



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

"A Different Light"

A Different Light – 21 January 2023 – “ Making the transition from holiday to work can be hard ”

It's nothing but a happy memory. The summer holidays. Long lie ins. Long days drenched with sun. Long days drenched with rain. Christmas ham cooked countless ways, ham sandwiches, ham toasted sandwiches, ham steaks, ham pasta (aka Whore's Pasta truly--look it up), quesadillas and finally Asian noodles with ham broth. We had Declan over from London, our 17 year old nephew who is going to film school. He shadowed me for a few days completing one of his course assignments making a documentary. He chose me as a subject despite my warnings of being outstandingly boring. He chased me through Whangarei with a camera, I was on my mobility scooter, he was on foot with a large camera. Jonny getting his hair cut, Jonny getting his lunch, Jonny going to Chiropodist, Jonny driving on SH1 to Waipu explaining the prevalence of logging trucks. Ho hum!

Weekends quickly became meaningless as the days merged into one long blurry hedonistic pattern of reading, eating, swimming in the pool, binge watching Streaming TV and drinking cocktails: Tequila Sunrises, Singapore Slings, Bloody Marys, Mojitos and Daiquiris. The only pressing task was tending to my tomatoes which have grown prolifically due to our erratic weather. The recent strong wind from Cyclone Hale was somewhat perturbing as the tomato plants had grown ridiculously large. My efforts to stake them was particularly random and precarious.

As the holidays started drawing to an end, I found myself thinking positive affirmations as the countdown to returning to work started. Four days out. Think of it as Easter weekend, you will be really excited to embark on an easter

weekend. Three days out, Labour weekend, you would be thrilled to bits to have Labour weekend in front of you. Two days out. Imagine you are just starting your weekend, that's always a cheerful thought. Then Sunday comes with that knuckle dragging sinking feeling when the realisation comes that the holidays have finally come to an end.

So back at work and I find myself staring blankly in a stupor thinking now what the hell do I do again and then it all starts coming back to me. What to do with the results of Hundertwasser building accessibility survey; ongoing advocacy to push those responsible to provide a suitable residential service for an intellectually impaired young woman. Speaking of Residential services how is our Respite & Residential needs survey (on the Tiaho website) going to quantify the dire shortage of such services in Northland? Then there's the up and coming Surf day at Ruakaka on the 11th February, giving disabled people a go at "catching a wave"- always a great day. In other mahi we will be soon be hosting advocacy workshops through Auckland Disability Law. We also need to gear up to deliver disability awareness Customer Service training to Accessable, the main disability equipment in the North Island via zoom. Then there is the scheduling and promoting of the Enabling Good Lives workshops throughout Northland to form a Northland Regional Enabling Good Lives Leadership Group to feed into what disability services in Northland will be like in the future. Yes, that right, that's what we do, I remember now. I love my job and being able to make my passion my job- what a privilege. It doesn't stop my mind from wandering and wondering , now and then...when is Waitangi weekend again?

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