



**PARENTS OF VISION IMPAIRED (NZ) INC**

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*Providing a community to support parents of children with vision impairments*

9 March 2026

Human Rights Team

Policy Group

Ministry of Justice

SX10088

Wellington

Via email to: [humanrights@justice.govt.nz](mailto:humanrights@justice.govt.nz)

Tēnā koutou,

Please find attached Parents of Vision Impaired (NZ) Inc's submission on the draft ***Implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Seventh periodic report.***

Happy to provide further information if requested.

Ngā mihi,

Rebekah Graham

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## ABOUT PARENTS OF VISION IMPAIRED NZ

Parents of Vision Impaired NZ (PVI) is a registered charity which supports parents who have blind, low vision, or vision-impaired children. There is no cost to enrol, and we provide a supportive community for parents who are overcoming challenges every day. We offer parents advice, information, and opportunities to meet other parents. We publish a quarterly newsletter (eVision) and have a members-only Facebook page for families and whānau to share information and to network. PVI runs an annual conference which allows parents and whānau to get together face to face for a longer time to talk, listen and learn in a social setting. PVI takes an active part in the disability sector through making sure that the voice of visually impaired children and their parents is heard in consultations with government, schools, local councils, and other organisations.

## ABOUT THE ICCPR

In April, the New Zealand Government is due to submit its **seventh periodic report on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (the Covenant) to the United Nations Human Rights Committee**, which monitors how signatories are implementing the Covenant.

New Zealand ratified the Covenant on 28 December 1978 and is one of more than 170 countries that have done so. States that have ratified the Covenant have undertaken to report periodically to the Committee on the measures they have adopted that give effect to Covenant rights and on progress made in the enjoyment of those rights.

The Covenant is the main international treaty dealing with civil and political rights, many of which are affirmed by the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990. The Covenant affirms rights including life, liberty and security, and privacy; freedom of expression, association and assembly; the right to participate in public life; and rights relating to criminal procedure, such as the right to a fair trial.

The report outlines developments and measures adopted by New Zealand during the reporting period to give effect to the rights guaranteed by the Covenant. New Zealand's most recent periodic report to the Committee was considered in 2016. A follow-up reply was provided in 2017 on several matters on which the Committee requested further information.

**The Ministry of Justice** is seeking feedback on the draft report from people and organisations with an interest in the Covenant, and human rights more broadly. They want feedback to help ensure the report is clear and accurate, and to determine if we should include any other information relevant to civil and political rights in New Zealand.

When providing your feedback please consider the following issues:

- Does the report cover what you see as the most important issues and developments to do with civil and political rights in New Zealand since 2015? Is there anything important missing?
- Do you have feedback on specific areas of the report?
- What has the government done well to improve the enjoyment of civil and political rights in New Zealand since 2015?
- What are the most important areas the New Zealand Government could address to enhance civil and political rights and enable equal enjoyment of human rights?

## PVI'S APPROACH

Our submission focusses on the needs of blind, deafblind, low vision and vision impaired children and their families and whānau. We often use the term disabled as a catch-all terms to include blind, deafblind, low vision and vision impaired persons as many of our children have additional disabilities alongside vision loss.

In our submission, we draw on several key documents. These are listed below, and we have identified the relevant components of each for this submission:

**The New Zealand Bill of Rights Act (1990).** This Act states that everyone has the right to be free from discrimination from government and state officials, including on the grounds of disability.

**United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>1</sup>.** In particular, Article 23, which recognizes that a mentally or physically *disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life*, in conditions which *ensure dignity, promote self-reliance, and facilitate the child's active participation in the community*. This includes access to independent and dignifying forms of emergency management.

