

DPA Strategic Plan 2026-2029

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1. Who are DPA?

We are New Zealand's first pan-impairment Disabled People's Organisation (DPO). We are a disabled-led organisation, with disabled individuals and organisations across the country making up our membership. We are governed by the National Executive Committee, who are elected by members; and we are supported by a team at our National Office who work around the motu to achieve our mission and support our members.

As a DPO, and as a member of the DPO Coalition, DPA has a role in monitoring the government's performance on disability rights through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Independent Monitoring Mechanism (IMM).

We are a disabled-led organisation with a strong history of disabled people making change for us and by us. As a membership based DPO, we have a democratic process that supports disabled leadership and self-determination. We are politically independent and advocate for our community without competing interests.

Purpose

The Assembly is established for the purposes of:

- **Leadership:** to lead in reflecting the collective voice of people with disabilities, locally, nationally and internationally;
- **Information and advice:** to inform and advise on policies impacting on the lives of people with disabilities;
- **Advocacy:** to support people with disabilities to have a voice, including a collective voice, in society;
- **Monitoring:** to monitor and give feedback on existing laws, policies and practices about and relevant to people with disabilities;
- **Incidental things:** to do all other things that are incidental or conducive to the attainment of any of the above objects.

Mission

Our mission is to uphold the rights, wellbeing, and interests of disabled people and drive systemic change to achieve equity.

Vision

For society: We envision a society where disabled people are thriving, self-determining, and achieve equitable outcomes. Disability rights are an everyday reality; disabled people are valued and fully and equally participate in society. Disabled people no longer have to fight for our rights to be respected.

For our organisation: DPA are recognised national leaders in the disability sector and disabled community. We are instrumental in shaping policy to make government and broader society in New Zealand better for disabled people. We have a strong track record of holding the government accountable; advocating across disability issues; and

supporting the next generations of disabled people to find community and organise collectively. We are strong, member-driven, and being a member of DPA is a source of connectedness, self-understanding, learning, and pride.

Values & Ethics

- We work within a human rights framework, especially working to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and other human rights agreements.
- We acknowledge the rights and status of Māori as mana whenua, and aim to work in greater partnership with hapū, iwi, and tākata hauā/whaikaha Māori collectively.
- We believe that our community has the expertise and power to create a more inclusive and just society.
- We support the Enabling Good Lives principles.
- We believe in Disability Justice, and value the leadership of intersectionally marginalised disabled people.
- We see the following as particularly important agreements and documents for disability rights and justice:
 - Te Tiriti o Waitangi
 - United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
 - United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
 - United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
 - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - Whāia Te Ao Mārama 2018 to 2022: The Māori Disability Action Plan
 - Atoatoali'o National Pacific Disability Approach 2025
 - Skin, Tooth, and Bone – The Basis of our Movement is Our People: A Disability Justice Primer by Sins Invalid

2. Strategic Pillars / Pou

Our strategic pillars (pou) are DPA's focus areas that we will prioritise action on to fulfil our mission; achieve our vision; and to give effect to our constitution. They are:

Advocacy	Accountability	Anti-Ableism	Community Action
We bring disabled people together to advocate for a more just society. DPA are leaders in systemic advocacy for disability rights and speak out on key issues affecting our community. We provide information, advice, and tools for people to advocate for themselves and their communities. We provide information and advice to government, agencies, and other actors to better serve disabled people and implement disability rights.	We hold the government to account and ensure they are meeting their obligations to disabled people. We hold agencies, organisations, and other actors accountable for upholding disability rights and respecting disabled people in all their policies and operations. We use mechanisms available to us, such as the UNCRPD, and IMM, to do this. We give effect to disability rights, and other human rights, through all aspects of our own mahi. We model the change we want to see.	We challenge ableism and discrimination and work to make anti-ableism mainstream in Aotearoa New Zealand. Anti-ableism is entrenched within all facets of our work - from policy to communications and media, to our engagements with members and wider community.	We build on the power of our members and collaborate with partners to make society more inclusive. We support people to understand disability rights, and the history and movements within our disabled community. We are in solidarity with allied rights movements and centre Disability Justice, so that our actions and advocacy uphold the intersecting rights and experiences of multiply marginalised disabled people.

