# The Whaikaha logo with a tohu design with the words Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People in a light contrast colour against a purple background.

# Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha Strategic Intentions

# Tauākī Whakamaunga Atu

# 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2028

# Introduction | Tīmatanga kōrero

## Our history

The Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha began on 1 July 2022. It was hosted by the Ministry of Social Development.

During 2024, the Government carried out a review on the Ministry. Following the review, the Disability Support Services part of the Ministry was moved into the Ministry of Social Development.

On 1 December 2024, the Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha moved from being part of the Ministry of Social Development to being ‘standalone’. Cabinet agreed the standalone Ministry would work to drive change with disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau.

## Our strategic framework

Our vision is ‘Disabled people thriving in New Zealand’.

Our purpose is ‘Driving real and meaningful change with disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau’.

We strive to improve the lives of disabled people, especially in these areas:

* Accessibility
* Education
* Employment
* Health
* Housing
* Justice

Our work is guided by Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We promote the Enabling Good Lives principles and approach, and we draw on the lived experience of disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori.

## Our context

About one in six New Zealanders is disabled. This is about 851,000 people, or 17 percent of New Zealanders.

Disabled people have diverse lives. There is no one way of defining ‘disability’, and not everyone likes the word ‘disability’. The Ministry works with many groups who prefer different words, including Deaf people and Turi Māori.

In 2023, Stats NZ did a Household Disability Survey that asked disabled people about their lives.

The survey found that:

* some people had higher rates of disability than the national rate – for example, Māori, people in Northland, and LGBTQIA+ people.
* disability rates increased with age, so older people had a higher rate of disability than younger people.

The survey also found that disabled people are still facing barriers, and these barriers are worse for tāngata whaikaha Māori. For example, disabled people are doing less well in employment, health, life satisfaction and income adequacy compared with non-disabled people.

Carers for disabled people are also facing barriers. The survey found that carers of disabled children felt stressed more than carers of non-disabled children. Carers of disabled children are less likely to have a paid job or enough spare time compared with carers of non-disabled children. Some found it hard to get support to look after their child.

New Zealand has made a commitment to disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Ministry’s job is to help put this commitment into action, driving real and meaningful change.

## Our functions

The Ministry is the steward for disability issues. This means we work within the government and outside the government to help disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau thrive.

As system stewards, the Ministry has five functions.

### System leadership and societal change

We show leadership across government, supporting other government agencies to make sure their work helps disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori thrive. We do this by leading work including the New Zealand Disability Strategy and the New Zealand Sign Language Strategy.

We promote change for disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau by working with the community, business community, local government, iwi and hapū Māori. We raise the profile of disabled people and their success.

### Strategic policy

We work with government agencies in areas like health and education, to make sure they are thinking about the interests of disabled people, and the different needs disabled people have at different times in their lives. We help these agencies see gaps in the services they provide.

### System level monitoring

We look at disabled people’s life outcomes, and how well the government is improving those outcomes. We use data to help show whether government services are effective for disabled people.

### Disability information and advice

We are working to become a ‘hub’ that brings together information and advice about disability into one place. This includes the Alternate Formats service, which has recently moved into the Ministry.

### Relationship building with disabled communities

We build the relationship between disabled people and the government. This includes helping disabled people contribute to key areas of government, and helping government grow its capability to work with disabled people.

# Our strategic direction | Tō mātou ahunga rautaki

The Ministry has six ‘strategic outcomes’. These are areas that are important to disabled people’s lives, and we use them to guide our work.

## Accessibility

**All disabled people can access the places, services and information they need. They can fully participate in their communities with ease and dignity.**

Being able to access places, services and information allows disabled people to participate fully in all aspects of life. However, disabled people face barriers, including going to places like the doctor, supermarket, dairy or park.

The Ministry has an Accessibility Work Programme that includes the Alternate Formats service, and work with the Ministry of Transport to address transport barriers for disabled people.

## Education

**Disabled people have a positive experience of schooling and tertiary education, and are supported to achieve good education outcomes.**

A good education is key to disabled people having good lives, but there are gaps between the experiences of disabled learners and non-disabled learners. Addressing these gaps will give disabled people more options and help them achieve their potential.

The Ministry works with government education agencies in areas like getting rid of barriers for disabled learners to enroll and attend school, building teachers’ skills, supports for disabled learners, and collecting better data about disabled learners.

## Employment

**Disabled people can access employment in an equal way to others. They can find inclusive jobs and get equal pay for work of equal value.**

Employment has a lot of positives for disabled people, including financial benefits, choice and control. Society also benefits from disabled people’s employment. However, disabled people are less likely to have jobs, and tend to earn less money, than non-disabled people.

