**September 4 2013**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Disabled people demand building access**

Government needs to step up and ensure disabled access is incorporated into buildings that need to be earthquake strengthened,” says Beverly Grammar, President of the Disabled Persons Assembly (DPA).

“The recent recommendation from the Royal Commission on the Canterbury Earthquakes to allow property owners to bypass disabled access requirements to lessen compliance costs for building owners is very short sighted,” she says.

Although final decisions have yet to be made (a period of consultation will see submissions made to select committee), Beverly says, “It just seems so odd that the issue has even got any traction.”

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* states that economic reasons can’t be used to exclude disabled people from everyday life.

“New Zealand is a signatory to that agreement,” says Beverly. And Government can’t make important decisions about disabled people without involving them in those decisions. That certainly hasn’t happened in this instance.”

Beverly says this opportunity to create improved access for disabled New Zealanders as work is done on the up to 25,000 buildings through-out the country can’t be allowed to be lost.

She says Government needs to seek advice and expertise from the sector and then look at creative options to make sure disability access and facilities are included as earthquake strengthening work is done.

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