



DONALD BEASLEY
INSTITUTE



Tell me about you



Summary of research report

October 2022

Before you read this document



This is a long document.



While it is written in Easy Read it can be hard for some people to read a document this long.



Some things you can do to make it easier are:

- read a few pages at a time
- have someone help you to understand it.



This report talks about abuse. This may make people upset when they are reading it.



This information is:

- not meant to scare anyone
- not true for everyone with disability.



This information does not mean that these things will happen to you.



If you are worried after reading this document you can talk about it with your:

- family
- friends.



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What is this document about?



The **Donald Beasley Institute** wrote a **research** report called:

Tell Me About You.

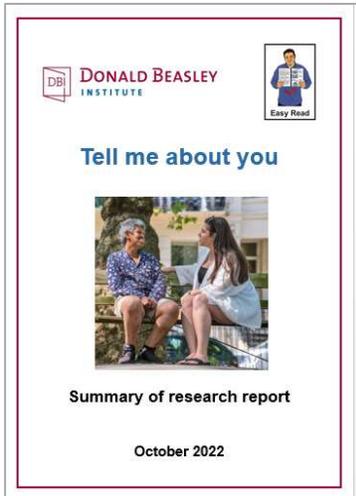


The **Donald Beasley Institute** does a lot of important research about lots of different things.



Research is:

- looking at things that have happened
- trying to find out how to do things better.



In this Easy Read document we call the Donald Beasley Institute the **DBI** for short.

This Easy Read document is a **summary** of the things the DBI found out from their research.



A summary:

- is shorter than the full report
- tells you the main ideas.

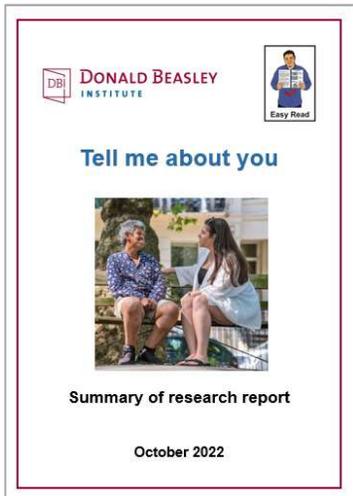


For the research the DBI:

- spoke to disabled people
- wrote down their stories.

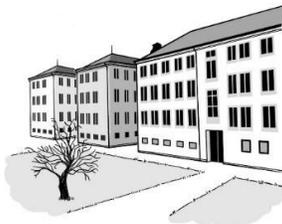


The stories that people shared are an important part of the research report.



In this Easy Read document we have also put in parts of the stories that people shared.

We have included these stories using the same words the people used.



The stories people shared are in orange boxes like this.



The stories are **not** in Easy Read.

Who asked for the research?



The **Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care** gave the Donald Beasley Institute money to do this research.



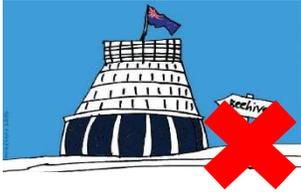
The **Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care** is an **investigation** by a group of experts.



Doing an **investigation** means looking more closely at things that have happened in the past.



In this document we call the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care the **Royal Commission** for short.



The Royal Commission is **not** part of:

- the Government
- faith-based institutions like churches.



The inquiry will make **recommendations** to the Government about what it has found.



Recommendations are things that the Government should do to make things better for people.



The Royal Commission:

- started in 2019.
- will finish in 2023.

Who did the research?



The people who worked on this project are part of the Donald Beasley Institute research team.



Their names are:

- Brigit Mirfin-Veitch



- Kelly Tikao

- Umi Asaka



- Edén Tuisaula

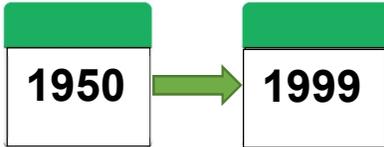
- Hilary Stace

- Robbie Francis Watene

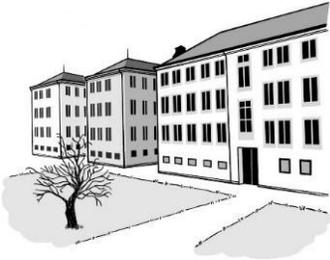


- Patsie Frawley.

What is the research about?



The research is about disabled people who **lived in care** in Aotearoa New Zealand between 1950 and 1999.



Lived in care means that the Government or a **faith-based institution** was in charge of your care / looking after you.

People in care live in places like:

- institutions
- group homes
- childrens homes
- foster care
- church-based homes or schools.





Faith-based institutions are run by religious groups like churches.



Faith-based institutions provide:

- care
- education.



The research was done to find out about the experiences of people in care in New Zealand.



This investigation happened because lots of people asked the Government to do it.

The investigation looked into bad things that happened to people in care like:



- **abuse**
- **neglect.**



Abuse means when people who lived in care were treated very badly.

Abuse can be:



- **physical** – a person kicking or hitting you



- **sexual** – when someone does sexual things to you that you do not want them to



- **emotional** – yelling or saying things that are not nice to you.



Neglect means when caregivers **do not** give a person all the things they need to feel well looked after.

Why was the research important?



The Royal Commission wanted to:

- learn about the kinds of abuse that happened
- show they believe the stories of people who have lived through abuse
- make sure that abuse in care does not happen again.



The Royal Commission wanted as many disabled people as possible to tell their stories

but



some disabled people did not know about the Royal Commission.



It was also hard for some disabled people to tell their stories.



The Royal Commission asked the Donald Beasley Institute to set up the **Tell Me About You** project.



The **Tell Me About You** project was a way of making sure disabled people could tell their stories.



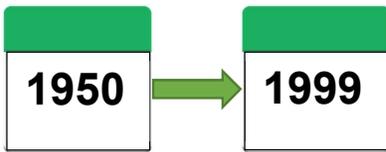
We called the people who shared their experiences **storytellers**.



You can find more Easy Read information about the research project on our **website**:

www.donaldbeasley.org.nz/tell-me-about-you

Who did the Donald Beasley Institute talk to?



The people we spoke to about their experiences included:

- **neurodiverse people** who lived in care between 1950 and 1999
- people with **learning disability** who lived in care between 1950 and 1999.

Neurodiverse means that:

- the brain of a person works in a different way to others
- a person learns things in another way.



A learning disability is when you need support with doing everyday tasks like:

- doing things at home like cooking or cleaning
- understanding information
- making friends and meeting new people
- looking after your money
- getting and keeping a paid job.

Aramahi / What we wanted to find out



There were 4 important things that the Royal Commission wanted to find out from the Tell Me About You project.



The first 2 important things were:

1. Did the storytellers:

- know why they were taken into care
- think it was a good idea for them to have lived in care?



2. What type of abuse / violence did storytellers experience while they were in care?





The other 2 important things were:

3. Did the storytellers have any thoughts about why the abuse / violence happened to them?



4. How did the abuse / violence affect:



- the storytellers themselves
- the families of the storytellers
- the friends of the storytellers



- any people close to the storytellers / their community?



The researchers knew that some people who lived in care might not understand that they had experienced abuse.



The researchers also knew that people might want to talk about both:

- good experiences in care
- bad experiences in care.



The Tell Me About You project asked storytellers about their whole lives.



This meant that storytellers talked about lots of things not just their experiences of care.



You can read the storytellers' kōrero / stories in their own words on pages **33 to 44.**

How did storytellers share their stories?



Storytellers were able to choose how they shared their stories.



This was to make sure that storytellers felt safe and comfortable when they shared their stories.



The sorts of ways storytellers told their stories included:

- having a friendly / relaxed chat over tea and biscuits
- taking a walk through the places storytellers had lived and talking about their experiences.





Some other ways storytellers chose to tell their stories included:

- sharing things that helped them to remember / tell their stories about living in care like:



- photos



- films



- music

- other things.

- telling their stories with people they trusted like:



- whānau / family

- close friends



- other people who knew them well.

Some more ways storytellers chose to tell their stories included:



- using art or poetry to help tell their stories



- telling their stories using the internet like:

- in emails
- using a video call program called Zoom
- using another kind of online chat programme.



Te Kāhui Arataki – Making sure that Māori storytellers felt safe



The Tell Me About You project was given guidance by **Te Kāhui Arataki**.



Te Kāhui Arataki is a group of Māori advisors / researchers from iwi and hapū across Aotearoa New Zealand.



The group have **lived experience** / knowledge of disability and care.



Lived experience means that a person has:

- a disability
- lived in care
- a disabled family member who lived in care.



Te Kāhui Arataki made sure that Māori storytellers felt safe telling their stories.



Te Kāhui Arataki also supported the other researchers to make sure they thought about / understood Māori **tikanga** when they did the project.



