July 2024

**To Dunedin City Council**

Please find attached our submission on the Dog Control Bylaw and Dog Control Policy review

For any further inquiries, please contact:

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# 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:**

**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.

# The submission

DPA welcomes this opportunity to give feedback to the Dunedin City Council on the Dog Control Bylaw and Dog Control Policy Review.

From a disability perspective, there is much to commend but also some areas that need improvement.

DPA is pleased to see that Disability Assist Dogs (as a disability service animal and working dogs) are recognised within the policy.

We also welcome the DCC’s proposal to continue not charging any registration fees for disability assist dogs.

This policy is enormously beneficial given that many disabled people live on low, fixed incomes and for those who own assist dogs this recognises the high costs of maintaining them.

Retaining the no fees policy also recognises that disability assist dogs (and other service animals) are vital for the independence, dignity, and inclusion of the disabled people who need them.

## Changes to dog control policy recommended

In terms of aspects of both the by-law and policy that need improving, we ask that changes are made to the provisions of the Dog Control Policy regarding the need to ‘be physically capable of controlling the dog’.

We fully acknowledge the importance of controlling dogs for safety reasons. However, we recommend rewording the provision to emphasise the need for people in control of dogs to exercise all reasonable skill and care and to always prioritise safety when handling dogs. For example, for some disabled people verbal commands may be equally as effective as physical control.

Another factor to consider is that dogs (alongside other animals) need to be restrained, especially around disability assist/service dogs.

Service animals, including assistance/guide dogs, are specially trained to work with the disabled person they support. Any unnecessary disturbance by both people and other animals can distract them from their work, thereby impacting the ability of their owners to navigate or be supported.

DPA asks that the policy also highlight the need for people to be aware that all disability assistance dogs are working dogs and that Council work alongside disabled people to run regular publicity campaigns around this.

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| **Recommendation 1:** that Council re-word the policy to emphasise the need for all dog owners and handlers to exercise all reasonable skill and care and to always prioritise safety when handling dogs. |

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| **Recommendation 2:** that Council work with disabled people to raise public awareness of the fact that all disability assistance dogs are working dogs and should not be distracted while working. |