**Paula Tesoriero – 21 November Zoom hui transcript**

**Prudence Walker**

Tēnā koutou, I'm Prudence Walker. Your facilitator for the Q&A this evening. Before we begin, I'd like to hand over to Peter Allen for Karakia. Peter is a tangata whaikaha Māori member of the Better Outcome Partnership. It's great for Peter to be able to join me and you for the korero this evening, Peter.

**Peter Allen**

Pō mārie Prudence, kia ora ki a koe. Ko tēnei te mihi aroha ki a koutou ngā tāngata o tātou nei motu, haere mai i tēnei pō ki te whakarongo ki tātou nei Tumuaki ko Paula. Nō reira ko tēnei te mihi mō tēnei nō reira kua tae te timata a tātou nei hui mō te pō, he karakia. Whakataka te hau ki te uru. Whakataka te hau ki te tonga. Kia mākinakina ki uta. Kia mātaratara ki tai. E hī ake ana te atakura. He tio, he huka, he hau hū. Tīhei mauri ora!

So just a short mihi and welcome to everybody for joining us here tonight so that we can listen to our Chief Executive Officer Paula, and just a short karakia that says, you know, cease the winds from the west and cease the winds from the south and let the wind blow over the oceans, let wind blow over the land and let the day dawn with a glorious day.

So we'll hand it back to you now, Prudence, for your for your housekeeping kia ora.

**Prudence Walker**

Kia ora Peter. As I began I'm Prudence and I'll be facilitating this session this evening with Paula. I'm a feminine presenting pale skin person in my early 40s with a well rounded face and body, who currently has faded pink shoulder length hair. Tonight I'm wearing a purple t shirt. I have identified as a disabled person for the last 25 years and prior to my current role as chief executive of the disabled persons assembly of New Zealand.

I worked for a disability service provider for 11 years, I have facilitated many conversations in and around disability over the last 15 years and my sign name is Prudence which portrays beads around my neck. Or I'm also referred to in New Zealand sign language as pink, not to be confused with the singer. I'll briefly go through what to expect in this session, and how to get your questions in when we get to that point.

So just to let you know that this zoom meeting is recorded for people who cannot be here today if you'd wish to turn your camera off please do so. And that's up to you. If you would also prefer not to have your audio captured or it's easier for you in terms of accessibility, you are welcome to put your comments and questions in the chat box.

We have a large group today. So that's great your microphones will be automatically muted until we get to the question time. Where you'll be able to unmute once I invite you to ask your question. You can also indicate if that's difficult for you to do. We will get the moderator, to do that for you. We're looking forward to the comments and questions and you'll be able to do that in two ways. When we get to that point, if you would like to ask a question verbally, please click on the reactions button on your zoom toolbar and click ‘raise hand’.

I know that some people are not able to use that. So if you'd like to ask a question verbally you are able to raise your hand physically, through that might take a bit longer for me to scroll through and see all the people, and of course the other way is that you can pop a question into the chat. So we've got people looking at that, and we will get through as many questions as we're able to today. Just for a start to get you thinking about the questions, please try and keep your questions to general questions for Whaikaha rather than individual questions around individual support, though if any of those are raised we will let you know how to best get those addressed.

If we don't get to all of the questions today, which I suspect we might not, please keep writing your questions in the chat, which will be open 15 minutes after the session ends. Those questions will be collated all grouped into things, and those will be answered on Whaikaha our website in the coming weeks.

We're looking forward to those questions and shortly I will introduce Paula the new Chief Executive of Whaikaha - The Ministry of Disabled People who will share her initial impressions from the brief time that she's been in the role. Then we’ll have the Q&A session for a bit of discussion and a chance to reflect together on where we’ve been over the year and to support Paula in thinking about what will be important for Whaikaha moving forward to the new year.

First though I'd like to go back to Peter Allen, to talk a little bit about partnership.

**Peter Allen**

Kia ora, thank you Prudence. Kia ora everybody. Ko Ruahine ngā maunga. Ko Mākaretu te awa. Ko Rakautatahi te marae. Ko Ngati Kahungunu ki Tamatea te iwi. He Tangata mata rehu ahau. Ko Peter Allen ahau. Tēnā koutou tēnā koutou, nau mai haere mai haere mai I tēnei pō.

