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Progress On Disability Strategy

The New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 requires the Minister for Disability Issues to report to Parliament each year on progress in implementing the New Zealand Disability Strategy.

To help the Minister do this, all government departments write an annual report describing what they have done to implement the Disability Strategy, over the year ending 30 June.

The Office for Disability Issues collates key information from the reports, along with other types of information it knows about, into one report on progress. This annual progress report is presented to Parliament by the Minister for Disability Issues, published, and made available to the public.

The fifth annual New Zealand Disability Strategy progress report

is a snapshot of what is known about the issues, activities and outcomes facing disabled New Zealanders and their families during 2004/2005. Any trends are also highlighted.

The report records and builds knowledge of disability issues, and of strategies to address these issues.

The report will be available this month at www.odi.govt.nz

Stories Highlight Challenges

The stories of disabled people and their families and how they are challenged in their daily lives is a feature of the New Zealand Disability Strategy fifth progress report.

Previous Disability Strategy progress reports have focused on government activity.

As well as including the stories, the fifth report also increases the focus on outcomes for disabled people that can be measured, so that there is a better sense of how things are actually changing.

The stories were sourced by Zeta Resources Ltd, led by Anne Brunt. She talked with disability sector organisations to identify ways of contacting people.

All interviews were then done using a predetermined set of questions. These ranged over subjects such as a person's experience of work, finances, education, living situation, access to services and relationships. People's appreciation of the Disability Strategy and community attitudes towards them were also canvassed.

There was a diversity of people included, with a range of ages, ethnicities, impairments and geographic locations. Confidentiality was assured if people did not want to be publicly known. In the end, most interviews have photos and actual names of people interviewed.

An excerpt from the report, featuring Gail, is below.



Gail with her dog Sammy.

“My vision for our society 10 years from now is that people will realise that yes we are all different; not just in our hair colour, country of origin and values, but that some of us have an impairment and can be different too. However, we all have skills and can make a contribution to our communities in our own way. Hopefully we will see more people with impairments out and about in the community, taking leadership roles and taking part in everyday activities, going to work and being able to make choices about their lives.”

Translating Strategy Into Positive Change

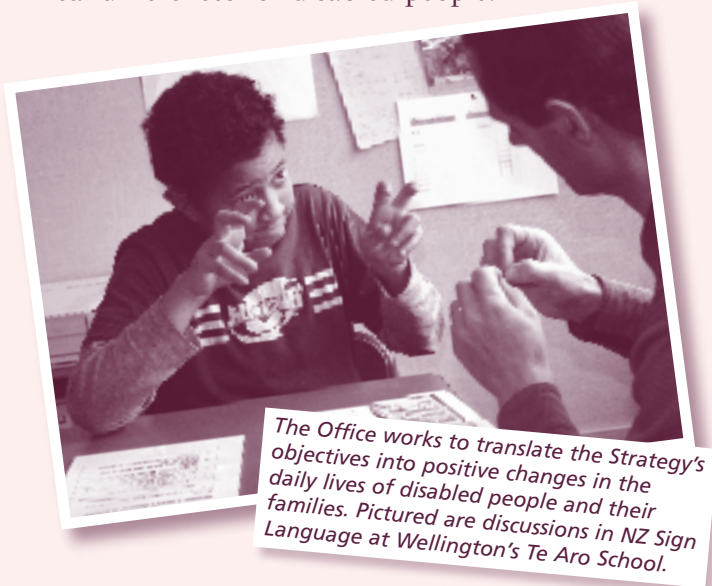
The Office for Disability Issues is ensuring the New Zealand Disability Strategy's objectives are being translated into action, so that there are real and positive changes being made in the daily lives of disabled people and their families.

The Office has two processes to make sure this happens – planning and reporting.

Each year, all government departments and some crown agencies develop a plan describing actions they will take over the next year to implement the Disability Strategy. This planning takes place from February to May.

The Office has regular contact with all government departments and provides workshops, seminars and advice to help promote understanding and inclusion of disability issues in their work.

It also provides guidance and feedback when they develop implementation plans. This year, the Office emphasised that plans should focus on new or significant ongoing actions with outcomes making real differences for disabled people.



The Office works to translate the Strategy's objectives into positive changes in the daily lives of disabled people and their families. Pictured are discussions in NZ Sign Language at Wellington's Te Aro School.

Business as usual activity has been either reduced or moved to a separate section of the plans, because government departments should be doing these things as a matter of course and they do not need to be planned for. However, reporting on this kind of activity remains important.

The plans cover the period from 1 July to 30 June of the following year. Forty implementation plans for the year 2005-2006 are available on the Office website at www.odi.govt.nz

The Office also reports on progress towards implementing the New Zealand Disability Strategy. The fifth annual progress report will be publicly available this month. See page one for more detail on the report.

Accessible Websites

The New Zealand Disability Strategy fifth progress report includes information for the first time on measuring accessibility of government websites.

Office for Disability Issues' Director Jan Scown says with an increasing emphasis on government information and services available online, there is growing importance to ensure websites are accessible to everyone.

"As part of our role in monitoring implementation of the New Zealand Disability Strategy, we wanted to find out how well government was doing."

AccEase Ltd (a company specialising in online accessibility) was asked to find out how well disabled people were able to use government websites and to access public information.

This work was undertaken during June-July 2005, using a two stage process. First, websites were checked against international Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, which are part of the E-government Web Guidelines (www.e.govt.nz/web-guidelines/index.asp). Secondly, members of a user panel checked the websites' usability with their own equipment. The panel comprised people with sensory (sight and hearing), cognitive and mobility impairments.

"Many agencies are making excellent progress towards meeting the guidelines, and are making an effort to improve accessibility of their public information. Several websites have subsequently changed since the survey was conducted," Jan says.

The Office is using the information to continue working with government departments to further develop and improve the accessibility of their websites.

Excellent Websites

Twelve websites were described by AccEase as excellent examples of accessible websites:

Office for Senior Citizens www.osc.govt.nz

StudyLink www.studylink.govt.nz

Ministry for the Environment
www.mfe.govt.nz

Bioethics Council www.bioethics.govt.nz

E-government www.e-government.govt.nz

Families Commission
www.familiescommission.govt.nz

Ministry of Transport www.mot.govt.nz

New Zealand Embassies www.nzembassy.com

Reduce Your Rubbish
www.reducerubbish.govt.nz

Skill New Zealand www.skillnz.org.nz

Office for Disability Issues www.odi.govt.nz