

Media Release
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Psychologists call for funding rule changes to be reversed

The New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPSS) is very concerned about the recent changes to funding rules for disabled people and their families and its potential long-term impacts on their psychological wellbeing. We call on the Government to provide additional funding for Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People, and for the Ministry to reinstate the previous rules.

The sudden changes to both Purchasing Rules and the Equipment and Modification Services are destabilising and distressing for families who are often already having to manage difficult situations, with limited resource and service provisions. Having essential supports that were planned and agreed suddenly removed shows a clear lack of respect for disabled people and will impact on their sense of security and safety.

Flexibility to meet the needs of the individual and their support requirements was established after many years of work by the disabled community, recognising the realities of their day-to-day life. Carers are a vital part of many disabled persons' ability to carry out daily tasks and participate in society. Items that support carers being able to continue their work therefore directly support the disabled person – this includes respite support and devices. Burnout is a well-documented phenomenon, especially in long-term care situations, and having carers who are stressed or physically injured can severely restrict the quality of life of the disabled person.

Psychologists also recognise the value of self-determination and autonomy for individuals in making decisions about their own care and supportive resources - and the ways in which this control improves psychological wellbeing. We are deeply concerned that the decision to restrict this flexibility and remove this control will negatively impact on their and their family's wellbeing for many years to come.

NZPSS acknowledges the concluding observations from the United Nations International Monitoring Mechanism regarding the implementation of the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** in New Zealand, in particular the lack of suitable respite services in point 39¹.

NZPSS supports the “whole of life” approach as outlined in the **New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026**². The associated outcomes directly align with ensuring that disabled people and their families have self-determination with their allocated funding.

Background to the New Zealand Psychological Society:

The New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPsS) is the largest professional association for psychologists in New Zealand. It has more than 2300 members, including students, and aims to improve individual and community wellbeing by representing, promoting and advancing the scientific discipline and practice of psychology. Many of our members work in spaces that work with and support tangata Whaikaha and their whānau – including physical and mental health, education, community services, and organisational support.

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