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| Speak Up - Kōrerotia  9 August 2016  Disability rights and the New Zealand Disability Strategy | |
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| Male | This programme was first broadcast on Canterbury’s community access radio station Plains FM 96.9 and was made with the assistance of New Zealand on Air. |
| Female | Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM. |
| Sally | E ngā mana,  E ngā reo,  E ngā hau e whā  Tēnā koutou katoa  Nau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”.    Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right.  Nau mai haere mai welcome to “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. I’m your host Sally Carlton, based here in Christchurch. Today’s topic we’re going to be thinking about the New Zealand Disability Strategy and placing it in context, the domestic and the global context. The reason for the topic? Well, the Disability Strategy is currently undergoing a revision from its 2001 original and the second round of consultation is opening up on the 25 July. This show will hopefully raise some awareness and tell you why you should be having a say in taking part.  Looking at the Strategy as a document but also situating that document within the wider context will be some other guests later on in the show; particularly important will be the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - or the CRPD - but here to set the scene with us today is Nicky Wagner, Minister for Disability Issues. |
| Nicky | Kia ora Sally. |
| Sally | Nicky, thanks so much for taking the time, making the time to come in and see us today and I think we might dive straight in because we are just doing this ten-minute segment. And I thought I might start off by asking what are some of the high points for being Minister for Disabilities? |
| Nicky | That’s a good question, Sally. It wasn’t something that I imagined when I was a child that I would be, but when the Prime Minister asked me if I would take the portfolio he reflected on the fact that Christchurch is rebuilding the city and we want to make it as accessible as possible so I’m also involved with the regeneration of Christchurch so I have two hats there and I think that’s important but also in the past as a local MP I’d had quite a lot to do with the local disability community and in particular I’d had a couple of young interns, disabled interns and that had been really quite successful and I’d introduced the Prime Minister to him so I think he thought yes, I could take the portfolio. |
| Sally | And what do you enjoy about the role? |
| Nicky | Well it’s a very active role actually, people are very keen to engage with the Government and the Government has really moved its thinking and how it works with the disability community quite significantly over the last five or six years and really all our work is to do with co-design of policies. So the Ministry or the Department of Disabilities Issues is focused on working with the disability community, working with the disabled peoples organisations and actually making sure that we road test our policies before they go out and there’s a lot of change in the sector as well so that’s exciting. |
| Sally | And you said it’s changed in the last five or six years to being more co-collaboration I suppose, co-production. What was it like then beforehand? How were policies rolled out? |
| Nicky | Well I think it’s like anything in Government in the past, we tended to sit in ivory towers and make policies and say that sounds good and then broadcast them on the nation but we’re learning very much that unless you work with the people on the ground how do you know what’s going to work at the other end and actually how do you know what’s going to be of value because I think that’s the bottom line, the bottom line is that we do an enormous amount of work with the disability community but we want to make sure that the money that we spend is spent in the right places. And before I was the Minister we didn’t actually know how much money we were spending so we’ve done a lot of work trying to find out where that money is going. And of course there’s a great focus now on social investment, in other words seeing where the needs are and trying to spend the money in the right place. And you’ll be interested to know that when you take the money from education, health, social development and the other things that sort of cluster around it, nearly $5 billion is spent on disability every year. So there’s a large amount of money but we need to make sure that we put the money in the right place. |
| Sally | It’s nice to hear you talking about this co-production because it’s what we call the human rights approach, including people in that very early stage and not making any decisions without including effected people. |
| Nicky | Well “nothing about me without me” is the pretty strong call from the disability sector but it just seems to be common sense to me. |
| Sally | Now recently in June 2006 you attended the Conference of State Parties to CRPD, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. What would you like to tell us about that experience? |
