

Hon Louise Upston

Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector
Minister for Disability Issues
Minister for Social Development and Employment
Minister for Child Poverty Reduction



27 SEP 2024

Lync Aronson
President
Brain Injury New Zealand
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Dear Lync

Thank you for your email of 28 August 2024, regarding the recently announced changes to Disability Support Services (DSS).

I understand you have concerns around what these changes will mean for the disability community. I want to assure you the Government is committed to the Enabling Good Lives (EGL) vision and principles. I want the best outcomes for the disabled community, their families, and those who care for them, and the Government is focused on maximising this support.

I know that urgent action is needed to stabilise the system and ensure disabled people and carers have certainty around what they can access. The changes I have announced are about improving disability supports and knowing that we have a system that is fair for all who get support, and that people can feel confident about.

You asked why DSS isn't moving back to the Ministry of Health. The decision to move DSS to the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) was made because MSD has the controls and capability already in place to better manage this funding. I consider the service delivery responsibilities for DSS will sit much better in a large department with mature models of practice and national and regional infrastructure.

Furthermore, we are moving away from the medical model of disability, and focusing on the social model of disability, as outlined in the New Zealand Disability Strategy. To find out more about the social model of disability, please see this page: <https://www.odi.govt.nz/disability-toolkit/things-you-should-know-definitions-concepts-and-approaches/>

The expansion of EGL has been paused to ensure, moving forward, disabled people have access to support that is fair and based on need, not location. At the moment there is a high level of variation in the approaches taken to providing disability support services across the country.

I hear your request for consultation. I will be taking advice from officials on options for a consultation and engagement strategy with the disability

community and DSS stakeholders as we work through building the consistency needed in a national service. I have asked that consultation includes opportunities for disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori, their families and whānau, and carers to provide input.

The new Taskforce set up within the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) will also undertake consultation with the community as it works to implement the recommendations supplied by the recent Independent Review. The aim is to improve fairness, prioritise those with the highest needs, and reduce regional variability in how DSS is provided across New Zealand. I have passed your letter onto the Taskforce so they can include you in the consultation process.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me. I hope my response provides some assurance this coalition Government is determined to build a fair, sustainable, high-quality disability support system that delivers better outcomes for disabled people based on their needs.

Thank you for writing to me.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Louise Upston', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Louise Upston
Minister for Disability Issues