Kia ora everybody, so my name is Peter Allen and I come from Hawke’s Bay, but I’m currently living in Palmerston North and I’m a vision impaired person. And for my audio description. I'm a fair skinned Māori with white hair, and standing at about five foot 11, about 185 pounds. And tonight, I'm wearing my black polo shirt sitting in my lounge here in Palmerston North, and welcoming you, all out here today.

One of my roles that I'm here as, as prudence has said, is as a community member working alongside our Tumuaki, our Chief Executive Officer Paula Tesoriero, and we also work alongside the senior leadership team, and it's designed so that we can have community participation or partnership with our senior leadership team here at Whaikaha. So we're having community members engaged in this process and working alongside our team.

That's a good innovation that we're looking to introduce and so again that's one of the changes, that’s one of the ways we would like to move forward. And so, yes definitely we have a good strong community team working with them at the moment. And they have a lot of representation from many of the organizations and their networks throughout the country as well.

And so, that's just a quick overview because the true star of tonight we want to hand over to is Paula, so ko tēnei te mea aroha tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou kia ora nau tatoa katoa. Back to you again Prudence, kia ora.

**Prudence Walker**

Kia ora Peter. And now I'd like to invite Paula Tesoriero the Chief Executive of Whaikaha the Ministry of Disabled People to speak, as I'm sure you're aware prior to taking up this role, Paula was the Disability Rights Commissioner, where she was able to speak on and commission work to support our rights as disabled people and those rights being upheld. Like many of you, I've appreciated the opportunity to support and work with Paula on many of the issues and barriers we face as disabled people. Some of you have heard me comment that having Paula in this role gives me hope of what the future holds for disabled people in Aotearoa. She certainly has a big job to do, and I know that you’ll have many questions for her, which we will do our best to get through today. Please join me and welcome Paula.

**Paula Tesoriero**

E nga mana, e nga reo, rau rangatiratanga ma, tēnā koutou katoa. Ko Paula Tesoriero tōku ingoa, ko taku tūranga mahi, he Tumaki mō Whaikaha - the Ministry of Disabled People. Talofa lava, kia orana, warm Pacific greetings, e ngā reo tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa. My name is Paula Tesoriero and it's been lovely seeing people join tonight's zoom and recognizing many of those names and faces.

For those who are not able to see me. I am sitting in front of a purple, lift up banner that has the words Whaikaha on it, Ministry of Disabled People. And I'm sitting at a table and wearing a white top with black spots, dangly silver earrings and I have short brown hair. My sign name is, I’ve got two fists, that are motioning the riding of a bike. It was gifted to me by Deaf Aotearoa as my sign name.

Thank you to Peter and Prudence, ngā mihi matua Peter for opening us with our karakia and introducing our session this evening and Prudence thank you for supporting this conversation tonight. I want to thank everyone, especially those from our disability community, whānau, supporters of all of this work for joining us tonight. I hope this will be the first of many sessions like this, that we have where we can share updates and I can hear directly from you about what's top of mind.

What's concerning you and get your guidance and thoughts. A number of you have already made time to meet with me to share your experiences and hopes and frustrations. I want to acknowledge your generosity and sharing what can often be very personal stories, and also for your patience as we work through the transition to the establishment of whaikaha and face the challenges ahead of us.

So for those who don't know me, I am a disabled person and I'm really honored to be the first Chief Executive of Whaikaha, and the first disabled Chief Executive across the public service. I took up the role on the first of September. And so while I'm very much looking forward to our questions and answers. There might be some that I can't answer, but I'd like to hear them anyway, so that as Prudence said, we can respond and put the answers on our website.

After the initial establishment phase, we have been consolidating the existing disability related functions that came across from the old Ministry of Health, and also from the Ministry of Social Development, having transitioned into Whaikaha, we're now starting to look at the future shape of our leadership, and our organization, so that we can meet the aspirations of our community.

Our aspirations are really clear. We are here to lead. We will drive better outcomes for all disabled people in partnership with community and others. We’ll lead policy, transform the way that disability support is provided and progress transformation of the whole disability system. We have two really big levers to help create this change. The first is that we are now responsible for Disability Support Services and the changes that we know we need to make to serve the community better.

