

# **Kōrero for Change**

**Advancing Accessibility in NZ**

**Justice System**

**Wednesday 13 August 2025  
9am-12pm | Via Zoom**



# Introduction

Welcome to **Kōrero for Change | Justice**, a webinar hosted by Access Matters Aotearoa Trust, with funding from Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People, Spectrum Foundation, J R McKenzie Trust, and Foundation North.

An accessible and inclusive justice system upholds the rights, dignity, and autonomy of all citizens, including disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori, whānau hauā, tagata sa'ilimalo and āiga-tele, d/Deaf, and neurodivergent. It is a cornerstone of a fair and democratic society, promoting equity, accountability, and trust. Yet across Aotearoa, disabled people continue to face barriers; physical, procedural, cultural, and attitudinal, that prevent full and equal participation in the justice system. True accessibility in justice is not merely about legal compliance; it requires systems that are responsive, transparent, and designed in partnership with disabled communities to ensure everyone can seek redress, be heard, and experience justice on equal terms.

Join us for an impactful event as we explore the role of the justice sector in promoting inclusion, equity, and belonging for disabled people and those with access needs. We'll engage in courageous conversations about ableism within the justice system, barriers to accessible legal processes, culturally responsive approaches, the impact of bias in legal settings, the training of justice professionals, and the structural changes needed to ensure that everyone can access justice, and no one is left behind.

We are proud to feature speakers, panellists, and moderators who will challenge assumptions, share lived experience and help drive systemic change toward a more inclusive justice system in Aotearoa New Zealand.



**Access  
Matters**  
Aotearoa

**SPECTRUM  
FOUNDATION**  
Ahākoa ko wai te tangata, ahākoa nō hea

**Whaikaha**  
Ministry of Disabled People

**FOUNDATION  
NORTH**  
*Pūtea Hāpai Oranga  
Funding to Enhance Lives*

**J R McKenzie  
Trust**

# Programme

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| 9 am     | <b>Introduction to 'Kōrero for Change' on Justice, Karakia Timatanga, and Housekeeping</b><br>Franceska Tangaere   <i>Changemaker, Advocate and Influencer</i>   |
| 9.05 am  | <b>What is ableism? Examples of ableism in the Justice Systems</b><br>Dr Huhana Hickey MNZM   <i>Academic, Disability Rights Lawyer</i>  |
| 9.11 am  | <b>Making New Zealand Accessible: "A Design for Effective Accessibility Legislation"</b><br>Warren Forster   <i>Barrister &amp; Researcher, ACC Advocacy Service</i>   |
| 9.18 am  | <b>PANEL ONE + Q&amp;A   The Deciders</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Dr Juanita Ryan</b>   <i>Deputy Chief Executive, Pae Ora, Ara Poutama Aotearoa, Department of Corrections</i></li><li>• <b>Superintendent Andrew Mortimore</b>   <i>Director of Prevention PNHQ, New Zealand Police Ngā Pirihimana o Aotearoa</i></li><li>• <b>Warren Forster</b>   <i>Barrister &amp; Researcher, ACC Advocacy Service</i></li></ul> <b>MODERATOR:</b> Dr Huhana Hickey MNZM   <i>Academic, Disability Rights Lawyer</i>         |
| 09.55 am | <b>PANEL TWO + Q&amp;A   The Thinkers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Brigit Mirfin-Veitch</b>   <i>Associate Professor, Director at The Donald Beasley Institute</i></li><li>• <b>Dr Michael Roguski</b>   <i>Kaitiaki Research and Evaluation</i></li><li>• <b>Dr Lida Ayoubi</b>   <i>Senior Lecturer, Director of Postgraduate Programmes, School of Law, Auckland University of Technology</i></li></ul> <b>MODERATOR:</b> Kera Sherwood-O'Regan   <i>National President Disabled Persons Assembly New Zealand</i> |
| 10.30 am | <b>BREAK TIME – 10 minutes</b>   |

10.42 am

**PANEL THREE + Q&A | The Creators**

- **Susan Martell** | *Legal Supervisor Associate, Aotearoa Disability Law*
- **Prudence Walker** | *Kaihautū Tika Hauātanga, Disability Rights Commissioner, Te Kāhui Tika Tangata, Human Rights Commission*
- **Kate MacKay** | *Lawyer, a member of TLANZ's Mental Health & Disability Law Committee, The Law Association of New Zealand*
- **Paul Gibson QSO** | *Independent Disability Consultant and Chair of the New Zealand Disability Strategy Justice Working Group for Whaikaha, Ministry of Disabled People*

**MODERATOR: Caleb Simpkins** | *Lawyer, Simpkins Legal, Barristers and Solicitors*

11.19 am

**PANEL FOUR + Q&A | The Doers**

- **Darryn Aitchison** | *General Manager, Youth Law Aotearoa*
- **Tania Thomas** | *Director of Advocacy, IHC New Zealand*
- **Nan Jensen** | *Better Lives Legal*

