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 To Dunedin City Council

Please find attached DPA’s submission on the Dunedin City Council Open Spaces Plan 2022

## Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

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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

DPA welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Dunedin City Council Open Space Plan.

DPA is pleased to see that the City Council is undertaking a broader review of the open spaces that it has responsibility for. Our submission highlights the importance of accessibility and universal design as crucial to promoting inclusion for everyone in our community, including for disabled people. In this respect, we welcome the Council’s initial suggestions to include in the plan the following objectives, firstly, maximising use and building connections so that open spaces are highly accessible spaces for our community to live healthy, active and socially connected lives; and, secondly, developing open spaces so they meet the changing needs of our diverse community and provide for a variety of interesting experiences.

We will elaborate within this submission about what these objectives mean to disabled people and some initial suggestions on how this can be actioned.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (UNCRPD) Articles most relevant to our submission are:

* Article 4.3 Involving disabled people and our organisations in decisions that affect us
* Article 5: Equality and non-discrimination
* Article 7: Children with disabilities
* Article 9: Accessibility
* Article 19: Living independently and being included in the community
* Article 20: Personal mobility
* Article 30: Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

The New Zealand Government policies and strategies which are relevant to this submission are as follows:

 New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026:

* Outcome 5 - Accessibility

# DPA’s recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** DPA strongly recommends that all open spaces, including those being newly created or updated, fully incorporate universal design features so that accessibility can be easily achieved for everyone. Universal design features will vary depending on the place and space being planned for. For example, outdoor parks will need to have height adjustable seating, accessible toilets and changing spaces, accessible pedestrian spaces with tactile strips in place for blind and low vision people as well as mobility parking spaces nearby. If thinking about places such as historic open spaces including soldier’s monuments or other places of interest, there will need to be thought given not just to the abovementioned considerations but also the need to create ramped access to soldier’s or other historical monuments. Some examples that have come to mind for us are the various war memorials and the Archibald Baxter Peace Gardens which are not currently accessible to any people using wheelchairs or mobility aids. Signage will need to include accessible formats such as Braille, Large Print and New Zealand Sign Language, alongside English and Maori in public places and spaces. Note that access to different formats and languages could be done via a QR code on the sign. This has the advantage that makes it easier to update the information or add extra languages over time.

**Recommendation 2:** DPA strongly recommends that all created and/or modified public spaces have spaces which can be flexibly used and changed, for example, to accommodate events and to ensure that all people, including disabled people, have inclusive access to them.

**Recommendation 3:** DPA is keen for there to be further engagement, on a co-design basis, between the DCC and local disability community with a particular focus on involving DPA as well as other locally based disabled persons organisations including, for example, People First, Deaf Aotearoa, Blind Citizens Network Otago and Muscular Dystrophy Association in this process. DPA and many disabled people, DPOs and other access stakeholders are involved in the Access for All Group which meets monthly and should be fully involved alongside the Council’s Disability Issues Advisory Group (DIAG) in this process going forward.

# Conclusion

DPA welcomes the intended vision for this plan and hopes that it will lead to the creation of fully universally designed, inclusive and accessible open spaces within Dunedin. If this is done, then everyone, including disabled people who are currently excluded from fully accessing many places, will be able to freely access the city’s many beautiful open spaces.