

August 2023

To Auckland Council

Please find attached DPA’s submission on Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Plan

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/$file/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:**

* **Leadership:** reflecting the collective voice of disabled people, locally, nationally and internationally.
* **Information and advice:** informing and advising on policies impacting on the lives of disabled people.
* **Advocacy:** supporting disabled people to have a voice, including a collective voice, in society.
* **Monitoring:** monitoring and giving feedback on existing laws, policies and practices about and relevant to disabled people.

**UN 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 New Zealand has signed and ratified, confirming that disabled people must have the same human rights as everyone else. All state bodies in 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 3 – General principles**
* **Article 9 – Accessibility**
* **Article 11 – Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies**
* **Article 19 – Living independently and being included in the community**
* **Article 20 – Personal mobility**

**New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026**

Since ratifying the UNCRPD, the New Zealand Government has established a Disability Strategy2 to guide the work of government agencies on disability issues. The vision is that New Zealand be a non-disabling society, where disabled people have equal opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations, and that all of New Zealand works together to make this happen. It 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**
* **Objective 8 - Leadership**

# The Submission

**Introduction**

DPA welcomes the opportunity to feedback on the Auckland Council’s Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Plan 2023.

DPA believes that this plan is timely given the Auckland Anniversary Weekend and Cyclone Gabrielle weather events earlier this year.

Alongside others in the community, DPA were very concerned and disappointed about Council’s poor response to the Auckland Anniversary Weekend flooding events. The failures around not declaring a state of emergency and issuing warning notifications quickly enough have been well highlighted.

We hope that this plan will seek to address those failures to ensure that they never happen again.

DPA, in the immediate aftermath of the Auckland Anniversary Weekend flooding events and before Gabrielle struck, reached out to our members in the region to ascertain what their experiences had been like.

The feedback gleaned from these efforts included that while many disabled people were resilient and had withstood the floods well, others had not as we heard stories about the impact that weather-enforced homelessness had on disabled people, especially given the lack of accessible housing.  We also heard that there was some difficulty accessing support especially when it came to assisting with property clean ups and disruption of disability support services and activities.

We note that the new Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People initiated a response aimed at Auckland’s disabled community over both storm events by providing essential information and a coordinated response with disability organisations and service providers during these periods. The availability of funding from central government aimed at disabled people and their whānau and disability organisations also assisted during the clean-up and recovery period.

However, these storms reinforced the need from a civil defence perspective for timely information in accessible formats, good support systems, assistance to disabled people and their whānau in planning for disasters, and the ability to have well organised disability support systems and structures in the recovery phase are very important.

In our submission we call for closer collaboration between Council CDEM and Auckland’s disabled community through the establishment of a partnership in which disabled people are fully represented in all planning and response processes. We also call for emergency preparedness and responsiveness programmes to be made fully accessible to disabled people, provide more resources to enable disabled Aucklanders to become better prepared for disaster events and ensure that recovery programmes and processes fully address the needs of disabled people in emergencies.

DPA would also like to highlight that disabled people are at higher risk of being de-prioritised for support and assistance during civil emergencies. This has been the case both domestically and globally and is why the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) Article 11 calls for all signatories (including New Zealand) to recognise that disabled people have the right to the same level of protection as other people.

This is why local and central government – in this case Auckland CDEM – have a duty to ensure the safety of disabled people in times of risk and emergency.

Our submission covers the five main questions asked in the submission form and associated main document about partnership with mana whenua and mātāwaka, hazard reduction, operational readiness, community readiness and response.

**Partnership with mana whenua and mātāwaka**

DPA strongly supports the CDEM Plan’s requirement for a Te Tiriti-based relationship to be built with mana whenua and mātāwaka throughout Tāmaki Makaurau.

It is important when doing this to recognise the needs of Tangata Whaikaha disabled Māori who are inter-sectionally disadvantaged due to experiencing the barriers of systemic racism, ablism, and of disproportionately living in lower socioeconomic communities.

The needs of tangata whaikaha need to be fully accounted for in all CDEM emergency management plans and response processes.

This can best be achieved through working directly with Tangata Whaikaha Māori, their relevant iwi, hapu and whānau and representative organisations.

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| **Recommendation 1:** that CDEM and Council work in partnership with Tangata Whaikaha – Disabled Māori in all emergency management planning and response processes. |

**Hazard reduction**

DPA welcomes any measures which would seek to reduce the risks from natural and climatic hazards as suggested in the planning document.

