



***Disability in New Zealand:
Access and Inclusion for All***

Green Party election priority

*Cleaner Environment
Fairer Society
Smarter Economy*

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Introduction

Nearly one in four people in New Zealand live with a disability.¹ The Green Party is committed to building a fully inclusive society where disabled people have the same ability to participate and contribute as anyone else. Currently, disabled people face significant barriers to participation in many areas including employment, housing, transport and information.

As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the New Zealand Government has a specific responsibility to ensure disabled people can participate and contribute to society.

A fully inclusive, accessible society benefits disabled people, their whānau and friends and society as a whole. Creating an inclusive society where disabled people are not blocked from participating will require political will and commitment at all levels.

The Green Party values disabled people's participation in society and places a high priority on inclusion and access – whether it is watching TV or being employed. The steps we are proposing here will help build a fairer, more inclusive society that benefits everyone.



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Summary

The Green Party will:

1. **Improve employment outcomes for disabled people.** We will increase Job Support and Mainstream funding by \$6.8 million and require the public sector to provide leadership in employing people with disabilities.
2. **Amend the Broadcasting Act and Telecommunications Act to require targets for phasing in captioning for all broadcast and on-demand TV.** We will set a target of 100 percent captioning for Television New Zealand (TV1 and TV2) by 2017 and TV3 by 2020.
3. **Support disabled people into home ownership.** We will extend the Green Party Home for Life Progressive Ownership package to disabled people who are first home buyers.
4. **Invest up to \$3.5 million into the Total Mobility scheme.** We will increase mobility and access to independent travel for disabled people and undertake a full review, with the view of implementing a nationally consistent and available scheme.

*Access and **inclusion** for people with disabilities is vital to building a **fairer** society for everyone.*

- Metiria Turei, Green Party Co-leader

Situation

Disabled people face systematic and casual barriers that prevent their full participation in society. This affects not only people with disabilities but also their families, friends and the wider community.

Employment

Disabled people are seriously under-represented in paid employment with a 59 percent employment rate compared to non-disabled New Zealanders at 76 percent.² While a majority of people with disabilities need no extra assistance with workplace modifications and support, about 19 percent do.³ Many disabled people enter the workforce via part-time or temporary work. Currently job support funding is restricted to full-time work (20 hours or more a week) which restricts disabled people attempting to enter the workforce via part-time, temporary or voluntary employment.

The public sector is the biggest employer in New Zealand with over 36,000 front line staff. Currently, most government departments do not have specific departmental initiatives for actively identifying and recruiting people with disabilities into the potential candidate pool. That means many disabled people find themselves excluded before the interview stage.⁴

A survey of the public service sector by the Human Rights Commission, in 2013, showed that of the 25 departments who collected disability data (out of 29), eight had no staff who said they had a disability. The average rate of employment with a disability was 3.7 percent and ranged from 0 to 10 percent.⁵

In other countries, the public service is instead taking a leadership role. The Australian Public Service through the 2012 policy 'As One' seeks to target, recruit, employ and retain talented disabled Australians.⁶ The New Zealand public service, by not taking action on this issue, is losing out on an opportunity to tap into the skills and talents of disabled New Zealanders.

Captioning

Currently 380,000 New Zealanders are deaf or hearing impaired.⁷ This is over 8.5 percent of the population. For many, accessing information on television is a significant challenge as a large proportion of programmes on television are not captioned.

Many countries have mandatory requirements for captioning but New Zealand does not. Of the 1232 hours per week available of free to air television, only 250 hours are captioned.⁸ While this accounts for about 25 percent of all programmes, captioning varies widely from channel to channel; between 0-70 percent captioning for free to air television.⁹ At present, despite the increasing importance of accessing digital information on-line, no on-demand services are captioned.¹⁰

Most existing captioning is publicly funded by taxpayers to the tune of \$2.4 million a year.¹¹ Most other countries including the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Australia have much higher rates of captioning (99 percent, 99 percent and 85 percent respectively).¹² All of these countries have legislation that requires broadcasters to be responsible for providing captioning.

Home Ownership

Home ownership is another area where disabled people face significant barriers. In New Zealand, only 52 percent of disabled adults own or partly own a home.¹³ The rate of home ownership for those with disabilities from birth is even lower at 27 percent.¹⁴ This is significantly less than the 64.8 percent for the average population.¹⁵

Independent Travel

Some disabled people have limited access to travel independently and safely. Independent access to transport is essential to be able to function effectively in society. The Total Mobility Scheme provides subsidised taxi services for those who are not able to easily use the public transport system.¹⁶ However, 70 percent of disabled adults and 78 percent of parents or caregivers of disabled children had no knowledge of the scheme.¹⁷ Further, while the scheme provides some relief, many were still finding it unaffordable to use the service given the rising costs of taxi services.¹⁸

Solution

The Green Party places a high priority on removing barriers to participation for disabled people.

1. Improving employment outcomes and public sector employment

While a majority of disabled people do not require specific workplace modifications or support in order to be employed, about 19 percent need access to support funds.

Mainstream funding provides subsidies, training, and other support to help people with significant disabilities get work. As of July 2014, Mainstream funding has been rolled into Improved Employment and Social Outcomes Support Multi-Category Appropriation. Job Support funding provides support funds for disabled people going into, and already in, employment to cover costs such as New Zealand Sign Language interpreters and electronic note-taking.

