August 2023

To Wellington Councils

Please find attached DPA’s submission on Wellington Regional Waste Management and Minimisation Plan

For any further inquiries, please contact:

Chris Ford

Kaituhotuho Kaupapa Here ā Rohe - Regional Policy Advisor (Local Government)

policy@dpa.org.nz

**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.

**UN 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**

**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**

# The Submission

DPA welcomes the opportunity to submit on the combined Wellington council’s Regional Waste Management and Minimisation Plan.

DPA welcomes the draft plan which seeks to take a cross-regional approach to waste minimisation and management.

Disabled people, like everyone, are both generators of waste and users of recycled products. This submission outlines how disabled people need improved access to waste and recycling services as well as accessible information and communications about them.

We also need the barriers which exist to the Wellington regional disabled community playing a full part in creating a zero-waste environment removed, so that disabled people can be full partners in this journey.

To make this a reality, disabled people and locally based disability organisations need to be fully involved in discussions around how the region manages its waste and recycling.

**Accessibility to waste, recycling and other initiatives geared towards zero-waste**

DPA asks that Wellington region councils make waste reduction both attractive and accessible. For disabled people, making waste reduction accessible means ensuring that all facets of the waste and recycling are accessible to everyone, including to the disabled community.

DPA recommends that local councils introduce a policy where any disabled resident can request (either online or via other means) for collectors to come onto their property to uplift their rubbish and recycling provided that relevant health and safety guidelines are observed.

Currently many local authorities require disabled people to provide medical certificates as verification for the purposes of identifying anybody who has an impairment or condition which prevents them from putting out their own waste and/or recycling at the kerbside.

However, this means that disabled people must go to a medical practitioner or specialist to get another medical certificate to verify impairment, which can be time consuming and costly and creates another barrier for disabled people to accessing one of the most important services any council provides - waste collection and recycling.

DPA asks that a simple system be set up where disabled people can just go online, to indicate to their relevant council whether that they would like to have their rubbish and recycling collected outside their front door on collection days would be a more efficient and inclusive way of dealing with this issue.

|  |
| --- |
| **Recommendation 1:** thatWellington councils introduce a policy where disabled people can request (either online or via other means) for collectors to come onto their property to remove rubbish and recycling. |

DPA also recommends that councils through either any disability advisory groups they have and other engagement mechanisms, involve the disabled community in discussions around how to make the waste and recycling system more accessible. One of our Wellington members pointed out the other issues facing disabled people when accessing waste and recycling services:

***“Regarding waste, a strategy needs to recognise [that] many disabled people will find it difficult to reduce waste, e.g., due to lack of hand skills (e.g., unable to cut up cardboard, refill shampoo containers etc.) and [lack of] accessible transport, to take [the] stuff to be recycled.”***

DPA asks that all Wellington region councils undertake to engage with the disabled community around the barriers that we face in making our waste recyclable and as to what is needed to make recycling centres accessible.

|  |
| --- |
| **Recommendation 2:** thatWellingtoncouncils through disability advisory groups and other engagement mechanisms, involve the disabled community in discussions around other ways in which to make the waste and recycling system more accessible. |

**Making information and communications about waste and recycling more accessible to disabled people**

DPA recommends that information and communications about recycling and waste collection be made readily available in accessible formats including New Zealand Sign Language, Easy Read, Braille, audio and large print formats. This would ensure that disabled people have ready access to information about how to reduce waste and increase recycling in accessible ways.

|  |
| --- |
| **Recommendation 3:** thatWellingtoncouncils make all information and communications about recycling and waste collection made available in accessible formats including New Zealand Sign Language, Easy Read, Braille,audio and large print formats. |

DPA also recommends that all local councils work alongside the Ministry for the Environment and disability organisations to publicly promote the post- July 1, 2023, exemption around the use of plastic straws for disabled people and people with health conditions who can still request them from such venues as supermarkets, pharmacies, hospitality businesses and health and disability services after that date.

|  |
| --- |
| **Recommendation 4:** that Wellington councils work alongside the Ministry for the Environment and DPOs to publicly promote the exemption around the use of plastic straws for disabled people and people with health conditions. |

This should be explicitly acknowledged in the plan as well as a commitment to work alongside the disabled community by relevant stakeholders to develop more ecologically sustainable, safe and accessible alternatives.