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To Stats NZ

Please find attached DPA’s submission on the Census 2023.

## Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

Contact:

## **Prudence Walker**

## **Chief Executive**

## **021 546 006**

## **policy@dpa.org.nz**

# Introducing Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

The Disabled Persons Assembly NZ (DPA) is a pan-disability disabled person’s organisation that works to realise an equitable society, where all disabled people (of all impairment types and including women, Māori, Pasifika, young people) are able to direct their own lives. DPA works to improve social indicators for disabled people and for disabled people to be recognised as valued members of society. DPA and its members work with the wider disability community, other DPOs, government agencies, service providers, international disability organisations, and the public by:

* telling our stories and identifying systemic barriers
* developing and advocating for solutions
* celebrating innovation and good practice

# Sex, Gender and Sexual Identity

DPA strongly supports the inclusion of questions on sex, gender, and sexual identity in the census to better capture the diversity of the population. As disabled people are of all genders and sexualities, and are impacted in many different ways by this, it is important that sex, gender and sexual identity are covered in the Census.

# Right to be Counted

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)[[1]](#footnote-2) highlights the key role of the state in collecting data on disabled people that enables formulation and implementation of policies that give effect to the Convention. In NZ, the Census and the post-census Disability Survey are a key source of data on disabled people for policy making and funding. For this reason, it is critically important that the census asks the right questions to avoid groups of disabled people being underrepresented in these data sets.

# Content and the Use of Information: Limitations of the Washington Short Set Questions

Whilst DPA understands why Statistics NZ has chosen to use the Washington Short Set (WSS) questions on disability, we are concerned that relying solely on these to identify disabled people will result in significant shortcomings of data. The most significant of these is that the WSS under-samples a number of different groups of disabled people, including people with learning disability, neurodiverse people, people with disabling mental health conditions and people with long-term health conditions such as cancer, MS, diabetes and inflammatory bowel diseases. Using the WSS means that these people are only included in disability data if or when their impairment or condition effects one of the functional areas raised in the WSS questions on disability.

This means that, for example, if an impairment or long-term condition doesn’t prevent walking, but does affect ability to undertake basic household tasks such as vacuuming, then there is nowhere on the census form for a person to state that they have such a condition. Such conditions do often require ongoing service provision as a result of impairment-related needs, but currently risk not being captured in the Census or the post-census Disability Survey.

Given that, among other uses, the Census is used to prioritise public spending and direct service allocation, we feel that it is vitally important that people with long-term conditions or impairments, who may not be captured by the WSS questions, can state this in the Census.

DPA recommends the inclusion of an additional identity question (properly separated from the WSS) to complement the WSS questions. Such an approach will enable people with a range of impairments or long-term conditions to identify as experiencing disability even where their impairment or condition is not captured by the WSS questions and thus allow these people to go into the pool of participants for the post-census Disability Survey.

While we recognise that identity questions will not capture all impairments (since many disabled people won’t self-identify as such), we understand that the WSS questions does usually cover many of these groups well. For example, older people with physical and sensory impairments are a group that often don’t identify as disabled but are captured well by the WSS.

Conversely, with the right wording, an identity question is likely to do better at capturing many of the groups that are not captured well by the WSS, including younger disabled people and people who are neurodiverse.

DPA strongly urges Statistics NZ to look at including an expanded version of the identity question[[2]](#footnote-3) used in the Counting Ourselves Survey[[3]](#footnote-4).

# Pool of Participants for the 2023 Disability Survey

We note that the pool of participants for the post-census Disability Survey will be predominantly drawn from people who answered that they are significantly affected in one of the functional areas of the WSS questions on disability.

As discussed above, this approach would currently exclude people with impairments or long-term conditions not significantly impacting one of the areas of function covered by these questions. This means that the Disability Survey will be limited only to people with specific functional impairments and will not include anyone with a long-term condition which does not yet affect one of these designated areas of function. This means that many people who require support services as a result of their impairment or condition who will not be identified in either the Census or the Disability Survey.

DPA recommends the inclusion of additional question/s in the Census to enable people with other impairments or long-term conditions to be identified in the Census and ensure that the pool of participants for the Disability Survey includes these people.

1. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-31-statistics-and-data-collection.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. **Do you identify as a disabled person, a deaf person, and/or as neurodiverse (for example, being on the autism spectrum)?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| O Strongly  | O Not at all  |
| O Quite a lot  | O I don't know  |
| O A little bit  |  |

 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://countingourselves.nz/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)