We also have a role, which is referred to as the system steward, which recognizes our role as leaders and experts in government about disability, and we will do that through our own strategic policy, but also through influencing other government agencies by commenting on their policies, programs and services, and also through the budget process.We are not responsible for things like housing, education, transport, those things remain with the relevant agency, but we are now in a much stronger position to influence them then we have been in the past, because of the establishment of Whaikaha.

To be successful, we as an organization need our community, to feel you have a stake in and are able to see yourself reflected in the makeup of who we are and who we partner with. We must and will become the leading example across government for the public sector in employing disabled people, and in empowering our community.

We will grow our workforce of disabled people with the skills, encouraged to bring together the values of our community and the responsibilities of the government system. It's going to take time to make all of these changes. We are at the start of something new. We are still building our organization recruiting to roles. But I know that you will help us, support us and hold us to account.

I will open shortly for questions, but it would be remiss of me to not acknowledge the things that I already know about our sector, and some of the things that, since coming into this new role, you've shared with me, and I want to give you a sense of what we're doing about them.

I've heard from many families that you're tired, that Covid on top of housing, and now cost of living, pressure, have put more pressures on disabled people and whānau and through much of that time, respite, and other supports have been less available, I know and I've heard that many people are looking to the future and wondering, what will happen when it's more challenging for families to play the role that you do in the life of your disabled whānau member.

That uncertainty on top of the fatigue of previous years, I know has left a number of families and disabled people wondering about the sustainability of things. We have introduced additional flexibility and carer support, and individualized funding and removed restrictions on who can pay family members. I've heard that that flexibility helps, but I've also heard that it could be more easy to use. And too often, where the system requires more information.

It doesn't meet the basic expectations of a mana enhancing engagement. Likewise changes to paying family members have helped, but we haven't got all of the settings right yet. I absolutely expect my team, who are committed to engage with you on those issues. and that providing greater facilitation and clarity for those who are grappling with the system is a priority.

I've also heard from families, disabled people, providers about the workforce shortages and about the difficulty in finding support and sustaining that support. At a time when we are seeking to expand choice and control, workforce constraints are increasingly limiting the options available to all of us. I acknowledge that there is not a simple solution to that. But I also know my team are looking to meaningful progress through a Workforce Strategy and some medium, short term and long term options around it.

I've heard of the deep dissatisfaction with the limited living options available for our community, and a deep fear of what options might be taken away. The recent UN review of our progress to implement the UN Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been really clear.

The report told New Zealand that we must make progress on broadening the options that disabled people have to live in. In particular, must shift away from a reliance on institutional or facility based options to be considered to live up to Article 19 of the convention.

My team, are preparing the start of a substantial response to the UN recommendations, as well as the emerging findings of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the abuse in state care, and I expect to be speaking with you more about those things in the new year. I've also heard that many of you, in relation to the Enabling Good Lives approach, that it's an option that many feel is only available to some, and that it needs to grow. We're currently working on what the EGL plan will look like. So that next year, more people will have more flexible options.

I'm really aware of the expectations that all of this places on a new ministry, and on me as our Chief Executive. I thought very carefully about taking this role, stepping from my previous role where I was advocating for change, alongside many of you for our community. And I deliberately took this role as an opportunity to think about how I can help lead and support change.

So my commitment is to make that sustained change that we know we need, that reduces complexity, prioritises the embedding of disability rights as fundamental rights within our system and within our community. We are going to have to work right across government, across local government, with our community partners, with all of you to deliver on our aspirations.

It is early days for us, but we are a really ambitious organization. We are recruiting, so please make sure you do keep a lookout on the website for roles and for ways to be involved in our important work. We're putting in place the various policies and processes that all organizations need, and at the same time, we are getting ready to implement for change, next year.

So thank you for your ongoing work, for your advocacy, for your tireless work in our community. I'm really looking forward to to give a genuinely transforming and changing opportunities for our community, and I feel very lucky to be in this role, surrounded by a great team. I know that you'll have many questions and I look forward to exploring them with you.

