

A Hanga-Aro-Rau: Manufacturing, Engineering and Logistics Workforce Development Council White Paper

Unlocking the potential of the disabled workforce:

Strategies to inform redesign of the vocational education and training system and its link to employment support and recruitment

Contents

Foreword.....	3
Executive Summary	5
Enablers for disabled people in VET and employment.....	6
1. Improving achievement and accessibility in industry training	6
2. Building employer disability confidence and awareness	7
3. Bringing employers and employment support organisations together.	8
4. Developing better employment support infrastructure.....	8
Disabled people in VET and employment.....	10
Introduction	10
Employment outcomes for disabled people	10
Disabled people are clearly disadvantaged in the New Zealand workforce:.....	10
Education outcomes for disabled people	11
Vocational and tertiary outcomes for disabled people	12
Tāngata Whaikaha Māori and Pacific Disabled People.....	13
Benefits to the economy of employing more disabled people	13
Improving support and academic outcomes for disabled ākonga in VET.....	14
Barriers to Creating a Pathway to Industry for Disabled People	17
Employer attitudes.....	17
Ableism	18
Lack of information	19
Unsafe workplaces for disabled people to provide personal information.....	19
Enablers for employers and disabled people.....	19
A system that supports all disabled people	20
Promotion of employer support infrastructure	21
Access to a diagnosis and workplace assessments.....	22
Safe, accessible learning environments and workplaces	22
Comprehensive data about disabled ākonga and staff in industry	23
The role of the Government in disability employment.....	24
References	26

Foreword

Our explicit focus in this white paper is on enabling a strong and prosperous New Zealand economy through investments in the success of disabled people. This focus sits within the broader objectives of an established pipeline of disabled workers, one where they are supported and empowered within the workplace and where skills shortages are filled by a diverse workforce at every level of industry. Our vision is the realisation of disabled people's potential, resulting in higher skilled and higher paid workforces that meet the changing needs of industry.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight and support this vision, providing actionable guidance to those ultimately responsible for the redesign of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system: the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), the Ministry of Education (MoE), and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and their agents, including those responsible for the transition from Workforce Development Councils to Industry Skills Boards (ISBs). The critical redesign function is best supported by robust evidence and policies that have been proven to work well, which is exactly why we have developed these three white papers, focussing respectively on Māori, Pacific Peoples and disabled people. The success of these groups is essential to the success of the VET system as a whole, and we acknowledge that some ākonga and kaimahi in our industries may find themselves and their experiences reflected in all three papers:

1. Redesigning Vocational Education and Training system to unlock the potential of Māori and the Māori economy through workforce development: Strategies to inform vocational training design.
2. Redesigning the Vocational Education and Training system to unlock the potential of Pacific Peoples through workforce development: Strategies to inform vocational training design.
3. Unlocking the potential of the disabled workforce: Strategies to inform redesign of the Vocational Education and Training system, and its link to employment support and recruitment.

We acknowledge that existing providers, business associations, and employers may already be implementing some of the enablers we propose in this paper. It is critical that the redesign of the VET system does not lose what is already being accomplished when it goes through the next set of changes. This includes national efforts to coordinate disability supports across the VET system, and to create pathways from education to employment. The redesign presents us with opportunities to reset and recalibrate and, where it makes sense, to build on existing foundations for a stronger, more responsive and more inclusive VET system.

One of the foundations worth retaining is the legislative and policy focus on under-served communities. That includes preserving in the Education and Training Act 2020, regardless of which entities are responsible for the functions, the provision to “meet the needs of all of its learners, in particular those who are under-served by the education system, including (without limitation) Māori, Pacific, and disabled learners.”¹

To discuss this lever and others that are available to us through the effective and efficient use of the functions that already exist within the system, please reach out to:

¹ (Education and Training Act 2020, schedule 13(4)(f)).

Phil Alexander-Crawford Chief Executive (Te Whiu, Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Rēhia, Ngāpuhi) and Samantha McNaughton Deputy Chief Executive.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge all those who contributed to this paper. Special thanks go to Grant Cleland for integrating multiple sources of data and evidence, and his considerable professional and lived experience, into a coherent and compelling argument for what is necessary to ensure the success of disabled people in vocational education and training, and in employment. We are also grateful to Dr Carina Meares for her invaluable peer review and guidance in the development of this paper and for the substantive literature review that informed it. Lastly, our thanks go to All is for All² for the research that provided such valuable insights into the experiences of disabled people and employers in the construction, engineering, infrastructure, logistics and manufacturing industries, and which also provided key evidence for this paper.

² (All is for All, 2024a; 2024b).

Executive Summary

An estimated 17% of the population of Aotearoa New Zealand have impairments,³ and because our society is built in ways that do not account for these, disabled people experience inequities in both employment and education systems.⁴ The employment rate for disabled people, for example, has decreased since 2013.⁵ Disabled people are also more likely to work part-time; have lower incomes than non-disabled workers; and have lower levels of labour force participation regardless of their level of qualification.⁶ In education, disabled people are more likely to have no post-school qualification and less likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher than non-disabled people.⁷ It is critical that these inequities are addressed, both for the wellbeing of disabled people, and for the many contributions they can make to a strong and prosperous New Zealand economy.

We recognise the unique place of Māori as tāngata whenua of Aotearoa New Zealand, and the need to address the significant inequitable outcomes in education and employment outcomes for Tāngata Whaikaha Māori (Māori disabled people). 24% of Māori live with an impairment, the highest rate for any ethnic group in Aotearoa, across all age groups.⁸ Tāngata Whaikaha Māori are also less likely than non-disabled Māori to be in the labour force, and those who are in the labour force have higher rates of unemployment.⁹

Poor outcomes for Pacific disabled people are also evident across a range of social indicators, including healthcare access and treatment, and employment and housing. These outcomes are often compounded when Pacific Disabled People are also members of other marginalised groups.¹⁰ We therefore need to consider the accessibility needs and appropriate cultural models of support for Tāngata Whaikaha Māori and Pacific Disabled People; to address the specific barriers each group faces; and to include them and their families in the planning of any supports or programmes to address these inequities.

This white paper draws on a range of sources about disabled people in employment and education systems to provide actionable guidance in the form of a series of recommendations for those currently redesigning the VET system and those considering pathways into employment. These sources include the research undertaken by Hanga-Aro-Rau and Waihangā Ara Rau¹¹ that examined the experiences of disabled people and employers in Manufacturing, Engineering, Logistics, Construction and Infrastructure industries, and the literature review written to support it.¹²

³ (Statistics New Zealand, 2025a).

⁴ (Meares, 2024).

⁵ (Statistics New Zealand, 2014; 2020).

⁶ (Statistics New Zealand, 2014; 2020).

⁷ (Earle, 2019).

⁸ (Whaikaha, 2025).

⁹ (Meares, 2024).

¹⁰ (Meares, 2024).

