young people have made the transition.

Data sovereignty requires a Māori-led governance model, and all data needs to be treated carefully

Several submissions expressed concern that data can be used for harm and that there need to be safeguards and clearly defined purposes for the use of any health and demographic information. Some submitters noted that identifying as tangata whaikaha Māori or as a disabled person is the choice of an individual and being labelled on a nationwide system was not endorsed. There is also concern about whether current disability measurement tools mean that not all disabled people are counted.

Submitters recommended embedding Māori data sovereignty principles of whakapapa, rangatiratanga, kaitiakitanga and introducing te Tiriti-based data governance models.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi must underpin all work

The importance of te Tiriti o Waitangi within the health priority outcome area was commented on by several submitters, who highlighted the need for next steps and implementation of the strategy to be underpinned by te Tiriti:

'More needs to be done around this area to involve more input by talking and involving more with Tāngata Whaikaha Māori and their whanau and iwi within the decision making and upholding the Treaty of Waitangi – Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles and values of all Māori within the disabled community as there has been a lack of consultation from Government around this matter.' (consultation hui notes)

5.4 Te whai whare: Housing

Summary of data: Housing

We received 305 survey responses on the housing outcome area overall, including 44 from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori. Housing was also discussed in several consultation hui held by the Ministry and community groups, including targeted hui for tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau.

Of tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents to the feedback form, 79 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed goal and 86 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the description of success.

There was generally good support for the housing actions, with the proportions of tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with each action ranging from 80 percent to 88 percent.

Action 3⁶ on identifying barriers to increasing the supply of affordable, accessible houses and possible ways to remove those barriers received the most support,

⁶ Housing action 3 - 'Identify possible barriers to increasing supply of accessible houses in the private market and investigate opportunities to remove those barriers. Understanding barriers to the supply of accessible housing will help target potential interventions to improve supply.'

with 88 percent of tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with it. The action receiving the least support was action 6⁷ on voluntary accessibility guidelines for private dwellings, with 80 percent of tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori agreeing or strongly agreeing. This action also received the least support among respondents generally (73 percent).

Despite the high levels of support for the housing goal, success description and actions from quantitative responses, the qualitative responses from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori demonstrated a range of concerns and suggestions. These responses are further detailed below.

Common themes and insights: Housing

Written feedback on housing included clear calls for housing actions to be strengthened and better tailored to the lives of tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau.

'Wouldn't it be awesome if there as a whole of life approach to consider our whānau hua's housing needs over their time... inclusive of whānau, and whānau spaces.' (feedback from respondent)

There was strong alignment between the key themes identified by Māori submitters and overall feedback. However, some issues received greater emphasis from Māori submitters. These included recommendations for co-designing housing policies and actions with Māori, upholding te Tiriti o Waitangi in the housing system, focusing on whānau-centred housing models, and the importance of targeted solutions for Māori.

Several other themes were similar between Māori and all submissions. These include: highlighting the urgent need for more accessible housing; calling for mandatory accessibility standards for private dwellings; emphasising the importance of supported living arrangements; improving the social housing system; ensuring that modifications are widely available; and greater support for renters and making it easier for them to navigate the housing system. Like all submissions, tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters called for the actions to be further strengthened.

Housing solutions should be designed and implemented with Māori, iwi and hapū

Submitters highlighted the need to better involve tāngata whaikaha Māori, their whānau, and iwi in decision making. One Māori group submission called for *'culturally grounded housing solutions co-designed with whānau, hapū, and iwi.'* Co-designing housing policy would reflect diverse needs and aspirations. They

⁷ Housing action 6 - 'Develop voluntary national guidelines on accessibility for residential dwellings.'

also noted the need for funding for kaupapa Māori housing research and innovation led by tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau collectives.

Another Māori group submission highlighted that the data matching systems referenced in action 2 should be co-designed with Māori⁸. This would be key to ensuring that tāngata whaikaha Māori are not disadvantaged by generic allocation systems. On action 5⁹, the group noted:

'Data must be disaggregated by ethnicity and region and used to drive investment in kaupapa Māori housing solutions. Māori must be involved in data governance and interpretation.'

Te Tiriti o Waitangi must be upheld in housing solutions

One Māori group submission noted that te Tiriti o Waitangi must be embedded in all housing strategies, with Māori governance and decision-making roles. The group emphasised the importance of the housing sector being trained in cultural safety, anti-racism, and te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations. Another submitter noted that more must be done in housing to uphold te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The Strategy should focus more on whānau-centred housing models

'Whānau housing models – such as papakāinga and intergenerational living – are absent, and emergency housing is rarely disability-responsive.' (Māori group submission)

This group submission also recommended funding collective housing initiatives that reflect Māori and Pacific intergenerational living preferences. Others noted that there is a lot of growth in Māori housing and papakāinga, and there is an opportunity to ensure that the needs of whānau hauā are accounted for in this area.

There should be targeted housing solutions for Māori

One submission recommended more work should be done to provide housing for tāngata whaikaha Māori and non-disabled Māori due to Māori having, on average, greater health issues than non-Māori. One group recommended that action 3 should include investigating barriers that are specific to Māori, including financing, racism and discrimination, and that solutions should support Māori-led housing solutions.

There is an urgent need for more affordable and accessible housing

⁸ Housing action 2 - 'Improve data matching between disabled people and social housing properties with accessible features that meet their needs and ensure disabled people and their whānau are prioritised to accessible properties.'

⁹ Housing action 5 - 'Gather annual data on the housing-related needs of disabled people and compare this to what is being built in each region, to influence the housing market to build and make available more accessible housing.'

'Tāngata whaikaha Māori are unable to count on accessible, healthy housing that – for example – supports multi-generational living.' (Māori group submission)

Submitters emphasised the lack of affordable, accessible homes in Aotearoa. One group submitted that the housing market has no incentive to do better in a capitalist system due to disabled people having, on average, lower incomes. They recommended that the strategy must move beyond data collection and voluntary guidelines to counter this lack of action.

Several submitters called for the government to introduce incentives to increase access to accessible housing. Suggestions for incentives covered public, private, and emergency housing, and both rented and owner-occupied homes. Others noted that there are stark regional differences in access to suitable housing, particularly outside of main centres.

There should be mandatory standards for building accessible housing

Many submitters – both individuals and organisations – recommended that voluntary guidelines on accessibility should be replaced with mandatory standards. Some also highlighted the need for monitoring the uptake of accessibility guidelines by housing providers. One group considered that while voluntary guidelines may be acceptable for easily modified accessibility features, there should be mandatory standards for features which are not easily altered – such as door width.

There should be greater emphasis on choice and control, and support needs

One respondent noted that while accessibility is critical, it receives more emphasis in the strategy than other, equally important, areas such as independence and supported living arrangements. Some submitters placed greater emphasis on financial barriers over accessibility. Others noted that homes should be able to accommodate live-in caregivers and disabled whānau. Submitters also recommended that housing solutions should be tailored to tamariki with higher or more complex needs and their carers.

Improvements are needed in social housing to ensure better outcomes

Several submitters recommended that social housing should be more accessible, and that the Government should commit to increasing the supply of social housing and building more – if not all – to meet universal design and accessibility standards. Submitters highlighted the importance of accessibility and universal design in ensuring that homes remain suitable for people throughout the different stages of their lives. One respondent noted the need for Community Housing Providers to help address gaps left in the private housing market.

Housing modifications must be widely available

A few Māori group submissions highlighted that while action 4¹⁰ commits to reviewing the housing modification system, it does not commit to any further work beyond the review. One group noted this is also true of action 3. Submitters considered that agency responsibility and urgent action are needed to reduce delays for tāngata whaikaha and whānau accessing suitable housing.

There should be better support for renters and navigating the housing system

Submitters highlighted the difficulty of navigating the housing system and housing supports. A Māori group submission recommended:

- that disabled renters should be supported with more access to housing modifications in private rentals, and protected against eviction and discrimination;
- establishing a national register of accessible rental properties with transparent criteria;
- funding peer-led housing advocacy services to challenge discrimination and support tenancy rights; and
- creating accessible, multi-lingual housing information platforms which are tailored to disabled communities.

Another group submission recommended that long-term rentals or leasehold schemes should be targeted to tāngata whaikaha.

5.5 Te pūnaha whakawā: Justice

Summary of data: Justice

We received 237 survey responses on the justice outcome area, including 39 from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori.

Of these, 84 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed goal, and 86 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the description of success.

There was strong support for all justice actions, with the proportions of tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with each action ranging from 83 percent to 94 percent.

Common themes and insights: Justice

The justice outcome area should focus on structural transformation

Feedback from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters suggested that the justice outcome area lacks focus on systemic issues and the need for structural transformation. Submitters raised concerns about the absence of commitment to

¹⁰ Housing action 4 - 'Review and explore ways to improve the housing modification system'

te Tiriti o Waitangi and called for Māori-led justice solutions grounded in tikanga, whakapapa, and mana motuhake.

At the same time, submitters expressed hope and a forward-looking perspective, emphasising the need for rights-based, culturally grounded, and co-designed solutions.

The inequities tāngata whaikaha Māori face are not adequately reflected

One group submission considered that the data presented in the case for change misrepresents the extent of inequity faced by tāngata whaikaha Māori, particularly due to inappropriate comparisons, which likely underestimate the scale of injustice.

Upskilling the workforce should be approached holistically

Submitters emphasised the need to shift societal values away from individualistic norms toward a collective worldview. They called for educating the justice workforce on disability, cultural competence, and the impact of societal attitudes (including political rhetoric) on frontline service delivery.

They also raised concerns that the justice goals fail to adequately recognise the importance of cultural competence alongside disability and Deaf competence. This was seen as contributing to the ongoing invisibilisation of tāngata whaikaha Māori.

A safeguarding framework is urgently needed

Like other submitters, tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters felt that a safeguarding framework is urgently needed, along with multiple accessible pathways for reporting abuse, discrimination, and rights violations. They also raised concerns similar to those of other submitters about conflating justice and safeguarding, with a suggestion that safeguarding would be better placed within the vision, principles or as a cross-cutting theme.