As I mentioned, I'll try and answer what I can tonight. But for me, the most important thing was connecting with you, and giving you a sense of where we're at, what's coming up, and I look forward to more of these engagements. So I'm going to throw back to Prudence ngā mihi nui, kia koutou katoa.

**Prudence Walker**

Kia ora Paula, thank you for sharing those initial thoughts with us. We certainly want to see Whaikaha the Ministry of Disabled People drive better outcomes for all disabled people and in the long sort [loud static] Sorry I was just getting a bit of feedback in my own voice there, a little off putting but it's all sorted. And I'm sure that we would all appreciate some of that reduction of complexity in, you know, just trying to live our lives.

I certainly support, you know, what Paula said around the fact that Whaikaha the Ministry of Disabled People are recruiting and would encourage anyone who thinks that they have any of the skills needed to be working for the Ministry, to really be putting yourself forward for consideration for any roles that interest you. I’m all for supporting the advancement and employment for disabled people whatever that looks like for individuals.

So it's now time for the Q&A session. Please keep your questions focused around Whaikaha broadly as Paula won't be able to answer any personal questions around support. And as I mentioned, I don't suppose that we’ll probably have time for all the questions that people want to ask, but these will be collated and themed and answered on the Whaikaha website, over the coming weeks. If you'd like to verbally ask a question, please raise your electronic hand if you can, or your physical hand if you're not able to do that. And of course, you can also type your questions in the chat and people are looking out for those and feeding them to me.

Okay, so I know that a number of hands have gone up already, and I think the first one to go up was for Ken, I'm guessing is the name. Just showing on the screen Ken RICM

**Melanie**

Hi. Sorry. That's just my surname it's Melanie Kenrick here. Thank you very much for your presentation Paula, and you certainly touched on some of the issues, particularly the workforce issue which I know as I'm sort of involved with an organization which is providing support for people with disabilities and that certainly is probably one of the top issues. Wearing a different hat, in terms of my involvement with health, so you mentioned that you're going to have a major role in terms of advocacy towards some of the public policies, do you see sort of a major role in terms of your advocacy and trying to promote change within councils, because it's actually councils which are delivering a lot of the, I guess, on the ground services that people are needing, and actually see, and are really important. So how do you see the Ministry’s, sort of, I guess, relationship with local councils.

**Paula Tesoriero**

Thanks Melanie, and thanks for your comment about workforce which I can come back to after, I’m sure there’ll be other questions on that, but in relation to local barriers. You were really clear that, you know, we have a role to play in really stewarding change across government, and we’ll be focused on government agencies in the very short term, but, you know, you're absolutely right that, you know, really we're, you know, a lot of the barriers that our community face are actually at that very local level. And so we know also that there's a greater opportunity for local government and central government to be working much more closely connected, so, you know, I see our role as really trying to influence and support local council to do better. So, we'll be growing, what I referred to before as our stewardship function, and absolutely, we will be working to, I guess, better connect those relationships across and with local government then, then there has been an opportunity for us to do in the past.

**Melanie**

Do you potentially see that there's some potential for government funding to flow through to our local governments in terms of, I guess, improving some of the outcomes, and maybe service provision that maybe local government could provide? I think Melanie these huge opportunities as we think about our approach to enabling good lives in the future and about, you know, enabling advice or about, you know, community driven leadership and responses.

And so, I do see an opportunity for local government, if you know, driven by community, to provide a broader range of choices and supports for disabled people yes. Thank you. I'm sure there's many more questions so I'll leave it there. Thank you, though.

**Prudence Walker**

I've got a question here that's coming from the chat, Paula, that says there is central government funding for programs and projects in the community, Is this ministry likely to release any funding to the public for community projects/programs?

**Paula Tesoriero**

Thanks for that question. The short answer is yes, and I don't know if that question had specific programs and things in mind because I can't see the question, but absolutely we will be making funding available for strengthening the voice mechanisms for disabled people. And also, as we think about broadening the enabling good lives approach, next year. We absolutely will be looking to invest in greater community, so disabled people and whānau capability and capacity building within the community.

**Prudence Walker**

Kia ora thanks for that. Probably expanding on that, somewhat partly to do with that, Jonathan asked how will Whaikaha live up to its obligations under Article 4.3 in general comments seven of the convention?

**Paula Tesoriero**

Absolutely, so kia ora Jonathan thank you for that question. So, look I’m really determined that our agency, absolutely, lives up to those obligations in terms of how, we've got some partnering arrangements that Peter touched on earlier, but we’ll also be working to embed our partnership approaches next year with disabled people and families, and so we’ll strengthen our partnership relationships that way, but also we've got a really big opportunity in that role of stewarding change across government where we are talking with agencies about the expectations around involving disabled people, through their representative organizations in service design, the development of policies. And, you know, helping to facilitate those exchanges, so you know I hope that through investing in community across the country through our stewardship role that actually we will be mobilizing our community to have many more voices at the table.

And monitoring, sorry Jonathan I didn't touch sorry on the monitoring aspect of that. I guess, you know, as an agency, we will expect to be monitored and to be held to account for what it is that we deliver and that's why I'm really, I guess, pleased that we have an opportunity to lead the response to the recommendations made by the UN earlier this year, and we've got a really great platform for change, you know we've got the harrowing stories that came through the royal commission of inquiry to abuse in state care. We've got the Waitangi tribunal kaupapa inquiries. We've got the UN recommendations, establishment of Whaikaha, you know, we're at a moment in time where I hope we can leverage those, and be held to account for our role in responding to them.

**Prudence Walker**

Kia ora Paula. I know there's a lot of hands up on the screen but I'm going to ask one more question from the chat before I go back to those for the moment. Colleen Herbert from CCS disability actions says he patai taku.

What is Whaikaha’s position on the paper released by the UN on deinstitutionalization in the context of the way forward within Aotearoa? Now I know you spoke a little bit about institutionalization but I just wondered if you wanted to expand on that in response to this question.

**Paula Tesoriero**

Thank you for that question, I think the thing I'd say at the moment is that it's our absolute aspiration to, or intention to increase the range of ways in which disabled people receive supports and, you know, we know through the Enabling Good Lives protocols and demonstrations that with greater support in the community and with more flexible funding arrangements, that that has meant that some people who may have otherwise been in receipt of residential care are now living in community and better thriving in community.

So I think, you know, we know that with the right support disabled people can live a good life. So that's what we're committed to delivering on.

**Prudence Walker**

Kia ora Paula, and now Trish McQueen has a verbal question for you.

**Trish**

Hello Paula [inaudible] and my question for you is, therapy for disability adults in need, have ongoing therapy like myself and the ability to the proper assistance of our disability [inaudible]

And my other question is, will you make sure that people like myself get counselling if we need it?

**Prudence Walker**

So your question Trish, was on people who require ongoing therapies and around counseling is that right?

**Trish**

Yes it is, sorry yes. Thank you, yes.

**Paula Tesoriero**

Kia ora Trish thank you, nice to see you again. I'm not sure I have a very clear answer to that question. Other than I would anticipate, as part of the way in which we work with Te Whatu Ora, who’s one of the entities that have been created through the health reforms that we will raise with them, the importance of that so I've just made a note.

It's not something that sits exactly with us, but we will raise with Te Whatu Ora and we'll put some information, because I haven't answered that in full here, on the website.

**Trish**

And my other question, because disabled people get [words unclear] money from work and income would we be able to get some more money in our rooms because we’re struggling to live on limited money.

**Prudence Walker**

Thank you, so your question is around, benefits is it? and not being enough to live on?

**Trish**

Yeah.

**Paula Tesoriero**

Yeah, Trish thank you for raising that, and, you know, it's an absolute issue I'm really aware of and, you know, particularly at the moment, post Covid, the cost of living issues, housing issues it’s a real pressure for our community. And again, as part of that role of stewarding change across government. We have raised and we will raise again with our Ministry of Social Development colleagues, the issues that are coming through the community and that is absolutely one that I hear, and we will certainly raise those points with our colleagues.

**Trish**

And will there be a review, with [inaudible]

**Paula Tesoriero**

Yes. Yeah, thanks. Thanks Trish and I think the other, the other point around income is just on, I am also acutely aware of the income thresholds that you know when our community, earn above a particular amount, the impact that can then have on other supports from government and again it's something that we've, raised with other agencies, and just on your last point about engaging with the community.

Absolutely, you know, that is where I get the greatest feedback, is out and about engaging with the community so very keen to keep doing it. Trish thank you.

**Prudence Walker**

Kia ora Trish. Denise Astell has a verbal question for you Paula.

**Denise**

Kia ora Paula good to see you. Now I mean none of this will be a surprise to you, but, so for those that weren't eligible under Ministry of Health to get DSSs because they weren't on the list that, you know, gets the support. So now with Whaikaha will those who come under the social model of disability be able to get the supports that they hugely need.

**Paula Tesoriero**

Kia ora Denise, thank you and absolutely. I'm very aware that there are more people then the approximately 52,000 people that we support, who need access to disability support services, the budget that we have at the moment, covers the people that we’re currently committed to providing supports to. And we are absolutely, you know, committed to looking at having those conversations with relevant ministers about eligibility more broadly, because it's very much an issue I'm acutely aware of.

**Denise**

Yeah no I appreciate that because, also we have the issue of, you don't put under, like, now it's Te Whatu Ora and don't fit under Whaikaha. But you know, you sort of fall into this area, there is a grey area and there's a lot of rare disorders who are in that area. So it's like, where would you suggest that people who don't fit somewhere, how can they approach would this be something that the ministry would be looking at?

**Paula Tesoriero**

Yeah absolutely Denise, I think, you know, at the end of the day, there's no wrong door for government or there shouldn't be a wrong door and so you know if it, I welcome that discussion here, and we can join people up to that various new health entities and where different responsibilities lie so it will be concerning to me if our community felt that as a result of any reforms and things that people didn’t know where to go, so feel free to use our contact at whaikaha.govt.nz . Email, and really happy to facilitate some of those conversations Denise absolutely.

**Prudence Walker**

Kia ora. On a somewhat similar, but slightly different note, Kelly asked, will there be any work around mental health and getting this under the Whaikaha umbrella, instead of the Ministry of Health?

**Paula Tesoriero**

Yeah, good point Kelly I'll have to come back to you with a more substantive response on our website if that's okay. Very acutely aware of, you know, people experiencing psychosocial distress and identify as disabled people so there’s, you know, very much work that, you know, very much things that we are doing to work with the Ministry of Health and Te Whatu Ora around some of the mental health reforms and changes to mental health legislation so we absolutely have a role in trying to influence that.

**Prudence Walker**

Kia ora. And Tonya asked do you anticipate changes to legislation that will require investment by local governments and businesses around accessibility?

**Paula Tesoriero**

So, people may be aware of the accessibility legislation that is before Parliament at the moment. It's just been through it’s select committee stages. And that will be reported back to Parliament as to what the select committee have heard and recommend, so I know many people in our community are really looking forward to, you know, hearing how that legislation is ultimately shaped and, you know, the rationale behind that legislation is to find a way to start reducing the many barriers that disabled people and our families experience and you know those barriers are right across New Zealand, they’re across government, they’re across private sector, local government, and you know we've got an opportunity to really start to turn that around and it's important that we do that.

**Prudence Walker**

Kia ora. I've got a question here that says, are you recruiting parents with lived experience and where can they fit into Whaikaha?

**Paula Tesoriero**

Absolutely. So, you know, I'm really committed to growing a workforce here at Whaikaha that absolutely brings people into the organization who are disabled so we grow a disabled workforce. And also, other people who have lived experience, be that through whānau, through caring for disabled people, and you know we of course have allies and champions who might not be disabled, working with us. And I think one of the things that, you know, I'm also really committed to doing and have started conversations with other Chief Executives about across government is, you know Whaikaha is one place to build that workforce expertise, but actually we want to build that expertise right across government. And we want to make the experience of working inside central government, much, much better for disabled people

and we've now got some improved data around the experience of disabled people in the public service, and we want to build on that, and grow that workforce, but you know my approach to this is absolutely whānau members should apply for jobs at Whaikaha, we welcome those applications. And more broadly, in addition to the potential for working in Whaikaha. You know, I’ve already in this role spoken to a number of family and whānau networks and I'll continue to do that because I absolutely need to hear and understand what's happening for family and whānau more broadly.

**Prudence Walker**

Kia ora Paula, we haven't got too much longer to run on this so we have time for probably two more questions. So Grant you are next in line for the verbal questions. So I invite you to ask Paula your question.

**Grant**

Kia ora Paula, kia ora Prudence, and kia to the gentleman who led the karakia. Thank you all for facilitating this discussion tonight. My question Paula, I'm a disability advocate here in Tauranga moana and my question is that one of the common themes I’ve heard from people on the ground is having a one stop shop for all things disability, all the services, supports and information that people need, is that something that Whaikaha will evolve into or develop along the way?

**Paula Tesoriero**

Kia ora Grant thank you for that question. And nice to see that beautiful backdrop on your screen of Mount Maunganui. So the short answer is yes, my hope will be, or my expectation will be that Whaikaha is the exemplar in terms of the provision of information, that people can come to us with that one stop shop sense of where to find information on disability. It’s going to take us a little while to build that.

Because we're building our comms team and building that capability, but yes in time, because I think that, you know, something I've heard and experienced myself is just, there's a lot of information in a lot of different places, it's not all accessible, and there is an opportunity I think with the establishment of our agency to look at things like that so thank you for for that suggestion.

**Grant**

Awesome. Thank you, Paula.

**Prudence Walker**

I think I Gabriel Hogg has a question.

**Gabriel**

Hey Paula, nice to see you. I had two questions please, compassion and using AAC.

I guess my first question follows on from Jennie’s, will Ministry of Disabled People in capacity of disabilities support services, look at extending their eligibility criteria for other neurodiverse people beyond the scope of autism for those that don't have another co-occurring condition? And will more funding be provided to Talklink Trust to enable disabled neuro diverse people to reduce waitlists in order to access earlier access to assistive technology and augmentative and alternative communication?

**Paula Tesoriero**

Kia ora Gabby thank you for that, and It's nice to see you again too. So a couple of questions in there, the question about eligibility more broadly is something we're going to have to grapple with, as we think about that mandate that we've got around transforming the system.

And so absolutely, the question about Talklink. I don't know the answer to that off the top my head but we'll put some information on the website about that. And interestingly, the issue of greater access to assistive technologies and augmentive technologies is something that I'm definitely hearing quite a bit of in this role so thank you for raising it.

**Prudence Walker**

Kia ora thank you for that Paula. Now I know that the year has been quite a few questions in the chat and some of those have been answered by chat, but for those ones that haven't, They will be collated into themes and answered on the website in the coming weeks, and Yang I know that you had some there related to business, and so I think the email address has been posted for you to direct that to.

I'm just aware Sarah you're the only other one who had the electronic hand up. So if I can just invite you in the last few minutes we have to ask your question to Paula, and then we have all the others written down.

**Sarah**

Awesome, kia ora koutou my name is Sarah and I'm the founder of the Facebook group. Collectively, I'm here on behalf of 29 other New Zealanders with lived experiences of disabilities. A very multicultural group. And one of the main themes from the group was around the disconnect with disability advocacy and representation in hospitals.

Our disability community, including myself, I am someone that has multiple disabilities but there's a real disconnect between the care that we receive in hospital, and then the aftercare with GPs. What is the role of Whaikaha in terms of educating medical practitioners, clinics and hospitals in terms of how to navigate with people that have disabilities?

Because that is predominantly one of the main issues that a lot of us in the group that I am managing have. And it's more around education and, in hospitals, like I can get a cultural advocate, but it's very very difficult to have representation in hospitals in terms of having a disability advocate, or having inequalities across GPs where a GP may be able to talk about disability support services, and then another patient and their GP, like, there was no conversation around a needs assessment.

So, what is the role in terms of educating the healthcare sector on what we need? Because it's really important that our GPs, have their education, and are prompting us as patients around the support services that we may be eligible for, as well as hospitals.

**Prudence Walker**

Thank you, kia ora Sarah.

**Paula Tesoriero**

Kia ora Sarah, thank you for that question. A few points, one, I'd love to learn more about your group. So it will be great to get an email from you with a way to make connection. So thank you for that firstly and for all the work that you’re doing to support people. Secondly, I've done a couple of recent media interviews actually, long form interviews. One specifically focused on GPs as an audience, and I was able to talk about some of the things that have come through the New Zealand Health Survey and things which absolutely reflect some of the things that you have raised.