¹¹ (All is for All, 2024a).

¹² (Meares, 2024).

Enablers for disabled people in VET and employment

A redesigned VET system should include a focus on improving both education and employment outcomes for disabled learners. This should include how the system connects to and supports employers and employees, whether they are currently in training or planning to be. Given that one in six New Zealanders lives with an impairment,¹³ it is likely that employers already have disabled staff. Industry training in all modes, therefore, needs to be accessible to disabled people, and employers need to be confident in their ability to create accessible working and learning environments. A critical part of achieving this accessibility is to involve disabled people from the top down, from the development of strategy and policy through to government initiatives, education and training at all levels, and throughout workplaces. All need to reflect a ‘nothing about us, without us!’ approach.¹⁴

1. Improving achievement and accessibility in industry training

Specific enablers for vocational education include:

- Establish accessibility as a forethought, rather than an afterthought. In this way, accessibility for disabled people is built into the very foundations of physical, information and communication structures and systems throughout VET.
- Strengthen teacher education with a coordinated focus on Universal Design for Learning (UDL)¹⁵ in order to improve secondary, vocational, and tertiary qualification achievement by disabled ākonga. This requires a coordinated strategy of UDL training; guidance and resources that are easy to use and find; and the monitoring of any impact on disabled learners’ outcomes.
- Retain disabled ākonga as a priority underserved learner group in legislation that applies to VET, and in the standing up of Industry Skills Boards.
- Identify disabled learners at each level of the education system and report annually on education experiences, progress and academic outcomes for this priority group.
- Retain the requirement that all vocational education providers, including those in work-based learning, are required to develop, update and monitor the impacts of their Disability Action Plans, in partnership with their disabled ākonga and disability support staff.
- New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA), Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and Workforce Development Councils (soon to be Industry Skills Boards or ISBs) use their respective levers for programme/qualification approval, and the monitoring of providers, to embed the use of Universal Design for Learning in both teaching and assessment across the vocational training system.
- Retain and build on the existing coordinated infrastructure for supporting disabled learners (which was established under Te Pūkenga and is at risk of being lost during

¹³ (Statistics New Zealand, 2025a).

¹⁴ This phrase has its origins in an international disability rights conference in Eastern Europe and was used subsequently by leaders of Disabled People South Africa (Charlton, 1998).

¹⁵ (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, 2024).

its disestablishment). This would include initiatives such as networks for staff and ākonga; training for kaimahi; accessibility policies, for example on the recording of lectures and the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI); bulk purchasing of assistive technology; resource learning support forums to share good practice; and assessment accommodations.

- Improve transition from school into vocational/tertiary education and then employment with a flexible UDL teaching and assessment environment that accommodates disabled learners' various needs and abilities. This should also include creating more pathways between the VET and employment systems to support disabled people, for example through work experience, placements and internships.
- Allocate specific VET funding for the support of disabled ākonga; and develop, implement and monitor these supports, with active input from disabled ākonga.
- Revisit disability employment support funding policy to address inequities between the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) support of those who are injured with the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) funding for people whose impairments are from birth or illness.
- Establish consistency, collaboration and shared services between work-based and campus disability support services. For example, these services in the larger polytechnics have a long successful history of providing learning supports for disabled ākonga with a range of impairments, and could support work-based providers, many of whom are in the process of developing these services.

2. Building employer disability confidence and awareness

Many employers are interested in expanding the diversity of their workforce, including attracting and supporting more disabled people, but they 'don't know what they don't know'. Barriers to employment for disabled people can include employer concerns about health and safety and physical access, negative stereotypes about disabled people; workplaces that are unsafe for the sharing of personal impairment information; a lack of employer awareness about existing disability employer support infrastructure; and ableism. Industry needs a better understanding of learning and employment support services across the vocational education and training ecosystem, and through into employment.¹⁶ Specific focus is required to engage with education and training providers and employers to promote career opportunities for disabled people.¹⁷

Specific employment enablers include:

- Promote understanding of ableism, unconscious bias, and the development of inclusive workplace practices and cultures, perhaps through a nationwide campaign for small to large employers, funded by Government, that focuses on workplace training, guidance and resources.

¹⁶ (All is for All, 2024b; Meares, 2024).

¹⁷ (Deloitte, 2022).

- Provide employer training, guidance, and resources to build disability confidence, including myth-busting information about workplace health and safety considerations and employers' legal obligations.
- Showcase success stories of disabled employers and employees to raise the visibility of disabled people's success and foster mentorship.
- Educate employers on the barriers faced by disabled people in the workplace and how they can contribute to overcoming these.
- Encourage employers to review their recruitment processes and support them to implement more inclusive recruitment practices.
- Create social support networks for employers, peers and co-workers who are supporting and recruiting disabled staff. These could include communities of practice across industries and support networks for disabled staff.

3. Bringing employers and employment support organisations together.

- Build better employer links with the disability employment agencies funded as part of MSD¹⁸ and ACC.¹⁹ Employment Support Programmes, and other useful support services, can resolve employer concerns and develop more effective workplace supports for employers and disabled staff.
- Develop more equitable support infrastructure for employing disabled people with different impairments.
- Increase the visibility of disability, disabled role models and supportive employers.
- Create safe workplaces for disabled people to provide personal information about the workplace support they require through training, guidance and resources for employers.
- Increase employer understanding of family connections and how these and other networks can assist them to support and recruit disabled staff.
- Increase employer understanding of the potential of disabled staff, and how they can find support to resolve any concerns from organisations that support disabled people into employment.

4. Developing better employment support infrastructure

- Increase MSD workplace support funding to the same level as that provided by ACC.

¹⁸ (Work and Income, n.d.).

¹⁹ (ACC, 2024).

- Shift responsibility for disability employment policymaking from MSD to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), so we have an employment strategy rather than welfare strategy for the employment of disabled people. This should include an increased policy focus on employer supports.
- Coordinate initiatives, support and funding from all relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Education (MoE), MSD and MBIE.
- Improve accessibility in workplaces by reviewing and providing equitable funding for any costs associated with workplace modifications, assistive technology and other inclusive workplace equipment, for those on MSD or ACC.
- Collect industry data about the progress of disabled staff and create, implement and monitor disability inclusion policies.
- Create opportunities for disabled people to develop their industry skills and experience so they can compete with non-disabled applicants during recruitment. This could include internships, work experience or training placements for disabled people.
- Ensure that disabled people have better access to a diagnosis and workplace and learning assessments. This is also required in the VET system.
- Develop strategies to address the impacts of sexism, racism and ageism in the workplace; organisations that do this are more likely to recognise ableism and see value in employing disabled staff.
- Learn from employers in smaller regional communities about how they connect and support disabled people in their local community and replicate their success in larger centres.