3. Foundations

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

We aim to elevate the leadership, voices, and experience of tākata hauā/whaikaha Māori; to be in good relationship with hapū and iwi Māori; and to work in partnership to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Organisational Sustainability and Resilience

We govern and manage our organisation with care, to ensure that we can meet our goals and vision for many years to come. We have diverse sources of financial and other resources required to be resilient in a changing environment. We recognise the realities of living and making change as disabled people, and effectively distribute mahi across both our governance and operational teams, aligning with realistic capacity and sustainable workflows.

4. Advocacy Pou / Pillar

We bring disabled people together to advocate for a more just society.

DPA are leaders in systemic advocacy for disability rights and speak out on key issues affecting our community. We provide information and advice for people to advocate for themselves and their communities. We provide information and advice to government, agencies, and other actors to better serve disabled people and implement disability rights.

Advocacy Pillar Goals:

Internal goals:

1. **Advocacy capacity:** To increase members' knowledge and skills to engage in effective advocacy and campaigning
2. **International advocacy:** To build staff and member knowledge and capacity to engage with international rights and advocacy levers (eg. UNCRPD - United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, COSPs - Conferences of States Parties)
3. **Member engagement:** To establish strong processes for members to inform our organisational advocacy positions and campaigns

External goals:

1. **Priority advocacy areas:** To increase DPA's advocacy on our priority advocacy areas, bringing an anti-ableism, disability rights & justice, and Tiriti justice lens
2. **Advocacy profile:** To raise DPA's profile as a disability rights and justice advocacy organisation
3. **International profile & leverage:** To increase our presence in international fora, and improve our use of international mechanisms to support our advocacy

Priority advocacy areas

DPA's advocacy will always be centred on implementing and actioning disability rights, underpinned by the UNCRPD, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and other relevant human rights

agreements. Often, we also must also respond to issues affecting the disabled community as they arise. To make our advocacy more effective and targeted, we will identify priority advocacy areas for DPA periodically, drawing on surveys and feedback from our members through various mechanisms.

DPA's enduring advocacy priorities are:

1. Disability rights and full implementation of the UNCRPD

Advocating for a world where disability rights are an everyday reality, and disabled people have full and equal enjoyment of all human rights.

The UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) is an international legal agreement that spells out the rights that disabled people have, and what governments need to do to respect disability rights in their country. The New Zealand government has signed the agreement and is responsible for making sure that all laws in New Zealand uphold disability rights.

DPA raise awareness of disability rights and the UNCRPD, and promote public understanding of their importance. We advocate for the UNCRPD to be fully implemented, including being embedded in domestic laws. We call attention to UNCRPD Committee and IMM (Independent Monitoring Mechanism) recommendations and highlight instances where disability rights have been breached.

2. Societal ableism

Ableism is discrimination of and prejudice against disabled people, rooted in the belief that disabled people are inferior and less valuable than non-disabled people.

Ableism can be intentional or unintentional and can happen at different levels – internalised (when disabled people ourselves hold ableist beliefs); interpersonal (when an individual person is ableist towards another individual); or institutional and systemic (when ableism is embedded into rules, norms, and practices in organisations and our society as a whole).

DPA work towards our vision of an anti-ableist society by proactively raising public awareness of ableism and by being responsive to topical issues of societal ableism

that arise. Our advocacy under this priority area is focused at the institutional and systemic level.

3. Tiriti Justice

DPA recognise He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni (The Declaration of Independence of the United Tribes of New Zealand), and the reo Māori text of Te Tiriti o Waitangi as foundational constitutional documents of New Zealand. We recognise that Te Tiriti is what enables DPA to operate and exist in Aoteroa me Te Waipounamu (New Zealand).

DPA will advocate for Tiriti justice, systemic equity, and the rights of Māori as tākata whenua as a cross-cutting theme throughout all our advocacy work. We recognise and advocate for the tino rakatirataka of iwi and hapū, self-determination of tākata whaikaha and hauā Māori, and ensure all DPA's advocacy and communications are in line with our responsibilities as a tākata tiriti organisation.

DPA's additional advocacy priorities from 2026 are:

4. Income and Employment

Many disabled people in New Zealand live in poverty or on very low incomes. This is a critical issue in the current cost of living crisis, and considering the additional costs many people have due to their disabilities. Some disabled people cannot work in paid employment and may be reliant on a social welfare system that is often inadequate, inaccessible, complicated, and discriminatory. Disabled people who can be in paid employment often face barriers including discrimination, inaccessibility, and lack of flexibility and support. Disabled people may also need to work limited hours, be self-employed, or gain employment later in life. This can all affect disabled peoples' income and stability.