Tikanga means:

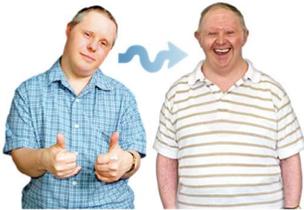
- Māori customs
- the Māori way of doing things.

Who were the storytellers?



Of the 16 storytellers who took part in the Tell Me About You project:

- 12 were men
- 4 were women.



All the storytellers were between 45 and 75 years old.



Storytellers could choose if they wanted to:

- use their real name in the project
- use a different name so no one else would know who they were.





The storytellers had different **cultural identities**.



Your **cultural identity** means you share things in common with other people like:

- being the same race
- speaking the same language
- being the same nationality which is where you come from
- your beliefs and art.



14 storytellers identified as European New Zealander.



1 storyteller identified as Sāmoan New Zealander.



1 storyteller identified as Māori and European New Zealander.



14 storytellers had a disability of some sort that included:

- 10 storytellers who had learning disabilities
- 3 storytellers who had autism
- 1 storyteller who had a **neurological disability.**



A neurological disability is a condition that affects how your brain works.



At least 3 storytellers had more than 1 disability.



Some storytellers had different reasons for being a part of the project like:

- 1 storyteller was a family member of a storyteller who had been in care
- 1 storyteller used records from the care system to tell the story of their disabled family members.



Kōrero / Stories



In this section you can read what the storytellers said about being in care.



You can also listen to recordings of the full stories on our website at:

www.donaldbeasley.org.nz/tell-me-about-you



The stories help answer the 4 important questions that the Royal Commission wanted to know about.



The stories we have included here:

- use the same words the storyteller used
- are **not** in Easy Read.





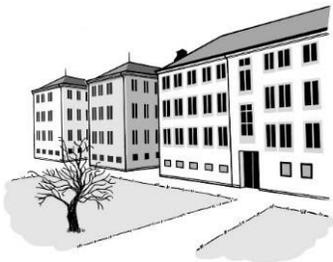
1. Why were storytellers taken into care

and

did they think it was right for them to have lived in care?



Not all storytellers understood why they had been taken into care.



Rawiri said:

“I was in Cherry Farm, sort of at the side. I think I was about 28 years old [when I went there]. I don’t know how I got there. I feel like I was born in Cherry Farm. Did you find out how I got there?”

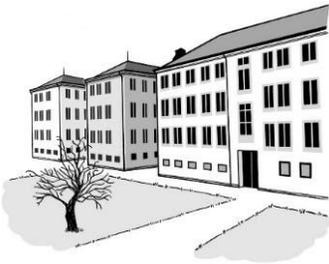


Some storytellers shared that they did not like being in care.



Their stories show that they did not think that being in care was right for them.

Jabert said:



“My mum found it difficult to manage me so I went to stay at Templeton for short stays and then eventually these stays got longer. [...] I didn’t want to stay at Templeton. I wanted to get out. Happy to leave yes.”



2. What type of abuse / violence did storytellers experience in care?



People experienced both good and bad things while in care.



Storytellers shared stories about the physical and emotional abuse that they experienced from:

- other children they lived with
- the people who were supposed to be caring for them.

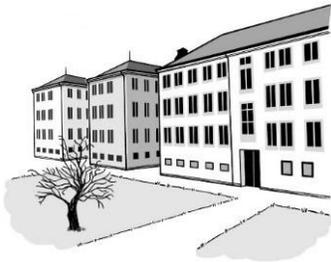


Sometimes the abuse happened to them many times.





Many storytellers said that if they tried to tell other people about what was happening to them nothing was done to support them.

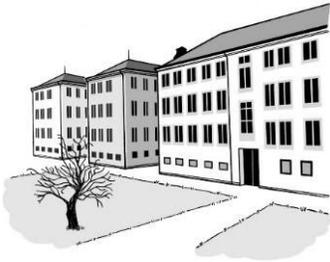


Graeme said:

“The staff were no good to me at Cherry Farm. They used to give me a needle in the arse. They would stab it into me. And give me lots of pills. I hadn’t done anything. I was scared of them. [They would] just knock me around because I used to play up and that. They used to ah, hit me. I got locked up in Cherry Farm. The room was empty. Only floorboards and a big door. I was in that room for a long time. Sometimes I used to hurt people too –I don’t know why I done that.”



Another storyteller shared how he was treated by the people who were supposed to be looking after him.



David said:

“I got put in a laundry bag once by staff and hung up high.

