

New Zealander To Chair UN Committee

New Zealand's Ambassador to the United Nations in New York has been elected by the General Assembly to chair the committee developing a convention on the rights of disabled people.

Ambassador Don Mackay's appointment is an acknowledgement of the leadership role that New Zealand has played in the development of this convention.

Office for Disability Issues Director Jan Scown says Don's appointment is recognition of the excellent job he has done chairing the working group which

developed the draft disability convention. It also recognises his role co-ordinating the informal negotiations at the fourth and fifth meetings of the committee.

In future, the New Zealand delegation will need to support the Chair in his facilitative role as well as continuing to promote New Zealand's views of how the convention should look.

Disabled New Zealanders involved in committee negotiations have included people in the New Zealand delegation, as well as people representing the Human

Rights Commission and Inclusion International. The sixth meeting of the committee will take place from 1 to 12 August 2005. Read more at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/adhoccom>



Ambassador Don Mackay chairing a recent United Nations meeting.

Disability Advisory Council Meets

An advisory council set up to help Government and the Office for Disability Issues respond more effectively to the needs and issues of disabled people met for the first time in May.

It met to learn about its role and to hear about the Office's work programme.

The council will comprise 11 disabled people and two family members of disabled people, who have been selected by disability consumer organisations (called appointing organisations) to represent their interests on the council. Two organisations, Carers Alliance and the Association of Blind Citizens, have yet to select their representatives.

Office Director Jan Scown will choose a chair from among the council members at their next meeting on 23 and 24 June 2005.



From left to right: John Forman (representing Carers Alliance), Mike Gourley (appointed by Disabled Persons Assembly - DPA), Mike Roberts (back - appointed by Central Potential), Victoria French (front - appointed by Neurological Alliance), Sheryl Wallace (appointed by People First), Graham Stairmand (appointed by Grey Power), Ngaire Doherty (appointed by Auckland Deaf Society), Claire Freeman (front - appointed by DPA), Dick Earle (back - appointed by Hearing Association), Carolyn Weston (representing Association of Blind Citizens).

Nominations Register

The Government is investing \$568,000 over the next four years to establish and maintain a nominations register of disabled people for government appointments.

Managed by the Office for Disability Issues, the register will identify and nominate appropriately skilled disabled people for appointment to governance positions on Crown bodies. The register will foster leadership by disabled people and increase the diversity of board membership so it is more representative of New Zealand society.

The funding will also be used to provide appropriate training to develop the skills and experience of potential nominees.

Caregivers' Payments Reviewed

The Office for Disability Issues is leading an interdepartmental review on payments to and support of family caregivers of disabled people.

A number of government programmes provide support for family caregiving of disabled people. However, people caring for disabled family members have generally been excluded from eligibility for contractual employment as their caregivers.

A decision by the Complaints Review Tribunal of the Human Rights Commission in August 2001 found this exclusion was potentially discriminatory under the Human Rights Act.

Other programmes of support have also been criticised as not providing sufficient help to family caregivers of disabled people.

The review will provide direction for resolving the issue of whether there are valid grounds for excluding people caring for disabled family members from

contractual employment as their caregivers. It is also considering which types of support best help such family caregivers to meet related costs.

As a first step, the review has looked at government objectives for policies relating to family caregiving of disabled people. Till now, New Zealand has had no clear statements about what these policies should be trying to achieve. In March 2004

Government approved statements prepared by the Review Team.

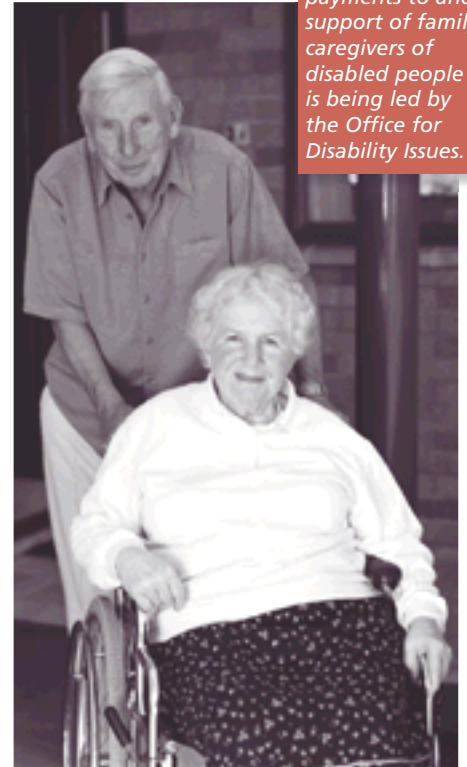
Further options for help will be developed around these statements for consultation with the disability sector.

The statements were publicly released at the Caring for the Caregivers Summit, held in Wellington in March, in a paper presented by the Office.

The paper 'Payments to and Support of Family Caregivers of Disabled People: the work of the Office for Disability Issues', can

be accessed at www.odi.govt.nz. There is also information on the background to the review and its development to date. Information will be updated as the review progresses.

The review on payments to and support of family caregivers of disabled people is being led by the Office for Disability Issues.



Action On Strategy

The Office for Disability Issues recently hosted a seminar for government agencies to discuss planning their implementation of the NZ Disability Strategy for 2005-2006.

The Office made the point that government agencies should focus on activity that makes a real difference to the lives of disabled people when they come to plan their implementation of the NZ Disability Strategy for this coming year.

Disabled Persons Assembly's Mike Gourley talked about the continuing importance of the NZ Disability Strategy to disabled people. He described it as being like their treaty with government, outlining a partnership approach on changing society from a disabling to an enabling, inclusive one.

"There are things that everyone needs to work on, like changing discriminatory attitudes, but having

government action will help promote change," he said.

Margaret Earle of the National Health Committee and David Corner from IHC Self Advocacy talked about taking action on recommendations from "To Have an 'Ordinary' Life" – their report on improving the lives of people with intellectual disabilities. They said government agencies could make changes to be more inclusive of people with intellectual disabilities, such as making communications available in plain English formats.

Sarah Gordon of Case Consulting Ltd discussed her work with the NZ Police promoting awareness of people with experience of mental illness, which was done as part of the Like Minds campaign. Case Consulting is now developing a disability awareness training package for use by government agencies.

Implementation plans from government agencies will be available in July 2005 at www.odi.govt.nz. The annual progress report will be published later this year.