| Nicky | Well it sounds really boring, all those acronyms, but actually it was fantastic. Really the focus for me was to support Robert Martin to get a position on the committee for the Rights of Disabled People, the United Nations Committee, and he’s a fantastic New Zealander. I don’t know if your listeners know about Robert but I’ll give you a quick pencil sketch. He lives in Wanganui, he’s in his late 50s, as a child he was born with a learning disability and he was institutionalised, until he was about 14 or 15 he lived in various institutions across New Zealand and he lived the life of somebody away from his family and really saw a lot of the things that the reason we’ve got rid of institutions going forward. But he managed to rise above that, he’s worked in his community, he’s been involved in sport, he has a great love of life and he’s been an advocate for the disabled community internationally as well as locally. So two or three years ago Minister Turia nominated him to be on this Committee and we’ve been lobbying for him ever since and on the day he was elected and it was incredible excitement and it was a really important step forward. It was important in terms of people with learning disabilities; they tend to be a bit of the silent group in the disability sector and I think it was really wrong that we could have had the Convention and a Committee supporting it for ten years without anyone from the learning disability community. And so when New Zealand nominated, the first nomination and the fact that he was selected, suddenly that Committee becomes more diverse; it is truly about nothing about us without us, nobody left behind. And so there was a great celebration, we had a big party, it was a great relief because a lot of people had done a lot of work. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had worked really hard and Robert worked enormously hard, he had two or three days that he met 70 different countries so it was a well-deserved win and I think it’s going to be very good for Robert, for New Zealand and for the United Nations. |
| Sally | In terms of it being very good, what do you see the likely implications being of this nomination? |
| Nicky | Well its symbolic for a start, the fact that somebody with a learning disability is there, but they’re going to learn that not only is he there but he’s actually contributing very well and it will connect us up to that Committee much more closely. |
| Sally | Just to shift the focus slightly: New Zealand Parliament recently tabled the Optional Protocol to the CRPD, that was at the end of June 2016. Just a couple of words on what would the Optional Protocol enable in terms of disability rights and do we have a timeline for when a decision might be being made? |
| Nicky | Well yes, it’s important that we supported that Optional Protocol, we signed the Convention and actually interestingly enough New Zealand was absolutely significant in that Convention. Our permanent resident in the New York, Don McKay, he led that and so even when you go to the UN now, they remember us as the person that made the Convention happen and that’s been really strong. But the Optional Protocol is part of that, it’s optional and it’s about taking complaints from your country to the United Nations and so we’ve signed up for that. I don’t know how much difference it’s going to make, part of it is the fact that we’re saying yes here we are, we believe we’re doing the right thing, if you want to take a complaint we feel confident so that’s symbolic too but basically any complaints have to be dealt with in New Zealand first and some of those issues are quite difficult but we tend to be able to sort them out here. So I’m not sure whether it’s going to make a difference but the fact that it’s there is really important. |
| Sally | It’s definitely symbolic, again that symbolic step that New Zealand has taken. Now after the break we’re going to be discussing the Disability Strategy in a bit more detail, have you got any comments, thoughts, opinions you’d like to raise for our listeners before that? |
| Nicky | Ye. First of all, I want to encourage everybody to have a look at the Draft which you say is coming out on the 25th July, it’s really important that this Disability Strategy reflects what the disability community, their families, the great community service operators are seeing and wanting because we’re going to be using as a guide for the next ten years. The original Disability Strategy that was created in 2001 has been seen as world leading but things have changed dramatically since then; for example, we got the Convention. So things have changed dramatically how we think about disability, how we work with the disability community, so this new Strategy is to reflect that. But one of the other things that’s important too is that the original Strategy stood alone; this Strategy is now linked up with the Disability Action Plan and so that’s the operational arm of the Strategy. So we believe that we’ll be able to take the Strategy and really get some action on it. |
| Sally | And will people be able to access both the Strategy and the accompanying Action Plan? |
| Nicky | Everything is there, everything is on the internet, we’ll be having more meetings around the country. Hundreds of people - maybe even thousands of people - had their say at the first time of the Disability Strategy, we had meetings in 18 different places around the country. We’ve got an online website called [www.jointheconversation.nz](http://www.jointheconversation.nz) so we had a lot of information, we’ve gathered that all up, we’ve put it into the draft document and now we’re road testing it and so we need as many road testers as possible. |
| Sally | Fantastic, so I would encourage everybody to have a look at it and definitely have a say as well. Any final words, Nicky? |
| Nicky | No just that the disability community I think is in good heart, we are co-designing the policies, we’re working together to set the direction through the Strategy, we’ve got an Action Plan and I feel very excited about the future. |
| Sally | Great, thank you so much for taking the time to come in. |
|  | **MUSIC BY ADELE – SET FIRE TO THE RAIN** |
