

kia tū tahi tātou

**nzdsn**

New Zealand Disability Support Network



## NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2024



NZDSN recently wrote to Carolyn Tremain, CEO of Tenancy Services within MBIE over the lack of an 'easy read' version of their Residential Tenancy Agreement template. We pointed out that 24% of the New Zealand population has a disability; that New Zealand has recognised the importance of disability and the needs of disabled people as an early signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the New Zealand Disability Strategy and the government strategy Enabling Good Lives. We then expressed

frustration that with a significant number of disabled people residing in rental accommodation, they have to rely upon others to explain and advise on Residential Tenancy Agreements content and complexities. The Tenancy Services website offers no less than twenty-one different language variations of the Residential Tenancy Agreement, but not an easy read version suitable for disabled people. Nor a video explanation with captions suitable for disabled people.

We hope that by bringing this matter to her attention, the Ministry will acknowledge its obligations to disabled New Zealanders and confirm with us when an easy-read version of the Residential Tenancy Agreement will be available via their Tenancy Services website as a simple-but-important priority.



Over the past two weeks, disability has finally been the focus of the media and (importantly) of government. For the wrong reasons, mind you. The state of funding for our new Ministry, Whaikaha, has been problematic since their day of establishment. To get to the point where they were within hours of running out of support funding is criminal for all concerned. This isn't a party-political issue. This problem of funding in our sector is decades old and spans multiple governments of all colours. Isn't it time it was sorted out?

The introduction of purchasing guidelines for those seeking to utilise Equipment Management Services and for those accessing support via Individualised Funding packages is not unreasonable. It is helpful to have boundaries, so long as they are realistic. No, the issue here was the manner in which the announcement was made – following an assurance in January to the sector that Whaikaha would consult, partner with and be transparent, the announcement lacked any consultation, partnership or transparency and caught everyone off guard. While apologies abound, it remains a serious dent to Whaikaha's credibility and the government's recognition of disabled people and the cost of supporting them. In complete contradiction of this is the fact that there is no comment or withdrawal of the purchasing guidelines for EMS and IF, even though it is bleedingly obvious to many there are problems.

NZDSN was heartened to hear in a meeting with Minister Simmonds that she and the Ministry were open to engaging on any issues or 'unintended consequences' from the guidelines. Better late than never.



## He Aka Hui | Equitable Access to Wellbeing - Addressing Diagnostic Overshadowing for Autistic People and People with an Intellectual Disability

The [Equitable Access to Wellbeing Framework](#) (EAW) is a shared framework for the disability and mental health and addiction workforces providing support for autistic people and people with learning disability who experience mental distress and addiction.

In 2023, Te Pou hosted a hui presenting the framework. The response to the hui was overwhelmingly positive. This year, we will be hosting further hui. The first is being held on 10 April.

Through the session, we will explore the concept of Diagnostic Overshadowing and discuss strategies to avoid attributing people's mental distress to their disability. We will also talk about the EAW framework and how it can be used to provide better support for disabled people experiencing mental distress.

Speakers include Dr David Bathgate (Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist – Southern) and Gabby Hogg (Specialist Autistic Consumer Advisor).

The audience for this hui are the disability and health workforces.

[Register for the online hui - 10 April 10.30am-12.30pm here.](#)



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

## Employment Support Contracts

After months of chasing MSD on the status of Employment Support contracts, due to expire in June this year, we are advised that "...regarding extensions of the contracts it is expected that providers will hear from their Relationship Manager managers in a few weeks. We are unable to share anything further at this stage."



**AutismCRC**

We have just launched the 2024 Governance Programme, and that applications are open to autistic adults in Aotearoa New Zealand. We ran the Programme in 2019, but at this time was only open to Australian residents – if you want to read about what we did, the evaluation report can be found [here](#).

