April 2023

To Wellington City Council

Please find attached DPA’s submission on Mahere ā-tau Draft Annual Plan 2023-2024

For any further inquiries, please contact:

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**Introducing Disabled Persons Assembly NZ**

**We work on systemic change for the equity of disabled people**

Disabled Persons Assembly NZ (DPA) is a not-for-profit pan-impairment Disabled People’s Organisation run by and for disabled people.

**We recognise:**

* Māori as Tangata Whenua and [Te Tiriti o Waitangi](https://www.archives.govt.nz/discover-our-stories/the-treaty-of-waitangi) as the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand;
* disabled people as experts on their own lives;
* the [Social Model of Disability](https://www.odi.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/guidance-for-policy-makes/) as the guiding principle for interpreting disability and impairment;
* the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html) as the basis for disabled people’s relationship with the State;
* the [New Zealand Disability Strategy](https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/) as Government agencies’ guide on disability issues; and
* the [Enabling Good Lives Principles](https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/about-egl/egl-approach/principles/), [Whāia Te Ao Mārama: Māori Disability Action Plan](https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/whaia-te-ao-marama-2018-2022-maori-disability-action-plan), and [Faiva Ora: National Pasifika Disability Disability Plan](https://www.moh.govt.nz/notebook/nbbooks.nsf/0/5E544A3A23BEAECDCC2580FE007F7518/%24file/faiva-ora-2016-2021-national-pasifika-disability-plan-feb17.pdf) as avenues to disabled people gaining greater choice and control over their lives and supports.

**We drive systemic change through:**

* **Leadership:** reflecting the collective voice of disabled people, locally, nationally and internationally.
* **Information and advice:** informing and advising on policies impacting on the lives of disabled people.
* **Advocacy:** supporting disabled people to have a voice, including a collective voice, in society.
* **Monitoring:** monitoring and giving feedback on existing laws, policies and practices about and relevant to disabled people.

**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),1 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. 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 particularly relevant to this submission, including:

* **Article 3: General principles**
* **Article 9: Accessibility**
* **Article 19: Living independently and being included in the community**
* **Article 20: Personal mobility**
* **Article 30: Participation in cultural life, recreation and sport**

**New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026**

Since ratifying the UNCRPD, the New Zealand Government has established a Disability Strategy2 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. It identifies eight outcome areas contributing to achieving this vision. There are a number of Strategy outcomes particularly relevant to this submission, including:

* **Outcome 5 – Accessibility**
* **Outcome 8 – Leadership**

# The Submission

DPA welcomes this opportunity to submit on Wellington City Council’s Mahere ā-tau Draft Annual Plan 2023-24.

We see from this plan that the Council is progressing several projects that have emerged from previous long-term plans.

We wish to congratulate Council for progressing the following projects upon which DPA specifically submitted:

* Begonia House Garden
* City Housing/ Te Kāinga programme
* Paneke Pōneke – Bike network plan
* Let’s Get Wellington Moving (various projects)

We would like to make brief comments and recommendations on these specific policies and projects contained in this annual plan:

* Rates remission and rebate changes
* City Housing
* Te Ngākau Civic Square
* Let’s Get Wellington Moving

**Rates remission and rebate changes**

DPA supports the Council’s proposal to support ratepayers, especially low-income ratepayers, from being disproportionately affected by proposed rates increases.

We support the proposals to include the Council’s own remission form in their rates rebate form, but also to increase the low-income remission amount from $500 to $700 and eliminate the financial hardship postponement fee application fee for ratepayers that also qualify for the Central Government rates rebate scheme.

This move is a positive one for many low-income earning ratepayers, including disabled people, who are currently experiencing increased stress on budgets due to the cost-of-living crisis. This information needs to be available in accessible formats.

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| **Recommendation 1:** That information about the Council’s new rates remission policies is made available in accessible formats including New Zealand Sign Language, Easy Read, Large Print and audio. |

**City Housing/Te Kāinga programme**

DPA congratulates Council on the completion of the first universal design, accessible units in Central Wellington as part of its Te Kāinga programme.