This white paper highlights that many employers and industries are genuinely interested in better supporting and recruiting disabled people. There are also many disabled people who want to contribute to these industries and to our economy. To achieve this participation, the VET redesign needs to build the disability confidence of kaimahi associated with industry teaching, assessment and employment of disabled people, so that people with various impairments receive the right learning and workplace supports to achieve their potential.

Addressing the barriers and implementing the solutions outlined in this white paper will contribute to more inclusive and more accessible industry training and employment for disabled people, which will in turn benefit disabled people, employers and the Aotearoa New Zealand economy as a whole.

Disabled people in VET and employment

Introduction

One in six New Zealanders lives with an impairment.²⁰ Disabled people include those with permanent impairments, those with impairments resulting from long or short-term injury or illness, the Deaf community and people with learning disabilities, neurodiversity, mental health conditions, and physical, sensory and hidden impairments. These impairments often last for six months or more.²¹

Rather than being disabled by their impairments, disabled people are instead 'disabled by their environment'. As noted in the New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026:²²

Disability is not something individuals have. ... Instead, 'disability is the process which happens when one group of people creates barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments that other people have'.²³

This white paper draws on a variety of sources, including the findings of research²⁴ commissioned by Hanga-Aro-Rau and our fellow Workforce Development Council, Waihangara Ara Rau, in 2023-2024, and the literature review²⁵ conducted to support it. The research examined the experiences of disabled people and employers in manufacturing, engineering, logistics, construction and infrastructure industries. Data collection methods included a survey of employers (n=247), and interviews and focus groups with 25 employers (three of whom were also disabled) and 34 disabled people.

The purpose of the research, and of this white paper, is to understand what is required for these industries, employers and workplaces to recruit and better support more disabled staff. We also consider here what is needed in a redesign of the VET sector to make vocational education and training more accessible, equitable and welcoming for disabled people; and what is required to create pathways for disabled people from VET into employment.

Employment outcomes for disabled people

Disabled people are clearly disadvantaged in the New Zealand workforce:

- In June 2024, the labour force participation rate for disabled people aged 15 to 64 years was 44.7%, compared with 84.1% for non-disabled people.²⁶
- The employment rate for disabled people was 39.8% compared with 80.3% for non-disabled people. This has decreased since 2013.
- The unemployment rate for disabled people was 11%, compared with 4.5% for non-disabled people.
- The underutilisation rate for disabled people was 26.3%, compared with 11.3% for non-disabled people.²⁷

²⁰ (Statistics New Zealand, 2025a).

²¹ (Office for Disability Issues, 2016; United Nations General Assembly, 2007).

²² (Office for Disability Issues, 2016).

²³ (Employment New Zealand, 2024, cited in Meares, 2024, p.19).

²⁴ (All is for All, 2024a).

²⁵ (Meares, 2024).

²⁶ (Statistics New Zealand, 2024).

²⁷ (Statistics New Zealand, 2024).

- Disabled people are more likely to work part-time, have lower incomes, have lower levels of workforce participation than non-disabled people regardless of their level of qualification; and the majority that are not employed want a job.²⁸
- Disabled people are twice as likely as non-disabled people to have no formal qualifications, and those with qualifications are only employed at the same rate as non-disabled people without qualifications.
- Over 40% of young disabled people are not in employment, education or training.²⁹

Education outcomes for disabled people

The Education Review Office (ERO) in 2022³⁰ found that:

- There is currently no systematic administrative data on disabled learners across the school system, including learning and progress achievement, and education outcomes.
- A significant proportion of disabled learners do not feel accepted, and are not supported to engage in learning or wider school activities.
- 49% of teachers spoken to had not heard about Universal Design for Learning,³¹ a key tool for ensuring an equitable educational experience.
- Many teachers are not confident in teaching disabled learners, particularly those with more complex needs.
- The curriculum is designed to be flexible and inclusive, but Ministry of Education guidelines and resources are not well consolidated in one place for easy access, and most teachers are not using them.
- The quality and inclusiveness of education varies significantly between schools, resulting in inequitable outcomes for disabled learners.
- There are, however, pockets of good practice, particularly in schools in lower socio-economic and more diverse communities.
- Disabled learners with more complex needs (who have significant difficulties with learning, concentrating, remembering, accepting change, managing self, and/or relating to others) report poorer experiences than other disabled learners.

The ERO review made a number of recommendations related to identifying disabled learners in the system, reporting, strengthening teacher education, improving coordination of education support agencies, and acting when schools persistently fail to meet the needs of disabled learners.

²⁸ (Statistics New Zealand, 2014; 2020).

²⁹ (Statistics New Zealand, 2014; 2020).

³⁰ (Education Review Office, 2022).

³¹ (Achieve, 2024).

One area in which limited data is available is National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) and University Entrance (UE) achievement outcomes.³² These are highly concerning; an appropriate next step would be a review of learning supports in secondary education in order to improve academic outcomes for disabled students:

- In 2020, 65% of ākonga with learning support and funding did not achieve NCEA within three years of being in Year 11.
- Just over half had no record of any standards-based assessments and were not on an NCEA pathway. 82% of these ākonga were Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS)³³ funded disabled students.
- Students approved for Special Assessment Conditions (SAC)³⁴ and learning support were less likely to achieve University Entrance.
- New Zealand European or Pākehā learners apply for SAC at nearly twice the rate of Māori learners, so that disabled Māori can be even further disadvantaged when it comes to accessing support.

Vocational and tertiary outcomes for disabled people

At least 22% of ākonga in vocational education have an impairment.³⁵

The 2013 Disability Survey³⁶ provided comparative tertiary education participation rates for disabled and non-disabled learners aged 16 to 39. Disabled students were more likely to be enrolled in foundation tertiary education (Level 1 to 3 certificates), about as likely to be enrolled in vocational education, including industry training (Levels 4 to 7 non-degree) and less likely to be enrolled in degree level and above compared to non-disabled students.

In 2013 and 2018,³⁷ Statistics New Zealand found that disabled people were more likely to have no post-school qualification, and less likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher than non-disabled people.

In 2023, the [National Disabled Students' Association](#), with the support of the MoE, NZQA and the TEC, surveyed (n=235) and interviewed (n=10) disabled students in order to understand their lived experience of tertiary education.³⁸ An analysis of responses showed that:

- 32% of ākonga found it difficult to ask teaching staff for help.
- And 60% of learners had experienced exclusion or discrimination because of their disability.

Only 23% of learners were asked to give feedback on disability issues by their education providers, despite the TEC requirement for providers in tertiary and vocational education to develop disability action plans in consultation with disabled ākonga.

³² (NZQA, 2023a).

³³ (Ministry of Education, 2021).

³⁴ (NZQA, 2023b).

³⁵ (Earle, 2019).

³⁶ (Earle, 2019).

³⁷ (Statistics New Zealand, 2020).

³⁸ (Smith, 2023). Keep in mind that research participants were primarily from universities and polytechnics, with only five learners from Private Training Establishments (PTEs), apprenticeships, and Wānanga.

