



Long fight: The Ismail family, from left, Yaaseen, Abdurahman, Naadia, Ayesha and Hoosein. Mr Ismail says Kiwis are treated like temporary residents in Australia, despite paying taxes.

Kiwi family wins battle for disability care in Oz

A NEW ZEALAND child in Australia has won the right to disability care after being initially denied it because of his nationality.

The Ismail family's battle led to a statewide policy reversal in Western Australia, with all resident New Zealanders now able to apply for disability care.

New Zealand-born Abdurahman Ismail, 10, was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome in 2010, requiring specialist support costing about \$800 a month.

His family moved from South Africa to New Zealand in 1999, and in 2008 to Australia, where his father works as a finance manager for a global infrastructure company.

But when they applied to the Western Australia Disabilities Services Commission for help caring for Abdurahman, they were declined because of his status as a "non-protected" New Zealander.

The family complained to the Western Australian Equal Opportunities Commission, citing discrimination.

Abdurahman's father, Hoosein Ismail, said it took six months for the disabilities commission to back down, with support initially offered only if the family agreed to keep it secret.

"We refused to sign the non-disclosure agreement. I mean, there could be 1000 Kiwis in the same situation."

The disabilities commission relented late last year and in February quietly changed its eligibility criteria to include non-protected New Zealanders.

Mr Ismail said the change was a victory, but Kiwis residing in Australia still faced many restrictions. "You are always treated like a temporary resident even though you pay the same tax as everybody else."

His work had sponsored the family for permanent residency, but many other New Zealanders did not have this luxury, he said. "If I didn't get help I would have had to take out another mortgage on my house."

The disabilities commission refused to discuss the case.