

## **A call to disabled people, Tangata Whaikaha Māori, families, whānau and allies regarding the need to explicitly include EGL in the refreshed NZ Disability Strategy**

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**Attention all disabled people, Tangata Whaikaha Māori, families, whānau and allies.**

We need to ensure work done over the last decade by disabled people, Tangata Whaikaha Māori, families, whānau and allies is not lost.

Currently, the recently released draft New Zealand Disability Strategy does not explicitly reference the Enabling Good Lives (EGL) vision, principles or approach as a key foundation. **EGL was developed as an across-government framework for positive change.** Since 2013, elements of EGL have been tried, tested and have been found to make a positive difference in the lives of disabled people, Tangata Whaikaha Māori, families, whānau.

The EGL National Leadership Group (NEGL) urge you to consider submitting feedback so **EGL is explicitly included as a foundation for positive change in the Vision and Principles section of the new Strategy.**

**Please make your views clear to Whaikaha and the Minister.**

Information on the ways you can make comment on the draft NZ Disability Strategy can be found at:

[www.whaikaha.govt.nz/about-us/our-work/new-zealand-disability-strategy-refresh#scroll-to-3](http://www.whaikaha.govt.nz/about-us/our-work/new-zealand-disability-strategy-refresh#scroll-to-3)

## **Why EGL needs to be overtly included as a foundation in the NZ Disability Strategy**

Since 2012:

- EGL has been promoted by a range of disabled people, Tangata Whaikaha Māori, families and whānau throughout New Zealand
- Development work has gone into regional leadership networks in eleven areas
- over 4400 disabled people and families have directly experienced the value of a new EGL-based system in 'demonstration' sites. Many disabled people, outside the demonstration sites, have used the EGL principles to create positive change in their lives throughout New Zealand
- an EGL-based approach has been evaluated and has been found to work better for disabled people, Tangata Whaikaha Māori, families and whānau than existing ways of doing things
- The Royal Commission Report into Abuse in Care named EGL as a way of the future.<sup>1</sup>
- the EGL approach is being used to create positive change in a range of social services across a variety of sectors.

## **Where EGL came from**

Between 2009 and 2011, a coalition of disabled people, families, whānau and allies worked alongside the Minister for Disability Issues to draft a “clean sheet” model for positive change. This collaboration resulted in the first Enabling Good Lives report in

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<sup>1</sup> “Whanaketia – Through pain and trauma, from darkness to light”

2011, which established the vision of shifting power to disabled people and families and embedding flexibility, self-determination, and community leadership.

In 2012, community-governed groups in Christchurch and Waikato produced the EGL Canterbury Report and EGL Waikato Report, exploring what a new system could look like on the ground. These reports directly informed the establishment of three demonstration sites—in Christchurch, Waikato, and MidCentral—to test the EGL principles in practice.

The Christchurch, Waikato, and MidCentral demonstration sites showed that when disabled people and whānau truly hold choice and control, outcomes improve across employment, education, social connection, and overall wellbeing. Engagement by Māori and Pacific disabled people rose by up to 60 percent in Mana Whaikaha and by 33 percent overall, demonstrating stronger reach into communities historically under-served by traditional systems.

## **The impacts of the Enabling Good Lives approach on Disabled People's Lives**

### **1. Enhanced Self-Determination and Autonomy**

Under EGL, disabled people and their whānau hold real decision-making power over the supports they receive. This shift from a provider-led to a person-led approach means individuals set their own goals, choose their own pathways, and manage their own budgets—resulting in stronger ownership of life choices and day-to-day experiences.

### **2. Improved Social Connection and Wellbeing**

By emphasising community-based supports and relationship-building, EGL fosters deeper social inclusion. Pilot sites reported significant gains in social participation, peer networks, and overall life satisfaction when people co-designed their support arrangements and tapped into natural supports—friends, whānau and community groups.

### **3. Better Access to Education and Employment**

Demonstration projects showed that when choice and control increase, so do opportunities for learning and work. Participants moved more smoothly into mainstream education settings and secured part-time or full-time roles at higher rates than under the traditional system. This has benefits for income security, skill development and sense of purpose.

#### **4. Greater Cultural Engagement and Equity**

EGL's co-design process actively involves tangata whaikaha Māori and Pacific disabled people. As a result, engagement with disability services by Māori rose and engagement across Pacific disabled communities increased — narrowing historical service gaps.

