**Press Release: Acclaim Otago Inc**

15 November 2013

**Acclaim Otago Receives Law Foundation Award**

Acclaim Otago (Inc), a support group for injured New Zealanders and their families with members throughout New Zealand, has recently been awarded the annual NZ Law Foundation Shadow Report Award. This funding will be used to produce and present a shadow report to the United Nations on New Zealand’s compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Shadow reports enable domestic organisations to draw attention to issues that New Zealand has excluded from its formal report to the UN on its compliance. The report will focus specifically on the experiences of injured New Zealanders, particularly privacy, access to justice, integrity of the person, and meaningful vocational rehabilitation.

New Zealand was heavily involved in the development of the convention, and it was ratified in 2008. The United Nations Committee for this Convention will be examining New Zealand’s compliance with the Convention in 2014. “By raising and addressing New Zealand’s lack of compliance with the Convention, we aim to reform the law and improve the experiences and outcomes of people who have disabilities caused by injury in New Zealand,” says Dr Denise Powell, spokesperson for Acclaim Otago. “This could result in significant benefits for a large group of people who have virtually no ability to take action on their own behalf due to problems within the current legal framework. The report will provide for a collective voice that consolidates the experiences of marginalised individuals who otherwise wouldn’t be heard. New Zealand was one of the few developed countries that elected not to sign the optional protocol to the Convention allowing individual complaints to the UN, and so a shadow report is one of the few means available for drawing international attention to this issue.”

Acclaim Otago has a history of successful advocacy on behalf of injured New Zealanders in drawing attention to systemic inequities. Andrew Beck, a prominent Barrister, notes “The plight of persons with disabilities caused by accident is frequently ignored in New Zealand because of the existence of the Accident Compensation Scheme.” Peter Sara, a specialist ACC lawyer of longstanding experience, says “In my view there would be considerable benefit in having an independent external agency such as the United Nations being provided with New Zealand’s compliance with the Convention.” Sara continues, “I am less confident that the New Zealand Government will disclose potentially embarrassing information.”

“Available evidence suggests that there are structural problems with the legal framework and substantive law around personal injury in New Zealand, that affect the experiences and outcomes of injured people”, says Mr Warren Forster, an experienced advocate and enrolled Barrister and Solicitor who will co-author the report with Dr Powell.

Acclaim Otago looks forward to consulting further with injured New Zealanders in the build up to submitting the report in September 2014.

The New Zealand Law Foundation’s Shadow Report Award is worth up to $10,000 to help human rights advocates report on New Zealand’s compliance with its international treaty obligations. It is available each year to a non-government organisation or individual interested in Human Rights issues.

Law Foundation Chair, Dr Andrew Butler, said treaty monitoring bodies often express gratitude to NGOs for picking up domestic issues in shadow reports that might otherwise be missed.

“The Foundation knows that shadow report preparation takes considerable time and effort, and this may be preventing NGOs from doing these reports. We are providing this award because we believe shadow reporting is a valuable contributor to the treaty monitoring process.”

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For further comment please contact:

* Warren Forster, Acclaim Otago (Inc) on 03 477 3823.
* Lynda Hagen, NZ Law Foundation on 04 499 1037