



Ngā whakaaroaro Reflections

Aroaromahana Spring 2023



**ccs
disability action**
Including all people

TE HUNGA HAUĀ MAURI MŌ NGĀ TĀNGATA KATOA

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Te Aronui



Every disabled person/whānau hauā
is interwoven into the lives of their
whānau and community.

Nau mai haere mai Welcome



Dairne Kirton
National board president

Tē tōia tē haumatia
*Nothing can be achieved without a
plan, great workforce, and
an impactful way of doing things.*

I am delighted to share our new Strategic Priorities 2022-2025 with you.

Our strategic priorities and vision are embodied by Te Aronui. Aro means 'to face' or 'to turn towards' and nui is 'the great space'. Te Aronui reflects both the nothingness and the everything and is a space of aspiration. Te Aronui will guide CCS Disability Action as we embrace the possibilities of the future.

Te Aronui reflects the interconnectedness of disabled people/whānau hauā to the environment in which we live. We will focus on these connected elements as we work alongside the people we support, each other and other organisations.

I would particularly like to acknowledge Ike Rakena, former māngai (Māori advisor) to the board. Ike was instrumental in guiding us towards Te Aronui and I would like to thank him for his leadership.

A special thank you to the national board, local governance, staff and members for your commitment to us. Your support gives us a stronger voice, where it matters, to help shape an inclusive Aotearoa. Take care of yourselves and whānau.

Noho ora mai, Mā te wā.



Melissa Smith
Chief executive

***Whiria te tangata ka puta he oranga
Whiria nga mahi aroha ka puta
he tino rangatiratanga.***
*Weaving people promotes well-being
Weaving the work of love
promotes excellence.*

We are thrilled with the gift of Te Aronui from the CCS Disability Action National Board.

Our new vision is to see every disabled person/whānau hauā interwoven into the lives of their whānau and community. Our focus is now simplified and are designed to reflect the holistic needs and mana of disabled people, their family and whānau.

Disabled people should have self-determination, to be recognised as the expert in their own lives and to have access to the resources and relationships they need and want. Our new vision also reminds us that we must ensure that the voices of disabled people/whānau hauā guide us in enabling people to lead their own lives, in their own way.

Te Aronui reflects an aspiration that motivates us all – be it in our mahi with individuals, at a community level or lobbying for legislative change. I'm excited to have Te Aronui shaping our approach in the years to come.

Find our more:
www.ccsDisabilityAction.org.nz/strategic-priorities

Peanuts and paper money: Why NZ's Minimum Wage Exemption needs to end



Would you work for just \$3 an hour? What about \$1.50? Most people would say that is unfair, but for many disabled employees in New Zealand, this has been their reality.

HISTORICALLY, THE MINIMUM Wage Act 1983 has allowed labour inspectors to issue minimum wage exemptions that permit disabled employees to be paid less than the minimum wage on the grounds that they are less productive, or that their impairment limits their ability to perform the job. There are around 800 people nationwide who are affected by this exemption, 70% of whom are paid less than \$5 per hour. Most of these workers have a learning disability.

Although the 2023 Budget announced that the exemption will come to an end by mid-2025, as it currently stands, this discriminatory system still affects disabled people across the country.

Like many disability advocacy organisations around the country, CCS Disability Action is strongly opposed to the minimum wage exemption, affirming that disabled people have a right to be fairly compensated for their work and should have adequate support (if needed) to undertake meaningful employment.

For Debbie Ward, CCS Disability Action's national disability leadership coordinator, the exemption is nothing short of exploitative.

"You've got these big businesses benefitting from disabled people who are perceived as being unable to get jobs any other way, yet the work they're doing contributes to those

businesses' profits," she says. "Every bit of work that each of these people is doing is contributing to the final product, but they are not even receiving the minimum wage for those efforts."

"In any work environment, you should benefit both financially and personally, whether that is through social interaction or a sense of fulfilment. However, disabled people under this scheme are not receiving the same financial benefits as everyone else for the same job."

A complex machine

Despite the consensus from disability advocates that the minimum wage exemption is discriminatory, wider opinions on the issue have been firmly divided. There are some in the disability community, including the families of those affected, who do not want to see it abolished. They feel that work provides their disabled loved ones with purpose and social interaction which they would not have the opportunity to enjoy without the exemption.

Debbie suggests that these concerns point to a wider systemic issue around how support, funding and allowances are currently allocated, which affects both disabled people and non-disabled people. ►



Debbie Ward.

► Debbie also questions the idea working in these “sheltered workshops” is the best way to provide true purpose and social interaction to disabled people. She says that, rather than facilitating inclusion, the minimum wage exemption creates an inherent division in the workplace.

“I’ve been into these places before and the disabled people that are working there all refer to the non-disabled people as staff, while the disabled people are called clients,” she says.

For the employers who hire these individuals, the arguments for keeping the exemption in place range from reduced productivity to health and safety concerns. But is productivity a reasonable yardstick for compensation, or for that matter, value? As disability activist Robyn Hunt noted in a Spinoff article, for disabled people (unlike their non-disabled counterparts), deficit is the default assumption, and they are consequently obliged to prove otherwise, often without the support they need to do so.

Likewise, the idea that disabled people have a fundamental impact on health and safety could be seen as contentious, at best.

“Employers don’t want to employ disabled people because of the perceived health and safety risk, but actually they have exactly the same obligations as employers under the Health and Safety at Work Act to provide a safe workplace to every person who comes into their building,” Debbie says.

What are the alternatives?

In 2019, the Labour Government announced that they would look to replace minimum wage exemptions with a wage subsidy, which is intended to support employers to take on workers with disabilities instead of penalising disabled people who want to work. Progress has been slow due to the widespread dissension surrounding the issue, but with the Budget 2023, the government finally announced that the exemption would be axed by mid-2025. The wage supplement taking its place will increase the pay of those affected to minimum wage.

Despite this, disability advocates are calling for a more holistic approach through the development of social enterprise models and greater access to employment support and personalised community participation programmes.

While ending the minimum wage exemption is a step in the right direction, the need for systemic change remains, and Debbie Ward sees this as an “opportunity for innovation”. Disability support providers such as CCS Disability Action represent a path forward by facilitating supported employment contracts to help disabled people get meaningful work, if that is what they want to do. From assessing someone’s goals and skills to assisting them with the job search process, these organisations work with disabled people to match them with a fulfilling (and properly compensated) role.

As Workbridge chief executive Jonathan Mosen points out, at the end of the day, every New Zealander is entitled to a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay.

“We are delighted to hear of, and work with, companies in many areas of business who have come to appreciate disabled people as hard-working, diligent, productive people who are worth paying for. They are an asset. They are not a liability or a health and safety risk,” says Jonathan. *“We have worked with many employers over the years to provide reassurance and dispel those myths and it is always rewarding when, after taking*

what might initially be perceived as a risk in hiring a disabled person, employers come back to us to find more staff.”

