13th June 2022

To Youth Parliament

Please find attached DPA’s submission for the Economic Development, Science and Innovation Select Committee

Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

Contact:

**Prudence Walker**

**Chief Executive**

**021 546 006**

**policy@dpa.org.nz**

# 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, youth) 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

## 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 5 – Equality and Non-discrimination[[2]](#footnote-3)

“In order to promote equality and eliminate discrimination, States Parties shall take all appropriate steps to ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided.”

### Article 9 – Accessibility[[3]](#footnote-4)

“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.”

### Article 27 – Work and Employment[[4]](#footnote-5)

“States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.”

## 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[[5]](#footnote-6). It identifies eight outcome areas contributing to achieving this vision, including:

### Outcome 2 – Employment and Economic Security[[6]](#footnote-7)

“We access all places, services and information with ease and dignity.”

### Outcome 5 – Accessibility[[7]](#footnote-8)

“We access all places, services and information with ease and dignity.”

# The submission

DPA is providing this submission for the Youth Parliament Economic Development, Science and Innovation Select Committee to highlight areas where we can better ensure disabled people have equitable access to employment. Disabled people often lack access and opportunity through barriers they have no control over, not through lack of potential to succeed. This submission and its recommendations are particularly salient for disabled youth who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).

DPA acknowledges the work of Ministry of Social Development with their Working Matters Employment Action Plan[[8]](#footnote-9), an all-of-government Action Plan that aims to help ensure an inclusive economic recovery from COVID-19 where disabled people and people with health conditions can participate in employment as they want to, on an equal basis to others.

DPA also acknowledges the work of Ministry of Education, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and Ministry of Social Development in this space in the form of their joint Long-Term Insights Briefing on youth at risk of long-term limited employment outcomes[[9]](#footnote-10), which acknowledges that outcomes are particularly poor for disabled youth, and youth with long term health conditions.

Statistics around participation of disabled people in the workforce[[10]](#footnote-11) are reflective of the barriers disabled people experience in having equitable access to all aspects of society. Disabled people, including the intersections of women, rainbow, Māori, Pasifika and youth, must be included in any discussions around the employment of disabled people.

## Area of focus for a transition to a high wage, low emissions economy: innovation

A disabled-led approach is imperative for meaningful improvement to the employment statistics of disabled people. For example, through social procurement such as DPA’s Mahi Tika – Equity in Employment[[11]](#footnote-12), an employment programme that is developed, led, and delivered by disabled people[[12]](#footnote-13).

Mahi Tika – Equity in Employment is specifically designed to make use of the underutilized disabled workforce, focusing on empowering disabled to be working or training in the industry of their choice and supporting them to become mentors to other disabled people. Delivery of this project provides disabled people the opportunity to come together with other disabled job seekers to participate in workshops that build employment skills and confidence to apply for jobs.

This programme has enabled DPA to gain first-hand insights into the benefits of disabled-led employment programmes and believes these programmes are important for achieving higher levels of sustained employment for disabled people.

## Impact on regions and communities

DPA believes key policy areas such as housing, physical and mental health, and the justice system contribute significant systemic barriers to employment for disabled people and are greatly impacted by economic changes. By actively removing these systemic barriers and enabling greater access to the labour market, disabled people will have opportunities for increased employment and financial security. This is particularly salient for those in rural communities, where disabled people experience increased barriers to employment.

DPA believes this is an area in need of increased focus and an innovative strategic approach. DPA also wishes to highlight that transport and digital inequity are significant barriers that need to be addressed for disabled people to be able to engage in the labour market, particularly those in rural regions of New Zealand

## Honouring Te Tiriti

There is a disproportionate rate of unemployment for disabled people in New Zealand. Only 22% of disabled people are employed, and 72% of those not working would like to be employed[[13]](#footnote-14). In addition, 54% of main beneficiaries are disabled[[14]](#footnote-15), emphasising the importance of prioritising the support of disabled people into employment.

