**Video Transcript**

**Message from Paula Tesoriero**

Kia ora. Ko Paula Tesoriero tōku ingoa, ko taku tūranga mahi, he Tumu Whakarae mō Whaikaha - the Ministry of Disabled People. Talofa lava, kia orana, warm Pacific greetings. My sign name is this representing two pedals on a bike. I'm standing in front of the camera wearing a blue short sleeve shirt and black pants.

My job is the Chief Executive of Whaikaha, the Ministry of Disabled People. It's been quite a year. Since day one Whaikaha is focused on improving outcomes for disabled people and transforming the systems that support our lives. We've been working hard to fully establish ourselves and build our teams. We know what we need to achieve cannot be done alone, and we need to continue to build strong partnerships with disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori. Whaikaha been engaging with many people in our community and have been listening to feedback.

We're aware there are people in our community who are struggling, people who were already doing it tough, have had covid make matters worse and on top of that many people were recently impacted by the severe weather events that battered parts of the North Island. Yet, through the past year, we have felt the support of the community, which we are here to work in partnership with and to serve.

So, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in our community who has supported us in our journey so far, including the people who advocated for the establishment of Whaikaha and were involved in its original establishment. People who have met me and shared their experiences. People who bravely shared with the Abuse and Care, Royal Commission of Inquiry and the Wai 2575 inquiry. People and groups who invited me to speak to their organizations or attend their events, and people who have contributed to some of our key projects. And people we work alongside who do so much hard work every day.

Since becoming the Chief Executive in September last year, I've been reminded daily about the privilege and responsibilities which come with this job. We all agree that transforming the disability system requires us to be courageous and that this will take time. And that we must recognize our commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Enabling Good Lives Principles and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities in all our work. And that's why those three pou are so central to our work.

Whaikaha is responsible for the commissioning and delivering of more than 2 billion of disability supports to up to 120,000 people on any given day. And we are taking our first steps towards system transformation. We have also been strengthening our cross-government work with other agencies so we can all start working together towards making meaningful societal changes for disabled people and whānau.

Our work has just begun and with the support of the disability community and our allies, We are already making progress, including continuing the establishment of Whaikaha by developing systems and processes – as well as a larger, more fit for purpose organisational structure – which will enable us to embark on system transformation and fulfill our mandate.

Service provision such as equipment, housing modifications, vehicle purchase, and modification assistance to 68,135 people.We've been working with government and community to be in a position to draw down the a hundred million dollars on contingency to put in place the foundations for the nationwide system transformation using the Enabling Good Lives approach.

We've been developing a strategy to improve the outcomes for those in the care under the intellectual disability forensic framework. We've made the flexible approach to carer support and individualized funding, including the ability to pay family members to provide support, permanent.

We've invested in community development to build disabled persons in whānau leadership. We've promoted the rights of disabled people, including responding to almost 2000 requests for advice from the public government agencies and our Minister’s Office. We led the government delegation to Geneva for the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities examination of New Zealand's progress on realisation of the UNCRPD. We contributed to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State Care. And to the Waitangi Tribunal Wai2575 Health Services and Outcomes Inquiry which includes claims for tāngata whaikaha Māori.

We led on proactive engagement with Covid 19 strategies. We provided stewardship on the disability action plan. We published the third edition of the Aotearoa Autism Guideline to support autistic people in whānau. We contributed to co-chairing of the Disability Data and Evidence Working Group. We also implemented the safeguarding response for disabled and vulnerable adults as part of the broader Te Aorerekura strategy.

We co-sponsored the governing of the Education Review Office disabled learners’ reviews. We led the International Initiative for Mental Health and Disability Leadership Exchange Regional Hub in Christchurch. We've been managing and governing the board nominations database, engaging nearly 200 disabled people with an interest in governance and board participation. We've been compiling and producing the annual report towards a non disabling New Zealand for the Minister to present to the House of Representatives on implementing the New Zealand disability strategy.

We've participated in a wide range of conferences and forums on issues of importance to our community. That's just some of the things, and I hope that over the next 12 months you'll see Whaikaha add to the list of achievements. Significantly, one of the top priorities is strengthening our community partnership arrangements, expanding our workforce, including hiring more people so we can deliver on our promise. Encouraging other government agencies towards change through our disability stewardship role and progressing the much needed disability system transformation, including establishing a transformation office to drive this work.

Whatever your connection to Whaikaha has been over the past 12 months, thank you.

We have so much more to do and we can't do this on our own, so thank you. Ngā mihi nui kia koutou katoa.