I told the big boss of Templeton on him – he got a warning.

I got strangled by another and that staff member got a warning also.”



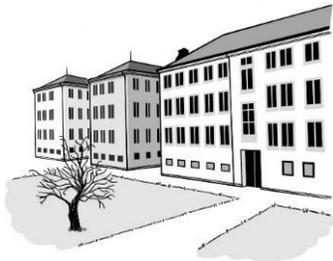
3. Why did the abuse and violence happen to storytellers who lived in State care?



There are many different reasons that explain why abuse / violence happened in places of care.

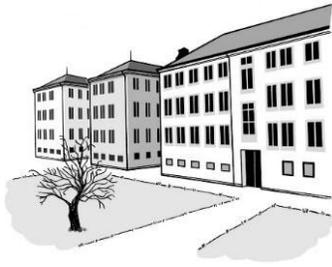


A storyteller shared how she felt like she did not get good support from the people who were supposed to look after her while she was in care.



Lusi said:

The institute felt “dark and cold”... I think that the concept of institutions are not set up to care and look after the disabled people because it is built on a system that dehumanise disabled people.



Lusi also said:

And I think that hasn't changed much for how the current State care works. Care was about medication, changing, showering and other very clinical procedure that does not take into account the very individual needs such as human connection and affection.”



Another storyteller shared how he felt when the people who were supposed to look after him did not understand / listen to him.



Allan said:

“Because when staff didn’t understand me and expect me to do things that I wasn’t sure about, then yell at me for getting it wrong, then I would explode, they would just see me as a person who was trying to be naughty or out to be dangerous. And that wasn’t the case at all. I think there was a misunderstanding and I wasn’t being listened to is what the problem was.”



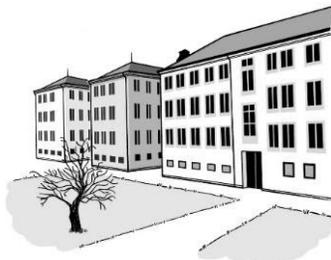
4. How did the abuse / violence affect:



- the storytellers themselves
- the families of the storytellers
- the friends of the storytellers
- any people close to the storytellers / their community?



Storytellers were often split up from their family by being in care.



Michael said:

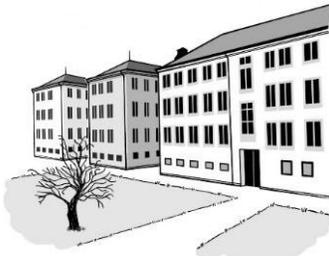
“Mum and Dad came up and visited me, but it was hard leaving, saying goodbye to them.”



The storytellers told stories about their lives after leaving care that were important to listen to.



Their stories showed what kind of lives people wanted to live as a part of the community.

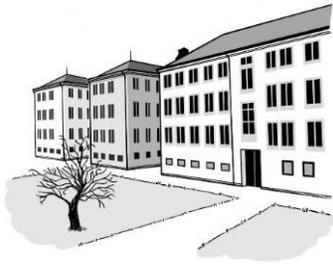


Graham said:

“A good life is going and looking around shops, getting coffee. I’ll tell you a good thing right, if I’m on a radio show, you might hear my voice everywhere. I was on a radio show and I can still be on it. There’s a song I like. “I’ll be home for Christmas, you can count on me”. It makes me a bit happy. One thing that I know, stand up for your rights. You get together with someone and stand up. That means rights. That means rights.”



Other storytellers talked about how they think their lives are much better now they are not in care.



Allan and Nathan said:

“I always say this, that everyone should be treated equally. I didn’t feel like I was treated equally before I started living in the community. I think when you are out in the community you have your own freedom and you’re not, you’re not told when to shower or when to eat and you have choices of what you want to do. Rather than what you were told to do. I have control on my own choices and more freedom too. I have a good landlord, a new couch and a new chair. I’ve been very settled here ... I’m going to be living in the community until I’m an old man.”

Kitenga / What we found out from the stories



The people who gathered the stories from the storytellers used a certain way of looking at the information to help them understand:

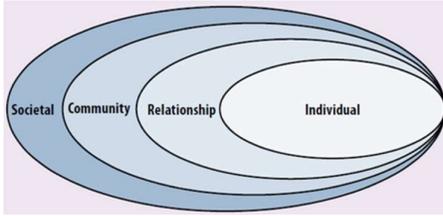


- the stories
- why the storytellers experienced the abuse / violence that they did.



