



Read our CEO **Jonny Wilkinson's** regular column in The Northern Advocate

"A different Light"

A Different Light 9 February 2019 – Spoon full of sugar

I got feedback on social media on my last column to the effect “actually please can you start writing about Disabilities Matters and Issues in 2019?” and “Yes, I think we hear too much about the world Jonny lives in”.

It’s always a hard pill to swallow, negative feedback on social media. It’s hard not to get defensive, so I have done some reflecting and when you right things for a public audience it has to be interesting. It has to engage people in one way or another. Disability is a very personal thing. It’s personal to each individual, I think that’s why sometimes it’s hard for disabled leaders to think and encompass disability in all of it’s diversity. Disability issues can also get incredible repetitive and be the same old issues year after year. There has been a call for people to attend and co-chair the 12th session of the Conference of States Parties (COSP) to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that will take place in June 2019 at UN Headquarters in New York. The three things of the conference are; Technology, digitalization and ICTs for the empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities, social inclusion and the right of the highest attainable standard of health and inclusion of persons with disabilities in society through participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sports. It’s not like these issues are new or riveting.

Are you still with me?

Lack of employment, access issues, discrimination not to mention mobility parking abuse rears its head time and time again. It’s no wonder the general public can soon tire from these and turn their collective attention elsewhere. One needs to give it a personal touch and some humour in order to connect. Disabled people do not have to be defined by their disabilities either. It’s good to let people know that there is life beyond disability and that we all have the same up’s and down’s, slings and arrows, good days and bad just like non-disabled people. Who ever said that, to my defence, I have written about disabled issues extensively. Gender pay equality versus disability unemployment, accessible tourism, the euthanasia bill, access at the Waitangi Copethorne, interpreters on Waitangi Day, Paralympians, Stephen Hawkins etc etc

Are you still awake! What would you like to hear about? Disability Issues? The world of Jonny? Or perhaps a mixture of the two?

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