

Imagine Better Message to Government: Fully fund disability support; don't try to save money by cutting essentials!

Disability advocacy organisation Imagine Better has a blunt message for the Government and Ministry of Health about the funds needed for disabled people:

- Properly funded Disability Support Services are essential for disabled people to lead good lives.
- Trying to cut spending on these services by reducing the support people get is an erosion of human rights, will dramatically worsen the lives of thousands of Kiwis, and will lead to increased government spending on things like mental health, lost productivity, and residential care.
- The system is underfunded and this needs to be addressed in the next Budget not by taking precious and life-saving resources from disabled people and their families.

These message come after revelations that proposed reductions to Disability Support Services were put forward to as a solution to a \$90 million dollar deficit in the Ministry of Health budget. Despite these being officially stalled, recent media coverage has shown that existing support is barely adequate and the disability community is concerned about budget cuts by stealth on a case by case basis.

Disability Support has been chronically underfunded for many years. Work commissioned by the New Zealand Disability Network indicates a 12% funding gap. The proposals would have seen access to this support reduced still further, reducing with it the ability of disabled people to live their lives.

The support people receive is used for a range of fundamental activities such as household support, meal preparation and showering. Access to adequate Disability Support is critical to the wellbeing of disabled people and their whanau.

Imagine Better CE, Tony Paine says join voices in the Disability community calling for Disability Support to be treated in a way that recognises its real value in disabled people's lives. This means assurance of no reductions to individual's support where their needs have not reduced. It also means an increase in the next budget in line with the actual need of the community.

The organisation are concerned that what may be seen as minor reductions at a bureaucratic level would have major impacts on disabled people's well-being and that of their families. Any shortfalls in support are likely to be covered by family members and place undue strain on familial relationships. Equally, a failure to invest in disabled people's needs now is likely to have repercussions for their mental and physical health which will become costs elsewhere in the health system.

Imagine Better better CE Tony Paine says:

Imagine Better await a Budget announcement that reflects the Government's stated commitment to wellbeing. This must account for the wellbeing of disabled people and their whanau which the organisation will continue to advocate for.

ENDS

Imagine Better is a collective of disability activists, advocates and allies. The collective works to be a nationally influential thought leader and advocacy organisation supporting the growth and effectiveness of the disability rights, visibility and justice movement.