

Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160



Tuesday 20th March 2018

To the House of Representatives,

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of New Zealand (MSNZ) is the national body representing the needs of the 4000 New Zealander's diagnosed with MS, their families and carers.

MSNZ is writing to express our support for Nicole Thornton's petition 2014/0102 requesting that the House of Representatives pass legislation to ensure that, if a retail establishment does not have public restrooms, those who have medical conditions that require immediate toilet access must be allowed access to employee restrooms. We wish to request that people with multiple sclerosis (MS) be included in the list of those requiring immediate toilet access.

Multiple Sclerosis can cause damage to the nerve pathways that control the urinary system. This can affect the bladder's ability to store urine, or the ability to empty itself of urine. In some cases these problems can occur at the same time. Sometimes the mix up in messages from the nerve pathways mean the bladder detrusor muscle is overactive—contracting the bladder when only small amounts of urine are present.

This type of bladder dysfunction can cause:

- Urinary urgency – a strong sensation that urination is imminent and cannot be postponed
- Urinary frequency – the need to urinate more frequently than every three or four hours
- Incontinence—involuntary discharge of urine; and/or

Urine can 'back up' in both the kidney and the urinary tract. This built-up urine can crystallise into stones, or provide a breeding ground for infection. These issues must be treated immediately. To prevent infection people with MS are recommended to avoid holding urine for long periods of time and empty their bladder frequently and completely.

MS can also cause problems with bowel movements, suffering from incontinence, the total loss of bowel control. One key strategy for managing this problem is emptying the bowel at specific intervals to reduce the risk of an accident.

Bladder and bowel problems can have a significant effect on a person's sense of well-being and quality of life. Bladder problems affect about 50% of people with MS at some point in their condition, and, as with most MS symptoms, these will vary from person to person.

Bladder and bowel issues if not treated and managed appropriately can cause further, often more serious, complications as well as being extremely embarrassing to a person, heightening feelings of anxiety and isolation. A more accepting and supportive society can help overcome this with the peace of mind that, should the need occur, a person will have easy access to appropriate facilities. We support the petition made to the House of Representative as a positive step to overcoming the

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worry that many people with bladder problems, like those experienced by people with MS encounter.

We hope you will be supportive of the petition presented before you and work towards a more accessible and supportive society for those with bladder and bowel issues.



Your Sincerely,



Amanda Rose
MSNZ National Manager

About MSNZ

MSNZ is a non-profit organisation formed in 1967 to advocate for systemic change so the 4000 people diagnosed with MS in New Zealand have access to first world treatment, resources and services to improve their well-being and quality of life. The work of MSNZ aims to reduce the burden of MS on those diagnosed, their carers and families.

MSNZ is the national body of MS organisations in New Zealand providing support, information, educational resources and training opportunities to our member organisations, 18 independent regional societies who provide support to people living with MS in their communities.

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