# Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill: Initial Briefing for the Social Services and Community Committee



This is a summary of a report from the Ministry of Social Development that supports the Social Services and Community Committee in its consideration of the Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill (the Bill). You can see the full Bill here <https://tinyurl.com/4mnykvab> and alternate formats here <https://tinyurl.com/2zn54224>.

## About the Bill

### Purpose

The Bill will create an accessibility framework that takes a progressive approach to identifying, preventing, and removing barriers to participation for disabled people, tāngata whaikaha and whānau whaikaha Māori and others with accessibility needs in New Zealand.

The purpose of the legislation is to accelerate progress towards a fully accessible New Zealand where disabled people, tāngata whaikaha and whānau whaikaha Māori, and others with accessibility needs have an equal opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations.

To do this, the Bill establishes the Accessibility Committee to:

**(a)** identify accessibility barriers in New Zealand society; and

**(b)** work towards preventing and removing accessibility barriers in New Zealand society; and

**(c)** work towards growing accessibility practices across New Zealand.

And it strengthens government accountability by creating strong, clear responsibilities for the Minister for Disability Issues, Chief Executive of Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People (Whaikaha), and the Accessibility Committee

### Background

The Bill is a result of work over several years by the government in response to decades-long advocacy for accessibility improvements by the disability community.

The Bill does not itself create regulations (for example, it doesn’t include rules for how wide doorways should be). Instead, it creates a clear way of identifying, removing and preventing accessibility barriers over time. The Bill is expected to lead to new or amended regulations in some areas depending on the Committee’s recommendations. These will be worked through with relevant parties at the time those accessibility barriers or practices are considered.

## Summary of the Bill

The Bill is in two parts.

### Part 1: Preliminary Provisions

Part 1 sets out preliminary provisions. These include:

* the purpose of the Act (as summarised above);
* principles to guide a person who performs a function or duty or exercises a power under the Act, for example these people must consider the rights of disabled people under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
* and obligations for these people to act in a way that gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi.

### Part 2: Accessibility Committee

In Part 2, the Bill describes the functions, duties, and powers of the Accessibility Committee. These include:

* The Accessibility Committee has a function to provide advice to the Minister on matters relating to accessibility barriers and accessibility practices.
* The Accessibility Committee has a duty to ensure its work is informed by the lived experiences of disabled people, tāngata whaikaha and their families and whānau, and others with accessibility needs.
* The Accessibility Committee has a power to request information from some government organisations to help it do its work.

The Bill also describes how the Accessibility Committee’s members will be chosen, for example the majority of the members must be disabled.

The Bill sets out the responsibilities of:

* the Minister for Disability Issues to provide oversight and support to the Accessibility Committee;
* and the Chief Executive of Whaikaha to support the Accessibility Committee with administrative support and publishing the government documents required.

This part also states that the legislation is required to be independently reviewed no later than five years after commencement to ensure that it is addressing accessibility barriers as intended.

**End of information: Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill: Initial Briefing for the Social Services and Community Committee**