

**English Transcript  
for  
VisAble Launch Event  
24 October 2024  
Grand Hall – NZ Parliament**

11:35am

**(Nate Rowe)**

Well good good morning still, good morning ladies and gentlemen everyone  
(Maori spoken)

If you are wondering who I am my name is Nate and I'm very humble to come  
on behalf of

our local Iwi here Te Āti Awa of Te Whanganui-a-Tara to open your celebration  
and acknowledgements that brings us here today together.

(Maori spoken) Also coming here on behalf of service and Office of the Clark as  
well to share with you some of our customary practices to acknowledge you in  
the room and also the space that we are partaking together today. I will speak  
both in Maori and English uh our leaders uh tell us our elders that, you know a  
purpose of a whakatau is about connection. It's about connecting everyone in  
the room together to bring us to a state of being comfortable with each other  
and so through the many languages not only spoken here today hopefully  
through Maori and through English we can tie each other in together here uh  
under our Maunga which is behind Parliament (Maori spoken)

We started in the space of what we call Rangi and Papa which is the  
phenomenons above and the phenomenons below and it's those things which  
are our natural environment which bind us here together today. We play all  
the same role of protecting that precious Taonga with us here so for the many  
protectors from all the communities across our country welcome welcome  
welcome welcome. (Maori spoken)

We now, it is customary for us and like many other cultures to acknowledge  
those that have passed our loved ones, those that have helped shaped and  
create the Pathways in which we walk today those heroes in our lives that help  
to shape the characteristics and mannerisms and values that we hold we will

remember them forever in our thoughts and in the oceans of our thoughts as well just like our Rangatira who has passed recently, our Pauline (Maori spoken) Some of you will be going to celebrate and to acknowledge her in her service after this (Maori spoken)

We now put those Legends back to sleep and come to you the Legends of the living in the room here today. (Maori spoken)

Uh, how do you uh translate that one. That's a long one, eh. Look in summary, whanau, it just means I just talked about our wahi tapu in what we call our sacred places or the head of Maui's fish, where people live in the Wellington region, the intelligent ones. No, I'm joking, you know. This is our place in space of the world but it talks about something that's in our Narrative of our Iwi, which I'd like to liken to your one here today, which is called (Maori spoken) or more commonly known as Taniwha

which we call phenomenons that once resided in the harbour there, which used to be a lake in the ancient times. Their names were (Maori spoken) that opened the mouth of Maui's fish so that the land could breathe again and and the other (Maori spoken) wasn't strong as it's mate there and got stuck and became Miramar Peninsula, Miramar if you're wondering where that is Whanau, it means sea view.

It's a Spanish word but anyway that's where (Maori spoken) is but we call that phenomenal Pathways (Maori spoken)

a phenomenal uh event is taking place now for those that need (Maori spoken)

Like that of Te Ara Tupua and like that of the name of our ancestral house at Waiwhetū which is called (Maori spoken) which means Goodwill to humankind so from that good thought (Maori spoken)

Um, I'm going to pinch one your (Maori spoken)  
yeah I know you had that on another one already but uh let let me tell you about Te Aroha, it was composed by great man. Morvin Te Anatipa Simon wrote a range from Whanganui, beautiful composer.  
And it talks about love, faith and peace to all.

Let it be those things that we partake in today. So uh anyone want to start us off cuz I, my auntie's not here with me today, that's what but I've got you great people in the room, you (Maori spoken)

[Singing]

I'd just like to finish by saying thank you again for having us on behalf of what we call (Maori spoken) which was laid two years by Kura Moeahu and Alisha Moeahu, which is the symbol of peace which comes from Pipitea Marae laid here on the Parliamentary Precinct as well. So welcome welcome welcome

11:47am

**(Joanne Dacombe)**

(Maori spoken) Welcome to the grand hall and our launch my name is Joanne Dacombe and I'm the chair of the board for VisAble and why I might be the face of the board that you see up here today, I want to acknowledge my hardworking board members and the immense amount of respect I have for each of them, for their knowledge, insights, passion and dedication. We are very much a team. There are so many people I want to thank for where VisAble is today but I do just need to single out People First for their unwavering support from the start.

It is great to see so many people here today, many of whom I sort of have come to regard as friends not just colleagues. So thank you all for coming. I have the dubious honor of running through the housekeeping measures for your safety, so I appreciate your attention even if you've been here many times before. So on arrival here you should have been issued with one of these visitor stickers. Please ensure it's clearly visible and do not remove or discard it and hopefully it won't fall off on its own. Should the fire alarm sound, please evacuate the venue via the same route that you entered or via the nearest safe exit. The evacuation assembly point is Bolger Park at the rear of Parliament, not to be confused with the playground at the front. Please follow the directions of security staff and fire wardens.

Don't rely on me for directions, I am geographically challenged, so like you I'll be relying on those security guards and fire wardens.

In the event of a medical emergency we've been asked to refrain from calling um 111 um. Just inform security or the venue staff immediately. Security will manage any medical emergency within the Parliamentary complex.