| Sally | Kia ora, nau mai hoki mai, welcome back to “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM 96.9. We’ve just been talking with Nicky Wagner and now we’ve got some new guests in the studio to discuss disability rights and specifically the new Disability Strategy for New Zealand. We’ve got Megan, Gary, Robbie and Shane. If you could all please introduce yourselves, tell us a little bit about yourselves and why you’re taking part in today’s conversation. |
| Robbie | Alright well I’ll kick it off, my name is Robbie, I’m 27 years old and I’m a student at the University of Otago and I have quite a big interest in young people who live with disabilities and also disability rights. I have a disability myself, I live with phocomelia which means that the bones in the lower half of my body didn’t develop properly before birth so I walk on a prosthetic leg that’s called Lucy Leg. So that’s a little bit about my background and what I bring to the discussion and also to the Reference Group. |
| Sally | Robbie could you just tell us a bit about the Reference Group please, seeing as you’ve touched on it? |
| Robbie | Yes. So the call went out late last year to form an expert Reference Group, all of us on the Reference group either live with a disability or are some way engaged in the disability community and what we do is we’ve come together to advise and direct the process of the revision or creating this new Disability Strategy. |
| Sally | Thanks and Gary you’re also on the group? |
| Gary | Yes, I’m Gary Williams, I’m from Christchurch. I’ve been active in this sector for 40-odd years, I’m looking forward to working with the outcome project. |
| Megan | And that leaves me, my name is Megan McCoy and I’m the Director of the Office for Disability Issues. I’m involved because my Office is leading this process to develop the new Disability Strategy but also because disability and the rights for disabled people is something I’m really passionate about and committed to on a personal level too. |
| Shane | And lucky last me, I guess I have lived experience, I’ve got a learning disability and going from a country high school to a city high school, I’ve sort of got those experiences of what can work and what can’t work and so that’s sort of why I got involved. |
| Sally | In disability rights? |
| Shane | Yes. |
| Sally | What do you mean by the differences between the rural and city high schools? |
| Shane | Sort of a rural high school is more family orientated and I wouldn’t say a city high school is but it’s sort of less. |
| Sally | Alright so why are we developing then a new Strategy in 2016? |
| Robbie | Well the last one was developed in 2001, now that’s 15 years ago and a lot has happened in the last 15 years. I was ten years old at the time when the first one was declared and you think Wi-Fi, Google wasn’t a thing, Facebook wasn’t a thing and we also didn’t have the 2008 CRPD, Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. So all of these things have developed - not to mention the technology on the medical side that has developed - we’ve got new issues facing us and while the original Strategy was fantastic we have new generations coming through and we need to take into account all of these new things that have come up along the journey and we need to work towards the next ten years and what’s going to come up for us in these next ten years and how are we going to ensure that all New Zealanders, regardless if they have a disability, are living in a safe and equal and dignified environment. |
| Sally | And could you please explain a little bit about how the 2001 Strategy has influenced the CRPD and then how the CRPD has influenced the 2016 Strategy? I guess the linkages between those three documents. |
| Robbie | So of course the 2001 Strategy came first and we had a really quite prominent influencing input into the development of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in 2008. I think we had some key roles in the drafting of that Convention and putting some quite important input in the **35:44** Committee and the official delegation. Now, both of those documents - the 2001 Strategy and the 2008 CRPD - have had strong influence on the 2016 Strategy that we’re putting together now. I think the 2001 Strategy was brilliant. |
| Shane | I think the 2001 Strategy had more grounding to it but that might have been just reading into it but what, this is just the first consultation with the new Disability Strategy, we’ll see how far we go with the next stage if it gets more grounding from then or not. |
| Sally | And Shane you were the only person in this conversation who wasn’t part of the reference group. |
| Shane | That’s correct. |
| Sally | So as someone who is looking from the outside… |
| Shane | So I might just be reading in a little too much. |
| Sally | As someone who is looking from the outside, have you got any other comments on it? |
| Shane | It’s good we’re updating it because things like Wi-Fi and all those sorts of technologies weren’t available ten years ago. |
| Sally | Fifteen actually. |
| Shane | Fifteen, oh wow, so those sorts of things weren’t available but I don’t think we should take a whole huge evaluation off it because there’s still some good things I can see in it, we don’t need to go too far. |
| Robbie | We’ve been influenced by that, the original one, in developing this new document and the CRPD also is at the core of the 2016 Strategy, together with the Treaty of Waitangi actually. Those two key documents are at the forefront of the 2016 Strategy, they are right there upfront with their values and principles and the Strategy works in really well with that but they all complement each other in a really wonderful way actually. |
