



New Zealand  
Speech-language  
Therapists' Association

*Te Kāhui Kaiwhakatikatika Reo Kōrero o Aotearoa*



Universal Periodic Review Theme: Disabilities

*Recommendations from Cycle 2*

- *Establish strategies across all sectors, in particular health, education and justice, to identify and remedy structural discrimination*
- *Continue its efforts to effectively implement the New Zealand Disability Strategy with a view to ensuring the full realization of human rights for persons with disabilities*

There is a revised NZ Disability Strategy, Supported Decision Making – education and advocacy/on the ground work – understanding what exactly it is/what it looks like in practice and how it fits into our current legal framework. People with neurodisability and the justice system- seeking to understand the scale of prevalence of certain disabilities (such as learning difficulties) in the justice system.

**Current Challenges**

**Communication Disability** is under recognised in policy and law. Therefore people with communication disability are often deemed to not have capacity and are not able to take charge of life decisions.

**Communication loss** leads to social isolation, anxiety and depression,  
Consequences are: **reduced literacy**, loss of earning potential, **susceptibility to crime** there are high rates of dyslexia, cognitive communication disorder and hearing loss in the prison population.

**Recommendations:**

- **Implement Accessibility Legislation that will include physical, communication and information access principles to ensure the full realization of human rights for persons with disabilities**
- **Develop policy that ensures the “right to communication” is addressed for people with disabilities with reference to the use of “all supports to express their ideas freely and be involved in decisions”.**

## FACTS

- Literacy and learning:
  - 1 in 10 children have speech language problems
  - Two thirds of students with low literacy at 16 had low literacy at the age of 8 (ref 1)
  - About 20% of young people drop out of school with no qualifications (ref 1)
  - About ⅓ of Auckland's annual 21,000 new school entrants don't have the oral language and early literacy to learn and read easily (ref 1)
  
- Lack of communication skills in young offenders and the prison community:
  - Early intervention for literacy, speech and language for children in our schools may prevent them heading down the path of criminal activity
  - Introducing speech and language therapy for young offenders would reduce re-offending and help them back into employment on release ([The Guardian](#))
  - Communications Assistants are a growing feature of the [NZ justice system](#)
  
- Illness and its effects on communication:
  - Communication disabilities span a very large group of people who live with conditions including: Stroke, Motor Neuron Disease, mental health conditions, stuttering, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and other dementias.
  - 16,000 people in New Zealand have aphasia, the inability (or impaired ability) to understand or produce speech, as a result of brain damage or stroke (ref 2)
  - Around 9,000 people suffer a stroke each year in New Zealand and 30% will result in aphasia (ref 3)
  - 10,000 people in New Zealand have Parkinson's and one of the most common symptoms is speech and swallowing difficulties (ref 4). Swallowing difficulties are the most common cause of death in Parkinson's.

### References:

1. <http://learningauckland.org.nz/talking-matters>
  - a. <https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/14667>
2. <http://www.aphasia.org.nz/public/about/public-about/>
3. <http://www.brnz.ac.nz/your-brain-health/stroke>
4. <http://bit.ly/2w0Bkym>