The Green Party will reinstate Mainstream as a standalone package and increase funding to Mainstream by \$2.4 million to \$6 million a year, and to Job Support funding by \$4.4 million to \$12 million a year. The total increase of funding in this package will be \$6.8 million a year.

Eligibility for Job Support funding will be expanded to cover part-time, temporary and volunteer work to open up new pathways to employment for disabled people.

The Green Party will also review funding arrangements for vocational support organisations to ensure that such contracts are fair, and are regularly adjusted to cover cost of living increases.

The public sector needs to lead the way in being a positive employer for disabled people. We will amend the State Sector Act to place a stronger emphasis on the responsibility of the state sector to give disabled people an equal chance to get a job.

In order to increase employment of people with disabilities within the public sector, the Green Party will:

1. Instruct the State Services Commission, in conjunction with the Office for Disability Issues and Disabled Person's Organisations, to work with government departments and employers holding government contracts to develop best practice guidelines and identify pathways to employment and retention for people with disabilities.
2. Require public sector employers to set internal targets for employment and retention of people with disabilities in consultation with the Office for Disability Issues.

Pathways to employment and employment targets will be reviewed after three years to assess progress.

*Improving employment, social **participation**, home ownership and mobility are just the **first steps** in the right direction.*

- Mojo Mathers, Green Party disability issues spokesperson

2. Captioning

Current levels of captioning across a range of media are far too low, limiting access to information, news, sports and popular culture for many New Zealanders.

The Green Party will amend the Broadcasting Act and the Telecommunications Act to ensure regulations are introduced for mandatory captioning by broadcasters of both broadcast and on-demand TV.

These regulations will establish a quota system, phased in over time, for broadcasters to provide captioning with the goal of achieving 100 percent captioning by 2017 for state-owned Television New Zealand (TV1 and TV2) and by 2020 for TV3. All other broadcasters will have targets and time-frames set out on a case by case basis as a proportion of their profits.

We will also introduce quotas for audio-description and New Zealand Sign Language content.

Once 100 percent captioning has been achieved for TVNZ and TV3, current funding for captioning for the networks will be phased out. The funding will instead be used for monitoring of captioning for quality control.

The Green Party will also require any film, TV programme, video or DVD resource produced with public funding (whether from NZ on Air funding or via departmental grants) to be tied to a requirement to provide closed captioning – whether on-air or other mediums.

3. Home Ownership

In 2013, the Green Party launched its 'Home for Life' package, which gives families more security around housing. Part of this package, Progressive Ownership, provides a pathway to home ownership for families who do not have a deposit or income for a commercial mortgage.

Progressive Ownership is open to families with dependent children. The Green Party will extend eligibility to include disabled people who are first home buyers. This will work in conjunction with other criteria such as income levels to ensure it benefits disabled people who need the help the most.

This package will see the Crown build affordable accessible homes worth around \$300,000 on average. Disabled people will enter into an agreement where the Crown owns all the equity in the house. They will pay a basic payment to cover the Crown's cost of capital (\$200 per week on a \$300,000 house at a Government bond rate of 3.5 percent) and

make additional, variable purchases of equity in the property from the Crown at the value of the house when the agreement was signed. Over time, the entire equity in the property could be bought by that person and they will own it outright. Or they can cash-up that equity at any time by selling it back to the Crown.

Operational costs will be minimal. For example, Housing New Zealand, currently, spending \$1,000-\$2,000 per house on administration, and rates are another \$2,000 per house on average.¹⁹

4. Increase to Total Mobility

The current Total Mobility scheme provides subsidies for taxis for people with disabilities. It is funded in part by regional councils and in part by Government. The current Government contribution, which totals \$14 million, can range anywhere from 40-60 percent in each region.²⁰ The Green Party will increase the Government contribution by 25 percent; adding another \$3.5 million into the scheme.



Improving participation is just a first step in the right direction – Mojo Mathers.

An increase in funding will be tied to a commitment to review the scheme. The review will aim to implement a nationally consistent and

available scheme. There will also be a focus on increasing awareness and usability of the scheme.

The Green Party is also committed to improving accessibility of public transport.

Benefits

There is a significant cost to society if we continue to lock disabled people out of full participation. This cost will only increase as our population ages.

The opportunity cost of workforce exclusion of people with disabilities alone is \$11.7 billion in New Zealand.²¹ There is a large pool of talent that is currently untapped and New Zealand needs to provide the required support to help people with disabilities gain meaningful employment. A best practice model from government will serve as encouragement for the private sector to follow suit.

Access to information, news and popular culture is vital to participation and social and mental well-being and a sense of belonging. This affects educational and employment prospects as well as social interactions. For far too long New Zealand captioning levels have lagged behind other countries. Captioning also benefits the wider community as 80 percent of those who use captioning do not have a hearing loss.²²

Owning one's own home provides for security and stability. This is especially important for disabled people who are often in paid employment for shorter times and may have specific housing needs.

Public transport is often not accessible in many regions and many disabled people are not able to drive their own cars. Access to private transportation is vital to supporting active participation in our community.

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