

Disability Advisory Panel Achievements 2019-2022

The Disability Advisory Panel began its meetings for this term in August 2020 and has captured a wide range of disability perspectives. Interruptions due to COVID 19 both delayed the appointment of Panel members, resulting in a shorter term, and impacted how the Panel operated. The majority of Panel meetings were held online rather than in person due to various COVID 19 restrictions. However, by having the meetings online, this presented an opportunity for increased engagement, such as for open meetings for members of the public and for Panel members that may have only been able to attend half meetings or might otherwise have difficulty with transport. Online meetings significantly increased public attendance and participation in open panel meetings. However, the lack of regular face to face meetings may have impacted the quality of the experience for panel members.

Membership

Panel members for this term were Martine Abel-Williamson QSM (co-chair), Jason Boberg (co-chair), Renata Kotua (August 2020 to June 2021), Chantelle Griffiths, Gerard Martin, Bonnie Robinson, Rachel Peterson, Ursula Thynne, Kramer Hoeflich and Ronelle Baker (October 2021 to September 2022),

The high calibre of panel members, and their impact, was enhanced by the co-chairs' leadership.

Acknowledgements

The Panel would like to acknowledge the support of Liaison Councillor Josephine Bartley, her second term in the role, and the enduring support and advocacy of Councillor Cathy Casey, in her role supporting all of the advisory panels.

The Panel is appreciative of the support of council staff, both those directly supporting the Panel and those presenting to the Panel. Particularly for those in their first term, Panel members also acknowledge the significant support provided by peers within this Panel and other Panels, both past and present.

The Panel's work programme

At the start of the term, the panel set out objectives for how council can value disability diversity by:

- Embedding disability impact thinking, inclusion and universal design across people and places, access, climate action, the council workforce, governance, and digital inclusion; and
- Ensuring that recovery from the impacts of COVID includes doing things differently in ways that empower disabled people in Tāmaki Makaurau.

Six key actions were identified by the panel:

- Advise the council on helping to change the public awareness of the

strengths and rights of disabled people, and to celebrate disability in its diversity.

- Provide input on council initiatives and advocacy to increase disabled people's access to affordable accessible housing.
- Help the council group to identify priorities for more accessible end-to-end transport solutions.
- Understand and advise on the council's strategies for recruiting, retaining and mentoring disabled people.
- Support the council to understand and remove barriers to the participation of disabled people in governance. Advocate for council-appointed entities to include appointees with lived experience of disability.
- Through the panel's activity, demonstrate the strengths disabled people bring to creating a Tāmaki Makaurau that works for everyone.

Presentations from council staff

The panel established a strongly inclusive and learning environment for council staff to present and seek feedback. The panel appreciated that staff focused presentations on matters of most interest to the panel and participated in discussions as a shared learning experience. Panel members also valued staff returning to 'close the loop' on topics that the Panel had provided feedback on.

The Disability Advisory Panel received presentations on, and provided feedback to:

- Auckland Council's Long Term Plan
- Economic Development Action Plan
- Regional Land Transport Plan
- Regional Parks Management Plan
- Affordable Housing Advocacy Plan
- Eke Panuku Thriving Town Centre guidance
- Auckland Transport Parking Strategy
- Future of Local Government Review
- Housing Consultation

The Panel received several presentations from the Auckland Regional Leadership Group, a grouping of central and local government agencies that were meeting fortnightly to understand, collaborate and address the far-reaching impacts and unforeseen consequences of COVID 19. The Panel provided essential feedback from a disability perspective regarding access to emergency food parcels, access to vaccination centres or at-home vaccinations, and access to online information.

The Panel received two presentations from the Bylaws team in relation to the Street Trading and activities on the footpath bylaws. These have since been incorporated into the Activities in the Road Corridor Bylaw (2022). Panel members advocated for a reduction in street clutter due to the impacts on accessibility, careful management of trading on the footpath including outdoor dining provision

and advocated for safety improvements for e-scooter management and licensing to minimise their interactions with pedestrians.

The Panel received two presentations from the Plans and Places department on a proposed Transport Plan Change in relation to the National Policy Statement for Urban Development. The Panel supported the provision of accessible parking requirements for residential developments. The Plan Change was publicly notified on 18th August 2022.

Disability Operational Action Plan

Auckland Council's Disability Operational Action Plan was initiated by the 2013-2016 panel and published in 2015. The plan sets out actions across council departments to increase accessibility across a range of facilities and services.

This Panel has continued to provide advice in relation to the Disability Operational Action Plan, receiving progress reports twice yearly, and providing input to its implementation.

Beach Access

Panel members supported the provision of accessible beach matting for Takapuna. An adult change facility – Changing Places - has also recently been completed at Gould Reserve.