**United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)<sup>2</sup>.** This was ratified by the New Zealand government in March 2008. Particular articles of relevance:

*Article 9* which states that, to enable people with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life:

*States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to people with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas.*

And *Article 29*, which states:

*Parties will ensure that persons with disabilities can **effectively and fully participate** in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely chosen representatives, including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected.*

**Enabling Good Lives Approach<sup>3</sup> and Principles<sup>4</sup>.** This approach applies a set of disabled-led principles into disability support services. The following principles are particularly relevant to our submission:

- **Ordinary life outcomes:** Disabled people are supported to live an everyday life in everyday places; and are regarded as citizens with opportunities for learning, employment, having a home and family, and social participation - like others at similar stages of life.
- **Mainstream first:** Disabled people are supported to access mainstream services before specialist disability services.
- **Easy to use:** Disabled people have supports that are simple to use and flexible

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.odgi.govt.nz/united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/read-the-convention/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/about-egl/egl-approach/enabling-good-lives-summary/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/about-egl/egl-approach/principles/>

This section provides a response from **PVI that is structured around the Ministry of Justice's four feedback questions** and draws on PVI's key focus on disability, children, young people, and families.

We have highlighted areas where **civil and political rights for disabled people and their families are not explicitly reflected in the draft report**. Where gaps exist, it is unclear whether this reflects:

- Relevant government initiatives that have not been captured in the report, or
- Areas where specific measures have not been implemented, or
- Data and evidence that has not been collected or monitored.

These points must be clarified in the report.

### **1. Does the report cover what you see as the most important issues and developments to do with civil and political rights in New Zealand since 2015? Is there anything important missing?**

The draft report addresses many important civil and political rights developments since 2015, including non-discrimination, participation in public life, privacy, and administration of justice.

However, the report **does not explicitly address disability**, including children, young people, and parents/whānau of disabled children. It is not clear whether this is because initiatives exist but are not reported, because measures have not been implemented, or because data is not available.

The key areas of relevance to disabled persons that are missing and/or incomplete:

- **Disability (general):** The rights and experiences of disabled people, including disabled and young people, and their parents/whānau, are not explicitly addressed.
- **Accessible participation:** There is limited mention of accessible civic engagement, voting, and consultations for disabled people and families.
- **Pay equity impacts:** The disproportionate effects on disabled persons and their care workers are not reflected in the statements made (¶25–26), nor how this negatively impacts on disabled persons civic participation rights (without adequately paid care workers, participation is greatly limited).
- **Justice and rehabilitation:** The human rights implications for young offenders, convicted prisoners, and military-style interventions are not fully addressed (¶240, ¶298, ¶302). A disproportionate number of convicted offenders have some form of disability. This is not mentioned, nor is there mention of how the proposed interventions will screen and/or provide appropriate accommodations.
- **Legislative and policy critiques:** Several sections present political messaging or government talking points rather than evidence-based reporting (¶20, ¶85–¶91, ¶317, ¶330), which is not appropriate for reporting at this level.

Additional areas for inclusion and/or clarification:

- **Accessibility of public information** and government consultations for disabled people – there is limited mention or measures for this included.

- **Participation of disabled persons in civic and political life**, including voting, advisory roles, and consultation processes, and accessibility measures thereof – there is limited mention or measures for this included.
- **Measures to prevent discrimination against disabled people** in public services, justice, and education – do these exist, and how are they measured?
- **Privacy and autonomy considerations for disabled children** and their families when accessing government services is not mentioned.
- **Accessible legal processes and advocacy support for disabled people** and their families when navigating the justice system – do these exist? Are they sufficient? How do we know?

Inclusion of these areas and measures would better reflect New Zealand’s obligations under Articles 19, 25, and 26 of the ICCPR. If the data does not exist and processes are not in place, then this should be explicitly stated.