“For many of us, work is associated with mana, the development of a social circle and economic independence. People with impairments are no less entitled to the full benefits of all the rewards of work.”



A missed opportunity: The Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill

BJ Clark, national manager access and infrastructure

Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, we like to think of ourselves as a free and equal society where everyone can take part and pursue the lives they want. However, this is not the experience of disabled Kiwis across the country.





BJ Clark.

OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT was designed with largely the non-disabled portion of our population in mind, leaving more than 1.1 million disabled people (or one in four New Zealanders) to struggle with accessing – or be completely unable to participate in – everyday settings. And with no specific legislative framework in place to effectively deal with systemic access barriers and establish minimum standards, this is unlikely to change.

The government said it will address this issue with the Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill, but this has since been reported back to the House of Representatives on 20 June 2023 without implementing any of the changes recommended in submissions during the review process. Instead of a transformative framework, I, like many others in the disability community, see this as a missed opportunity that is unlikely to have any real impact – and could even send us backward.

The state of accessibility in Aotearoa

Unfortunately, accessibility is not a guaranteed right in New Zealand, and instead requires continuous advocacy both on the part of individuals and at a systemic level. People with visible and invisible disabilities encounter ongoing barriers to participating in every part of life.

The burden of overcoming these barriers falls disproportionately on the shoulders of

Examples of participation barriers include:

- Information and communication barriers (e.g. lack of closed captioning, inaccessible websites and signage).
- Physical obstacles (e.g. inaccessible transport and buildings).
- Abuse of mobility parking spaces.
- A lack of understanding about the importance of access (e.g. how accessibility benefits businesses).
- Inaccessible public services (e.g. barriers to education, healthcare and justice).

disabled people and their loved ones, even though most New Zealanders will experience disability, whether permanent or temporary, at some point in their lives.

These barriers have been longstanding and progress has been slow and hard to measure. Existing laws do not provide adequate guidance on identifying, remedying and preventing access issues, whether that is in designing a physical space, creating a website, providing employment or delivering goods and services. There is also no centralised leadership on accessibility, so change is fragmented and relies on the discretion of individual agencies.

In September 2022, a United Nations committee of disability experts reported that New Zealand is failing to meet its obligations to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (which was signed in 2008). ►

► It found that “urgent action” is needed to protect disabled people’s autonomy, independence and right to participate in all areas of society. Many of the recommendations were the same ones the UN committee had previously presented in 2014, which have yet to be actioned.

Analysing the Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill

First released in August 2022, the Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill looks to create a new legislative framework to address barriers that stop disabled people from taking part in society. As currently written, the bill will establish an Accessibility Committee to provide recommendations on ways to remedy access barriers.

On the positive side, I was excited to see that the majority of the committee would be made up of disabled people, including whānau hauā, and that the selection process seeks to ensure diverse representation. In keeping with “nothing about us, without us”, it’s important that disabled people’s voices are given the platform they deserve and not displaced by those of non-disabled people. However, I do question whether the committee will be given the authority required to make it a meaningful entity or if it is more tokenistic in nature.

The major sticking point that I and many others have with the Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill is the lack of measurable goals, specific accessibility standards, expectations, compliance guidelines, complaints processes or an enforcement agency. Essentially, the powers of the Accessibility Committee are very limited, and there are no mandatory standards or

Access Matters Aotearoa’s principles for accessibility legislation:

1. Applies to all.
2. Sets a timeline.
3. Sets the bar.
4. Provides accessibility in all areas of life.
5. Sets policy.
6. Champions access to all goods, services and facilities.
7. Champions accessible workplaces, employment and education.
8. Charge the government with the responsibility to lead, educate, train, inform and review.
9. Be enforceable.
10. Be made real through regulations.
11. Ensure public funds are not used to create or perpetuate obstacles to full accessibility in all areas of life.
12. Be a lens through which to vet legislation.
13. Have real force and real effect.

any government provision to make it a reality. This means there is no guarantee that the committee’s recommendations will be implemented, regardless of how valuable they might be.

At its worst, there is a chance that the bill could even slow down progress on accessibility if it requires all actions to be reviewed by the Accessibility Committee, creating a bottleneck that would delay already long overdue improvements. It's clear that the legislation lacks the substance it needs to have a genuine impact and build the inclusive society we deserve.

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities echoed this sentiment, expressing concerns that the bill does not contain any enforcement mechanisms to ensure tangible change.

CCS Disability Action had the opportunity to give feedback on the bill before it closed for submissions in November 2022. We were one of many voices calling for a rewrite to identify clear steps for improving accessibility and measuring progress towards these targets over time. We also think it's essential to incorporate the 13 principles set out by Access Matters Aotearoa.

