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To Hamilton City Council

Please find attached DPA’s submission on the Moving About the City: Access to Hamilton Disability Policy Update

Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

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# Introduction

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 to 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 Moving About the City: Access to Hamilton Disability Policy Update.

DPA is pleased that Council is planning to update the policy as, in our view, it needs to be strengthened. While the current policy does contain some particularly important principles and policies, these need to be extended. This is particularly relevent as Waikato has served as one of two demonstration sites for the Enabling Good Lives (EGL) trial which has been funded by central government over the last ten years. EGL is a new way of doing things in the area of disability in recognising that we as disabled people have a full and equal right to participate in our communities, and that the ways in which government funded disability support has been delivered need to change to recognise this and that our communities, including the Waikato, should live up to this vision. Principally, EGL is premised upon:

* giving disabled people and their families/whanau more choice and control over the supports they receive;
* asking disabled people and their families and whanau to think about what a good life looks for them; and
* helping disabled people and their families/whanau to decide what information and support is needed to help them live a good life.

The principles which inform EGL are built upon key international human rights and New Zealand Government disability policy documents such as the UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), the New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026 and the National Disability Action Plan. To this end, the main principles of EGL are:

* Disabled people and their whānau/family have choice and control,
* This begins early in the life of a disabled child,
* Is mainstream first,
* The kind of support each person gets needs to be right for them,
* People with disability and their families/whānau have mana,
* Disabled people should have the same lives as all New Zealanders,
* Be easy to use, and
* Relationship building.

The decision by Government to roll out EGL throughout the country after its successful trial in the Waikato and the fact that it will underpin all future disability policy is why DPA is recommending that the existing disability policy be replaced with a full Disability Strategy and Action Plan for Kirikiriroa. This Disability Strategy and Action Plan should be developed through a full co-design process with the local disability community. The Strategy should, ideally, contain a wider policy vision, goals, and milestones which can be reported against by Council, and one based on the principles of both Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the UNCRPD. Sitting alongside this would be an action plan, covering key policy priorities identified by the local disability community which need to be addressed and within timeframes agreed to by both Council and the disability community.

In terms of policies that should be added, DPA feels that housing should be a high priority for inclusion and given the high need for accessible housing, a policy of making all council-owned housing accessible and all communities accessible to disabled people is essential. Co-related to this is the need for urban planning processes to be also fully accessible to and inclusive of disabled people.

In this sense, DPA believes that issues such as transport accessibility, housing, and urban planning, for example, should not be tackled in siloed isolation but in a more joined up way (as EGL envisages) which considers the linkages between the need to plan and build accessible housing, buildings, parks, recreational and sporting spaces, retail outlets, transport infrastructure and footpaths. Council should also strengthen its commitment to ensuring that all its communications and information are made available in accessible formats including Braille, New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), Easy Read, large print, captioned video and audio. Furthermore, Council should commit itself to making all its services fully accessible to everyone who uses them. The need for greater interlinkages, information accessibility and full access to Council services should be emphasised in any Disability Strategy and Action Plan.

DPA believes in the need to retain a single voice for disabled people at Council. In this regard, we oppose any suggestion that any disability advisory mechanism be split into various working groups focused on specific areas such as, for example, transport, housing or accessibility. DPA believes that disabled people, irrespective of impairment, are best represented by cross-impairment based disability bodies. Therefore, the retention of a single, strengthened disability advisory mechanism which is fully transparent and accountable to the Hamilton disability community is required as part of any Disability Strategy and Action Plan.

Overall, DPA believes that any disability strategy and policy should be fully resourced and supported at all levels by Council through both funding and ongoing support from the Mayor, Councillors, management and all staff.

### UNCRPD

The UNCRPD Articles most relevant to our submission are:

* Article 4.3: Involving disabled people and our organisations in decisions that affect us
* Article 9: Accessibility
* Article 19: Living independently and being included in the community
* Article 20: Personal mobility
* Article 21: Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information
* Article 29: Participation in political and public life
* Article 30: Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

  New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026:

* Outcome 5: Accessibility
* Outcome 6: Attitudes
* Outcome 7: Choice and Control
* Outcome 8: Leadership

### Wider impact on Disabled People

DPA would welcome the adoption of a strengthened disability policy, preferably in the form of a Disability Strategy and Action Plan for Kirikiriroa/Hamilton. If adopted and implemented fully, this would further help to strengthen the inclusion of disabled people in the Kirikiriroa community.

# DPA’s recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** DPA recommends that Council replace the existing Disability Policy with a Disability Strategy and Action Plan, developed in full partnership with the disability community and which would contain a full vision, objectives, and goals for Council to meet based on Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the UNCRPD and EGL principles.

**Recommendation 2:** DPA recommends that the Action Plan contain a suite of policy actions based on the Strategy, co-designed by both the disability community and Council, which would be implemented over an agreed timeframe and with appropriate resourcing.

**Recommendation 3:** DPA recommends that areas such as, for example, policies on accessibility to transport infrastructure, housing, retail areas, parks and recreational facilities, and footpaths, etc, be un-siloed as part of any new Disability Strategy and that a holistic, cross-impairment approach be taken in this regard.

**Recommendation 4:** DPA recommends that Council should strengthen its commitment to ensuring that all its communications and information are made available in accessible formats including Braille, New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), Easy Read, large print, captioned video and audio within a timeframe agreed upon with the local disability and Deaf communities.

**Recommendation 5:** DPA recommends that Council should commit itself to making all its services fully accessible to everyone who uses them within a timeframe agreed upon with the local disability and Deaf communities.

**Recommendation 6:** DPA recommends that a single disability advisory body be retained by council based on representation from all impairment groups, namely, Deaf and hard-of-hearing, mobility impaired, blind and low vision, neurodiverse, psychosocial disability/mental distress and age related.

**Recommendation 7:** DPA recommends that any Disability Strategy and Action Plan be fully resourced and supported by all levels of Council.

# Conclusion

DPA believes that the review of the existing Disability Policy is timely. At a time when the EGL principles which have been partially pioneered in the Waikato are about to be rolled out nationwide, we would like to see Kirikiriroa/Hamilton be a leader in adopting a disability strategy and policy which aims for the full inclusion of all disabled people in the Kirikiriroa community. Indeed, the wider community has had a lot to learn from what has happened with disabled people in the Waikato and we would like to see Hamilton City Council work in partnership with the disability community in the region to take bolder steps forward towards building a community which is both welcoming and accepting of everyone.