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To Hamilton City Council

Please find attached DPA’s submission on the Draft Annual Plan 2022/23

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 Hamilton City Council’s (HCC) Annual Plan 2022-23.

**Hamilton City Council Disability Policy Review**

DPA is pleased to see that the Council recently consulted over the existing Access to Hamilton: Disability Policy. We responded by calling for an even stronger Disability Strategy and Action Plan for the city underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and Te Tiriti O Waitangi.

Therefore, we want to reiterate the themes of our submission on the disability policy in terms of building an inclusive, accessible city which can be lived in by all people, including disabled people. We want to build a community where every person has dignity, worth, autonomy and value. This can be done through ensuring that every disabled person feels a true sense of citizenship via the removal of disabling barriers and attitudes within our community. Hamilton City Council can play a lead role in effecting positive change in the city through acting as a partner with the disabled community in this.

We would recommend the plan be brough forward for further discussion with the Hamilton disabled community as soon as possible and DPA would like to be involved as a co-design partner in the creation of the new Strategy, amongst other disabled people’s organisations and representative stakeholder groups such as the Hamilton Disabled People’s Forum.

We would also recommend that a budget line be created within the plan to accommodate the development and implementation of the new Strategy over the next 2022-23 financial year and in the immediate years beyond to ensure that the costs of doing so can be fully met.

**Placing Universal Design accessibility features in new parks and playgrounds**

DPA notes that this plan includes funding for work to begin on the first stage of the new Peacocke Park and the purchase of a new community park at Northern Rotokauri.

DPA recommends that these parks should be designed and built to universal design (UD) accessibility standards and incorporate accessible play spaces and inclusive equipment for use by both disabled and non-disabled children alike and that budget lines for these projects should include funding for UD design and construction elements. Universal Design standards enable any buildings, facilities and open spaces to be fully designed and built to accommodate the needs of the widest number of users across the course of their lifespan, and this includes disabled people.

DPA recommends the use of Universal Design principles in the design and construction of public buildings, spaces and places and this includes parks and playgrounds. Across all local authorities in Aotearoa, Auckland Council is leading the way in this respect and has published useful guidelines on this subject. [[1]](#footnote-2) Building the new playgrounds to UD standards would ensure that disabled tamariki/children, their whanau/families and all other members of the community will benefit from having inclusive, integrated destination playgrounds where everyone can play, recreate and connect.

**Additional investment in footpaths, crossings**

Additional investment in footpaths and mobility crossings is needed throughout the city in order to keep up with the growing population and increasing level of foot traffic and mobilising pedestrians.

The increase in the number of people using our footpaths and cycleways, in the absence of any decline in individual motor vehicle usage, has had serious implications. According to recent research investigating pedestrian and micro vehicle accidents in several major international cities, including Auckland, heavily investing in footpaths and other transport infrastructure was found to be an important tool in lowering the number of accidents involving pedestrians, cyclists and e-scooter users.[[2]](#footnote-3)

DPA recommends that Council provide significant funding towards identifying and tackling accessibility and safety blackspots throughout the city, with an emphasis on adding new mobility crossings, upgrading existing crossings and ensuring that the footpath network is safe and user friendly.

There are several areas where footpath/pedestrian infrastructure upgrades should be undertaken as a matter of priority which our Hamilton members have identified. These are:

* Suitable crossings need to be established and footpaths upgraded near bus shelters on all Meteor and Comet bus routes
* More suitable crossings are needed on Te Rapa Straight and Ulster Street, especially given the issues which face older disabled people, mobility impaired people and blind and low vision people accessing that area.

We also note that the proposed Onion Road re-alignment will present opportunities for safety and accessibility improvements to be made as part of that project.

DPA also notes that the Council is proposing to develop shared walking and cycling spaces across gullies in the Peacocke area. If this project goes ahead, then any walking and cycling spaces should be separate but parallel to one another and/or well signed and marked out to avoid collisions between pedestrians and cyclists.

**Transport accessibility on Comet and Meteor bus system**

DPA welcomes Council’s plans to increase patronage and improve public transport on the Comet and Meteor bus system network. Public transport is an important component of many disabled people’s lives as the continuing popularity of the Waikato Regional Council’s ‘Bus It’ scheme for disabled people shows.

Nevertheless, some disabled people still can’t access the transport network due to poor supporting infrastructure including inaccessible footpaths surrounding bus shelters (see above) and other issues. Therefore, DPA welcomes the proposals to improve service reliability, bus shelter access and to provide greater traffic calming measures to improve safety around bus stops.

DPA recommends that local disabled people and our disabled people’s organisations including DPA and representative stakeholder groups, such as the Hamilton Disabled People’s Forum be fully involved as co-design partners in this upgrade work and that Council should provide adequate funding for this project that takes full account of rising inflationary pressures.

### 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 30: Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026:

* Outcome 5 - Accessibility

### Wider impact on Disabled People

If the HCC brings forward discussions on developing a Disability Strategy and Action Plan, improves pedestrian accessibility and public transport, and makes its proposed new destination playgrounds fully inclusive and accessible, then significant progress will be made towards the goal of ensuring that all disabled people within Hamilton can exercise their full rights to participation and citizenship.

# DPA’s recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** DPA recommends that the new Disability Strategy and Action Plan we called for be brought forward for further discussion with the Hamilton disabled community as soon as possible. DPA would like to be involved as a co-design partner in the creation of the new Strategy and Action Plan, amongst other disabled people’s organisations and representative stakeholder groups such as the Hamilton Disabled People’s Forum

**Recommendation 2:** DPA recommends that a budget line be created within the annual plan to accommodate the development and implementation of the new Disability Strategy and Action over the next 2022-23 financial year and in the immediate years beyond to ensure that the costs of doing so are met.

**Recommendation 3:** DPA recommends that the new destination playgrounds at Peacocke and Rotokauri parks be designed and built to universal design (UD) accessibility standards and incorporate accessible play spaces and inclusive equipment for use by both disabled and non-disabled children alike. Budget lines for these projects should include funding for UD design and construction elements.

**Recommendation 4:** DPA recommends that Council provide significant funding towards identifying and tackling accessibility and safety blackspots throughout the city, especially those identified by us along the Te Rapa Straight and Ulster Street, with an emphasis on adding new mobility crossings, upgrading existing crossings and ensuring that the footpath network is safe and user friendly.

**Recommendation 5:** DPA recommends that local disabled people and our disabled people’s organisations including DPA and representative stakeholder groups, such as the Hamilton Disabled People’s Forum, be fully involved as co-design partners on all projects discussed within this annual plan, particularly around those concerning footpath and infrastructure upgrades and transport improvements.

# Conclusion

DPA welcomes this annual plan and hopes that it will lead to an even better Hamilton going forward as the city and the country emerges from the Covid-19 emergency while facing ongoing challenges such as the cost-of-living crisis and planning for climate change. Our local Kaituitui and Regional Policy Advisor are available to be reached out to over this annual plan. DPA Waikato would also welcome the opportunity to speak in support of this submission at upcoming oral hearings.

1. Auckland Council. (n.d.) *Auckland Design Manual.* Retrieved from <https://www.aucklanddesignmanual.co.nz/design-subjects/universal_design> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Pennington, P. (2022, May 4). Auckland streets risky for pedestrians and cyclists, new research shows. *Radio New Zealand.* [*https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/466402/auckland-streets-risky-for-pedestrians-and-cyclists-new-research-shows*](https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/466402/auckland-streets-risky-for-pedestrians-and-cyclists-new-research-shows) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)