Earthquake, in the event of an earthquake we drop cover and hold until it

stops. We've been asked to keep away from windows and any other obvious hazards that are in the venue. Please remain inside the venue and await instructions from security staff. We are hoping that there will be no long and strong earthquakes but we wait for security to advise us. Toilets, the toilet facilities for the Grand Hall are located downstairs on the ground floor near the main entrance. There is an accessible bathroom on the floor below the grand hall and to get there come out of the grand floor and to the left is a cage lift. Take the lift down to the ground floor and exit to the right. The toilet is in the corner to the right. Please ask a parliamentary staff member or VisAble team member if you need support. Make sure that VisAble team member isn't me, because even with these directions I'm likely to get you lost. Smoking, obviously all parliamentary um buildings and grounds are smoke and vape-free um. So save that for outside the main gates uh. We'd ask that you switch your phones to um silent or vibrate so they don't interrupt the procedure, proceedings today um. Photos are permitted inside um but please don't take any outside of the Grand Hall um. There is support available should you find any of today's content triggering. And to access that, please look for any VisAble team member wearing either a purple lanyard or um purple beads. Now they may have them either around their neck or they may have them on the on their wrist uh. Just a heads up that there could be division bells for members in the debating chamber. Apparently they normally ring at 1:53pm on a Thursday, hopefully we will have left here by then, so bear that in mind um. But sometimes they do ring outside of those times. We aim to finish up by 1:30pm so those intending to go to Pauline Boyle's funeral will have plenty of time to get to the venue. And we will have a queue lined up as a signal but if you have to leave sooner that's fine. And that nicely segways into the honor I have of acknowledging Dr Pauline Boyles here today. You would have seen the photo of her showing her seated at a table at the Taikura safeguarding training in 2023. She's wearing an orange sweater and looking at the camera smiling. What some of you may not realise is that she made that trip to Auckland with an oxygen bottle and tow, such was the importance she attached to the mahi. Pauline was a staunch and passionate advocate for the disability community and was a champion of our rights as disabled people. She was well respected as a leader in the disability sector and was willing to share her knowledge and made a lasting impact on people she worked with. Many of us have had the privilege of working with Pauline on numerous and various project where her commitment and dedication were clear. I personally worked with her around the collaboration of the three former DHBs here in Wellington capital Capital Coast Health, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa. I also worked with her a little around access to the Child Development Service. She was deeply involved in many

initiatives across the disability sector, all of which benefited from her expertise and leadership. She supported our work at VisAble and was passionate about safeguarding disabled people so they could live lives free from abuse. Pauline's contributions have left a lasting legacy and she herself will be greatly missed by many who had the privilege of working alongside her. Because of my deep connections across the disability sector, I've had the privilege and honor of working with many wonderful people, including many of you here today who are more than colleagues and that includes some of our speakers and I'd now like to introduce you to a wonderful, one of our wonderful founders of VisAble, someone who has spent 17 years working on safeguarding adults, on working with disabled people and systems to create the change disabled people have badly needed. I was lucky enough to work with her in several roles and enjoyed connecting with her each time. An interesting fact we have uh we both shared the same hairdresser for a while while she lived in Kapiti and we have the same wedding anniversary. This person is a very humble wahine who also stepped in as one of our interim CEOs while we took the time needed to search for just the right person for the permanent chief executive role. She is gracious, inclusive and passionate about the mahi at VisAble and we'll share a little of the journey to get to where we are today. And I'd now like to invite Sue Hobbs to come up. [Applause]

11:55am

**(Sue Hobbs)**

I'm speechless that's not a good point to start with, is it. Thank you (Maori spoken) Welcome to the launch of VisAble.

VisAble encompasses the concepts of visible and enable and sums up in a single word our mission. And that is of making violence against disabled people visible while enabling a more disability responsive Family Violence and Sexual Violence system. Sir Robert Martin was a Disability Rights activist and a survivor of abuse in care. So Robert was excited when I spoke to him about setting up a disabled person-led

violence prevention organisation, the first in Aotearoa.

He liked the name VisAble, no surprises as this was his life's work, campaigning about inhumane conditions and horrific abuse of disabled people endured.

Today is an opportunity to thank and acknowledge all of you who have so generously shared your experiences and have worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the abuse against Tangata Whaikana Maori, deaf, disabled people, whanau and families, including child to parent violence New Zealand's invisible family violence. As a founder of visible alongside Debby Hager, wave,

