



PARENTS OF VISION IMPAIRED (NZ) INC

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Providing a community to support parents of children with vision impairments

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Tēnā koutou,

Please find attached PVI's submission on the District Court (Protection of Judgment Debtors with Disabilities) Amendment Bill 284-1 (2020).

Ngaa mihi,

Rebekah Graham

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Parents of Vision Impaired

Parents of Vision Impaired (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 of parents who are overcoming challenges every day. Our current membership is at just over 1300 active members, with close to 800 email subscribers.

PVI offers parents advice, information, and opportunities to meet other parents. We publish a quarterly newsletter (eVision) and have a members-only Facebook page (currently at 292 members) for families and whānau to share information and to network. PVI also runs an annual conference and AGM which allows parents and whānau to get together face to face for a longer time to talk, listen and learn in a social setting.

Additionally, 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.

The submission

PVI strongly supports the District Court (Debtors with Disabilities) Amendment Bill. We wish to express our particular support for measures to protect disabled persons with a vision impairment¹ from the seizure of items which are deemed necessary for their care or which support their independence. The first cohort of PVI parents have vision-impaired persons who are in various supported living situations, and there is ongoing concern that seizing items needed for their care would have a disproportionate impact on their health and well-being when compared to the monetary value of items seized. This has the potential for flow-on costs to public health and to social services that greatly exceed the cost of the original debt.

PVI strongly supports the specific clause prohibiting the immobilisation of adapted motor vehicles. If an adapted vehicle is removed or immobilised for debt recovery this has a disproportionate impact, in part because of the scarcity of accessible alternative options for transport, such as accessible taxi vans.

Due to the nature of vision impairments and the need for assistive technologies PVI would support an addition to Clause 4 which amends Section 167 (Warrant to seize property) of the Principal Act (The District Court Act 2016).

¹ For brevity we have utilized vision impairment throughout this document to include blind, low-vision and vision-impaired persons.



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Recommended changes

PVI recommends inserting the highlighted wording after section 167(2)(a)(ii), into (iii) as follows:

*(iii) in the case of the judgment debtor with a disability, any item that is necessary for his or her care or support, **communication**, independence, or to promote his or her inclusion and participation in society (for example any mobility device, specially adapted motor vehicle, **computer/smartphone with adaptive technology or accessible features**, or medical equipment)*

Vision-impaired persons often rely on computers and smartphones for their communication needs. While a fully sighted person can access cheaper technologies (e.g. a cheap smartphone), this is not the case for vision impaired persons who rely on specialist adaptive features and/or specialised technologies (for example, JAWS, eReaders and the like). Screen reading technologies often cost more than the computer which they run on! Additionally, applications such as Wayfindr or BlindSquare which some vision impaired persons utilise for independent travel, require more advanced smartphones on which to operate.

Adding the phrase “computer/smartphone with adaptive technology or accessible features” to the list of examples will be useful to indicate the kinds of communication devices that are typically utilized by vision impaired persons.

Conclusion

PVI welcomes the protections that this amendment bill affords vision impaired persons. PVI recommends further strengthening these protections through the addition of communication devices to the list of equipment which cannot be seized against debts.

PVI would like to speak to this submission
