

Briefing to the Incoming Minister of State Services the Hon Tony Ryall



This briefing outlines the challenges and opportunities IHC has identified for the Incoming Minister of State Services.

The most significant issue for IHC and people with intellectual disabilities is the overall need for leadership and coordination. The fact that the Government response to the Select Committee Inquiry into the Quality of Care and Service Provision for People with Disabilities (Select Committee Disability Inquiry) does not address its recommendation to appoint a lead agency means that the State Services Commission (SSC) needs to take a lead on this.

Disability policy and disability support services funding for the one-in-six New Zealanders living with disability is carried out by 11 government departments and agencies. All government agencies are responsible for implementing the 2001 New Zealand Disability Strategy and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, which New Zealand ratified in 2008.

IHC welcomes the opportunity to work with the incoming Government. IHC was formed as a membership based, advocacy organisation in 1949 by parents who wanted better lives in the community for their children. To this day IHC provides strong advocacy for the now 50,000 people in New Zealand with an intellectual disability and their families. We support the independent voice of people with an intellectual disability through the Self Advocacy movement and representation in our governance structure. IHC also works in partnership with disabled people's organisations such as People First.

IHC has a wholly owned subsidiary IDEA Services Ltd that provides \$195 million of government contracted disability support services to 6350 people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

Vision

IHC's vision for people with an intellectual disability is that they live satisfying lives in the community. This means participating in and contributing to their communities and realising their full rights and responsibilities as New Zealanders.

Essential to achieving this vision is:

- **Action**
- **Leadership and coordination**
- **Partnership.**

Challenges in the current environment

After almost a decade of good intentions and reviews, the new Government now has the opportunity to make a real difference in the everyday lives of people with intellectual and other disabilities. Review after review in 2008 have shown the same systemic issues, which the previous government did not address effectively.

“[A]lthough people with disabilities make up a significant proportion of the population, their needs are frequently marginalised and neglected.” Select Committee Disability Inquiry Report, September 2008

These issues are firmly within SSC’s role as one of the three central government agencies overseeing the state sector. Most of the Development Goals set out in its briefing on *Delivering Better Public Services* are relevant. However, SSC has not exercised any leadership on the key disability issues that affect a growing number of New Zealanders.

The overarching challenges identified by the participants in the first New Zealand Disability Strategy review released in August 2008 are:

- the absence of a national implementation plan and linked funding
- the size and status of the Office for Disability Issues
- society’s attitudes to disabled people
- barriers in government agencies to implementation.

Annual reporting by government departments and agencies on implementing the Disability Strategy is patchy, variable and of the ticks-in-boxes type rather than looking at outcomes achieved. The Select Committee Disability Inquiry, instigated by National, overall found a lack of direction and leadership in disability services provision, variable services and significant systemic problems. It also stated the New Zealand Disability Strategy had not been effectively implemented.

While the 9 February Government response recommitments to the essential principles of disabled people being able to exercise choice and control to live fulfilling lives in the community, it did not take the essential decisions on action. Instead it outlines a number of further reviews, examinations, investigations and scoping exercises.

Opportunities and solutions

IHC supports National’s Disability Policy. We also welcome the new Government’s stated intention of focusing on the most vulnerable New Zealanders at this time of global recession. To achieve action on the desired outcomes for people with intellectual and other disabilities, we need state sector leadership and partnership with the disability sector.

Of particular relevance to SSC’s leadership, coordination and oversight role are:

Leadership

IHC supports the Select Committee Disability Inquiry’s first recommendation that an appropriately funded lead agency with responsibility for disability issues, accountability and monitoring be appointed. This is crucial to successfully making headway on the entrenched problems in government’s key role in disability support. We are disappointed that the Government response to the inquiry does not appoint a lead agency as recommended and has dismissed having an Independent Disability Commission, like the successful Mental Health Commission.

It is essential that the State Services Minister sits on the Ministerial Committee on Disability Issues which the Government is to set up, and that this committee has the mandate to drive and coordinate change. IHC is heartened by the Ministry of Social Development's leadership across the whole-of-social-sector in government in critical areas and would like to see this extended to disability issues. We believe the Ministry of Health, as the largest disability support funder, has abdicated any lead role.

Having a separate Minister and Office for Disability Issues (ODI) has not achieved what was expected in raising the profile and advocating for and monitoring disability progress. With only nine staff, ODI does not have the role, capacity or capability to exercise leadership in the government sector. This lack of resourcing has in fact served to further marginalise and segregate disability issues.

Whole-of-government approach

The disability support 'system' needs to be whole-of-government and well aligned, not the current fragmented, silo approach – attention to this will not only make navigating the disability support system easier for people with disabilities and ensure they and their families get their full entitlements, but would also make for cost savings by reducing duplication, conflicting policies and time-consuming processes.

Engagement and partnership

Essential to this is a relationship of respect, trust and collaboration with disability advocacy and provider organisations. The necessary leadership, planning, coordination, implementation and monitoring must be cross-sector and cross-government.

Not only must disability sector CEOs be part of ODI's proposed Disability Sector Forum, they must be included in key current Government initiatives, such as the Jobs Summit, examination of government spending and infrastructure taskforces along with the private and public sectors. We also support the New Zealand Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations' call in its briefing for a PM's NGO Forum. NGOs are the first to see the impact of hard times on vulnerable New Zealanders. We can mobilise the community and offer responsiveness, flexibility and value for money.

Reporting and Monitoring

Reporting and monitoring of progress on implementation must be robust, transparent and meaningful in terms of government's and disabled people's goals, with real incentives and sanctions. This needs to be carried out in accordance with the New Zealand Disability Strategy, the United Nations Convention and the Government response to the inquiry, among other key disability policies and programmes.

Chief Executives' contracts

Including progress on meaningful disability targets in State Sector Chief Executives' contracts, will help embed the New Zealand Disability Strategy and the recently ratified UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability in State Sector performance.

Transforming government contracting model

There needs to be implementation of a contracting and pricing model for disability support services that is sustainable, fair and supports quality service provision. This must be based on fostering innovative, flexible support tailored to disabled people's needs and preferences and whole-of-life outcomes, rather than the current narrow focus on minimum compliance with outdated standards. The new Pathways to Partnership model for essential social services should be extended to disability support.

Disability capability

Disability awareness and training to inform government strategic and operational policy is vital. A recent example of inadequate input from a disability perspective is that the Public Health Bill did not mention people with disabilities as a specific disadvantaged population group – now recommended by select committee to be added.

Raising public awareness

The still-prevailing ignorance and stigmatisation around disability needs to be addressed in order for people with disabilities to be included in all facets of community life. The successful Like Minds, Like Mine campaign for people experiencing mental illness, funded by government, provides a model.

Information provision

IHC supports the recommendation in the long-term disability supports review of having a website as a single entry point for information on disability supports for people with disabilities and their families. The Government response to the inquiry also supports local area coordination as carried out effectively in Australia and elsewhere.

Information collection

It is vital that information on people with disabilities is collected to provide a solid base for planning, decision-making and accountability, and to monitor progress. However, in 2005 SSC stopped collecting information about how many disabled people are employed in the state sector.

About IHC

IHC was formed in 1949 by parents who wanted better lives in the community for their children. IHC is now the largest disability services provider in New Zealand and a leader in the disability sector. This includes having the largest housing portfolio outside government.

IHC:

- Delivers \$195 million of government contracts and \$10.5 million of non-government funded services
- Employs almost 6500 staff
- Provides disability support services for over 6350 people with intellectual disabilities and their families
- Advocates for the rights, inclusion and welfare of over 50,000 New Zealanders with an intellectual disability.