

The following is the summary of Disability Issues asked of all the Mayoral Candidates in Northland

Note: The following Candidates chose not to reply to an email sent: Ken Couper & Shaquille Shortland

Whangarei District Candidates replies

How would you support a Northland Regional Accessibility Policy that is currently being developed by the three District Council's and the Regional Council?	
Mike Budd	I have emailed WDC for an update as this project stalled for a while. I will work to ensure the next steps to undertake extensive engagement meets the budgeting it requires to progress
Vince Cocurrullo	I would continue the work that has already been done and look to accelerating its completion.
Brad Flower	If the report is already being developed, then getting an understanding of the objective of the report and having a full understanding of what needs to be achieved and making the changes required would be the best way to support the policy.
Fiona Green	By encouraging the Whangarei District Council Disability Advisory Group to connect with our communities including families of disabled, their caregivers and volunteers. The more ideas the better - and not just from a select few which many of us in the disability sector are seeing. We should be encouraging as many as possible to have a bigger say on where Accessibility should sit and look like in their region. A welcoming, inclusive atmosphere should be the first things that visitors see. Remove barriers that make access difficult, to ensure shopping center's and offices (where applicable) can be enjoyed by all. Ensure all customers can navigate around single retail level centers with ease, the main entrances controlled by automatic doors, aisles are wide with good LED lighting, and lifts are wide enough for a person to turn around in a wheelchair. Disability Carparking is still a problem in town - in most spaces it needs to be doubled like the CBD and organised better - like in multilevel carparks. There should also be undercover mobility carparks in some areas around town. Availability of free and loan wheelchairs and mobility scooters need to be publicised. Five wheelchairs and one mobility scooter are available for use from the customer service desk for customers while shopping at Northlands. There is no charge to loan a wheelchair or mobility scooter, however customers must provide details from one form of identification. A map showing where you can find accessible toilets and parent rooms would be helpful. We recommend booking these prior to you visiting Northland. Guide and assistance dogs should be welcome. The animal must have an accessible dog registration tag and the owner must have their handler's registration card available, if required.
Nick Jacob	By educating myself on the main issues facing the disabled members of our community. Meeting with them, hearing what they need improve their wellbeing and access to our community and how council can empower people with disabilities to be seen, heard and take action for themselves.

There is a major lack of affordable housing in Northland. Accessible housing is even worse. What are your views on Universal design in housing?

Mike Budd

There is a need to ensure accessibility to homes for those who require it. I feel this is a Central Government consideration and duty, I would lobby government for support. The funding to allow access when and where required needs to be subsidised by Central Government, alongside Health and Insurance premiums as part of a national policy consideration.

Vince Cocurrullo

The shortage of affordable accessible friendly housing is an important issue. Council has a role in providing written material on how to make buildings accessible friendly, and in the case of new builds and renovations this should be provided during the building consent process. I also see merit in a mayor engaging with housing providers and property managers directly to encourage disability friendly design.

Brad Flower

A universal design for public housing projects would be essential. For private housing then council could make recommendations but should not enforce private citizens to construct houses outside of what suits their own requirements.

Fiona Green

Universal design is specific in its requirements when planning to build physical, and home environments so that they are usable by a wide range of people, regardless of age, size or disability status. Universal design caters for the needs of individuals with disabilities but also provides benefits for others

Nick Jacob

It is relatively easy and affordable to tweak designs to make them accessible. I would like to see new developments and subdivisions designing with inclusivity in mind. With a large proportion of our community needing accessible housing, we need to ensure that we begin striving to match that. Designing intergenerational structures that suit all kinds of people in different life stages.

What do you think the biggest issue is for the disability community in your district?

Mike Budd	Disability issues aren't a "one or the other" option, they are complex and individualised. A key issue is the ability to allow social participation in events and activities in day to day living.
Vince Cocurrullo	Engagement. Many of our disability community feel disenfranchised or separated from the rest of the community. Some even feel ignored due to their disability. As I have chaired Northable for 5 years I believe in re-engaging and taking the time to listen to everybody.
Brad Flower	As this issue is not something that has affected me or anyone I am close with, please excuse my response if It doesn't fully answer your question. I think the following could be issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transportation• Accessibility to buildings• Employment opportunities • Education opportunities – Tertiary facilities
Fiona Green	Lack of understanding about autism and neurodiversity. Autism is alot more common than many realise and discrimination against that sector of the community has been vicious and cruel at times. The solution is education.
Nick Jacob	One of the main challenges is for people who require personal care in their homes. Accessing carers who are well trained, available, empathetic and have time to build a rapport with their clients is a challenge. We need to attract, support, train and pay our carers well, to enable them to empower those that need some day to day assistance.

