

29 January 2023

Please find attached DPA’s submission on the Budget Policy Statement 2022 (Budget 2023)

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# Introducing Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

**We work on systemic change for the equity of disabled people**

Disabled Persons Assembly NZ (DPA) is a not-for-profit pan-impairment Disabled People’s Organisation run by and for disabled people.

**We recognise:**

* Māori as Tangata Whenua and [Te Tiriti o Waitangi](https://www.archives.govt.nz/discover-our-stories/the-treaty-of-waitangi) as the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand;
* disabled people as experts on their own lives;
* the [Social Model of Disability](https://www.odi.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/guidance-for-policy-makes/) as the guiding principle for interpreting disability and impairment;
* the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html) as the basis for disabled people’s relationship with the State;
* the [New Zealand Disability Strategy](https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/) as Government agencies’ guide on disability issues; and
* the [Enabling Good Lives Principles](https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/about-egl/egl-approach/principles/), [Whāia Te Ao Mārama: Māori Disability Action Plan](https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/whaia-te-ao-marama-2018-2022-maori-disability-action-plan), and [Faiva Ora: National Pasifika Disability Disability Plan](https://www.moh.govt.nz/notebook/nbbooks.nsf/0/5E544A3A23BEAECDCC2580FE007F7518/$file/faiva-ora-2016-2021-national-pasifika-disability-plan-feb17.pdf) as avenues to disabled people gaining greater choice and control over their lives and supports.

**We drive systemic change through:**

* **Leadership:** reflecting the collective voice of disabled people, locally, nationally and internationally.
* **Information and advice:** informing and advising on policies impacting on the lives of disabled people.
* **Advocacy:** supporting disabled people to have a voice, including a collective voice, in society.
* **Monitoring:** monitoring and giving feedback on existing laws, policies and practices about and relevant to disabled people.

## 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),[[1]](#footnote-2) 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. All state bodies in New Zealand, including local and regional government, have a responsibility to uphold the principles and articles of this convention.

The following UNCRPD articles articles are particularly relevant to this submission:

* **Article 9 Accessibility**
* **Article 11 Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies** - which requires governments to uphold disability rights in situations of risk and emergency and put in place measures to protect and ensure the safety of disabled people
* **Article 25 Health**
* **Article 28 Adequate standard of living and social protection**

## New Zealand Disability Strategy[[2]](#footnote-3) 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. It identifies eight outcome areas contributing to achieving this vision.

The following outcomes are particularly relevant to this submission:

* **Outcome 2 – Employment and Economic Security**
* **Outcome 3 – Health and Wellbeing**
* **Outcome 5 – Accessibility**

# The Submission

DPA notes that the Budget Policy Statement for 2023 (BPS 2023) has three overarching goals:

* Continuing to keep New Zealand safe from COVID-19
* Accelerating the recovery and rebuild from the impacts of COVID-19
* Laying the foundations for the future, including addressing key issues such as our climate change response, housing affordability, and child poverty.

DPA cautiously supports the overall focus of the budget policy statement with the strong proviso that disabled people’s rights are upheld in the delivery of these goals.

## Disabled People and COVID-19

We know from multiple reports over the last two years that disabled people's rights in Aotearoa NZ have not been upheld during the COVID-19 pandemic [[3]](#footnote-4), and that disabled people have been, and continue to be, disproportionally impacted by COVID-19.

DPA would like to bring to the committee's attention the following major report released recently (Jan 2023) - ***Ngā Kawekawe o Mate Korona***[[4]](#footnote-5) . This report examines the impact of COVID-19 , including Long Covid, in Aotearoa NZ on a range of demographics. The findings of this report are extremely concerning and have been reported extensively in the media[[5]](#footnote-6).

In relation to disabled people the report highlighted the need for Government to recognise that:

**"...*those already disadvantaged are likely to face greater challenges in a pandemic. Support and resources should therefore be prioritised for those with greatest need.”***

DPA urges the committee to take the findings and recommendations of ***Ngā Kawekawe o Mate Korona*** seriously in their deliberations on the Budget Policy Statement.

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| DPA asks that disabled people be explicitly included in the budget measures and that Budget 2023 contains resourcing to implement the detailed recommendations of ***Ngā Kawekawe o Mate Korona*** .  In particular DPA asks that resourcing be provided in Budget 2023 to:   1. Significantly reduce barriers to access to primary health care, especially for Tangata Whenua, including tāngata whaikaha, for Pasifika peoples, and for disabled Tāngata Tiriti. Supports such as transport or home services are needed to ensure equity of access. 2. Ensure that when advice, public health messaging and COVID-19 support information of any kind is being communicated, that messaging reaches tāngata whaikaha Māori and disabled Tāngata Tiriti at the same time as non-disabled people, with no delay. 3. Ensure there are easy-to-use, accessible options for disabled people so they can report adverse reactions or unmet health needs and the system responds in a timely manner. 4. Ensure that long COVID is recognised as a disability to allow access to financial and practical support. 5. Establish a national long COVID centre to support local long COVID clinics. |

DPA notes that this report follows an earlier report by the Independent Monitoring Mechanism (IMM) in 2021 that highlighted the realities and challenges disabled people in NZ faced during the COVID-19 emergency[[6]](#footnote-7).

