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**To Otago Regional Council**

Please find attached our submission on the Strategic Climate Action Plan 2024

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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.

## United Nations 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]](#footnote-2) 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.

The following UNCRPD articles are particularly relevant to this submission:

* **Article 4.3 – General principles**
* **Article 9 – Accessibility**
* **Article 11 – Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies**

# The Submission

**Introduction**

DPA welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Otago Regional Council (ORC) on the Strategic Climate Action Plan.

From our reading of the strategic plan and associated action plan, we support the direction that council is taking around climate change.

We have contributed our perspective on climate change and its impact on disabled people in some of our past submissions to the ORC so we are pleased that the ORC has taken on board some of our key recommendations from past submissions in this action plan. This includes the need to decarbonise the region’s Total Mobility service fleet and increase accessibility for disabled and older people to public transport services.

We also wish to acknowledge the ORC’s support for our upcoming workshops on civil defence and emergency preparedness for Dunedin’s disability community.

In this submission we briefly reiterate some of the key background issues for disabled people around climate change.

**Disabled people at increased risk from climate change**

In past submissions, we have referenced a journal article from *Nature Climate Change* [[2]](#footnote-3) which highlighted how many governments arefailing to take disability inclusive climate action, and that disabled people are disproportionately more at risk of higher mortality rates in climate emergencies.

This is underpinned by the fact that disabled people have been treated as lower priority in climate emergencies or other disasters and systemically excluded from receiving emergency healthcare and humanitarian support as a result.

The article also highlighted that slow onset climate change, including sea level rise, more intense and damaging weather events, as well as rising water and food scarcity all exacerbate the existing inequities experienced by disabled people.

Michael Stein, in a Harvard University Center for the Environment (2023) [[3]](#footnote-4) interview elaborated about the impacts of slow onset climate change on disabled people:

*“Climate change amplifies the marginalization experienced by persons with disabilities negatively affecting health, reducing access to healthcare services, food, water, and accessible infrastructure. People with psychosocial disabilities have triple the rate of mortality in heatwaves.”*

It is in this wider context that DPA is pleased that the ORC has started on a collaborative process with disabled people to further explore and address these issues from a disability perspective.

**South Dunedin Future project**

One of the most crucial issues facing disabled people in the New Zealand context is that of managed retreat.

DPA has been recognised by both the ORC and Dunedin City Council (DCC) as one of the key stakeholders in the South Dunedin Future Project. We are strongly supportive of the community-driven approach that has been taken to this and the openness that the project team have demonstrated in their interactions with both us and other community organisations involved in this project.

**Q.1): The draft plan puts forward a vision for a low-emissions Otago with resilient ecosystems, communities and businesses. Does ORC’s vision for Otago align with your vision for Otago?**

Yes, it does. We need ambition if we want to meet our climate goals as a region and as a country. DPA recommends that the ORC aim for a greater emissions target than central government’s on the basis that the government’s proposed reductions will be less than what is needed to meet our 2050 climate targets.

As we noted above, it is important to remember that disabled people are being impacted and placed at risk by climate related emergencies like floods, heatwaves and fires. That is why this province must do its part to meet the 1.5-degree Celsius warming limit set by the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

**Q.2) The draft plan’s mitigation goals reflect the sort of work that ORC can do to help mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Which of the mitigation goals below could ORC be working harder to address?**

DPA believes that while the ORC is making good progress around managing climate change issues, it should working hard to equally address all of them.

**Goal 1.1: ORC provides relevant information to Otago’s leaders, mana whenua, communities and businesses to support them to make well-informed decisions to mitigate emissions.**

DPA would like to see a greater flow of information in accessible formats, for example, Braille, Large Print, New Zealand Sign Language, Easy Read, captioned video and audio so that disabled people can make well informed decisions around how to mitigate their own emissions.

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| **Recommendation 1:** that the ORC provide emissions mitigation information in accessible formats to enable disabled people to help our disability community to make informed decisions around emissions mitigation. |

**Goal 1.2: ORC operates low-emissions, efficient and affordable public transport services that are widely used by Otago people and visitors.**

DPA supports this goal as transport emissions comprise 5.7% of all carbon emissions in our region.

DPA supports many of the ORC’s underway or planned actions including those around providing reliable, accessible public transport services, decarbonising the public transport fleet, exploring opportunities to support decarbonisation through the Total Mobility Scheme, and undertaking surveys of total mobility and other public transport users.

DPA called for many of these actions in past submissions to the ORC and we are delighted that these have been included in this draft climate action plan.

**Goal 1.3: ORC works in partnership with mana whenua and coordinates and collaborates with other agencies and communities to deliver cohesive climate action mitigation.**

DPA is supportive of the increased efforts that ORC has gone to in communicating with the wider disability community, including through groups such as Access for All Dunedin (of which DPA is a part) on relevant issues.

ORC need to ensure that they are also engaging with other disabled communities throughout the province, particularly those in provincial Otago such as Alexandra, Queenstown, Balclutha, and Oamaru specifically around climate change.

Hearing the voices of rural disabled people, including on accessible transport changes, will be crucial going forwards.

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| **Recommendation 2:** that the voices of rural disabled people are engaged with and heard on climate change, transport and other issues by the ORC. |

**Goal 1.4: ORC has delivered on the community’s expectations to be a low-emissions organisation**

DPA supports the ORC leading by example in terms of reducing its own emissions.

We support all the actions that ORC has given itself including the development and implementation of an organisational emissions reduction plan.

