



Q&A for Paula Tesoriero

	Question	Answer
1	Disabled people have commented that they are more included in meetings online, what would we need to do to ensure the digital divide doesn't prevent inclusion in the future? Is it useful to consider digital inclusion is essential infrastructure?	Technology provides important communication tools for many disabled people. During COVID19 we saw how the internet and access to devices served most of the population in allowing us to connect with each other as friends, family, or for work. But some of people did miss out on information and that communication because they had no access to technology, the internet, or it was just impossible as a means of communication for them. Cost, location, and ease-of-use are all barriers. We saw attempts by the Ministry of Education to provide internet and hardware to students, but that didn't work for everyone. Digital inclusion is essential infrastructure, yes, but we must also work to close the gaps on who can actually access it and not assume it is the answer for everyone in an emergency.
2	My daughter has down syndrome and I am a single parent. My sole worry is her future. How will she be cared for long term, how can what I am provided now set her up so she is protected to her death as I will not be there when that day happens.	There are great organisations in the community that can help you and your daughter plan, and support your daughter make the decisions she wants to make about her life. Like the New Zealand Down Syndrome Association.
3	Kia ora Paula. Since captioning isnt available, would you be comfortable/able to share your written speech after this webinar? Thanks	Yes – it will be shared on the PSA webinar site. A recording of the webinar with subtitles has also been made available, and can also be seen on the PSA webinar site at www.psa.org.nz/progressivethinking
4	Paula What is your view on strong Civil Rights legislation to explicitly protect disabled peoples rights in NZ?	NZ has signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and is obliged to uphold it. We should see the Convention made real and visible across our domestic legislation and policies.
5	I'm also concerned about the new abortion law. If we aim to build an inclusive society parents should not be pushed to abort their child based on a disability that has a high survival rate and can be part of a functional society. Sure it should be left a freedom of choice, but where infrastructure and culture is there then it is shouldn't be a hard choice to make.	No particular disability should be singled out for messages for parents that their child's life won't be worth living or have value. In the recent report from the Independent Monitoring Mechanism we call to ensure that parents are provided with balanced information including that from parents of disabled children.
6	Kia ora Paula, Thanks for your talk. Please discuss the status under law of the two covenants (ICCPR and ICESCR) for citizens seeking to bring cases of	Our International obligations need to be translated into domestic law for us to be able to enforce them or seek redress. So, in terms of the ICCPRs that is primarily through our NZ bill of Rights Act. NZ has now ratified the optional protocol of the CRPD which means people can complain directly to the UN but have to exhaust all domestic remedies first.



	discrimination through the Human Rights Act. Doesn't one have greater status than the other?	The only law that the CRPD has been explicitly included in, is the Oranga Tamariki Act. So, the Human Rights Act is the main protection against discrimination. That means that any law providing civil political, economic or social protections must also be applied equally to disabled people or risk being discriminatory.
7	What actions can we take to keep flexible working practices in the forefront of employers minds?	For those working in the State services, yesterday guidelines were published for employers on how to create flexible working by default. These were developed with the PSA following a legal claim against SSC. Agencies will now all need to move to develop policies to create flexible working by default.
8	Kia ora Paula. While in Wellington in the last few days I saw many homeless people back on the street. Many homeless people must have some form of 'disability' or affliction (on top of being poor/disadvantaged/vulnerable/abused/alienated, etc.). Why has this been allowed to happen? Why aren't all such people with 'disabilities' and disadvantage being reached and better served? What are the gaps that need to be filled here?	All people have a right to adequate housing and standard of living. Disabled people are more at risk of poverty and homelessness. It was remarkable during COVID19 that homelessness could be addressed so quickly when it has been such a wicked problem in New Zealand. Definitely, political will is important to creating solutions. Short term accommodation like motel units are not feasible for long term housing solutions. We need more accessible housing. I have called for Kainga Ora to increase its target for homes built to universal design.
9	Kia ora Paula, to what extent are the bridges between different phases of live - eg, school / work / study a focus for raising the rights of disabled people?	Before COVID19 about 39% of young disabled people were not in training, employment of education. A higher proportion than non-disabled. The transition period is crucial, and so is the attitudes about young disabled people's potential. Low expectations of families and teachers can impact on achievement and going on to work or higher study.
10	kia ora Paula. Have you heard much about the crisis response in terms of violence services over this time, for disabled kiwis?	I was concerned about the risks that disabled people may have been in inside Bubbles, for example, where they returned from group homes to their family homes, the extra stress of no respite care being available, and lack of usual supports. No refuges are currently accessible and services don't have staff skilled in working with disabled people. These are issues I am working on with the Joint Venture on Family Violence and Abuse.
11	Also, a general question - how would you like to see those in the audience and people with disabilities / their families contribute towards your work?	My role is to uphold and protect the rights of disabled people in New Zealand. I talk with Disabled Persons' Organisations about issues of concern. I encourage you to join those organisations and take part in their advocacy which I then support. Also taking your complaints to the Human Rights Commission is an avenue for not only resolving individual but sometimes systemic issues, and monitoring the issues impacting on disabled people's human rights. But addressing discrimination against disabled people does not fall on disabled people. Everyone has a role to play in this. We can all challenge ableism – the thinking and defaults that prioritise able-bodied perspectives.





12	what part can Joe public play to make it accessible not just more accessible in general?	Raise your awareness of what accessibility means. It's not all about ramps rather than steps. It's also about the way information is given, and how people are included. Not all impairments are visible so don't make assumptions. Think about who is missing. If disabled people aren't there, why not?
13	During recruitment. What do you think about employers contacting potential candidates to talk further regarding their disabilities and how those disabilities may impact their possible work?	Employers shouldn't make assumptions about what a candidate can and can't do. They are obliged by law to make "reasonable accommodations" which candidates are in the best position to describe. Technical supports can be resolved at little cost or even be funded. Post COVID19 employers should have a bit more understanding of the benefits that flexible work arrangements can provide, and that working from home, or time flexibility, is actually a good option for many people and their employers.
14	Thankyou Paula. Really enjoyed your presentation. You have highlighted real issues faced by everyday people who go unnoticed. I support you in your fight for equity for the disabled people. I am interested in the invisible disabilities that you talked about. How can we make it more visible?	Don't assume that all impairments are visible. Responding to one type of impairment doesn't cater for all. This is where universal design approaches are really useful and can meet the needs of most people. Make information available in a range of alternative formats. Celebrate the diversity of disability.
15	Technology is a great advantage with people with ASD and Down Syndrom as they are quite visual and some non verbal. Yet often are not easily designed for them or you need to download very expensive apps for accessibility and language.	Technological solutions are part of the answer, another part is the attitudes behind funding decisions that views research and development of these solutions as important and worth investing in and subsidising to make them available.
16	That question on who is doing research currently on disabilities is a million dollar question as I would be interested in whether the core agencies eg Health, MSD, Health and disability commission etc are doing ongoing research.	I agree. We need more data on disabled people's lives, and robust research. But we also have a lot of information already and need to act on those things we do know.
17	What happens when the child has PTSD from assignments. Because of poor standards from assessors	I suggest talking to the school about the support available to the child and what alternative assessment arrangements can be made that meet their needs.
18	What can individual public servants and managers do to help remove barriers to disabled candidates seeking work?	Talk to HR and Diversity and Inclusion teams about accessible recruitment practices and training for supporting disabled team members in their work lives and professional development.

