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## "A Different Light"

### **A Different Light – 14<sup>th</sup> June 2025 – “Embracing the hot-cold dance of Northland winters”**

In Tai Tokerau whenever the daily high temperature dips below 20 degrees Celsius, beanies, scarves and puffer jackets appear instantly. Yes, winter has hit us with an abrupt snap this year but it's also alternating with the residual warmth of late autumn. One minute I'm basking in the kind of warmth that has you considering whether a shirt is necessary as a concept, and the next, I'm digging out hoodies and jackets, muttering, “This is brutal! I'm not ready.”

Let me put this in context. I was born in Fiji, so somewhere in my distant upbringing is the expectation that warmth is a basic human right. But I'm also of Northern English descent, which means theoretically my DNA should enable to embrace the cold with just a raised eyebrow and a flat cap. Unfortunately, these two heritages seem to fight each other in an ongoing battle. I find myself driving into work from Waipu with the heater on full bore at my feet with the window down. I do however tend to run on the hot side particularly at night in fact I've only just started to add a thin blanket to the sparse sheet I've been snoozing under.

My wife is a completely different story. She detests being cold and embraces the tradition of hunkering down and breaking out the winter woollies, blankets and duvets. At night I carefully fold the many blankets and furs to the middle of the bed opting for a cooler approach. But then I wake in the early hours somewhat cold and vaguely shivering. I gingerly try and reclaim some of the blanket mountain I had rejected hours ago only to be told quite severely “DON'T STEAL THE BLANKETS!”

When we are driving, however, the tables are turned. Sally seems to get hot in the car and she cranks the air conditioning up. The cold air always seems to be aimed at the steering wheel and my hands turning them into frigid claws.

Hot and cold, up and down the fluctuations in temperature seem to never end. But this is where my adaptability comes into play. As disabled a person I know that disabled people agile when it comes adjusting the environment. We

read our bodies, we pace ourselves, and prepare for every seasonal twist and turn. We juggle mobility scooters, walkers, meds, and yes—temperature control—with finesse.

It's not just about personal comfort—it's about survival in systems that often forget we exist. So, while I may groan about the swings in climate and changes in temperature, I know that we are some of the most resilient, adaptable folks out there, because we have to be.

Still, it doesn't stop me from complaining about being too hot in bed. When I do, my wife just smiles sweetly, wrapped up like a burrito, and says, "You'll be fine. You were born in Fiji, remember?"

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