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Please find attached DPA’s submission on the draft Social Cohesion Framework.

## 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

**Disabled People and Social Cohesion**

DPA considers the following to be fundamental elements for any social cohesion framework to be meaningful for disabled people.

* Economic equity,
* Wellbeing,
* Trust,
* Safety,
* Non-discrimination,
* Social connection, and
* Sense of belonging .

Without all of these in place, genuine, enduring social cohesion will be very difficult if not impossible to be achieved. While there are components of the proposed social cohesion framework, such as “t*ackling all forms of discrimination at all levels” that* align with our understanding of social cohesion, we consider that there are a number of significant and necessary elements that are either missing or not given sufficient emphasis and/or prominence in the framework.

In this submission we will focus on the first four elements above: equity, wellbeing, trust and safety.

**Disabled People , Social Cohesion, Equity and Wellbeing**

A key element for disabled people is equity, in particular social and economic equity. Economic exclusion has a huge impact on both the ability to build social connections and on wellbeing outcomes for disabled people. Furthermore, the negative impacts of economic exclusion are cumulative over time.

There is strong evidence that unequal societies are more materially competitive, more hierarchical and more stressful for everyone[[1]](#footnote-2). It benefits everyone to ensure that no demographic or group is left behind in poverty or wellbeing outcomes.

It is also well established that wellbeing outcomes are much poorer for disabled people and their whānau across a wide range of measures[[2]](#footnote-3) [[3]](#footnote-4) [[4]](#footnote-5)

DPA believes that as long as disabled people, who have some of the poorest wellbeing outcomes in our communities, continue to be socially and economically excluded, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to build strong social cohesion.

To be meaningful for disabled people, any social cohesion framework must include measures that will improve economic equity and wellbeing for disabled people, particularly for disabled Māori, Pacific and children who experience some of the greatest inequality in our communities.

Failure to directly address equity for disabled people risks disabled people being left behind and increasing inequality for disabled people and their whānau which in turn will hinder other measures taken to build social cohesion.

For these reasons DPA considers it important that any social cohesion framework is explicit that there needs to be social and economic equity for disabled people and other marginalised groups. This needs to be much more specific and tangible than has been captured in the proposed actions under “*Improve equitable access to the determinants of wellbeing for all”* - and must capture fundamentals such as healthy food and warm safe and accessible housing.

Another area of concern for DPA is the reference throughout the framework to access and accessibility, rather than participation and equitable outcomes. This is particularly evident in the statement “*Improve equitable access to the determinants of wellbeing for all”* that is used in the framework. Further on, it goes on to suggest that an action for central government for “*Improve equitable access to the determinants of wellbeing for all”* be “*Provide funding for accessibility services (i.e. interpreters)“*

There are two comments we would like to make here. Firstly, disabled people need equitable access to services across society, not just to accessibility services. Secondly while DPA strongly supports and regularly advocates for improved access and accessibility; and increasing funding for accessibility services is one small component of this, it is important that improving accessibility does not become a proxy for improving participation and wellbeing for disabled people.

Put simply, progress in improving accessibility is not the same as progress in improving participation and wellbeing for disabled people. For example, improving access to MSD services by increasing funding for NZSL interpreters will not ensure that a disabled person has sufficient income to feed themselves well if benefit levels are too low.

Similarly improving access to kaianga ora services will not ensure that disabled people are safely and securely housed in warm dry accessible homes if there are insufficient accessible state homes available.

The limitations of what can be achieved by improving access need to be understood when developing and implementing the framework. It is action on access AND economic equity AND social participation that is needed. Actions listed in the tables for central government need to make progress across all of these areas. Action on access without progressing economic equity risks being tokenistic rather than transformative.

DPA recommends that attention be given to just what is intended by the terms access and accessibility throughout the framework and care is taken to ensure that these terms are not being used as a proxy for participation or wellbeing.