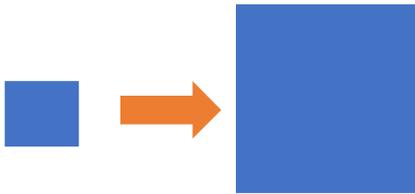
The way they looked at the stories is called the **ecological model** of disability violence and abuse.

An **ecological model** is a way of understanding the many things that affect health and wellbeing.



A drawing / image of the ecological model looks like 4 circles that:

- are placed inside each other
- **increase** in size.

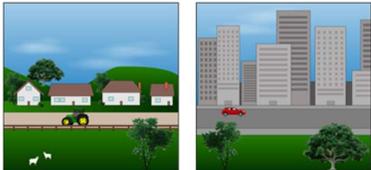


Increase means to get bigger.

The model is a way of showing how certain things can affect your life / experiences as a disabled person like:



- the way you feel about / get on with people you know well / are close to



- the places you live / grow up in



- other members of a wider community / group you are part of called society.



1

In the ecological model the storytellers are put in the middle of the first circle called the **individual** circle.



2

The second circle is called the **relationship** circle that is about the storytellers:

- family
- friends
- people they are close to / who support them.



3

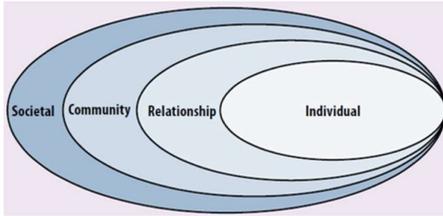
The third circle is called the **community** circle that is about where the storytellers:

- go to school / work
- live.





The fourth circle is called the **societal** circle that is about how the storytellers are treated by people in the wider world.



The story gatherers used the ecological model to look at how the things in all 4 circles:



- connect with each other
- affect the lives / experiences of the storytellers.



We will explain how things in the 4 circles helped the story gatherers understand what the storytellers had told them on the following pages.



1. The individual circle

Storytellers said that when they were in care people did not:

- listen to them
- trust them.



They also said they did not have the freedom to make their own decisions.



The people who were supposed to look after them did not **respect**:

- their identity / who they were
- their **human rights**.





Respect is when someone shows they have thought about:

- who you are / the kind of person you are
- things that are important to you
- how you might feel.

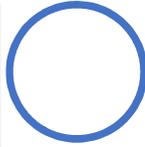


Human rights are things that everyone should get to live a good life.

For example everyone has a right to things like:

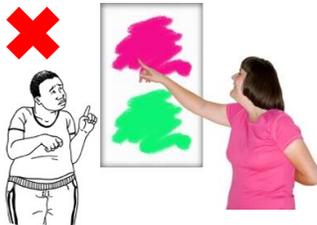
- a safe place to live
- enough food to eat.



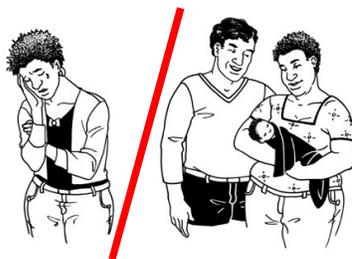


2. The relationship circle

Storytellers shared that they experienced physical and emotional abuse / violence in care by the people who were supposed to care for them.



They said that other people made decisions for them.



They also said that they were not given any chances to spend time with their families / friends.



3. The community circle



Storytellers shared that sometimes they were not allowed to have people visit them while they were in care.

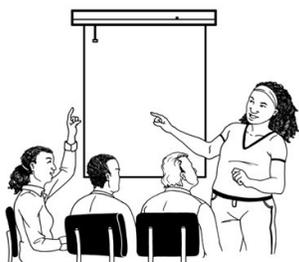


This included people who were part of their family.



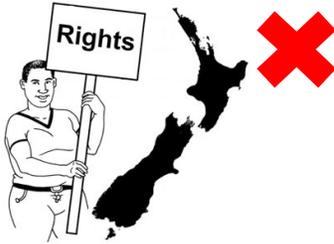
Storytellers said they were not given the same opportunities / support as other people:

- to be a part of their community
- to assist them with getting:
 - an education
 - training
 - a job.

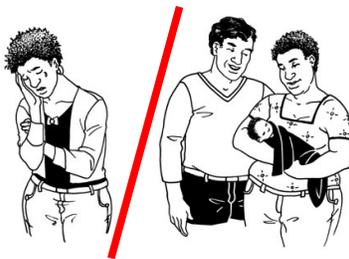




4. The societal circle



The story gatherers learned from the storytellers that the laws of New Zealand did not respect the rights of disabled people.



This meant that storytellers in care were separated from:

- their family
- their community.



It also meant that disabled people were:

- left out from being part of society
- not treated fairly.





How the 4 circles work together

The story gatherers saw that the experiences of the storytellers were affected by things in all 4 circles.



An example of this is **disablism** which is a type of **discrimination** against disabled people.



Discrimination is when someone is treated differently to other people because of things like:

- how old they are
- if they are a man / woman / someone of another gender
- if they have a disability.





Disablism affected disabled people in a bad way by making it okay for disabled people to be:

- taken out of society / taken away from their families
- put into state care.



This kind of treatment is called **systemic abuse**.



Systemic abuse is when rules / laws that are put in place to support people end up harming them instead.



This means that it was **not** the fault of disabled people that they were treated badly.



Disabled people were treated badly because society did not:

- respect the rights of disabled people
- find ways to support them:
 - to live the life they wanted
 - to stay in their community.

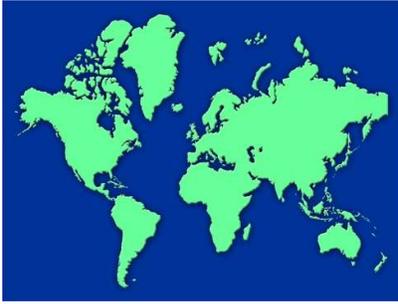


This kind of discrimination was not always here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Colonisation led to Māori disabled people being split up from their:

- whānau / family
- communities.





Colonisation is when:

- a group of people from one country called **colonisers** set up home in another country
- take over the country from the people who already live there.

Colonisers bring with them their own ideas about how they think people should live like:

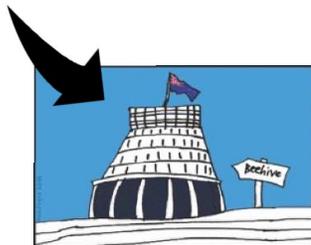
- the religion they follow
- the language they speak
- the money they use
- the laws they agree to
- other things they might do that are part of their culture.

Titiro whakamuri kōkiri whakamua / Recommendations to make things better



There are some things that must happen to make sure that abuse / violence in care do not happen again.

The following pages include **recommendations:**



- **from** the Tell Me About You project
- **to** the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care
- **to** the New Zealand Government.

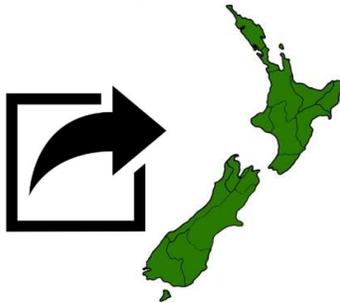


Recommendations are things that the Government should do to make things better for people.



It is important that the people who experienced abuse in care are:

- listened to
- supported in the community so they can live well.



Their stories need to be shared all over Aotearoa New Zealand

and

kept in public places so everyone can access them.





This could be things like keeping the old institutions as places where people can visit / learn about what happened.



It is important that people know about the rights of disabled people that are set out in the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is also called the **UNCRPD**.



The UNCRPD:

- is a law that lots of countries have agreed to
- says what governments must do to make sure disabled people get the same rights as everybody else.



People who need to know about the UNCRPD include:

- people who provide important services to disabled people
- people who make policies / laws in Aotearoa New Zealand.





It is important that these people use **Article 12** of the UNCRPD.

Article 12 says that everyone should have choice and control over their own life.



The DBI thinks that the recommendations made in this report must be put in place quickly.



It is very important that a system is put in place so that all disabled people who were abused in care can get **access to justice** for the way they were treated.



Access to justice means that people can:

- complain about what happened to them
- be heard
- be believed
- get the support they need to:
 - understand why the abuse happened
 - live a good life now.

Kupu Whakamutunga / Conclusion



The Tell Me About You project is a collection of stories from only a small number of disabled people.



The DBI knows there are many more disabled people in Aotearoa who:

- also have important stories to tell about being in care
- were not able to be part of the project.



All the storytellers were very brave to share their stories.



The DBI research team wants to say thank you to all the storytellers.



This information has been written by the Donald Beasley Institute.



It has been translated into Easy Read by the Make It Easy service of People First New Zealand Inc. Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.



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