

No. 1, 2004

April 2004

Making Parliamentary Processes Accessible

The introduction to Parliament later this year of the New Zealand Sign Language Bill will herald new ways of making parliamentary processes accessible, particularly for Deaf people.

The Minister for Disability Issues Ruth Dyson is working with the Clerk of the House to ensure both Parliament and the select committee process are accessible to people who want to participate in the hearing and select committee processes of the Bill.

Once the Bill is introduced, it will be announced via Minister Ruth Dyson's Participate list

and on the Office website. It will also be translated into plain language.

At the first reading of the Bill there will be interpreters in the Parliamentary debating chamber with the Members of Parliament. There will also be closed circuit TV projecting the interpreters onto large TV screens in the public gallery. This will be the first time interpreters have been used for the reading of a bill in Parliament.

The Clerk's Office is also exploring other ways of making Parliament accessible including web-casting, captions and plain language options.

Once the Bill has been read, it is expected to be referred to a select committee. In preparation for this, Committee staff will receive awareness training on accessibility issues for Deaf people. In addition to written submissions, submissions to the Bill will be accepted on video in New Zealand Sign Language.

Two documents about what a select committee is and how to make submissions to a select committee are currently being translated into plain language. They will be available from Parliament and via the Office website, and will be useful for many disabled New Zealanders.

Draft Text For UN Convention

For two weeks in January in the New York snow, a working group of 27 countries, 12 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) representing disabled people and one human rights institution met to produce a draft text of the convention on the rights of disabled people.

This draft will be used as a basis for the third Ad Hoc meeting in May/June this year.

New Zealand was chosen to chair the working group meeting. New Zealand Ambassador Don McKay provided an open style and process with countries and NGOs given equal status and

speaking time.

He was assisted by Andrew Begg and Val Meyer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and



New Zealand Ambassador Don McKay (centre) chairs the working party at the United Nations.

Trade. The Office for Disability Issues Director Jan Scown was the official NZ delegate and New Zealander Robert Martin was the Inclusion International delegate.

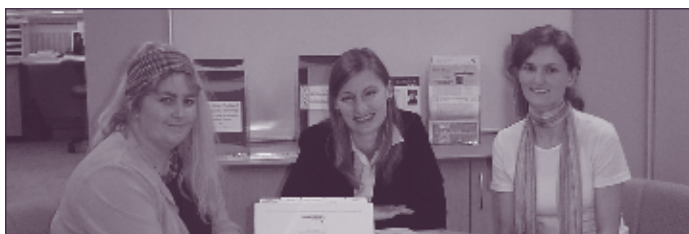
The text is available from the UN Enable website www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable. It can also be accessed from a link on the Office website www.odi.govt.nz.

The Office will be consulting with the disability sector, human rights organisations and government agencies in April to gather information and feedback for its delegation back to the UN at the end of May.

Proud To Be A Kiwi

It's not just Lord of the Rings that makes New Zealanders proud. The Office was recently visited by Kirsten Young, a New Zealander working in Geneva as the European Regional Co-ordinator and legal counsel for the Landmine Survivors Network.

She is a non-government representative on the UN Convention for the Rights of Disabled People, and visited while on holiday in Wellington. She said New Zealand's contribution to the Convention had made her very proud to be a New Zealander, and she shows her NZ passport at every opportunity.



From left to right: Office Policy Analyst Tessa Thompson, Kirsten Young and Policy Analyst Victoria Manning.

Implementing Strategy

The third report on Progress in Implementing the New Zealand Disability Strategy has been tabled in Parliament.

It covers actions in the 2002-03 year and is the first progress report to include actions by every government department.

While the format still covers all 15 objectives, it also covers every action point under those objectives, and indicates if work to implement these was reported, what was done and what the outcome was.

For 27 departments this was their first report on progress and there was wide variation in both the work and the level of change that resulted.

More departments are beginning to report on activities that will make a difference to disabled people. Highlights include an increase in disabled people being consulted about policy/service delivery issues; an increase in information on government websites that is accessible; a survey by the New Zealand Police of disabled people; preparation work for the telephone relay service; and of course the Office for Disability Issues, which was established in this timeframe.

The Office continues to work closely with departments as they begin to think about their progress in the 2003-04 year and their next report and implementation plans.

For further information on the report and 2003-04 implementation plans access www.odi.govt.nz. Requests for published copies can be made via the website or by writing to the Office at PO Box 12136, Wellington.

Briefly

The Office has revised its website with a new section, 'What's Happening'. It highlights current Office activity, a summary of disability projects across government and achievements by disabled people and the sector. View this at www.odi.govt.nz. Feedback is welcomed at odi@msd.govt.nz

The Minister for Disability Issues Ruth Dyson is congratulating the Police and the Department of Conservation – the Police for its 2003 survey of disabled people and the four page article on disability in the Police Magazine, and Conservation for its commitment to making a difference for disabled people. One way Conservation has demonstrated this is by encouraging input from disabled people into its work. It has released a discussion document about access to its tracks and is actively seeking input from disability groups.

The Human Rights Commission inquiry on accessible public land transport released its first report in March and now invites submissions on it during April and May. They are welcome in any format, English, Māori and NZ Sign Language. The report can be requested via: email www.hrc.co.nz/inquiry; Ph 0800 496 877; TTY (Teletypewriter) 0800 150 111; Fax 09 377 3595.

The Office is updating its list of key contacts for the disability sector. It will then be available to other government departments to help them to consult with disabled people. If your group would like to be included, please send contact details and a short description about the purpose of your group to odi@msd.govt.nz

The Ministry of Health's Disability Services Directorate (DSD) is currently conducting the second round of consultation on its Consumer Participation Project. The project will recommend a mechanism by which disabled people and their families/whanau can be more involved in Directorate activities. For a consultation pack contact Jane Thistlethwaite at LIFE Unlimited; Ph: 0800 008 011; Fax: 07 834 9982; Email: paulinef@life.nzl.org or www.weka.net.nz