

Enabling Good Lives National Leadership Group (NEGL) reflections on 2025

Context

NEGL recognises struggle, controversy and conflict are an integral component of growth. However, acknowledging this does not mean we avoid the tiredness and bruises associated with this phase. 2025 has been hard. However, when reflecting on 2025, it has also been a year of considerable achievement and movement. Below are some of the achievements the NEGL has identified:

1. During the discussions associated with both the refreshed NZ Disability Strategy and the DSS survey and consultation it became apparent the EGL-based attitudes, expectations and approaches have become woven into the fabric of the disability community. Over the last fourteen years EGL concepts have been widely accepted. While EGL is by no means the only promoter of many concepts, these concepts were not a necessarily strong and widespread preference and expectation prior to 2011 when the EGL approach was released.

In various consultation forums and working groups held during 2025, concepts and practices fundamental to an EGL-based approach were widely promoted by a diverse range of disabled people, families, tāngata whaikaha Māori me ō rātou whānau and allies. Members of the disability community clearly articulated that increased choice and control was essential, flexibility was key, personal and whanau budgets enabled greater autonomy, funding should be based on a strengths and aspiration-based plan and the Crown needs to work regionally and nationally with disabled leadership networks and the disability community.

The landscape is beginning to change.

2. The final version of the NZ Disability has been released. The NEGL notes that EGL was omitted from the draft version. The NEGL acknowledges the vision, understanding and determination of disabled people, families, tāngata whaikaha Māori me ō rātou whānau and allies in returning EGL to its rightful place as a foundation for positive change. Clear and consistent voice, independent voice and collective independent voice counts.

3. There are now four regions with strong and enduring EGL-based Regional Leadership Groups/Networks and several other regions well prepared to develop this more fully. These groups are community mandated leadership forums that are influencing positive change at a personal, family, whānau, local, regional and national level as envisaged by the EGL approach. As these regional networks continue to expand they fulfil a number of valuable functions that include: providing real-time information to the NEGL, building what can become a national infrastructure for collective independent voice and they become a support to the social movement.
4. The NEGL notes the government's recent direction around increasing flexibility, choice, and control for disabled people in the disability support system. The NEGL considers this a positive step. The acknowledgement that people want more flexibility in how their personal budgets are used indicates the EGL principles are genuinely being taken seriously at a system level. It is a welcome shift toward trusting disabled people to make decisions about their own lives — which is exactly what EGL has been advocating from the beginning.
5. As the Kaitiaki of the EGL approach, the NEGL received no resourcing between February 2025 and December 2025. However, the NEGL still exists, is still strong, carries a clear and practical vision for the future and is in the final stages of negotiating some project-based resourcing from the crown and a contribution towards basic operational costs from community funders.
6. Enabling Good Lives (EGL) and NEGL are evolving. In 2013, NEGL was established by the Minister of Disability Issues as a non-statutory advisory committee, to provide leadership for the implementation of EGL. In 2026, the NEGL will be increasing our independence.

An independent status gives the EGL National Leadership group greater operational freedom, stronger perceived impartiality, and longer-term stability than a ministerial advisory body — enabling strategic leadership, broader stakeholder engagement, and clearer accountability outside political cycles.

Some key advantages of independence

- **Stronger perceived impartiality:** As an independent entity the group can be seen as less politically influenced, which can boost credibility with sector partners, iwi, and communities
- **Broader stakeholder reach:** Independence allows direct, sustained engagement with Ministries, networks, providers, researchers, and communities without potential constraints, improving legitimacy and buy-in.

Operational freedoms and agility

- **Flexible mandate and longer horizon:** As an independent body NEGL can set multi-year strategic priorities and pursue systemic reforms rather than short-term policy fixes tied to political cycles
- **Tailored governance and capability:** NEGL will experience fewer procedural limits than a ministerial advisory committee, enabling faster, community-led work.

Credibility, trust and influence

- **Independent evidence base:** Publishing independent positions, reviews, data and recommendations can enhance community trust and makes it harder for critics to dismiss findings as politically motivated.
- **Neutral convening power:** NEGL can act as a broker between government, sector and communities, mediating issues and building consensus for implementation.