How would you decrease the number of working aged disabled people who are not engaged in employment?	
Mike Budd	Create a workshop programme to help retrain, develop and upskill individuals with disabilities to deliver a range of products and services to society at large
Vince Cocurrullo	As a community leader the mayor has a pivotal role in connecting workplaces with the disabled community. The issue is about facilitating the willingness of employers to have disability friendly workplaces and the willingness of the disabled community to engage in employment.
Brad Flower	Decreasing the number of disabled people not engaged in employment is a challenge that cannot be solved by a Council alone. Councils can work with the districts employers to highlight the challenges and facilitate workshops to help find solutions.
Fiona Green	Depending on circumstances, design workshops that help individuals getting ready for work, what to expect on the job, preparing for a job interview, and what you need to be aware of in the work force in today's climate. Teach work ethics . Find employers who are happy to employ disabled individuals.
Nick Jacob	Education campaigns across the region highlighting the various skills disabled individuals can bring to employers. From consultancy teaching, to online work, creative roles or physical work, the skills of people with disabilities are extremely diverse. Perhaps encouraging businesses to offer job opportunities dedicated to employing a person with a disability. I would like to see funding secured to invest in small businesses run by and employing people with disabilities. Providing free inclusive education for entrepreneurs with disabilities to start their own businesses

How do you plan to increase usage of NZ Official Languages (Te Reo Māori and NZ Sign Language) in Local Government?

Mike Budd

I think this is well underway and time will deliver the outcome we all look to include our three national languages for all people. I support the use of all three languages to ensure communication meets its audience.

Vince Cocurrullo

The role of Council is to allow the use of NZ's official languages at all Council events and meetings as required. I would also be encouraging the Council staff to learn Sign Language so when communicating with the public they can do it efficiently.

Brad Flower

I do not have an indication the levels that Te Reo and NZ Sign Language are currently be used in Local Government. To have a plan I would need to know where we are currently at to ascertain where we need to be. The levels need to be reflective of where the communities needs are and staff should be encouraged to upskill to meet this need.

Fiona Green

I am sure the community and those attached with Council would love to contribute their ideas to promoting sign language and Maori language. There's eceb groups and individuals who are already attached to Council who can help. Make sure the Maori words for our region are upheld. Make learning Maori alot of fun. I am a Maori language teacher. Who will fund the Interpreter for sign language? Would be good to get the Deaf community and their sign language interpreters involved in this one. There' alot of work rest needs doing in Whangarei that shouldn't be left tona select/elite few.

Nick Jacob

As has become common place to use karakia and waiata, I would like to see sign language being integrated into the day to day kaupapa of council. Using meetings to introduce new words, phrases and greetings to our staff. Especially focusing on front of house staff. Employing hearing impaired people to ensure that customers have access to someone who can sign. In addition I would look at voice to text software for council meetings. This would have to wait until the new building as the current council chambers have dreadful acoustics but the new one they tell me is state of the art purpose built. People could watch live or after meeting at their own pace.

Far North District Candidate replies

Note: The following Candidates chose not to reply to an email sent: Clinton Dearlove, Kevin Middleton, Joshua Riley, Rachel Witana (no contact details available)

How would you support a Northland Regional Accessibility Policy that is currently being developed by the three District Council's and the Regional Council?	
Jaqi Brown	100% support. The need for a cross region policy makes sense to ensure consistency.
Ann Court	<p>The Far North District supports a Disability Action Group (DAG) who advocate for a more accessible environment for Far North residents and visitors with disabilities.</p> <p>Membership is made up of staff, elected members and community members, representing geographical spread as well as representation from the disabled community.</p> <p>The Council adopted an 'Equity and Access for people with Disabilities Policy' in 2013. This is currently being reviewed by the DAG group.</p> <p>Our expectation would be this work would dovetail into and inform a Regional Accessibility Policy.</p> <p>We remain committed to supporting this group and implement their recommendations into Council BAU.</p>
Kelly Stratford	I would continue to be an advocate as I have been in this space since 2015. I am the council representative on Far North District Councils Disability Action Group committee. I have attended almost every hui, and stood up for the improvement in engineering standards to ensure accessibility for all, ie. wheel chairs, walking frames or people who, like me, are vision impaired. I would continue to support the Disability Action Group in progressing solutions to concerns. and support the resource allocated to them and others to engage in this policy and the requested implementation plan.
Moko Tepania	Recently Council resolved to make a new Accessibility Policy as well as an implementation plan for the policy when adopted. An earlier report also highlighted that the Te Tai Tokerau Regional Accessibility Strategy is the most appropriate way to address access to Council services, facilities and assets in the Far North. I will continue to support the development of this strategy to enable better accessibility across our region.
John Vujchich	I would complete the joint policy ensuring adequate opportunity and time has been allocated for input from those with a disability and from disability groups such as Tiaho Trust.

