



Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

June 2025

Ki te Kaipara Te Oranganui / Kaipara District Council

Please find attached DPA's submission on the Proposed Kaipara District Plan

Noho ora mai,

For any further inquiries, please contact:

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Introducing Disabled Persons Assembly

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](#) as a founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand;
- disabled people as experts on their own lives;
- the [Social Model of Disability](#) as the guiding principle for interpreting disability and impairment;
- the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) as the basis for disabled people's relationship with the State;
- the [Aotearoa New Zealand Disability Strategy](#) as Government agencies' guide on disability issues; and
- the [Enabling Good Lives Principles](#), [Whāia Te Ao Mārama: Māori Disability Action Plan](#), and [Faiva Ora: National Pasifika Disability Disability Plan](#) as avenues to disabled people gaining greater choice and control over their lives and supports.

We drive systemic change through:

Rangatiratanga | Leadership: reflecting the collective voice of disabled people, locally, nationally and internationally.

Pārongo me te tohutohu | Information and advice: informing and advising on policies impacting on the lives of disabled people.

Kōkiri | Advocacy: supporting disabled people to have a voice, including a collective voice, in society.

Aroturuki | Monitoring: monitoring and giving feedback on existing laws, policies and practices about and relevant to disabled people.

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),¹ a foundational document for disabled people which Aotearoa New Zealand has signed and ratified, confirming that disabled people must have the same human rights as everyone else.

All state bodies in Aotearoa 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 5: Non-discrimination
- Article 9: Accessibility
- Article 13: Access to justice
- Article 19: Living independently and being included in the community
- Article 20: Personal mobility
- Article 29: Participation in political and public life.

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>

Aotearoa New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016–2026

Since ratifying the UNCRPD, the Aotearoa New Zealand Government has established a Disability Strategy² to guide the work of government agencies on disability issues.

The vision is that Aotearoa New Zealand be a non-disabling society, where disabled people have equal opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations, and that all of Aotearoa New Zealand works together to make this happen.

The Strategy 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
- Outcome 6 – Attitudes
- Outcome 7 – Choice and Control
- Outcome 8 – Leadership

² Office for Disability Issues. (2016). *Aotearoa New Zealand Disability Strategy*. Retrieved from: <https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/>

The submission

DPA welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Kaipara District Plan.

DPA supports councils developing district plans that best meet the needs of all residents, including disabled people. This plan presents an opportunity to grow Kaipara while ensuring that the environment is protected and infrastructure remains resilient – all important factors in ensuring a thriving community.

For disabled people, accessibility is not an add on but an essential and central component of planning for Kaipara's growth. Before moving onto the submission, we would like to highlight some of the positive initiatives which have happened in the last year.

These include:

- Kaipara District Council's staff involvement with Taitokerau disability community with the development of the Taitokerau Regional Accessibility Strategy³
- The community and Council's continued recovery efforts following severe weather events.

Disability demographics

According to Statistics New Zealand's 2023 Disability Survey, Northland had a disability population rate of 23 percent⁴ and with a population of 71,430 in Northland means there are at least 16,428 disabled people currently residing within the Northland area.

³ <https://www.fndc.govt.nz/Council/Policies-bylaws-and-strategies/strategies/te-tai-tokerau-regional-accessibility-strategy>

⁴ <https://www.stats.govt.nz/reports/household-disability-survey-2023-findings-definitions-and-design-summary/>

In 2023, 15,735 people in Northland were aged 65 or older, which is 22% of the total Northland population.⁵ This number is likely to increase further as the population ages as there is a strong correlation between ageing and disability.

With those statistics in mind, building an inclusive Kaipara where everyone, including disabled people can fully participate in their communities without barriers should be an overriding objective of the Council in this plan.

Equity and Access for Disabled People

Accessibility is a core principle of the UNCRPD, and a key outcome of the Aotearoa New Zealand Disability Strategy. In the Far North District Council Review Report,⁶ our ability to engage with, participate in, and belong to includes access to:

- choices about where to live, learn, work and play
- safe and affordable transport
- public buildings, spaces, and facilities
- information in formats and languages that meet disabled people's needs
- leadership positions on an equal basis with non-disabled people.

An example of inclusion that is often missed is the importance of disabled people being involved in the economic growth of Kaipara through, for example, developing their own business initiatives including in accessible tourism. We also have disabled entrepreneurs creating outdoor accessible events in Northland.⁷

An accessibility lens

Accessibility is a core principle of the UNCRPD, and a key outcome of the Aotearoa New Zealand Disability Strategy. It affects every area of disabled people's lives, from the homes we live in, the places we work and the extent to which we can move around our communities. It also has a major impact on disabled people's level of risk and ability to recover following severe weather events.

⁵ <https://figure.nz/chart/FyfHKfmyQB67AWR0-jsCw2mrpdK7onHrn>

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https://infocouncil.fndc.govt.nz/Open/2022/02/SPC_20220208_AGN_2493_AT_files/SPC_20220208_AGN_2493_AT_Attachment_11680_1.PDF

⁷ <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/northern-advocate/news/accessible-tourism-offers-untapped-potential-jonny-wilkinson/XDS2KUMJMNFRVHOTBUWYDXXK6Y/>

DPA's role is to advocate about the importance of accessibility for everyone, including disabled people. Even when disabled people have a seat at the table, our voices often go unheard or are not listened to. This plan presents an opportunity to build accessibility and inclusion into all facets of planning and development – something that is crucial given the increasingly ageing population of Northland.

By building accessibility and inclusion into all planning processes, Kaipara District Council will be playing its role in upholding the rights of disabled people under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (“the Disability Convention”) to fully participate in their community.

