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To Wellington City Council

Please find attached DPA’s submission on Dog Review Policy

Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

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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.

Since our formation in 1983, DPA has brought disabled people together and shaped our collective input in a way that drives system level change.

**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/) and [Whāia Te Ao Mārama: Māori Disability Action Plan](https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/whaia-te-ao-marama-2018-2022-maori-disability-action-plan) as avenues to disabled people gaining greater choice and control over their lives and supports.

**We drive systemic change through:**

**Leadership:** reflecting the collective voice of disabled people, locally, nationally and internationally

* modelling disabled leadership;
* as a member of the [Disabled People’s Organisations (DPO) Coalition](https://www.odi.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/disabled-peoples-organisations/);
* as a member of [Disabled Peoples International](http://www.dpi.org/);
* as a member of the [Pacific Disability Forum](https://pacificdisability.org/), a member of the [International Disability Alliance](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/); and
* creating and supporting disabled-led initiatives such as [Mahi Tika – Equity in Employment](https://www.dpa.org.nz/mahitika/mahi-tika-equity-in-employment).

**Information and advice:** informing and advising on policies impacting on the lives of disabled people

* providing a channel for information between disabled people and government;
* providing advice, commentary, and submissions to Parliament, government agencies, and local authorities;
* providing advice to businesses and non-government organisations; and
* research.

**Advocacy:** supporting disabled people to have a voice, including a collective voice, in society

* listening to disabled people and identifying barriers to equity;
* engaging both nationally and regionally with our members and the wider community - disabled people, whānau, allies and organisations;
* building the capacity and capability of disabled people;
* partnering with other organisations on projects and campaigns; and
* engaging with the media.

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

* monitoring existing and proposed laws, policies and practices relevant to disabled people and whānau; and
* supporting government, organisations, businesses and the public to recognise, understand and address barriers to equity.

# The submission

DPA is providing this submission for the Wellington City Council in its deliberations around its Dog Policy.

Dogs are important in the lives of many disabled people. For blind and low vision people, guide dogs ensure that this section of the disability community can safely navigate around our communities. For people with other impairments, including those who live with physical and sensory impairments, neurodiversity and psychosocial (mental health) disabilities, disability assist dogs are important in enabling people to receive the physical, emotional and other support that they need to live good lives in our communities.

For both disabled and non-disabled people alike, dogs are also pets and companions who provide comfort, security and fun for their owners. Therefore, disabled people care very much for the health and wellbeing of their dogs and would like to see this recognised within the new policy.

Generally, we are largely happy with the existing Dog Policy from 2016 but would like to see some additional changes made to strengthen it going forward. This submission has been compiled with input from our Wellington membership who have recommended these improvements on the existing policy.

Firstly, we would like to state that DPA is happy with the retention of existing policies around recognising the needs and rights of disabled dog owners, especially disability assist dog owners, within the existing policy. We would like to see these provisions retained, essentially around recognising the legal rights of disabled people with their disability assist dogs to go anywhere where dogs might otherwise be barred from going.

Secondly, we would like to see the City Council launch a programme of public awareness and responsiveness around the needs and rights of disability assist dog owners. This awareness programme should be aimed at businesses and other entities who may not be aware, for example, of their legal responsibilities under the newly passed Human Rights (Disability Assist Dogs Non-Discrimination) Amendment Act 2021 to permit disability assist dogs into premises and grounds where other animals are usually banned. Also, this awareness programme should incorporate information around the Dog Control Act 1996 and its provisions permitting disability assist dogs into any premises and grounds as well.

This programme should be developed by the Council as part of a co-design partnership with disabled people and Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs) which include DPA and other principal stakeholders including Blind Citizens New Zealand, Muscular Dystrophy Association, Deaf Aotearoa, Balance New Zealand and People First. The Council’s Accessibility Advisory Group should be involved too as should other disability organisations.

Developing this type of programme would avoid discrimination being visited against disabled people who own disability assist dogs.

Thirdly, DPA notes that Council is currently investigating the possibility of letting animals, including dogs (in addition to disability assist dogs), onto retail premises. This would include into popular venues such as cafes and restaurants, especially where owners permit this. In terms of introducing this type of policy, the needs of people who live with allergies and other associated health conditions (particularly those triggered by being near animals) will need to be considered. Otherwise, this may lead to people with allergies effectively being excluded from premises without proper measures in place to manage this.

Otherwise, we look forward to the next round of consultation on the new Dog Policy which will be undertaken by the Council to be elected on October 8th.

DPA recommends that the next rounds of consultation involve us and representatives from other DPOs in the Wellington area as listed above.

# DPA’s recommendations

The Disabled Person’s Assembly strongly recommends:

* **Recommendation 1:** Thatthe City Council launch a programme of public awareness and responsiveness around the needs and rights of disability assist dog owners. This awareness programme should be aimed at businesses and other entities who may not be aware, for example, of their legal responsibilities under the newly passed Human Rights (Disability Assist Dogs Non-Discrimination) Amendment Act 2021 to permit disabled people with their disability assist dogs into premises and grounds where other animals are usually banned. Also, this awareness programme should incorporate information around the Dog Control Act 1996 and its provisions permitting disabled people with their disability assist dogs into any premises and grounds as well.
* **Recommendation 2:** That if Council decides to permit business and building owners the right to bring animals (including dogs in addition to disability assist dogs) onto their premises, that the needs of people who live with allergies and other associated health conditions (particularly those triggered by being near animals) will need to be considered and measures put in place.
* **Recommendation 3:** That this programme be developed by the Council as part of a co-design partnership with disabled people and Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs). The Council’s Accessibility Advisory Group should be involved too as should other disability organisations.
* **Recommendation 4:** That the next rounds of consultation involve us and representatives from other DPOs in the Wellington area as listed above.