As outlined in the CDEM plan, five yearly assessments of hazards are important but, wherever possible, these should also be undertaken annually, especially when it comes to hazards concerning flooding, sea level rise and earthquake/volcanic eruption risks.

DPA recognises that only so much can reasonably be done to contain and manage hazards by both CDEM and other relevant stakeholders. We believe that while it is reasonable that communities, businesses and government organisations take reasonable steps to prevent and/or manage these risks themselves, it is important that both central and local government funding be utilised to support these activities throughout the Auckland region.

Through central and local government funding, communities and businesses can be supported to undertake essential works to manage risks like updating drainage and sewerage systems to minimise flooding, make buildings earthquake and storm proof and improve communications infrastructure between CDEM and the communities it serves.

All work aimed at reducing risks to the natural and built environment from emergency events should ensure full accessibility for everyone to them, including for disabled people to, i.e., public buildings, parks, reserves, riverbeds, lake and beach fronts, housing and community spaces is retained and even improved because of any remediation work.

DPA believes that disabled people should be involved in the co-design and planning of any remedial work programmes which are designed to reduce climatic and natural hazard risks and in developing the planning instruments for the built environment which will be required to do so.

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| **Recommendation 2:** that all work aimed at reducing risks to the natural and built environment makes all spaces fully accessible to everyone, including disabled people. |
| **Recommendation 3:** that disabled people be involved in the co-design and planning of any remedial work programmes which are designed to reduce hazards and in developing the planning instruments for the built environment. |

**Operational readiness**

The operational readiness of Auckland CDEM must be more efficient and responsive in all civil emergencies going forward.

While DPA shares the view of many people that Auckland’s CDEM and Council leadership’s responsiveness were much improved by the time Cyclone Gabrielle struck in February, there is an absolute need to continually exercise and test all CDEM capabilities and capacities, including communications, with relevant stakeholders.

DPA welcomes CDEM’s plans for emergency management in Auckland to anticipate and assess a range of potential hazards and events and set out clear management approaches to address each contingency.

DPA supports the proposal in the CDEM plan for people involved in Auckland’s emergency management system to have the capabilities they need to support effective response and recovery. We believe this capability building should extend to disability responsiveness and awareness training for all CDEM staff and volunteers across the region.

This training should include how best CDEM should communicate with and support disabled people to plan for emergencies and then provide active support and accessible communications during emergencies.

To undertake these and other tasks, CDEM should consider appointing a Disability Responsiveness Advisor/Trainer to its team who would act as a focal point of contact between the agency and Auckland’s disabled community. Any appointee should preferably self-identify as a disabled person and have good links to the region’s disabled community and disability organisations.

DPA believes that the Responsiveness Advisor role should sit within the CDEM executive management team so that a disabled community perspective can be fed into all emergency response planning and during times of emergency.

DPA also recommends that CDEM employ staff and volunteers who are truly reflective and representative of the many communities who live in the region, be they Māori, Pasifika, ethnic, rainbow, disabled, rangatahi/youth, and older people to ensure that underrepresented groups become part of growing the agency’s presence in all of Auckland’s diverse communities.

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| **Recommendation 4:** that disability responsiveness and awareness training for all CDEM staff and volunteers should form part of ongoing capability and capacity building. |
| **Recommendation 5:** that CDEM appoint a Disability Responsiveness Advisor/Trainer to its team with their main role being to build relationships between the agency and the disabled community and would sit within the CDEM Executive Management Team. |
| **Recommendation 6:** that CDEM recruit and build a diverse volunteer and paid workforce which represents all of Auckland’s communities including representation from Māori, Pasifika, ethnic, rainbow, disabled, rangatahi/youth and older people’s communities. |

DPA supports the plan’s proposals to have the right strategic and operational partnerships, equipment and assets and supporting systems in place. These strategic and operational partnerships should include with the disabled community and disability organisations.

Assets and equipment should be stored in strategic locations throughout Auckland for ready deployment and be fully accessible for disabled people to use in the event of emergencies, i.e., inflatable boats/craft and other transport options in terms of accessible mobility vans.

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| **Recommendation 7:** that CDEM build strategic partnerships and relationships with the disabled community and disability organisations. |
| **Recommendation 8:** that CDEM assets and equipment be stored in strategic locations throughout Auckland for ready deployment and that they be accessible to disabled people (with assistance) in the event of an emergency, i.e., inflatable boats/craft and accessible mobility vans. |

**Community readiness**

DPA welcomes CDEM’s commitment to ensuring that all Tāmaki Makaurau communities are informed, prepared and resilient to emergencies.