Pools and Leisure Facilities

Panel members have advocated for greater accessibility in council's pools and leisure centres including: provision of accessibility information online, provision of appropriately designed accessible parking, provision of accessible toilet and changing facilities, ensuring accessibility equipment such as hoists are provided and maintained, and encouraging regular accessibility training of frontline staff. Four Pool and Leisure Centres have had accessibility audits in 2022 – Westwave, Lloyd Elsmore Pool, Otara Pool and Leisure Centre, and Albany Stadium Pool. The Panel also recommended Council prioritise the sale of older Council facilities that remained inaccessible, to free up resources to improve accessibility elsewhere in its building stock.

Public Transport

Auckland Transport has its own Accessible Action Plan which is updated and reviewed with Auckland Transport's Public Transport Accessibility Group. The Disability Advisory Panel supported new electric bus and electric ferry provisions that are more accessible, as well as actively retiring buses that provided accessibility challenges.

Newsletter

The Panel initiated and supported the production of a regular newsletter to communicate council's progress against the [Disability Operational Action Plan](#)

Community engagement forum

In support of the actions in the work programme, in 2022, the Panel hosted an online community forum focused on disability leadership, led by Ursula Thynne and Gerard Martin, with support from Council's Support team and from Panel members.

The *Exploring Disability Leadership Forum*, with MC and panel co-chair Jason Boberg, included presentations from Martine Abel-Williamson QSM (co-chair and President of the World Blind Union), Dan Buckingham (Chief Executive, Able) and Paula Tesoriero (the then New Zealand Disability Rights Commissioner, recently appointed as Chief Executive Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People). The event was attended by 50 people, including Panel members, members of the public and some council staff and council-controlled organisation staff. Participants shared their experiences and learned from disabled leadership stories and each other. Positive feedback was received from the presenters, council staff and members of the public following this forum.

Cross-panel working groups

Panel members actively contributed to cross-panel working groups:

- Climate Change Working Group
 - The cross panel climate change working group was formed to provide diverse community advice to guide the implementation of Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri: Auckland Climate Plan. The group acted to shape climate action, considered by the plan, to be not only a technical effort to cut emissions but to also address human rights and social inequalities in recognition that the effects of climate change are not borne equally.
 - The group provided advice on key issues, barriers and opportunities arising through implementation of the plan and provided an opportunity for diverse communities and staff to discuss issues, share information and identify opportunities to build capability in relation to climate change.
- Thriving Communities Working Group
 - Panel members contributed to Ngā Hapori Momoho Thriving Communities Strategy 2022-2032, Council's wellbeing strategy with a particular focus on increased access and participation, improved health outcomes and increased community resilience and sustainability.
- Elections Working Group
 - Panel members continued to advocate for online voting as a means of improving accessibility for disabled voters. Panel members supported the call for supports for disabled candidates to stand in local body elections. Panel members made recommendations on engaging with disability organisations to improve voter turnout.

Other feedback opportunities

The panel also provided feedback on:

- Auckland Council's submission on the Ministry for the Environment's consultation document – *Reducing the impact of plastic on our environment*.
- Submission to Statistics New Zealand on the 2023 Disability Survey

- International Day of Persons with Disabilities – 3 December 2021
- Significance and Engagement Policy Refresh

Disability related achievements outside the panel's work

Martine Abel-Williamson:

- Opened the 15th conference of state parties (COSP15) to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD) at the United Nations in New York, NY in June 2022.

Jason Boberg:

- Facilitated the Disability Caucus, spoke at the People's Plenary, and gave the first high-level intervention on behalf of the Disability Caucus at COP26 UNFCCC in Glasgow.
- Held a side event at COSP15 - Disability Inclusive Climate Action: Opportunities and Best Practices, from domestic action to the UNFCCC.
- Speaker at the 50th session of Human Rights Council side event - Climate Change and Persons with Disabilities – how to ensure equal participation, full realization and enjoyment of human rights.

Appendix 1:

Recommendations to incoming panel

Ensure that, through the panel member induction or other means, the panel has a good understanding of what is and is not within council's ability to control/manage.

There is much to learn about council and how to be an effective panel member. When new panel members join, they should be partnered with a mentor who is a more experienced panel member or past panel member.

Diversity in panel membership is important, as is intersectionality – for example being tāngata whaikaha Māori (highlighted in Stuff article - <https://www.stuff.co.nz/pou-tiaki/128364706/being-mori-and-disabled-is-a-doubleedged-sword>).

There is added value in panels working together in Auckland's big issues (housing, transport, local elections, governance, belonging and participation). Encourage opportunities for cross-panel working groups and workshops.

Feedback from panels is most effectively captured during discussions between staff and panel members, rather than seeking written feedback from panels.

There is much to be learnt from others working within the disability sector and councils around the country. More efforts could be made to draw on these people through focused engagements.

Continue to monitor and support the implementation of the Disability Operational Action Plan and ensure that success is communicated and celebrated.

Contribute to continuing the supportive environment that encourages staff and the Panel to get the most learning out of discussions, presentations and feedback received.

Enjoy the experience, learn more about council and disability issues, and take opportunities to grow and develop one's governance experience and capability.