| Sally | It’s interesting you mentioned the Treaty of Waitangi, could you give me more of a sense of how it’s influenced the 2016 Strategy? |
| Robbie | The CRPD is an international document that many countries from around the world signed up for but we need to recognise that the 2016 Strategy is a document for New Zealanders and it’s for Aotearoa, it is our country and we needed to have the Treaty of Waitangi at the heart of that, the values and principles that are listed there at the front and then also we’ve had consultations with different communities, Maori communities, Pasifika communities and more, a lot of people around the country to ensure that this is something that everyone can take ownership regardless of their background, where they’re geographically located, what kind of disability they have, what language they speak, to ensure that the 2016 Strategy is relevant and applicable to as many people as possible. It really is an awesome journey actually and it’s so cool to see so many different people around the country having their input and having ownership and it’s so encouraging to see, as a young person for me, where we’re headed in the future. |
| Sally | And just one final question Robbie, were there any challenges developing the strategy; or, what were the challenges? |
| Robbie | There’s always challenges and I think that when you’re working with such a diverse array of people everyone has different focus areas. I think for me as a young person - I can only speak for me personally - as a young person, a big challenge is how are we going to make this document relevant in ten years? That’s a long time and a lot could happen in the next ten years and I guess in a sense my generation is the one that’s stepping into it, the one that’s inheriting, that we are the leaders of tomorrow, we are inheriting this country so it needs to be fixed and to be clear enough so there are no misinterpretations, that this is what we expect, this is what we have rights to but at the same time it’s flexible enough to develop and to be a living document that can take into consideration issues that pop up over the next ten years because we don’t know what we don’t know. And this document needs to be able to have different space to discuss some of those things without room for misinterpretation or misunderstanding.  And I think another challenge that we’ve had as the Reference Group has been this question of implementation, I spoke about it earlier. The 2001 Strategy was brilliant but there wasn’t so much of a focus on how we’re going to do it, how we’re going to implement these core values and these How are we going to achieve this? And so in this new Strategy there’s a huge focus on that and we’ve got some other cool things happening such as these outcomes favourites which will be consulted on in the near future as well as the Disability Action Plan. So together all of these things, when they are put together, we hope that we can deal with some of those challenges of implementation. |
|  | SONG |
| Sally | Nau mai hoki mai, welcome back to “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” on Plains FM 96.9. You’re with Sally Carlton, your host, and we’re also talking with Megan McCoy, Gary Williams, Robbie Francis and Shane McInroe who are talking about disability rights and the Disability Strategy. We finished off by thinking about how the CRPD or the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability is influencing the current Strategy and one thing that I guess I wondered about when I read through it is the idea of the social model of disability which came through pretty strongly, I thought, in the Disability Strategy and I wondered if that ties into the CRPD at all? |
| Megan | Yes, it does. So one of the important things about the UN Convention is that it’s really clear about the fact that disability is not something that a person with impairment necessarily has, it’s about what society, the way it treats disabled people and the barriers that it puts up. So the social model of disability was in fact described in the first Strategy and so that’s one of the areas where New Zealand was a bit of a leader and it supported us when we were there negotiating the development of the Convention and it’s still there in this current draft as well because it’s something that disabled people are still telling us is really important, that the focus needs to be on changing the world around us and sort of eliminating those barriers that are put up. And that’s ultimately where disability happens, it’s the way that people are treated and the way that they can be discriminated against, that it stops people from doing stuff. |
| Shane | Now it’s sort of the same principles to Enabling Good Lives. |
| Megan | Yes. |
| Sally | Could you explain a little bit what is Enabling Good Lives? |
| Shane | Oh wow Enabling Good Lives - you might need to help me here, Megan - it’s what I interpret as pretty much getting all your funding all into one sort of mum and dad easy to use the funding and how they and the child want to use it, in a way which is easy for everyone. |
| Gary | I see Enabling Good Lives as a way that disabled people can have an element of control over their lives so it’s a new way of thinking about how do disabled people, how disabled people can participate… putting disabled people in the system. It’s about being part of a community, it’s about taking control, it’s about remembering that disabled people are not outside society too. It’s a new way of thinking about how to support disabled people to have good lives. |
| Sally | This idea of trying to encourage society to see disabled people differently, have you noticed any change? Those of you who were involved in the 2001 Strategy and in the disability space since then, have you noticed changes since that 2001 Strategy? |
