



Scan for
NZSL name

Visual description: A purple Whaikaha logo with a QR scan for the NZSL name.

Level 4, 56 The Terrace
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New Zealand

21 May 2025

To: Nigel Corry; Daran Ponter

Email: info@gw.govt.nz; daran.ponter@gw.govt.nz

Tēnā koe Nigel and Daran

I am the chief executive of the Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha. The Ministry is the central government ministry responsible for developing strategy and policy to improve the lives of disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori.

I am writing to you in your role relating to public transport.

As you will be aware, disabled people often rely on public transport to assist them to get to employment, education, medical appointments, and participating in social activities. It is important that they feel safe, and all modes of transport are inclusive.

We continue to hear from disabled people who have challenges accessing public transport across New Zealand due to a range of factors including attitudes of drivers, accessibility of equipment such as working ramps, and lack of knowledge when it comes to the rights of assistance dogs. Whenever feedback is received, we encourage people to contact the appropriate transport agency. However, I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of your obligations and offer support if it is needed.



Whilst we understand that technology and equipment may not always perform as it should, situations are often made worse by the people's attitudes in responding to the situation. I would be grateful if you could re-enforce the message, that disabled people are experts in their own needs. If a disabled person asks for assistance or an accommodation to be made, such as the lowering of a ramp, please believe them and respond in a mana enhancing way.

Access of Assistance Dogs on Public Transport

Despite the legal protection for people with assistance dogs, we are hearing and reading about increasing instances of disabled people having difficulty using public transport. In particular, problems with the behaviour of drivers and other staff who have a role in supporting accessibility, including knowledge about the rights of those with assistance dogs. It appears the main reason for issues arising is a lack of awareness of the law and general understanding.

I encourage you to consider taking further steps to promote and enforce the rights of assistance dog handlers to access public transport in your area.

To support you and your colleagues to understand the correct process, I thought it would be useful to set out the law in this area so you can ensure that all public transport operators in your regions follow this law.

Section 75 of the Dog Control Act 1996 provides rights for Disability assist dogs. Subsection (1) says that:

“(1) Any disability assist dog accompanying and assisting a person with a disability, or accompanying a person genuinely engaged in the dog's training, may enter and remain—

- (a) in any premises registered under regulations made under [section 120](#) of the Health Act 1956; or
- (b) in any public place.”

Section 75(2) also says that “the person whom the dog is accompanying must comply with any reasonable conditions imposed by the occupier or person controlling the premises or place in relation to the entry or presence of the dog”.



Finally, section 75(3) makes it clear that “this section overrides any enactment prohibiting or regulating the entry or presence of dogs in relation to the premises and places referred to in subsection (1)”.

In addition to the obligations in the Dog Control Act, section 21 of the Human Rights Act 1993 sets out the prohibited grounds of discrimination, which include “reliance on a disability assist dog, wheelchair, or other remedial means.”

If your current public transport contracting arrangements do not include clear obligations relating to accepting the use of disability assist dogs, I would welcome to opportunity to discuss ways to add to this content.

Thank you for all the work you and your colleagues do in regional councils and unitary authorities across Aotearoa New Zealand, to make our country more inclusive and accessible. I also welcome the opportunity to hear more about any public transport accessibility work you are progressing.

Nāku iti nei, nā



Paula Tesoriero MNZM PLY
Secretary for Disabled People
Te Tumu Whakarae | Chief Executive
Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People