Tāngata Whaikaha Māori and Pacific Disabled People

Statistics New Zealand estimates that 24% of Māori live with an impairment of some kind,³⁹ the highest rate for any ethnic group in Aotearoa, across all age groups.

Tāngata Whaikaha Māori (Māori Disabled People) are less likely than non-disabled Māori to be in the labour force, and those who are in the labour force have higher rates of unemployment. They also have lower incomes, greater likelihood of damp, cold and inadequate housing, higher rates of discrimination and lower rates of self-assessed health compared to other Māori.⁴⁰

With regard to education and employment support systems to address these inequities, there is a documented need for strategies⁴¹ which:

- Consider the specific barriers that Tāngata Whaikaha Māori face in education and employment.
- Include fair representation of Tāngata Whaikaha Māori and their whānau.
- Consist of kaimahi training to build 'disability confidence' from a cultural and Te Tiriti o Waitangi perspective.
- Acknowledge that some Tāngata Whaikaha Māori are reluctant to provide personal information about their impairment because of cultural perspectives of disability that leave them feeling whakamā.
- Consist of different cultural models of support and outlines of how Māori business networks can support Tāngata Whaikaha Māori into these industries.

Similar to Tāngata Whaikaha Māori, poor outcomes for Pacific Disabled People are also evident across a range of social indicators, including healthcare access and treatment, and employment and housing. These outcomes are often compounded when Pacific Disabled People are also members of other marginalised groups. Considering their cultural needs in the development of support systems is also important.⁴²

Benefits to the economy of employing more disabled people

Economies as a whole can benefit significantly from the employment of disabled workers.

- In 2017, NZIER⁴³ calculated a fiscal benefit of NZD\$1.45 billion if the labour force participation rates of people with and without disabilities were equalised.⁴⁴
- The benefits of employing disabled people accrue to individual businesses too, with increased revenue and profit margins. Research undertaken in 2018 by global

³⁹ (Whaikaha, 2025).

⁴⁰ (Statistics New Zealand, 2015, cited in Meares, 2024, p.32).

⁴¹ (Te Pūkenga, 2022).

⁴² (Meares, 2024).

⁴³ (New Zealand Institute of Economic Research <https://www.nzier.org.nz/>).

⁴⁴ (Bealing, Kriebel & Pambudi, 2017, cited in Meares, 2024).

professional services company Accenture concluded that the 45 companies they classified as ‘Disability Inclusion Champions’ achieved, on average, 28% higher revenue, double the net income and 30% higher economic profit margins over the four-year period analysed.⁴⁵

- A follow up to the Accenture 2018 study published in 2023⁴⁶ found that in the previous five years, companies that led on key disability inclusion criteria realised 1.6 times more revenue, 2.6 times more net income, and twice the economic profit as other participants in their annual benchmark survey.
- Employers value the contributions that disabled staff make to their workplaces, for example, disabled staff tend to stay longer, thus improving staff retention rates. They also see value in disabled people’s ability to adapt to change, and describe how reflecting the diversity of the community opens up new markets and new ways of doing things.⁴⁷

Improving support and academic outcomes for disabled ākonga in VET

It is essential that all industry training is accessible for disabled people.

The Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE) identified disabled ākonga (learners) as underserved learners alongside Māori and Pacific ākonga. At least 22% per cent of ākonga in vocational educational have an impairment.⁴⁸

Between 2021 and 2023, Vocational, Tertiary Providers and Private Training Establishments (PTEs), including those involved in work-based learning, were required by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) to develop and implement Disability Action Plans (DAP)⁴⁹ as part of their investment plans.

These plans have primarily focused on developing actions to resolve barriers in the social and physical environment to the academic achievement of disabled ākonga. The focus has been on improving learning support and academic outcomes for disabled ākonga.

These Disability Action Plans have shown the need to:

- Use Universal Design for Learning (UDL)⁵⁰ to create more flexible teaching and assessment to accommodate the range of needs and abilities of disabled learners. This would improve academic achievement with qualifications at all levels of the education system, and improve access to the industries covered here.
- Identify disabled ākonga at enrolment and create disability support positions, such as the Principal Advisor - Learners with Disabilities position recently created by BCITO,⁵¹ particularly within work-based learning environments.
- Develop systems to get feedback from disabled ākonga and employers about the services and the support they require. This would increase disabled ākonga

⁴⁵ (Accenture, 2018, cited in Meares, 2024).

⁴⁶ (Accenture 2023, cited in Meares, 2024).

⁴⁷ (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2021, cited in Meares, 2024).

⁴⁸ (Earle, 2019).

⁴⁹ (Tertiary Education Commission, 2024).

⁵⁰ (Achieve, 2024).

⁵¹ (BCITO, 2024).

participation in industry training by assisting employers to more effectively support disabled people.

- Build the disability confidence of teaching and support kaimahi, employers and colleagues who support disabled ākonga through training, resources and support.
- Improve data collection about disabled ākonga and the support they need.
- Create accessible information, digital platforms and more access to assistive technology.

Disability Action Plans have the potential to improve learning support and academic outcomes for disabled people. In recent years, Te Pūkenga has held various wānanga with disabled ākonga. They have said that these sorts of supports are urgently needed to enable disabled ākonga to achieve vocational qualifications, and the lack of flexibility and UDL is currently a barrier to their learning and assessments. This is reinforced in the Te Rito Report: Insights from Disabled Ākonga,⁵² which talks about disabled ākonga experiences in vocational education.

Another gap in current provision is a lack of consistency, collaboration and shared services between providers in the provision of disability-related learning support for disabled ākonga in the vocational and tertiary education sectors. There are disability support services within larger polytechnics and universities that have a long history of successfully supporting disabled ākonga. These could be supporting smaller and work-based learning providers who are just starting to develop their systems for supporting disabled ākonga.

What we would like a VET system redesign to consider for disabled ākonga:

- The Ministry of Education and TEC develops a clear data pathway for identifying disabled learners in the education system and report to Government annually on education experiences, progress and academic outcomes for this priority group. This could include comparing outcomes with Māori and Pacific ākonga, assessing whether current learning supports are making a difference and setting targets for achievement.
- Strengthen teacher education with a coordinated focus on Universal Design for Learning in order to improve NCEA, vocational, and tertiary qualification achievement by disabled ākonga. This requires a coordinated strategy of UDL training; guidance and resources that are easy to use and find; and the monitoring of any impact on disabled learners' outcomes.
- Retain disabled ākonga as a priority underserved learner group and national coordination and consistency of disability support within VET. History has shown that when providers have autonomy, work within a competitive model, and are not specifically encouraged to allocate funding for the support of disabled ākonga, these students are often forgotten. This support should include targeted funding and programmes to support career pathways and lifelong learning.
- Continue the collaboration, consistency and shared services across campus, work-based and online disability support services that have started to develop in vocational

⁵² (Te Pūkenga, 2021).

education. This would include initiatives such as networks for staff and ākonga; training for kaimahi; accessibility policies, for example on the recording of lectures and the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI); bulk purchasing of assistive technology; resource learning support forums to share good practice; and assessment accommodations.