it has been a privilege to have been on this incredible long journey with you and I am proud to call so many of you my friend. Without your passion, wisdom, support and encouragement I and we would not be here today. Where is it, oh the timeline. You will see from the timeline that it's been a journey of action starting in 1987 to stop abuse against disabled people. I encourage you all to please share your work with us by adding your name and your actions to the timeline because we know we didn't get here alone. If you look at the Timeline you will see so many names of people who have contributed to us being here today. I want to thank all of you I want to say a special thank you to People First who are being here from day one with me and Jan Logie, are you here somewhere, I saw you somewhere um yaay, and Marama Davidson who listened. I also want to acknowledge the groundbreaking Safeguarding Adults from Abuse (SAFA), mahi in the Waitemata led by our dear friend Delia McKinnon who couldn't be here today. Today is a big day. We are not just another organisation. This is a mission, this is a call for action. If you are in any doubt why the need for VisAble and why you here today, let me share the following with you. Disabled people experience much more abuse than non-disabled people. Disabled people are our families, they are our whanau, they are our friends, they are part of our communities. Everyone who experiences violence is harmed by it. Human rights mean everyone, so our responses must be fully equitable and inclusive. We need to acknowledge that disabled people's expertise and lived experiences are often not valued and our voices often sidelined but we must have a seat at the table and be included fully in the design and decision-making process. Nothing about us without us. Here are two family violence scenarios. These have been simplified to emphasise a systems gap that creates critical situations of risk for disabled people and those adults who meet the Crimes Act definition of vulnerable adults, noting that we use the preferred term of Adults at Risk. In our first example Ayla lives with Brad. They have been in a relationship for a long time. Ayla is experiencing family violence. Brad is controlling, manipulative and he uses patterns of abusive behaviours both physical and non-physical. Ayla does not leave the house and has no access to money or contact with anyone outside of the house. Brad controls Ayla's medication and if and where she goes for medical help. When police attended a family harm episode at their home address, they issued a Police Safety Order, a PSO, using their powers under the Family Violence Act to allow a cooling off period and to enable Ayla to access services. Ayla was able to access help from the local family violence service. In our second example we have Rae who lives with George. They have been in a

relationship for a long time. Rae has a traumatic brain injury, a physical disability and uses a wheelchair. Rae is experiencing family violence. George is Rae's primary caregiver. George is controlling and manipulative. He uses patterns of abusive behaviours both physical and non-physical. Rae does not leave the house and has no access to money or contact with anyone outside the house. George controls Rae's medication and where they go for medical help. In contrast to scenario one Rae has a traumatic brain injury, a disability and the abusive partner is Rae's caregiver. When police attended a family harm episode at their home, they found Rae lying in their own excrement on a bin bag on the floor. Police did not issue a PSO and left leaving Rae and George together in the home. This happened due to the fact that George, Rae's partner, was also their primary caregiver. The fact, this fact influenced the police's decision around issuing a PSO and providing safety for Rae. There is so much that we could unpick here and talk about here but there are two reoccurring themes that the harm done to Rae was not recognised as family violence. And that removing George would have left Rae at home without any support. This is not the police, this is that there is no system. There is no system for putting a safe person into the home to support Rae or removing Rae to a safe place. This is not okay. We need an integrated trim track approach for responding to family violence, sexual violence and adult safeguarding. This requires safeguarding adults legislation, a statutory body that promotes people's rights and protects people from violence, abuse and neglect and responds when abuse is happening. I would like to uh share a quote from a victim uh of family violence that was referred to the safer pilot in the white matar and I will call her Hope. Hope was a manager working in mental health before she was diagnosed with a neurological disorder that results in muscle weakness, loss of sensation and seizures. Hope wanted me to share this with the decision makers. My normal is not your normal. Your system is broken, it does not work for me, my needs or my children. If your normal is not my normal, then you must find a way to communicate with me and how to meet my needs because you can adapt and change the way you do things. My new normal means that I am unable to change. You have the ability to change how you listen and how you recognise violence and the intersection with disability. Family violence and sexual violence responses need to work for everyone. I want to finish with a special acknowledgement. Last week here our dear friend Dr Pauling Boyles passed away. Without Pauline we would not be here today. Pauline's wisdom, humility and passion will continue to be a shining light for us. Pauline I will miss you terribly. Pauline let's get sh\*t done. Pauline we are launching VisAble. (Maori spoken) Thank you.

[Applause]

[Singing]

12:05pm

**(Joanne Dacombe)**

Thank you, thank you very much Sue for taking us on the Whakapapa journey and leaving us with some examples of why our work is so important. Thank you to both Sue and Debbie for stepping up as our interim CEs and to all the staff for supporting them while they undertook that mai. And Sue we have something for you.

[Karakia]

A little while ago a small delegation of us, including um Debbie met with several Ministers to discuss our work. That visitors, that visit included ministers Upston and Chhour, who despite their busy schedules graciously welcomed and listened to us. These ministers asked insightful questions and were keen to know more. We are lucky enough to have them both here with us today at this launch and I thank them for their support uh. Sort of an interesting fact, the first time I met uh Minister Upston in her office I left my coat behind and it was quite some security issue to get it back for my trip home. I'd like, I'd now like to invite the Minister of Disability Issues who also holds a number of other busy portfolios as well, The Honourable Louise Upston to say a few words.

12:07pm

**(Hon Louise Upston)**

Kia ora everybody and welcome to Parliament, uh your house. It is fair to say that there are some meetings you uh have in your ministerial office that have more of an impact than others and I have to say for all of the wrong reasons yours was one of them. And the fact that your coat, I kind of liked it so I didn't want to give it back.

Now in all seriousness I know both um for myself and Minister Chhour that um meeting in our office was very impactful. And so it is really exciting to be here with you today in your

official launch. So my, the sign name that I was gifted is this uh and that also describes um what I'm wearing. I tend to wear blazers. Today I'm wearing one

that is bright green, blue black and white uh. I'm a middle-aged Pakeha woman with shoulder length dark blonde hair. And I think of any of the things uh that we come across as Ministers, the ability to launch an initiative like this really is stunning. And so it is really exciting to be here. Sue, thank you for um laying out the timeline and nothing gets launched without an enormous um amount of effort and contribution by many in many areas over many years and I think particularly uh for this work it's very special. And so it's great to have my friend and Ministerial colleague The Honorable Karen Chhour with me in both her hats as the Minister of Children and the Minister for the Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence. Paula Tesoriero, the chief executive of Whaikaha, a woman that you all know well, who is just doing a fantastic job of leading an organisation that is very special to us and does such critical work uh. Emma Powell, [[unfortunately she is sick]] so apologies from Emma Powell, um who we, you know in the, in the public sector we have some real treasures uh and Emma is one of them. She is the Chief Executive of the joint venture of Te Puna Aonui and Paul Gibson who was of course uh taking up the mantel of your incoming Chief Executive.

