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No crumbs left for the disability community, yet again.

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Like Seagulls swooping on a lone crumb at a hungry sparrows feet, this government has yet again stolen disabled peoples supports in the form of more cruel cuts and pauses on funding.



This morning, [Minister of Disability Issues Louise Upston announced](#) that, following a review of Whaikaha, the Ministry of Disabled People, a massive budget 'blow out' meant that the following changes would need to happen:

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- Whaikaha will be restructured, losing responsibility for disability support services (DSS) which would be transferred to MSD
- A pause to the further roll out of Enabling Good Lives
- No increase in funding to residential based care, despite you know, inflation.

There have been so many attacks on the autonomy of disabled people under this government. [Changes to purchasing guidelines](#), [EMS funding criteria](#) have made the supports that disabled people and their whānau rely on, much harder (even impossible) to access. Our world is getting smaller by the day, our spectrum is dulling in colour, now everything seems to be black, white or non-existent.

This government is trying to control the narrative by saying that they are only responding to irresponsible past spending, blaming the last government for this shit show. It actually feels like all these changes are punitive, with the disability community being punished for requiring support.

Everything is so fuzzy today, so my thoughts are not as succinct as I'd like. But here's what I'm thinking right now.

My daughter turns 16 soon. The Child Disability Allowance which pays for approximately *piss all*, is replaced by a Supported Living Allowance at this age. I booked the appointment at the bank to get her an eftpos card, and we'd talked together about how she can pay for things she wants to buy now, contribute to the household in the future as well as save a little bit for a rainy day. Just like any other young person. I was quite excited by this glimpse of financial independence.

Now we hear that people on this allowance are expected to work, and will be required to do work-ready assessments. And the absolute audacity of these dingbats in power using traffic lights to distract us from the fact they plan to sanction people who can't meet their work ready requirements. LOL.

What do all these changes have in common? Relinquishment of rights, freedom and mana of disabled people - that's what. This government wants power and control. Control in the classrooms, control over our money, control over our outcomes in health, control of their freedom.

These announcements feel personal, even though from the other side we (disabled people and whānau) are nothing more than numbers in their liabilities

column to them. Framing these announcements as ‘taking time to get things right’, still feels like punishment to the disability community.

‘Pausing’ the Enabling Good Lives roll-out sounds like a temporary measure, but we know this will go the same way as the ‘pause’ on flexible guidelines. This is absolutely heartbreaking for the many community advocates, organisations, disabled people and whānau who have embedded EGL principles into their every day lives, showing us all a better way of providing support for disabled people.

By opting not to increase funding for the section of the community in residential facilities, many of whom have complex needs, this government has shown their lack of care for both disabled people as well as the workforce relied on to care for these people. Inflation, and the cost of living crisis means that they are forcing our community into financial hardship, and unsafe environments when the capability of the workforce will be impacted by these decisions.

Paula Tesoriero, CE of Whaikaha was given an almost impossible mission to set up a brand new ministry from scratch with a finite pool of funding. Consecutive governments could have poured millions of dollars into this ministry, and still fell short of expectations. Attitude and intent is what made Whaikaha so amazing, and so intimidating to tunnel-visioned, non progressive governments.

Maybe they will be more free to support disabled people in their new form. Goodness knows we will need them, now we are a part of MSD - a place that does not feel culturally or spiritually safe for many disabled people.

A ministry by, and for disabled people was a beautiful pipe dream, but without a government that values leadership in the disability community, let alone the community as a whole, this was always going to end badly.

Today I’m thinking especially of the disabled staff at Whaikaha, who wanted so badly to make this work. Know that none of our anger, hurt or sadness is aimed at you.

When I say ‘we’ I know my place as a parent of a disabled rangatahi. It’s not a royal ‘we,’ it is simply me, an ally to my daughter, and the disabled community, standing in solidarity with them today and every day.

xxx KIA KAHA, TĀNGATA WHAIKAHA xxx

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