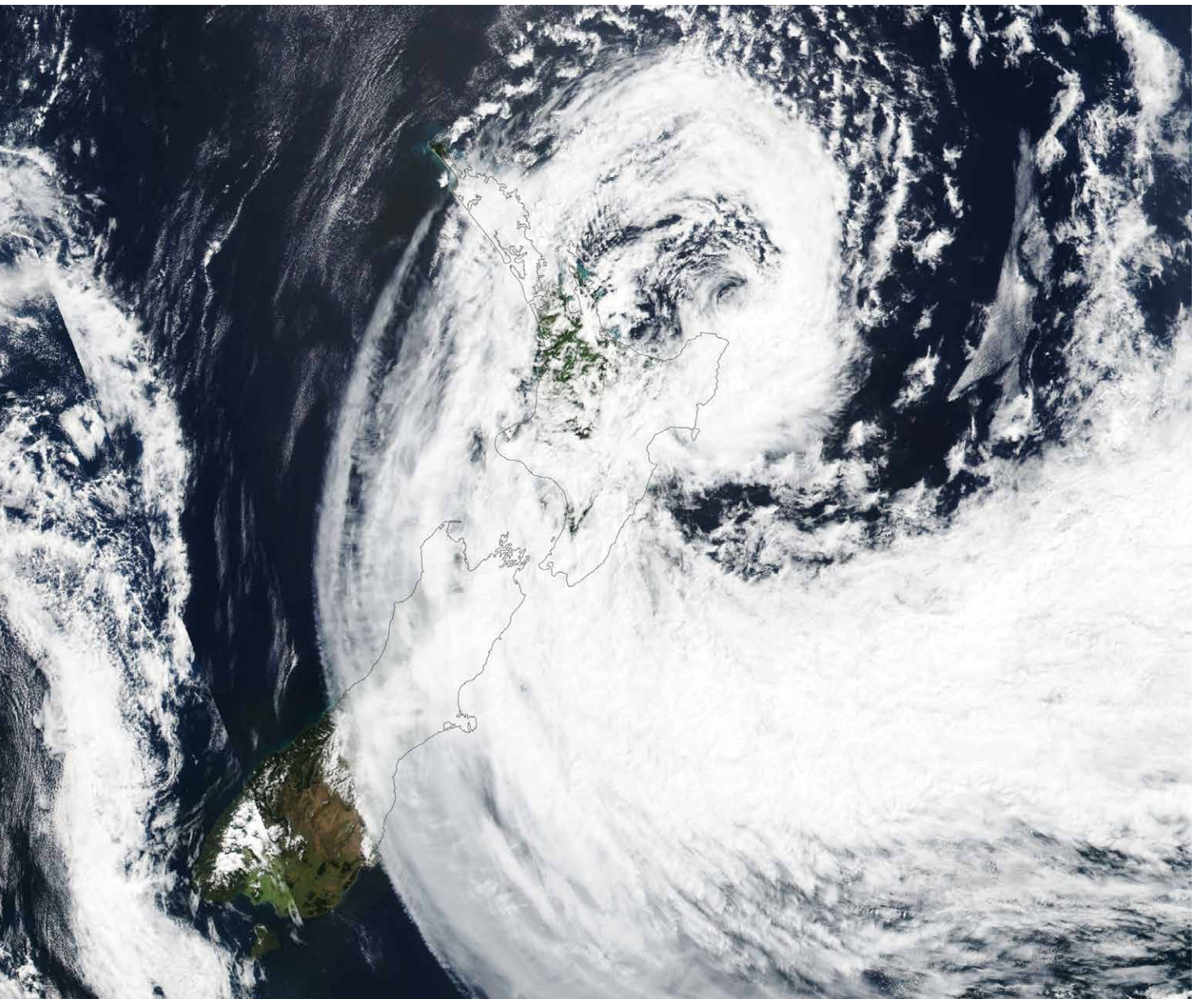
When the final report was released in June 2023, we were disappointed to see that only minor amendments have been put forward by the Social Services and Community Committee following the 10-month-long review of the legislation. Unfortunately, the report largely ignored the significant concerns put forward by the disability community.

CCS Disability Action will continue to advocate for better accessibility for New Zealanders and work towards removing the barriers to participation that affect disabled people from every walk of life.



Understanding the impact of the North Island flooding and Cyclone Gabrielle on disabled people

When severe weather events happen, no one is immune. The effects of the flooding in the North Island and Cyclone Gabrielle have been devastating for people from all walks of life, including disabled people.



NASA Earth Observatory image by Lauren Dauphin.

WHILE THE RESILIENCE we have seen in our communities has been admirable, one thing that the weather events have emphasised is that the needs of disabled people can change in an emergency and will vary for each individual. In looking at the response to these disasters, we can see stories of real tenacity, generosity and resourcefulness, as well as opportunities to adapt responses and fortify the disability community against future challenges.

Unpacking the disaster response

Within just a few short weeks, two major weather events pummelled various regions of the North Island, the effects of which are still being felt by many.

North Island Flooding – 27 January

In Auckland, Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People were active in the immediate response, providing timely information and on-the-ground support from staff, holding daily meetings with providers and advocating for the needs of disabled people as part of the wider city management plan. They also established a forum for providers to raise concerns and issues that needed to be addressed, which was later extended to include other regions in the following weeks.

CCS Disability Action's own response was similarly prompt. As the weather unfolded, staff immediately began contacting people who require essential supports to ensure their wellbeing.

Bettina Syme, CCS Disability Action's general manager for the northern region, explained that due to Covid-19, emergency response plans were already well established.



“We gained a lot of skills and resources during Covid-19 that were really valuable for handling the flooding,” she said.

Although priority was given to making emergency shelters accessible, one issue Syme identified was that during evacuations, disabled people were not always able to take their specialist equipment with them.

“This left some people feeling really vulnerable and reluctant to evacuate somewhere else without a clear idea of the supports available,” she said. “There were those who believed it was best to stay put.”

There were also reports of a lack of clear and accessible communication from Civil Defence during the Auckland response, leading to confusion and distress for some disabled people and their whānau.

Cyclone Gabrielle – 12-16 February

When Cyclone Gabrielle struck, communities were left isolated, without access to necessities for extended periods. Amid the chaos, officials, providers and community members had to be resourceful in dealing with the challenges. ►



Bettina Syme.

► Marae played a crucial role in supporting the community during Cyclone Gabrielle, particularly in remote areas. Among many notable efforts was Te Whakamaharatanga Marae in Waimamaku Valley, Northland, which provided power from a generator, hot water, a functioning kitchen and the only source of satellite internet in the area.

Renah Hohaia, a service manager for CCS Disability Action at the time, helped to organise the marae's response, having previously witnessed the effects of Cyclone Bola in 1988. The marae provided emergency accommodation for several community members, including a person who relied on power to use their supplementary oxygen.

Gisborne was also cut off for several days, with flood-damaged roads and no access to power, water, internet or mobile phone coverage. This presented significant challenges for CCS Disability Action staff as they worked to ensure the safety of the people they support.

"We had no choice but to drive everywhere to contact people because there was absolutely no connectivity," said Colene Herbert, general manager midland region.

"Our support workers were the backbone of the cyclone response, many of whom had been impacted themselves. They were the ones getting out of their cars and crossing rivers or finding alternative routes to get to

the people they support and then coming back to us to report what was happening. They were amazing."

The lack of connectivity also made it difficult for staff to keep abreast of Civil Defence decision-making.

"We were out of the loop for the first four days until the networks came back. Email updates were going out to all the community organisations over that time but because we weren't connected, we weren't getting them," said Herbert. *"It meant that we initially weren't able to represent the voice of disabled people at the table."*

In Hawkes Bay, they faced similar issues, with the need for generators and basic supplies being key concerns in both areas.

"I did wonder how people who were reliant on power chairs or motorised wheelchairs were coping when they had no access to generators or power," said national disability leadership coordinator Debbie Ward, who was away from her Napier home at the time but received reports from friends and colleagues.

"There were disabled people who couldn't get to the supermarket and relied on their groceries being delivered to them, but the supermarkets weren't doing deliveries at first."

Midland regional disability leadership coordinator, Tahlia Rarere, was one of the staff members working to distribute generators and supplies to people who needed them.



Renah Hohaia.



Colene Herbert.

“Civil Defence had a team working to get generators to disabled people in their homes who needed them to preserve life, and they were very responsive and helpful with this,” she said.

“However, it was difficult to source these for people who require power for mobility needs. This was because the focus of Civil Defence was on providing generators to preserve life. You can see the issue here is that it is also an absolute need for people’s mobility equipment to be usable at any time. Topping up generators for individuals was also unsustainable due to resources running low.”