Reaction from local DPA members has been very positive to this.

It is also great to see another New Zealand council take the lead on incorporating universal design principles into its new social housing builds.

DPA believes this as there is still a severe shortage of accessible housing both in Wellington and around the country. That is why we continually emphasise the need to build social housing to universal design standards.

Another important element of social housing is its affordability. In the last annual plan, we noted Wellington City Council’s proposal to set up a Community Housing Provider (CHIP) as a means of accessing Income Related Rental Subsidies (IRSS) from central government.

Some of our members have commented that much of Wellington’s social housing is still unaffordable, suggesting that IRSS subsidies are not yet being claimed by Council.

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| **Recommendation 2:** That the WCC continue to lobby Government over making the IRRS subsidy available to all local authorities and that this should be the case regardless of the structures any council uses to provide social housing.  |

DPA is also pleased to see that plans are afoot to undertake phase two of the city housing plan.

We note that these plans include the development of a business case to guide the next phase of the Council’s house build programme.

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| **Recommendation 3:** That disabled people and disabled people’s organisations be fully involved as co-design partners in business case planning for the next round of council housing development. |

Also, we would like to see WCC ensure that all their new social housing builds meet universal design standards.

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| **Recommendation 4:** That WCC builds all new Te Kāinga properties to universal design standards. |

**Te Ngākau Civic Square**

DPA is supportive of the projects to earthquake strengthen and/or re-build several of the buildings on Te Ngākau Civic Square including the new Council building, Town Hall and Te Matapihi Central Library.

DPA understands the necessity of doing so given the high earthquake risk which Wellington carries, something demonstrated only too readily by the Kaikoura Earthquake in 2016.

Members of Wellington’s disabled community were very saddened by the closure of Te Matapihi due to earthquake risks and are looking forward to the opening of the new library in 2026.

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| **Recommendation 4:** That WCC keep the Wellington disabled community informed about any accessibility and safety issues which might arise during the Te Ngākau Civic Square rebuild.  |

**Let’s Get Wellington Moving**

DPA has supported (and continues to support) the Let’s Get Wellington Moving work programme.

We have submitted on aspects of this work including the Golden Mile and People Friendly City Streets.

DPA supports the concept of shared streets on the proviso that space for cyclists and other micro-mobility users (especially on the Golden Mile) is kept separate and parallel, avoiding the possibility of collisions between cyclists and pedestrians travelling on foot, and also those using mobility devices (including crutches, mobility walkers, wheelchairs and children’s strollers).

DPA also believes that there is a need to address other issues associated with safe, accessible travel including the need for buses to go right up to key destinations including the Railway Station and for more accessible public toilets to be opened for longer.

The need for buses to go right up to key points, such as the Railway Station, is due to the safety issues which have dogged Lambton Quay where some fatal crashes have occurred in recent years, as well as the safety issues this presents for disabled people and other members of the public.

Accessible toilets need to be open for longer, especially given that time does not dictate when people, including disabled people, need to have toilet stops.

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| **Recommendation 5:** That public transport, such as buses, have the ability to pick up and drop off passengers at key destinations including the Railway Station for both safety and accessibility reasons.**Recommendation 6:** That accessible toilets should be open for more hours, including in the evenings, for the safety and convenience of disabled people and other members of the public. |

Another issue is the need for improvements to pedestrian crossings, especially for the benefit of blind and low vision people in terms of having more audible crossings available as well as buttons which are located in the same place and which work.

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| **Recommendation 7:** That Council make accessibility improvements on pedestrian crossings including the creation of more audible crossings and using systems where buttons are aligned in the same place and which work.**Recommendation 8:** That the Council run education programmes when changes are made to pedestrian crossings around matters like when it is safe to cross. |

As part of the transformational programme, we look forward to the development of business cases for rapid mass transit, the basin reserve and second Mount Victoria tunnel.

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| **Recommendation 9:** That disabled people and disabled people’s organisations be involved as co-design partners in the business planning cases for rapid mass transit, the basin reserve and second Mount Victoria tunnel. |