



## The Chief Ombudsman's vision – to be accessible to all New Zealanders

### A message from the Chief Ombudsman

The reality of accessibility continues to be out of reach for many disabled New Zealanders. Disabled people face many barriers here in New Zealand. Barriers prevent disabled people living full and good lives.

My vision is that the Ombudsman will be fully accessible and inclusive to all disabled New Zealanders. This means that disabled people will be able to work here or with my staff in the way they need to, in a way they can understand. My Accessibility Strategy is a key part to achieving this vision. It will inform the mahi towards inclusivity so that everyone wishing or needing to engage with the Ombudsman, can.

My Accessibility Strategy aims to identify and break down the barriers preventing disabled people from engaging on an equal basis as others with the Ombudsman. I have created this Accessibility Strategy to support disabled people to access, use and understand the Ombudsman's services. The strategy will also provide opportunities and enhanced support structures for disabled people to continue to work here effectively. It will also weave in with my other key work strands as I strive for full diversity and inclusion.

The people who need the Ombudsman's services are sometimes the least likely to have heard of me – this needs to change. Te Rōpū Kaiārahi Hauātanga / my Disability Advisory Panel is assisting me to inform my work, practices and culture with disability concepts, perspectives and values that reflect New Zealand today.

I am proud of the work my staff do to assist me with protecting and monitoring disability rights in New Zealand under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. My staff take part in training on disability rights and how to create accessible documents. But with nearly a quarter of New Zealand's population identifying as disabled, there is more to be done. My Accessibility Strategy commits to actively engaging disabled people in decision-making processes, with the aim of strengthening my leadership role in the accessibility space.

I will be monitoring and reporting on the progress of the Accessibility Strategy to ensure disabled people's perspectives are at the heart of this work.

Making accessibility a reality means the Ombudsman must use accessible practices. Accessibility means putting people at the centre of the Ombudsman's work – all New Zealanders. It is the right and fair thing to do.

## Overview of Accessibility Strategy

### Vision and principles

#### Vision

The Ombudsman is fully accessible to disabled New Zealanders and is regarded as a leader in the area of accessibility. The Ombudsman will lead by example to demonstrate that full accessibility can be achieved.

#### Guiding principles

1. The Accessibility Strategy Working and Governance Groups have a clear mandate from the Chief Ombudsman to break down the barriers to ensure disabled people have equal opportunities to engage with and gain equitable employment at the Office.
2. The Disability Convention, and ensuring the rights of New Zealanders are respected and upheld, is placed at the heart of the Accessibility Strategy through understanding disability concepts, perspectives and values.
3. Giving credence to the disability community's mantra of '*nothing about us without us*', we work with the Chief Ombudsman's Disability Advisory Panel/Te Rōpū Kaiārahi Hauātanga to better inform and design our work, and infuse our work practices and work culture with disability concepts, perspectives and values.

#### Goals

The overarching goal of the Accessibility Strategy is to break down the barriers that prevent disabled people from engaging equitably with the Office of the Ombudsman. Realising the vision and overarching goal of the Accessibility Strategy requires these four goals:

1. **An accessible Ombudsman's office**  
Reduce barriers for disabled people accessing, using and learning about our services.
2. **An inclusive employment process**  
Provide opportunities for disabled people to obtain and maintain employment at our office.
3. **Encourage disabled people to engage with our office**
4. **Monitor and report on the progress of the Accessibility Strategy Action Plan**

Actions to achieve these goals and the timeline for each are set out in the [Accessibility Strategy Action Plan](#).

#### Rationale

The rationale for the Accessibility Strategy includes to:

- ensure we align with our internal values that our true north is to guard the mana and dignity of all people, we all matter, our focus is on fairness and that we believe we can make a difference;
- ensure compliance with existing laws and the potential for future Accessibility legislation, which would legally enforce many of the components of the Accessibility Strategy;
- set an example, demonstrating a commitment to disability rights and what can be achieved which is meaningful;
- ensure engagement of disabled people internally and externally to fulfil Article 4(3) of the Disability Convention, providing that governments should actively involve disabled people in decision-making processes;
- ensure we align with the guiding principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi / The Treaty of Waitangi<sup>1</sup> (Te Tiriti);
- ensure all our services and information is available to all New Zealanders, and accommodation is in place to ensure and promote inclusion; and
- value and promote diversity within the workplace.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Ombudsman acknowledges there are two texts with different meanings.