Some of the most significant aid that enabled community organisations to do their work came from the Ministry of Social Development’s \$2 million Community Support Fund. The funding was accessible to providers like CCS Disability Action with few restrictions in place, allowing staff to allocate it to those who needed it.

“MSD was very fast at getting financial resources – within just a few days – and it was a really high trust agreement on their part,” said Herbert.

“We were able to quickly identify people who had lost possessions or homes and provide whatever they needed. [...] And it wasn’t just for people we support, we could use it to help anyone with a disability, including the elderly.”

The aftermath: What can we learn?

The impact of the flooding and cyclone will likely remain with us for quite some time, with a lot of the long-term consequences still revealing themselves. As communities gradually start to recover, it will be important to understand the factors that may have influenced the outcome, existing problems that are highlighted during disasters and what we might do differently in the future.

One systemic issue that may be exacerbated by the extreme weather events is the difficulty disabled people face when accessing equipment.

“The system was broken prior to the cyclone, so now you’ve got the added pressure of maybe having to wait a little bit longer due to the impact of the cyclone,” said Ward.

“I have a friend who’s been housebound for five months while waiting for an urgent replacement for her broken wheelchair. So imagine what it would be like for someone who may have lost equipment in the floods. How long are they going to have to wait? And what about the people who no longer have a home to be housebound in?”

With providers playing a crucial role in delivering information and support during these disasters, some have raised the question of how this will be managed following the shift towards an individualised funding model. ►



Tahlia Rarere.



Debbie Ward.

► *“There are some vulnerabilities when you take up an Individualised Funding package,” says Herbert. “There is a risk of natural disasters impacting people who strike out on their own. Who will be on the ground to check in and support them?”*

A key consideration is how best to prepare for future disasters, both on an individual level and a systemic one.

“Cyclone Gabrielle really highlighted privilege – people who had the resources to do so were able to stock up on supplies and others couldn’t,” said Rarere. “Not all people have extra money in the bank to create emergency kits and prepare their homes. Also, not all people have whānau and natural community supports. This can be really isolating in an emergency and pose added barriers.”

She notes that the responsibility goes beyond just the disability community. *“It would be great for all emergency responders to have disability awareness training, for example.”*

Ward suggests there is also work to be done within the disability community itself to ensure disabled people are as prepared as possible.

“I think it needs to be more than just giving information because we have seen that doesn’t work. How many of us had proper emergency supplies already? I know I didn’t,” she said. “It needs to be something really practical, such as support workers sitting down with people and assisting them with what they need to put an emergency pack together.”

Herbert says she is exploring options to ensure people have access to items such as powerbanks and wind-up radios, as well as generators in each region that can be distributed to those who need to charge mobility equipment. She also suggested it could be valuable to look at connectivity options such as satellite internet, to guarantee disabled people have a voice in future responses.

Likewise, Syme proposed that there needed to be improvements to the system so that people could urgently replace essential supports, such as more flexibility about disability support and funding that would allow them to purchase their own generators. She argued that this must be a partnership across government, providers and the people they support.

Despite the challenges and uncertainty, the dedication of everyone on the ground is undeniable. Yet for those at the forefront of recovery efforts, the broader question is clear.

“How do we fortify disabled people and their communities so that next time they are ready?” asks Herbert. “Because there will be a next time.”

Disaster preparedness tips for disabled people

1 Establish a support network

Build a team of people who can support you in an emergency. This could include your friends and family, co-workers, neighbours and support workers. It's important not to rely on a single person in case they are not able to reach you when you need them. These people should understand what your needs might be in a disaster and how they can best assist you, including how to operate any essential equipment.

Be sure to establish multiple ways to contact each other (not just telephone) and arrange for them to check on you immediately in the event of a disaster or evacuation order.

2 Create an emergency plan

Consider your capabilities, limitations and what you might need before, during and after a disaster, then make a list of your requirements and the resources you have for meeting them. For example, what personal care assistance do you need? What will you do if your water is cut off? How will you continue to use electricity-dependant equipment if you have no power?

Base your plan on your lowest anticipated level of functioning. Be sure to store this plan somewhere safe (e.g., online plus a physical copy), and share it with your support network. Make a note of any relevant medical information. It's also a good idea to make a floorplan of your home and identify possible exits from each room.

When travelling, let your accommodation provider and/or travel companion know of any needs you may have.

3 Gather an emergency kit and essential supplies

Your emergency kit should contain essential supplies that you (and your service animals) might need after a disaster strikes and should last several days. This should include non-perishable food, water, a torch, a whistle or noisemaker, batteries, a powerbank, an emergency radio, first aid supplies, masks, sanitary items, spare mobility aids and extra medication. Wheelchair users might want to have heavy work gloves for wheeling over debris.

It's also a good idea to have a small portable emergency supply kit kept next to your bed for quick access. You don't have to purchase everything at once – aim to gather your supplies over a few months.

If you use power-dependant equipment, check with your supplier to see if there are other ways to charge batteries and ensure you notify your electricity company of your needs.

4 Be prepared to advocate for yourself

Practice how to quickly explain to people how to guide or move you and your equipment safely. Instructions should be brief, clear and specific. If communicating may be a problem for you, consider carrying pre-printed messages with you or putting them in your portable emergency kit.

Meihana's story

Meihana Hartley came to CCS Disability Action's Manawatu branch three years ago with a clear idea of where he wanted to be but was lacking the confidence and skills to get there alone.

THE 24-YEAR-old was living in Feilding with his parents at the time and was referred to CCS Disability Action connector service to explore his study and employment options, using Enabling Good Lives principles to guide their work together.

Enabling Good Lives is an approach to supporting disabled people that offers greater choice and control over the supports received, so that they can plan for the life they want.

“Sharleen feels her role is to work quietly in the background to help give him the skills to succeed.”

Meihana initially worked alongside community support coordinator Ali Sigley, then began working with coordinator Sharleen Fields around a year ago. She feels her role is to work quietly in the background to help give him the skills to succeed, in the things that matter most to him.

“My job is to link him with the information he needs and to provide step-by-step coaching so he can tackle anything that might be challenging,” she explains.



Meihana Hartley.

As a first step to building his independence and work-readiness, Meihana and CCS Disability Action identified a 'Skills for Life' course at education provider ITS (Industry Training Solutions) in Palmerston North.

"CCS Disability Action supported me through the enrolment process, helped me to learn how to use the bus to get there and worked with the Ministry of Social Development to get funding for the course," explains Meihana.

“ Meihana tackled a wide range of work both in front of house and in the café kitchen, with confidence. ”

He completed the course, and his skills were then put to the test at a work placement at the ITS café, All Sorts. According to Sharleen, he did exceptionally well, tackling a wide range of work both in front of house and in the café kitchen, with confidence.



Meihana appreciates the respectful way in which his support needs have been met.

