

## Submission on the Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill

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### Submitter details:

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**Recreation Aotearoa wishes to make an oral submission to the Select Committee at the appropriate time.**

**Submission:****Introduction**

1. The New Zealand Recreation t/a Recreation Aotearoa is a professional association and industry body responsible for providing leadership, advocacy and professional development opportunities for those involved in the broader recreation sector. We work at an agency, industry and professional level to build capability, develop partnerships, and equip individuals and organisations with the skills they need to deliver high quality recreation experiences that engage participants.
2. Recreation Aotearoa's membership includes recreation policy makers, territorial local authorities, voluntary organisations, regional sports trusts, outdoor recreation businesses, and others involved in the delivery of recreation throughout New Zealand.
3. Our role is to champion high-quality recreation for the benefit of New Zealand.
4. Our vision is that by 2020 New Zealand will have a strong recreation industry that meets the needs of current and future participants, so that through recreation, New Zealanders are active, healthy, and connected
5. Recreation Aotearoa believes recreation is vital to New Zealand society. Recreation is not just about enjoyment, it is about being healthy, engaged, stimulated, and interacting with others, and this occurs via outdoor recreation, community recreation, parks, and aquatic and facility-based recreation centres.
6. Recreation is a major contributor to the physical and mental health of individuals, and to the resilience of our communities. 90 per cent of New Zealanders believe that by being active they are in turn maintaining a good level of health and fitness, and this helps to relieve stress.
7. A thriving recreation industry can also help our nation prosper socially and economically. Sport and active recreation contributes \$4.9 billion or 2.3% to our annual GDP, and the sector employs more than 53,000 New Zealanders. The nation's recreation values and opportunities are fundamental to the nation's tourism industry.

8. Recreation is part of what it is to be a New Zealander. Many of us are members of clubs and groups that enjoy recreation for fun, health and social reasons. 84% of New Zealanders believe sport and physical activity bring people together and create a sense of belonging.
9. For individuals, recreation contributes to physical and mental wellbeing and provides an opportunity to meet new people. People define themselves and their communities through their recreation opportunities. Recreation fosters community cohesion and resilience and supports the integration of social groups such as diverse ethnic groups. 74% of New Zealanders agree that sport and physical activity help build vibrant and stimulating communities.
10. Investment in recreation generates tourism opportunities and supports regional development by encouraging skilled professionals and migrants to consider business options in and beyond the main centres.
11. Research shows that recreation makes a significant contribution to social resilience. It allows individuals to thrive, and to connect with each other. This, in turn, makes communities stronger. A society in which people are active and healthy is also more economically sound.
12. Physical inactivity is associated with loss of productivity and health costs, as well as associated costs such as pain and suffering. Healthier, happier individuals are more likely to do well in other areas of their lives, whether it is in social or professional situations. This has a positive flow-on effect for communities and society as a whole.
13. Greater understanding of these benefits and their downstream impacts, along with awareness of how laws and regulations can influence recreation delivery, are key to ensuring that New Zealand's recreation opportunities remain among the world's best.
14. Recreation Aotearoa is a proponent of Universal Access. For everyone to be able to access all spaces, places, and opportunities of recreation in Aotearoa, to ultimately improve the lives and inclusion of disabled people.

### **The Accessible Active Recreation Project:**

15. Recreation Aotearoa's strategic plan *Te Whai Oranga* emphasises the importance of a focus on accessibility in one of its Pou:  
*"All tāngata o Aotearoa can access high quality recreation opportunities regardless of location, age, ethnicity, gender, ability, or socio-economic status."*

16. A critical focus area for Recreation Aotearoa is addressing inequities in participation that exist for certain groups in our communities, including disabled tamariki and rangatahi.
17. Recreation Aotearoa receives investment funding from Sport New Zealand's Disability Inclusion Fund to deliver our Accessible Active Recreation Project. This includes the employment of a full-time Disability and Inclusion Programme Manager to develop and champion standards, guidelines, and advice to the active recreation sector, for greater access to outdoor recreation, play spaces, and facilities.
18. In alignment with the Sport New Zealand Disability Plan, and the New Zealand Disability Strategy Outcomes 3 (Health and Wellbeing) and 5 (Accessibility), the goal of our Accessible Active Recreation Initiative is to enhance wellbeing by improving access to recreation places and spaces for disabled people, with a particular focus on tamariki and rangatahi.
19. Recreation Aotearoa has convened and leads an Accessible Outdoor Working Group. The working group consists of individuals and organisations who are disability advocates, and of whom the majority identify as disabled people or people with disabilities. The Group has representation across Territorial Authorities, National Disability Sport and Recreation Organisations, National Disability Support Organisations, Charities, Foundations, and the private sector.
20. Our submission is on behalf of Recreation Aotearoa, and is supported by the following individuals and organisations from the Accessible Outdoor Working Group: Jezza Williams - Makingtrax Foundation, Matt McKone – Pollen Studio, Quentin Smith – Councillor and Deputy Mayor, Queenstown Lakes District Council, Kimberly Graham – Grab Your Wheels, Let's Travel, and CCS Disability Action.