So my thanks also to those who have stepped into to the uh job in an interim capacity. And really it's also the opportunity to acknowledge those who are no longer with us. And I know Pauline, um it's nice to have her with us today and I know what a special place um she has played in this work from the beginning. So really just congratulations, uh congratulations on the launch of VisAble.

The naming of it is absolutely perfect in terms of uh the work that you do and the enormous work that's gone into getting to today so well done. If you think about any situation of violence and Sue outlined, you know, two very unfortunately typical examples, except they were atypical uh in a very shocking and harsh way when uh a disabled person, the decisions that are made, that are made for the right reasons at the time, then end up being the wrong reasons. And we do know that disabled people are um significantly more affected as victims of family and sexual violence um and I'll have to just repeat for you when the team from VisAble came into my office. It was just really with shock and horror, uh was Minister Chhour's and my response, it was just like really?

How come we, how come we don't have this service already um because it seemed such a no-brainer and so necessary. And look, I'd love to live in a country where this sort of thing doesn't happen um but we're a long way from that. So, what is more important, is that we have services like VisAble who can

uh be in there as early as possible to prevent the harm that we know occurs uh. So I do want to recognise uh the decades of work that's gone into developing um DAPAR or the Disability Abuse Prevention and Response prototype which is all about safeguarding uh the rights of disabled people and responding to situations of violence, abuse and harm. And it absolutely recognises and has at the heart of it, um the power of lived experience and disabled leadership and really shows uh what is possible when communities are given access to the decision-making and resources. I'd have to say that uh I have zero, zero tolerance for any abuse or neglect uh and violence. But the reality is, it still exists and that's why government must join up to do a much better job. So I'm proudly one of the Ministers that works alongside Minister Chhour on the Ministerial group. And the safeguarding from adults um from abuse response requires a wide range of agencies to work together which is why uh cross-Ministerial groups are so critical because you can't deal with the sorts of responses that are required in this setting if you're dealing with one government agency and not another. So, that's a really important part of it uh in July uh when the Royal Commission of inquiry released its final report, I made the point of reading every page. And for those of you who have uh read it, you will know how harrowing those accounts are.

And it was particularly harrowing reading disabled people Tangata Whaikana Maori deaf and Turi Maori being so significantly impacted and in more numbers than any of us would have liked. So really what we have to do is turn those harrowing pages uh into protections for the future. So, while we have the apology coming up um that in my view is really still um a significant and important step, but a small one in terms of the work that is ahead of us. So, I want to give my commitment to you that uh the safeguarding um of adults at risk is a significant part of not just my work as a Minister for Disability Issues but across government. So, thank you all for your commitment in making New Zealand uh a happier and safer Place. The work you do is so important. There aren't too many events where you have two Ministers alongside to launch it but I think that demonstrates the significance um of what you've done to date and the work that is ahead of us so (Maori spoken)

[Applause]

I just had to say you're not allowed to close down the end of the contract. Close down the contract, please pass that on to your colleagues. [Applause]

12:14pm

**(Joanne Dacombe)**

I want to thank you very much Minister, we look forward to your ongoing full support as we continue to work collaboratively in this space. Thank you for your commitment to come after the apology. I will now hand over to the Minister for the Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence and the Minister for Children, The Honorable Karen Chhour.

12:15pm

**(Hon Karen Chhour)**

Oh thank you everyone, um it's a real honor to be here today in my capacity as Minister for Prevention of Family Violence and Sexual Violence. I think, I'd just like to quickly make a special acknowledgement um to Marama Davidson, um because I think it's really important to acknowledge

the beginning of this conversation was started uh through Marama Davidson and also a special mention to Jan Logie, who's in the room today um for all the hard work she's done within this community.

I don't like listing too many names because somebody always gets forgotten and offended so um uh but there are a few that I I think should be mentioned. So, first of all, a special mention to Louise Upston, um also my friend and colleague who has taken me under her wing over the last three years and really inspired me to be the person I am today in this place, so thank you uh. And also to Sue Hobbs, the Board members and recently appointed Chief Executive Paul, Paul Gibson and the team of VisAble. And to the leaders of all the iwis and NGO sectors who are here today, communities and government agencies um. It's great to see all coming together in this room today for the same purpose uh. And then of course uh just an acknowledgement of the loss of Pauline Boyles and just acknowledging um that loss of that knowledge, the love and the care that she brought to the sector. And so as I look around this room I also would like to acknowledge those joining us via livestream who cannot be here today. And I want to say thank you. Thank you to each and every one of you um who have played a role in this. VisAble, enabling safer lives and communities. Such a simple statement but a powerful one. And I share your vision, VisAble, I too want all disabled people to achieve an aspiration that everybody should be able to achieve, to live a good life and a full life, including to be respected, included and welcomed into communities and wider society, free from harm, free from violence and free from abuse. As Minister for the Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence, my responsibility is

to provide leadership to improve the family violence and sexual violence system response in New Zealand for the generations to come. My goal for my time as Minister is to work towards breaking the cycle of abuse and harm. I know it will take all of us, including VisAble and many other organisations that are here today, who can reach our children, our young people and families to provide the support to prevent, respond and to heal from violence. Our 25-year-old 5 year strategy called

Te Aorerekura is supported across Parliament, which I think is truly important, is to ensure the provision of safe, integrated and early help for people impacted by violence alongside prevention and healing to improve the overall system response.