With Meihana's confidence growing, he decided he would like to move out of the family home. He initially went to live with his sister, then worked with Sharleen to get ready to go flatting. As well as finding a suitable rental and a flatmate, they found a support worker who Meihana connected well with, to assist with the practicalities of living independently. ►



◀ It was a huge step for him and one that, in Sharleen's view, took a lot of courage. *"As we were working through the process, I was there as a sounding board whenever he needed to talk things through. He really pushed himself and took a risk, so I think he should feel proud of where he's got to,"* she explains.

“ CCS Disability Action have supported me to be confident in myself and to be independent. ”

"Moving into a flat for the first time is something I never thought possible in the past. CCS Disability Action have supported me to be confident in myself and to be independent," says Meihana.

It's a risk that has really paid off. He's enjoying the flatting experience and has built a great dynamic with his support worker and flatmate. Sharleen has noticed that Meihana is taking increasing responsibility for planning what needs to be done each day and is less likely to defer to the views of others in the first instance. *"Meihana is getting more confident in saying what he wants, which is what it's all about!"* she says.

The pair are now looking at what's next – considering how Meihana might one day move into his own home and the steps needed to make that a success.

He's taking all the skills he's developed during this time and is now taking charge in other areas of his life.

"I now have the confidence to go to the bank myself and make my own appointments. A year ago, I would not even think of doing something like that," he explains.

Spurred on by these successes, Meihana set his sights on a driver license – a rite of passage for so many young adults. He studied incredibly hard for close to two years and is now the proud holder of a learner license. This major achievement under his belt, he's now begun the practical training needed for his restricted license.

Meihana has also recently begun going to the gym, something that's been on his wish list for a long time. He's initially attending with a CCS Disability Action support worker while he gets used to the equipment and the experience. The aim is to attend by himself, when he's ready.

Sharleen has high hopes for Meihana's future.

"He's (literally) going from strength-to-strength. My aspiration for Meihana is that he will do well in whatever is important to him. In the time I've known him, he's really blossomed. He continues to grow in confidence and that is awesome to be part of," she says.



Sharleen Fields.

Clock tower, Palmerston North.



Tracy's story

Tracy Landon Lane has had a lifelong love of gardening – in fact, it runs in her family. When she decided to turn her passion into a career, her CCS Disability Action coordinators were there to support her.



“I WAS RAISED by my grandparents and they had a real love of gardening, so that inspired me. I would describe myself as a very creative person – I love drawing, photography, writing, tapestry, poetry – but I’m also very practical too and I don’t mind getting my hands dirty,” says Tracy.

Tracy survived a traumatic car accident when she was five years old, an accident that left her with permanent injuries which can make processing information and some physical tasks challenging. She has been supported by the team at CCS Disability Action for many years.

“Tracy is an astounding woman,” says service coordinator Pamela Watson. *“She is a very capable person and has an incredible range of talents and interests and she’s great fun to be around.”*

The Nelson Marlborough team have supported Tracy in several different areas of her life, over time. For example, they were there for her when she moved into a flat with friends and again when she got her driver’s licence – an almost essential item in a Marlborough town where so much work is in its horticultural surroundings.

“In 2019, Tracy decided she would like to take her passion for gardening and turn it into a career.”

In 2019, Tracy decided she would like to take her passion for gardening and turn it into a career. Her coordinators at the time were there to assist her to enrol in a Certificate in Horticulture course from the



Tracy Landon Lane.

Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology and helped her ease into it – just until she felt comfortable and confident to tackle things on her own.

“One of the early lessons involved using the angle grinder to sharpen tools,” laughs Tracy. *“I loved every minute of it!”*

Tracy has a keen intellect and often undertakes detailed research on subjects that interest her. This ability to apply herself was useful with the academic side of the course. Tracy’s tutor Don Cross was also a great support, giving Tracy reasonable extensions if she needed it to complete written assignments and ensuring that everything was in place to ensure her impairment wasn’t a barrier to success.

Tracy loved the practical aspects of the course, where she learnt all the ins and outs of raising healthy seeds and seedlings. Tracy successfully graduated with the rest of her class at the end of 2019. *“It felt like a really great achievement,”* she says. ▶



Tracy at work at Selmes Garden Trust.

► After volunteering at Selmes Garden Trust for a couple of years, an experience she really enjoyed, Pamela began supporting Tracy. *“I thought: ‘Enough voluntary work! It’s time we get you a paid job!’”* Pamela went to it, polishing up Tracy’s CV and hunting down leads to make it happen. The result was a paid position at Butler’s Nursery – it was seasonal work and lasted just under six months, but it paid well and, most importantly, Tracy loved it.

“I like to be helpful. It was a quiet, friendly place to work along with very supportive people. Having paid employment was really good.”

I felt more confident that I would have that extra bit of security for unexpected financial things that may come up,” she explains.

Tracy put her qualifications to good use and was responsible for lifting rooted cuttings, trimming and potting.

“ Tracy is eager to learn and has a really good attitude to work. She fitted in well with our small team. ”

Her hard work did not go unnoticed. *“Tracy is eager to learn and has a really good attitude to work. She fitted in well with our small team of staff. We have no hesitation in recommending her to any employer,”* says nursery owner and manager Steven Butler.

Pamela was confident that Tracy would be a great asset for a local business and together the pair put Tracy’s CV forward for lots of local positions. When Selmes Garden Trust were on the look out for voluntary nursery staff, Pamela saw an opportunity to use her local networks to turn the unpaid role into a job for Tracy.

“The team at our local Work and Income New Zealand office are really helpful. I knew about the Flexi-wage subsidy and both Tracy and I felt she had the experience and qualifications Selmes needed. We worked with Tracy’s case manager and with Selmes and were successful in securing the funding that made it possible for them to offer Tracy a paid position,” explains Pamela.

Tracy has been in the role for a few months now and absolutely loves it.

Her responsibilities are similar to what she's done before with Tracy most often found happily weeding, shifting plants and transplanting pots in the potting sheds. As part of the role, she needed to learn how to use a forklift, something that felt well outside of Tracy's comfort-zone.

"I wasn't sure if it was something that I could learn to do, to be honest. But having a forklift license is really helpful in the horticulture industry so I really wanted to try. I felt pretty good when I got my forklift license," says Tracy.

“It's the little things that come with being employed, like being able to pay her bills on time, that make her feel “independent and capable.” ”

Having paid, stable work has made an incredible difference in Tracy's life. It's the little things that come with being employed, like being able to pay her bills on time, that make her feel “independent and capable.”

She's been grateful to have Pamela by her side. *“She's brilliant,”* says Tracy. *“She's so upbeat and positive. She's the first person to say: ‘You can do this.’ I have appreciated having someone who really believes in me.”*



Pamela Watson.

Seymour Square, Blenheim, where Tracy's great uncle volunteered.



Whanaungatanga Relationships

A new office location for our Westport branch

The CCS Disability Action Westport team outside their new location.