| Shane | Can I butt in? Sort of me being a newbie to the disability sector, it is changing but there’s those people who are sort of… especially ones around employment, are sort of a bit cynic… I don’t put I’ve got a learning disability, I just leave that out, they’re going to find that out in the first week. |
| Gary | I think that attitudes are changing as we become a more sophisticated society but there’s a long way to go, there’s still discrimination against disabled people because they’re disabled people. |
| Shane | We’re all on the waka together, just which way we’re going no-one knows. |
| Sally | A beautiful description. How about in the office, Megan, have you noticed any changes over time? |
| Megan | Well I don’t think I’ve been around long enough in this role to really be able to say but I suppose people tell me that there have been changes, that there are more and different supports available for people, that people are getting to have more of a say more often in things that are important to them. But I’m also hearing lots that there’s not enough of that going on, that there’s still too many situations happening out there where disabled people don’t get to make choices, where they aren’t listened to and where they don’t get treated in the right way. So I suppose my impression from what I hear out in the community and talking to lots of disabled people is that yup, there’s been some changes but we’ve still got some way to go. |
| Sally | Just to change the focus slightly now: Gary mentioned before, and I think Robbie you touched on it too, the idea that New Zealand was quite influential in drafting the Convention and I think it’s quite often said that New Zealand is doing relatively well in the disability rights space, I just wondered if you had any thoughts about why that might be the case but also where you think there’s room for improvement still? |
| Robbie | Well I’ve worked in the disability sector around the world and the general view globally is that New Zealand are the forefront runners in disability rights and we are to a certain degree, I would agree with that on the most part, disability rights around the world are lagging behind other rights and there are significant improvements that need to be made. But even in New Zealand, as Megan said, we still have a long way to go, there are still New Zealanders, disabled Kiwis who do not feel safe in their environments, who do not access to communities, who don’t feel that they have the same rights as other people and we’ve got evidence of that, we know it’s happening and it doesn’t often make the headlines because these are people who have a voice but whose voice has I guess maybe been silenced by the rest of society, by louder voices, whoever it may be, whatever it may be. There are people who exist in our society who are living like second class citizens. We know it’s happening and this is why we’re all so passionate about what we do because, for me as a disabled woman, I grew up in a family where I received a lot of support and my family treated me the same as my brothers and I grew up in quite a supportive environment but when I started to learn about people who may not have had those supports I realised that actually I have a responsibility to start speaking out and to start working on these things because at the bottom of it all, in the words of Brooke Fraser, the Kiwi singer, she said now that I have seen I am responsible. And I think all of us we feel a certain responsibility to speaking out and we’re not just talking about disability rights, we’re talking about human rights, we’re talking about basic human rights that all people should be afforded that unfortunately some people in New Zealand still aren’t. |
| Shane | We saw that… People First run a speaking up course and it very much showed that there’s still that left out discrimination in New Zealand, there were people making complaints on the day. |
| Sally | About discrimination? |
| Shane | Yes, around 50% made a complaint on the day. |
| Sally | Goodness that’s really high. |
| Megan | I also, like Robbie, I also worked internationally in the areas of disability-inclusive development and whenever anyone I met overseas said, “Oh you’re from New Zealand, oh you guys are really, really good on disability rights” I was always really chuffed to hear that even though I hadn’t worked that much in New Zealand and I didn’t know. So I was really stoked when the opportunity came up for me with my current role as the director, I thought this will be really awesome, I get to see what a developed country and what New Zealand looks like and see what all the fuss is about internationally. And I suppose there’s two things that I have learned, one is that no country including our own is doing perfectly and as Robbie was just saying there’s still too many people out there who don’t get to have a say and who are facing some really, really tough situations. The other thing I suppose I’ve learned - and that’s through some of the international work I’ve done in this role - is that one of the things where I do think New Zealand is doing well - and I’m not saying we’re perfect at it - but where we are comparative to other countries doing well is in working directly with disabled people, working in a co-design way and I think the Reference Group that we have for this new Disability Strategy is just one example of that. So I suppose for us we see it and we just see it as part of a normal way of working and we see all of the things that we need to improve in but compared to other countries, they don’t often work directly with disabled people to make decisions that are important to them. So that’s something that I suppose I’m proud of, that I think we’re doing quite well in New Zealand. |
