# Plain language summary – United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Progressing the Government Response to Concluding Observations

## Summary and recommendations

Disclaimer: This summary is produced by Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People.

New Zealand must report to the United Nations on its progress towards implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the UN Committee) is an independent international committee of 18 experts on disability rights and policy. It examined New Zealand’s progress on the UNCRPD in 2022 and made 63 recommendations. These recommendations are also called Concluding Observations.

This summary is about decisions made by Cabinet on these recommendations. Cabinet agreed to:

* Take actions to implement 30 of the UN Committee’s recommendations with actions to implement them where Government work is already underway or planned.
* Consider 17 other recommendations as part of work to refresh the New Zealand Disability Strategy in 2025.
* Add the recommendations and the actions being taken to the online Human Rights Monitor tool. This will make it easier for people to know if these actions are being taken, and what the actions are.

There are 16 recommendations where no action is planned right now. Of these, seven of the recommendations were not going to being worked on by the last Government, as they did not agree with them.

The Minister for Disability Issues will report back to Cabinet by December 2025 on progress made on the recommendations.

More information, including the full paper and appendices one and two are available at [www.whaikaha.govt.nz/about-us/corporate-publications/cabinet-papers](http://www.whaikaha.govt.nz/about-us/corporate-publications/cabinet-papers), including in accessible formats.

## Plain language summary - Appendix Two: Progressing the Government response to the UNCRPD Concluding Observations

These are the actions that government agencies are taking to respond to the United Nations Committee’s recommendations:

* The Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) helps people who had medical procedures done to them against their will (without their consent). ACC can give people access to support, recovery services, and sometimes money (compensation).
* The Ministry for Culture and Heritage is looking at ways to improve how media works in New Zealand.
* The Ministry of Disabled People (Whaikaha) is responsible for acting on a lot of the recommendations the United Nations Committee made.
  + Whaikaha has given the Disabled People’s Organisations Coalition (the DPO Coalition) more money so it can consult with disabled people and represent them in important matters.
  + Whaikaha is creating a plan to improve accessibility in New Zealand. Whaikaha will work with other government agencies who can help improve accessibility.
  + There is money set aside to help stop family violence against disabled people. This money helps projects called VisAble, People for Us, and Supporting Change. These projects help disabled people affected by violence. Whaikaha also supports action plans run by other agencies which focus on supporting victims and stopping violence before it happens.
  + Whaikaha is planning how to make the Accessibility Charter stronger. The Accessibility Charter is a document that leaders of government organisations can sign to show they are committed to providing information in an accessible way.
  + The New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) Board is working on growing the number of NZSL interpreters, including trilingual interpreters. Trilingual interpreters interpret between NZSL, Te Reo Māori and English.
  + Whaikaha is responsible for the Disability Four-point plan. The goal of this plan is to help make the Public Service a better place for disabled people to work. It focuses on things like improving accessibility, and reducing inequality such as the difference in pay between disabled and non-disabled people. The Ministry of Social Development is also working to improve job opportunities for disabled people.
  + The Independent Monitoring Mechanism (IMM) is made up of the Ombudsman, the Human Rights Commission and the DPO Coalition. The IMM monitors how well New Zealand is following the UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). Whaikaha is looking at ways to make its partnership with the IMM stronger.
  + Whaikaha has also given the DPO Coalition more funding to help its work on the IMM.
* The Ministry of Education is improving disabled people’s access to education with learning supports that are aimed at students with extra learning needs. The Ministry of Education is also making sure that more learning supports are available for students in Māori language settings who have extra learning needs. The Government will think about opportunities to improve education for disabled people as part of the next Disability Strategy.
* The Ministry of Health is responsible for acting on many recommendations.
  + The Ministry of Health is making sure that disabled people who are terminally ill and want to go through the Assisted Dying process can do so safely. The Ministry of Health is working to protect disabled people, collect good data, and monitor disabled people’s experiences and outcomes in healthcare.
  + The Ministry of Health is focusing on actions which will make New Zealand more prepared for future pandemics. The Ministry is using two key reports to help its work. These reports are from the IMM about disability rights in a pandemic, and the Royal Commission of Inquiry into COVID-19.
  + There is a new Mental Health Bill. The Bill is currently going through the processes needed for it to become a law. The Ministry of Health will collect and respond to people’s feedback on the Bill, including on whether it protects the rights of disabled people.
  + The Ministry of Health is focusing on making sure that intersex children do not have unneeded medical procedures and surgeries. Health New Zealand is leading this work. They are creating support and information resources for intersex children and young people.
  + The Ministry of Health will work to improve the health system for disabled people over the next 3 years. The Ministry is particularly focused on improving outcomes for Māori disabled people, Pacific disabled people, and intellectually disabled people. It also wants to improve data, and protect disabled people in the health system.
* When people have conditions which affect their decision-making, such as dementia, brain injuries, and learning disabilities, they are sometimes treated differently under the law. The Law Commission is reviewing this law, and will release a report on it in 2025. The Ministry of Justice will then give the Minister of Justice advice on the report and what should happen next. In the meantime, Whaikaha is creating a website with practical resources to support disabled people and others to make their own decisions on the things that affect them.
* The Ministry of Justice is working with Community Law Centres to help disabled people on low incomes to get access to legal services.
* The Ministry of Social Development has set up a Taskforce to find ways to make disability support services better. The Taskforce will consider three of the United Nations Committee’s recommendations. The three recommendations are to:
  1. Help disabled people choose where they live and who they live with.
  2. Make sure that people with foetal alcohol syndrome disorder, chronic fatigue syndrome and other chronic and rare conditions can use disability support services and other supports.
  3. Make a plan so people do not need to live in residential institutions, including group homes and residential specialist schools. Also, provide community supports to help disabled people to live independently in the community.
* The Ministry of Social Development will support disabled people to get jobs. MSD is focusing on getting people into work quickly.
* The Ministry for Women will work with Whaikaha to make sure government agencies consider the needs of disabled women and girls.
* The Ministry of Women and Whaikaha will also work on making sure organisations that represent disabled women and girls are involved in government processes.
* Oranga Tamariki is helping their staff to make sure that disabled children, including Māori disabled children, can say what they think about decisions that affect them as much as other children.
* Oranga Tamariki created a disability strategy which focuses on data, research, and evaluation. This will help Oranga Tamariki to support disabled children and young people better in a range of areas, including education, care and protection, and youth justice.
* In 2020, the Ombudsman recommended changes to make sure that newborn babies and children are not taken away from disabled parents just because the parent is disabled. Oranga Tamariki accepted all the recommendations and is now acting on them.
* Te Puni Kōkiri and Whaikaha will work together to make sure that information which is important to Māori disabled people is available in accessible formats.

There are 17 more recommendations from the United Nations Committee which are complex and cover a range of different topics. These recommendations are going to be considered as part of creating the next New Zealand Disability Strategy. The disability community will be involved in making the next Disability Strategy.

There are 16 recommendations which do not have actions planned at this time. However, this can change in the future as other work moves forward.