**MODERATOR: Tarewa Cowan** | *Governance & Operations Liaison Officer, Kāpō Māori Aotearoa NZ*

11.58 am

Closing Remarks and Karakia Whakamutunga | **Franceska Tangaere MC**

12 pm

**Webinar Ends**

# Biographies

## Master of Ceremonies

**Franceska Tangaere** | *Changemaker, Advocate & Influencer*



Ko Hikurangi te maunga  
Ko Waiapu te awa  
Ko Horouta te waka  
Ko Hinepare te marae  
Ko Ngaai Tāne te hapū  
Ko Ngāti Porou te iwi  
Ko Franceska Riria Tangaere tōku ingoa

Franceska Tangaere has embraced the tangata whaikaha community following a life-altering injury sustained through sexual assault after being trafficked against her will from 2020–2024. Despite immense adversity, she stands as a powerful advocate and changemaker.

Franceska is a Pou for TAMA – Te Ao Mārama Aotearoa, representing Māori disabled voices and mentored by Dr Huhana Hickey. She is also an Executive member of the Inclusive Greens, a rōpū of disabled peoples within the Green Party.

A qualified counsellor, Franceska, is deeply committed to empowering and supporting others. Her professional journey includes roles at Taikura Trust as a NASC Coordinator, Raukura Hauora o Tainui as an international Indigenous health researcher, and Te Rōopu Taurima as an Assets Manager.

Online, she uses her platform to uplift and connect. Her TikTok account Mana Mareikura has over 145k followers, and her newer page The Caring Community is dedicated to supporting disabled peoples nationally and internationally.

Franceska's favourite whakataukī is: "Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini" – My strength is not that of a single warrior, but the strength of many.

# Speakers

## **Dr Huhana Hickey MNZM** | *Academic, Disability Rights Lawyer*



Dr Huhana Hickey (MNZM), a lawyer from Ngāti Tāhinga (Waikato), Ngati Ira (Whakatohea), is an academic and disability rights lawyer. She has multiple sclerosis, was the first openly disabled Housing NZ board member and is an unflinching advocate for whānau hauā and all disabled people. Dr Hickey is a member of the New Zealand Human Rights Review Tribunal and became a member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2014 for services to people with disabilities. In 2021, Dr Huhana entered the Attitude TV Hall of Fame for her work with the community where she remains an advocate and voice for the disability communities. She is a mother, a nana, wife and aunty where her relaxation is in music and art.

## **Warren Forster** | *Barrister & Researcher, ACC Advocacy Service*



Warren Forster is a barrister and researcher based in Aotearoa New Zealand, with nearly two decades of experience in personal injury law, disability law, and dispute resolution. While he is a qualified barrister, Warren does not represent individuals in a legal capacity through his current advocacy service. Instead, he focuses on leading system change in the justice and compensation sectors.

Warren is widely recognised for his work transforming how disputes are resolved within the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) system. He co-founded Talk-Meet-Resolve, an innovative dispute resolution service that replaces adversarial processes with agreement-based approaches, often resolving issues within weeks rather than months or years. His work consistently centres on improving access to justice and creating more humane, effective systems.

Through research and advocacy, Warren has contributed to major reviews and inquiries that influence how Aotearoa supports people impacted by injury and disability. His passion for doing things differently and achieving better outcomes has made him a key figure in New Zealand's legal and policy landscape. His commitment to fairness and justice continues to shape more inclusive and responsive systems, making him a vital voice in the conversation on equitable dispute resolution.

# Panellists

**Superintendent Andrew Mortimore** | *Director of Prevention PNHQ, New Zealand Police Ngā Pirihimana o Aotearoa*



Andrew or Morts joined New Zealand Police in November 2001. Upon graduation from RNZPC in early 2002, Morts was posted to a General Duties Constable role in Huntly in north Waikato. He started his Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB) training in mid-2006 as part of the Huntly CIB, fully qualifying as a Detective in early 2009.

Andrew was promoted to uniform Sergeant in Hamilton City in 2013 and promoted through other roles before being promoted to Inspector as Area Commander Waikato West which saw him return to the Area HQ at Huntly. From November 2019 until May 2020, he was acting as Waikato District Commander and then in September 2020 he took up the role of District Prevention manager.

In August 2022 Andrew was promoted to Superintendent and the role as Director Leadership and Development at the Royal New Zealand Police College and he is now the Director of Prevention based at Police National Headquarters. Within his current role he holds organisational portfolios of Family Harm, Mental Health, Alcohol, Youth, Rural Policing, Crowded Places and Community Inclusion which focuses on Police's outward facing engagement with our Old People, Disabled and Rainbow communities.

**Warren Forster** | *Barrister & Researcher, ACC Advocacy Service*

Refer to **Warren Forster bio** in the Speakers session.