Te Aorerekura acknowledges the importance of community leadership and government systems are critical and we have large workforce so we must be working in the right ways, enabling communities to do what they do best, enabling well families leading prevention and social change, responding in ways that are appropriate to their communities. And I've had the pleasure of visiting many of these agencies around the country, uh and it's absolutely inspiring um to see what is being achieved. The idea is the Action Plan will help us to focus uh actions by government agencies and communities so we can work together on the overall strategy.

It acknowledges the intergenerational nature of this problem and we know it has to be a sustained effort over time. This year we have been working on the second Te Aorerekura Action Plan which will set priorities for the next 5 years. It will take a more targeted view than the first plan, aiming at prioritising actions where agencies can make an immediate difference to break the cycle of violence. The action plan will be published by the end of this year and some of you, many of you uh have have been involved in the targeted engagements to shape this plan. Thank you uh for contributing your knowledge in this space. But an Action Plan alone will not solve all the problems in the family violence and sexual violence system but it will bring a stronger focus to the way government agencies work together at a regional level and in partnership with communities to improve the outcomes by people impacted by violence. And I hope, uh I hope you can see the sincerity from myself and Minister Upston uh and in our absolute dedication to working together for the betterment uh of this community. Disabled people are key to the implementation of the next Action Plan. And following Ministerial approval of the section Action Plan I welcome the opportunity to share with you the final content in the near future. I want to assure you that disabled people are and will continue to be a

priority in the implementation of the next Action Plan and I know that disabled people need to be considered in all aspects of our work. I welcome your advice and know how you wish to be involved. Government cannot and will not do this on our own which leads me to the reason why we're here today. This work is hard, so it makes it all the more significant when leaders rise to the challenge to say we know what works for our people. Nothing about us without us. Congratulations to VisAble for this monumental milestone and I wish you all the very best in your advocacy and leadership for disabled people and look forward to working with you to enable progress on family violence and sexual violence space. Thank you for the critical role you have played in the implementation of Te Aorerekura and the important role you play in the sector and the wider community. I'm very grateful, thank you.

12:23pm

**(Joanne Dacombe)**

Thank you very much Minister, we really appreciate your acknowledgement of Marama Davidson who has been a longtime supporter of our work. I also thank you for acknowledging the Action Plan and thank you for sharing our vision and we look forward to your commitment to working with us in partnership to prioritise and to progress the prevention of family and sexual violence. I'm now really happy and lucky enough to introduce our next speaker Paula Tesoriero who I first met in her previous role when she was appointed the Disability Rights Commissioner uh. Interesting fact, we both had the dubious distinction of attending the same high school and uh for those with vision impairments we're both on the shorter side in terms of height. Paula is now the Chief Executive of Whaikaha, the Ministry of Disabled People and remains committed to disability rights, including the rights of all people, disabled people to live a life free from abuse and harm. Paula, I now invite you to come up to the podium.

12:24pm

**(Paula Tesoriero)**

(Maori spoken) My name is Paula Tesoriero, I'm the Chief Executive of Whaikaha, the Ministry of Disabled People and a warm Pacific greetings uh. I am standing behind a lectern, to be fair I'm not that much taller than it uh, wearing black pants, uh black jacket with some coloured specs through it and my sign name is this, which is two bicycle pedals moving in a forward direction, uh reflecting my love of and um experience in paralympic cycling. It is really great to be able to be here today and celebrate the launch of the VisAble. Thank you, Sue, for everything um but thank you for your words today

uh. Thank you Minister Upston, Minister Chhour for your words and your commitment to this really important work. Congratulations Paul on your new role, so befitting for a person with your mana and understanding of abuse from your critical work on the Royal Commission of Inquiry into abuse and state care. I want to recognise all of those who are here today for your commitment to ensuring that disabled people can live a life free from abuse and neglect. And I honor all of those, some who are in the room who have shared their experiences of harm. I too want to acknowledge the passing last week of our dear friend and our colleague at Whaikaha, Pauline Boyles. She worked tirelessly as many have said for decades to improve the lives of disabled people and she was a much loved member of our team. I've never had a staff member die while working as part of the team.

It has affected us. She led our safeguarding work program which included collaborating on the development and implementation of the DAPAR prototype and supporting with our full support of Whaikaha the establishment of VisAble as a legal entity. While spending time with her at the hospice recently, we talked about how VisAble can build on the earlier work to lift the invisibility of disabled people in our nation's understanding of violence and abuse of disabled people. It won't surprise many of you who knew her that while I was sitting with her she made me write a list and she made me promise a number of things about continuing the legacy that she was part of setting and continuing this important work. So we mourn uh her loss and this afternoon I know a number of us look forward to celebrating her life at her funeral. In my previous role I was so privileged to work alongside some of the experts in this room, so Debbie, Leo, Ruth, Gary, many in this room as we brought together for the first time in our report the body of evidence about abuse of disabled people in New Zealand and a road map for action.

