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To Environment Canterbury

Please find attached DPA’s submission on Canterbury Emergency Management Group Plan

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.”

### Article 11 – Situations of risk and humanitarian emergency

“States Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.”

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 updating of the Canterbury Emergency Management Group Plan.

DPA is aware of the fundamental role that Canterbury Emergency Management have played in recent years in responding to the high number of emergency events which have impacted on the region including the 2010-11 Canterbury and 2016 Kaikoura earthquakes, March 15th terrorist attack, as well as numerous flood and weather events.

Given the increasing incidence of adverse weather events with climate change and the risk of further earthquakes (including the likely rupturing of the Southern Alpine Fault), the leading role of Emergency Management will be more important than ever going forward.

Disabled people are at fundamentally higher risk of not having their needs met during an emergency and facing barriers to both planning and being prepared for an emergency. DPA notes that central government is currently preparing to update the Civil Defence and Emergency Management Act 2002 with new emergency management legislation within the next year and that this will trigger a whole set of new emergency planning requirements.

In the meantime, DPA welcomes this interim regional plan in the expectation that we will be involved in the planning, development and implementation of the new national and regional emergency management system from a disability perspective. However, we are making several recommendations to ensure that the current regional emergency response system within Canterbury is more disability responsive and friendly.

These relate to the use of appropriate terminology, the need to have disabled people and our organisations included as part of disaster and emergency management planning and response, the need for Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People to be listed as an important government agency and other matters which need to be addressed around enabling a better response for disabled people when disasters strike.

Ultimately, we would recommend that DPA and other locally-based disabled people’s organisations are fully involved in emergency management planning and responsiveness through a qualified disabled person being appointed to the Canterbury Civil Defence Emergency Management Committee given our valuable experience in working alongside Canterbury Civil Defence in preparing successive editions of our booklet *Don’t Be Scared – Just Be Prepared: A Guide for People with Disabilities in the case of an emergency* and the role we played in providing welfare support to our Christchurch members following the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes.

# DPA’s recommendations

The Disabled Person’s Assembly recommends:

* **Recommendation 1:** Objective 13 of enabling and empowering individuals, households, organisations and businesses to build their resilience, paying particular attention to people and groups who may be disproportionately affected by disasters, should include examples of highly impacted groups including disabled people, older people, people with health conditions, Māori, Pacific, ethnic communities and low-income areas as being most at risk from disasters in the document.
* **Recommendation 2:** That around 5.5.4 Public Alerting: there must be more recognition that there are many people, especially in the disabled community and amongst older people, who have limited or no access to devices such as computers or mobile phones through which to receive emergency alerts. Therefore, under other tools, reference should be made to not only having community phone trees activated (particularly to try and reach those who may only have a landline) but also to continuing to send out alert notifications through traditional media, such as via local radio stations and having emergency services, civil defence staff and community volunteers alert people through visiting people’s homes in an emergency, especially those who are known to identify as either disabled or older people or whom may have English as a second language and this includes Deaf people who use New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) as a first language.
* **Recommendation 3:** Around 6.4.10 volunteer management: a programme of disability and Deaf responsiveness training to civil defence and emergency management staff and key volunteers is included as part of actions to improve the responsiveness of emergency management to all communities, including disabled people.
* **Recommendation 4:** In the space for checking and updating all relevant government agency names, Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People should be added as a key government agency contact as it is the new ministry responsible for leading on disability issues and funding disability support services as of July 1, 2022. We would also like to see ACC and education agencies including the Ministry of Education and broadcasters including Radio New Zealand and Television New Zealand (designated as lead national broadcasters under civil defence legislation) added to the list of essential agency contacts for the region as well.
* **Recommendation 5:** Under 6.4 Group Response: the current priority groups for first responders list is fine but the language concerning ‘the care of sick, injured and dependent people’, is outdated and should be replaced instead by the need to ‘***support disabled people, older people, people with health conditions and people from other high-risk groups***,’ in emergencies.
* **Recommendation 6:** That DPA and other locally-based disabled people’s organisations are fully involved in emergency management planning and responsiveness through a qualified disabled person being appointed to the Canterbury Civil Defence Emergency Management Committee given our previous valuable experience in working alongside Canterbury Civil Defence in preparing successive editions of our booklet *Don’t Be Scared – Just Be Prepared: A Guide for People with Disabilities in the case of an emergency* and the role we played in providing welfare support to our Christchurch members following the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes.
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)