



TE HUNGA HAUĀ MAURI MŌ NGĀ TĀNGATA KATOĀ

Briefing to the incoming Coalition Government on disability policy

25 October 2017

Introduction

The Coalition Government, your party is part of, has been formed on a mandate of change. This will require the Government to play a more active role in tackling the barriers faced by disabled people and their families. The Coalition Government needs to take a firmer leadership role with disability policy than in the past and intervene when the market delivers poor outcomes for disabled people.

This briefing will outline some of the key issues in disability policy and will make broad recommendations. During the election campaign, we were concerned about the lack of rigorous debate about disability policy issues. While parties had some disability-related policies, these were not generally part of the major election debates. This is worrying because Statistics New Zealand has identified that one in four of the population has a disability. We have created this general briefing to help ensure the Coalition Government has a strong focus on disability.

Following this general briefing, we will present specific briefings that are more detailed for individual Ministers. As always, we are happy to provide more information and/or provide briefings in person.

About us

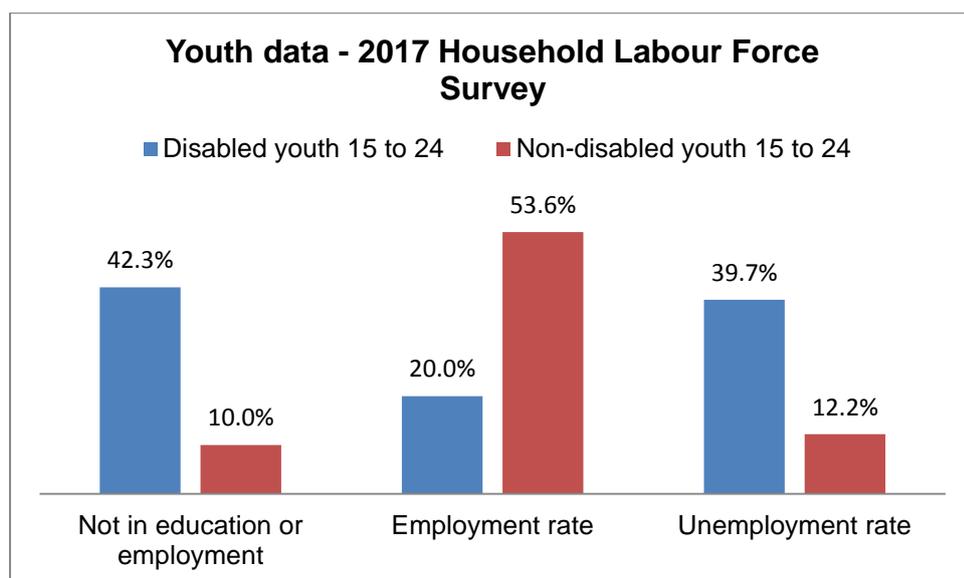
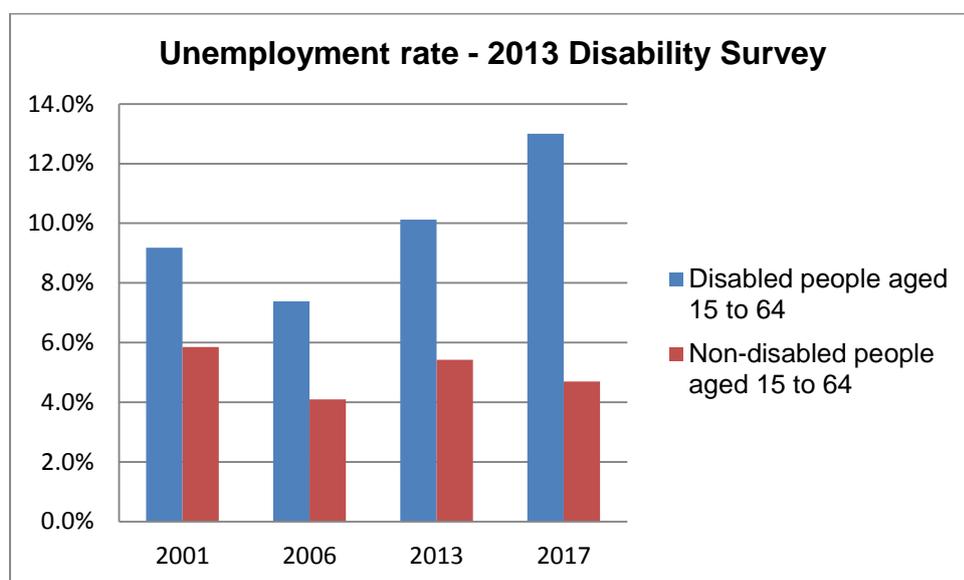
CCS Disability Action is a community organisation that has been advocating for disabled people to be included in the community since 1935. As of May 31 2017, we were providing support to around 4,000 children, young people and adults through our 17 branches, which operate from Northland to Invercargill.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