And I acknowledge Frances, my colleague at the commission at the time, who assisted me and the group in bringing that report together.

And I also want to acknowledge The Honourable Marama Davidson and Jan for picking up many of those recommendations and seeing them form part of Te Aorerekura and thank you Minister Upston and Minister Chhour for um continuing to support that work. I learned so much in that from the experts about the structural causes of ableism that leads to the abuse of power, as well as the many forms and causes of violence experienced by disabled people and the settings that create conditions for abuse. So, when I stepped into this role as a Chief Executive of uh the Ministry of Disabled People, Whaikaha, the responsibility of keeping people safe in the services that we funded weighed

heavily. And I remember Lara, the manager of Pauline's team, who was one of the first in the team to say, Paula, this is what we need to do. And so a priority for Whaikaha over the past two years was to make some changes to strengthen the system. We recently published a quality framework for disability supports that will now or are now being commissioned through the Ministry of Social Development. The programmes that we launched that sit under that framework include the DAPAR prototype and we're really proud to fund and support VisAble. We also provided The Growing Voice and Safety Programme. This is a new advisory service for disability support providers. It matches a specialist advisor with providers to assist them to work through specific specific quality safety issues. Te Pou Waiora now has the contract for this service. We also are launching or got the early stages of launching The Growing Voice and Safety - People for Us service. That service is staffed by disabled people, Tangata Whaikaha Maori and whanau, who work with disabled adults who live in residential settings to help raise concerns and supports to identify pathways to help them.

And finally, we progressed our work to respond to the recommendations of the Rachael Schmidt-McCleave report into complaints that we commissioned about how we collectively can do better for people in residential care. We have a critical role moving forward at the Ministry to contribute to the cross-government work alongside our colleagues at Te Puna Aonui to ensure that agency's work, to make sure that mainstream services are accessible for disabled people. And that bespoke services like VisAble exist because we know that the twin track approach works. We know we have a lot of work to do across government agencies to improve the many disability data gaps, including data gaps in this area. And at Whaikaha we will continue to work to change attitudes because when as a society we value disabled people and work to remove barriers to full economic and social inclusion, then we know we reduce the risk of violence. One of the great things I was thinking about today, Sue and Debbie and others, about the launch of VisAble, is that we are talking about violence and abuse of disabled people, because it's often been invisible in our country's narrative. So, by talking about it, by raising awareness and the strong Ministerial commitment that we have to this work, then we begin to address it. And we must address it. Sue you outlined some of the scenarios and some of the stats. And I picked up our report and was reminded of the very, the very harrowing and real stats. You know, 40% of disabled woman experience physical violence from an intimate partner over their lifetimes, compared to 25% of non-disabled women. 34% of disabled men experience five or more episodes of non-partner physical violence, compared

to 14% of non-disabled men. And globally, studies tell us that disabled children are nearly four times more likely to experience violence than non-disabled children. We know and you highlighted this Sue that the risk of abuse can increase when disabled people are unable to leave an unsafe situation, particularly where the abuse is from someone they rely on for support. So, this is why organisations that work to prevent this from happening and enable people to remove themselves from these situations is so important. In closing, much work needs to be done to reduce the many and long-standing risks of violence and abuse and the barriers to reaching safety that disabled people experience. Today we celebrate the progress that we've made with the launch of VisAble. I think back to the work we did and how this was something that we thought about and congratulations to you for making it, it happen. And I look forward to our continued work uh alongside you for a safer world for disabled people. (Maori spoken)

[Applause]

12:35pm

**(Joanne Dacombe)**

Thank you very much for your words of encouragement, Paula, and your willingness to listen to the experiences of disabled people uh. We thank you very much for funding our establishment and we look forward to continued engagement with the Ministry as we continue our push for attitudinal and systemic change. Next up we have the Chief Advisor of Te Puna Aonui, Liz Tanielu, and we just thank her for stepping in at really short notice on behalf of um Emma Powell today, thank you very much.

12:36pm

**(Liz Tanielu)**

(Maori spoken)

(Samoan spoken)

I too would like to also offer my condolences um to the family and to the community of Paula, uh Pauline Boyle who some of our colleagues have worked very closely in the work that we've been doing in Te Puna Aonui. On a lighter note, uh Minister Chhour I want to apologise as a Samoan hearing the Samoan boisterous choir singing outside while you were giving a very important speech um. They didn't get my memo, I'll talk to them later. On behalf of our Chief Executive, uh Emma Powell, who's unfortunately been sick

for the last week, who's unable to be here today obviously and I know would want to extend to you all her congratulations and warm wishes. Thank you for the opportunity for allowing us to offer a few remarks on this very important occasion. Congratulations VisAble and all the leaders in the sector, in the communities, for the work that you do for our people. You've heard from our Ministers, uh heard about some of the priorities, challenges and opportunities before us. Our responsibility at Te Puna Aonui business unit is to help align collective government agency action to implement the national strategy Te Aorerekura. Our focus and our work together with the nine Te Puna Aonui member agencies, Justice, Corrections, Health, Social Development, ACC, Te Puni Kokiri, Police, Oranga Tamariki and Education on the actions that would deliver meaningful and sustainable shifts in the system, to strengthen families, whanau and communities, respond to violence and support healing. Through Emma's leadership the business unit has been positioned to ensure we are well equipped to deliver in the key areas of evidence and insights, leading for collective impact and working with communities to deliver effective responses. Our work has a unit, uh with a particular focus on engaging with the disabled peoples, began in the early days of when we were called joint venture business unit.

