



# INFORMATION TO MAKE A SUBMISSION

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES BILL – DSS BILL





## Note

The information contained in this resource has been developed through consultation with New Zealand Down Syndrome Association (NZDSA) members and the Parent/Family/Whānau Network, as well as the shared development of key messages through stakeholder meetings, and through resources kindly made available by a range of organisations.

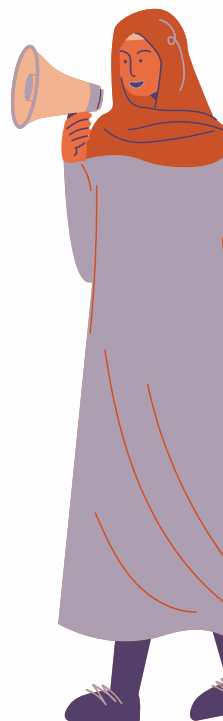
These include CCS Disability Action, the Disabled Persons Assembly (DPA), NZ Disability Support Network, National Enabling Good Lives networks, Regional Enabling Good Lives groups, Carers NZ, Family Leadership Alliance, People First New Zealand, Disability Connect, Nick Ruane, and Dr Huhana Hickey. Links to these sources are provided on the resource page.





The Minister says the Bill will improve "consistency, fairness, transparency and sustainability."

However, the NZDSA  
is  
concerned about the Bill.



# Overview of the Bill



People First have created an Easy Read version of the Bill.  
You can read here. [Easy-Read-May-2026-factsheet-DSS-Bill.docx](#)





This Bill should work to make DSS easier to use.

DSS says this Bill does 3 main things:



- makes a **clear legal foundation** for DSS
- sets out what it means for a disabled person to **employ** a family member to give them care
- answers the decision by the Supreme Court about how paid family care works.





The Bill proposes to establish a statutory basis for Disability Support Services, including:

- who may be eligible for supports
- the principles and purposes of the system
- assessment and decision-making processes
- the role of “natural supports” such as family and whānau
- powers relating to funding, allocation, and administration of supports
- oversight and operational functions within the disability support system

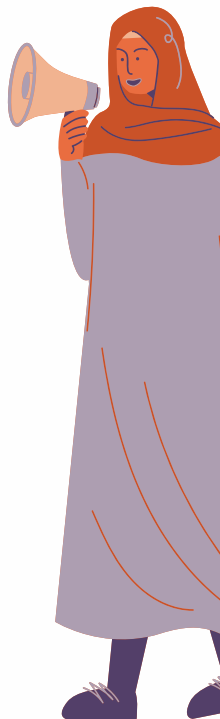
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**A significant and concerning feature of the Bill is that many detailed operational settings are not included directly in the legislation itself.**



# Collated Community Feedback

- advocating for a full redesign of the Bill  
or
- calling for significant changes before it becomes law



# Collated concerns about the Bill



1. Lack of meaningful co-design and consultation
2. Key decisions left to secondary legislation and ministerial discretion
3. Absence of key rights frameworks and principles in the Bill
4. The role and interpretation of “natural supports”
5. Family carers deserve recognition and fair employment rights now, not later
6. Means testing, eligibility testing, and future funding risks
7. Lack of safeguards, appeals, and accountability mechanisms
8. Risk of rationing and unmet need through a contribution-based model

**The following section outlines each of these concerns in more detail.**





# Concerns

## 1. Lack of meaningful co-design and consultation

- A lack of meaningful co-design and consultation with disabled people and their whānau before the Bill was introduced.
- The Bill has not been developed through genuine co-design with disabled people, tāngata whaikaha, whānau hauā, family carers, or Disabled People's Organisations.
- Article 4(3) of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires governments to actively involve disabled people in developing legislation that affects them. This obligation has not been met.
- The disability community has long advocated the principle of "Nothing About Us Without Us".
- The compressed timeframe has created significant accessibility barriers. Time is an accessibility issue.

# Concerns

## 2. Key decisions left to secondary legislation and ministerial discretion

- Important detail is being left to future policy and secondary legislation.
- Secondary legislation means that future Ministers can change the rules through regulation, without the same level of parliamentary debate and public submission required for primary legislation. Most of the substantive detail, including who is eligible, what supports are funded, and how decisions are made, is left to secondary legislation.
- Broad discretion is left to operational decision-making processes.



# Concerns

## 3. Absence of key rights frameworks and principles in the Bill

- Absence of any reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Does not uphold the Treaty of Waitangi.
- No reference to the Enabling Good Lives approach.
- Undermines disabled people's rights to choose who provides their care.
- The Bill "**appears to redefine disability support from a rights-based support system toward a limited, financially managed contribution system.**" Dr Huhana Hickey.






# Concerns

## 4. The role and interpretation of “natural supports”

- Clause 8, the “family first” clause, implies that disabled people must exhaust support from family members before they are entitled to government-funded care.
- The Bill places unrealistic reliance on family carers and unpaid caregiving, despite many carers already experiencing significant financial pressure, exhaustion, and burnout.
- Increased unrealistic expectations of unpaid care create a real risk of harm to both disabled people and their whānau, particularly where carers are ageing, unwell, or unable to continue providing intensive support.
- Disabled people have the right to choose who provides their care and support. Family care should be a choice, not an expectation.