Janine Nel has been working in the Westport office since last May 2022. Her reason for joining? *“People. I love people.”* She is embracing her role, having previously worked in flood recovery. *“So far, I’m absolutely loving it. Yes, it’s a challenge because it’s all something new, but it’s been amazing to be able to see things fall into place for the people I work alongside and be part of progress in their lives.”*



Photo: The Westport News.

CCS DISABILITY ACTION'S Westport branch has moved! You can now find their bigger and better office at EPIC Westport, 10A Lyndhurst Street.

The Westport office is one of 13 offices in the South Island. A team of nine community support workers provide direct support to around 60 young people and adults on the West Coast. Their goal is to ensure that every disabled person is included and participates in the life of their family and community. This involves supporting independent living, a family and youth team, individualised funding, ACC Living My Life, Te Whatu Ora/Whaikaha contracts and developing and engaging personalised plans to support people to achieve their goals.

Service manager Steve Kinnings is conscious there aren't many agencies on the West Coast that provide such support and is passionate about connecting with the rural community. *“Our service coordinators and support workers go above and beyond,”* he says. He hopes the new office will help increase their presence, welcoming anyone to come in and have a chat about what they have to offer and how they can support them. *“Our doors are open!”*

Moving to EPIC Westport has been a welcome change from the previous Palmerston Street address. *“The atmosphere is awesome,”* service coordinator Janine Nel says of the bigger space. It's also an ideal spot to connect with other agencies. She looks forward to assisting disabled people to take full

advantage of all opportunities in the community, including employment, recreation and social events, to name a few.

CCS Disability Action has supported disabled people and their families from Karamea to Haast for many decades. Richard Buchanan, general manager of the southern region, says that while the types of support have changed over the years, the focus on ensuring disabled people and their families are able to access all opportunities in the community has not changed. *“Providing support services from the new Westport office enables us to continue raising the profile of our work and engaging with the whole community,”* says Richard.

**CCS Disability Action
Westport**
EPIC Westport
10A Lyndhurst Street
Westport 7825



BJ Clark ONZM QSM JP with governor-general Dame Cindy Kiro at Government House.

The investiture ceremony involved a high tea, the governor-general reading a citation and pinning on the award, having photos taken, then a private audience with the governor-general. *“That was pretty special for my family,”* says BJ.

Congratulations in order for BJ Clark, ONZM QSM JP

ON 24 MAY 2023, BJ Clark was officially invested as an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit. BJ was recognised for his services to the community as part of the 2023 New Year Honours. The ceremony took place at Government House in Wellington, a special day for BJ and his family.

BJ joined the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services Association (RNZRSA) after 21 years in the military. It became a passion for him to do what he could to help those that have served. Since then, he has held many roles within the RSA and was the national president for the last eight years.

Along with being part of the community justice panel in Christchurch, BJ is a justice of the peace, marriage celebrant, and member of the Veterans Advisory Board. *“I’m fortunate I love my job – I get up in the morning and I just look forward to going to work,”* he says of his current role at CCS Disability Action.

Reflecting on the day, BJ says, *“To go to Government House with seven of my family, and for them to be part of such a special occasion, that was lovely.”* He humbly acknowledges the people who supported him: *“Whilst I received the award, there are a lot of people who have got their fingerprints on it. It’s important that we never forget that.”*

Congratulations and thank you, BJ, for all of your incredible mahi.

Thank you to our supporters – ILT foundation

OUR INVERCARGILL BRANCH was the grateful recipient of a grant from the ILT foundation. The much-needed funding boost contributed to the ongoing wage cost of a staff member who supports disabled people in the Invercargill city area. The grant means the team can deliver more support to disabled children and their whānau.

“The grant has meant we can create new opportunities for the people we support, such as events and excursions. We really appreciate ILT Foundation’s support. It makes such a difference,” says Rachael Kooman, senior service manager of the Invercargill branch.

ILT Foundation has been a proud supporter of CCS Disability Action Southland since 2006.



“They are an integral part of our community, and the work they do is truly remarkable. ILT Foundation is pleased to play a small role in funding their operations to ensure they continue to support the disability sector,” says Paddy O’Brien, ILT Foundation chair.

Disabled business owners shine in new podcast: My Business Stars



Julie Woods.

CCS DISABILITY ACTION has launched a new podcast series, My Business Stars. Created in partnership with the Disability Business Network and hosted by “That blind woman” Julie Woods, the podcast series delves into the diverse experiences of successful entrepreneurs in the disabled community. In each episode, guests from all walks of life sit down for a conversation about the ups and downs of their journeys and how they got to where they are today.

With guests ranging from professional speakers to social entrepreneurs, the podcast provides unique insight into the lived experience of disabled business owners all over the country.

“I can only describe these conversations as astonishing,” says Woods. *“Business owners have been so willing to share the good and the bad, which has made this window into their journeys so enlightening.”*

Woods believes that the podcast is an important opportunity for people to learn about what it’s really like for disabled people in business and the physical, social, and attitudinal barriers that affect employment equity.

Episodes available at
www.ccsDisabilityAction.org.nz/my-business-stars



“We’ve had amazing feedback from the customers who have visited our Vivid Living Display Homes and the village at Red Beach! We’re really proud that the general consensus echoes our belief that the design, build and quality of the homes is very high,” says Gemma Gloyne.

Universally designed retirement living

CHOOSING WHERE TO spend your retirement is an important decision. In their new development at Red Beach on Auckland’s North Shore, Vivid Living (a Fletcher Building brand) is bringing an innovative approach to retirement living, working with Lifemark – a subsidiary of CCS Disability Action – to give residents more choice in how they spend their non-working years.

The development is comprised of 48 single-level villas ranging from one to three bedrooms. The majority are Lifemark rated, making them suitable for a wide range of abilities without compromising on style.

Lifemark was engaged from the beginning to consult on the project design and continued to provide input throughout the process. The result is that the villas boast a high level of workmanship and are safe and usable for all ages and stages.

The light-filled designs offer a sense of flow that can be easily adapted to changing needs and have a range of practical features including slip-resistant flooring, level door thresholds and spacious rooms and hallways.

By combining these features with support and care options tailored to individuals, the Vivid Living offering will support its residents to live independently.

“We have worked with Fletcher Building on other projects since 2015 and it is an honour to be part of this significant step into the retirement sector,” says Lifemark general manager Geoff Penrose. *“Vivid Living is certainly ahead of its time.”*

For the Vivid Living team, the choice to build to Lifemark standards was a no-brainer.

“We love that Lifemark homes are easy to live in – for a lifetime. It fits perfectly with what is at the heart of what we’re doing, and that is to make sure our homes are usable for our diverse range of customers, today and into the future,” says Gemma Gloyne, head of retirement at Vivid Living. *“We really value that having a Lifemark star rating means that our residents can have peace of mind knowing their home will suit them for years to come.”*

Find out more at www.lifemark.co.nz



From left to right: Claire Dale, BJ Clark national manager access and infrastructure and Raewyn Hailes, access advisor and educator pictured here at Parliament.

