



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**

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Wahine O Aotearoa

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**Submission to the Chief Electoral Office on the Discussion Document:
Services to Voters with Disabilities**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 42 nationally organised societies. It has 34 branches throughout the country attended by representatives of those societies. The Council's function is to serve women, the family and the community at local, national and international levels through research, study, discussion and action.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on this consultation paper. NCWNZ has for many years had policy concerning people with disabilities being able to access all services and roles that are required of them. NCWNZ believes they should be given every opportunity to be totally involved in civic life, and that all barriers that may inhibit the achievement of this should be removed. Therefore we are pleased to see this subject being addressed and hope to see the objective met.

Access to polling places

1. The use of the internationally recognized logo for disability instead of the asterisk is an idea that could make these polling places more recognisable.
2. Include very clear instructions on how to access these polling places in the packs sent out to everyone who is eligible to vote. Also make it a special point in the advertising that goes out via the media in the weeks before the election.
3. Ensure that it is not just the building that is accessible but that suitable parking is also available close to the booth. Make sure that the polling places that are open prior to polling day are accessible as it may be more convenient to many disabled people to cast an early vote, especially if it could be done in a familiar building.

Assistance to Voter with Disabilities

1. A large print sample could be of assistance to sight impaired as it could help them ascertain the order of the candidates and parties on the voting form.
2. A separate area would be appreciated by those we spoke with who need assistance to vote to ensure their privacy.
3. A Braille template could be an advantage for those sight-impaired voters who prefer not to have assistance. Many sight-impaired people carry their own magnifiers with them, so the template and the large print sample would cover this area.
4. Many people who need assistance prefer to have someone they know to rely on to fill out their voting form and under the Act are entitled to have such a person, but we have heard of instances where there were difficulties persuading Electoral Staff of this right.





Services to voters with disabilities who have difficulty getting to a polling place

1. We feel that premises used by disabled service providers would be ideal for pre polling day booths. People could then avail themselves of this when they attend such a place during the week.
2. NCW NZ itself does not own premises, but some of the many societies that form our council may, and we would encourage them to offer these if they were suitable.
3. We realise that some voters feel uncomfortable having a party representative receive their vote. Therefore we feel that there needs to be electoral staff able to visit private homes where needed.
4. Again people who are unable to go to a polling place need to know that they can vote in their own home. (This could affect people with just a short-term inability to leave their home.) Media advertising and information in the packs could explain how to access this. Of course the information would also be on the 0800 number.

Staff Training

We agree there has to be a greater awareness of the rights of those with disabilities who wish to participate in the Election. These people would much rather not have assistance but because of their circumstances they have to have assistance. The staff need to be trained so that there are no extra problems for these people to face.

This training would also apply to those manning the telephones on the 0800 number.

Provision of Information

Our members believe the best way to distribute the information is through the many existing groups for people with disabilities who can then use their newsletters, web sites etc. Pamphlets in the voter packs in large print allowing people to know how to access the information they require is also important.

This same information should appear in the media with tele-text on the television promotions.

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National President

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