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To Wellington City Council

Please find attached DPA’s submission on the Newtown to City bus and bike improvements

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.”

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 Wellington City Council as it deliberates on the latest series of Newtown to City bus and bike improvements. We have been pleased to hear from local DPA members that the WCC has been working with disabled people on this plan.

DPA is pleased to see that several accessibility requirements have been considered in the development of this plan for the Newtown to City route. These positive aspects include no changes to mobility parking, the retention of parking outside the Urgent Pharmacy on Adelaide Road, and the inclusion of separate bus and bike lanes on Adelaide Road and Riddiford Street to Mein Street as some key examples.

However, there are a few issues which need to be resolved in the area to enable further accessibility and safety improvements to be made.

The first point we seek to make is that while we acknowledge the need for the growing number of cyclists to be safe, there is also the need to consider the safety of disabled pedestrians including those who use mobility aids including wheelchairs, mobility scooters and walking frames.

That is why we would like to make a series of recommendations to improve safety and accessibility for pedestrians.

Firstly, the current bus stop outside Wellington Hospital is unsafe for pedestrians and needs an urgent upgrade for safety reasons. The surface around the stop can be slippery and the uneven surface creates trip hazards, thereby not providing a level boarding platform for bus users. Furthermore, there is a low colour contrast between the footpath, cycle lane, and bus platform which presents a safety risk for blind and low vision people and all other users who could unwittingly step into oncoming traffic. Of particular concern is that the gradient when either boarding or disembarking from buses at this stop is steep, therefore, presenting a risk for anyone exiting buses, especially to people, for example, using wheelchairs or mobility devices or whom have a mobility impairment which impacts upon their balance. Sometimes, passing cyclists do not stop or slow down when a bus is at a stop or when people are crossing.

Secondly, DPA recommends that WCC work with Health New Zealand on issues around the Wellington Hospital car park which is on this route. It is our understanding that the former Capital and Coast DHB and Council entered into an agreement to deal with car parking issues in this area. On this basis, the WCC and Health NZ should collaborate to tackle issues such as the lack of mobility parking. While we understand that it is possible to park underneath the main hospital complex, this can present issues for people who may experience, for example, mental distress in the form of anxiety who may not like being in confined or more darkened spaces.

Thirdly, DPA recommends that safety signage be erected, especially in or near bus stops and footpaths alerting all people to the fact that there are footpaths, bus stops and cycleways adjacent to one another and that there is a need to watch for safety strips and other hazards.

DPA is pleased that for safety reasons, there will be a separate lane for cyclists, e-scooter and skateboard users covering the majority of the City to Newtown area which will be an improvement on having them use footpaths which is an issue for many people currently and is an ideal way of managing the conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and other modal users.

However, DPA strongly recommends that there be no shared footpath and cycle lane created at the end of Adelaide and Rugby Street. This is due to it being a busy area as it has a high number of businesses which generate pedestrian traffic. Shared spaces present a significant risk in that they may be dangerous for people who are blind, deaf or mobility impaired and who, therefore, may not be able to see or hear cyclists coming towards them or may not be able to move out of the way quickly.

Finally, DPA recommends that any further planning on this route continue to be undertaken as part of a co-design process between Council and disabled people and our representative organisations known as disabled persons organisations (DPOs) in accordance with Article 4.3 of the UNCRPD.

# DPA’s recommendations

The Disabled Person’s Assembly recommends:

* **Recommendation 1:** That the current bus stop outside Wellington Hospital is prioritised for an urgent upgrade for safety reasons as it is unsafe for pedestrians.
* **Recommendation 2:** That WCC work with Health New Zealand on issues around the Wellington Hospital car park which is on this route. It is our understanding that the former Capital and Coast DHB and Council entered into an agreement to deal with car parking issues in this area. On this basis, the WCC and Health NZ should collaborate to tackle issues such as the lack of mobility parking in the hospital car park and surrounding area. While we understand that it is possible to park underneath the main hospital complex, this can present issues for people who may experience, for example, mental distress in the form of anxiety who may not like being in confined or more darkened spaces.
* **Recommendation 3:** That safety signage be erected, in or near bus stops and footpaths alerting all people to the fact that there are footpaths, bus stops and cycleways adjacent to one another and that there is a need to watch for safety strips and other hazards. These signs need to be in large, clear text which will enable both vision impaired people to see them and people with learning disabilities to read them easily.
* **Recommendation 4:** That there be no shared footpath and cycle lane created at the end of Adelaide and Rugby Street. This is due to it being a busy area as it has a high number of businesses which generate pedestrian traffic. Shared spaces present a significant risk in that they may be dangerous for people who are blind, deaf or mobility impaired and who, therefore, may not be able to see or hear cyclists coming towards them or may not be able to move out of the way quickly.
* **Recommendation 5:** That any further planning on this route continue to be undertaken as part of a co-design process between Council and disabled people and our representative organisations known as disabled persons organisations (DPOs) in accordance with Article 4.3 of the UNCRPD.

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)