### **General Comments:**

21. Recreation Aotearoa submits that the significance of enhanced access to active recreation for disabled people is underappreciated. The Sport New Zealand Spotlight on Disability Report (2018) tells us that in any given

week, 1.1 million Disabled People participate less, and in fewer sports and recreation activities than non-disabled people in Aotearoa.

22. We also know that disabled people who participate in fewer sports and activities also score less favourably on health and wellbeing indicators. According to the NZ Wellbeing Statistics (2021), disabled people are faring worse than non-disabled people across a range of wellbeing outcomes.
23. Recreation Aotearoa submits, however, that there is a strong appetite by disabled people to participate more, comparative to non-disabled people, particularly with disabled adults aged 25 and over.
24. Sport NZ's Active New Zealand data also demonstrates that the majority of the top 20 activities disabled adults want to try in the next 12 months are recreational (rather than traditional sport) in nature, with a similar trend demonstrated for children and young people.
25. Recreation Aotearoa notes that the Halberg Foundation recently conducted a survey of people with disabilities titled *Want Better Access to the Great Outdoors?* The results also confirmed a strong desire to participate more in active recreation, specifically in the outdoors.
26. However, disabled people also have more barriers to increasing their participation than non-disabled people. For disabled rangatahi for instance, a lack of nearby accessible facilities and spaces is a much stronger barrier than non-disabled people of the same age.
27. We also know that when there are barriers to accessing Adventure Therapy it creates:
  - Inhibited self-esteem & confidence
  - Feelings of inadequacy & equality
  - Perceived limitations
  - Families barrier Individuals to participation
  - Families restrict themselves to participation
28. Thus, Recreation Aotearoa submits that access to recreation and physical activity is a significant component of achieving the aspiration of the New Zealand Disability Strategy, Outcome 3 – Health and Wellbeing to '*have the highest attainable standards of health and wellbeing*', and to achieve greater inclusion within Aotearoa's society more generally.

29. As such, Recreation Aotearoa holds the strong view that given the demand from disabled people of all ages to do more physical activity, a significant difference can be made to improve individual wellbeing and inclusion through enhancing the accessibility of active recreation places, spaces and opportunities

### **Feedback in detail:**

30. Recreation Aotearoa acknowledges and commends the significant mahi/work that has taken place to get to this point and supports the progression of accessibility legislation, in general.
31. Recreation Aotearoa submits that the establishment of an Accessibility Committee alone is not going to address systemic accessibility barriers that prevent disabled people, tāngata whaikaha and their families or whānau, and others with accessibility needs from living independently and participating in all areas of life, including quality recreation experiences.
32. Further, Recreation Aotearoa submits that 'progress' towards a fully accessible New Zealand' (Part 1, 3 Purpose, 5) is not strong enough to achieve universal access or to address systemic barriers. This language is not consistent with the strong vision of the New Zealand Disability Strategy whereby: *"New Zealand is a non-disabling society – a place where disabled people have an equal opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations, and all of New Zealand works together to make this happen."*
33. Nor is 'progress' consistent with the United Nations Guiding Principles of the Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities which calls for *'full and effective participation and inclusion in society'*.
34. As an alternative, Recreation Aotearoa proposes that the Bill is amended to ensure accountabilities and provisions within the Act require Central and Local Government, private organisations, and landowners to comply with accessibility standards that are regulated and reviewed.
35. Such requirements and/or regulations must be designed with, and by, disabled people to achieve greater access and inclusion. This supports a key principle in implementing the New Zealand Disability Strategy by

*'ensuring disabled people are involved in decision-making that impacts them'*

36. Recreation Aotearoa submits that the Bill should be amended to require the review, and mandatory update of, legislation and New Zealand Standards and Codes that currently preclude the inclusion of disabled people in recreation and wider society e.g., NZ Building Act and Standards, Reserves Management Act, NZ Aquatics Facilities Standards, NZ Tracks and Outdoor Visitor Structures Standards and associated MBIE and Department of Conservation Construction and Maintenance Guidelines, etc.
37. Recreation Aotearoa submits that the Bill does not include enforcement mechanisms that are required for an acceleration of accessibility e.g., a regulator, a barrier notification system, and a dispute resolution process
38. Recreation Aotearoa submits that the Bill be amended to mandate a cross-government approach to ensure that the wider system responsible for the accessibility of recreation specifically is consistent, compliant, and collaborative in their approach. E.g., Waka Kotahi, Department of Conservation, Whaikaha Ministry of Disabled People, Sport New Zealand ihi Aotearoa, Ministry of Education and Territorial Authorities, Tourism New Zealand, etc.
39. Recreation Aotearoa supports and commends several aspects of the Bill concerned with the establishment of the Accessibility Committee. Specifically, we support the requirement that the Committee has knowledge and understanding of: te Tiriti of Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi, te ao Māori, and tikanga Māori and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
40. Recreation Aotearoa also submits its support for the establishment of both a Community and Māori nominations panel for the appointment to the Committee (Part 2, 12 & 13).

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