DPA advocates for a stronger and more equitable social welfare system, that provides disabled people what they need to be well. We advocate against discriminatory practices in welfare and employment, including benefit sanctions and penalties for disabled people in relationships, and against sheltered workshops and minimum wage exemptions for disabled people. We advocate for inclusion and equity in employment, including access to job support funding and other initiatives that provide support and reduce barriers for disabled workers.

5. Housing

Living in a safe, accessible, and affordable home is a necessity for disabled people to be well and to thrive. Disabled people have rights to an adequate standard of living, and to live independently if we choose. New Zealand's lack of accessible and affordable housing, and our inequitable housing system often dictate where disabled people can live - removing choice and control and placing barriers to our employment and wellbeing. This contributes to many disabled people living in unsuitable, unsafe, and unreliable housing; relying on temporary accommodation; or experiencing homelessness.

DPA advocate for an improved housing system that is affordable, accessible, equitable, and aligned with disability rights. We advocate against discriminatory laws and practices, such as institutionalisation and criminalisation of rough sleeping. We advocate for housing policies and interventions that support disabled people to live well, such as mandatory universal design standards, and building more affordable and accessible homes.

6. Climate Change & Emergency Preparedness

Highlighting the ways in which disabled people are harmed by climate change and emergencies themselves, as well as by ableist responses and interventions that don't have disabled people in mind.

DPA advocate for disabled people to be better included in climate decision-making, and for climate change interventions to uphold our rights. We advocate for better and more equitable climate resilience, adaptation, and emergency preparedness, recognising that many emergencies are caused by climate change, and that the needs and rights of disabled people are often ignored during times of crisis.

5. Accountability Pou / Pillar

We hold the government to account and ensure they are meeting their obligations to disabled people.

We hold agencies, organisations, and other actors accountable for upholding disability rights and respecting disabled people in all their policies and operations. We use mechanisms available to us, such as the UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), and IMM (Independent Monitoring Mechanism), to do this. We give effect to disability rights, and other human rights, through all aspects of our own mahi. We model the change we want to see.

DPA are currently part of the DPO Coalition - a group of Disabled Peoples Organisations in Aotearoa with status under the UNCRPD; and the Independent Monitoring Mechanism - a group with a special mandate to monitor the government's progress on disability rights.

Accountability Goals

Internal goals:

1. **Member accountability:** To establish regular opportunities for members to engage with the NEC and DPA more broadly, and share their views
2. **Ways of working:** To improve our internal systems and processes to reflect ways of working that uphold disability rights, are anti-ableist, and make DPA a role model employer of disabled people, including establishing processes to improve and effectively monitor staff and volunteer* wellbeing (shared with anti-ableism)
3. **Member accountability:** To ensure that DPA is a safe and welcoming space for diverse and intersectionally marginalised people, and ensure there is a safe process for feedback and concerns to be raised
4. **Tiriti partner accountability:** To develop a Te Ao Māori Strategy, to ensure that DPA has good relationships with hapū, iwi, and memā Māori (Māori members) and meets our obligations under Te Tiriti (shared with Te Ao Māori foundation)

*Volunteers = NEC members and members who are active / collaborating on kaupapa with staff or NEC

External goals:

1. **International accountability mechanisms:** To establish engagement with United Nations and other international mechanisms that can enable DPA to achieve our mission and vision, and hold government to account (eg. UNCRPD, CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, UNDRIP – United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNCROC – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ECOSOC – United Nations Economic and Social Council, UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change etc.)
2. **Consultation & Engagement:** To actively participate in submissions and consultations in alignment with our strategy; priority advocacy areas; and in support of allied movements at local, national, and international levels
3. **DPO Coalition:** To improve our strategic engagement with the DPO Coalition, and Independent Monitoring Mechanism, to strengthen monitoring and accountability of disability rights at a national and international level

6. Anti-Ableism Pou / Pillar

We challenge ableism and discrimination, and work to make anti-ableism mainstream in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Anti-ableism is entrenched within all facets of our work - from policy to communications and media, to our engagements with members and wider community.

DPA are actively working towards our vision of an anti-ableist society by being proactive on public awareness and education regarding ableism, while also being responsive to issues of ableism that arise.

