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## "A Different Light"

### **A Different Light - 3 July 2021 – “Letting go of well-travelled mobility scooter – Not easy”**

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Out with the old and in with the new. Sometimes things just wear out their welcome and go their use- by date. Sometimes it's hard to let go of those things that you have used for years and kid yourself that there is nothing wrong with them. As in the lyrics of Cat Stevens song 'Oh Very Young', " like Your daddy's best jeans, denim blue faded up to the sky, you want them to last forever but you know they never will", it was time to upgrade my travelling mobility scooter.

The jalopy, the Bismarck. It was trusty (kind of) but very rusty. It would fold up into a fairly compact size but you had to have several things in alignment before it would materialise into something that would take you from A to B. It had a lever, a ring and an angle to be sorted simultaneously, and it wasn't that light. Both my PA and wife can attest to that, both complaining of buggered shoulders as a result of man handling the beast in and out of my boot. It's been around. From Opononi to Invercargill. From the Gold Coast to Europe, running out of batteries on the Brighton Pier and bouncing over cobblestones exiting the Coliseum in Rome causing jarring that could (and pretty much did) turn my vertebrae into talcum powder! Ah yes, the anecdotes; arriving in Heathrow after a long haul trip from Auckland, picking up the scooter and realising the keys had gone missing in transit and somehow convincing an aircraft engineer to hotwire it. I will never forget the image of the chap in a turban taking the insulation off a wire with his teeth. Rolling the scooter completely over in front of an ambulance exiting a Bruce Springsteen concert. Doubling Sally my wife on a concourse in the Gold Coast because her feet hurt. Hurriedly taking our granddaughter back to the hotel as she screamed after a jellyfish sting on the same Aussie beach. Running out of batteries a number of times in the early hours of the morning.

It is still going, it still does the job, although I have to admit it was looking pretty haggard with bits hanging off it and more rust than paint. I now have a new model, simplified, smaller, lighter, compact, red and black, minimalist. It is taking a little bit of getting used to. The forward and reverse is operated with a flick of a switch as opposed to a backward and forward lever. My memory muscle is entrenched in the old method resulting in me lurching backward

or forward at the wrong time. There is also a stability control which I guess is a good thing. It slows down when you turn a corner and goes at a snail's pace when you are on full lock. I have to remind myself not to do u-turn in front of an oncoming car! Don't get me wrong, I am not complaining, I'm just a little sentimental about the old jalopy and all we've been through. Adaptation is a necessity for all of us, particularly when you have a disability. I remember in my 20's being able to cross Queen Street diagonally on foot, fat chance of me doing that these days. It's good to have access to things that make life easier, not only equipment but an accessible built environment, and inclusive communities where there are opportunities to participate. In the words of the illustrious Alexi Sayle it is indeed a case of –“Hello John, got a new mota?”

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