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To Auckland Council

Please find attached DPA’s submission on Auckland Council Emergency Budget 2020-2021

## Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

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# Background

## Introducing Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

Disabled Persons Assembly NZ (DPA) is a pan-disability Disabled People’s Organisation (DPO) with a vision of an equitable society[[1]](#footnote-1). DPA’s vision is that disabled people of all impairment types and groups in society are able to direct their own lives, where attitudinal and environmental barriers that prevent disabled people’s full and equal participation in society are removed. DPA recognises:

* disabled people as experts on their own lives
* the social model of disability, which proposes that what makes someone disabled is not their condition, but the attitudes and structures of society
* Māori as Tangata Whenua and Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand
* the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

DPA and its members work with the wider disability community, other DPOs, government agencies, service providers, international disability organisations, and the public to ensure this convention is upheld.

## United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

DPA was influential in creating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), a foundational document for disabled people which New Zealand has signed and ratified, confirming that disabled people must have the same human rights as everyone else[[2]](#footnote-2). All state bodies in New Zealand, including local and regional government, have a responsibility to uphold the principles and articles of this convention. There are a number of UNCRPD articles pertinent to this submission, including:

**Article 9 – Accessibility** “States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications.”

**Article 19 – Living independently and being included in the community** “Community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs.”

**Article 29 – Participation in political and public life** “To promote actively an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others.”

**Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport** “States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to services from those involved in the organization of recreational, tourism, leisure and sporting activities.”

## New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026

Since ratifying the UNCRPD, the New Zealand Government has established a Disability Strategy to guide the work of government agencies on disability issues. The vision is that New Zealand be a non-disabling society, where disabled people have equal opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations, and that all of New Zealand works together to make this happen[[3]](#footnote-3). It identifies eight outcome areas contributing to achieving this vision, including:

**Outcome 5 – Accessibility** “We access all places, services and information with ease and dignity”

## Auckland’s disabled community

One in four New Zealanders have a disability or long-term health condition. Māori and Pacific peoples have an even higher-than-average rate of disability. There were approximately 271,000 disabled people residing in Auckland in 2013, a number which rises to over 300,000 when accounting for current population increase. Of these people, 90% experience limited mobility[[4]](#footnote-4) and rely on expensive taxi services or Auckland Transport’s public transport services to access public facilities[[5]](#footnote-5). Furthermore, Disabled people in Auckland face an increased risk of living in poverty largely due to lower incomes and extra resource requirements compared to non-disabled people[[6]](#footnote-6). Statistics also show that disabled New Zealanders are grossly overrepresented in unemployment rates; two-thirds of disabled people earn less than $30,000 per annum, increasing the likelihood of poor socio-economic outcomes[[7]](#footnote-7).

# The submission

DPA acknowledges the difficult decisions that lie before Auckland Council in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lock down. The economic and social consequences of the lock down have had serious implications globally, nationally, and locally that we will be living with for some time to come. DPA will be looking to Auckland Council for leadership when it comes to supporting the recovery locally.

We wish to acknowledge the ongoing hard work Auckland Council has undertaken to keep essential services going and communities connected throughout the crisis. In saying this, DPA stresses that any decisions Auckland Council takes should ensure that the social and economic needs of vulnerable and marginalised communities, the disability community included, are taken into account and that our needs and interests are given high priority in decision-making processes over the year ahead.

## The effect of budget cuts on disabled Aucklanders

Budget cuts as a result of the emergency budget will significantly impact disabled people across Auckland in a multitude of ways, including an unsustainable increase in the cost of living, digital exclusion, and opening up Auckland Council to not upholding their responsibilities in the UNCRPD.

DPA acknowledges the need to impose a rates increase of either 2.5% or 3.5% for the 2020-2021 financial year. However, DPA urges Auckland Council to consider the wider impact this cost rise will have on the disabled community, who already have lower incomes and less employment[[8]](#footnote-8). Disabled people are also more likely to be renters, who often experience rates increases passed on through rent increases. These pre-existing disadvantages mean that disabled people will be adversely affected by rates increases and it is imperative to ensure additional cuts do not further disadvantage the Auckland disability community.

DPA would like to see more transparent projections around these cuts. For example, cuts to libraries, transport, and footpath maintenance and upgrades. DPA seeks clarity around the specifics of proposed cuts, such as whether the current publication of proposed cuts of 28% to library services will extend to reduced operating hours or closures. Many disabled people often rely on public spaces such as libraries to access the Internet, which is often critical to their ability to connect and communicate. This is difficult for all people with mobility issues, whether because of illness or disability. Examples of digital exclusion factors such as library closures during the Covid-19 lockdown period are imperative to avoid as they will have a disproportionate impact on people who are already experiencing social exclusion in other ways[[9]](#footnote-9). Furthermore, reliable, accessible and affordable transport services are required to ensure access to public services such as libraries, community halls/centres, leisure and recreational services, etc.