Anti-Ableism Goals:

Internal goals:

1. **Continued Development:** To continuously improve our staff, NEC, and member understanding of systemic ableism, drawing on Disability Justice and our other values and frameworks
2. **Framing and messaging:** To establish some shared standards and expectations around anti-ableist framing and messaging, that informs our work in all areas – from policy positions, to communications, to statements from NEC etc.
3. **Ways of working:** To improve our internal systems and processes to reflect ways of working that uphold disability rights, are anti-ableist, and make DPA a role model on anti-ableism and disability rights (shared with accountability)

External goals:

1. **Public awareness:** To raise public awareness of what ableism is and how it manifests in our society, and promote anti-ableism
2. **Partnerships:** To educate and promote anti-ableism with our partner organisations and allies in social change movements

7. Community Action Pou / Pillar

We build on the power of our members and collaborate with partners to make society more inclusive.

We support people to understand disability rights, and the history and movements within our disabled community.

We are in solidarity with allied rights movements and centre Disability Justice, so that our actions and advocacy uphold the intersecting rights and experiences of multiply marginalised disabled people.

Community Action Goals:

Internal goals:

1. **Understanding:** To improve members' and the general public's understanding of disability rights, disability justice, and disabled peoples' movements in Aotearoa - including the role of DPA
2. **Member Engagement:** To increase effective member engagement in our organisation

External goals:

1. **Collaboration:** To increase collaboration and connection with other community organisations, communities, and adjacent groups to build power and capacity for action
2. **Visibility:** To increase visibility and promotion of disability rights, with a focus on anti-ableism, intersectional disability justice, and Te Tiriti justice

8. Te Tiriti o Waitangi Foundation

We aim to elevate the leadership, voices, and experience of tākata hauā/whaikaha Māori; to be in good relationship with hapū and iwi Māori; and to work in partnership to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi Goals

Internal Goals:

1. **Strategy development:** To develop a Te Ao Māori Strategy, to ensure that DPA has good relationships with hapū, iwi, and memā Māori (Māori members) and meets our obligations under Te Tiriti and UNDRIP (shared with Accountability Pillar).
2. **Capacity & Capability:** To increase staff, NEC, and member understanding of Te Ao Māori in a manner that is appropriate, grounded in tikaka, sustainable, and does not put pressure on Māori staff to be educators.
3. **Support Māori Staff:** To ensure that Māori staff are well supported as DPA develops in our Tiriti and Te Ao Māori journey – including ensuring that Māori staff are not relied upon to provide cultural labour outside the scope of their position descriptions or put in positions that could affect their iwi and hapū relationships, but that they are supported to grow in their taha Māori as they wish to and have capacity for.
4. **Support Māori Members:** To increase the human and financial resourcing to support the Māori Members' Network to meet regularly, and engage according to their aspirations (**aligns with community action engagement goals**)

External Goals:

1. **Mana whenua:** Establish meaningful relationship with mana whenua of our "base" (currently Ōtautahi - Kāi Tahu, especially Ngāi Tuahuriri hapū) to understand how they want to engage with us; opportunities for collaboration; and tikaka we should follow as manuhiri on their whenua.
2. **Manuhiri:** Establish meaningful relationships with mana whenua of other takiwā we engage in (eg. For conferences, in-person hui) so we can be good manuhiri and collaborate as effective allies.

3. **Whakawhanaukataka:** Establish meaningful relationships with Māori DPOs and individuals in the disability movement; and understand how we can support and collaborate; and appropriately elevate Māori disabled voices as a non-kaupapa Māori organisation.

9. Organisational Sustainability and Resilience Foundation

We govern and manage our organisation with care, to ensure that we can meet our goals and vision for many years to come. We have diverse sources of financial and other resources required to be resilient in a changing environment. We recognise the realities of living and making change as disabled people, and effectively distribute mahi across both our governance and operational teams, aligning with realistic capacity and sustainable workflows.

Organisational Sustainability and Resilience Goals

Internal goals:

1. **Governance Resilience:** To improve governance systems and processes to ensure that the requirements of effective governance are met while being sustainable for governance members' time, capacity, and contributions.
2. **Operational Resilience:** To improve operational systems and processes to ensure that operations run smoothly while being sustainable for staff and other contributors.
3. **Governance Succession:** To increase member interest in contributing to DPA in a governance capacity, enhance capability of members and NEC to be effective governors, and increase number of candidates for elections
4. **Operational Succession:** To increase opportunities for staff development, and improve ease of transition in the event of staff turnover
5. **Financial Sustainability:** To develop and implement a funding sustainability strategy to support DPA being financially sustainable and able to execute on the goals outlined in our organisational strategy, while minimising reliance on any single funder or type of funding; improving predictability and sustainability of funding; and enabling DPA to more easily receive charitable donations