

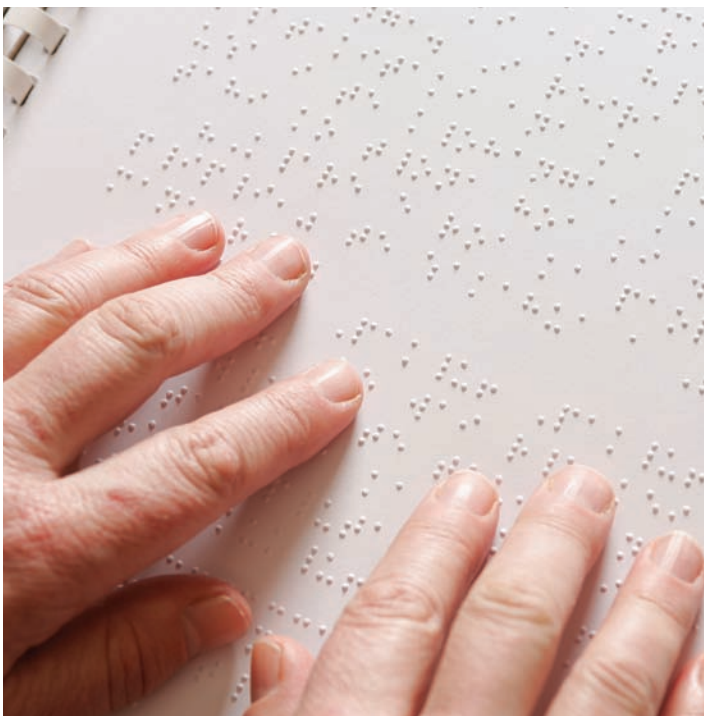
# Making disability rights real

## The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Disabled people can expect that their rights will be realised more quickly now that the Government has agreed to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Disability Convention).

The Disability Convention gives voice, visibility and legitimacy to issues facing disabled people. It recognises that all over the world, disabled people do not generally have the same access to human rights that other people do. It calls on governments to remove barriers that prevent disabled people from participating in society in the same way as other people.

The Disability Convention includes disabled people as those with “long-term, physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments”. Seventeen per cent of New Zealanders are disabled, a large section of society which can find it difficult to get access to a good education, find a good job, participate in the community and have control over the way they lead their lives. The Disability Convention can help change this.



## How will it work?

The government is responsible for implementing the Disability Convention. The Office for Disability Issues (ODI) is responsible for the government's implementation of the Convention with leadership provided by the Ministerial Committee on Disability Issues, which is chaired by the Minister for Disability Issues. The Convention requires that a mechanism be set up to monitor and report the Government's performance by independent agencies.

Three independent partners form the mechanism that will promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the Disability Convention. They are

- ◆ The Human Rights Commission
- ◆ The Ombudsmen
- ◆ The New Zealand Convention Coalition.

The three partners will:

- ◆ develop a framework for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Disability Convention
- ◆ report to the United Nations on the overall implementation of the Disability Convention and on specific issues
- ◆ advocate for specific issues important to disabled people
- ◆ provide advice on legislation policy and practice affecting disabled people
- ◆ produce an annual report to Parliament.



## The role of the Human Rights Commission

The United Nations recognises the Human Rights Commission as New Zealand's independent national human rights institution.

Disabled people are one of the most disadvantaged groups in New Zealand. Complaints and enquiries to the Commission from disabled people are consistently amongst the most serious and numerous the Commission receives. Improving their rights has been a key focus of the Commission in recent years.

The Commissioner with responsibility for disability rights issues will lead a programme to identify areas where disabled people are vulnerable to abuse or denial of their rights, and advocate for solutions and remedies from government agencies, the private sector and the community.

The Commission will also have a strong role promoting the Convention and the rights of disabled people, and help raise the profile of disabled people and the issues they face.

If you have a discrimination complaint or want more information contact:

**Human Rights Commission InfoLine**

**Free phone 0800 496 877**

**Email [info@hrc.co.nz](mailto:info@hrc.co.nz)**

**TXT 0210236 4253**

**[www.hrc.co.nz](http://www.hrc.co.nz)**

**Language Line and NZ Sign Language interpreter available.**

If you have a hearing or speech impairment, you can contact the Commission using the New Zealand Relay Service:  
**[www.nzrelay.co.nz](http://www.nzrelay.co.nz)**





## The role of the Ombudsmen

The Ombudsmen receive, and where appropriate, investigate complaints about the administrative conduct of state sector agencies.

When investigating a complaint the Ombudsmen consider whether the agency has acted reasonably and fairly. This assessment includes looking at whether the agency has taken the principles of the Disability Convention into account.

State sector agencies include:

- ◆ central government departments, such as the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC), Work and Income, the Ministry of Health and Child, Youth and Family
- ◆ local government agencies, such as city, district or regional councils
- ◆ school boards of trustees
- ◆ universities, polytechnics and other tertiary education institutions
- ◆ district health boards.



Ombudsmen act independently, are impartial and aim to recommend reasonable solutions that are in the public interest. Ombudsmen do not investigate every complaint they get, and must establish that they have the power to investigate and that an investigation is necessary. The Ombudsmen are able to investigate the administrative conduct of a state sector agency without receiving an individual complaint if there is an area of concern that needs to be addressed.

If you believe a state sector agency has acted unreasonably or unfairly in a way that affects disabled people, contact the Ombudsmen at:

Free phone 0800 802 602

[www.ombudsmen.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsmen.parliament.nz)





## The role of the New Zealand Convention Coalition

The New Zealand Convention Coalition was established in 2010 to ensure that disabled people had an active role in the monitoring and implementation of the Disability Convention. It consists of six national disabled peoples' organisations; the Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand inc, Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand inc, Disabled Persons Assembly, Ngā Hau E Whā, Ngāti Kāpo o Aotearoa and People First New Zealand inc–Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.

Disabled peoples' organisations (DPOs) are national community organisations that are led by disabled people to give voice to what they think and want to see in society.

Photos, from left front cover:

- Braille (Photo: Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind)
- Touch Compass Dance Trust (Photo: Raw Vision)
- Wairongo Ihimaera, sign language (Photo: Paul Wolfram)
- Achilles International NZ (Photo: Ben Watson/North Shore Times)
- At Haast, on 2700 km walk. (Photo: Tony Brunt/Hedgehog House)
- People First Employment Agreement (Photo: People First)
- Teresa Nicol (Photo: Special Olympics)
- Spark Centre (Photo: Spark Centre)
- Sarah Pivac-Alexander (Photo: Paul Wolfram)

As an independent monitoring mechanism, the Coalition ensures that disabled people have an active role in monitoring the rights of disabled people. The Coalition recognises the importance of sharing its work with the regional and global disability communities.

The key objective of the Coalition is to develop and coordinate a mechanism which allows for direct input from disabled people in the monitoring of disability rights as outlined in the Disability Convention: "Nothing about us without us."

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