| Sally | It’s interesting actually because Robbie you mentioned that it’s not just disability rights, its human rights and we always say that the human rights approach is to not just consult but really work alongside the people who are being affected so yes, you’re kind of modelling that which is really great to see. |
| Robbie | I was just going to say the day that I got a job where my disability - what the world considers as a weakness or society might consider as a weakness - the first time I got a job in a place where my disability was -considered a strength, I tell you what- it feels so good, it feels so good to be valued for who I am! I can’t change who I am and to celebrate that and to celebrate the diversity and what I bring as someone with a diverse experience and to put that on the table as something that’s of value is such a good feeling and I’m really, really lucky to have had that experience and to have that as an ongoing experience. So Megan’s definitely right, we’ve had some incredible leaps and bounds in New Zealand and the fact that we’ve got a space to talk about these things as disabled people is incredible. The fact that we can talk to you here and now is incredible and it needs to become the norm, it needs to become something that’s celebrated and valued which is not something that happens everywhere. |
| Sally | Well on that nice positive note I think it might be time for your song actually Robbie, which is the Black Keys’ Gold on the Ceiling. |
|  | **MUSIC BY THE BLACK KEYS – GOLD ON THE CEILING** |
| Sally | Hello you’re with Sally, Shane, Gary, Robbie and Megan on Speak Up – Kōrerotia discussing disability rights and the Disability Strategy and this final segment we’re going to think a little bit more about the Strategy, placing it in context and where we’re hoping to go in New Zealand in the disability right space. So I guess I’ll guess I’ll just open the floor to whoever would like to talk about it, how do you think the Strategy is going to have a positive influence in the disability rights space? |
| Robbie | I’m super excited about it. I’m probably I think the youngest member on the reference group and in ten years’ time… I’m a student at the moment and I would like to think of myself as someone who is stepping into the future and inheriting this beautiful country of Aotearoa and to be involved in that and to be part of shaping the next ten years and what it’s going to be like for disabled Kiwis is an incredible opportunity and I think all of these conversations are just so exciting, we’re inheriting our future here, everything from down to the language that’s used, what’s talked about, how it’s going to be implement, what actions are going to take, this is exciting times. As we talked about before, we’ve made leaps and bounds and we’ve still got some improvements to make but this is it, this is it happening here and now and it’s an exciting future. |
| Gary | Thank you Robbie. I’m hoping too that the Strategy will deliver results for disabled people and in ten years’ time I can look back and say we did this, we did a good job, we set the future up well for the next generation of disabled people, actually I’m not that concerned about my generation because it is what it is but if we can set it up for perhaps the disabled people who aren’t born yet then they can access schooling, they can get a job, they can do what it is that they **10:19** their peers, everybody does. |
| Shane | Just to get treated the same as everyone else. |
| Gary | When we talk about the same it’s a good thing, it has to be good. |
| Sally | Gary, what are some of the actions or measures… I know this will be part of the Action Plan but have you got a sense of what some of those measures might be? |
| Gary | I thinking that we’ve got to look at employment, education, income, where people live and how they live, those are the kind of issues that I’ve been looking to. |
| Robbie | And I think also from my perspective when it comes to the outcomes framework, we want to know how disabled people are faring compared to non-disabled people and we know there are some significant gaps particularly in employment as well and I think we want to be able to reduce the gap between disabled and non-disabled people. But in addition to that within the disability community we want to know how different people are going. We know that disabled people are unique, no two people are the same, but we also know there are some groups of disabled people who often get left behind. So it’s not just about the 1.1 million [disabled New Zealanders] and how are they going, within that how are different groups of people doing when it comes to employment or education? Their lives might look quite different to others’ and that might be OK but I think we need to get that information as well. |
| Sally | I guess that’s one of the great challenges, isn’t it? Disability is such a very, very broad term. |
| Shane | Can I ask a point? Have you thought… but ever sort of working with the big major employment agencies like Cover Staff, Trade staff instead of working with Work Bridge? It just sort of came into my head now. |
| Megan | I don’t know whether those things have been specifically considered but I think one of the things that we’re trying to do in the new Strategy is to try and talk about disabled people being citizens or being New Zealand citizens and therefore being eligible for participating in the things that all other New Zealanders do. And I suppose if I’m thinking about your question Shane, some disabled people might need specialised supports and services within the employment area in order to be able to get a job but what about all of the other providers and all of the other opportunities for all other New Zealanders? Do disabled people get to participate and have a go at that stuff as well or is it always the special and different stuff and I think we need to look at both and that’s something we’re trying to do in the Strategy as well is to say hey, disabled people are part of New Zealand, they need to participate and be included in all of the programmes that are happening out there not just those for disabled people. |
