# Curious about working for Whaikaha? - Video Transcript

**Speaker – Paula**

Nau mai, Haere mai, welcome to Whaikaha, the Ministry of Disabled People. 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. I'm sitting in a chair wearing a green jacket with white pearl looking buttons down the side with a black T-shirt underneath and silver dangly earrings.

My sign name is this, which represents two bicycle pedals moving in a forward direction. And my job is the Chief Executive of Whaikaha. I'm joined this morning by my colleague, the Deputy Chief Executive, Policy, Strategy and Partnerships, Ben O'Meara.

**Speaker – Ben**

Thanks Paula, great to be here.

**Speaker – Paula**

Together, we want to give you some insights into Whaikaha and what motivates us to do the work that we do here. I'm delighted that you are curious about joining us. We are a new Ministry, and the first one like this in the world. We have a huge opportunity to make a meaningful difference for disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau. To achieve our aspirations, we need to build a diverse and inclusive team.

We will work in partnership with our community to innovate and break down barriers to participation for disabled people in all areas of life, including things like sport, social activities, housing, health, education, and more.

Whaikaha is committed to listening to the voices of the disability community to understand how these barriers can be removed. We're nearly at 40% of our workforce identifying as disabled, and many more of our people are our allies, with lived experience, through whānau, and community connections.

We really benefit from this diversity, and we want to grow it. Whaikaha strives to be a creative, diverse, and flexible place to work. We want to be an exemplar employer, and we're working to improve our recruitment processes so that they have accessibility at their heart. We also want to be known for removing barriers to employment, providing workplace reasonable accommodations, and career development and pathways for our people. We want our people to have every opportunity to achieve their full potential.

So Ben, you're relatively new to Whaikaha. What motivated you to apply for a role here?

**Speaker – Ben**

Well, I think three main things, Paula. The first one was the opportunity to work with you of course, and others here who I knew before I started. The second thing was that I have spent 30 years doing policy work and working with policy teams, and when I started in my journey, I got a hand up from a scholarship for disabled people that was offered by the Ministry of Commerce.

And that brought me from Tāmaki Makaurau to Te Whanganui-a-Tara to complete my university studies and then do summer employment. And after that, I got an employment opportunity that started me in my career.

I see real potential at Whaikaha to develop people in similar ways to the opportunities that I had, and to make opportunities available for disabled people.

And the last thing is the work programme. So a lot of the issues that we're working on are complex. We're looking at a system, continuing to operate a system that supports disabled people, while at the same time transforming that system to give the disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori more efficacy and influence, choice and control over the things that matter to them. And that's exciting work.

It operates within a partnership context with disabled people. It provides an opportunity to get alongside disabled people to amplify their voice and to work more directly with the community than is possible in many other government agencies. So that's the reason why I'm here.

**Speaker – Paula**

We've got so much to do and so much to look forward to and it's really neat having you with us and the contribution that you and your team make. What are some of the things that you've noticed about the way we can do things differently?

**Speaker – Ben**

We have quite a diverse workforce here at Whaikaha and people are very open and welcoming and look at different ways to manage and achieve things. One of the most interesting things for me as a blind person is people have said to me, can you access and read that document? You know, is that accessible for you? Or do we need to do things in a different way? And in many cases as a blind person, technology makes documents much more accessible than they used to be, but still, it's really great to know that that support is there if I need it. In terms of people actually thinking, without me even having to ask about the best way for me to access things.

Second thing is the opportunities to work closely with the disabled community from early on in the policy process. So, we're trying to share reports as we draft them for the Minister with disabled people on key topics, and get their input on those reports before they go before the Minister.

And finally, we're also looking for a really diverse workforce, it's a great opportunity to work with a wide range of people. I've learned a whole lot about other disabilities. Often when you're disabled, blind like me, I guess you know a lot about being blind, but I've learned a lot about other disabled people and the way that we can adapt the things that are helpful for them. And I think that that's really...By having more people out and working in Whaikaha and other organisations like us, the easier it will become for other disabled people to come and do this work, because it's often hardest to change the system the first time around, and then every time after that it hopefully gets easier.

**Speaker – Paula**

So, given all that, what sort of people do you think would enjoy working here at Whaikaha with us Ben?

**Speaker – Ben**

I think mainly people who are committed to making a difference for disabled people. One of the main things we're seeking to do is to transform the disability support system at the same time as we're keeping the current system running. So, we're looking for people who have a commitment to change.

Not everyone who works here needs to be disabled, we also want people who are allies of disabled people and can bring their skills and experience to influence the change in the way we deliver services. I think being able to partner with people is really important. So being able to get alongside disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori and to work with them on different ways to progress the kinds of mahi that we want to get done here in Whaikaha. Being open to new solutions, open to ways of changing things, but also understanding the way that Government operates and our role in advising ministers and cabinet on the kind of changes that are needed.

So, I think we need a real variety of skills from great policy people who have worked on system change before and understand what policy's role is in a system change process, through to people who can help manage programmes, big programmes of work to change things, who have really great relationship management skills and are able to partner with a wide range of people, understand Te Ao and Tikanga Māori to partner with tāngata whaikaha Māori.

And then in the operational space are able to work with our providers and all of those who are supporting disabled people out there on the ground, every day, to I guess integrate a way of working that helps to provide greater choice and control to disabled people.

**Speaker – Paula**

Plenty of opportunity.

Today we've given you a window into Whaikaha and a couple of examples of the opportunities we have before us. We need more people to help us achieve the aspirations of disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau. And we'd love to hear from you if you're curious about a career with us.

If you're keen to contribute to an organisation where everyone belongs, where innovative thinking is rewarded, we would love to hear from you. We encourage you to apply for roles at Whaikaha via our website, or for you to refer your friends and whānau to us. Ngā mihi nui kia koutou katoa.