Mobility parking battle: fight for fairer enforcement continues

TAURANGA-BASED CLAIRE Dale has had enough of mobility parking abuse and has taken her fight directly to Parliament.

In February 2022, Claire presented a petition to the then Minister of Transport Hon. Michael Wood. The petition asked government to substantially increase fines for mobility parking abuse and to implement national legislation to allow cohesive enforcement across public land and privately-held land that's used by the public – such as retail spaces and supermarkets. She also called for an awareness campaign on the impact of mobility parking abuse on disabled people and their whānau.

CCS Disability Action has been supporting Claire throughout the process. *“Claire’s passion is drawing others into the conversation and never giving up. She’s an inspiring person to be around and I feel proud to be working with her,”* says Raewyn Hailes access advisor and educator for CCS Disability Action.

Following her petition, a select committee was appointed and heard Claire’s petition. Supporting submissions were heard from NZ Police, Human Rights Commission and CCS Disability Action. Submissions against the petition were also heard, primarily from business.

The select committee asked submitters to work together to report back on a solution. The Ministry of Transport wrote this report and Claire was then invited to respond. She felt the Ministry’s report sided too heavily with retailers – stating enforcement was too expensive and challenging for businesses, who cited concerns over losing customers and the safety risk to those enforcing parking. *“It was egregious,”* she says.

One positive noted in the report is the recent example of Queenstown Lakes District Council, who began using CCTV to catch mobility parking abuse. *“They found that the upfront costs were recouped by the fines received in the early days when people were still offending. The system is working very well to discourage people from abusing mobility parks. I would hope to see something along those lines as the national standard,”* she says.

The committee chairperson gave positive feedback, and the committee members clearly understood the issue – all had close contact with people who use the Mobility Parking



Raewyn, who has been working for change in this area for many years is cautiously optimistic. *“There most certainly is work still to be done in this space and I am looking forward to next steps.”*

scheme. From here, the committee will write a report and give recommendations to government. Unfortunately, this will not progress until after the election.

Magical bridge playground



Mike Garrett is thrilled that CCS Disability Action can support the Claudelands-based playground.

FAMILIES LIVING IN the Waikato will soon be able to enjoy New Zealand’s first fully accessible ‘destination playground’.

The Magical Bridge Trust, which was formed specifically for the project, is developing the playground in partnership with the Hamilton City Council.

The playground design will take account of a diverse range of needs, including people with physical impairments, neurodiversity, learning disabilities as well as visitors with hearing or visual impairments.

CCS Disability Action’s Waikato branch provided a grant to the project, made possible by generous bequests to the branch. It felt like the perfect fit for the organisation’s vision.

“This is such an exciting development for Waikato, so we were thrilled to be able to support it. Disabled children want to be included alongside their siblings and non-disabled friends and this playground will make that a reality. It’s incredible to see disabled people’s needs put front and center in this development,” says local executive chair Mike Garrett.

www.magicalbridge.co.nz

Gilmore Lodge has a new home

The new Arrowtown property boasts a range of accessible features in a picturesque setting, making it the perfect place for a holiday.

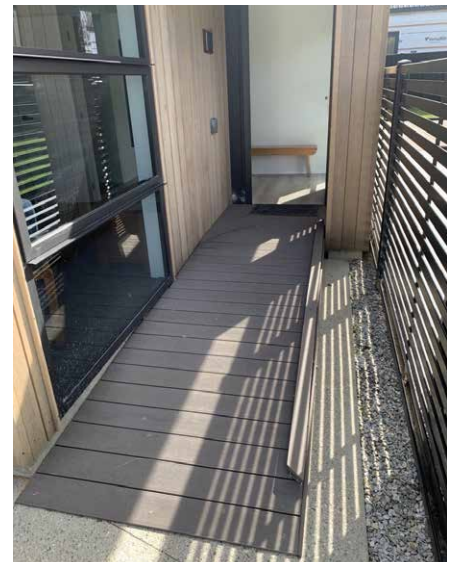
GILMORE LODGE NOW has a new, and even more, picturesque setting. The CCS Disability Action’s Southland branch Queenstown-based holiday home was sold in 2022, with a new property purchased in 2023 in the new location.

The change was due to accessibility concerns at the old property, something the new location has in spades.

General manager for the southern region Richard Buchanan is pleased to be able to offer members of CCS Disability Action a high-quality holiday rental. *“The Arrowtown property is beautiful. It was built in 2021 and has a great layout. We made some accessible adaptations to the property – such as creating an accessible bathroom – but other than that it was ready to go. It’s a property and a location I’m confident people will enjoy. I’m really pleased that we can keep the intention behind the original Gilmore Lodge gift, which was to give disabled people accessible travel options.”*

The single story, four-bedroom property is fully fenced, with a sunny outdoor area and alpine views.

To enquire about booking go to www.ccsdisabilityaction.org.nz/holiday-homes/arrowtown



Ngā mihi to Ike Rakena

Mā mua ka kite a muri, mā muri ka ora a mua.
Those who lead give sight to those who follow, those who follow give life to those who lead.

IN MARCH 2023 at his turangawaewae of Makaurau Marae in the heart of Ihumātao, CCS Disability Action acknowledged the contribution of Ike Rakena and said haere rā to a treasured leader, mentor, whānau member and friend.

Ike was joined by whānau, including his “darling” wife Debbie, colleagues from the CCS Disability Action National Board, current and former staff, and community members impacted by Ike’s mahi. It was an emotional but fitting farewell to a man who has given so much, to so many.

“Ike is a true giver,” explains CCS Disability Action national board president Dairne Kirton. *“Ike has a special gift for growing and supporting people. He also makes it safe for anyone to be in the Te Ao Māori space, regardless of who you are or where you’re at in your understanding.”*

Ike served as Māngai (advisor) to the board and the organisation since 2010. He was also chair of Niho Taniwha subcommittee.

Ike is passionate about seeing whānau hauā people included and valued in marae hui and kaupapa. His work helping build Karanga Maha communities – grassroots steering groups who connect whānau hauā with their whakapapa and culture – was a clear example of seeing his principles and passions in action.

Ike was an important voice in the development of Te Aronui, CCS Disability Action’s vision, that brings to life the organisation’s Strategic Priorities. *“He has not only made a significant difference in his mahi with our organisation in terms of our vision, strategic direction and policy, but he has also profoundly impacted the lives of many individuals,”* says Dairne.

“Ike will always be whānau, so we are confident our paths will keep crossing in the future. On behalf of the organisation, ngā mihi maioha Ike,” says Dairne.

