

Auckland Council Disability Advisory Panel's recommendations on the Auckland Council 10-year budget and Auckland Plan 2050

21 March 2018

1. Overarching principles:

Recommendations:

- That Auckland Council staff recognises the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026 (NZDS).
- That Auckland Council references both of the above documents, and the importance of accessibility and inclusion, in all council policies and strategies.
- That Auckland Council consults this Panel on issue relevant to Aucklanders with disabilities or access needs. This includes, but is not limited to physical, cognitive, sensory, and emotional access needs, both permanent and temporary.
- That Auckland Council makes full use of their online tools – the Auckland Design Manual and Universal Design Tool.

2. Regional fuel tax increase (RFT)

The Panel generally supports introducing an RFT to pay for improvements to our transport system, but has the following concerns:

- The Auckland Transport administered Total Mobility Scheme maximum subsidy (\$40.00 - i.e. half of an \$80 taxi fare) has not changed since October 2010. The panel believes this is no longer sufficient, especially in light of the introduction of an RFT which can be expected to cause a rise in taxi fares.
- Some people with disabilities, or senior citizens, may lose the level of freedom and independence they have from driving their personal vehicles due to the higher cost of fuel.
- Because of the lack of accessible housing, people have less choice over where they live, which may incur longer travelling distances, and therefore higher fuel costs.
- The amount of fuel used by people who use power wheelchairs can be far greater because of the chair's weight (>120kg), and the need to use larger vehicles.

Recommendation:

- **That, should an RFT be introduced, council reviews with Auckland Transport the maximum fare subsidy of the Total Mobility Scheme, as taxi and other public transport fares are likely to increase as a result of the introduction of the RFT.**

3. Environment – e.g. kauri dieback and water quality

We support the environmental targeted rates increase (option B). We believe that the people of Auckland, acting as stewards of the land, need to ensure that we are acting in a sustainable and caring way towards the environment. We also encourage the implementation of Environmental Education programmes to ensure that we have a holistic approach to environmental wellbeing, as well as adopting a Taha Māori approach.

As a panel, we have further concerns regarding the environment:

- Issues which affect the general population are exacerbated within the disability community (for example, environmental / weather events). Just two examples are overflowing storm water drainage systems and household rubbish scattered over some footpaths which can create safety issues and impede mobility.
- Eco-principles need to sit at a policy level – current consent processes can be lengthy and debilitating for eco-friendly constructions.
- As noted in the Housing section below, we recommend speedier consent processes for accessible housing builds as well as eco-housing builds.

Recommendations:

- **That Council adopts Option B.**
- **That Council addresses the further concerns above.**

4. Transport investment proposals

The panel is deeply concerned about accessible public transport in Auckland and strongly recommends improvements in this area.

- **Inequitable subsidy and permit access**
 - Some in the disability community receive subsidies for travel on public transport, and others do not.
 - Some in the disability community receive mobility parking permits, and others do not.

Recommendation:

- **That Council advocates for equitable access to subsidies and parking permits.**
- **Public Transport:**
 - Public transport is currently neither adequately nor consistently accessible.
 - This affects those with anxiety, people who are deaf (accessing information not provided in NZ Sign Language), blind/visually impaired people, those with mobility issues, with cognitive and literacy issues, and others.

Recommendations:

- **That Auckland Transport (as a Council-controlled organization or CCO) recognises the UNCRPD and the NZDS.**
- **That AT references both of the above documents, and the importance of accessibility and inclusion, in all transport Policies and Strategies.**

5. Housing investment proposals

The panel is deeply concerned about the accessible housing in Auckland and strongly recommends Auckland Council do more to encourage more accessible housing in the region.

- Housing is a key issue for our communities – it is the foundation for other issues, including transport.
- There are issues around central government policy that the panel would appreciate advocacy from local government. We would like to engage with Auckland Council in the future about these issues, including conflicting policies that prevent people from being eligible for accessible social housing.

Recommendations:

- **That Council provides speedier consent processes for developers who provide affordable accessible housing (private and social).**
- **That Council provides financial incentives through rates for accessibility features or retrofitting.**
- **That Council consults with the Panel about engaging with central government to prioritise housing issues for those with disabilities – including conflicting policies that prevent people from being eligible for accessible social housing.**
- **Within the context of the Auckland Plan and Long Term Plan documents, the panel recommends adding the word ‘accessible’ wherever housing is discussed.**
- **That Council implements their tools wherever possible:**
 - **Auckland Design Manual**
 - **Universal Design Tool**
 - **For more information visit aucklanddesignmanual.co.nz or universaldesigntool.co.nz**

6. Rates increase

The Panel has a neutral stance on the general rates increase.

- Home ownership for general population within Auckland is becoming increasingly difficult – it is even more problematic for people with all disabilities, including those with mental health issues.
- Homeowners with disabilities pay the same rates as those without disabilities, but may not be able to use various services funded by rates, due to inaccessibility. This may impact particularly senior citizens who acquire impairments through aging.
- Rate increases will likely increase rent payments. People with disabilities are more likely to rent than be home owners.

Recommendation:

- **That Council considers the impact of rate increases on our communities and consults further with the panel about mitigating negative effects.**

7. Miscellaneous

The following issues are brought to the Council's attention for future, ongoing engagement:

- Social environments, which people find difficult to access or find overwhelming, is of concern. A sense of belonging is necessary in the long term – consider designing some spaces where one size fits one, rather than always using a one size fits all approach.
- When someone faces barriers accessing various social environments, it may not just affect them, but those around them, for example, support people and children.
- Full participation is the key issue.
- Civic engagement excludes people when methods are limited, for example, people cannot make a verbal/video/sign language submission. This affects those who have English as a second language as well.
- There are few statistics relating to our communities, eg. homeowners vs renters, levels of employment and income. We would like to engage Council's research unit to address this lack of information.