The Labour market is failing disabled people

We need stronger action from Government to reduce the unemployment rate amongst disabled people. As of June 2017, 42% of disabled youth aged 15 to 24, or over 6,500 young people, are not in employment, training or education. This is over 4 times the rate for non-disabled youth. 13% of disabled people are unemployed (Statistics New Zealand, 2017a). In 2013, 15.8% to 19.4% of carers of disabled

children were unemployed¹. Research we commissioned from the Donald Beasley Institute this year confirmed this depressing situation. It showed that 72% of the disabled people surveyed were not working, but 80% of disabled people wanted to work (Milner, Mirfn-Veitch, Brown, & Schmidt, 2017, p. 12). It also showed that most of the disabled people who were in work, wanted to work more hours than they currently work.

The labour market is simply not working for disabled people and their families.



¹ Unpublished data from the 2013 Disability Survey, available on request.

Recommendations:

- That the Coalition Government develops a coherent set of policies aggressively tackling the high unemployment rate amongst disabled people and their families and implements these policies as soon as possible.
- That the Coalition Government investigates the effectiveness of doing the following:
 - Reducing abatement levels for disabled-related benefits.
 - Introducing subsidies and mandatory standards to improve the accessibility of workplaces and transport.
 - Setting targets for government departments and contractors who receive government funding.
 - Running employer attitude campaigns (based on solid research).
 - Expanding the mainstream employment and internship programmes as well as other employment support.
 - Removing barriers to work in disability support (such as the ban on carers using the carer support subsidy while at work).
 - Setting the Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) Subsidy at a more realistic rate for disabled children/young people to enable their carers to work.

We need higher expectations of our education system

We note that the Confidence and Supply Agreement between the Labour Party and the Green Party states that every child with learning difficulties will be able to participate fully in school life. We fully endorse this commitment. We also note that the New Zealand First Party has committed to support inclusive education in its policies on education. We are looking forward to all three parties following through on their commitments.

We need to improve the quality of education disabled students receive. Without good access to quality inclusive education, students with disabilities are at high risk of poor outcomes, including unemployment, which ultimately disadvantages them, their families and wider society. The Treasury predicts the following for teenagers on a

Supported Living Payment, attending a special school or receiving special education services:

1. 75% will achieve below NCEA 2;
2. 35% will use mental health services; and
3. 62% will receive a long-term benefit for five plus years (McLeod, et al., 2015).

In 2017, 41% of disabled youth (aged 15 to 24) had no qualifications (Statistics New Zealand, 2017b). This is around 6,400 young disabled people. This matches the rate for adults with disabilities as a whole. 40% of working age disabled people have no qualifications (Statistics New Zealand, 2017a). We are not making any serious progress in increasing the rate of qualifications amongst disabled people.

Recommendations:

- That the Coalition Government invests more in learning support.
- That the right of all students to attend their local school is upheld irrespective of their educational and other life challenges.
- That the Coalition Government holds the Ministry of Education and schools accountable for the low rate of disabled students achieving qualifications.

While formal qualifications may not be achievable for everyone, especially those with higher support needs, the rate of achievement is clearly too low. The country simply cannot afford to have thousands of young disabled people leave school without a qualification.

The underfunding of disability support services needs to end

Since the early 1990s, significant increases in funding for disability support services have been rare and have not kept up with inflation. While there have been some increases, they have tended to focus on specific areas, such as the recent “pay equity” settlement or the “sleepovers settlement”. As a result, many organisations providing disability services such as ours are now underfunded by around 10% to 15% on average. This has made it harder and harder to deliver services at the level

of quality disabled people need. There is a funding crisis in the disability sector which is getting worse every year and comes at a time when we need our service organisations to invest in new ways of supporting disabled families. This will simply not happen with so much pressure on “bottom lines”.

We have several promising reforms underway focused on the Systems Transformation project, due to start next year in the Mid Central DHB region. We have a real opportunity to create a new and better system that gives disabled people far more choice and control over their support. A system that can actually make some serious progress in reducing the inequalities disabled people face. If we do not address the current funding crisis, it may undermine or even prevent the reforms from bringing about change. For a new system to take hold, we need service organisations to be innovative, collaborative and open. This cannot happen if organisations are fixated on their dwindling “bottom line”.

Recommendations

- That the Coalition Government considers an across the board increase to all contracts for disability services provided by the Ministries of Health and Social Development by 10%.
- That the Coalition Government publicly supports the high-level design for the transformation of the disability support system.

