



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

## "A Different Light"

### **A Different Light – 10 September 2022 – “Who will support our community best?”**

New research shows that more than two in five workers are planning to look for a new job.

There is a bit of this hitting the media at the moment There is talk of ‘quiet resignation’ in which post covid workers are consciously reducing their work input to a level manageable with their lifestyle. In addition to this, there are some highfliers flying to new perches. Last week Paula Tesoriero landed the position of CEO at the long-awaited brand new Ministry of Disability Whaikaha. Tesoriero, the former Disability Rights Commissioner, is a gold and bronze medal-winning paralympic cyclist and a fierce advocate of disability rights. She has spoken out with great articulation and volume on issues such as the Euthanasia Bill, the high rates of unemployment for disabled people and the need for more accessible housing. When she was interviewed on TV One News last week, she described herself as a ‘really proud disabled person’. Her appointment has greatly pleased the New Zealand disabled community who were appalled when a non-disabled person was initially appointed as Acting CEO in the position. A great new perch from which to make some real headway for the disabled community – congratulations, Paula. Both people with a high profile and those who choose stealthier approach can be prominent and make significant changes to the sector they are in.

Another highflier is the appropriately named, Ray Finch. He is the Chief Operating Officer for Spectrum Care who has recently resigned to take up a new position in Health. Ray has an exuberant, enthusiastically positive manner which saw him establish much needed residential facilities for disabled people in Whangarei. He has always shown understanding that disability is so diverse in

it's nature, that there needs to be a range of options available for living a good life. It was no easy feat. He had to gather evidence of the need and demand for such residences, citing incidents of young disabled adults with high and complex needs who had to move to Auckland and further afield, to access such residential services. Thank you Ray for standing up for our disabled rangatira in the North!

Sheryl Mai has served Whangarei as Mayor for the last 9 years. She has consistently supported the Disability Community over this time. She has always made herself available to open an event or write a letter of support. She too is going to stand down, calling it a day. Kia ora to Sheryl- you have been a high flying Mayor and advocate for our community!

Who will replace Sheryl,- we will know soon enough. Tiaho Trust has contacted each of the Mayoral Candidates in Northland, of whom there are 22. We have asked them questions around local disability issues, to encourage disabled people to have the information they need to vote on disability issues in local government. We are a large constituency. Disabled people make up 24% of the NZ population, in Northland the percentage is higher at 29%. Simply by asking the candidates about issues such as universal design, disability and employment and accessibility, we hope to prompt them to really consider this constituency.

Have a look on the Tiaho website for their answers and see who are our potential highfliers and who are the dead ducks in this race!

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