While other submitters emphasised the need to protect people with specific disabilities (such as people who are neurodivergent), tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters emphasised the need for co-designed, tikanga-based safeguarding protocols and independent oversight.

There needs to be better support for tāngata whaikaha Māori me ō rātou whānau long before they interact with the justice system

Like other submitters, tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters also strongly supported a focus on early intervention.

Submitters felt that success should be measured by how well the system supports disabled people long before they reach crisis points. They also stressed the importance of ensuring that restorative justice options are both available and culturally responsive.

There were strong calls for the justice system to move away from fast-tracking people into punitive pathways, such as bootcamps, and to instead understand the root causes of offending behaviour through a health and wellbeing lens.

'We are too quick to fast track troublesome people away rather than understand why they are the way they are and look to a health option rather than a judicial persecution. If we are not protected by our justice system then we are open to being potentially victimised by a system that refuses to learn or care about those it is there to supposedly protect.'
(feedback form respondent)

A holistic approach to accessibility should be considered

While accessibility was raised by tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters through calls for accessible reporting and pathways, they did not go into detail about specific access barriers (such as physical, digital, or informational barriers) to the same extent as other submitters. They were also less focused on specific disabilities and less critical of the language and framing of actions.

From a Māori worldview, the concept of disability is holistic and collective, which may explain why accessibility was discussed in broader terms. Submitters may not consider specific access barriers as the most meaningful or relevant way to discuss accessibility.

Overall, feedback from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters was largely aligned with that of other submitters. However, tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori submitters placed particular emphasis on the need for greater involvement of tāngata whaikaha Māori, their whānau, and iwi in decision-making. They also highlighted the importance of upholding te Tiriti o Waitangi and eliminating institutional racism in the justice system through culturally sustaining initiatives.

6 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.

The final strategy document incorporates changes in response to public feedback, including feedback from tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori. 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.

Appendix 1 Summary of feedback form data

Mean scores and percentages of tāngata whaikaha Māori and Māori respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with questions from the feedback form

Questions	Mean score (1-5 scale)	Percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed
Vision		
Clear and easy to understand	3.43	58%
Aligns with values and aspirations of disabled people	3.56	61%
Confident it will lead to meaningful change	3.02	35%
Strategy overall		
Reflects what matters most to disabled people	3.67	65%
Confident will lead to meaningful change	3.22	39%
Principles¹¹		
Accessibility	4.73	96%
Choice and control	4.65	95%
Equity, cultural inclusion and intersectionality	4.56	89%
Human rights	4.68	95%
Participation and inclusion	4.64	96%
Respect and dignity	4.75	98%
The Treaty of Waitangi (te Tiriti o Waitangi)	4.41	86%

¹¹ Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each principle on a scale from 1 - not at all important to 5 - very important. The percentages in the table represent those who responded 'important' or 'very important' to each principle

Questions	Mean score (1-5 scale)	Percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed
Education		
Education goal	4.19	79%
Education description of success	3.98	67%
Action 1 – Expand early intervention services	4.04	74%
Action 2 – Reduce wait times for learning support	3.72	60%
Action 3 – Make it easier to access learning support system	4.47	89%
Action 4 – Invest in more specialist school satellite classrooms	4.15	74%
Action 5 – Improve teacher training	4.26	83%
Action 6 – Improve school reporting	4.04	72%
Action 7 – Support kaupapa Māori settings	3.98	68%
Action 8 – Identify disabled learners in education data	4.13	79%
Action 9 – Implement tertiary disability action plans	4.04	72%
Employment		
Employment goal	4.03	70%
Employment description of success	4.15	80%
Action 1 – Information on job pathways	4.03	70%
Action 2 – Review employment supports	4.07	73%
Action 3 – Develop mentorship programs	4.24	78%
Action 4 – Information and resources for employers	4.02	71%
Action 5 – Improve accessibility and inclusion in workplaces	4.28	80%
Action 6 – Implement awareness campaign	4.20	75%

Questions	Mean score (1-5 scale)	Percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed
Health		
Health goal	4.26	82%
Health description of success	4.14	75%
Action 1 – Review and improve policies and practices	4.53	90%
Action 2 – Build workforce capability	4.60	94%
Action 3 – Build disabled people capability for health roles	4.39	84%
Action 4 – Identify disabled people in national health data	4.26	80%
Action 5 – Record individual accessibility needs	4.38	86%
Housing		
Housing goal	4.28	79%
Housing description of success	4.56	86%
Action 1 – Develop definitions of accessible homes	4.40	83%
Action 2 – Data to better meet social housing needs	4.43	86%
Action 3 – Identify private market barriers	4.50	88%
Action 4 – Review housing modification system	4.40	86%
Action 5 – Annual data on housing-related needs	4.36	81%
Action 6 – Develop national residential accessibility guidelines	4.33	80%



Disabled people thriving in New Zealand