



About us

Advance the public interest in the provision of Assistive Technology, that contributes and supports New Zealanders through funding and promotion.

To give the Assistive Technology industry a voice.

To improve the quality of equipment provision and develop alliances with all industry stakeholders.



Minister for Disability Issues

The opportunity arose to have a meeting with Hon. Louise Upston when she was scheduled for a visit to the Northcote electorate, hosted by MP Dan Bidois. Katie Noble was informed about the visit and extended the invitation to Dan and Louise to visit with one of our members in the electorate, Cubro.



We met with the Minister for Disability Issues Lousie Upston, Gareth Hollins (one of the political advisors to the Prime Minister who has been seconded to Minister Upston), Dan Bidois (MP Northcote) and Martin Anderson (Regional Manager Disability Support Services). This meeting was at the premises of Morton & Perry with our hosts Logan Currie, Jason Clare, Chris Clare and Levi Murray in attendance. Andrew Short (our chair) and Chris Ross (committee member and a local business) joined us for this meeting too.

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A short synopsis of the meeting is presented below.

The Minister mentioned:

- Budget static at 23/24 levels.
 - Budget won't be changing until MSD Taskforce has completed their work.
 - Taskforce being assembled with Chris Bunny as lead
 - DSS separated out and now a part of MSD.
 - Across agency taskforce under leadership of Chris Bunny will be taking some time to sort out Whaikaha and DSS.
 - One of the questions is with the overall funding in mind, have we (government) got the overall allocation correct, is funding going to the correct areas.
 - NASCs and EGL sites without budgets leading to budget blowouts, flexible funding needs to be brought under control (is not income support).
 - All NASC services have budgets, and their services should be uninterrupted.
- Suppliers reiterated that:**
- Underfunding and budget overspend are related, budget overspend occurring because the needs are increasing, and the budget is conservative.

- Clients' needs are not always being met as assessors were selecting simple list solutions, resulting in the client's function and positioning deteriorating which will require more complex equipment in the future at an increased cost.
- Some costs are hidden particularly in relation to trials and rebates - AT suppliers support the system financially through the trial process which essentially is short term loan. Rentals paid for by Heath NZ hospitals were also increasing while wait lists for Whaikaha funded equipment grow.

The Minister is aware:

- of disabled people not getting the support they need in a timely fashion,
 - particular focus on high and complex needs
- that early intervention saves costs.

The Minister is not aware:

- that rebates are being paid by suppliers to providers,
- the amount of trial equipment out and the value.



The meeting was positive and constructive, and we look forward to having a follow up to the conversation soon. The minister will possibly attend out networking function on 6 November if she is able to get parliamentary leave to do so.



Member Focus – Able Axxcess



Bill Russell reports that over the last year Able Axxcess has made great progress with R&D on a number of projects. Much of this has been done with next to no budget or resource and for him personally has added much enjoyment to his BDM role, with a big emphasis on Developing new Business.

They have created a number of new products or product enhancements. Axxcess Bathrooms are transportable accessible Bathrooms for temporary use on-site, while an existing bathroom is refurbished. To make this work on site, they needed to design and implement a weather cover system for their ramps. They also have created low-vision add-ons for ramps with bright yellow paint and tactile buttons for the start and finish of ramps.

Able Axxcess created a completely new brand - Bounce, for innovative new products mainly made from recycled rubber tyres. They have developed energy absorbing rubber tiles for kids' playgrounds to prevent injury from falls of up to 1.5m. They are in the process of creating a website and marketing material to support the brand and will soon move to rolling out installations at various ECE sites.



Other new products are furniture risers that can adjust the height of furniture to a better height for aged customers, ramps for small or elderly dogs to reach dog doors and their Ladder safety pad will be relaunched.



Government Budget 24/25

“Budget 2024 sets out the Government’s plan to rebuild the economy, ease the cost of living, deliver better health and education services, and restore law and order. This is a Budget that will lay the foundations for growth in our country.”

This is how the budget for 24/25 was introduced by the current coalition government and although more money went to the Disability budget, budgets for equipment remained static. The need to review Whaikaha and their budget overruns justified the decision not to increase budgets, until greater clarity of processes was achieved and better monitoring and managing mechanisms were put in place.

