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To Christchurch City Council

# Please find attached DPA’s submission on Ōtautahi Christchurch Urban Forest Plan

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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/%24file/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.

# The Submission

DPA welcomes the Ōtautahi Christchurch Urban Forest Plan. We recognise the importance of this plan in seeking to tackle climate change issues and provide a more green-friendly aesthetic feel to the city centre.

DPA also appreciates that, in the summer months, having more trees will provide much needed shelter from what are likely to be even warmer days, something that is important for everyone, especially disabled people and older people.

DPA supports all of the goals outlined in the plan.

However, there is one area we would like to make a recommendation about and that is the placement of trees so as to ensure that both infrastructure and people are not placed at undue risk by their placement.

By this, we mean that there is the possibility of tree roots emerging over time, thus damaging footpaths impeding access for everyone, including disabled people.

In this regard, DPA acknowledges and supports the reference made in the introduction to the plan that:

*“Mature tree roots can damage nearby infrastructure such as footpaths and underground pipes, however, this can be avoided through improving both the design and the tree species selected. Adhering to a rule of thumb of ‘right location, right plant, right function’ can avoid many of these problems. This means better integrated design and planning to select the right species and ensure the space is appropriate for the tree.”*

Nevertheless, DPA recommends that when engaging in planning around tree placements in the urban forest that disabled people and our Disabled People’s Organisations [DPOs] be involved in discussions alongside other community stakeholders around this.

This would enable disabled people to identify issues, hazards and suitable areas so as to ensure safe continuity of access for members of both the disabled and wider communities.

**DPA’s Recommendations**

* **Recommendation 1:** that when engaging in planning around tree placements in the urban forest that disabled people and our Disabled People’s Organisations [DPOs] be involved in discussions alongside other community stakeholders around this.