As with all of our Sylvia Rodger Academy Programmes, this is by-and-for autistic adults. It is open to anyone interested in taking a role on a board or other governance body, such as an advisory council, and would like to develop their knowledge and skills in corporate governance. Participants will explore topics including board director duties and responsibilities, risk management and strategic planning, financial literacy, and effective governance. The Programme also provides an opportunity to complete a board observation and to network with other participants and current board directors. For more information about the Programme, please visit: <https://www.autismcrc.com.au/sylvia-rodger-academy/governance>.

## ...and finally, on Pay Equity!

In short:

- While a meeting has been scheduled, there is no further movement to date on the first Care and Support Worker (CSW) Pay Equity Claim.
- Employers have been considering an offer to settle this claim and extend out to all employers across the four sectors, but it is early days
- Unions have filed for mediation against the employers in the first claim in an effort to progress settlement, although there are no real grounds for this
- No real progress on the further two CSW claims
- No real progress on the Front-Line Manager Claim

## Media – NZDSN in the Spotlight

### **If there's money for landlord tax cuts, there's money for fair pay for disability workers**

Disability support providers are calling on the Government to show the same support for disability workers as it does to landlords, says Disability Support Network CEO Peter Reynolds.

"The pay equity settlement for care and support workers has been frozen for months, with the Government saying it can't afford to fund it. So, imagine our surprise to see the Government find \$3b for landlords. That's more than enough to deliver pay equity for the 60,000 care and support workers.

"Our workers are not multi-millionaire mega-landlords, but that doesn't mean they should be forgotten and ignored by this Government. Hundreds of thousands of disabled Kiwis and their whanau rely on the help they get from care and support workers.

"Disability support providers want fair pay for our workers, which they deserve, and will help to ease the chronic staffing issues many providers face. But our funding comes from the Government, so pay equity can only be delivered if the Government stumps up.

"The excuse that the Government doesn't have enough money doesn't hold water. If there's enough money for tax cuts for landlords, there's enough money for disability workers to have the fair pay they deserve. It's time for the Government to deliver," says Mr Reynolds.

### **Disability sector facing death by a thousand cuts to fund tax cuts**

Cuts to some support services and equipment disabled people can purchase to help with their lives and provide respite for them and their carers amongst other costs is part of an ongoing series of cuts that are undermining the entire disability sector, says New Zealand Disability Support Network (NZDSN) CEO Peter Reynolds.

NZDSN is a network of not-for-profit organisations and some for-profit NGOs that provide support services to disabled people, mainly through contracts with the government.

"The sudden ban on things like respite funding and other options to meet the needs of disabled people comes on top of the reduction in benefit increases, the below-inflation minimum wage increase, the removal of half price public transport for under 25s, and the upcoming reinstatement of prescription charges. Each of these penny-pinching moves adds more pressure to disabled people, their families and those who provide their support during the cost-of-living crisis.

"We fear this is just the beginning, with rumours of a funding freeze for frontline disability services in the coming Budget. Disability support services are badly underfunded already. While recent years have seen the disability support services budget grow 10% a year on average, this has struggled, and often failed, to keep up with increasing demand, increasing staff costs and other cost-of-living factors. The sector is already on its knees; a funding freeze would effectively be a deep cut that would see some support services under intolerable pressure.

"On top of that, there has been no progress from the government in settling the pay equity claims for care and support workers. Providers want to be able to pay their workers fairly and offer attractive wages to address the workforce shortage. But the government needs to provide the funding, and it is failing to do so.

"The Government cannot plead poverty, not when it is about to pass a law to give \$2.9b to landlords. It is not right that disabled New Zealanders, their whanau, and the workers and providers that support them should face cutbacks while such largesse is lavished on landlords," says Mr Reynolds.

# Creativity & Innovation



**Be part of something special! NZDSN Conference 2024 – 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> June 2024, Takina Events Centre, Wellington**

Expressions of Interest are now open from NZDSN members to present workshops on innovations in their services. Registrations for conference will be opening this week.

*Any questions on items in this Newsletter, please contact NZDSN at [admin@nzdsn.org.nz](mailto:admin@nzdsn.org.nz) or the CEO directly at [ceo@nzdsn.org.nz](mailto:ceo@nzdsn.org.nz) or 027 534 6472*