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The Northern Advocate

"A different Light"

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My home is our castle

When I think about the traditional western-style nuclear family...it just seems a little illogical, a little odd.

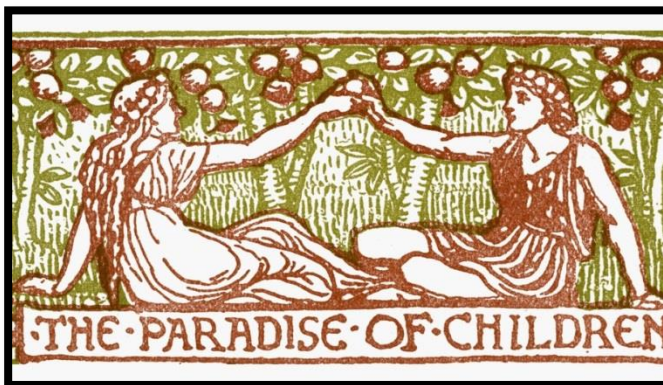
"Be careful what you wish for -you might get it!"

Don't these kind of smarty pants clichés grate when they're rolled out with such mindless regularity?

One of the more popular clichés when talking about grandchildren is the old, "They're great cos you can hand them back when you want to". (People who say that just don't get grand parenthood).

Here's another cliché I'm experiencing at the moment: "Packed to the Rafters".

Yes, they've come home to roost. My eldest daughter moved in a while ago when she needed to re-boot.



And then after months of lecturing and haranguing my other daughter to save up and buy a house, I suddenly "got what I wished for" as she, her partner Sharif and our much adored moko, Isla, moved in.

So, here we are, suddenly a lot fuller than we were.

Our two Sydney silky terriers, acquired when we first started getting to grips with empty nest syndrome (loving these clichés!) now seem somewhat redundant.

I've always thought the extended family, the village life and the papa kaianga have their own obvious logic; everyone has their place, everyone contributes, everyone is valued.

Don't get me wrong, papa kaianga style does have its drawbacks - queuing for the bathroom (that can result in a cold shower), never ending rounds of laundry, navigating refreshed sibling tensions and standing on sharp toys.

I haven't seen a power bill yet.

But in my mind the pros outweigh the cons.

The divisions of labour are far more punctuated.

I'm really enjoying my role of cooking with Sharif, who runs around small mountains all day, working in the forestry sector and who has a mountainous appetite to match.

We are really paying tribute to winterish comfort food: pulled pork hamburgers, Fijian curries, beef cheek and bacon hock ragout, chicken chow mein with old school crispy noodles and more beef cheeks and burgers.

When I think about the traditional western style nuclear family . . . it just seems a little illogical, a little cold.

The inherent problems seem to be dislocation.

Older people living in rest homes, subject to isolation and loneliness, young parents struggling with the stress of the unknown territory of raising nippers without a handbook, and the nippers themselves being juggled into early childcare centres during that hectic pre-work commute.

Now, I know lots of these modern institutions do really good work but the simplicity of everyone making a contribution and being a part of it is a bit of a no-brainer ultimately.

That's what organisations, communities and societies strive for, a state where everyone is adding value working towards a common cause.

I know this is one of the main desires of disabled people - to be valued, which in turn means they are being included, and are participating. I hope that one day we do all get what we wish for.

Jonny Wilkinson is the CEO of Tiaho Trust - Disability: A Matter of Perception, a Whangarei-based disability advocacy organisation.