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**Annual Report 2022**

**Presented at the AGM held on 21 December 2022 by Zoom**

Tēnā koutou katoa

2021/2022 has been another period of challenge and change as we continue to adjust to a new normal in the wake of the COVID 19 pandemic. During this period we have seen a number of significant events, reviews and report backs which are highly relevant to our work. These include; another lockdown in August 2021; the relaxing of COVID safeguards and the opening of borders in 2022, the establishment of Whaikaha a new Ministry of disabled people in July 2022 and the decision to roll out EGL nationwide.

During this period a number of reviews and reports have been undertaken and published including:

* the UNCRPD Committee’s Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of New Zealand. Highly relevant to IEAG’s mahi are the recommendations that New Zealand
  + *“Develop an inclusive education strategy that includes measures for the devolution of segregated education settings into a mainstream inclusive education system, to transition funding and resources from specialist education to inclusive education, to prioritise inclusive education in teacher training, to establish uniform inclusive education policies and guidelines, to develop an inclusive education curriculum, and to promote and raise community awareness;*
  + “Take measures to cease investment in residential specialist schools for children with disabilities and establish a deinstitutionalisation process that ensures adequate support is provided for children with disabilities to return to their families and exercise their right to an inclusive education. and
  + “Withdraw the proposal to change entry requirements for enrolment in residential specialist schools and redirect funding and resources into an inclusive education system; “
* research by the Education Review Office on Education for disabled learners in schools which has confirmed that disabled learners are still experiencing exclusion, many are not progressing sufficiently and do not feel accepted or that they belong.
* the Highest Needs Review – Report Back to Cabinet released in November 2022, and.
* A report just released by the Royal Commission which highlights significant failures of the state to protect disabled and neurodiverse children and young people in care. As Commissioner Paul Gibson commented; ***“***[*The experiences of disabled survivors*](https://www.stuff.co.nz/pou-tiaki/129306072/abuse-in-care-you-cant-walk-away-from-this--survivors-testimonies-must-not-be-ignored-says-counsel)*, shared with the Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, describe a terrible history. But it would be a mistake to believe this remains in our past*.”

As confirmed by Education Review Office’s research, disabled young people, their families and whānau continue to face challenges in understanding, navigating and accessing their rights within the education system, especially in light of the complexities and challenges created by the COVID19 pandemic. This means that our work in advocating for changes to the education system for the benefit of all young New Zealanders, and in particular disabled students, is more important now than ever.

**IEAG’s Governing Committee**

The Governing Committee members for 2021/2022 were Paul Brown, Rebekah Corlett, Trish Grant, Douglas Hancock, Heather Lear, Jude MacArthur, Giovanni Tiso and Katarina Werahiko. Heather Lear continued as the Convenor until November 2022 when she resigned to take up the new role of IEAG’s Director. Giovanni Tiso has replaced Heather as Convenor.

The terms of the following governing committee members; Trish Grant, Giovanni Tiso and Rebekah Corlett, expire at this AGM. I am delighted that they have been nominated for a further term.

As an organisation we rely heavily on the voluntary contributions of our governing Committee and I would like to thank committee members for their contributions and continued support of IEAG. I have particularly valued the support I was given during my five years as Convenor.

**IEAG’s new Director**

A key finding of the 2019 organisational review of IEAG was that the Co-Convenor role had become so large that was unsustainable, especially for a volunteer role. Options for employing a staff member were discussed. Implementing this recommendation took longer than the Committee would have liked largely due to the disruption and challenges of the COVID19 pandemic.

I have recently been offered and accepted the new position of Director of IEAG, effective from 1 November 2022, and have resigned as Convenor and from the governing committee.

**2021/2022 in Review**

Over this period IEAG has continued to provide both individual and systemic advocacy and to work with the Ministry of Education and stakeholders within the disability and education sectors on education system reforms. Our areas of work included;

* **Individual advocacy:** providing information, advice and support for individual families whose children were experiencing challenges at school. Liaising with schools and the Ministry of Education on their behalf. Supporting parents who often just needed a listening ear and someone to share their experiences with.
* **Co-hosting “We need your Voice” events with IHC** in Whangarei, Auckland and Waikato for families/whanau and teachers/professionals. This enabled them to share their schooling experiences/concerns. Two of the events were held in person and one online due to ongoing COVID restrictions/concerns. These provided families with an opportunity to obtain advice and support for individual matters of concern.
* **Systemic advocacy:** As an organisation we collaborated with the broader disability community and with education partners with the aim of effecting systems change to enact the rights of and better address the individual needs of disabled students. Actions undertaken include;

Providing written submissions on;

* proposed changes to Teaching Council disciplinary processes, expanding the Education review Office mandate and School Boards of Trustee elections and composition,
* on phase one and two of the Review of interventions for students with the highest needs,
* written and oral submission on the Inquiry into school attendance.
* on the draft restraint guidelines and Rules.
* on the Disability Right Commissioners Inquiry into the impact of the Omicron outbreak on disabled people.
* on proposed changes to the direct access enrolment pathway to residential special schools.
* on the Teaching Councils draft strategic plan 2022 to 2025
* on the Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill

Engagement via Zoom with Ministry of Education officials on various pieces of work;

* the Review of interventions for students with the highest needs
* targeted engagement on proposed changes to enrolment criteria for residential specialist schools.

Participation in stakeholder and sector forums including;

* + - Education for All (EFA) forum which meets on a monthly basis;
    - Member of EFA steering group that meets monthly;
    - Meeting quarterly with the Associate Minister of Education, Hon Jan Tinetti, as a member of EFA steering group;
    - Families/Whanau representatives meeting with Office of Disability Issues, including imputing into set up of new Ministry of Disabled People;

* + Helping with the planning of a National Inclusive Education Hui planned originally for September 2021 at AUT in Auckland, but due to the COVID pandemic now being held via Zoom on 28 February and 1 March 2022. This is co- hosted by NZEI and EFA as part of a sub-group which met weekly via Zoom.
  + We prepared an independent analysis of the government policy context, investment decisions and student wellbeing outcomes relating to residential specialist schools paper. This was presented to the Ministers of Education, Disability Issues and Associate Minister of Education.
  + Information IEAG and other stakeholders obtained under the OIA informed an open letter of concern to Ministers of the crown on the education, safety and wellbeing of students attending residential specialist schools.
  + We commissioned a legal opinion from human rights lawyers on the consistency of the proposed changes to enrolment criteria for residential specialist schools with New Zealand’s UNCROC and UNCRPD obligations.
  + Submitting a supplementary report to the United Nations Committee on Convention of persons with disabilities on the second and third periodic review of New Zealand to be held in Geneva in August 2022.

**Financial Stewardship**

We have continued to engage All Accounted For as our accountants and to utilise XERO software for the financial management of IEAG’s accounts.

In February 2021 we received funding of $50,000 from a Lottery COVID 19 Community Wellbeing Grant to provide advocacy support at an individual and systemic level for disabled children and young people and their whanau who as a group have been disproportionately impacted in terms of their learning by the COVID19 pandemic. In November 2022 we were successful in gaining a $50,000 grant from Ministry of Social Development - Care in the Community Disability Welfare Fund. IEAG’s multi-year Lottery National Community Grant of $10,000 which was payable from March 2020 for 3 years has ended and we have applied for funding in the 2022/2023 round.

**2023 year ahead**

**Projects and Advocacy**

* A key part of our work will involve delivering advocacy services funded by MSD Care in the Community Disability Welfare Fund.

That "children and young people are learning and developing" is a key objective of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. Access to quality inclusive education is essential for the wellbeing of disabled children and young people.

Barriers to accessing education include a lack of knowledge about education and disability rights and capacity to advocate effectively. Families/whānau of disabled learners can lack understanding of their child's education rights and entitlements, how to get the right support, how to raise concerns and how to advocate at the school and systems level.

IEAG's community initiative aims to provide disabled learners and their whānau with accurate information, accessible resources and individual advocacy support through;

* Developing and disseminating information and resources about disabled learner’s rights to education and wellbeing.
* Providing individual advocacy support when needed.
* Collaborating and connecting with others within and across the disability and education sectors to influence system wide changes that positively impact on the wellbeing of disabled learners and whānau.
* We will continue to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of disabled children and young people in residential specialist schools and to have this seen as a children’s rights issue, as a matter priority.

**Representation**

* Continued involvement in advisory roles to the Ministry of Education and other Ministries, in advocating for inclusive education
* Raise public awareness about the changes to Learning Support

**Collaboration**

* Education For All Forum, cross-sector meetings and initiatives
* Disability and education sector organisations
* Ministry of Education
* Human Rights Commission and Office of Disability Issues,
* Ministers responsible for Education, children and youth.

**Acknowledgements for support given to IEAG 2021/2022**

We wish to extend our thanks to organisations that have supported our work through grants, and to those people who have generously and voluntarily supported our work. We acknowledge with gratitude the funding received from:

* Lottery Community Grants Board
* COGS – Auckland City, Wellington, North Shore, Waitakere,
* Ministry of Social Development - Care in the Community Disability Welfare Fund

This support has been invaluable and is very much appreciated.

It has been an honour to serve as IEAG Convenor for the past five years; I am very much looking forward to helping progress our mahi in my new role as Director in the year ahead.

Director

IEAG

Heather Lear QSM