In our submission on last year's Budget Policy Statement DPA called for Government to implement the recommendations of the IMM report in full and to ensure resourcing in the budget to enable this to happen.

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| DPA repeats our call for the Budget to set aside sufficient resourcing for the IMM 2021 report recommendations to be implemented in full.  In particular, DPA asks that Budget 2023 resource measures to ensure significantly improved access for disabled people to food, transport, habilitation services, housing, and public spaces. |

People with a learning disability have some of the poorest health outcomes of any demographic, as highlighted by the huge gap in life expectancy for people with a learning disability with data[[7]](#footnote-8) from the Ministry of Health showing that women with a learning disability have a life expectancy nearly 23 years less than the average for all NZ women, while men with a learning disability over 18 years less than the average for all NZ men.

This means there needs to be specific measures to support improved health outcomes for disabled people, particularly those with an intellectual or learning disability.

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| DPA asks that Budget 2023 contain significant resourcing for measures to improve health literacy and access to primary health care for disabled people especially for people with a learning disability. |

## Accelerating the Recovery: Including Disabled People

DPA notes that many of the projects that have been flagged for investment in building back from COVID-19 involve transport and housing projects.As we have previously highlighted[[8]](#footnote-9), both transport and housing are areas where disabled people face major barriers to access and where lack of access has a major impact on our lives and ability to live independently in the community.

DPA is concerned that there is a risk that significant infrastructure projects, especially those that are fast-tracked, will result in infrastructure that is inaccessible for disabled people. This has the unfortunate effect of ‘locking in’ inaccessibility for a significant period of time - often decades.

There is currently often poor or non-existent engagement with disabled people into the design, development and placement of infrastructure. Consultation processes are therefore key to ensuring that accessibility is fully integrated into new projects.

From past experience, when building and infrastructure projects get fast tracked (as happened with some of the early projects post the Christchurch Earthquakes), DPA has seen that accessibility often ends up being seriously compromised.

Getting accessibility built in from the start is particularly important because it is often impossible (or prohibitively expensive) to retrospectively add in accessibility once a project has been built.

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| DPA asks that any funding in budget 2023 tagged for infrastructure projects also mandate that they meet the highest possible accessibility standards. |

## Laying the Foundations for the Future: Disabled People and Climate Change.

DPA strongly supports investment in the transition to a climate-resilient, sustainable and low-emissions economy with the proviso that this investment is done in a way that does not lock in inequality for disabled people; and recognises us as experts in our own lives and leaders in equitable solutions.

## Low-Emissions Transport: Electric Vehicles and Disabled People.

Currently there is a mode shift underway from petrol or diesel vehicles to low emissions public transport and electric vehicles; both of which, if not done appropriately, can have negative impacts for disabled people.

DPA would like to draw attention to the Climate Change Commission’s advice to Government[[9]](#footnote-10) which recognises that public transport is not always an option for some disabled people and that such people are heavily reliant on driving or being driven.

While electric vehicles have lower emissions than petrol or diesel vehicles, there are significant issues with them for disabled people:

* They tend to be more expensive and are therefore out of reach for many disabled people who are much more likely to live in poverty,
* They tend to be smaller, making it difficult or impossible for some disabled people requiring larger wheelchairs and other equipment, to use them,
* They are much quieter than conventional vehicles, posing a safety risk to disabled people, older people and children.

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| DPA asks that Budget 2023 sets up a grant or subsidy to support disabled people to purchase suitable electric vehicles.  Disabled people who need larger vehicles to transport wheelchairs must not be disadvantaged by the phasing out of more affordable petrol and diesel versions. |

## Accessible Housing:

Disabled people are less likely to own their own homes and are more likely to live in rented accommodation. DPA is concerned that the scarcity of affordable and accessible rental housing is putting disabled people in significant hardship.

DPA notes that at the end of 2020 there were more than a thousand New Zealanders on Kainga Ora’s waiting list for accessible state homes.[[10]](#footnote-11) This situation is unacceptable, and breaches disabled people’s right to safe secure housing.

We urge Government implement legislation to require all new houses to meet universal design standards so that they can be easily made accessible. This would have the added benefit of allowing older people to age in place and was a key recommendation of the third IMM report: Making Disability Rights Real[[11]](#footnote-12).

DPA also urges government to set a target for 100% of new public housing to fully include universal design to ensure that this housing is always available for use by disabled people and able to cater for the access and functional needs of New Zealand’s aging population as recommended by the Community Housing Collective[[12]](#footnote-13).

