



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

"A Different Light"

A Different Light - 9th October 2021 – “Are we at the Covid 19 Delta outbreak vaccination tipping point? ”

We finally have a date locked down despite the lockdown, (although this constant rain is making it look a bit precarious!). The completion of our new home build. It's here at last. It's happening. It's real! After months of vacillating over fixtures and colour schemes, negotiating with neighbours over fencing (some more cooperative than others), there is light at the end of the tunnel. It's approaching fast (unless this persistent rain continues to impede the last pour of concrete!).

The packing is ongoing, arduous, and onerous. It seems mountainous, no matter how much we pack, the same amount of effects remain. We've been giving away stuff. My wife Sally in particular has been giving away my stuff. I was somewhat alarmed the other day when she announced she had given away my axe and log splitter to our son-in-law. It seemed symbolic. The end of an era. "Well, you don't need them anymore do you?", she said. I nodded slowly in realisation that the Tipping Point had been met: my fire-starting days were over. The fireplace being replaced by that over practical flick of a switch that will turn the heat pump on. I should be pleased. I should be relieved. No more haggling over wet wood on Trademe. No more humping firewood indoors. No more panic as you realise the large log you tried to cram into the firebox, just won't fit and it has already caught alight. But there is something about a fire that has its own comfort zone. It's sort of primeval, back to our ancestors. It's like cooking with gas (another change to get used to, thanks to the Climate Change Commission). Fire is tangible, visual, you can see it, smell it and you can certainly feel it.

I think the discontinuation of gas heating, gas cooking and wood burning heating is going to gallop on at a fairly rapid pace. It's one of those things that gets talked about a lot with little seeming to happen and then over a short period of time things change rapidly- a tipping point is reached. Like the wearing of bike helmets, the decline in cigarette smoking, the steady rise of the electric vehicle, scooters and bicycles. I haven't seen an electric iron in action for long time, although rather than attributing this to a tipping point this may just be a reflection of our increased personal outsourcing due to a concurrent increase in our household's domestic apathy.

Things seem to change when they reach a tipping point that induces an avalanche of either implementation or decline. In “The Tipping Point”, Malcolm Gladwell wrote about social epidemics, theorising that there were three rules of social epidemic. The first rule is that you need three kinds of people involved; Connectors with vast networks who bring everyone together; Mavens, who are information specialists who accumulate knowledge and finally, Sales people, who are charismatic with powerful negotiation skills. Rule number two is about the need for concepts to have the ‘stickiness’ factor – something that makes the specific content of a message memorable. Lastly, Rule Three focuses on the power of context, as human behaviour is so strongly influenced by the environment.

Has New Zealand got these three types of people in place for the Covid Vaccination drive? Are our Health Sector leaders good Connectors? Are our Pandemic Modellers great Mavens? Do our politicians have the charisma and negotiation powers that are required?

I hope that our vaccination rate will soon reach that tipping point and rapidly escalate to a proportion where we will see the light at the end of the tunnel.

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