It is time for a new Access Law

The Labour Party, the New Zealand First Party and the Green Party have all committed to investigate a new Access Law with enforceable mandatory standards. This Coalition Government now has the mandate, but what is needed is action. This new Law and supporting regulations will set New Zealand on the path to becoming fully accessible and become a world leader in access for all.

In addition to allowing over a million citizens to participate more fully in society, this new Access Law will provide increased benefits for the economy and government finances. The New Zealand Institute of Economic Research has estimated that if we

can improve access and lower the unemployment rate for disabled people we can expect to see:

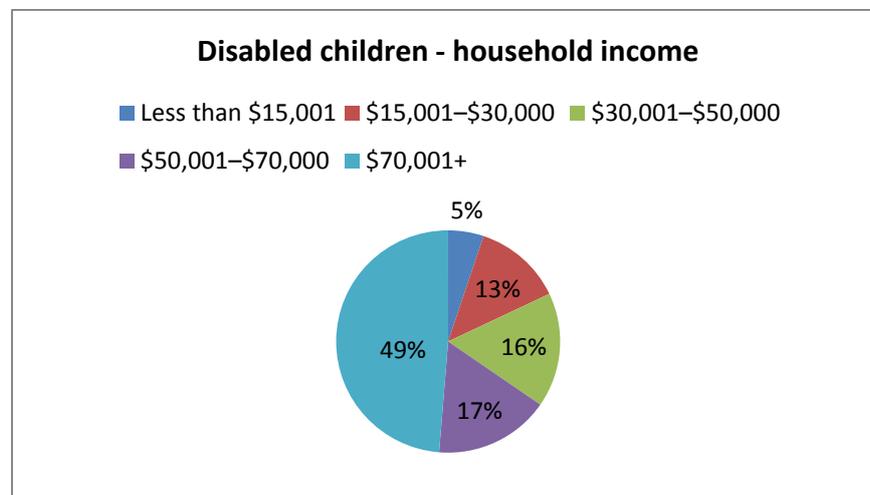
1. A \$300 million a year reduction in Jobseeker Health Condition or Disability benefit costs.
2. Increased tax revenues of \$387 million.
3. An extra \$1.45 Billion increase in GDP (New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, 2017).

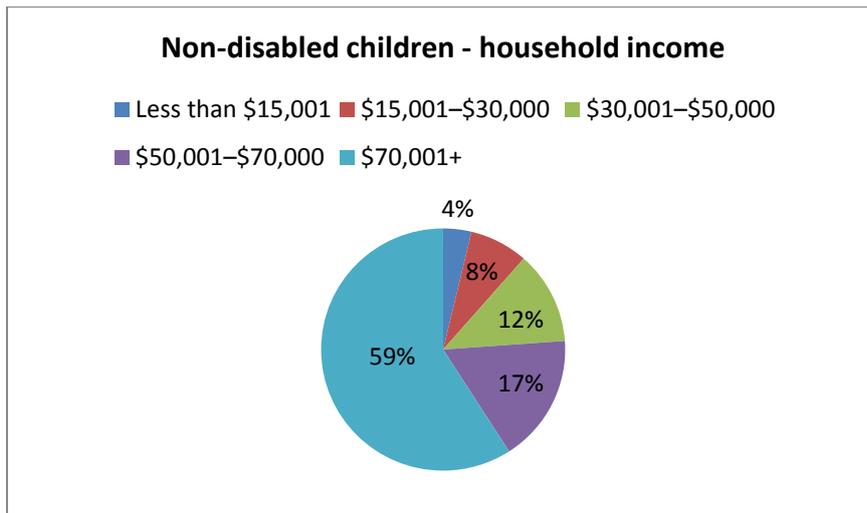
Recommendation

- That the Coalition Government works together with the Access Alliance, the wider disability community, businesses, local government, and government departments to develop the new Access Law and supporting regulations.

