



16 June 2026

Submission on the Drug Overdose (Assistance Protection) Legislation Bill

Balance Aotearoa is dedicated to providing high-quality peer support, advocacy, consultancy, and education in the areas of mental health and addiction. Our mission is to support people in strengthening their wellbeing and relationships, through approaches grounded in lived experience, connection, and empowerment.

We work alongside people experiencing significant mental or emotional distress and addiction challenges - whether they are living in urban or rural communities, or in acute psychiatric or forensic inpatient settings. We operate with an open-door policy: anyone who identifies as needing support is welcome.

At a national level, we serve as consultants and advisors, advocating for the human rights of disabled people and amplifying the voices of those with lived experience of distress and addiction. Balance Aotearoa is a disabled people led organisation (a DPO). We are part of the DPO Coalition and the Independent Monitoring Mechanism (IMM) for the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities in Aotearoa NZ.

Our peer support kaupapa can be summarised as:

“To connect, empower and advocate for tāngata whai ora / people with lived experience of mental distress and/or addiction.”

Originally founded in the mid-1990s as Balance Whanganui, our roots lie in mutual self-help groups for people experiencing mood disorders. Today, Balance Aotearoa offers holistic, recovery-focused group programs, as well as individual peer support for anyone experiencing mental distress and addiction.

This bill will save lives. It is aligned to harm reduction strategies that are proven to work. If people can reach out for help without fear of prosecution, they are more likely to survive an overdose or help someone else survive an overdose. It just makes sense. Similar laws in the United States reduced opioid overdose deaths by 10% to 15%, which could translate to saving 15 to 23 Kiwi lives annually (<https://www.phcc.org.nz/news/media-release-good-samaritan-law-could-save-lives-select-committee-urged-support-harm>). While we agree that only making this change will not solve the overall problem created by drugs, this bill is a step in the right direction. We encourage the Government to pass this Bill and go further. Invest in harm reduction, widespread naloxone access, whānau support, addiction services and lived experience organisations.