15th August 2021

To Ministry of Education (Employment\_Education\_and\_Training@msd.govt.nz)

Please find attached DPA’s submission on the Long-Term Insights Briefing (LTIB) on Youth at Risk of Limited Employment.

## Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

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# Introducing Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

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 is providing this submission on the Long-Term Insights Briefing (LTIB) on Youth at Risk of Limited Employment in lieu of the online survey.

DPA welcomes the joint initiative of Ministry of Education, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and Ministry of Social Development to work on a joint Long-Term Insights Briefing on youth at risk of long-term limited employment outcomes. In particular, we support the statement in the briefing document acknowledging that outcomes are particularly poor for disabled young people, and youth with long term health conditions.

Given the poor statistics of participation of disabled people in the workforce[[1]](#footnote-2), it is particularly important that this work connects with the disability community.

# The Survey Questions

**1. What is your relationship with this subject?**

In 2020, DPA developed Mahi Tika – Equity in Employment, a pilot employment programme, funded by the provincial Growth Fund (now known as Kaanoa) and Trust Waikato, to address this inequity and improve employment outcomes for disabled people. The programme is open to disabled school-leavers therefore we have valuable insights into the barriers disabled youth face.

**2. In what region are you located?**

Mahi Tika – Equity in Employment programme is currently being piloted in the Waikato region. However, DPA is a national organisation with membership across Aotearoa and we are exploring opportunities to expand the programme into other regions. We can reflect on barriers facing our Waikato-based participants however acknowledge that these are systemic barriers affecting disabled youth across Aotearoa.

**3. Do you wish to be contacted with a summary of responses from this consultation and updated on the progress of the briefing?**

Yes, this would be appreciated. Please send summaries to policy@dpa.org.nz

**4. Is youth at risk of limited employment a worthwhile subject to investigate further through a Long-Term Insights Briefing?**

Youth at risk of limited employment is definitely a worthwhile subject to investigate through the LTIB. There is a disproportionate rate of unemployment for disabled people in New Zealand. Only 22% of disabled people are employed, and 70% of those not working would like to be employed[[2]](#footnote-3). By addressing the barriers facing disabled youth who are at risk of unemployment, it is expected that future employment rates for disabled people will improve.

**5. What kind of initiatives, programmes or approaches do you think are most successful for youth at risk of limited employment?**

A youth- and disabled-led approach is imperative for the direction of any programme. For example, the disabled-led approach of Mahi Tika has resulted in a 66% employment rate for the participants involved in its first cohort.

**6. Do you agree with the proposed scope of the Long-Term Insights Briefing?**

 Key areas such as housing, physical and mental health and the justice system should not be out of scope of this Long-Term Insights Briefing as these are issues that contribute to significant systemic barriers to employment for disabled people.

DPA also wishes to highlight that transport and the digital divide are two other significant barriers that need to be addressed for youth, particularly disabled youth to be able to engage in any proposed employment programmes moving forward.

**7. Do you agree with those focus areas, and why or why not?**

DPA agrees with these focus areas

**8. Which focus areas do you think should get the highest priority?**

DPA believes that targeted support for groups who are most at risk of limited employment should receive the highest priority, such as disabled people, including the intersectionality of disabled LGBTQIA+ and Māori/Pacific youth.

**9. Are there any other focus areas you think we should consider?**

Youth in rural communities experience increased barriers to employment. DPA believes this is an area in need of increased focus.

**10. What do you see as the best opportunities to get better results for young people at risk of limited employment?**

DPA has first-hand insights into the benefits of disabled-led employment programmes and believes youth-led programmes are important for achieving high levels of sustained engagement.

**11. Are there barriers we have not mentioned? If so, what are they? Are there any other barriers you think we have missed?**

DPA has identified transport and the digital divide as key barriers to the employment of disabled people, particularly in rural areas.

Lack of affordable and/or accessible travel options has a big impact throughout the wider Waikato district. For example, there is no service available between Thames and Hamilton and in cases where there are transport options, they are not accessible. This means that many disabled people are restricted to finding jobs near where they live. An example of prohibitive costing is that a taxi from Thames to Hamilton one way for employment workshops is $250 so (non-driving) youth living in Thames may be excluded from these initiatives being held in Hamilton.

The inequitable system of disability funding means that those on ACC can often fund transport options, but disabled people under Ministry of Health cannot. Total Mobility provides discounted travel options for some disabled people. However, oftentimes this still comes with a prohibitive cost or unavailability of modified vehicles.

The digital divide is another major barrier for many disabled. A number of disabled people involved in Mahi Tika – Equity in Employment programme report not having access to digital devices or have no internet access which means that they are not able to access the job market, as they cannot find out about jobs or apply for them easily.

Students were provided with devices and data during Covid-19 lockdown so that they were able to access their education online. This initiative needs to be expanded to school leavers to enable them to access the job market once leaving school.

# DPA’s recommendations

In order to achieve better engagement with disabled youth, the Disabled Person’s Assembly strongly recommends that the Ministries engage with disabled youth across New Zealand, including in rural areas.

The views of young disabled, Maori and Pasifika must genuinely influence LTIB direction and we recommend disabled youth be involved in the LTIB at all stages of the process.

The Disabled Person’s Assembly also recommends that the Ministries should specifically state how the LTIB will meet its responsibilities under Te Tiriti and the UNCRPD.

DPA wishes to be kept informed of each stage of the process in setting up the LTIB.

1. Statistics NZ. (2020). *Labour market statistics (disability): June 2020 quarter.* Retrieved from <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/labour-market-statistics-disability-june-2020-quarter#:~:text=In%20the%20year%20to%20the,the%20series%20began%20in%202017&text=the%20labour%20force%20participation%20rate,percent%20for%20non%2Ddisabled%20people> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Ministry of Social Development. (2020). *Working Matters: An Action Plan to ensure disabled people and people with health conditions have an equal opportunity to access employment.* Retrieved from: <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/what-we-can-do/disability-services/disability-employment-action-plan/working-matters-2020-spreads.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)