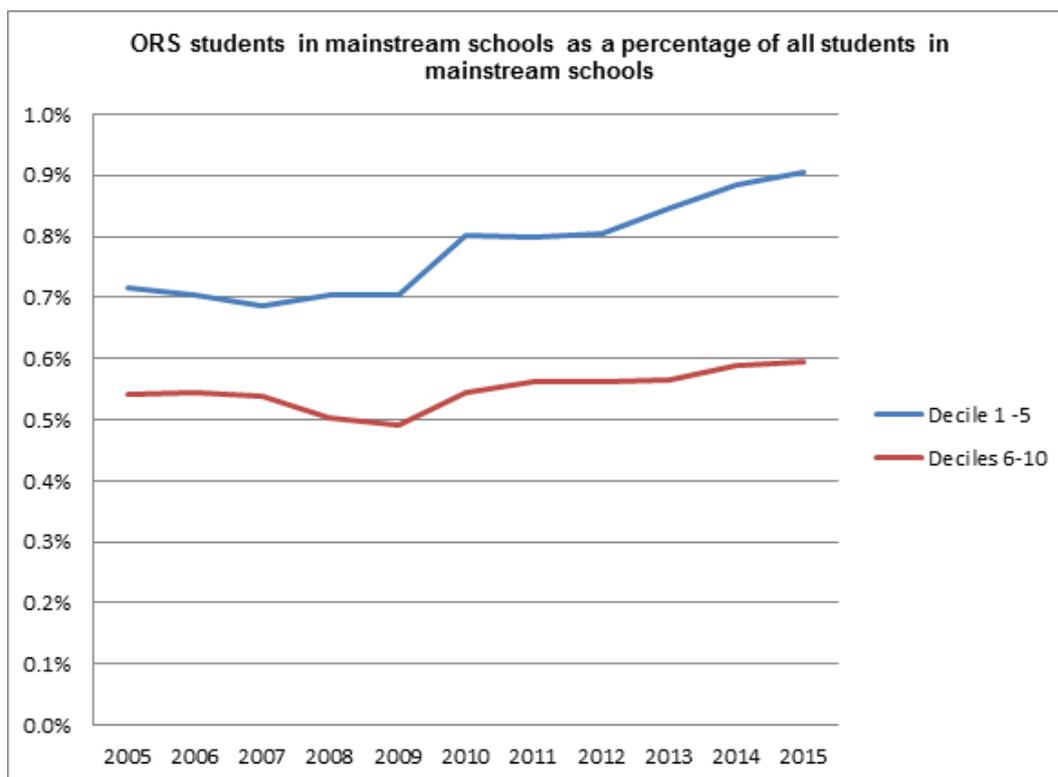
We need to reduce the rate of child poverty amongst disabled children

Disabled children are more likely to live in poorer families. The 2013 Disability Survey found that 34% of disabled children live in families that earn under \$50,000 a year, compared to only 24% of non-disabled children.





Students with disabilities are also more likely to be attending a low decile school. Ongoing Resourcing Scheme students are becoming an increasingly large percentage of students at lower decile schools².



² Information sourced from the Ministry of Education. All students attending special schools have been taken out, both out of the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme students and out of the all students groups. This gives a better picture of the decile ratings as special schools are not evenly spread out across deciles (and they do not match the shifting of decile ratings in mainstream schools).

Disabled children are more likely to live in one parent households. In the 2013 Disability Survey, 30% of disabled children lived in one parent households. 23% in just one parent households and 7% in one parent with other people (but not a couple) households. By comparison, 17% of non-disabled children lived in one parent households. 14% in just one parent households and 3% in one parent with other people (but not a couple) households.

Recommendations:

- That the Coalition Government makes reducing the rate of child poverty amongst disabled children and their families a priority in its overall strategy of reducing child poverty.
- That the Coalition Government considers:
 - Using a social insurance approach (similar to ACC) for all support for disabled children.
 - Investing in making mainstream services more accessible.
 - Reducing administration and making the system easier to navigate (for example by aligning the eligibility criteria for the Child Disability Allowance and the Disability Allowance).

We need more accessible social and affordable housing

We note that the Coalition Agreement between the Labour Party and the New Zealand First Party commits to the establishment of a Housing Commission. This Commission should have the availability of accessible affordable housing as one of its key areas of focus. With an aging population, there is a growing need for more accessible and affordable housing.

Disabled people are more likely to need social housing³. Yet housing providers and funders have often not considered their needs. The 2013 Disability Survey found that 107,440 people with a physical impairment had an unmet need for a house modification. 26,880 people with a vision impairment had an unmet need for a housing modification.

³ The 2013 Disability Survey found that disabled people are more likely to live in low income household and are more likely to rent their house.

When people make do with an inaccessible home they often face an increased risk of injury. It can also prevent them from being as productive and as engaged with their local community as they could be. A lack of accessible and affordable housing, including social housing, is one of the factors holding back disabled people from being involved in and contributing to society.

Recommendations:

- That the Coalition Government urgently takes a leadership role and actively promote accessible social and affordable housing using Lifemark® 3 star rating as minimum requirements.
- That the Coalition Government requires a certain minimum number of social and affordable housing be built each year to Lifemark® 4 & 5 star ratings. This should be enshrined in the new Access Law.
- That the Coalition Government makes the availability of affordable accessible housing a key area of focus for the new Housing Commission.

With an ageing population, it makes social and economic sense to promote and invest in accessible housing. All social and affordable housing funded, or built, by the government should be required to have universal design features.

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