**Disabled People , Trust and Safety**

**Data on trust**

Trust between people and in public and private institutions systems is widely recognised as a fundamental component of social cohesion[[5]](#footnote-6). DPA would like to draw attention to the following data on trust.[[6]](#footnote-7) In 2020, disabled people aged 18 to 64 compared to non-disabled people the same age are:

* 2.8 times more likely to have low trust in other people in New Zealand;
* 3 times more likely to have low trust in the health system;
* 1.8 times more likely to have low trust in Parliament;
* 3.7 times more likely to have low trust in the Police; and
* 1.4 times more likely to have low trust in the media.

The table below compares different demographic groups that are more likely to report low trust. Low trust means a score of 0 to 4 on a scale where 0 is not trusted at all and 10 is trusted completely. Disabled people aged 18 to 64 are the demographic most likely to report low trust in the health system, people generally, and the police.

Of particular concern are the high rates of low trust reported by disabled people in the health system and the police. The low trust reported by disabled people is also a reflection of the negative attitudes and bias that disabled people continue to experience from wider society.

DPA believes that these findings indicate the need for significant work to be done in and across multiple sectors to improve awareness and understanding of disabled people’s rights and commitment to upholding them in all interactions with disabled people.

**Safety: Disabled people more at risk from Violence and Abuse.**

Being safe from violence and abuse is fundamental to building trust and social cohesion. The Ministry of Justice's New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey[[7]](#footnote-8) found disabled people were significantly more likely to experience crime across all categories - particularly sexual assault and intimate partner violence.

Of particular concern is that they found that disabled adults in New Zealand are 52% more likely to experience sexual violence in their lifetime[[8]](#footnote-9) and up to 16 per cent of disabled New Zealanders experienced interpersonal violence - abuse from a partner or family member - in the previous 12 months, more than twice that compared with non-disabled people (7%)

Because of the harm that has been done and is being done to disabled people by abuse and violence in all its forms, DPA is strongly supportive of the government’s stated commitment to ending family and sexual violence. We urge full implementation of the recently released national strategy –**Te Aorerekura**[[9]](#footnote-10) across government and see this as one of the foundations for building social cohesion.

We also want to draw attention to the extensive harm that has been done to disabled children taken into state care, as is being highlighted by the current Royal Commission Inquiry into Abuse in Care[[10]](#footnote-11) inquiry. Again, we see implementing the recommendations from this inquiry (both those that have been made already in the interim reports and the final recommendations) as a fundamental part of building a strong social cohesion framework.

**Comment on Principles for Social Cohesion.**

Finally, DPA believes that that many of the principles that form the basis of Te Aorerekura ( such as prioritising **equity and inclusion** in all spaces) and Enabling Good Lives[[11]](#footnote-12), (such as mana enhancing), are of relevance for building social cohesion. Incorporating these principles will greatly help with ensuring a social cohesion framework that resonates for disabled people.

1. <http://www.inequality.org.nz/understand/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [Child poverty statistics for households with disabled people released for the first time | Stats NZ](https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/child-poverty-statistics-for-households-with-disabled-people-released-for-the-first-time) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://ccsdisabilityaction.org.nz/assets/resource-files/The-State-of-wellbeing-and-equality-FINAL-ONLINE.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [How a loss of trust has fed the divisions in society | Stuff.co.nz](https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/128128199/how-a-loss-of-trust-has-fed-the-divisions-in-society) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. <https://www.dpa.org.nz/store/doc/Post-Election-2020-Briefing-For-MPs.docx> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. NZCVS-Cycle3-A5-20210611-v1.0-fin.pdf (justice.govt.nz) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. [Disabled adults more than 50 per cent more likely to suffer sexual violence in New Zealand - NZ Herald](https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/disabled-adults-more-than-50-per-cent-more-likely-to-suffer-sexual-violence-in-new-zealand/JSWA3WG2DQOEAYKAYGNO3ERLKQ/) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. [National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence | Violence Free NZ](https://violencefree.govt.nz/national-strategy/) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. [Home | Abuse in Care - Royal Commission of Inquiry](https://www.abuseincare.org.nz/) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. [Principles - Enabling Good Lives](https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/about-egl/egl-approach/principles/) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)