

Disabled Persons Assembly New Zealand (Inc)

Governance Review 2011

Background

DPA's National Executive Committee (NEC) has decided to do a review of DPA's present governance structure.

This comes from the growing concern over the difficulties our Regional Assemblies (RAs) are having in maintaining their memberships and DPA's collective voice. There is also concern over the size (currently 13 members) and costs of the National Executive Committee and the effectiveness of decision making.

Comments and feedback

The National Executive Committee invites comments from DPA members on the proposed new model governance structure outlined below.

Do you support or not support the New Model Governance Structure? Yes or No
Why/Why Not

Please mail or email your comments by 11 November 2011 to:

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What is working well with DPA's current governance structure?

1. A democratic membership voting system that elects the governance group.
2. The authority of decision making rests with disabled people.
3. Committed individual members supporting the work of DPA. Corporate members happy to support DPA financially through their membership.
4. Some dedicated people holding regions

- together albeit few and far between.
5. Some Regional Assemblies (RAs) have reasonably effective networks with their communities. RAs that hold forums discussing wider issues and involving everyone work better.
 6. The new National President/President Elect transition gives planning and upskilling opportunity.

What is not working well?

7. Most of the original RAs are now in recess (including Auckland) and many of our existing RAs are struggling to maintain a credible collective voice. They are struggling to effectively connect with their members and communities to ensure that our collective voice is heard by disabled people and community policy makers. There are some notable exceptions to this trend.
8. Experienced and once long-serving members have lost connection with DPA.
9. New members become frustrated at the lack of leadership from Regional Executive Committees (RECs) and turn away from becoming involved.
10. RECs' management of bank accounts and fundraising initiatives can be problematic.
11. DPA membership numbers, both individual and corporate members, continue to decline.
12. The lack of grassroots action affects the strength of DPA's voice nationally.
13. The DPA Constitution appears to be too prescriptive for how RECs are expected to function for present day realities.
14. RECs are often overwhelmed by the structure and constitutional requirements and yet there is no real connection or responsibility/reporting of regions to the national organisation. The regional liaison person role does not work.
15. Many RAs become preoccupied doing committee-type things. Some RAs have adopted a less formal approach to running meetings.
16. The size and cost of the National Executive Committee (NEC) and how it can effectively make decisions and connect with RAs appears

problematic. The cost of governance impacts on the ability of the National Secretariat (national office staff) to deliver on DPA's strategic goals.

Reasons for revising DPA's current governance structure

The main reason for revising the current structure is to find a new structure that works. The current structure has been given more than a fair go (28 years) and no longer works. Tinkering with it will not address the issues outlined above.

Objectives for a revised structure

17. Allow DPA to be more strategic and issues based.
18. Allow for a widening of DPA's communities of interest in local communities to effectively capture the grassroots membership and collective voice of disabled people.
19. Allow for a closer connection and accountability between a National Board and National Office to DPA's grassroots membership.
20. Allow for the ability of the National Board to lead community involvement on key issues.
21. Allow for leadership capacity building of local DPA spokespeople and National Board members.
22. Allow for better value for money from limited resources.
23. Ensure DPA's place in a changing environment.

A possible new model DPA governance structure

24. Retain Disabled Persons Assembly (NZ) Incorporated.
25. Retain memberships and voting rights to elect National Board members. The intention here is to continue to ensure that all members can have a say in choosing the people who will govern the organisation at the national level.
26. Replace the NEC with a National Board of maximum 10 members made up of the President, President Elect, 5 elected members and 3 Board-appointed members. The intention here is to improve the effectiveness of decision

making of the national governance body by reducing its size from 13 to 10 and by ensuring the right mix of skills and perspectives. The required competencies, skills and perspectives of the National Board members will be specified in DPA's revised Constitution. These may include:

- Perspectives from a cross section of disabled
 - People with legal, financial, marketing and conflict resolution skills
 - People with knowledge and lived experience of health and disability support services
 - People who have governance experience.
27. Option available to replace the RECs with locally elected less formal local Assemblies or NEC Supported local spokesperson connected to the DPA National Office to:
- Provide the face of DPA
 - Promote DPA locally
 - Facilitate/collaborate with the disability community on common issues
 - Consult with the local community in a variety of ways: forums, social media
 - Provide the link between local assemblies and National Secretariat
 - DPA champions on specific issues.

The intention here is to allow the Local Assemblies to choose the way they want to function and run their Assemblies that meet the needs of their membership.

Establishing the new structure will be supported by a communications strategy.

Amendments to the DPA Constitution

28. Once a new model governance structure is agreed upon the proposed amendments to the Constitution will be drafted for consideration.