## **2. Do you have feedback on specific areas of the report? If so, please give the relevant section heading and the feedback.**

### **1. Non-Discrimination and Equality (Art 26, pp. 12–14)**

- While the draft report addresses non-discrimination broadly (pp. 12–14), disability is not explicitly referenced. We recommend that disabled people, including children and young people, be recognized as a **protected group under Article 26**, with examples of policies and practices to reduce systemic barriers.
- The barriers that disabled people and families face in **accessing public services, civic participation, and justice processes** are not mentioned.
- **PVI Recommends:** The inclusions of examples of government initiatives promoting equality and reducing systemic barriers – and what else needs to occur for disabled persons rights to be fully recognized

### **2. Participation in Public Life (Art 25, pp. 49–52)**

- The report discusses engagement with Māori and Pasifika communities but omits disabled people, young disabled people, and parents of disabled children. There is no mention of tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau..
- **PVI Recommends:** Include existing, proposed, and necessary measures to ensure meaningful participation of disabled people, young disabled people, and parents in **policy-making, advisory boards, and consultations**. This includes processes to ensure that all engagement mechanisms are **accessible**, including digital platforms, surveys, and public meetings.

### **3. Freedom of Expression and Access to Information (Art 19, pp. 42–43)**

- The report does not sufficiently address accessibility for disabled people and families. We recommend including government measures ensuring information is available in **accessible formats** (Easy Read, braille, audio, large print, accessible websites) so that all citizens can participate fully in public life. Access to information is discussed in general terms (pp. 42–43) but **accessibility for disabled people is not highlighted**.
- **PVI Recommends:** Inclusion of specific measures for **accessible information** for disabled people and families, in formats such as braille, audio, large print, Easy Read, and

accessible websites. This is a critical component for both parents of disabled children and disabled persons to be able to advocate effectively for recognition of their rights.

#### **4. Right to Privacy and Family Life (Art 17, pp. 40–42)**

- The draft report covers general privacy protections and communications surveillance (pp. 40–42). It does not include considerations for **privacy and autonomy of disabled children and families**, or considerations regarding ensuring that access to services does not compromise privacy or dignity.
- **PVI Recommends:** Inclusion of government considerations for privacy and autonomy of disabled children and families, and how access to services is not compromising privacy or dignity.

#### **5. Access to Justice and Legal Protections (Arts 14–16, Draft Report pp. 36–39)**

- The report addresses legal aid, miscarriages of justice, and NZBORA conformity (pp. 36–39), but **accessibility for disabled people** is not discussed.
- **PVI Recommends:** Emphasizing accessible legal processes for disabled people, including children and young people, and how their parents/whānau are supported when advocating in legal contexts. This should include available accommodations for participation in justice proceedings, accessible complaint mechanisms, and advocacy support. If this does not occur, then this also needs to be clearly stated.

#### **6. Rights of the Child (Arts 7 & 24, pp. 43–49)**

- The draft report discusses child protection, abuse prevention, and youth rehabilitation (pp. 43–49) but there is no focus/mention of **disabled children** as a group with specific civil and political rights needs, and who are particularly vulnerable group with regards to experiencing abuse.
- **PVI Recommends:** Include measures that ensure disabled children can exercise civil and political rights, access information, and participate in matters affecting them.

#### **7. Specific feedback**

Several parts of the draft report appear to present political talking points or advocacy rather than verifiable facts (see below). This risks undermining New Zealand’s credibility and reporting to the United Nations. We recommend:

- Removing or revising these statements unless supported by independent evidence.
- Clearly distinguishing between implemented initiatives, policy proposals, and political messaging.
- Providing data or references to demonstrate outcomes and impact.

##### **a) Law and Order (¶120)**

*Issue:* “The Government is focused on restoring law and order” reads as a political slogan.

*Recommendation:* Remove or replace with factual, evidence-based reporting on programmes, initiatives, or crime statistics.

##### **b) Crimes Amendment Bill / Ministerial Advisory Group (¶122)**

*Issue:* Report references the bill without discussing human rights implications or critiques.

*Recommendation:* Include independent evidence and assessments regarding impacts on civil and political rights.