DPA acknowledges the importance of Auckland Transport concessions for disabled people to travel on bus, train and ferry services. Disabled people often rely on these public transport services. DPA has concerns around the removal of concessions and/or reduced services. Regular services and disability concessions such as the Total Mobility scheme are essential for disabled people’s affordable ease of movement around Auckland. Removing transport barriers such as high costs aids the participation of disabled people in work, education, social activities, sport and leisure, and access to basic goods and services[[10]](#footnote-10). DPA hopes that the Council will work with Auckland Transport to ensure public transport fares are made affordable by advocating for exemption from fare increases and avoidance of concession removal for Total Mobility scheme cardholders. We believe that this will reduce further financial strain to low income earners in the community, of whom many are disabled people.

DPA is supportive of Auckland Council’s six demographic panels of seniors, youth, ethnic peoples, pacific peoples, the rainbow community, and disability community. In the lead up to the election, these panels were disbanded and are in the process of reassignment. DPA believes it is imperative that Auckland Council continues to fund these Advisory Panels. The disabled community is intersectional, and many disabled people are represented by other advisory panels as well as the Disability Panel.

DPA is pleased to see that Auckland Council is continuing with shovel-ready projects and road safety improvements. However, the possibility of a reduction to the upgrading and maintenance of road, footpath and road crossing infrustructure may pose safety risks for some disabled people. DPA would like to see these safety issues taken into consideration in the selection of upgrade and maintenance projects. DPA would like to ensure that disabled people are fully included in the ongoing co-design process for these shovel-ready improvements, especially those involving new crossing points and building improvements. Demographic panels such as the Auckland Council Disability Advisory Panel are crucial in this instance as an avenue for council officials and councillors to seek input because disabled people need to be involved in decision-making processes around things that impact them[[11]](#footnote-11). For example, the accessibility of shovel ready projects.

DPA appreciates the availability of community grants and hopes to see these grants continue to be available for encouraging equitable access to society for disabled people and the promotion of community events that serve Auckland’s disabled community. Many disability organisations rely on such grants and any cuts or withdrawal of them will negatively affect disablepeople.

DPA acknowledges that Auckland Council may need to run at a deficit for some time due to Covid-19. As businesses recover, DPA hopes to see rates revenue recover in turn, resulting in a return to pre-Covid-19 rates and a return to full funding, along with continued consultation with disabled people on decisions that affect them.

# DPA’s recommendations

DPA would like to remind Auckland Council of their responsibility to uphold the UNCRPD[[12]](#footnote-12), ensuring that disabled people are consulted with on issues that directly affect them, and by ensuring that the disability community is not disproportionately affected by the proposed emergency budget measures.

DPA strongly recommends:

* **Demographic panels are not cut**, including the Disability Advisory Panel.
* **Engagement with disabled people** on all issues that affect them continues
* **Libraries stay open** to ensure access to information for all
* **A disability impact assessment on how the proposed cuts will affect disabled people** to be undertaken by Auckland Council
* **Transport concessions for disabled people** not to be removed by Auckland Transport
* **The UNCRPD is upheld** by Auckland Council
1. Disabled Persons Assembly. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.dpa.org.nz/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. United Nations. (2006). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.* Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Office for Disability Issues. (2016). *New Zealand Disability Strategy.* Retrieved from <https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Statistics New Zealand. (2013). *New Zealand Disability Survey.* Retrieved from <http://archive.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/health/disabilities/DisabilitySurvey_HOTP2013.aspx#gsc.tab=0> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Imagine Better and Disabled Persons Assembly. (2020). *Barriers to access transportation.* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Wilkinson-Meyers et al. (2015). To live an ordinary life: resource needs and additional costs for people with a physical impairment. *Disability & Society, 30*(7), 976-990. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. King, P. T. (2019). *Māori with Lived Experience of Disability Part II.* Commissioned by the Waitangi Tribunal. Retrieved from <https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt_DOC_150473583/Wai%202575%2C%20B023.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. King, P. T. (2019). Māori with Lived Experience of Disability Part II. Commissioned by the Waitangi Tribunal for Stage Two of the Wai 2575 Health Services and Outcomes Kaupapa Inquiry. Retrieved from [https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt\_DOC\_150473583/Wai%202575%2C%20 B023.pdf](https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt_DOC_150473583/Wai%202575%2C%20%20B023.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The Workshop. (2018). Out of the Maze: Building digitally inclusive communities. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bd0d99e16b6404fe9018538/t/5bdf7f9b575d1f0d19337766/1541373904877/OutOfTheMaze.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Rose, E., Witten, K., & McCreanor, T. (2009). Transport related social exclusion in New Zealand: evidence and challenges. Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online, 4(3), 191-203. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Charlton, J. (2000). *Nothing about us without us: Disability oppression and empowerment*. University of California Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. United Nations. (2006). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.* Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)