For more on Ike’s contribution go to www.ccsDisabilityAction.org.nz/nga-mihi-ike



Top from left to right:
Dairne Kirton, Ike Rakena and Wendy Coutts, QSM appointed board member.

Above from left to right:
Dairne Kirton, Ike Rakena and Mel Smith.

Tika Integrity



Stephy Edwards
Education support worker Auckland

A kind and supportive presence

Education support workers make a massive impact on the children, families and the Early Childhood Centres they support.

We would like to acknowledge Stephy Edwards who shares our passion for inclusion. Here is some of the amazing feedback we have received about Stephy.

“I wanted to pass on my thanks for assigning Steph to Jacob. We have had an overwhelming amount of positive feedback on their relationship. I’ve attached a copy of Jacob’s latest learning story, and this is my favourite quote from it: She is a lovely and encouraging person and her presence supports you in every moment of your time together. Jacob, we all know how much you adore her.” says Jacob’s mum.

Every week at least one of Jacob’s teachers has stopped to tell us how amazing she is, and how helpful her presence is at the centre in supporting his development and ability to get involved at the centre.

“Please pass our biggest thanks on to Steph, she is doing amazing work and we appreciate everything about her.” Jacob’s mum.

Thank you for the work you do Stephy.

Bettina Syme
General manager northern



Anna Coleman
Coordinator Tairāwhiti Hawkes Bay

A pillar in the community

We would like to acknowledge our amazing Anna.

Anna has been part of the team for the last 15 months and what a difference she has made for the Wairoa community. Anna is always out and about in the community advocating for the people we support – be it at schools, in their homes, in hospitals, at community events or the local café.

Anna is very quick to help whānau get what they need when they need it.

During the cyclone, Anna worked tirelessly to ensure all the people she supported were OK, which was not easy with phone lines down in a rural and devastated environment.

Anna also runs her own business as a confidence coach and is currently setting up a confidence club and online space for people to boost their confidence.

“I help people tell their stories, speak their truth to power and give presentations,” says Anna.

Anna is involved with Speech NZ, Toastmasters, local performing arts and is learning Te Reo Māori.

You are a treasure, Anna. *Ka Mau Te Wehi!*

Colene Herbert
General manager midland



Jochanelle Pouwhare
Support worker Wellington

A vibrant and hardworking team member

Jochanelle possesses a dazzling array of skills and talents. She is committed to the people she supports and sees beyond any supposed 'complexity' in their needs.

Her peers hold her in the highest regard, and she provides solid support for all levels of the organisation. However, it is the boundless adoration from the people she supports that truly makes her shine.

Jochanelle's talents extend far beyond her role. Recently, her remarkable acting and singing abilities landed her a coveted role in a new mini-series *The Queen, The Club and Everything in Between*. This is to screen on TVNZ+ On Demand in February 2024.

We consider ourselves blessed to have Jochanelle as an invaluable member of our Wellington team. With her vibrant personality and fashion sense, infectious humour, unyielding dedication and unstoppable work ethic, she infuses every aspect of her role with a contagious energy. Jochanelle stands as a powerful advocate for those she supports, consistently going above and beyond her duties to ensure their wellbeing and uplifting her fellow colleagues in the process.

Janine Hoete-Thornton
General manager central



Jenny Bush
Service manager Canterbury West Coast

A dedicated and personable leader

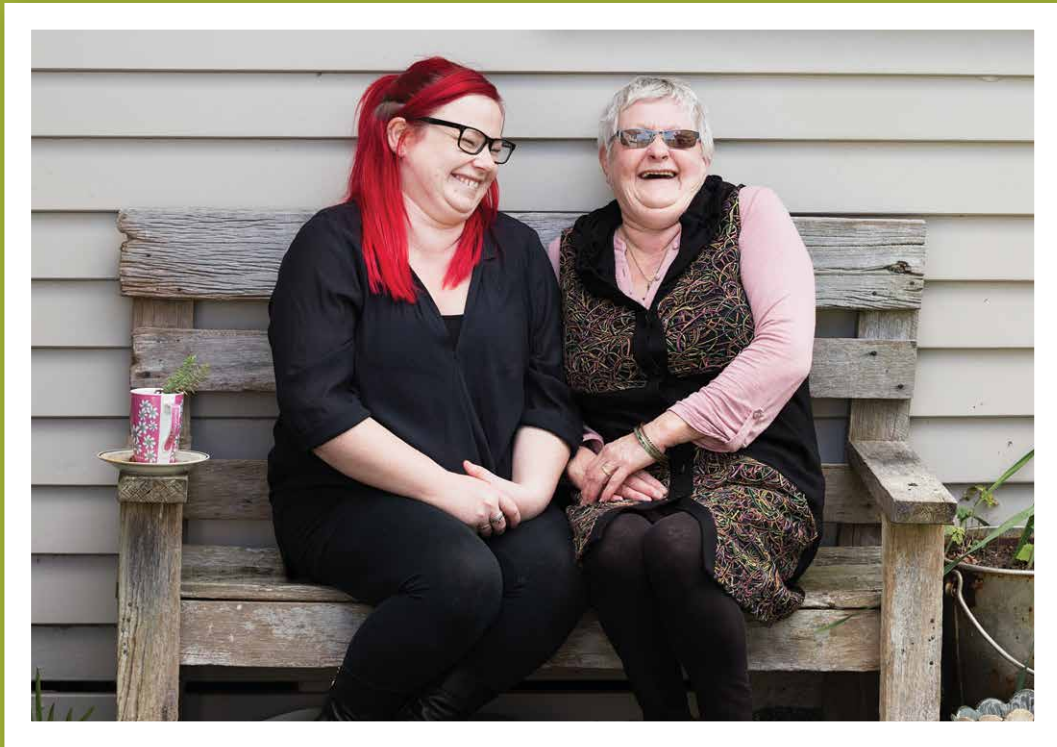
Jenny Bush is the service manager of the early intervention team for the Canterbury West Coast branch and joined us in this role in January 2022. At that time, all office-based staff were working from home. Despite this challenge, Jenny has created a high-performing, collaborative and professional early intervention team who deliver incredible outcomes for tamariki and whānau.

Jenny brings a great standard of integrity to the organisation and goes over and above what is expected. She is both professional and personable, enjoys a laugh and is held in high regard by all who have the privilege of working with her.

Not only is Jenny a professional leader with the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, but she is also involved in improvement and review work with our national team. In her spare time, Jenny is completing a Master of Specialist Teaching degree.


Thank you, Jenny, for all you bring to our organisation.


Richard Buchanan
General manager southern



Whakapā mai Get in touch

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED in more information or would like to get in touch, we would love to hear from you.

 0800 227 200

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Including all people

TE HUNGA HAUĀ MAURI MŌ NGĀ TĀNGATA KATOĀ