Through the leaders of the disabled sector and community, some of whom were here today and recognising those who have gone before us, they, you help shape the strategic direction and the actions that followed. From those leaders we have and continue to appreciate the very open and direct advice and with that a clear understanding of what um getting in the way way looks like.

The unit continues to meet regularly with VisAble, uh sorry with disabled leaders through the interim disability reference group set up with the leadership and support of the Human Rights Commission to advise on key projects, such as building the competence and capability of our workforce, safeguarding adults. The unit um we're especially excited to be working with VisAble to design and with other sector partners and government agencies the solutions and improvements to barriers in the system. This is an important development along the journey of role modelling and putting in place the change we want to see. Thank you time and time again for your patience, fortitude and commitment to progress work for your, for our communities. Paul, founders, board members and the amazing team of VisAble, we at Te Puna Aonui business unit look forward to working closely with you and other sector and community leaders to serve and to do our absolute best for our

disabled peoples and communities and the generations ahead. In closing, there's a Samoan proverb that goes (Samoan spoken)

simply put, our solutions lie within. Thank you for leading the way. (Samoan spoken)

[Applause]

12:40pm

**(Joanne Dacombe)**

Thank you very much Liz, really appreciate you stepping in at short notice and for the continued support of Te Puna Aonui for VisAble. Looking at solutions, looking to the future for change.

VisAble as a new organisation and as a board we spent quite some considerable time seeking and interviewing for just the right person to be our Chief Executive. We feel we have made the right choice in appointing Paul Gibson to this role. We wanted someone proudly disabled who understood abuse and could lead our organisation forward. Paul is uniquely positioned to bring his insights to our organisation with a strong history in disability rights as the first Disability Rights Commissioner in New Zealand and as a Commissioner for the recent Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care. Paul, I now invite you to come up. [Applause]

12:41pm

**(Paul Gibson)**

(Maori spoken)

Today we celebrate the launch of VisAble, a disabled-lead organisation. And can I acknowledge Ministers Chhour and Upston and I sense you're, um you're authentic and your willingness to work to us, to work towards solving some of these issues um. I acknowledge previous speakers and Paula, you may have got a list from Pauline, from the hospice bed, I got directed to apply to a job.

Various reports say how much more disabled people are abused than others, I've seen between three and eight times, three to eight times the abuse rate for non-disabled people. I acknowledge disabled people and our whanau here and listening in today, our community tells us why we celebrate the launch of VisAble. Abuse is not something to celebrate but to challenge and to solve.

Today I'll touch on three challenges and three solutions; listening to disabled people, implementing the Abuse in Care Inquiry recommendations and fixing the current problems of the increasing abuse against disabled people as a result of recent decisions. I'm privileged to be following the footsteps of Sue, Debbie and Pauline and others who have worked to establish VisAble. and, and are building the regulatory and community system of disabled adult abuse response and prevention that currently does not exist. We strive to build a system based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the Enabling Good Lives principles. I acknowledge Ministers and other politicians here today and thank the National Government of a decade ago for supporting Sir Robert Martin to go onto the UN Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities and for establishing, Enabling Good Lives um. Thanks Ministers for meeting with VisAble before I was part of it and welcoming us to be a thorn in your side. We'll take that to mean being truthful, challenging and solutions focused. First challenge, listen to disabled people you need us. Recent reviews have stepped away from the principle of nothing about us without us.

Our community is hurting. That's not only pain through cuts and support to disabled people and whanau already struggling but the real pain of being on the receiving end of violence and abuse that has increased as a result of ill-informed decisions that excluded us and that had no idea of the unintended consequences that include violence. To make better decisions you need us. Second challenge, implement the recommendations of the Abuse in Care Inquiry report - Whanaketia. I heard so many unforgettable stories, beyond the 3,000 pages, abuse was more atrocious, pervasive and ongoing than imaginable. It was mostly invisible and disbelieved, especially for disabled people. It was systemic and it was preventable.

Data collection and disability identification has never been prioritised but what we know now is the majority of the 200,000 people abused between 1950 and 2000 in care would under today's understandings be identified as disabled people. The factors that allowed abuse to occur to disabled people back, back then, most of them still exist today. The abuse still goes on. Physical violence, sexual violence, rape, extreme neglect, torture, medical abuse and lifelong trauma. Abuse occurred and was ongoing because good people, and today my message is to good people, in decision-making positions from all political parties, from many government departments had little or no connection with our community, didn't believe abuse was happening, made mistakes and didn't remedy them, lacked courage, lacked empathy, lacked the

imagination for anything different and didn't recognise their own ableism. Let's not accept that again. We as VisAble, I think the wider disability community, will work with government to solve this. Thanks Ministers and other politicians for inviting us here and fronting up today. To me the abuse of disabled people relative to the abuse of others still seems under recognised in the public and in the media and to politicians. And again reinforcing I think what I've heard today from Ministers is authentic, we look forward to hearing apologies to disabled people and to others from the Prime Minister, perhaps from Ministers here today and listening to a disabled survivor responding from our community on our behalf. With the release of the Abuse in Care report and with these forthcoming apologies, it's a unique moment in time. There's a critical mass of interest to be a circuit breaker.