DPA notes that although Kaipara District Council was involved with the development of the Tai Tokerau Regional Accessibility Plan, it was not adopted by Council. This decision disappointed many people within the Tai Tokerau disability community.⁸

The Te Tai Tokerau disability community has also been critical of the fact that the council has no disability advisory mechanism, for example, a disability advisory group, as part of its governance structures. As ratepayers, disabled people pay the same rates as non-disabled people yet have no access to the services that have been paid for.

<p>Recommendation 1: That DPA asks the Kaipara District Council to establish a Disability Advisory Group.</p>
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Barriers experienced by rural disabled residents

Te Kāhui Tika Tangata – New Zealand Human Rights Commission reported that disabled people living in rural areas are struggling to access services, so a disability advisory group would be beneficial in helping to elevate disabled people's voices when it comes to planning the future of Kaipara.⁹

⁸ <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/northern-advocate/news/an-accessibility-connected-region-equals-a-desirable-tourist-destination-jonny-wilkinson/PVOJKRODAFDT7AVHQM27YJNCVE/>

⁹ <https://tikatangata.org.nz/cms/assets/Uploads/Measuring-Progress-Indicators-Decent-Home/Location-full-commentary-right-to-a-decent-home.PDF>

An anecdotal story from a disabled mother caring for her disabled child highlights the additional barriers that disabled people living in rural areas encounter.¹⁰ There are also farmers who have shared their recovery stories after becoming disabled through an accident.¹¹

Tangata whaikaha Maori disabled people

Tangata whaikaha Māori disabled face barriers due to being both Māori and disabled people. Under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, we have additional rights as both tangata whenua and mana whenua.

As tangata whaikaha Māori disabled people, we were disenfranchised by the resolution to disestablish the council's Māori ward as this was another avenue where Māori disabled people could put themselves forward to become councillors. It is challenging enough as Māori to gain access to seats of power, but doubly so as Māori disabled people.

DPA supports the creation of a Māori Purpose Zone that has been set aside for a range of activities that specifically meet Māori cultural needs but often tangata whaikaha Māori disabled who as tangata whenua and mana whenua are not included in these discussions.

We ask this as not being involved in discussions as Māori disabled people means that any accessibility and inclusion issues within these zones cannot be fully addressed. For example, what if waka turi (Māori disabled wheelchair users) cannot access parts of these zones?

For these reasons, Māori disabled people need to be fully involved in any discussions around planning for Māori Purpose Zones.

<p>Recommendation 2: That tangata whaikaha Māori disabled be included in all planning and discussions around Māori Purpose Zones.</p>
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¹⁰ https://www.accessmatters.org.nz/rural_urban_divide_susan_s_story

¹¹ <https://www.ruraldelivery.net.nz/posts/Kevin-Richards-Farming-with-a-disability>

Climate resilience and emergency preparedness

Northlanders recently experienced Cyclone Tam and are still recovering from the infrastructure damage resulting from several severe weather events. DPA is actively involved in the emergency preparedness sector as disabled people are at high risk in weather-based events generated by climate change.¹²

For these reasons, there is a need for all decision makers to take steps to uphold the wellbeing of disabled people affected by natural disasters. DPA has heard first-hand about the serious impacts that weather-enforced homelessness has had on disabled people nationwide.

DPA recommends that Council establish a voluntary register for disabled people, older people and other at-risk groups in the community so that any requirements in case of emergency or evacuation, for example, around any medication, pets and disability equipment can be outlined by residents.

DPA reiterates – as we have done in previous submissions - that no disabled people are left behind in emergencies.

Recommendation 3: That Council include disabled people as co-partners in all emergency preparedness planning with a focus on removing barriers in this space.
Recommendation 4: That Council establish a voluntary register for disabled people to identify their requirements in case of emergency and/or evacuation.
Recommendation 5: That Council collaborate with disabled people to actively raise awareness of the need for the region's disability community to prepare for emergencies.

Accessible zones

DPA submitted on the Mangawhai Community Master Plan and the importance of accessibility for both locals and visitors.

¹² <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/28/people-disabilities-needed-fight-against-climate-change#:~:text=People%20with%20disabilities%20are%20at,said%20in%20a%20recent%20report.>

DPA recommends that any rebuilds, and new builds are based on Universal Design principles and that accessibility be at the forefront for key stakeholders including, for example, architects and planners.

Recommendation 6: That Council ensure that all rebuilds, and new builds are accessible and based on Universal Design principles.

Recommendation 7: That Council advocate for Universal Design with key stakeholders including, for example, architects, landscape designers, engineering consultants, and project managers.

Transport Network

Both public and private transport services in Northland are not accessible with some areas having no accessible taxis and shuttles, effectively limiting the transport options for disabled people.

The provision of accessible public transport services is a human right for disabled people as this enables us to undertake social and community connection on an equitable basis with non-disabled people.

DPA welcomes the many upcoming road repair projects that are slated to commence soon as these will enable more people, including disabled people, to connect with their communities and become less isolated as a result.

Recommendation 8: That Council work with Northland Regional Council on developing accessible public transport options.

Participation in public and political life

As mentioned previously, tangata whaikaha Māori disabled viewed the Māori Wards as an opportunity to serve their local communities prior to their axing.

DPA is concerned about the lack of disability leadership or inclusion on council. To remedy this, we would like to see council take a more proactive approach to implementing the Convention, NZ Disability Strategy and Te Tiriti o Waitangi across all its work.

We ask that all council decision-making bodies consider the needs of disabled people and that engagement processes fully involve disabled people and disabled people's organisations in all aspects of decision making.

Recommendation 9: That all council decision-making bodies consider the needs of disabled and Māori disabled people as part of all planning processes.