

July 2023

To Dunedin City Council,

Please find attached DPA’s submission on Reserves Management General Policies Feedback 2023

For any further inquiries, please contact:

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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.

**UN 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 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. There are a number of UNCRPD articles particularly relevant to this submission, including:

* **Article 3 – General principles**
* **Article 9 – Accessibility**
* **Article 19 – Living independently and being included in the community**
* **Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sports**

**New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026**

Since ratifying the UNCRPD, the New Zealand Government has established a Disability Strategy2 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. There are a number of Strategy outcomes particularly relevant to this submission, including:

* **Outcome 5 – Accessibility**

# The Submission

DPA welcomes the opportunity to feedback on the DCC Reserves Management Policy Review.

DPA recognises the value that reserves have for both people and the environment and support this being preserved and extended under the updated reserves management policy.

DPA believes that all reserves should be accessible to disabled people in order that, as a disabled community, we are able to enjoy them in the same way as non-disabled people do. Our view is that the best way to achieve this is through making refinements to the existing reserves policy in recognition of this.

DPA acknowledges that in the existing Reserves Management General Policy from 2005 that disabled access to amenities such as toilets and mobility parks are recognised.

However, there is a need to better recognise that there has been an extension of focus in recent times towards making wider reserve areas and the amenities upon them more accessible to disabled people.

In this submission, we will concentrate upon some of the key areas outlined in the online survey which are of importance to us:

* Recreation and Access
* Planning and Development
* Community Engagement and Partnership
* Maintenance and asset management

**Recreation and Access**

DPA supports the principles that all reserves should be open to the public and be used for the specific purpose they were designated for, i.e., as a playground, sports field, or walkway.

Principally, DPA believes that public access should be equitably available to everyone, including disabled people.

However, we recognise that there will be reasonable limitations to this given that, for example, all walking tracks on reserves may not be able to be made fully accessible, particularly for people with mobility impairments who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices.

DPA believes that in these situations Council should make every effort to ensure that reasonable accommodation is achieved by making tracks even partially accessible where full accessibility is not possible through, for example, making them accessible up to points where they are no longer deemed to be safe and/or accessible for everyone.

On these and other matters pertaining to accessibility, including around making supporting amenities like toilets and picnic tables accessible, Council should involve disabled people and disability organisations as full stakeholders in any discussions around improving and maintaining accessibility both within and to public reserves.

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| **Recommendation 1:** that disabled people and disability organisations be involved by Council as full stakeholders in all discussions relating to the accessibility of its reserves. |

DPA believes that any public events or commercial activities organised by private event organisers on reserve land should be required to provide accessibility arrangements for disabled people as part of any application for reserve use permits.

All permit applications should require applicants who are organising events or seeking consent to use reserves for commercial purposes to outline what specific measures they will take to ensure equitable access for disabled people to them.

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| **Recommendation 2:** that all private event organisers when submitting applications for special events or consent for commercial activities on reserves be required to specify what accessibility arrangements there will be for disabled people. |

**Planning and Development**

DPA believes that all buildings and facilities on reserves should be assessed for their accessibility. We acknowledge that the Building Act and associated regulations from the early 1990s were mentioned in the 2005 plan, particularly in relation to toilets.

However, the Building Act 1991 has now been replaced by the Building Act 2004 which still requires the issuing of consents on the basis that minimum accessibility standards have been fulfilled by the relevant local authority.

DPA recognises that even the 2004 legislation and relevant standards issued under that legislation are now deemed to be out of date by many in the disabled community and by those involved in the accessibility auditing sector.

For this reason, DPA now calls for going above and beyond minimum access standards through advocating for universal design (UD) principles to be applied across all new and renovated buildings and structures.

While acknowledging that reserves should not be cluttered by too many buildings, there is the need to review the accessibility of all existing amenities on DCC reserves with a view to developing a plan to update them for accessibility and other reasons.

Any new or upgraded buildings on reserves should contain features (depending on the nature of the reserve) including fully accessible toilets, wet floor showers and changing areas, suitable lighting, as well as cooking and food preparation facilities which are accessible to everyone.

DPA believes that buildings which particularly support camping grounds and sports/recreational grounds should have full facilities whereas areas like playgrounds and reserves should have, at minimum, accessible toilet and/or wet floor shower/changing facilities and accessible pathways.

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| **Recommendation 3:** that all buildings sited on public reserves be assessed for their accessibility by Council on a regular basis. |

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| **Recommendation 4:** that all new or upgraded buildings and amenities on Council reserve land be built/upgraded to Universal Design (UD) standards. |

DPA is pleased to see that mobility parking in reserve areas is mentioned in current policy. The need for mobility parking near reserves should be regularly reviewed by Council based on feedback from the disabled community, especially mobility parking users, and this point should be incorporated into the updated reserves management policy.

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| **Recommendation 5:** that the demand for mobility parking near reserves be regularly reviewed by Council based on feedback from the disabled community. |

**Community Engagement and Partnership**

DPA believes that disabled people and disability organisations should be one of the key groups who should be consulted with when it comes to reserves management.

There are several key groups which can and should be utilised locally to publicise consultations and any changes relating to reserves, especially those that may impact upon disabled people.

Disability and other stakeholder community groups who need to be informed about consultations or any changes to reserves policy should be identified and listed within a separate appendix in the updated management plan.

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| **Recommendation 6:** that Council make disabled people and disability organisations one of the key stakeholder community groups to advise on any changes to reserve areas or reserve management policy. |

**Maintenance and asset management**

DPA appreciates the extensive efforts that the DCC and its contractors go to in maintaining our many reserves in Ōtepoti/Dunedin.

DPA acknowledges the need for minimal signage on reserves by limiting it to being for essential purposes, including for wayfinding on tracks or identifying buildings.

DPA recommends that work be undertaken with the disabled community on how and where to place accessible signage in public places/spaces on reserves.

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| **Recommendation 7:** that Council work with the disabled community on accessible signage in public places/spaces in reserve areas. |

DPA believes that all walking tracks and pathways designed for pedestrian use on reserves should be made either fully or partially accessible (depending on factors including their topography and location) for disabled people as was mentioned earlier in the recreation and access section of this submission.

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| **Recommendation 8:** that all walking tracks and pathways designed for pedestrian use should be made either partially or fully accessible for disabled people. |

DPA believes that excessive mud through poor drainage control, long grass and overgrown, protruding tree stumps and weeds are potential accessibility and safety hazards for disabled people and these need to be more actively managed than at present. We feel that any new policy should prioritise the importance of maintaining good, clean, safe and accessible grounds across the city.

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| **Recommendation 9:** that excessive mud/poor reserve drainage, long grass and overgrowing, protruding tree stumps and weeds (amongst other hazards) should be more actively managed by Council for accessibility and safety reasons. |