DPA recommends an additional action be added in that the internal organisational plan be publicly consulted upon and once adopted, that the ORC annually report on its performance against set targets.

Through those means, the public will be able to hold the ORC accountable for reducing its own organisational emissions/carbon footprint.

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| **Recommendation 3:** that the ORC internal emissions reduction plan be opened for public consultation and that implementation is publicly reported upon annually. |

**Q.3) The draft plan’s adaptation goals reflect the sort of work that ORC can do to help our region adapt to the impacts of climate change. Which of these adaptation goals do you think the ORC should be working harder to progress?**

DPA supports the ORC work to achieve the following adaptation goals:

**Goal 2.1: ORC enables mana whenua to exercise rakatiraraka and increase their climate resilience through supporting the identification of risks to the value of mana whenua and collaborating on Māori-led adaptation planning.**

DPA supports more work being undertaken around this goal as the future of local tāngata whaikaha disabled Māori will continue to be impacted by climate change.

DPA has been particularly impressed by the partnerships forged between the ORC and Ngai Tahu over civil defence.

DPA has seen the benefits this has brought, including through local marae distributing emergency response kits to member whānau, including tāngata whaikaha disabled Māori.

Hopefully, the adoption of this plan will see similar actions implemented with not just Māori but other local communities including the wider disability community.

**Goal 2.2: ORC works in partnership with mana whenua and coordinates and collaborates with other agencies and communities to deliver cohesive climate action.**

DPA is happy to see the ORC’s increasing engagement with the disability community around various issues.

However, there is scope for engagement with the disability community to be stepped up around climate change issues.

One way of doing this would be through holding community hui with disabled people around raising awareness on climate change and gaining feedback on how disabled people can be involved in climate change planning and mitigation activities at the community level. A major focus of these hui would be around co-designing accessible, inclusive ways in which disabled people can do so at the individual, family/whānau and disability community level.

Such hui might be a good follow up to the upcoming civil defence emergency responsiveness hui being hosted by DPA.

We also recommend that similar climate change hui be held with other identified communities around the region, i.e., Māori, older people and rural communities.

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| **Recommendation 4:** that the ORC co-host hui with the local disability community around how disabled people can be involved in climate change mitigation activities and co-designing accessible, inclusive ways of doing so. |

**Goal 2.3: ORC effectively supports communities to reduce the impact of, be ready for, respond to and recover from climate-related events.**

DPA is supportive of this goal and believes that actions in this area should be stepped up around raising community awareness of climate hazards.

As noted above, the ORC is already playing a role with the disability community in this space through its participation in our upcoming Be Emergency Prepared! Workshop for the disability community.

It is expected that this workshop will generate further conversations between the ORC and the local disability community around what can be done in terms of climate change emergency event preparation, response and recovery planning.

**Goal 2.4: ORC provides reliable and relevant information to Otago’s leaders, mana whenua, communities and businesses to support them to make well informed decisions to increase their climate resilience.**

We reiterate the recommendation we made around Goal 1.1 that information on climate resilience be made available in accessible formats so that disabled people can fully participate in and be informed about these efforts.

**Q.3) ORC has detailed the actions being taken to address climate change in the action plan section? Do we think the ORC is doing enough to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions across the region?**

DPA recommends that greater efforts are made around addressing the high emissions which emanate from agriculture and fishing (74.4%).

While we acknowledge the action around the ORC engaging with the Otago Extension Network meetings hosted by Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), there are more specific actions that need to be added when it comes to reducing emissions from agricultural and aquacultural activities.

If emissions from our biggest emitting industries are not effectively tackled either regionally and/or nationally, we will fail to meet our country targets for emissions reductions, effectively dooming people who are at high risk from climate change, including disabled people, to a more dangerous future.

While acknowledging that targets for rural and fishing emissions need to be developed in collaboration with farmers and fishers, we note the resistance that has sometimes come from sections of those communities towards doing so.

Negative rural and fishing community attitudes towards climate change need to be urgently addressed, including through ongoing education, dialogue and using whatever limited powers the ORC possesses in the climate space to create both incentives and disincentives for the farming and fishing sectors to reduce emissions.

All the actions we take around our planetary ecology and climate impact everyone, including disabled people.

Any steps taken to reduce emissions by the largest emitters, including agriculture, will benefit everyone and that means both disabled people and the agricultural and fisheries sectors themselves.

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| **Recommendation 5:** that the ORC develop more actions around reducing the large-scale emissions of the agricultural and fishing sectors. |

1. <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-articles> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Stein, J.S., Stein, M., Groce, N. & Kett, M. (2023). The role of the scientific community in strengthening disability-inclusive climate resilience. *Nature Climate Change 13*, 108-109. [https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-022-01564-6.epdf?](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-022-01564-6.epdf?sharing_token=WG7FDIwxm9EdrpxLpip75tRgN0jAjWel9jnR3ZoTv0OlD0JgJ93tTQjFULmdry3BVlmuGxD5onmsJt996nkMEGAr2tCBsveYWZXhgtd709bHCKwbcstWptPivtOz4U34R-phYAWEgIDvEDGs0fzjPHcHM0ng8l0DWIje7vQzL10%3D) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Harvard University Center for the Environment. (2023, January 19). *Disability in a Time of Climate Disaster*. Retrieved from [https://environment.harvard.edu/news/disability-time-climate-disaster#:](https://environment.harvard.edu/news/disability-time-climate-disaster#:~:text=Climate%20change%20amplifies%20the%20marginalization,rate%20of%20mortality%20in%20heatwaves) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)