There is a major lack of affordable housing in Northland. Accessible housing is even worse. What are your views on Universal design in housing?	
Jaqi Brown	Makes sense to me, any house design that is easily accessible would be welcomed, in particular for social housing. I can understand that in high density areas the need to have 2 floors is becoming more prevalent, but there needs to be a balance and equity of provision. Not only for people with accessibility needs, but also young parents, elderly.
Ann Court	<p>Firstly, we need to acknowledge that the remit for legislation in this space sits with the Crown and not local Councils. Our role, if any, would be in advocacy space.</p> <p>I don't think I would be entirely comfortable with supporting any blanket or mandatory requirement for universal design. Unless we want to live in the world of "ticky tacky boxes on the hillside" where everything is the exactly the same, we still need people to be able to support creativity and architecturally interesting design that meet the needs of the investor/user. Those needs may or may not require their building to meet universal design guidelines. That may mean that some homes will have split levels, pole houses, no driveways (Wellington), internal staircases etc. Homes need to fit the landscape as well as provide a sense of place – this is an important aesthetic.</p> <p>Depending on your needs a universal approach could impose unnecessary costs for investment which may be redundant, and which will ultimately be borne by the homeowner or renter. Housing affordability is a critical need right now.</p>
Kelly Stratford	It's important. Council has been upgrading the housing for the elderly properties to ensure they are accessible.
Moko Tepania	I will front up and say that I had to look up what universal design in housing means but based off of what I learnt it absolutely makes sense to future proof all housing for changes in society as well as to give a family security in knowing that they can live in a home that will be designed to meet their needs at all stages of their lives.
John Vujchich	<p>I'm currently involved with an affordable housing development which does include universal design. Some are specifically designed for those who may have a disability. We also have designs from other providers that work well.</p> <p>Council also has pensioner housing stock and as Mayor I would be looking at improving the pensioner housing options, ensuring all a disability friendly.</p>

What do you think the biggest issue is for the disability community in your district?	
Jaqi Brown	Access to suitable rental housing. Disability car spaces being use by non-disabled. Footpaths. Untethered dogs. Limited access to public spaces. Isolation. Not enough knowledge about the supports available. Lack of support for caregivers... I could go on.
Ann Court	Right now, I think that is our engineering standards and guidelines which purport to engineer solutions that are accessible but in reality, do not work. We have footpaths that don't work for mobility users, but which meet the acceptable standard. We have buildings and other public spaces that are not easily accessible but get the tick of approval because the 'book of standards' says they meet the requirements. It is not until the engineering standards and guidelines are actually representative of the needs of the disabled sector will we have comfort that our future investment in Horizontal and Vertical infrastructure will be fit for purpose.
Kelly Stratford	The biggest issue is a lack of health workers to support our disability community. Although this issue is often drowned out by the issues people have with mobility parking being taken up by people being inconsiderate and breaking the rules. And there are accessibility issues for people on mobility scooters, wheelchairs and walking frames due to many of our footpaths.
Moko Tepania	I would say that accessibility is likely the biggest issue for the disability community in the Far North. A report to council's Strategy & Policy Committee earlier this year gave the results of a survey undertaken where accessibility support, accessibility to buildings and footpath access were all highlighted as being not good in our district. The Far North has almost non-existent public transport options and our townships themselves have poor accessibility when it comes to buildings, public spaces and footpaths. I look forward to the completion of the Regional Accessibility Strategy and how we can work to improve this across the Far North.
John Vujchich	Accessibility. I have a disability myself and was in a wheel chair and on crutches for a time so I have experienced first-hand how difficult it is to get around streets and public places. I would ensure that our footpaths standard is better designed for mobility and wheel chair use and that access to cross roads meets accessibility standards. Also, I would seek that the footpath renewal programme ensures such amenities meet the new standard, especially in areas of high need, eg hospitals, schools, pensioner housing.

How would you decrease the number of working aged disabled people who are not engaged in employment?