The Ministry is working with the Public Service Commission to create employment opportunities in the public service for disabled people. We work with government employment agencies on areas that help improve employment for disabled people.

## Health

**Disabled people have the highest possible standards of health and wellbeing.**

Health is one of the strongest factors helping people have good lives. Health is affected by many aspects of life, as well as by health and disability services. Disabled people have worse health outcomes compared to non-disabled people, including more emergency visits, more time in hospital, and more unmet health needs.

The Ministry partners with other agencies and disabled people to help improve health services, so they are inclusive, accessible, and meet the diverse needs of disabled people.

## Housing

**All disabled people have access to, and can make choices about, suitable housing.**

Having secure and suitable housing protects the health and wellbeing of disabled people and helps them have independence. However, disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to lack housing or live in damp and mouldy housing.

The Ministry works with housing agencies to help achieve better housing outcomes for disabled people. This includes work to reduce the number of disabled people in emergency housing.

## Justice

**Disabled people can access and participate in justice services that respond to their needs.**

Having contact with justice services can have a significant impact on a person’s life. It is important for disabled people’s wellbeing to have their rights protected, be treated fairly under the law, and be able to get legal help.

The Ministry is supporting government justice agencies with New Zealand’s response to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which includes recommendations about the justice system. We also work with these agencies to make sure justice services are accessible, with reasonable accommodations.

# How we operate as an organisation | Ā mātou mahi hei rōpū

## Our work programme

The Ministry is leading a strategic work programme with seven major projects.

### The New Zealand Disability Strategy refresh

The New Zealand Disability Strategy guides the work of government agencies on disability issues. The Ministry is refreshing the current New Zealand Disability Strategy, which ends in 2026.

The refreshed strategy will cover five years. It will include actions in these areas: education, employment, health, housing and justice. The refreshed New Zealand Disability Strategy will be launched in late 2025.

### The New Zealand Sign Language Strategy refresh

The New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) Strategy promotes the use of NZSL by Deaf people, Turi Māori and other NZSL users. It also guides the work of government agencies.

The Ministry is working with the NZSL Board to refresh the last NZSL Strategy, which ended in 2023. The refreshed Strategy will be launched in late 2025.

### United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities response

New Zealand is signed up the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which has made recommendations for New Zealand to improve the lives of disabled people. Different government agencies have a role in meeting the recommendations, and the Ministry coordinates those agencies.

### Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care response

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care was set up in 2018. It investigated abuse and neglect of people in the care of the State and faith-based institutions. The Commission released a final report in July 2024.

The Ministry is working with the Crown Response Office and other government agencies to improve the care safety system. This will improve the safety of disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori who are in care.

### Accessibility Work Programme

New Zealand has a responsibility to improve accessibility for disabled people, as part of our commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Ministry’s Accessibility Work Programme will take opportunities to improve physical and digital accessibility for disabled people. This will involve identifying and sharing good approaches, and raising awareness to help people and society do the right thing.

### Creating employment opportunities in the public service

The Ministry is working with the Public Service Commission to help create employment opportunities in the public service for disabled people.

This work began in 2024 and will continue to 2026. It will help showcase the talent of disabled people, celebrate success stories, and help the public service make sure workplaces are accessible. The work will also include launching an internship for disabled people.

### Reshaping our Ministry

Since becoming a standalone department, we have been working to reshape our Ministry, so we have the right people, structure and processes to deliver our work. This work will continue until all our improvements are in place and fit for purpose.

## How we work with others

The Ministry works with others to drive real and meaningful change for disabled people, tāngata whaikaha and their whānau. We try to work in a values-based way, to create trust and build the capability of groups we work with.

Our main relationships are:

* Disability groups and communities
* Māori-Crown relationships
* Central and local government
* Business and industry
* The wider community

## Our values

### The Ministry’s three enduring values are:

* Mana taurite | Equity drives us
* Mana kaha | We strengthen and support
* Mana tīhura | We explore and learn

### Our team

We have about 80 staff members, and about 62 percent of our staff are disabled. We are committed to providing reasonable accommodations for our staff.

Te reo Māori, tikanga, whakataukī and karakia are woven into our daily life as a Ministry.

### Our leaders are:

* Paula Tesoriero, Chief Executive
* Ginny Baddeley, Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Enablement
* Ben O’Meara, Deputy Chief Executive, Policy and Insights
* Rebecca Elvy, Deputy Chief Executive, Outreach and Innovation
* Ronelle Baker, Kauhautū – Chief Advisor Māori