There's a genuine opportunity to build cross-political and cross-public consensus to turn around the failures of the past. We owe it to past survivors like Josie here today, to act on what they have generously and courageously taught us so it never happens again.

It never happens again to disabled people or to anyone. Third challenge, fixing the immediate problem despite six years of listening to the Abuse Inquiry and its horrific findings on what went on in Disability Services, recent reviews and decisions on Disability Support Services have included zero analysis of the potential abuse consequences of those decisions. Now more disabled people are at risk of abuse and experience abuse as a result of these recent decisions. We're seeing that at VisAble. We, VisAble is already working constructively with officials and our other partners in the sectors, all who see this recent increasing abuse problem on immediate and on long-term solutions. Support from Ministers is essential. And a quick summary.

Those in the system need three things, need to understand three things.

A, to understand and act on the legal obligations under the Crimes Act to so-called vulnerable adults. We don't like that term, we use community preferred language, Adults at Risk.

B, understand family violence includes those in close living arrangements such as a group home. And is the responsibility of the MSD funded Family Violence Services not Disability Support Services to resource a response.

C, ensure disabled people are not forced to say an unsafe abusive home situations or forced to be homeless, both of those things are happening now. Solve this by creatively enabling and resourcing safe alternatives, for example the alleged abusers going elsewhere and the disabled victims staying in their own home with alternative support. We might need to have another look at some of those recent resourcing decisions that have led to the situation and also look at resourcing and supporting, for example people with FASD and their whanau. Can I finish um with reaffirming Pauline's vision, closing the gap between government and community to fix things. If we do this, in Pauline's words, we get sh\*t done.

[Applause]

And Sir Robert said on disabled people and the abuse we experience, it's no longer acceptable for us to be out of sight, out of mind. We are here today, we are here remotely, this may have been a hard lesson but still nothing is painful and traumatic as being on the receiving, on the receiving end of preventable abuse. Thank you for listening, thanks again, thanks in advance for acting. (Maori spoken) [Applause]

[Singing Tutira mai nga iwi]

12:52pm

**(Joanne Dacombe)**

Very very mindful that our Ministers need to leave. Thank you so much for both attending, we really appreciate that. And just want to acknowledge, just want to acknowledge and thank you very much for your words Paul, for highlighting challenges and solutions. We look forward to you leading our organisation and appreciate the huge mahi that's still lies ahead and setting us up for success. And uh now hand over to, sorry I didn't actually get your name. Yeah I never got told your name. Come forward, thank you. Just to give you a hongiri. (Maori spoken)

12:52pm

(Nate)

I'll give our final closing Karakia, um not to close it off but to open and to acknowledge the uh, your kaupapa of VisAble. (Maori spoken) So, it's not a closing Karakia, it's to acknowledge the launch of your new kaupapa that will be stretched far and wide to the many communities across our nation. (Maori

spoken) I wanted to share a Karakia with you uh very quickly. I know the kai's out and everyone's probably hungry, sorry but this, I won't be too long I'm know to go down rabbit holes. But I thought this is a Karakia quite appropriate, it comes from our ancestors of Parihaka. And if you know about Parihaka, you'll know about the struggle and the violence in which they had to uh comprehend with or deal with those times in the 1800s. And I'm a sixth generation of someone that was arrested from Parihaka, that came to the prisons here that went to Dunedin, which came from the people of this place at this time but it was a sim... Parihaka is about peace and non-violence to all. And so I share this Karakia with you which is actually a Poi Manu. A Poi Manu is a message to deliver to you here today. So, it talks about the concept of the new day and light and transition from night to day recognises the importance of a new kaupapa and the importance of light as life itself, as this goes back to the separation of Rangi and Papa. The first verse speaks about binding all the physical and metaphysical or the physical and the spiritual together and sensing and feeling all of the sounds of our natural world out there and the emergence of a light a new light for the day. It then references the dawning of the new day and the references to (Maori spoken) The next part talks about the foundation being strong (Maori spoken) and we have ascended from the foundation and can hear it resounding which is your kaupapa, may it stand strong forever. The last bit of this Poi Manu references again the physical elements of a whare or a house. Metaphorically speaking this is your kaupapa (Maori spoken) are the front, outside Po (Maori spoken) which is you the people, the heartbeat of your kaupapa. Back wall and the backbone of the house, it also references the importance of the fires which have you, which you have all lit here today in your house or kaupapa. So, the Poi Manu goes like this. At the end you'll hear me say (Maori spoken) and you say tina. And I go (Maori spoken) and you go (Maori spoken) which means let the house or the kaupapa stand strong for all time. So, it starts off like this

[Karakia]

**12:57pm**

**Event concludes**

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