



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA



12 SEP 2017

Dear 

On 7 August 2017, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *Regarding Disability Action Plan Priority 11, a copy of the DPO stocktake report and details of any other discussions between ODI and DPOs on this topic*

Since 2011, the Disability Action Plan has set out priorities for action that directly impact on disabled people. Since 2014, the Disability Action Plan has been jointly governed by six Disabled People's Organisations working together with government agencies. Each action in the Disability Action Plan has a lead agency, which is responsible for implementation and reporting progress.

The Office for Disability Issues has a coordination and support role with the Disability Action Plan, which includes collating monitoring reports several times a years. The Office for Disability Issues is not responsible for implementing the Disability Action Plan.

The monitoring reports are intended to be available on the Office for Disability Issues website. Due to a change in the format of the reporting earlier this year, there was a delay in updating the progress information under each action. However, the July 2017 updates on action progress are now available on the website.

In the Disability Action Plan 2014-2018, action 11A was led by the Disabled People's Organisation Blind Citizens. All activity on the action was completed in 2016, following a meeting between the six Disabled People's Organisations, the Office for Disability Issues, the Electoral Commission, and the Department of Internal Affairs. The end product of the action will be a report prepared by Blind Citizens. A draft of this report is attached, titled '*Promoting Participation By Disabled People in Political and Civic Processes*', dated August 2016.

The document titled '*Report to DPOs on Action 11A of the Disability Action Plan*', dated March 2017, outlines the state of the report. The report needs to be finalised by the Disabled People's Organisations, which the Ministry understands will be a subject in their upcoming discussions.

You will note that the names of some individuals have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Brian Coffey', with a stylized, flowing script.

Brian Coffey
Director, Office for Disability Issues

Report to DPOs on Action 11A of the Disability Action Plan Disabled People Access to Political Life

Clive Lansink

March 2017

I am currently the DPO lead for this action, which states: DPOs to complete a stocktake of what are the areas needing the most attention and which will make the biggest difference to promote disabled people participating in political and civic processes. ODI will convene a discussion with DPOs and relevant government agencies to discuss priorities from the DPOs stocktake and identify possible actions.

1 What Happened

Essentially this action has been completed, but it still needs some final work to completely sign it off. Attached to this report is a report I prepared around August last year which I hoped would be the final report on this action. It describes the steps we followed to complete this action and the outcomes of meetings to look at actions that could be taken to improve access by disabled people to political life.

9(2)(a) - Privacy of another

At first I intended to simply submit the original version of this attached report to the DPOs at our August meeting, and in fact I did send it to [redacted] with this in mind. But then it occurred to us that this report included outcomes of a discussion held on 11 May between DPOs and Government officials, including people from the Electoral Commission and Department of Internal Affairs. We decided it would be better to first pass the report by them in case of any difference of view over the outcomes. I did this on 15 August, which was also about the same time my father died, and I then let this issue go on the back burner.

I received a reply from **9(2)(a)** from the Electoral Commission. Using Word's track changes, she had made some changes to my final report. It is this version with her track changes that I am submitting now along with this report. The problem is I am confident my report accurately reflects outcomes we did agree at our meeting on 11 May, but some of her suggested changes are not insignificant. I was going to contact her to discuss our different views on the meeting but I regret I haven't yet picked this up, and now I am really not able to give this further attention.

2 What is Coming Up

This action has essentially been completed, though it may be necessary for the DPOs to decide what further action is needed.

3 Any Decisions DPOs Need to Make

Essentially we are at the point where we just need to reach agreement over writing up the outcomes of this process so there are actions that can be handed to Government to progress, either on their own or as part of a future Disability Action Plan. Dare I suggest that it might be appropriate for **9(2)(a)** who also has his own notes of our various meetings, to contact **9(2)(a)** and perhaps using the attached report as a starting point, agree any changes so it can be "signed off" as the final report of this action.

Promoting Participation By Disabled People in Political and Civic Processes

Report on Completion of Action 11A of the New Zealand Government Disability Action Plan

August 2016

Clive Lansink, Blind Citizens NZ

Introduction

Action 11A of the New Zealand Government Disability Action Plan 2016 states: "DPOs to complete a stocktake of what are the areas needing the most attention and which will make the biggest difference to promote disabled people participating in political and civic processes. ODI will convene a discussion with DPOs and relevant government agencies to discuss priorities from the DPOs stocktake and identify possible actions. Lead: DPOs." This action was also action 13A in the 2015 Disability Action Plan. The lead organisation on behalf of the DPOs was Blind Citizens NZ.