DPA supports the use of public awareness and community engagement activities that will contribute to these goals. However, there is a need for programmes to be specifically targeted and accessible to demographic groups including disabled people.

For the disabled community, this will mean having CDEM working in a co-design partnership alongside disabled people to develop community readiness and responsiveness programmes aimed at D/deaf and disabled communities to help the disabled community prepare for emergencies.

These programmes should be co-delivered by CDEM in partnership with disabled people and disability organisations.

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| **Recommendation 9:** that CDEM work in partnership with disabled people to develop and deliver community preparedness and responsiveness programmes aimed at the disabled communities of Auckland. |

Disability organisations, including disability service providers, Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People and Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs) including DPA should be utilised by CDEM to provide information and support to the disabled community in times of emergency.

DPA believes that information and resources about civil defence emergencies and risks/hazards should be made fully available by CDEM and Council in accessible formats including New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), Braille, Large Print, Easy Read and audio to any D/deaf or disabled person who requests them.

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| **Recommendation 10:** that information and resources about civil defence emergencies is made available in accessible formats including NZSL, Braille, Large Print, Easy Read and audio. |

**Response**

DPA favours a strengthening of the response that CDEM and Auckland Council can mount in future emergencies. The Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) should not only be clearly articulated and fit for purpose but rigorously tested in non-emergency periods to ensure that it can work effectively when it needs to.

DPA absolutely supports the provision by CDEM of emergency alerts and information in accessible formats including NZSL.

These emergency alerts should be available via the Auckland Council or CDEM websites, text and email link and on mainstream media (especially NZSL interpretations which have been very usefully provided at media conferences held by CDEM in the recent past).

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| **Recommendation 11:** that CDEM provides emergency alerts and information in accessible formats including NZSL, both online (via website, text and email alert) and on mainstream media channels. |

DPA supports the concept proposed in the planning document for Aucklanders to have access to safe refuge spaces in emergencies.

DPA affirms the need for key emergency refuge spaces/evacuation/welfare centres to be fully accessible to disabled people in terms of ensuring that they are physically accessible and usable by people with mobility impairments (i.e., wheelchair/mobility aid users), have accessible toilet, cleaning and showering facilities (including wet floor showers and railed toilets), visual fire alarms, quite spaces provided for neurodiverse and people with mental distress (and those who just want a quiet space) to go to as well as adequate lighting and security.

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| **Recommendation 12:** that CDEM ensures that key refuge spaces in Auckland are accessible and user friendly for disabled people. |

DPA believes that evacuation processes should be made accessible to disabled people by CDEM in terms of, for example, providing free mobility taxi and accessible bus services to transport disabled people to safer refuge in times of emergency (if time permits), as well as inflatable rafts and other rescue equipment worked by well-trained staff and volunteers who understand the needs of disabled people, amongst others.

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| **Recommendation 13:** that CDEM make evacuation processes accessible to disabled people and work with the disabled community to do so. |

**Recovery**

DPA supports the concept of recovery outlined in the CDEM Plan as being the need to use coordinated efforts to regenerate communities after an emergency is over by learning lessons and applying them as well as enhancing preparations for any future events.

DPA believes that CDEM needs to work with social agencies, including disability organisations and disabled people themselves, in identifying recovery needs and ensuring that resources and support are pooled from both central and local government as well as communities to ensure that disabled people are supported with clean-up activities, finding food, clothing and accessible accommodation and have whatever personal supports they usually have or may require due to the emergency.

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| **Recommendation 14:** that CDEM work with disabled people and disability organisations to identify the recovery needs of disabled people and the disabled community in the aftermath of emergencies. |

As mentioned earlier in this submission, finding accessible housing can be an issue for disabled people whose own accessible homes are damaged or become unliveable following an emergency.

DPA believes that Auckland Council working with both disabled people and central government should come up with solutions to ensure that disabled people can be re-housed in accessible accommodation (preferably emergency or temporary accommodation) until they can return to their own homes.

If homes are deemed unable to be moved back into then disabled people should be re-housed with support from central government and/or iwi and hapu as soon as practicable.

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| **Recommendation 15:** that Auckland Council work with both disabled people and government to ensure that disabled people can be re-housed in accessible accommodation until they can return to their own homes or permanently re-housed in accessible housing within the shortest possible timeframe if homes are deemed unliveable. |