- The strategic component of the Unified Funding System encouraged and enabled all providers to target and better support disabled ākonga, and this should be retained. Disability funding should also not be solely volume-based; rather a base grant should fund a plan for meeting the needs of disabled ākonga, alongside an appraisal of the cost of these services.
- Retain the requirement for all tertiary and vocational providers to have, implement and monitor Disability Action Plans with active disabled ākonga and Disability Support staff input.
- Ensure resourcing for disability-related learning support forums that share good practice. If work-based learning is separated from campus learning, the collaboration, consistency and shared disability support services that have started to develop across learning environments could be lost.
- To improve qualification outcomes for disabled ākonga, that NZQA, TEC and Workforce Development Councils use their respective levers for programme/qualification approval, and the monitoring of providers, to embed the use of Universal Design for Learning in both teaching and assessment across the vocational training system.

Implementing these actions would help to ensure future industry training is more accessible for disabled people.

Barriers to Creating a Pathway to Industry for Disabled People

Employer attitudes

Employer attitudes, including commonplace misconceptions, prejudice and stigma, are considered significant barriers to the recruitment and retention of disabled people. According to Bartram and Cavanagh:⁵³

“... we are simply not equipping contemporary managers with the knowledge, skills and abilities and more importantly the confidence to engage in disability employment and effective management. As part of the education of current managers and the next generation of managers it is vitally important that we break down the misconceptions of employing workers with disability and the often-misguided fears of managers about the potential for ‘problems’ associated with disability employment.”

Commonly held myths about disabled people in the workplace, and their respective facts:⁵⁴

Myth: Employing disabled people is expensive.

Fact: Accommodating disabled employees generally costs no more than supporting non-disabled workers.

Myth: Disabled employees have a high turnover rate.

Fact: Disabled employees remain with an employer an average of four months longer than non-disabled workers.

Myth: Disabled workers do not fit in.

Fact: Organisational benefits of having disabled workers on staff include the value of new creative skills, the increase in disability awareness, and a conscious, positive change in overall workplace inclusion.

Myth: The productivity of disabled workers is lower.

Fact: Productivity is actually a benefit of hiring disabled people.

Myth: Disabled workers present a higher risk of injury.

Fact: The presence of disabled workers in fact improves workplace safety.

In the All is for All research,⁵⁵ when asked to select the barriers that might impact disabled people in the workplace, the most common responses chosen by employers who responded to the survey included a lack of suitable jobs, a lack of physical accessibility, and a lack of knowledge about disabled people.

When employers were asked about the challenges they have experienced with disabled employees, concern about health and safety was most prominent, with 55% of participants

⁵³ (Bartram & Cavanagh, 2019, p. 346).

⁵⁴ (Sheppard, 2023).

⁵⁵ (All is for All, 2024a).

selecting this response. Lack of disability knowledge and physical accessibility were also common choices.

There were also employers in the research who didn't know about the support networks that are available to employers, such as a disabled employee's whānau, or the MSD and ACC contracted Disability Employment Support Services. They felt alone in their support of disabled staff and often struggled to provide effective workplace support; some had suffered financial losses as a consequence of this.

Certainly these issues can be challenges, but they are not insurmountable. For example, in 2018/19 the MSD-funded⁵⁶ 'Supported Employment Service' placed 4,310 disabled people into employment. This evidence indicates that these concerns *can* be resolved with the right support.

Another persistent myth is that disabled people were unsuitable for senior positions, and only able to take on roles under the [Minimum Wage Exemption Scheme](#)⁵⁷ or at entry-level. This attitude was also reflected in the experiences of disabled people in our focus groups and interviews, who often didn't feel supported to advance in their role.

Ableism

While disabled people are part of every community, not everyone has an equal voice or opportunities. This is due to ableism, which is "a belief system that values certain bodies or minds, and devalues others according to what is considered 'normal' or 'acceptable.'"⁵⁸ Like racism, sexism and ageism, ableism is the foundation from which discrimination(s) grows, thus negatively impacting on the employment opportunities and experiences of disabled people.⁵⁹

Ableism⁶⁰ exists within our industries and workplaces, as it exists across society. In a workplace context, this often means that if disabled people do not fit the expected mould for an employee, their skills are undervalued and their impairment considered a deficit. There are a number of measures that employers can implement to counter the impacts of ableism, including the introduction of disability inclusive recruitment practices and training to build the disability confidence of their staff. When employers in the All is for All survey were asked whether they use these kinds of practices, only 23% of respondents said they did.

In our focus groups, young disabled people spoke about workplace bullying or hazing⁶¹ because of their impairment. Compounding experiences of sexism, racism or ageism in the workplace made it that much harder for disabled people already navigating the impacts of their impairment, especially where the organisational culture is to turn a blind eye.⁶²

⁵⁶ (Ministry of Social Development, 2019).

⁵⁷ (Employment New Zealand, 2024).

⁵⁸ (Mirfin-Veitch et al., 2022, cited in All is for All, 2024b).

⁵⁹ (Mirfin-Veitch et al., 2022).

⁶⁰ (Wolbring, 2012).

⁶¹ Defined as any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them, regardless of a person's willingness to participate (Stop Hazing, 2020, cited in All is for All, 2024a).

⁶² (All is for All, 2024a).

Lack of information

Some employers in our survey seemed unsure about what was considered a disability. Just over 51% had never had a conversation about disability or about hiring more disabled people, while 36.8% said they had, and 11.9% were unsure. Many used the comment box on this question to signal the unsuitability of their workplace for disabled people in general.⁶³

The majority of respondents said they had not offered disability confidence training in their workplaces (61.9%).

When asked what would make a positive difference to employers' experiences of hiring disabled people, 80 employers said more knowledge about disability, while 72 wanted more support for their organisation and more support for their disabled employee. Fifty-six participants also said more knowledge about their legal obligations, more accessible advice about how to hire a disabled worker, and more financial support would help make a positive difference. This indicates that many employers are willing to learn and engage, with the right kind of support.⁶⁴

Unsafe workplaces for disabled people to provide personal information

The disclosure of personal information about workplace needs can be a significant risk for disabled people and was a key theme in interviews with disabled employees conducted by All is for All.⁶⁵ Employers need to understand the importance of creating a safe and inclusive culture; the legal boundaries around disclosure for disabled staff; and how they can safely ask disabled candidates about their impairments during recruitment. For example, asking all candidates "what workplace support do you require?" is a straightforward and inclusive practice that employers can implement immediately. Demonstrating to disabled people that disclosure will lead to effective workplace support rather than negative impacts on their workplace experience or career development, will lead to more disclosure and more accessible workplaces.