This report lists the outcomes of and the priorities identified through this action.

As envisaged by the action, the DPOs met on their own to identify actions that could encourage disabled people to participate more in political processes. That meeting took place on 15 October 2015.

The meeting of DPOs with Government agencies took place on 11 May 2016.

Identified Priorities and Actions

1 Lack of accessible information on candidates in general and local elections.

It was agreed increased efforts must be made to make information on people standing in elections accessible so disabled people can properly evaluate candidates. This is particularly important when public funding is involved, e.g. political broadcasts.

The Department of Internal Affairs agreed to report this discussion to and raise the need for more accessible information on candidates with the Society of Local Government Managers Electoral Working Party which coordinates local elections along with the Electoral Commission.

It was also agreed suggested the Electoral Commission encourage could advise political parties on how to create information that is more accessible to disabled people.

It was noted that the lead agency for relevant policy advice for parliamentary elections and referendums is and legislative issues are the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice.

Regarding the reference to public funding, it was understood that public funding is only available for used in connection with political broadcasts by parties on tv and radio. However it was suggested agreed that any such broadcasts should be

9(2)(a)

Comment: The Electoral Commission does not co-ordinate Local Body elections.

designed to reach the whole public, including disabled people. Such broadcasts could reach more disabled people by using such techniques as captioning, audio description and visuals that are easy to understand. The Electoral Commission will give consideration to this issue, and possibly amending the relevant guidelines for political broadcasts.

9(2)(a)

Comment The Broadcasting Act 1989 sets out the scheme for the broadcasting allocation – the Electoral Commission does not provide guidelines for political broadcasts.

- 2 There is still a need for a fully confidential vote, including an online voting option.

It was agreed this is needed particularly for local authority elections where voting is arguably more complex.

It was noted that telephone dictation voting has been working well for disabled people, particularly blind and vision impaired people. However this still involves sharing a vote with someone else.

It is understood however that no further progress can be made until legislation governing national and local elections is reformed. DPOs continue to urge the Government to take the necessary steps to introduce a truly confidential voting system accessible to disabled people. This should perhaps start with a trial of online voting, perhaps one that is restricted to disabled people.

- 3 People with disabilities can be elected not only to Parliament, but to governing roles on local authorities, DHBs, schools etc.

It was noted that for disabled people active in politics, the challenges are having the personal resources to go the extra mile and to have the ability to gain some access to the media, to travel to venues and to scan formal information.

It was agreed more can be done to improve understanding of the needs of disabled people, and to upgrade information systems to cope with generating accessible information. Entities such as Parliamentary Services, political parties, NGOs, local authorities, DHBs and school boards must do more to provide reasonable accommodations for disabled people in governing roles.

- 4 Disabled people need to be able to form organisations that have the capacity to effectively represent the voice of disabled people at local, national and international level.

If DPOs are to flourish, there needs to be some agreement on how they can generate revenue or be resourced in other ways. Article 4.3 of the Convention recognises the function of DPOs to represent disabled people. DPOs would be more able to succeed if they were appropriately resourced to carry out that function.

It is noted that action 5B in the Disability Action Plan aims to improve DPO capability so they can be more able to fully represent the full diversity of disabled people.

- 5 There is a need for more training of polling officials for all electoral events must on support the rights and needs of people with disabilities.

The Electoral Commission outlined the training and materials provided to general election electoral officials, providing copies of the voter care section of the training manual. It also described post-election research results showing that

voters with disabilities reported very high levels of satisfaction with the voting process, and lower levels of negative issues when voting than the general population. The Commission asked that any feedback from DPOs on the materials provided to be sent to them. ~~was keen to receive feedback agreed to work in consultation with from DPOs on the voter care advice included in to review the current training manuals used by of national and local electoral officials.~~

The Department of Internal Affairs will ~~also~~ raise the need for more training of local authority election officials with the Society of Local Government Managers Electoral Working Party which coordinates local elections ~~along with the Electoral Commission.~~

- 6 Consultation exercises such as the recent flag referendum must have strategies to ensure disabled people are included.

It was agreed this relates well to action 9A in the Disability Action Plan, i.e. to Increase accessibility of information across government agencies. It was noted that some Government departments already have useful guidelines on consulting with disabled people.

However it was agreed that when consultation exercises such as the flag referendum take place, the Government must ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure disabled people can fully participate.