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Please find below the Disabled Persons Assembly NZ submission on the 2020 Budget Policy Statement

Disabled Persons Assembly NZ Inc.

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**Introducing Disabled Persons Assembly NZ**

The Disabled Persons Assembly NZ (DPA) is a pan-disability 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

**Submission on the Budget Policy Statement**

DPA would like to make the following comments on the Budget Policy Statement

**Wellbeing focus**

DPA supports the overall focus of the budget policy statement on wellbeing.

**Disabled people need to be explicitly included**

There is increasing evidence and data that show that wellbeing outcomes are much poorer for disabled people and their whānau across a wide range of measures1  2

A “wellbeing” budget that does not deliver for disabled people, who have some of the poorest wellbeing outcomes in our communities, cannot be said to have delivered on its aim.

There is an opportunity in this budget to both to make a real difference to disabled people’s wellbeing and to improve outcomes for disabled people and their whānau.

To effectively improve wellbeing for disabled people, and ensure they are not left further behind, disabled people need to be explicitly included in the budget measures.

There needs to be targeted measures to improve wellbeing for disabled people, particularly for disabled Māori, Pasifika and children who experience some of the greatest inequality in our communities.

Failure to directly address wellbeing for disabled people risks our community being left behind and increasing inequality for disabled people and their whānau.

There is good evidence that unequal societies are more materially competitive, more hierarchical and more stressful for everyone3.  It benefits everyone to ensure that no demographic or group is left behind in poverty or wellbeing outcomes.

For any initiative, the best approach is a partnership one, where disabled people and whānau are empowered, resourced and supported to come up with solutions to improve their lives.

The principles that form the basis of Enabling Good Lives4, which underpins the current and ongoing transformation of the disability support sector is one way that this approach can be implemented.

Of the five budget priority areas in the budget policy statement, there are three that need to ensure disabled people are included within the delivery of these.

These are:

* Māori and Pacific - Lifting Māori and Pacific incomes, skills and opportunities
* Child Wellbeing - Reducing child poverty and improving child wellbeing
* Physical and Mental Wellbeing - Supporting improved health outcomes for all New Zealanders.

**Budget Priority 3: Māori and Pacific - Lifting Māori and Pacific incomes, skills and opportunities**

We know that Māori have a higher prevalence of disability5 .  Any measures to lift Māori and Pasifika incomes, skills and opportunities has to include those who are disabled, otherwise up to a  third of the demographic intended to be targeted by this priority will be excluded.

Māori are also more likely to be carers, so included as part of this priority there needs to be measures supporting disabled Māori and Pasifika people and their carers.

One change that would make a difference is fully funding Carer Support payments so that carers, especially those on low incomes, including Maori and Pasifika, don’t have to pay a top up out of their own pocket to access respite care.

DPA would like to see the budget include the following measures:

* Reforming and expanding the Disability Allowance to be more accessible and equitable in its distribution particularly for Māori and Pacific people.

* Reforming the culture at Work and Income to ensure that it is both more accessible and equitable for different ethnicities, especially for Māori and Pasifika people.

* Fully funding the Carer Support payment, especially for those on low incomes.

**Budget Priority 4, Child Wellbeing - Reducing child poverty and improving child wellbeing**

“*There has not been any Statistics New Zealand data available on disabled children since the 2013 Disability Survey. This is because Statistics New Zealand has been using disability questions aimed at adults*.”6

From the 2013 Disability Survey we know that 11% -  or more than one in 10 - children have a disability7.

We also know that disabled children are more likely to live in poverty.

“*Disabled children are more likely to live in poverty, and barriers to disabled children’s inclusion and full participation remain. Disabled children are at greater risk of living in low-income households. The 2013 Disability Survey shows that of the 95,000 disabled children aged 0-14 years, 15% lived in households with incomes under $30,000. This compares with 10% of 0-14 year olds in all households.”8*

This has a wider impact than just disabled children as the following statement highlights.

“*… if disabled children are more likely to live in poverty, it follows that their siblings and parents are also more likely to live in poverty. Likewise, because disabled adults are more likely to live in poverty, then their children will also be more likely to live in poverty. We currently lack New Zealand data on family composition and disability, but we can look at data from the United Kingdom, which should be broadly similar. In the 2017/18 Family Resources Survey, 8% of all children were disabled children, however, 31% of children lived in a family where at least one member was a disabled person. This included 23% of children who had a disabled parent. Disabled parents are an often-overlooked group with limited support available. ….. The United Kingdom data shows that almost a third of all children may be affected by disability-related inequalities. This shows the wide reach of disability-related inequalities and barriers*.9

It is clear that if this budget priority is be meaningful then a key part of this priority has to include measures supporting disabled children and their whānau as well as disabled parents/carers.

To lift disabled children out of poverty and improve their wellbeing, DPA would like to see as a minimum the budget including the following measures:

* A substantial increase to the rate of the Child Disability Allowance to help mitigate the impact of disability on disabled children and their whānau.

* Reforming the Child Disability Allowance to make it more accessible as recommended by the Child Poverty Action Group 2016 report10.

* Implementing the relevant recommendations of the Welfare Expert Advisory 2019 report “Restoring dignity to social security in New Zealand”. Many of these recommendations will have a significant positive impact for families with a disabled child or parent.11

**Budget Priority 5, Physical and Mental Wellbeing - Supporting improved health outcomes for all New Zealanders.**

Disabled people have some of the poorest health12 and wellbeing13  outcomes compared to the general population. This means that as part of this priority there needs to be specific measures for disabled people otherwise there is a risk that disabled people and their whānau will fall even further behind.

DPA would like to highlight here that work has been underway for many years to transform disability support services to deliver better outcomes for disabled people with localised trials of the Enabling Good Lives 14 approach in Christchurch, Waikato and Mid Central.

The Waikato demonstration reports 15 in particular show vastly improved outcomes for disabled people and their whānau when they are given choice and control over their support systems.

DPA considers that there is an urgent need to see the principles of Enabling Good Lives rolled out across the country.

DPA notes that people with a learning disability have some of the poorest health outcomes of any demographic, so there is an urgent need for measures that specifically target this group. Of particular concern is the huge gap in life expectancy, with data16 from the Ministry of Health showing that women with a learning disability have a life expectancy nearly 23 years less than the average for all NZ women, while men with a learning disability over 18 years less than the average for all NZ men.

To ensure that this budget priority includes disabled New Zealanders and that they are not left behind, DPA would like to see the budget include funding to:

•Resource the transformation of the disability support services to enable the roll out of the Enabling Good Lives approach across the country which will help improve the physical and mental wellbeing of many disabled people.

•Improve health literacy and access to primary health care for disabled people especially for people with a learning disability.

**In Conclusion**

DPA supports an overall focus on wellbeing in the budget, especially since wellbeing and health outcomes for disabled people and their whānau remain much poorer than the general population. DPA is deeply concerned that if the budget does not include measures that directly benefit disabled people and their whānau, we will only end up seeing our community fall even further behind.

There is an opportunity in this budget to both to make a real difference to disabled people’s wellbeing and to improve outcomes for disabled people and their whānau.

It is an opportunity that we urge the government to take up.