Disability Issues

Labour believes in full participation for people with disabilities to support them to fulfil their aspirations

Labour recognises that current law is not delivering the level of change New Zealanders with disabilities deserve and we can do much better

Labour believes in an accessible New Zealand and will introduce mandatory and enforceable standards for essential areas of life such as social housing and transport

HIGHLIGHTS

Labour will:
- Ensure implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Consult in partnership with disabled people and their families around areas of policy shortfall and inadequacy.

Introduction

One in four New Zealanders identify as having a disability. Labour believes that a truly inclusive society is one in which disabled people have meaningful lives within their communities based on respect and dignity, have their diversity recognised, and their human rights supported. Disabled people should be involved in every aspect of decision-making about their lives, with support where needed, from families. This is reflected in the motto ‘Nothing about us without us’.

New Zealand has been recognised for its leadership on disability issues internationally. However, there is still a long way to go before all disabled people enjoy a fully inclusive society that values them and enhances their participation.

Each disabled person must be recognised as an individual person with their own set of needs and aspirations – no two people with a disability are the same. We believe that disabled people should
be supported and encouraged to follow their aspirations, make their own choices, and to lead a quality life.

**Employment**

Labour recognises that disability should not be a barrier to work, and people with disabilities should be empowered to work if they can. Labour is committed to understanding and responding to people’s individual circumstances.

**Labour will**

- Support the provision of vocational services available to people with disabilities
- Encourage employers to adopt equal opportunity hiring practices, and ensure this includes persons with disabilities
- Focus on increasing the proportion of disabled people who are supported into paid work through increasing employer support and education
- Support employers to ensure workplaces are suitable for people with disabilities
- Recognise volunteer work as an important contribution to society and as a pathway to paid employment in some cases
- Maintain the availability of existing governmental support (Supported Living Payment and the Disability Allowance) to people with disabilities.

**Education**

We believe that all children have the right to be included in the general education system and to receive the individual support they require. Ensuring that disabled children can receive quality education in an inclusive environment is a priority for Labour.

The physical presence of disabled children in schools does not ensure their participation. For participation to be meaningful and lead to successful educational outcomes, schools must value diversity and provide a supportive learning environment and skilled teaching for all children.

**Labour will**

- Ensure that all children are welcome, included, and learning to their full potential at their local school
- Comprehensively review the entire system of special needs support so that resources are allocated based on individual needs assessment for each child, rather than each child having to meet the criteria imposed by the system
- Increase the funding pool for individual student support as resources allow
- Ensure the continued provision of special residential schools for the students with the highest needs
- Ensure that teachers and support staff receive training and professional development and information on inclusive education and disability awareness to ensure the active participation and learning of all children
- Work to ensure that all students and teachers have access to New Zealand Sign Language at school
• Strengthen the vocational services available at secondary schools and ensure this transitional service is used to develop pathways for students with disabilities upon their leaving school
• Review funding to physical and occupation therapy in schools.
• Promote the implementation of ‘Kia Orite: Achieving Equality: the New Zealand Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education’ in New Zealand tertiary institutions

Labour recognises the vital role that support staff plays in schools. We also recognise the financial pressures that schools face and that this has often led to support staff not receiving the level of remuneration they are rightly entitled to.

**Labour will** address these issues by working with the sector to:
• Develop a centrally-funded system for the salaries of school support staff
• Work towards the implementation of a Living Wage for all school support staff, over time and as funding permits.

**Health**

People with disabilities can have unique health needs which may relate to their disability. The National Advisory Committee on Health and Disability developed a report in 2003 entitled ‘To Have An Ordinary Life’, which recognises that the basic health needs of many disabled people are neglected.

**Labour will:***
• Implement the recommendations of the National Advisory Committee on Health and Disability research document: To Have an Ordinary Life
• Consider providing free annual health checks for people with an intellectual disability
• Support and work to implement the Carers’ Strategy
• Ensure that those on the autism spectrum are supported through disability support services funding
• Set new, more flexible criteria so that so that 250,000 more New Zealanders with long-term health conditions can get the extra support they need
• Work with sector experts to develop and fund a more comprehensive and coordinated long-term conditions programme. Our goal is to ensure equitable and affordable access no matter where people live or are enrolled.
• Support and implement the provisions of the New Zealand Disability Strategy.
• Further address the disparities in funding support services between ACC funded and non ACC funded disabled people.
• Ensure that health services accommodate the needs of deaf and blind people.
• Establish a specific fund for medicines to treat rare diseases, controlled by the Ministry of Health, funded from PHARMAC’s baselines.
• Repeal the family caregivers legislation which barred access to Human Rights redress and will ensure all family caregivers can provide and be paid for assessed care for their disabled adult family member.
Arts and culture

Labour supports every New Zealander being enabled to participate in our cultural life. We are committed to funding local cultural institutions at a level that allows this participation. We believe that participation in culture is not just about being a reader or an audience member.