#### **5. Simplified, Person-Directed Approaches**

EGL replaces multiple siloed programmes with a single, flexible framework. Connectors guide individuals through planning, funding and access, turning complex application processes into straightforward conversations focused on what matters to the person, not what fits the system.

### **Why Enabling Good Lives (EGL) Is Important in New Zealand**

#### **a. Upholding Human Rights and International Obligations**

New Zealand's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities commits the country to a rights-based, inclusive approach. EGL translates these international obligations into practice by embedding choice, control, and dignity at the heart of disability supports.

#### **b. Shifting Power to Disabled People and Their Whānau**

EGL places decision-making authority directly with disabled people and their families, enabling them to co-design their supports around their strengths and aspirations. This person-centred shift replaces a one-size-fits-all system with individually tailored plans that honour lived experience and personal goals.

#### **c. Driving Better Life Outcomes**

Evidence from Christchurch, Waikato, and MidCentral pilots shows that when choice and control increase:

- Autonomy and self-determination grow
- Social connectedness deepens
- Quality of life improves
- Access to education and employment expands

#### **d. Addressing Inequities for Māori and Pacific Communities**

EGL's co-design process actively engages tangata whaikaha Māori and Pacific disabled people. Pilot sites achieved a rise in service engagement among Māori and a 33 percent overall uplift, narrowing long-standing gaps in access and outcomes.

#### **e. Building a Sustainable, Principles-Based System**

Developed by the disability community in 2011, EGL rests on eight guiding principles—self-determination, mana enhancing, mainstream first, and more—that steer transformation across governance, service delivery, and community supports. This framework ensures lasting change and scalability nationwide.

#### **f. Transforming the Disability Sector and Beyond**

By embedding flexibility, relationship building, and ease of use into every interaction, EGL not only revolutionises disability support but also offers a blueprint for person-directed approaches across health, education, and social services in New Zealand.

**Some things to consider when developing your feedback to the draft NZ Disability Strategy**

### **Some ways to Integrate Enabling Good Lives (EGL) into the New Zealand Disability Strategy Vision and Principles**

#### **i. Aligning the Strategy's Vision with EGL's Vision**

The Strategy's overarching vision can mirror EGL's vision by centring "greater choice and control" for disabled people, Tangata Whaikaha Māori, families and whānau over supports and life pathways. Framing the Strategy's vision in this way ensures it speaks directly to self-determination, shifting from a deficit-based model to one that celebrates strengths, aspirations and leadership of disabled people and their families.

#### **ii. Embedding EGL's Eight Principles as Strategic Pillars**

Adopting the EGL principles as core strategic pillars provides a tested, community-driven framework for the Strategy's principles. Each principle informs key focus areas:

- Self-determination: Prioritise decision-making power for disabled people and whānau, embedding individualised planning across all services.
- Beginning early: Invest in families from pregnancy and infancy to build natural supports, prevent crises and nurture aspirations for disabled children.
- Person-centred: Design supports around whole-of-life goals, not siloed programmes, ensuring holistic wellbeing and long-term planning.
- Ordinary life outcomes: Commit to inclusive opportunities—education, work, housing and social life—parallel to those of non-disabled peers.
- Mainstream first: Embed accessibility and universal design across health, education, transport and public services before resorting to specialist solutions.
- Mana enhancing: Ensure services recognise cultural identity, contributions and rights of disabled people and their families, honouring te ao Māori values.
- Easy to use: Simplify navigation with one-stop access, clear information and flexible funding channels for all users.
- Relationship building: Strengthen community connections and natural support networks, fostering collective responsibility and belonging.

### **iii. Co-Design and Shared Governance**

The Strategy can adopt EGL's governance model by establishing leadership groups composed primarily of disabled people, tangata whaikaha Māori, Pacific peoples and families, supported by government agencies. This mirrors the National Enabling Good Lives Group's role in Kaitiakitanga—guardianship—ensuring lived experience drives policy decisions and accountability across all phases of strategy development and implementation.

### **iv. Driving Implementation through Outcome-Focused Measures**

Building on EGL's demonstration sites, the Strategy should embed outcome-based metrics—autonomy, social participation, cultural engagement, education and employment—that track real-world impacts rather than activity outputs. Aligning reporting frameworks with the eight EGL principles promotes transparency, continuous improvement and a clear line of sight from principle to practice.

What is the Enabling Good Lives (EGL) Approach?

[www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/about-egl/](http://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/about-egl/)

More information on EGL

[www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz](http://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz)