Ko Paula Tesoriero tōku ingoa, ko taku tūranga mahi, he Tumaki mō Whaikaha - the Ministry of Disabled People.  My name is Paula Tesoriero and I am the Chief Executive of Whaikaha. Today I'm wearing a white short sleeved top with lots of black spots on it. I have short brown hair, and I'm wearing small heart shaped green earrings.

My sign name is a reflection of two fists that are moving in a peddling fashion as though I'm riding a bike and that's because I love cycling. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have supported Whaikaha in the first six months of our existence and in my first three months as our leader.

As we wrap up 2022, I acknowledge your patience as we navigate through this early stage of our journey. I also want to thank our staff and our community partners at Whaikaha and all their hard work that has gotten us to this point. I want to make special thanks to the disability community. I have really valued reconnecting with many of you and also getting to know some new people in this role.

I'll be continuing in 2023 to get around Aotearoa meeting more people and our disability community and in our wider sector. Engaging with the community and the sector is crucial to Whaikaha succeeding. We are in this together. It has been a really busy start to Whaikaha’s journey and we are well aware that we have a huge amount of work to do yet. We are up for the challenge.

There have been some major milestones in our early days at Whaikaha which provide even more fuel to power our stage of transformation of the disability support system next year. Courageous survivors have shared their stories at the Abuse and Care Royal Commission Inquiry and the Waitangi tribunal hearings and the recent report from the United Nations highlights what Aotearoa needs to do to better uphold the rights of disabled people.

With Whaikaha we now have a Ministry that can build on those milestones and foundations for change as we look to the year ahead. I'm feeling really enthusiastic and optimistic. The winds of change are definitely stiring. Look out for a big 2023 here at Whaikaha - the Ministry of Disabled People. It's going to be a big year. We're going to be doing a lot of recruitment next year, we set our strategic direction for the year ahead.

We'll be starting to implement our transformation program and continue to establish our functions at Whaikaha. With that in mind, I would like to wish everyone a wonderful and safe summer holiday, and I look forward to reconnecting with you in the New Year. Meri kirihimete me ngā mihi o te tau hou. Noho ora mai.