

OUR POSITION

Families and whānau with children or other family members living with a disability, and their carers, need effective support to help them achieve whānau and family wellbeing and be successfully involved in their communities and workplaces.

OUR GOAL

Families and whānau caring for family members with disabilities can easily access information, financial support and support services to help them achieve a work-life balance that meets the needs of their families. Service providers take a family- and whānau-centred approach to service provision rather than focusing just on the individual(s) living with a disability.

WHAT THE COMMISSION HAS DONE SO FAR

2006: Disability and family life, poll on *The Couch*.

2006: *The Role of Whānau in the Lives of Māori with Physical Disabilities* Blue Skies Fund report.

2007: Caring roles and responsibilities, poll on *The Couch*.

2007: Submission on the development of a Carer's strategy for New Zealand.

2007: *When School's Out* research report (included consultation with families with disabled children).

2007: *Managing Multiple Sclerosis and Motherhood* Blue Skies Fund report.

2009: *Living with Chronic Illness* Innovative Practice Fund report.

2009: *Who Cares for People with Schizophrenia* Blue Skies Fund report.

Upcoming:

2012: *Through the Eyes of Parents, Children and Friends: Exploring the Resilience and Success Factors of Disabled Parents* report.

- > Family-friendly employers can make a real difference to people who need more flexibility at work for time to take care of family responsibilities.
- > Carers of disabled children often have to navigate a range of services with little guidance. They need more information about how and where to access support.
- > Family service providers need to work with each other more and to help provide a service that focuses on the whole family or whānau.
- > Unpaid carers make a significant contribution to the wellbeing of New Zealand families. Improved support for carers should include respite care and financial support.

REFERENCES

Families Commission:

<http://www.nzfamilies.org.nz/search/node/disabilities>

Office for Disability Issues:

<http://www.odi.govt.nz/what-we-do/ministerial-committee-on-disability-issues/index.html>

COMMISSION'S VIEW

- > Better understanding by the public, including employers, schools and support agencies, can help improve the way agencies consider the needs of people with disabilities and the needs of families who are caring for members with disabilities.
- > One of the main issues facing families and whānau for caring for family members with disabilities is how to balance their work and family commitments.

