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To Christchurch City Council

Please find attached DPA’s submission on South Library and Service Centre Building

Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

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Introducing Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

Disabled Persons Assembly NZ (DPA) is a pan-impairment 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 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
* innovation and good practice

## 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 [[1]](#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.”

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 [[2]](#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.”

# The submission

DPA is providing this submission for the Christchurch City Council in relation its proposals for upgrading the South Library and Service Centre. DPA welcomes the opportunity to submit on this given the importance of the library and service centre complex to the South Christchurch community and the fact that damage sustained during the 2010-11 earthquakes needs to be finally addressed. We believe that the updated centre will bring the community together and thereby enhance the wellbeing of all members of the local community, including disabled people.

DPA would like to see the South Library and Service Centre upgrade be fully inclusive through incorporating Universal Design (UD) standards throughout as part of the retrofitting process. This will ensure that all disabled people, their wider whanau and communities will be able to access the facility.

We have several recommendations to ensure that the facility can achieve this status and become a truly disability and people friendly space.

As a disabled person’s organisation (DPO) - one run by and for disabled people – we would welcome the opportunity to be involved in all discussions going forward on this development as per Article 4.3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Our Christchurch Kaituitui is available to join in these discussions alongside other members with sufficient notice.

# DPA’s recommendations

The Disabled Person’s Assembly recommends:

**Recommendation 1:** That there are sufficient mobility car parking spaces to accommodate the growing population in South Christchurch which encompasses disabled and older people living there.

**Recommendation 2:** That there be an accessible entrance for everyone including mobility wheelchairs/scooters and that doorways throughout the facility are also fully accessible and wide enough to admit all users.

**Recommendation 3:** Thatthere are clear visible signs for Deaf/hearing impaired people and also blind/vision impaired people with Braille signage included.

**Recommendation 4:** Thatvisual fire alarms be fitted to ensure that Deaf and hard of hearing people will be alerted about an emergency when it activates. An example of this occurred recently to one of our Deaf members who was in another public facility in the city when a fire alarm was activated resulting in increased anxiety for her.

**Recommendation 5:** That a quiet space be created within the centre for people to retreat to where they can rest and reflect. It will be a space for neurodiverse people, children (especially autistic children) and those who have psychosocial impairment and mental distress to reset themselves as naturally excessive noise can be generated and can overstimulate some people and/or create anxiety.

**Recommendation 6:** That rooms for meetings and study includes such features as suitable lighting which can be easily adjusted to ensure that settings are appropriate for all users, including neurodiverse people. Also, there is a need for audio hearing loops to be installed so that Deaf and hard of hearing users can participate in meetings and activities in those spaces, and that any furniture be ergonomic and accessible for all users.

**Recommendation 7:** That the Library and Customer Service Centre contain such features as accessible counters, appropriate lighting, and appropriate signage including in Braille and that information be available about the South Library and Service Centre in accessible formats including NZ Sign Language, Easy Read for people with learning disabilities, Braille and large print as well as audio.

**Recommendation 8:** That the upgraded cafe incorporate features including accessible counters, standard height tables and chairs (in addition to any “bar” height tables and chairs) well-spaced tables and easy access to toileting and other facilities.

**Recommendation 9:** DPA would welcome the opportunity to be involved in any further discussions on the South Library and Service Centre development alongside other disability groups and community organisations.

1. United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, December 13, 2006. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Office for Disability Issues. (2016). *New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016 – 2026*. Retrieved from https://www.odi.govt.nz/assets/New-Zealand-Disability-Strategy-files/pdf-nz-disability-strategy-2016.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)