# Concerns

## 5. Family carers deserve recognition and fair employment rights now, not later

- Family carers provide significant support that enables many disabled people to live in their communities, yet the Bill fails to recognise their wellbeing needs.
  - The well-being of carers directly impacts the quality of support they can provide.
  - Supporting carers is therefore essential to supporting disabled people.
  - Family carers providing substantial levels of care (40 hours or more per week) should be entitled to fair wages, holiday pay, KiwiSaver contributions, parental leave, and other employment protections.
  - Clauses 12–15 limit the ability of family carers to pursue employment claims through the courts, leaving carers without adequate legal protections or avenues for redress.
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# Concerns

## 6. Means testing, eligibility testing, and future funding risks

- Clause 11 establishes the legal architecture for future means testing and eligibility testing.
  - The Bill does not introduce these measures directly, but a future Minister could introduce them through regulation without requiring a full parliamentary vote.
  - Means testing has never applied to disability support in Aotearoa New Zealand.
  - ACC is not means tested. Public hospital care is not means tested. Public school education is not means tested. New Zealand Superannuation is not means tested.
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# Concerns

## 7. Lack of safeguards, appeals, and accountability mechanisms

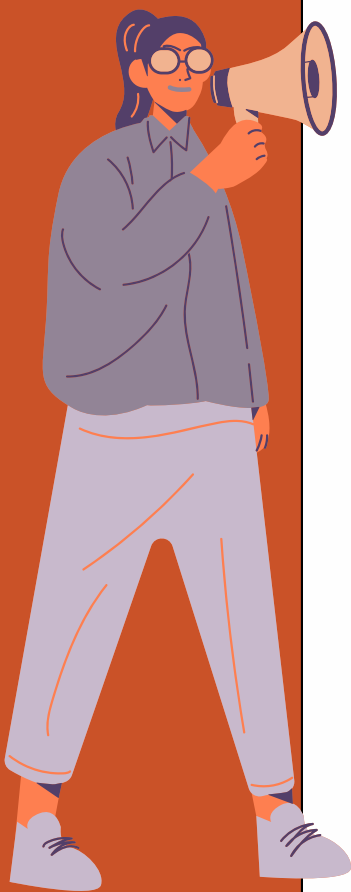
- The structure of this Bill matters as much as its stated intent.
- The Bill does not provide sufficient clarity around safeguards, appeals processes, certainty, or rights protections for disabled people and their whānau.
- The Bill does not clearly establish independent review pathways for decisions relating to eligibility, funding, or support allocation.
- It is unclear how programmes established through regulation will be monitored, evaluated, and publicly reported.
- Without robust safeguards, review mechanisms, transparency requirements, and accountability measures, there is a risk of inconsistent decision-making and reduced public oversight.

# Concerns

## 8. Risk of rationing and unmet need through a contribution-based model

- **The framing of support as a “contribution” rather than a right risks shifting disability support away from a rights-based system.**
- It may shift responsibility for unmet support needs from government-funded services onto disabled people, their whānau, and unpaid carers.
- There is no clear assurance that assessed need will be met or that disabled people will have a right to the support they require.
- This approach risks normalising a capped or rationed system where support is limited by available funding rather than rights and individual need.





This Bill will affect real people in real communities across Aotearoa.

Submissions are an important way to ensure disabled people, tāngata whaikaha, whānau hauā, and families are heard in the parliamentary process.



**Even a short submission makes a difference.**



# Resources

## Link to the DSS Bill

<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2026/312/en/latest/>

## Easy Read and Accessible Information

- Main DSS Bill information and Easy Read resources:

[www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/improving-dss/dss-bill/factsheet](http://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/improving-dss/dss-bill/factsheet)

- Easy Read PDF (May 2026 factsheet):

<https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/assets/Easy-Read-May-2026-factsheet-DSS-Bill.pdf>

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# How to Make a Submission


## Write a submission

- It does not need to be long
- Use an existing submission template exactly as it is
- Personalise or adapt it to reflect your own experiences and views
- Combine sections from different templates
- Add your own comments, stories, or concerns

Your lived experience is important. You do not need to be a policy expert.

## Oral Submissions

You can also request to speak to the Select Committee about your submission



# Templates and Advocacy Resources



## Submission templates and guidance:

- NZ Down Syndrome Association website: <https://nzdsa.org.nz/>
  - Disability advocate Dr Huhana Hickey – submission guidance and template (referenced in advocacy materials above) . [This is the link to the template.](#)
  - New Zealand Disability Support Network: Scroll down to Use our submission templates
  - <https://nzdsn.org.nz/make-your-voice-heard-in-the-dss-bill-select-committee/>
  - Disability advocate Nick Ruane – submission “cheat sheet” and guidance (Substack article referenced in advocacy materials above) [Read Nick Ruane's Substack article.](#)
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## How to Make a Submission

- CCS Disability Action: Scroll down to download our submission guide <https://www.ccsdisabilityaction.org.nz/news/disability-support-services-bill>

## Additional Information and Perspectives

- Disability Connect submission resource: <https://disabilityconnect.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/submission-on-the-disability-support-services-bill-may-2026.pdf>
- Disabled Persons Assembly (DPA): <https://www.dpa.org.nz/news-and-information/latest-news/disability-support-services-bill/>
- Video resource: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmW8\\_ljgHIA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmW8_ljgHIA)
- SAMS social media and updates (general reference): <https://www.sams.org.nz/>



# Link to make your submission

[https://www3.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/make-a-submission/document/54SCSSC\\_SCF\\_E6D8596D-C177-486B-CCF2-08DEB47E5457/disability-support-services-bill](https://www3.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/make-a-submission/document/54SCSSC_SCF_E6D8596D-C177-486B-CCF2-08DEB47E5457/disability-support-services-bill)



# Encourage Others to Participate

You can take action to influence change to the DSS Bill by:

- Encouraging whānau, friends, and community members to make submissions
- Sharing information about how to submit

Visiting or contacting your local MP to raise concerns





PLEASE SHARE THIS  
RESOURCE WITH  
YOUR NETWORKS

ACT  
NOW!

ACT  
NOW!



**NZDSA**  
NEW ZEALAND DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION