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**Sea-change: negotiating the United Nations
Convention on the Rights of Persons with
Disabilities – a New Zealand perspective.**

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Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes;
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
Ding-dong.
Hark! now I hear them — Ding-dong, bell.

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Abstract

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was the first human rights convention of the 21st century. It was notable because of the high levels of involvement stakeholders – disabled people – had in the negotiations process. This project looks at the role played by the disabled New Zealanders in the New Zealand delegation to the Ad Hoc Committee considering the text for the CRPD. It examined to what extent the disability rights movement slogan ‘nothing about us, without us’ was reflected in this process. Through interviews with disabled people who had represented NGOs, national human rights institutions and disabled people’s organisations at the UN, it finds that disabled people were instrumental in drafting a convention that addressed real-life human rights issues for disabled people.

Using Stienstra’s (2003) framework for assessing the effectiveness and value of consultation process, it also finds that CRPD negotiations show how the involvement of stakeholders in consultation processes can greatly enhance both the process itself and the results. The process represents a sea-change in terms of how consultations with disabled people should be conducted. With genuine interest and willingness to listen to the lived experience of disability, governments have much to gain from genuine engagement with disabled people and their representative organisations. The implications for social policy are shown to demonstrate how ‘nothing about us, without us’ can move beyond being a mere slogan. When correctly applied during consultations, it can become a transformative and powerful guiding principle for policymakers and legislators alike.

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List of abbreviations

ACC	Accident Compensation Corporation
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADL	Anti-discrimination Legislation
CCS	CCS Disability Action, formerly known as the Crippled Children's Association
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DPO	Disabled Persons Organisation
DPA	Disabled Persons Assembly
DRM	Disability Rights Movement
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDC	International Disability Caucus
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
NZDS	New Zealand Disability Strategy
NHRI	National Human Rights Institutions
ODI	Office of Disability Issues
UN	United Nations
UPIAS	Union for the Physically Impaired Against Segregation
WHO	World Health Organisation
WNUSP	World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry
WPA	World Programme of Action
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights