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To the Office for Seniors

Please find below DPA’s submission on the Older Workers Employment Action Plan.

## 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 supports the goals of the Older Workers Employment Action Plan (OWEAP): we agree that all people should have access to meaningful work that meets their needs, enabling them to thrive and contribute to the economy.

DPA would like to highlight the link between impairment and older people: as people age they are likely to develop impairments that may impact on their employment or be perceived to impact their employment. To amplify this link we propose that the OWEAP Reference the Disability Employment Action Plan.

# The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

Many of the Articles and Principles contained in the UNCRPD are relevant to the OWEAP. We highlight those most relevant below:

1. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one’s own choices, and independence of persons;
2. Non-discrimination;
3. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
4. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;
5. Equality of opportunity;
6. Accessibility;
7. Equality between men and women.

## **Article 4.3 -** Actively engage with organisations of disabled people

## **Article 5 -** Equality and non-discrimination

## **Article 6 -** Women with disabilities

## **Article 9 -** Accessibility

## **Article 24 -** Education

## **Article 25 -** Habilitation and rehabilitation

## **Article 27 -** Work and employment

## **Article 28 -** Adequate standard of living and social protection

# Employment-related services are effective, accessible and meet the needs of older workers

DPA believes that while it is vital that older workers can access information and services that enable them to stay employed or seek re-employment, it is also vital that the OWEAP more clearly spells out how such services and information will be made available to older disabled people. There is no mention here of the role of disability service providers nor of information being made in accessible formats.

# Older workers can access information and guidance to enable them to make decisions about their future work

DPA is concerned that the emphasis on accessing this information and associated tools is primarily online. Many such tools are often inaccessible to disabled people and many older and disabled people are less likely to have access to the internet or be highly skilled in using digital tools. We believe that more human support is needed in this area.

The lack of digital equity/access and limited digital skills, mentioned above in relation to employment services, is also of great importance to employment. Older Workers need to be supported to gain both the digital skills and access to digital platforms. The OWEAP should highlight this area more, and make mention of the specific training and support, needed by older disabled people in relation to digital access and skills, in relation to gaining or retaining employment.

# Older workers disrupted from employment can access services to return to employment

Again DPA stresses the need for accessibility and reasonable accommodations to be built into these services.

# A labour market to support the needs of older workers

DPA supports the aspirations of this section of the OWEAP, and again stresses that many of the solutions to making the labour market support the needs of older workers would be the same as those to support younger disabled workers.

# The labour market does not discriminate against older workers

DPA supports the measures put forward to combat discrimination against older people in the labour market.

Jobs are flexible and responsive to the needs of older workers.

Again, DPA would highlight the link between impairment and aging and support these initiatives as they would have a positive impact on all disabled workers and jobseekers.

# Older workers in employment can continue to upskill or retrain and are supported to change career

DPA supports these training and career support initiatives and again highlights their relevance and applicability to all disabled workers and jobseekers, regardless of age.

# Labour market actors involved in different sectors and regions are collaborating to maximise opportunities for their aging workforces

DPA supports the gathering of disaggregated information on older workers including disability status. Such information would assist employers and employment service providers (including MSD) to better plan to meet the needs of older workers.

DPA is pleased at the mention of reasonable accommodations for older workers with regards to retraining and planning processes. This is important for older workers seeking retraining or career planning support – again, the same types of accommodations and supports would benefit all disabled workers and jobseekers.

We are extremely pleased that the OWEAP recognises the need for Government to specifically address the needs of older workers who experience multiple disadvantages in their response to labour market disadvantage. It is vital that disability is recognised in this response along with other factors which often lead to exclusion from the labour market.