These statistics are even higher for tangata whaikaha Māori (disabled Māori), with 32% of Māori adults reported as being disabled[[15]](#footnote-16) therefore targeted support for tangata whaikaha Māori should be the highest priority.

## Structural barriers to employment and economic development

As stated previously, DPA has identified transport and digital inequity as key barriers to the employment and economic development of disabled people, particularly in rural areas.

Lack of affordable and/or accessible travel options has a profound impact on disabled people’s equitable access to employment This has impacts not only on a person’s ability to access the workplace but also to participate in work-related travel.

Digital inequity is also a major barrier for many disabled people. For example, not having access to digital devices or not having internet access, greatly limits a person’s ability to start up their own business or to access the job market as they cannot find out or apply for jobs easily.

DPA has previously highlighted the digital divide that exists for disabled people[[16]](#footnote-17). We have yet to see any of our recommendations taken up. We list below our recommendations that we made.

# DPA’s recommendations

### Overall DPA strongly recommends that government:

* Ensure the views of disabled people, particularly tangata whaikaha Māori influences the direction of policy in any economic development initiatives.
* Undertake sustained engagement with the disabled community, particularly tangata whaikaha Māori and disabled people living rurally.
* Ensure social procurement of disabled -led initiatives.
* Prioritise removal of systemic barriers, including ensuring affordable accessible transport options are available for disabled people and closing the digital divide.

### Specific recommendations to close the digital divide for disabled people

#### Affordability

* Ensure affordable access to the Internet focusing on the groups who have the lowest level of access to the Internet, including those in social housing and disabled people.
* Enable social housing providers and care agencies to provide internet access and install Wifi in their properties.
* Provide devices and necessary adaptive technology to people on low income at low or no cost.

#### Accessibility

* Ensure all online services, including those provided by government agencies, but also the private sector, are accessible for use by disabled people.

#### Digital Support

* Extensively expand support for people to gain the skills to operate online and to do so safely.

DPA would welcome the opportunity to speak to their submission.

1. United Nations. (2006). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.* Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. United Nations. (2006). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities – Article 5.* Retrieved from: https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-5-equality-and-non-discrimination.html [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. United Nations. (2006). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities – Article 9.* Retrieved from: https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-9-accessibility.html [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. United Nations. (2006). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities – Article 27.* Retrieved from: https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-27-work-and-employment.html [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Office for Disability Issues. (2016). *New Zealand Disability Strategy.* Retrieved from: https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Office for Disability Issues. (2016). *New Zealand Disability Strategy – Outcome 2.* Retrieved from: https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/employment-and-economic-security/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Office for Disability Issues. (2016). *New Zealand Disability Strategy – Outcome 5.* Retrieved from: https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/outcome-5-accessibility/ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. 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-9)
9. Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. (2021). *Consultation on the Long-term Insights Briefing on youth at risk of limited employment.* Retrieved from: https://www.mbie.govt.nz/have-your-say/consultation-on-the-long-term-insights-briefing-on-youth-at-risk-of-limited-employment/ [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. 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 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Disabled Persons Assembly NZ. (2020). *Mahi Tika – Equity in Employment.* Retrieved from: https://www.dpa.org.nz/mahitika [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Mahi Tika – Equity in Employment is a two-year pilot programme funded by Kānoa - Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit (MBIE) and Trust Waikato. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. 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-14)
14. Welfare Expert Advisory Group Report. (2018). *Whakamana Tāngata: Restoring dignity to social security in New Zealand.* Retrieved from: http://www.weag.govt.nz/weag-report/ [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Statistics NZ. (2013). *Disability Survey: 2013.* Retrieved from: https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/disability-survey-2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Disabled Persons Assembly NZ. *Feedback on the Draft Digital Strategy.* Retrieved from: <https://www.dpa.org.nz/store/doc/DPA-Feedback-on-the-Draft-Digital-Strategy-December-2021.docx> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)