

### **Reference: Provision of Changing Places facilities in Hamilton**

I am writing in support of the provision of Changing Places facilities in Hamilton.

The New Zealand Standard (NZS) 4121:2001 accessible toilets and showers required in places where the public may be admitted (whether for free or on payment of a charge), enables many disabled people to undertake everyday activities like other New Zealanders. However, NZS 4121:2001 does not meet the needs of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and/or other physical disabilities. Such impairments require additional accommodations to make it possible for the disabled person and their support person to comfortably and safely use toilet, shower and changing facilities.

Changing Places facilities in public spaces such as shopping centres and recreational and sporting complexes are designed for people with more restrictive impairments (for example, spina bifida, motor neurone disease and multiple sclerosis). Standard accessible toilets do not meet the needs of these people. Each Changing Places toilet provides:

- a height adjustable adult-sized changing bench
- a tracking hoist system, or mobile hoist if this is not possible
- enough space in the changing area for the disabled person and up to two carers
- a safe and clean environment.

The lack of Changing Places facilities in Hamilton city means that people with more restrictive impairments are not able to get out and about in the community and engage in everyday activities like shopping, enjoying time in a public park or going to see a movie. In other words, the lack of more accessible toilets to accommodate the needs of Hamilton residents with more restrictive impairments, prevents them from participating in and contributing to the Hamilton community on an equal basis with both non-disabled and disabled people with less restrictive impairments. Being unable to access their local community can also lead to social isolation and loneliness for people with more restrictive mobility.

The Government launched the New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026 in November last year. The vision underpinning the Strategy is a non-disabling society, that is, a society where disabled people, including those with more restrictive impairments, have an equal opportunity to achieve their aspirations and goals. The Government has confidence in the new Strategy guiding the work of government agencies, local government bodies and non-government organisations for the next ten years.

There are eight outcomes in the Strategy, all of which are relevant to ensuring that disabled people have the opportunity to live the best quality of life they can. One of the eight outcomes is accessibility, that is, disabled people being able to access all places, services and information with ease and dignity and on an equal basis with others. The provision of Changing Places facilities in Hamilton for residents with more restrictive impairments would be an excellent example of the progressive realisation of the accessibility outcome in the Strategy. Such provision would also be consistent with one of the key areas in Hamilton's Disability Action Plan 2016-2017, Facilities, Services and Access.

Should you wish to discuss the contents of this statement further, you are welcome to contact me.

Yours sincerely



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