November 2024

**To Far North District Council**

Please find attached our submission on the Keeping of Animals Bylaw

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 Far North District Council (FNDC) on the Keeping of Animals Bylaw.

DPA commends FNDC on their recent adoption of the Te Tai Tokerau Regional Accessibility Strategy outlining the vision, values, outcomes and actions it will take improve accessibility and the experiences of disabled people in Te Tai Tokerau.[[1]](#footnote-2) DPA supports Option 4 of the Bylaw to maintain the health and safety of its residents and to ensuring that animal welfare is prioritised. Our recommendations will be given from a disability perspective.

# Health and safety of disabled people

DPA acknowledges that the bylaw does not include dogs which are covered under the Dog Management Policy and the Dog Management Bylaw 2018. Our main aim is to raise awareness that disabled people keep animals like bees, pigs, poultry, livestock and cats for both emotional support and practical reasons, including the need to earn income.

DPA notes that the issues with people not managing their animals can impact on disabled people’s health and/or cause other problems, especially for people who are immunocompromised. The following concerns raised in the discussion document also have an impact on disabled people: –

* Animal noise and odours impact on disabled people and people with health conditions that are sensitive to noises and odours.
* Animals getting into rubbish or gardens can create more work for disabled people if their support workers or caregivers’ hours are limited and they cannot clean up the mess created by any animals themselves.
* Feral, wild, and abandoned cats can cause issues through attacking disabled people, other domestic cats or creating additional work in terms of the need to remove fleas from infected animals on properties.
* Animal faecal matter on footpaths is also concerning for pedestrians and more so for disabled people who mobilise using wheelchairs and other mobility devices who may wheel through such contaminants and get faecal matter on the wheels of their wheelchairs or scooters which can be difficult to clean up afterwards.
* Animals wandering onto private or public property and causing damage are another concern as disabled people should not be dealing with any animals that are not their own.
* Poultry without proper housing or care can create an environment where diseases or pests such as chicken fleas can be produced and spread.

# Accessibility lens on impacts on disabled

DPA recognises that the effective management of the new bylaw means that the FNDC will have increased enforcement options, provide more solutions to address current issues, and provide clearer public guidelines for animal ownership.

However, we would like to highlight that many disabled people due to the lack of accessibility to education or employment[[2]](#footnote-3) live on low, fixed incomes[[3]](#footnote-4) and predominantly in the rural areas of Northland. For these reasons, costs such as vet fees, transport fees, medical exemption and animal registration fees can be very costly for disabled people.

We are pleased that FNDC is supporting services making funding available to help meet desexing and microchipping requirements for low-income earners. Accessibility to these animal welfare and health services for disabled people needs to be considered in relation to accessing this funding as well as any support around the transport of animals to the closest veterinary clinic(s).

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| **Recommendation 1:** that Council work with Northland disability organisations on communication with the local disability community around support for animal welfare and health. |

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| **Recommendation 2:** that Council provide funding information for desexing and microchipping requirements is accessible and available in accessible formats including New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), Braille, large print, captioned video, and audio.  |

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| **Recommendation 3:** that Council request the various services offering funding for desexing and microchipping requirements consider offering support for the transport of animals to vet clinics for the purposes of desexing and chipping in Northland |

There is anecdotal evidence that many disabled people in the region keep animals for food or to earn an income from. With the current cost of living crisis, the fact that food is expensive means that Northland is disproportionately impacted by high food insecurity.

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# Disability rights and community involvement

DPA advocates for the inclusion of disabled people within all decision-making processes. That is why it is encouraging to see that the NZBORA affirming our rights and freedoms, including that of the right to be free from discrimination as set out in the Human Rights Act 1993 is included. As mentioned above, DPA also works to see that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is fully implemented in Aotearoa alongside Te Tiriti o Waitangi

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| **Recommendation 4:** that Council work to increase membership on the FNDC Disability Advisory Group to get community feedback on disability issues in Northland |

# Disabled people and support animals

Animals provide emotional support for both non-disabled and disabled people. Animals can provide a great sense of connection and fun when they are well cared for. For example, the Cerebral Palsy Society has provided information about the value that pets bring to disabled people.[[4]](#footnote-5) Companion Animals lists the benefits of owning animals for physical health, mental health and children’s learning. A key point is the mental health support[[5]](#footnote-6) that animals can provide for disabled people who are isolated and living in rural areas, of which there are many in Northland.

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| **Recommendation 5:** that Council discuss with the disability community about the supports that can be provided to local disabled people who own animals. |

1. Whangarei District Council. (2024). *Te Tai Tokerau Regional Accessibility Strategy*. <https://www.wdc.govt.nz/Council/Council-documents/Strategies/Te-Tai-Tokerau-Regional-Accessibility-Strategy> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Statistics. (2023, Jun). *Labour market statistics (disability): June 2023 quarter.* <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/labour-market-statistics-disability-june-2023-quarter/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Office of Disability Issues. (n.d). *Key facts about disability in New Zealand.* <https://www.odi.govt.nz/home/about-disability/key-facts-about-disability-in-new-zealand/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Cerebral Palsy Society. (n.d). *Disability and Pets.* <https://cerebralpalsy.org.nz/disability-and-pets/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Anxiety NZ. (n.d). *How becoming a pet-owner improved my mental health.* <https://anxiety.org.nz/resources/how-becoming-a-pet-owner-improved-my-mental-health> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)