However, disabled interviewees were concerned about the impact that disclosure might have on their employment or workplace support. Some said they had lost jobs upon disclosure, while others explained that they already felt their advancement opportunities were limited, without damaging them further by disclosing their impairment.

Until employers realise that they need to create a safe workplace environment for disabled people to provide personal impairment information, disclosure within these industries will remain limited. It is important that employers demonstrate to disabled people that disclosure will lead to effective workplace support, and not have a detrimental impact on their workplace experience or career development.

Enablers for employers and disabled people

⁶³ (All is for All, 2024b).

⁶⁴ (All is for All, 2024b).

⁶⁵ (All is for All, 2024a; 2024b).

A system that supports all disabled people

Most disabled people working permanently in the Manufacturing, Engineering, Logistics, Construction and Infrastructure industries had benefited from being given a chance by one fantastic leader or manager who believed in them and helped them get “a foot in the door” of their career.⁶⁶ However, most who had this experience were Pākehā men with male bosses. Māori or Pacific participants, rangatahi (young people) in early career stages, or older people perceived to be at the end of their career were less likely to have the benefit of this assistance and were still looking for an opportunity.

This suggests that the employment of disabled people in industry is not systemically supported and instead relies on the goodwill of individuals. Some disabled people shared that when their supportive manager changed or their encouraging leader left, their jobs became much harder, and some even lost their roles.

Some of the positive impacts that strong senior advocates were able to introduce were greater visibility of disability, more disabled role models and more supportive employers. Champions can also promote training and resources around physical access and health and safety solutions for disabled staff. Another positive approach was reaching out to family and community connections and available support networks. Other strategies included involving staff with disabilities in social events and providing local internships.

Although workplace champions and advocates can have a number of positive effects for individual disabled people, system-wide support and infrastructure is what is required to ensure that all disabled people are supported to enter and thrive in the workplace. A key finding of our research is that many employers were not accessing existing contracted support funded by ACC and MSD, and as a consequence struggled to provide appropriate workplace supports for their disabled staff. This had negative consequences for disabled people, employers and sometimes the organisation’s financial bottom line.

In both the survey and interviews, employers said that they wanted to engage with the disability community, but if there was no one on staff with the right skills and knowledge, they grappled with the lack of support, the impact of stereotypes and an ingrained belief that disability equals deficit. Transforming these foundational beliefs can only be achieved by tangible investment in long-term employer learning and support. Individual businesses cannot be expected to make such an investment alone.

How a VET system redesign could help:

- Building the disability confidence of employers and their kamahi is essential if these industries are to successfully employ and value more disabled staff.
- The VET redesign could include the development of a nationwide campaign for small to large employers, funded by Government, that involves workplace training, guidance and resources. These initiatives should focus on foundational understandings of disability, inclusive workplace support (enablers) and recruitment practices. The concepts of ableism, unconscious bias and common myths about employing disabled people should be covered. They should assist employers and kaimahi to implement inclusive recruitment practices and workplace supports;

⁶⁶ (All is for All, 2024a).

address any employer concerns about employing disabled people; and provide a range of successful industry examples.

- They should also address employer health and safety concerns to stop this being such a barrier; and provide support for staff with different impairments; clarify employer legal obligations; and give examples of good practice where disabled staff have been valued and employers have focused on the skills and contribution of disabled staff.
- Building better employer links with disability employment agencies and other useful support services to resolve employer concerns and develop more effective workplace supports for employers and disabled staff.
- Celebrate employers who are effectively supporting disabled people in their workplaces, as a way of marketing good stories about enablers for other employers and disabled people. These employers could also be mentors, and communities of practice within industries could be established for employers and disabled people to support one another.

Promotion of employer support infrastructure

Amongst respondents to the employer survey,⁶⁷ 44% employed or had employed disabled staff with a range of impairments e.g., people using wheelchairs for mobility, and people with brain injuries, epilepsy, hearing impairments and/or cognitive impairments. However, most had not accessed the kinds of available workplace support that would make their sites more accessible, and workplace support easier. Some had suffered financial losses as a consequence of employing disabled staff and saw this as a charitable endeavour.

Workplace supports for disabled people funded through ACC versus MSD are also inequitable. The research⁶⁸ found that ACC was a key enabler for disabled people in the workplace, providing payments for technology, adaptations and support workers. ACC funding is only available to those with an injury, most often occurring later in life.

On the other hand, those funded under welfare through MSD have proportionally less support and funding available at an individual level. This had significant short and longer-term implications. It appears harder for disabled people with impairments from birth or illness to succeed in employment generally and in these industries specifically. While sustaining an injury can be a significant trauma, people who acquire their impairment this way often have greater access to funding, and also benefit from prior study or employment success. In 2014, Statistics New Zealand unemployment rates for those with accident/injury (7%) were significantly lower than those with congenital impairments (15%).⁶⁹ Similarly, disabled adults who had lived with disability since they were children were more likely to have unmet needs (72%) than those who had become disabled later in their lives (57%).⁷⁰

⁶⁷ (All is for All, 2024a; 2024b).

⁶⁸ (All is for All, 2024a).

⁶⁹ (Statistics New Zealand, 2014).

⁷⁰ (Statistics New Zealand, 2025b).

How a VET system redesign could help:

- Support the development of better employer links with the disability employment agencies funded as part of MSD and ACC Employment Support Programmes, and other useful support services. These can help to resolve employer concerns and develop more effective workplace supports for employers and disabled staff.
- Increase MSD Job and Training Support and Funds to the same level provided by the ACC Return to Work Programmes, to ensure there is more consistency and a focus on employer supports. This should include a review of these support mechanisms for employers and disabled people, to determine if they could be enhanced.
- Foster partnerships between VET providers and industries to create more pathways for job opportunities for disabled people. This could involve internships, work experience or training placements for disabled people.

Access to a diagnosis and workplace assessments

Access to a diagnosis and assessment had a positive impact on disabled people in industries like construction and engineering, particularly when they felt safe to disclose in the workplace.⁷¹ Many research participants had hidden impairments such as neurodiversity, autism or mental distress. Workplace support provided after diagnosis made it easier for them and gave them more tools to succeed.

Difficulty obtaining a diagnosis can be a significant education and employment barrier because of the cost of assessments and the challenge of obtaining funding for these. Some groups, such as women, can find it difficult to get a neurodivergent diagnosis.⁷² In addition, some impairments are not recognised in Aotearoa New Zealand, such as Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.⁷³ When people don't have a diagnosis, they can struggle to get the learning and workplace supports that they require.

How a VET system redesign could help:

- Government and industry funding for impairment related assessments would make it easier for disabled people to obtain timely assessments for learning and workplace support in VET and employment. This would benefit both the employer and the disabled person.

Safe, accessible learning environments and workplaces

Fear of providing personal information about their impairment in a learning environment or workplace is a real barrier for many disabled people. This is because of the potential prejudice and stigma many face from their teacher, employer, colleagues or peers when they do this.