Jaqi Brown	Workbridge are contracted to provide support to bridge the gap. I would ensure that the council gave opportunities to people with disabilities to work and with their permission promote this to our business community as a tika thing to do. Every person deserves a chance to shine and be valued.
Ann Court	By making the region accessible. Be that multi modal (public transport, footpaths, safer streets etc), signage and design of public spaces. If we make it difficult to move about then its difficult to fully participate in society.
Kelly Stratford	I would hold a diversity expo, inviting industry employers and interested working aged disabled people. Facilitate a session breaking the myths of what the perceived limitations are vs the realities. The ideal outcome would be that awareness is raised for potential employers, interest is peaked for those seeking employment, and relationships formed. I would seek to follow this up with support from MSD and the office of Disabilities to support having a subsidised navigator in this space to assist connecting and placements.
Moko Tepania	I would open a relationship with the newly formed Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People and continue to work with our Disability Action Group so that the council can work in partnership to respond appropriately to help people into employment when and how we can.
John Vujchich	I have championed and succeeded in establishing a social/sustainable employment policy in Council, designed to create opportunities for local employment in smaller communities: that is one option. The other I initiated over a decade ago and which is now coming to fruition is the Innovation and Enterprise Park. Many jobs are being created with this initiative, including jobs for those with disabilities.

How do you plan to increase usage of NZ Official Languages (Te Reo Māori and NZ Sign Language) in Local Government?

Jaqi Brown	Leading by example, training and support to kōrero i roto i te reo Māori for councillors and community boards, changing policies around bi-lingualism on new signage and replacement signage to start with then budget for all signage to be bi-lingual. Ensuring we have staff with the capacity to sign, and ensuring that we use technology to break down any communication access barriers.
Ann Court	By choice not compulsion. We shouldn't force people into a new way of doing things. But if we incentivize then we get greater buy We are currently funding sign language courses, so they are free for the public to pick up. I have done one myself. We also fund Te Reo Training. Bilingual signage and the introduction of braille into placemaking is something we are just starting to see.
Kelly Stratford	If I am mayor, I will ensure that all videos and media we conduct, has a sign language interpreter. And that captions are used to translate into English/ Te Reo Maori.
Moko Tepania	I have had a huge interest in the revitalisation of te reo Māori since I started learning the language as a teenager. Over the past 3 years I have worked to encourage the usage of te reo in council and am proud to have had the first ever bilingual council report come across the table. I am excited that the council is working on a Māori Language Policy to promote the use of the language, especially in a district with 10,000 fluent speakers and will continue to support and encourage bilingual signage, communications and professional development of staff and elected members. I have only just started learning NZSL but am committed to ensuring that we increase its usage and understanding to enable greater engagement with all in our communities. Council's recent election videos were released in English, te reo and NZSL, a great start and something to make the new norm.
John Vujchich	Part of my empowering communities approach is to encourage and enable them to take such initiatives. As mayor I would ensure empowerment occurs and would look forward to creative ways that communities implement solutions. It is worth investigating having sign language available in large public Council meetings.

Kaipara District Candidate replies

Note: The following Candidates chose not to reply to an email sent: Craig Eldon Jepson, Jaren Joyce-Paki, Brenden Nathan, Ash Nayyar, Gordon Walker. **Craig Jepson replied 16/9/02 well after cut off date**
All of the following answers are from Victoria De La Viris-Woodcock.

How would you support a Northland Regional Accessibility Policy that is currently being developed by the three District Councils and the Regional Council?

Yes

There is a major lack of affordable housing in Northland. Accessible housing is even worse. What are your views on Universal design in housing?

I think Universal design is good policy because its about making buildings accessible to all people of all abilities at any stage of life. One in 4 NZ'ders has a disability, so this is a crucial issue for all our communities. Kaipara has slightly more disabled people than the national average also so that is something that must be considered - we need to understand what the needs are of our community better.

What do you think the biggest issue is for the disability community in your district?

We need much better public toilet access, and footpaths to accommodate wheelchairs, walkers, and mobility scooters. We also need a survey of footpaths and public access points to facilities to identify obstacles and hazards for the visually impaired as well as those with mobility challenges. Our public meetings also need microphones for the auditory-impaired to better hear proceedings.

How would you decrease the number of working aged disabled people who are not engaged in employment?

We need inclusive building design and working arrangements with flexibility to accommodate different needs.

How do you plan to increase usage of NZ Official Languages (Te Reo Māori and NZ Sign Language) in Local Government?

A series of workshops on te reo and sign language for elected members of the KDC.