As a result of the Whaikaha review the Disability Support Services arm of the ministry was placed under the Ministry for Social Development. A taskforce was established under the leadership of Chris Bunny and work was started to implement the 7 recommendations from the review

<https://www.whaikaha.govt.nz/news/independent-review/recommendations-1-7> one of which is:

- reinstating monitoring and reporting requirements for NASCs, **Equipment and Modification Service (EMS) providers** and EGL sites.

Currently there are reporting requirements for EMS, which we have been requesting from the ministry and have provided to our members.

In the meantime, the EMS budget is set at the 23/24 level and are managed through a prioritisation tool and budget constraints. This decision is based on recommendation 3 of the review -There will be no price increase for providers in the 2024/25 financial year (to 30 June 2025).

This impacts on providers EnableNZ and Accessible with whom suppliers have contracts to deliver products and services.

As for all businesses, suppliers and providers alike, there have been cost increases, resulting in downward spiralling business outcomes. EnableNZ declared a refusal to accept any price increases from suppliers. ATSNZ sought a legal opinion on this declaration and subsequently provided this to members to assist in their negotiations.

ATSNZ sent out a Key Message document to politicians and decision makers and provided it to our members to share with other politicians and relevant parties.

There has been much discussion in the media about the budget constraints for 24/25. Below is a selection of newspaper articles.

https://newsroom.co.nz/2024/10/15/disabled-nzers-shut-out-of-care-after-funding-freeze/?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwY2xjawF87fxleHRuA2FibQIxMQABHeHFgKRcxK3u92aCu6zQQX-DkIA6dGfa4xaintw8tz3RNqTFOPsuJvc9HA_aem_svRTnbsXJshU0aIqaxIG8g#Echobox=1729102647

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/northern-advocate/news/northland-disability-sector-gets-loud-to-protest-government-funding-cuts/XJEEPWNQJVGJJMBO4BNN57533U/>

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/whanganui-chronicle/news/whanganui-disability-advocates-concerned-by-funding-freeze-and-ministry-restructure/DVOB7NIRRVCHPJQAWBSPM6YXA/>

Upcoming events

- ATSNZ Disability Expo Auckland, 6-7 November, Due Drop Events Centre, Manukau, Auckland.
- Australian Assistive Technology Conference, 6-8 November Goldcoast.
- ATSNZ Disability Expo Christchurch. 20-21 November, Airforce Museum, Christchurch.
- ATSA Independent Living Expos 2025
 - 6 March Hobart
 - 14-15 May Perth
 - 20-21 May Melbourne
- Show Your Ability 2025
 - Auckland 10 March
 - Hamilton 12 March
 - Palmerston North 14 March
 - Christchurch 8 April
 - Dunedin 9 April
- Oceania Seating Symposium 2025. 4-6 November, Energy Events Centre Rotorua.



Disability Support Services

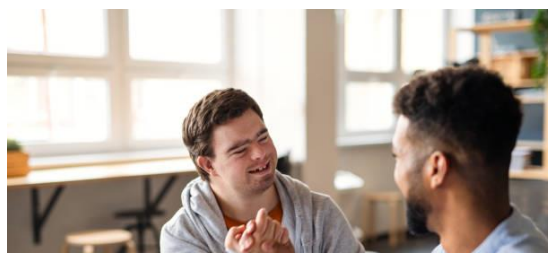
Disability Support Services (DSS) is now a business group in the Ministry of Social Development. It is responsible for providing essential support to around 50,000 disabled people and their whānau, as well as equipment and modification services for approximately 100,000 New Zealanders.

DSS published their new website on Friday 24 October and provided an engagement update: [Engagement | Disability Support Services](#). They will provide regular updates through the website and have newsletters people can subscribe to. [Publications | Disability Support Services](#)

DSS have published information about how you can be involved in this first round of engagement and consultation: [Survey on future disability support services | Disability Support Services](#). This is only their first round of engagement. There will be broader community engagement and consultation in early 2025.

A page on the website is dedicated to EMS, where you can read about EMS principles.

<https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/providers/equipment-and-modification-services>



ATSNZ Disability Expo

Auckland | 6-7 November
Due Drop Event Centre,
Manukau, Auckland

Christchurch | 20-21 November
AirForce Museum of New Zealand,
Wigram, Christchurch



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to find
out more