⁷¹ (All is for All, 2024a).

⁷² (Tupou, Curtis, Taare-Smith, Glasgow & Waddington, 2021).

⁷³ (Hunter, 2024a; 2024b).

Creating a safe environment for disabled people to provide personal information about their learning or workplace support needs in VET or employment is essential if we are to better support or recruit disabled people in industry training and jobs.

Good practices in supporting disabled ākonga and employees include:

- Reviewing enrolment and recruitment processes to identify any barriers to disabled people providing personal impairment information, and then implementing inclusive enrolment and recruitment practices.⁷⁴
- Well-informed curricula and pedagogy, following the Principles of Universal Design for Learning.⁷⁵

How a VET system redesign could help:

- Provide training and resources for VET and Industry about how to create a safe environment for disabled people to provide personal impairment information.
- Establish accessibility as a forethought, rather than an afterthought. In this way, accessibility for disabled people is built into the very foundations of physical, information and communication structures and systems. Often disabled people have to access disability support services because this infrastructure has not been built to address their needs. This is also why many disabled people have struggled to gain qualifications and employment.
- Address systemic barriers by tackling discrimination and bias within the education system and in industry. Do this in ways that address the intersectionality of disabled people's experiences and focus also on racism, sexism, homo- and transphobia, and ageism.
- Expect training providers to provide disabled ākonga with opportunities to participate in work-based learning / work experience / internships.
- Strengthen teacher education with a coordinated focus on Universal Design for Learning to create a more flexible teaching and assessment environment for NCEA, industry and vocational qualifications.
- Ensure that NZQA, TEC and VET providers use their levers for programme/qualification approval, and the monitoring of providers, to embed Universal Design for Learning within industry and vocational training.

Comprehensive data about disabled ākonga and staff in industry

More research and data to measure the progress of disabled people and the success of supports in the education and employment system is necessary. Further, there is little industry-specific research about disabled people's experiences transitioning into Manufacturing, Engineering, Logistics, Construction and Infrastructure, particularly in the

⁷⁴ (All is for All, 2024a; 2024b; Meares, 2024).

⁷⁵ (Achieve, 2024).

context of Aotearoa New Zealand. The research commissioned by Hanga-Aro-Rau and Waihangā Ara Rau completed by All is for All,⁷⁶ and discussed in this white paper, is a response to this evidence gap.

How a VET system redesign could help:

- Better systems to gather data about disabled people from school, vocational and tertiary education, and employment.
- Partnerships with disabled communities, and sponsoring research and forums (such as communities of practice) to share success strategies, and showcasing great employers who effectively support disabled staff in their workplaces.

The role of the Government in disability employment

Working Matters: The Disability Employment Action Plan, the government's response to the employment of disabled people,⁷⁷ lists actions designed to improve their employment outcomes and wellbeing. MSD reports progress on the plan through regular releases of the *Working Matters Dashboard*.⁷⁸

This is a 'welfare strategy' for the employment of disabled people. While it does include some objectives focused on employer support, it is mostly about getting disabled people off benefits and into employment. Current support for disabled people in employment, such as MSD Employment Assistance,⁷⁹ is often targeted at the disabled jobseeker rather than employers. If we are to better support and recruit disabled people in our industries, we need an 'employment strategy' for the employment of disabled people. This could include, for example, funding and support for employers to implement inclusive workplace supports, modifications and equipment, and for kaimahi training that challenges ableism and enables employers to implement inclusive recruitment practices.

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) is responsible for employment policy in this country. However, because we have a 'welfare strategy' for the employment of disabled people, there is a real risk that disabled people get overlooked in employment strategy and policy development.

How a VET system redesign could help:

- As part of the Government's social investment programme, a strategy for the employment of disabled people is developed by MBIE with more focus on supports for employers to recruit and retain disabled people. The effectiveness of these employer supports should also be evaluated and updated regularly.
- Associated initiatives and policy development should ensure that employers have better access to the support networks and funding already available to them, as well

⁷⁶ (All is for All, 2024a; 2024b).

⁷⁷ (Ministry of Social Development, 2020).

⁷⁸ (Ministry of Social Development, 2021).

⁷⁹ (Work and Income, n.d.)

as disability confidence training. Mechanisms to measure progress should focus on whether employers feel more disability confident, and whether more disabled people feel better supported and are being recruited and retained by industry. Appropriate data collection, as described in the previous section, is integral to measuring progress in this area.

- Workforce Development Councils (and ISBs from 2026), responsible for industry voice, standard setting and quality assurance, should develop industry-specific Disability Action Plans that address barriers to recruiting, supporting and retaining disabled staff within these industries.
- Ensuring disabled people are not just consulted with but are part of the VET re-design team – “nothing about us without us”.

In this white paper, we have highlighted the genuine interest that many employers and industries have in better supporting and recruiting disabled people. There are also many disabled people who want to contribute to these industries and to our economy. To achieve this participation, we have argued that the VET redesign needs to build the disability confidence of kaimahi associated with industry teaching, assessment and employment of disabled people so that people with various impairments receive the right learning and workplace supports to achieve their potential. Addressing the barriers and implementing the solutions outlined in this white paper, we believe, will contribute to more inclusive and more accessible industry training and employment for disabled people. This will benefit not only disabled people but employers and the Aotearoa New Zealand economy as a whole.

References

ACC. (2024, March). *Our History*. <https://www.acc.co.nz/about-us/who-we-are/our-history>

Achieve. (2024). *Learning support responsibilities preparation: Principles of universal design in education*. [Principles of universal design in education | Achieve](#)

All is for All. (2024a). *Key findings: Let's level up: Unlock the power of inclusivity and discover the potential of the disabled workforce*. Hanga-Aro-Rau & Waihangara Ara Rau. [Lets-level-up-KEY-FINDINGS-updated.pdf](#)

All is for All. (2024b). *Full Report: Let's level up: Unlock the power of inclusivity and discover the potential of the disabled workforce*. Hanga-Aro-Rau & Waihangara Ara Rau. [DisabilityReport 2024_fullreport_21Novlr.pdf](#)

Bartram, T., & Cavanagh, J. (2019). Re-thinking vocational education and training: Creating opportunities for workers with disability in open employment. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 71(3), 339–349. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2019.1638168>

BCITO. (2024). *We're building the people building New Zealand*. Te Pūkenga. [Apprenticeship NZ in building and construction | BCITO](#)

Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. (2024). *The 7 Principles*. <https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design/the-7-principles>

Charlton, J. I. (1998). *Nothing about us without us: Disability oppression and empowerment*. University of California Press.

