

Group Manager Visitor Services and Assets
Auckland Regional Council
Private Bag 92012
Auckland

21st December 2009

Dear Sir or Madam

Re: draft Regional Parks Management Plan

Thank you for the invitation to review the draft Regional Parks Management Plan and for the opportunity to make a submission, which is attached.

The Auckland Disability Providers Network Inc. (ADPN) has a membership of 100 disability provider organisations, each one representing a large group of people with disabilities in the Auckland region. (Attached are brief details about the ADPN)

Our principle objective is to ensure an inclusive future for all people in the Auckland region, with a particular focus on the needs of people with disabilities. However, it must be remembered that there are many citizens who do not consider themselves disabled, but whose lifestyle is compromised. If we get it right for people with disabilities, we also get it right for the elderly, for children, young families with prams, and for people for whom English is their second language and other minority groups.

NZ has a Disability Strategy which received international recognition through the United Nations Franklyn D. Roosevelt Award in 2008. However, the strategy has received little more than lip service in many Government and local body departments.

It is estimated that in New Zealand one person in five has a disability; that is 20% of the population. A not inconsiderable proportion! The day will come when each and every one of us will need an environment which suits our aging and failing condition. We need to be certain that these vital aspects of life are not left as "add-ons" or after thoughts in all the planning.

We feel strongly that provision should be made to ensure that all citizens are given the same opportunities to enjoy the benefits of access to our natural environment as a means of maximizing leisure time and facilitating the health and wellbeing of Aucklanders and visitors.

The work that has been carried out in preparing the Draft Regional Parks Plan is considerable and the disability committee congratulates the researchers and writers on this major body of work. In particular, we appreciate the section 11.1.3: "Limited and special mobility needs."

We welcome the opportunity to speak to our submission if there are to be hearings and assure you of our willingness to assist if there are questions concerning disability issues in the future.

Yours sincerely

Pam Antill
Executive Officer

Submission on the ARC Regional Parks Management plan

1. The section on 11.1.3: “Limited and special mobility needs” is to be commended.
2. A Barrier Free audit on Auckland’s Regional Parks was carried out in 2003 by CCS Disability Action. We recommend that this audit be re-visited and a report be written on the progress that has been made since. Have the recommendations highlighted in the audit report been implemented in the new facilities?
 - Recommendation: *A regular barrier free audit should be incorporated into the strategies to ensure access is made possible for all.*
3. We see access to parks as a vital element in the health of the citizens of a city. Research shows that having the opportunity to experience the outdoor environment increases quality of life through encouraging physical activity and has a positive impact on mental health. (ref. Prof. Billie Giles-Corti: Director, Centre for the built Environment and Health, School of Population Health, University of Western Australia)

Simply providing open spaces is not sufficient. People need to feel safe and that access is easy, affordable and barrier free. This contributes towards the social capital of a city.
4. Human scale is important. Therefore pavements, cycle paths, the opportunity to walk dogs, use wheel chairs and mobility scooters, use roads and cross roads safely, as well as access to public transport and car parking must all be accessible.
5. Consultation Guide: Part 11 Recreation and use management, page 5: we would like to see provision for disability vehicles
6. “Step Up Auckland” - the study carried out in 2009 in Auckland by the Auckland City Council and Auckland District Health Board, as two key agencies responsible for improving services to, access for and wellbeing of disabled people should be used as a reference document. It points to the enabling roles and responsibilities of all key decision-makers in the Auckland region. It is based on the understanding that disability is a result of the interaction between people’s impairments and their environments.

This report provides evidence about the key issues, needs and aspirations of the 77,000 disabled people in Auckland, New Zealand’s largest city. It was brought together by representatives of the Auckland City Council, Auckland District Health Board, Waitakere City Council and AUT University’s Institute of Public Policy. These agencies aimed to provide a clear snapshot of Auckland City’s heterogeneous disabled people and the reality of their lives that can be used to inform decisions in achieving enhanced citizenship.

7. Signage

Health, safety and wellbeing information must be conveyed in an accessible way to cater for people with all types of sensory and intellectual and literacy impairments. Those with communication problems must be able to access information e.g. danger, information about the parks themselves, about transport. Barriers to access are not solely physical.

8. Recommendations

- The Regional Parks Management Plan should be tested against the NZ Disability Strategy as the minimum standard required.
- The NZ Disability Strategy should be used as a reference against all new proposals and whenever changes are considered.
- Close communication between Parks Management and other city planners is vital to ensure Regional Parks are an integrated part of the city and accessible to everyone.
- Staff training: staff must be trained in customer service and have good communication skills. This includes not only the rangers, but also the call centre staff, who must know what provision there is in parks for people with limited mobility or other access issues.
- Information must be accessible so that people with sensory, literacy or intellectual disabilities are not disadvantaged. This applies to all signage, health and safety information as well as general information about parks and transport. Printed pamphlets alone are not adequate.
- Learning experiences must be accessible e.g. visitors' centres, information tours etc.
- Built environment: where there are buildings, structures and public spaces, there is access for all
- Employment: equal opportunities for disabled people to work in regional parks.
- Where appropriate e.g. at arrival points and where there is vehicular traffic:
 - Adequate shelter, toilet facilities and seating that can be easily accessed
 - Firm surfaces from the disability park space to the park entry (gravel surface is not wheelchair friendly)
 - Pedestrian-friendly walkways free from obstructions with smooth surfaces
 - Outdoor seating is available, particularly at transport stops and public spaces, spaced at regular intervals and where there is shade
 - Seating that is well maintained and safe

(continued)

- Pavements are well-maintained, smooth, level, non-slip and wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs with low curbs that taper off to the road
- Pavements are clear of any obstructions (e.g. street vendors, parked cars, trees, dog droppings) and pedestrians have priority of use.
- Roads have adequate non-slip, regularly spaced pedestrian crossings ensuring that it is safe for pedestrians to cross the road
- Beach access should be made possible for wheelchair and mobility impaired people where practicable at most of the popular beaches. Provision of beach buggies that are well advertised, readily accessible and well maintained would be an asset.

References

NZ Disability Strategy

United Nations Convention on Rights for Persons with Disabilities

Step Up Auckland - Decision-makers getting it right for disabled Aucklanders:
<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/projects/disability/docs/stepupauckland09.pdf>

WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities:
http://www.who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities/en/index.html.

Prof. Billie Giles-Corti: Director, Centre for the Built Environment and Health, School of Population Health, University of Western Australia: Work on Recreation and Health

Design Principle – Parks and Open Space: www.healthyplaces.org.au

Accessible Information and Communication Standards, Ontario, Canada:
<http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/accesson/act.htm>

Auckland Regional Parks Management Plan 2010 - 2020