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Progress On NZSL Bill

The Select Committee considering the New Zealand Sign Language Bill (NZSL) has tabled its report and made its recommendations.

In July 2004, the NZSL Bill went to Parliament for its first reading. Many members of the deaf community attended, as it was a landmark in the deaf history of New Zealand.

The Bill was unanimously agreed to by all parties. The Justice and Electoral Select Committee then considered 195 submissions. Six submissions were received in NZSL recorded on video.

The select committee's report is available at www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz/publications/committeereport. It recommends that the Bill include a new clause to ensure it is reviewed after three years.

Successful passage of the Bill now requires the following steps. The Government needs to reinstate the Bill, following the election. Members of Parliament consider the Select Committee's recommendations, and the Bill then has a second and third reading. At the second reading stage, there will

Office for
Disability
Issues' Victoria
Manning
signs "Bill".



be debate on the overall principles and clauses of the Bill, with members voting on the Bill clause by clause.

The third reading provides a forum for the final debate on the Bill. Royal Assent from the Governor-General would then complete the process, possibly by early 2006.

See www.odi.govt.nz for more information.

Conference Help

The Office for Disability Issues has provided funding to help disabled people present to a conference addressing the presence, nature and impact of abuse in care settings.

The Office also sponsored two one-day workshops that followed the Many Faces of Abuse Conference.

Conference organiser Lorna Sullivan says the conference was a huge success. "The workshops were also a great opportunity for participants to analyse issues, explore subjects in further depth, and gain a more informed understanding of themes and topics from the conference."

One participant commented that the post-conference workshops "made the invisible more visible".

For more information about the conference, its proceedings or to purchase an audio copy of the conference go to www.imaginebetter.co.nz

Supporting Advocates

People First, Nga Tangata Tuatahi has received funding from the Office for Disability Issues for two major projects.

The funding is part of the Office for Disability Issues' efforts to enhance the capacity of disabled people and their families/whānau.

People First, Nga Tangata Tuatahi is an organisation committed to helping people with intellectual disabilities to be their own advocates.

With the funding it produced a manual that contains information about its organisation, and how to run meetings where people with learning disabilities (intellectual disability) are present.

President Cheryl Wallace says the manual was originally intended for the organisation's own use but because of its popularity, it is now sold to other organisations in the disability sector.

A second project involved building relationships between People First, Nga Tangata Tuatahi's national office and its 35 regions around the country, and providing more support to local groups.

People First
President
Cheryl Wallace.



For more information contact: People First National Office, PO Box 9199, Marion Square, Wellington; 04 381 3424; www.peoplefirst.org.nz

My Turn To Talk

Communication is an essential part of most people's lives, and is often taken for granted, but for some people it is impossible to communicate without the help of assistive technology.

Below is Roly Baker's account of how he has been helped by technology. He cannot speak due to Cerebral Palsy but is capable of making his own decisions and speaking for himself via a communication system. He spent 13 years, from the age of 16, living in an institution. In 1991 he began living, with support, in the community.

"Being able to communicate changed my life," Roly says.

"I have cerebral palsy and I dreamed to be able to talk my own words. People see only the Cerebral Palsy body, not the intelligent brain and treat me like a child. I understand everything. I just didn't have a way to talk."

His first communication book was a dream come true. It allowed him to talk to people, tell them about his feelings, make choices, go to school and make jokes.

But it was just the beginning. He tried various communication computers over the years, and thanks the people who supported him to try them. The best was the Eyegaze Communication System, designed by Dixon and Nancy Cleaveland from LC Technologies. This allows people with severe motor disabilities to do many things with eye movements that they would otherwise do with their hands.

"Now things are really good," Roly says.



Roly Baker at his computer.

"I have learned to spell. I write to family, friends and to my support staff. I send email and surf the internet. The speaker phone next to the computer allows me to talk to family and friends through the computer.

"Having a talking computer has changed my life. I have big dreams to talk to people about my life experiences and to teach people how technology can make a difference. I can also make people understand that disabled people have a right to own their own lives."

For more information on Eyegaze go to www.eyegaze.com or email odi@msd.govt.nz

SPARC Proactive On Disability Issues

Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) has appointed a Senior Advisor for Disability to implement its 'No Exceptions' strategy – the disability implementation plan for the sport and recreation sector.

Senior Advisor for Disability Mike Gourley says SPARC is being proactive in taking a leadership role.

No Exceptions is the responsibility of the whole sector. It does not belong to any one organisation. What SPARC has done is to take a lead role in co-ordinating and facilitating the roll-out of No Exceptions over the coming year.

"My contribution will be to build the momentum already evident in the sector, and support key players to understand what they need to do, how they'll do it and when they'll need to do it by."

Mike is also president of the Disability Persons Assembly and chairman of the Disability Advisory Council.

Director of the Office for Disability Issues

Jan Scown says the proactive stance taken by SPARC is a great example of leadership in progressing the aims of the New Zealand Disability Strategy. As a Crown entity SPARC is not obligated to implement the NZ Disability Strategy but it has voluntarily completed plans of action for the last two years.

SPARC Senior Advisor for Disability Mike Gourley.