| Shane | Just the reason I brought it up is you can only go with one sort of employment agency, if you’re linked with one you can’t go with another, that’s what I’ve heard is that right? |
| Megan | I don’t know. |
| Shane | I could be completely wrong. |
| Megan | I don’t know and I guess that comes to the point of how do we make sure that disabled people have choice and control over their lives and the supports they receive? And that’s what you guys are talking about with Enabling Good Lives and that’s what we’re trying to reinforce in this Strategy as well and it might be that it’s more than one agency works for you, you might have different needs. |
| Shane | Because if you go with the bigger ones…. |
| Robbie | Different needs at different times of life. |
| Shane | You can go with up to ten employment agencies like Trade Staff and Cover Staff so that seems a bit…. |
| Sally | Sort of building on what I think you might be talking about Shane is one question that was put to me that might be helpful to ask: The Strategy is very aspirational, as I guess strategies tend to be, but New Zealand doesn’t have any way of penalising people who don’t adhere to it. Would it be worth thinking about laws to try and put some of these concepts into legal practice? And I’d just be interested to here if you’ve got any thoughts on that? |
| Gary | We’ve got laws already that we should use but I think that puts disabled people… We’ve been talking for years and years and years about changing it and changing the perception of disabled people and if we can do that, that’s half of it, that’s a win. |
| Megan | That was something that came through definitely in the first phase of consultation is that when people are talking about problems and barriers that they face or their family members face or friends or whatever, ultimately when you kind of drill down and find out why on earth is this stuff happening it comes down to attitudes. So many of the challenges that we see is because still unfortunately too many people just don’t really understand what disabled people can and should do and they get treated differently and that is I think such an important issue that we need to address. |
| Sally | Great. Well I guess just to finish up then, we would really like this show to be used to encourage people to get involved in the Strategy so what are some of the things that people could be doing to get involved? |
| Megan | So a couple of things, we’re having some workshops around the country where people can come, tell us what they think about the Strategy, you can also hold your own workshop. I know some organisations are doing that, it might even be with a group of friends or family members, you want to get together and have a look at the Strategy and see whether or not it’s good enough from your perspective. |
| Shane | Great. |
| Megan | And also people can give us some feedback via email or do it online or you can upload a video as well, I know that can be really important for people who might be sign language users or sometimes just easier to speak into a camera rather than having to write stuff down so there’s a whole bunch of different ways people can have their feedback and you can find all of the information on our website which is [www.jointheconversation.nz](http://www.jointheconversation.nz). This consultation finishes on the 21st of August which is the Sunday so really, really encouraging as many people as possible to have their say and to let us know whether we’re on the right track. We think we’ve done a good job with developing this current draft Strategy but we’re getting heaps of really good feedback from people - so the more people who look at it and give us some ideas and suggestions the better I think from my perspective, it’ll help make sure it’s a really, really strong document. |
| Shane | Sounds like a great road trip you’re doing, I’ve been looking online and just about every region in New Zealand. |
| Megan | Yeah, we’re pretty busy! |
| Gary | Can I just encourage all disabled people and all people associated with our community to feedback because the reference group is only 15 people but we know that there’s 1.2 million disabled people in our country who can use this as a chance to give guidance for the next decade about what it should look like for disabled people in New Zealand. |
| Sally | I imagine as well as our population ages, these sorts of strategies will become even more important won’t they, they’ll touch even more people probably. |
| Shane | Most definitely |
| Megan | Definitely, yes. |
| Sally | OK well have you got any final comments? |
| Shane | We’re all on the waka together it’s just which way we’re going to go. At the moment we’re going sideways. |
| Gary | I think we’re going forward but I think this is a great opportunity for us to guide our own destiny. |
| Robbie | Nothing about us without us. |
| Sally | OK well that sounds like a really positive place to finish up and everybody who is listening, disabled or not, I really encourage you to have a look at the Strategy and as Megan was saying there’s numerous ways you can get involved so please consider it, it’s obviously worth doing. Thank you very much to all of you for coming in, kia ora. |