We believe it is important to promote pathways to participation for disabled people to assist in developing their creative talents and cultural enterprise.

Labour values the contribution, and has encouraged the participation, of artists with disabilities and those with mental health conditions through funding for organisations such as Arts Access Aotearoa and support for a number of ‘outsider art’ programmes. We believe it is important to promote pathways for disabled people to assist in developing their creative talents and cultural enterprise.

Labour will:
- Work across Toi Aotearoa (Creative New Zealand), local community services, Ministry of Social Development and local government bodies to develop further opportunities for disabled people and people with mental health conditions to undertake creative initiatives
- Review the criteria for access to Creative New Zealand funding to ensure that grassroots creators of talent are not marginalised by an overly complex fund application system
- Look into ways to prevent people with disabilities having to pay for carers at events
- Promote accessible technologies to managers so people can better access arts and culture venues.

Broadcasting

New Zealand’s rate of public broadcasting captioning is available at less than 25% over a 24 hour period. This is well behind other countries such as Australia (85%) or the United States and United Kingdom (100%). This low level of captioning is a barrier to community integration for people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and may be considered to breach Article 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Labour will:
- Improve the level of captioning of television programmes, working towards agreed targets, to meet the needs of New Zealanders who are Deaf or hearing impaired.
Justice and Society

Navigating the justice system can pose many problems for persons with disabilities. These include inaccessible court buildings and the fact that many court, justice, and police personnel do not have a good understanding of disability issues. This in turn can mean that accessing justice, or ensuring that persons with disabilities can effectively exercise their rights, is often very difficult.

**Labour will:**
- Consider barriers to disabled people accessing the justice system and work with relevant agencies to minimise these barriers
- Invest in technology appropriate for people who are visually impaired or blind or Deaf, including captioning and audio visual and mobile phones, compatible with voice software, to enhance participation in our democracy.

In 2001, Labour launched the New Zealand Disability Strategy which created the base for more collaborative initiatives. The 2008 review of the Strategy showed that initial steps towards a more inclusive society had worked. Since then New Zealand has signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that commits us to ensuring full human rights and fundamental freedoms for all disabled people on an equal basis with others and without discrimination.

**Labour will:**
- Ensure implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Consult in partnership with disabled people around areas of policy shortfall and inadequacy.

Labour will also bring New Zealand in line with countries such as the United States and Canada which have legislation to protect the rights of people with disabilities

- Consider sponsoring the Accessibility for New Zealanders Act, draft legislation developed by the Access Alliance, with a view to passing it into New Zealand law.

Housing

Labour is determined to support quality living in the community for disabled people. This includes increasing opportunities to access comfortable and accessible housing. A long-term focus on increased building accessibility will also meet the needs of an ageing population.

**Labour will:**
- Demonstrate leadership in building “Lifetime Design” homes by ensuring that, where possible, new state houses are built in accordance with the disability sector approved Lifemark standard for accessible, adaptable lifetime design
- Encourage the design of accessible homes to ensure that a higher proportion of the housing stock is suitable to meet the needs of all people
- Ensure that Housing New Zealand, as part of its acquisition and maintenance programme, invests in the retrofitting of state houses so that they are accessible.
Transport

Many people with disabilities are reliant on public transport to get to work and training, to attend appointments, and to partake in community and social activities. Article 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises the right to accessible transport while Article 20 of the Convention recognises the right to personal mobility and seeks Government action to take effective measures to facilitate this at an affordable cost.

Labour will:

- Ensure that public transport networks, including buses and trains, are accessible and that transport providers train their staff in disability awareness
- Implement the recommendations of the Human Rights Commission report ‘The Accessible Journey’
- Investigate how best to ensure mobility taxis are available 24/7 in major cities on demand
- Promote the use of modern technology and good communications on bus and train services, for example voice and visual screen announcements of stops and of changes to the service.