23 June 2022

To the Environment Committee

Please find below DPA’s submission on the Environment Committee’s Consultation on the Emissions Budgets published in 2022 and the first Emissions Reduction Plan.

## Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

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# Introducing Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

The 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
* celebrating innovation and good practice

# The Submission

Disabled people are ***amongst the most adversely affected groups*** in relation to climate change and the group that faces the largest barriers in responding to the effects of climate change.

Every aspect of climate change affects disabled people. Given the wide-ranging issues covered in the Emissions Budgets published in 2022 and the first Emissions Reduction Plan we have focussed our feedback on those areas that have the most significant impact for disabled people or where we believe that there is specific disability advice needed.

# United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

Many of the articles and principles found in the UNCRPD are relevant to the Emissions Budgets published in 2022 and the first Emissions Reduction Plan.

We highlight the most relevant articles below:

## **Article 3 - General Principles**

1. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one’s own choices, and independence of persons;
2. Non-discrimination;
3. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
4. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;
5. Equality of opportunity;
6. Accessibility;
7. Equality between men and women;
8. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

## **Article 4.3 – Actively engage with organisations of disabled people**

## **Article 9 - Accessibility**

## **Article 11 – Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies**

# Engagement with Disabled People

Government must proactively engage with disabled people to ensure an equitable transition to a low carbon society. We are deeply concerned that without proactive engagement that we will be disproportionately negatively impacted both by the direct effects of climate change and by the policy responses aimed at reducing or mitigating the impact of climate change, which will result in disabled people being further marginalised as a group.

DPA recommends that Government:

## **Recommendation 1**

Acknowledges the importance of ongoing engagement with disabled people and our organisations.

## **Recommendation 2**

Engages with disabled people and their organisations throughout the implementation of climate change policy in order to ensure a just transition to a low-carbon economy for disabled people. Such engagement should recognise disabled people’s expertise and leadership in developing solutions to navigating an inaccessible world.

# Transport

The Emissions Reduction Plan recognises the need to move to the adoption of more electric vehicles, increasing walking and cycling, and improvements to public transport. DPA agrees that such moves are necessary in order to limit the effects of climate change and to keep society moving. However, such changes to transport can either increase or decrease transport barriers for disabled people depending on whether there is active engagement with disabled people that ensures our needs are fully considered and met. For example, not everyone can walk or cycle or walk or cycle far. Often when walking and cycling are prioritised it can result in fewer carparks, which means that people who need to park close to where they are going because of mobility impairments, cannot. The lack of close car parks may stop some disabled people from taking a trip, even an essential one. Constructive engagement with disabled people can mitigate such issues.

# Electric Vehicles

While electric vehicles are better for the planet than petrol or diesel vehicles, they do create significant issues for disabled people:

* They tend to be **more expensive**  and are therefore out of reach for many disabled people who 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;
* **Charging points** and related infrastructure **need to be accessible** in order for disabled people to independently use electric vehicles.

## **Recommendation 3**

In consultation with disabled people, implement standards on both the minimum noise level and the type of noise to be emitted by electric vehicles. It is important that this noise cannot be turned off by the driver. This will reduce the risk of accident to disabled people and improve safety across the population.

## **Recommendation 4**

Set up a grant or subsidy to support disabled people to purchase suitable electric vehicles so that disabled people who need larger vehicles to transport wheelchairs are not disadvantaged by the phasing out of more affordable petrol and diesel versions.

# Increased Walking and Cycling

While walking and cycling needs to be encouraged. However, just stating this won’t make pavements and footpaths safer or easier to navigate for disabled people. Bikes, scooters and other micro-mobility devices pose significant issues for disabled people when used on footpaths and should be restricted to cycle lanes where they exist, and the road where they do not, for the safety and comfort of all pedestrians.

## **Recommendation 5**

Regulate to require that footpaths be well maintained, and that bikes, scooters and other micro-mobility devices should not generally be allowed on footpaths.

# Public Transport

Public transport isn’t always an option for some disabled people and many disabled people are reliant on driving or being driven. However, there are other disabled people who are highly reliant on public transport because they cannot drive.

All public transport should be accessible to disabled people. The co-benefit of this is that older people, people travelling with small children and others with restricted mobility would benefit also.

In order to enable more disabled people to be able to afford public transport, DPA strongly supports targeted subsidised public transport fares for groups who are transport disadvantaged.

## **Recommendation 6**

That all public transport be required to be accessible and that targeted fare subsidies be continued for disabled people.

# Housing

New homes will need to be significantly more energy efficient than is currently the case. However, if houses aren’t accessible to disabled people, their energy efficiency doesn’t really matter. DPA strongly urges Government to ensure that new houses meet universal design standards for accessibility. This would not only mean that disabled people could benefit from warmer, drier, more energy efficient homes, but it would have the added benefit of allowing older people to age in place.

## **Recommendation 7**

That all new houses meet universal design standards so that they can easily be made accessible.

# Domestic Heating

Disabled people will benefit from making energy efficiency improvements to their homes. Financial support will need to be given up front to disabled people to help with the cost of energy efficiency improvements. Disabled people are less likely to own their own homes and are more likely to live in rented accommodation, so we welcome the introduction of standards for heating and insulation in rented accommodation. Government will need to monitor rental affordability as a result of the introduction of these standards.

In addition, the move to reliance almost exclusively on electricity for domestic purposes, while necessary for a transition to a low-carbon economy, does present some dangers for some disabled people who are reliant on electricity for apparatus such as ventilators. A power outage or power disruption could be life threatening for some disabled people. Government must be explicit on the duties of power companies to ensure electricity supply to disabled people who require a constant supply for medical reasons.

# Waste

Many disabled people are keen to do their part to reuse, recycle and repurpose waste as part of reducing emissions. However, this is not always easy for us:

* How do blind people know what can and cannot be recycled if they are unable to read the letters promoting the ability to recycle? Information on recycling, reusing and repurposing isn’t always accessible to us, and systems for waste disposal, reusing or recycling are not always physically accessible either;
* Disabled people are not always in control of the disability-related products we are supplied with by District Health Boards and other disability service providers such as continence products. We have to use what we are given and don’t have choices around buying a product that is more environmentally friendly;
* There is a need for initiatives that work with the disability community to find new, innovative ways for dealing with our waste in ways that are progressively more environmentally sustainable.

## **Recommendation 8**

Set up and fund programmes that support disabled people to manage their household waste more sustainably.

## **Recommendation 9**

Review products supplied to disabled people through government supported schemes (DHB’s, Disability Support Services etc.) to ascertain if more environmentally-friendly products are available, and supply them where appropriate.

# Jobs

DPA is disappointed that there is no mention in Emissions Budgets or the first Emissions Reduction Plan of employment for disabled people, reasonable accommodation or flexible working. Disabled people will continue to face discrimination and high rates of unemployment if an environmentally sustainable economy doesn’t explicitly include initiatives and support in employment and job seeking for disabled people.

## **Recommendation 10**

Provision of support, advice and education for both employers and disabled workers and jobseekers in the transition to an environmentally friendly economy.

# Summary of DPA’s Recommendations

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