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| DPA asks that Budget 2023 significantly increase investment in safe accessible state homes so that no disabled person is left homeless or stranded in inaccessible or temporary housing.  We also urge that a target be set for 100% of new public housing to fully include universal design. |

## Addressing Child Poverty: including disabled children

Disabled children are far more likely to live in poverty and experience material hardship than non-disabled children and children who live in a household where at least one person is disabled are also over twice as likely to experience material hardship than children in households with no disabled people.

DPA believes that if government is serious about lifting children out of poverty, then the budget must include targeted measures supporting disabled children and their whānau as well as disabled parents/carers.

Data from Stats NZ [[13]](#footnote-14) shows that nearly 1 in 5 disabled children live in material hardship (19.9 %, this is more than double the rate of non-disabled children who live in material hardship (9.8 %). Similarly, nearly 1 in 5 children who live in a household where at least one person is disabled live in material hardship. This is more than two-and-a-half times the rate for children who did not live in a household with at least one disabled person (7.3 %).

Material hardship is indicated by the number of households missing out on more than 6 of the 17 basic things most people would regard as essentials. Examples of essential items lacked include: the household respondent reporting serious restriction on eating fresh fruit or vegetables, putting off a visit to the doctor because of a lack of money, or not being able to pay the gas or electricity bill on time.

These statistics confirm the link between disability and poverty.

“… if ***disabled children are more likely to live in poverty, it follows that their siblings and parents are also more likely to live in poverty. Likewise, because disabled adults are more likely to live in poverty, then their children will also be more likely to live in poverty”.[[14]](#footnote-15)***

DPA urges government to address this inequity by raising benefit levels and increasing both the Disability Allowance and the Child Disability Allowance (CDA).

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| To lift disabled children out of poverty, DPA asks that Budget 2023:   1. Substantially increases the rate of the Child Disability Allowance to help mitigate the impact of disability on disabled children and their whānau and reforms the application process to make it more accessible as recommended by the Child Poverty Action Group 2016 report[[15]](#footnote-16). 2. Changes the Disability Allowance to at least the current maximum and simplifies the application process to be more accessible[[16]](#footnote-17) and equitable in its distribution. This will benefit children living in households where a parent or other household member is disabled. |

1. 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)
2. Office for Disability Issues. (2016). *New Zealand Disability Strategy.* Retrieved from: <https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/resources/making-disability-rights-real-pandemic> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. <https://covidaotearoa.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Nga-Kawekawe-o-Mate-Korona-Full-Report-2023-01-24.pdf>   
    [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/new-zealand/2023/01/calls-for-changes-to-sick-leave-rules-after-survey-finds-staggering-number-of-kiwis-have-long-covid-19.html>

   <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/300792237/call-for-long-covid-to-be-recognised-as-a-disability-support-insufficient-patchy>

   <https://www.1news.co.nz/2023/01/26/new-study-reveals-long-covid-symptoms-are-misunderstood/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. [Disability rights report highlights challenges under lockdown | Ombudsman New Zealand](https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/news/disability-rights-report-highlights-challenges-under-lockdown) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. <https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/health-indicators-new-zealanders-intellectual-disability> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. <https://www.dpa.org.nz/store/doc/DPA-submission-COVID-19-Recovery-(Fast-track-Consenting)-Bill-June-2020.docx>

   [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. [Our advice and evidence » Climate Change Commission (climatecommission.govt.nz)](https://www.climatecommission.govt.nz/get-involved/our-advice-and-evidence) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. [Disabled man enduring 'very stressful process' as wait for accessible house to rent continues | 1 NEWS | TVNZ](https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/disabled-man-enduring-very-stressful-process-wait-accessible-house-rent-continues) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. [Disability rights report highlights systemic inequities and opportunities for real change | Ombudsman New Zealand](https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/news/disability-rights-report-highlights-systemic-inequities-and-opportunities-real-change) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. <https://disabilityconnect.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/where-will-we-live-in-the-future.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. [Child poverty statistics for households with disabled people released for the first time | Stats NZ](https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/child-poverty-statistics-for-households-with-disabled-people-released-for-the-first-time) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. <https://ccsdisabilityaction.org.nz/assets/resource-files/The-State-of-wellbeing-and-equality-FINAL-ONLINE.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. <https://www.cpag.org.nz/assets/161102%20CPAG%20Otara%20CDA%20report%20CS6-WEB_01.pdf> suggestions to improve accessibility to the CDA included: • Increase promotion of the CDA to families and doctors, especially the eligibility criteria • Simplify the application procedure for CDA. • Better funding for culturally appropriate advocacy services by MoH and DHBs. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. <https://www.dpa.org.nz/store/doc/Post-Election-2020-Briefing-For-MPs.docx> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)