### **c) Pay Equity Bill (¶25–26)**

*Issue:* Misrepresents pay equity as “equal pay,” ignores disproportionate impact on disabled persons and care workers, and fails to mention the halt to 33 pay equity claims.

*Recommendation:* Correct framing, acknowledge ongoing inequities, and highlight human rights implications.

### **d) Political Messaging (¶85–¶89, ¶91)**

*Issue:* Sections present government talking points without reflecting opposition or independent evidence. ¶85 is particularly inappropriate.

*Recommendation:* Revise to include perspectives of affected groups and objective evidence.

### **e) Young Serious Offenders / Military Academies (¶240)**

*Issue:* Report does not align with international best practice on juvenile justice and rehabilitation, nor does it reference impacts on disabled young people or accommodations.

*Recommendation:* Include evidence-based standards and highlight concerns about militarized approaches and impacts on disabled youth.

### **f) Convicted Offenders (¶298)**

*Issue:* Human rights breaches are not adequately addressed, including conditions of detention and fair treatment.

*Recommendation:* Reference human rights standards and outline government measures to address breaches.

### **g) Use of Reasonable Force (¶302)**

*Issue:* Potential human rights violations for young offenders are not acknowledged.

*Recommendation:* Assess compliance with Articles 7 and 10 of the ICCPR and provide data or safeguards.

### **h) Regulatory Standards Act (¶317)**

*Issue:* Omits that most public submissions opposed the Act, and concerns were ignored.

*Recommendation:* Reflect opposition, document stakeholder concerns, and clarify government rationale.

### **i) Ban on Prisoner Voting (¶330)**

*Issue:* Constitutes a human rights breach (Article 25), disproportionately affecting prisoners with disabilities.

*Recommendation:* Include human rights implications and evidence of disproportionate impact.

### **More generally, for disabled children, young people, and their families:**

- Include explicit discussion of disabled children and young people, and parents of disabled children, across all relevant sections.
- Include data and evidence on participation, outcomes, and barriers.
- Clarify whether gaps are due to lack of action, lack of reporting, or lack of data.
- Ensure intersectional issues (ethnicity, socio-economic status, geographic location) are considered.
- Ensure accessible participation and information for all citizens.

- Include opposition perspectives and critiques where legislation is discussed.
- Ensure all statements are evidence-based and verifiable, maintaining credibility for the UN Human Rights Committee.

### **3. What has the government done well to improve the enjoyment of civil and political rights in New Zealand since 2015?**

- The report notes a number of general initiatives to strengthen civil and political rights, including legislative reforms in privacy, counter-terrorism, and justice processes.
- PVI acknowledges that New Zealand has taken steps to engage diverse communities in public life and policy development, particularly Māori and Pasifika peoples.
- The government has demonstrated commitment to child protection and youth participation, which provides a foundation to further include disabled children and families in these processes.

### **4. What are the most important areas the New Zealand Government could address to enhance civil and political rights and enable equal enjoyment of human rights?**

- **Explicitly recognize disabled people** under Article 26 (and throughout the report), with attention to intersectional barriers.
- **Guarantee accessibility of information** in multiple formats, so all citizens, including parents and young disabled people, can participate in civic life and access government information.
- **Ensure accessible participation in public life**, including voting, consultations, and advisory roles for disabled people and families.
- **Improve access to justice** for disabled people and families through accessible complaint mechanisms, advocacy, and legal processes.
- **Include disability-specific data and evidence** in reporting on participation, equality, and civil rights enjoyment, highlighting gaps and achievements.
- **Consult families and disabled people** directly in policy development and reporting to strengthen self-determination and voice.

### **Conclusion**

PVI welcomes the draft report and encourages the government to **explicitly include disability, in particularly disabled children and young people, and their families** in New Zealand's reporting under the ICCPR. Recognizing these groups' rights, ensuring accessibility, and promoting active participation are essential steps to uphold civil and political rights for all New Zealanders.