Deloitte. (2022). *Hanga-Aro-Rau Post COVID-19 workforce development needs in New Zealand's manufacturing and engineering sectors*. Hanga-Aro-Rau. https://hangaarorau.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Hanga-Aro-Rau-COVID-19-Final-Research-Report-Final-v1.0-10Oct2022_lr2.pdf

Earle, D. (2019, November). Disabled people and tertiary education: An analysis of the 2013 disability survey. *Education counts*. Ministry of Education. https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/196292/Disability-and-tertiary-education.pdf

Education and Training Act 2020. <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2020/0038/latest/LMS170676.html>

Education Review Office. (2022). *Thriving at school? Education for disabled learners in schools*. Education Review Office in partnership with the Human Rights Commission & the Office for Disability. <https://evidence.ero.govt.nz/media/cvqeq54g/thriving-at-school-education-for-disabled-learners-in-schools.pdf>

Employment New Zealand. (2024). *Employers - Minimum wage exemptions for disabled people*. Employment New Zealand. [Minimum wage exemptions for disabled people | Employment New Zealand](#)

Hunter, K. (2024a, February 22). Unpacking the UNCRPD for FASD. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder – Care Action Network (FASD-CAN). [Unpacking the UNCRPD for FASD - FASD-CAN](#)

Hunter, K. (2024b, June 5). FASD-CAN Report: Life with – or without DSS. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder – Care Action Network (FASD-CAN). [FASD-CAN Report: life with – or without DSS - FASD-CAN](#)

Meares, C. (2024). *Unlocking potential: What the research tells us about the current enablers of employment for disabled people*. [Literature Review Draft accessible \(hangaarorau.nz\)](https://hangaarorau.nz/Literature%20Review%20Draft%20accessible)

Ministry of Education. (2021). *Ongoing resourcing scheme*. Ministry of Education. [Ongoing Resourcing Scheme](https://www.education.govt.nz/ongoing-resourcing-scheme/).

Ministry of Social Development. (2019, June 30). *Pūrongo ā-tau: Annual report 2018/2019*. Ministry of Social Development. <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/corporate/annual-report/2019/annual-report-2018-19.pdf>

Ministry of Social Development. (2020). *Working matters: An action plan to ensure disabled people and people with health conditions have an equal opportunity to access employment*. Ministry of Social Development. <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/what-we-can-do/disability-services/disability-employment-action-plan/working-matters-2020-spreads.pdf>

Ministry of Social Development. (2021, October). *The working matters dashboard: Reporting progress on the NZ Disability Employment Action Plan*. Ministry of Social Development. <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/what-we-can-do/disability-services/disability-employment-action-plan/dashboard/working-matters-dashboard-2110.pdf>

Mirfin-Veitch, B., Tikao, K., Asaka, U., Tuisaula, E., Stace, H., Watene, F. R., & Frawley, P. (2022). *Tell me about you: A life story approach to understanding disabled people's experiences in care (1950-1999)*. Donald Beasley Institute. <https://www.donaldbeasley.org.nz/assets/projects/RCOI/Final-reports-and-stories/Tell-Me-About-You-Final.pdf>

NZIER. (2025). *NZIER is an independent economic consultancy*. NZIER New Zealand Institute of Economic Research. <https://www.nzier.org.nz/>

NZQA (2023a). *Analysis of NCEA and UE achievement outcomes of students who receive Ministry of Education learning support services/funding and of students who have been approved for NZQA special assessment conditions (SAC)*. New Zealand Qualifications Authority. <https://www2.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/understanding-secondary-quals/secondary-school-stats/2023/>

NZQA (2023b). *Special assessment conditions*. New Zealand Qualifications Authority. [Special Assessment Conditions :: NZQA](https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/special-assessment-conditions/)

Office for Disability Issues (2016). *New Zealand disability strategy 2016–2026*. Ministry of Social Development. [pdf-nz-disability-strategy-2016.pdf \(odi.govt.nz\)](https://www.odis.govt.nz/publications/new-zealand-disability-strategy-2016-2026/pdf-nz-disability-strategy-2016.pdf)

Sheppard, D. (2023). *The compelling case for disability employment in Australia: The unrivalled benefits of an underutilised labour market*. JobAccess. <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/downloads/compelling-case-disability-employment-australia>

Smith, J. (2023). *Lets get accessible: Disabled students' experiences navigating the tertiary education system*. Ministry of Education. [1-LGA-Final-Report.pdf \(educationcounts.govt.nz\)](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/2023/1/LGA-Final-Report.pdf)

Statistics New Zealand (2014). *Disability and the labour market: Findings from the 2013 Disability Survey*. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/reports/disability-and-the-labour-market-findings-from-the-2013-disability-survey/>

Statistics New Zealand. (2020, October 28). *Measuring inequality for disabled New Zealanders: 2018*. Statistics New Zealand. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/reports/measuring-inequality-for-disabled-new-zealanders-2018/>

Statistics New Zealand. (2024). *Labour market statistics (disability): June 2024 quarter*. Statistics New Zealand. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/labour-market-statistics-june-2024-quarter/>

Statistics New Zealand. (2025a, February 27). *1 in 6 New Zealanders are disabled*. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/1-in-6-new-zealanders-are-disabled/>

Statistics New Zealand. (2025b, February 27). *Disabled people need more care and support*. Statistics New Zealand. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/disabled-people-need-more-care-and-support>

Te Pūkenga. (2021). *Te Rito: Insights from learners and staff—Opportunities to enhance success for Te Pūkenga disabled learners*. <https://www.xn--tepkenga-szb.ac.nz/assets/Our-Pathway/Learner-Journey/Te-Rito-Insights-from-Disabled-learners-Part-Three1.pdf>

Te Pūkenga. (2022). *Strategic Disability Action Plan*. Te Pūkenga. <https://www.xn--tepkenga-szb.ac.nz/assets/Our-Pathway/Learner-Journey/Te-Pukenga-Strategic-Disability-Action-Plan-Brief-for-ELT-April-2022-with-tables.pdf>

Tertiary Education Commission. (2024, March). *Disability action plans: A guide for the tertiary education sector*. Tertiary Education Commission. <https://www.tec.govt.nz/assets/Oritetanga/DAP-Guidance-for-TEOs-March-2024.pdf>

Tupou, J., Curtis, S., Taare-Smith, D., Glasgow, A., & Waddington, H. (2021). Māori and autism: A scoping review. *Autism*, 25(7), 1844-1858. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613211018649> <https://childmind.org/article/autistic-girls-overlooked-undiagnosed-autism/>

United Nations General Assembly. (2007). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People. (2025, February 27). *17 percent of New Zealanders are disabled*. Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People. <https://www.whaikaha.govt.nz/news/news/17-percent-of-new-zealanders-are-disabled>

Wolbring, G. (2012). Expanding Ableism: Taking down the Ghettoization of Impact of Disability Studies Scholars. *Societies*, 2(3), 75–83. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc2030075>

Work and Income. (n.d.). *Job and training support funds*. Ministry of Social Development. [Job and Training Support Funds - Work and Income](#)