So I talked about the things that GPs can do to better support our community of disabled people and families. So, that's not the, you know, the sole answer, but just so that you know that it's very much an area I recognize-

[static and sound cutting out]

Absolutely, there is a role for us to connect with Te Whatu Ora around making sure there is some consistency in the provision of information with primary health providers around making sure that they do know about access to disability supports. So, thank you for raising that. The general issue around support in hospital. Yeah, again, you know, to answer your question about what role do we have, yes we have a role in, you know, feeding that information and working with Te Whatu Ora, and Te Aka Whai Ora in the provision of those suppots. So short answer is yes we do have a role, but also want to listen to other agencies and get them to come do their thing, but I’d really yeah, welcome contact from your group Sarah so we’ll leave that in your, in your hands to make contact.

Prudence if that, thank you Sarah. I do just want to acknowledge that, you know, there's over a couple of hundred people on this call tonight, which is great. And you know, to me as a disabled person and deliberately coming into this role to try and affect change it's absolutely visercal to me, it is core to, to me, that we achieve the things that we have been set up to achieve.

And, you know, it won't all happen overnight. It won't happen, you know, next year. Some of it might not happen the year after. But I am absolutely committed to leading change for our community and their families, and I absolutely, absolutely acknowledge the pressure the whole system is under. And, you know, we've got a really big mandate to affect change. We've got some money on contingency to help support taking an Enabling Good Lives approach, through, you know, things like personal budgets and connectors and investing in community to grow its capability capacity, and we need to start delivering that next year.

And that's what we committed to doing so, really want to thank you and also a big thank you from me, Prudence to you, for all your incredible work and commitment to our community and for this tonight and to Matua Peter for your, always, for your wisdom, and guidance and in cloaking us with the right cultural awareness, and to our interpreters so thank you and I'll hand back to you Prudence.

**Prudence Walker**

Kia ora Paula, thank you for that. And thank you to everybody who had a question or submitted a question. I apologize that we didn't get to all of them. But do want to reiterate that those will be grouped if there’s common themes and addressed on the Whaikaha website in the next couple of weeks, and Paula will

As she said, if you continue to want to engage and further korero or have further thoughts and questions. So, as we mentioned, this zoom will remain open for about 15 minutes just to allow if anyone has any last questions that they want to post in the chat for those to be captured, so that they can be answered later on. So I hope that this is the start of what I hope is a continuing conversation and I know it will be, and was helpful for you.

It's great to see so many people here today, and I think we've heard from Paula that there is an acknowledgement of how much work there really is to do, but there’s a real commitment to that as well. So thank you again for your suggestions and views, and I'd like to hand over to Peter to lead us and a closing karakia.

**Peter Allen**

Kia ora Prudence. Tēnei te mihi mutanga mō tatou nei hui o te pō. Te mea tuatahi kia koe Paula, he nui te mihi ki a koe mō tēnei korero o tēnei pō.

Te mea tuarua ki a koutou e ngā tāngata, e ngā whānau, e ngā Rangatira mā mō to koutou whakaaro, mo tō koutou patai, mō tēnei pō. Ngā patai nui mō tēnei nō reira he mihi tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, kia ora anō koutou katoa.

That’s a Māori whakataūkī but I just want to finish tonight before we do karakia and it is he whakatauki. Ehara taku toa, he toa takitahi engari, he toa takitini. And that’s a whakataūkī or a proverb that relates to you know the strength of the collective and that’s what Paula spoke to quite often tonight and that’s our whole disabled community, whether it is disabled people, whānau, providers, there's a whole lot of us that are in this together and so a big mihi to you all and it's that collaboration that we are searching for.

Kua tae te mutunga mo tatou hui mo te po. Ka whakakapi. Kia whakairia te tapu. Kia wātea ai te ara Kia turuki whakataha ai. Kia turuki whakataha ai. Haumi e. Hui e. Tāiki e!

So the vow of sacredness from this particular hui tonight that we have all been under has now been lifted so we can all continue in our lives for the rest of the night. Kia ora koutou.