



ccs
disability action
Including all people

TE HUNGA HAUĀ MAURI MŌ NGĀ TĀNGATA KATOĀ

Local Government (Community Well-being) Amendment Bill

25 May 2018

About us

CCS Disability Action is a community organisation that has since 1935, supported disabled people and advocated for their inclusion in the community. As of May 31 2017, we were providing support to around 4,000 children, young people and adults through our 17 branches, which operate from Northland to Invercargill. Our support focuses on breaking down barriers to participation. We receive a mixture of government and private funding.

Accessibility and universal design is a major focus for our organisation. CCS Disability Action runs the Mobility Parking Scheme. We have a nationwide network of access coordinators who work with local governments as well as the building and transport industries. We are rolling out a new accessibility app called Access Aware. We are a member of the Access Alliance, which is pushing for a new Access Law. We founded Lifemark, which is helping to increase the number of accessible houses. We have developed ways to collect data on accessibility, including the Measuring Accessible Journeys project and the Street Accessibility Audits.

What do we mean by access

Access means people's ability to use environments, services, and products on an equal basis with others. An access barrier is anything that stops someone from using an environment, service or product.

Access barriers can be:

- Physical (such as poor kerb cuts, no ramp access to buildings, building design failing to take into account how people with vision impairments navigate and products not being designed for people with impaired dexterity).
- Attitudinal (such as people with learning disabilities being discouraged or prevented from trying a service because of beliefs they cannot use the service).
- Informational (such as failing to provide information in Sign Language, Braille and Easy-Read).

We support the restoring of the four wellbeing criteria

Local government has a vital role in addressing many of the access barriers disabled people face in the community. We submitted on the Local Government Act Amendment Bill 2012 that removed the four wellbeing criteria from the purposes of local government. We opposed the removal of these criteria and support their restoration.

The social, economic, cultural and environmental well-beings encourage councils to consider the needs of all their citizens, rather than focus narrowly just on efficient or cost effective infrastructure and services. A narrow focus on efficiency can result in councils cutting corners with access. This can have significant effects on the wellbeing of disabled people.

In the 2013 Disability Survey, disabled people compared to non-disabled people:

- were more likely to have no qualification and less likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher;
- had higher unemployment and lower labour force participation;
- were more likely to have lower incomes and live in lower-income households.
- were less likely to report a high level of life satisfaction;
- were less likely to feel safe at home or in their neighbourhood;
- were twice as likely to be the victim of violent crime;
- were more likely to report being discriminated against and more likely to be discriminated against more than three times over a twelve-month period;

A lack of accessible infrastructure, buildings and services, including transport, plays a role in isolating people from their community and preventing them from accessing work, social, and educational opportunities.

If councils are required to take into account the impact of their decisions on people's wellbeing, this should hopefully lead to fewer corners being cut on access and ultimately more accessible infrastructure, buildings and services.

Planning for the future

We also support the reference to sustainable development and to future wellbeing as well as the definition of good-quality including the need to meet anticipated future circumstances. Planning for future needs is vital considering that we have an ageing population and this is likely to increase the number of people with access needs.

The number of people over 65 has a 90 percent probability of increasing to 1.28–1.37 million in 2041 and to 1.58–1.81 million in 2068 (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Disability rates increase with age. In the 2013 Disability Survey people over 65 had an estimated disability rate of 59%, compared to 21% of people aged 15 to 64 (Statistics New Zealand, 2014, p. 3).

The effects of the ageing population will impact more on provincial and rural New Zealand (Bascand, 2012, pp. 15-16). In provincial and rural areas infrastructure, services and facilities are often less equipped to meet access needs. It is vital that councils are encouraged to take a longer term view and invest in accessible infrastructure now before their rates-base starts to decline.

Expanding the wellbeing criteria to other Acts of Parliament

While restoring the wellbeing criteria is likely to be beneficial, local government is bound by other Acts of Parliament when carrying out their duties, including the Building Act 2004 and the Land Transport Management Act 2003. Parliament should investigate putting the wellbeing criteria into related Acts to allow a more consistent approach from local government and agencies that work closely with local government, such as the New Zealand Transport Agency.

Bibliography

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