**Dr Juanita Ryan** | *Deputy Chief Executive Pae Ora, Ara Poutama  
Aotearoa, Department of Corrections*



Ko Moehau te maunga, ko Waihau te awa, ko Te Kapakapa te moana, ko Tainui te waka, ko Ngāti Maru, ko Ngāti Airangi, ko Ngāti Kotemana ngā iwi, no Hauraki ahau, ko Juanita Ryan toku ingoa.

Juanita joined Corrections in 2008 as a psychologist in the Waikato. As Deputy Chief Executive Pae Ora, Juanita is responsible for the operational delivery of health, mental health, psychological services, and addictions and disability services for people on remand or serving sentences.

She has extensive frontline experience, having worked as a senior psychologist, a principal psychologist, Director Programmes and Interventions, and Chief Psychologist. This experience seeing, assessing, and supporting rehabilitative pathways for people in prison has given Juanita a good understanding of the challenges and opportunities Corrections faces.

As DCE Pae Ora, Juanita works to strengthen leadership and service outcomes related to health, disability, and rehabilitation. The delivery of the Hōkai Rangi vision is a key focus for Dr Juanita, with a particular emphasis on lifting healthcare and rehabilitation outcomes and improving reintegration prospects for all. Dr Juanita believes understanding each person's individual needs is the key to improving the complex health and rehabilitation challenges often presented by people in Corrections' management.

Dr Juanita and the Pae Ora team have a clear focus and vision to transform health and rehabilitation services to support and enable positive healthcare outcomes for all people in prison. She is committed to improving outcomes for Māori and she greatly values the relationships Corrections has formed with iwi and mana whenua.

**Dr Michael Roguski** | *Director, and Social Scientist, Kaitiaki Research and Evaluation*



Michael (Te Āti Awa; Ngāti Tūwharetoa) is a social scientist with a focus on marginalised populations and sensitive topic research. As consequence he has extensive research experience on topics such as human rights in prison, the experiences of d/Deaf and disabled people accessing health care and support during COVID-19, the abuse of police discretionary power, family and sexual violence, adult safeguarding in Aotearoa, conversion practices and manifestations of spiritual abuse, and the intersection of the criminal justice system and the lived experiences of disabled people.

He divides his team between his research company (Kaitiaki Research and Evaluation) and Te Herenga Waka | Victoria University of Wellington where he holds the title of Adjunct Professor in the School of Nursing, Midwifery, and Health Practice.

In addition to his paid roles, Michael is a member of the Family Violence Death Review Committee and the New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse (Vine).

**Dr Brigit Mirfin-Veitch** | *Associate Professor, Director at the Donald Beasley Institute*



Associate Professor Brigit Mirfin-Veitch became the Director of the DBI in 2007 but has been a member of the Institute's research team since 1994. As a sociologist, Brigit has a strong interest in understanding the social lives of people with learning disabilities and is committed to initiating and achieving social change through research. Brigit's research covers a wide range of topics, but she is particularly focused on access to justice issues, parenting by people with a learning disability, and wellbeing.

She is experienced in qualitative research methodologies, and regularly undertakes transformative evaluation projects, education, and advisory roles within the disability sector. Brigit is also a Research Associate Professor with the Centre for Postgraduate Nursing Studies, University of Otago, Christchurch, and an Adjunct Associate Professor within the School of Health and Social Development, Faculty of Health, Deakin University, Victoria, Australia (since 2018). Brigit is currently supervising a number of Ph.D. students, all pursuing disability-related doctoral research, which is a role she enjoys.

**Dr Lida Ayoubi** | *Senior Lecturer, Director of Postgraduate Programmes at School of Law, Auckland University of Technology, Te Wānanga Aronui O Tāmaki Makau Rau*



Dr. Lida Ayoubi is a Senior Lecturer and Director of Law Postgraduate Programmes at AUT Law School, specialising in international human rights law and public law. She has taught, researched, presented, and published widely on various human rights issues with a strong focus on disability rights.

With a long-standing interest in disability advocacy, she has continuously contributed to law and policy development in this space, particularly through her PhD thesis, for which she was awarded the 2015 John Miller Award in Social Justice and Community Development, and more recently through a UNESCO-commissioned report on access to information for persons with disabilities. She also serves on the Steering Group of the Aotearoa Disability Law Centre.

**Prudence Walker** | *Kaihautū Tika Hauātanga Disability Rights Commissioner, Te Kāhui Tika Tangata, New Zealand Human Rights Commission*



Currently serving as the Disability Rights Commissioner for Te Kāhui Tika Tangata | New Zealand Human Rights Commission, Prudence brings over 15 years of dedicated experience in human rights advocacy. With a career including her previous position as Chief Executive of the Disabled Persons Assembly of New Zealand, a Disabled Persons Organisation (DPO/OPD) and a number of rights, values and leadership-based roles with a national disability service provider.

Prudence holds qualifications in management and Te Reo Māori and has 25 years of governance experience. Her background also includes extensive experience in customer service and in facilitation. With a strong foundation in social justice, Prudence is deeply committed to advancing equity for all people including Tāngata Whaikaha Māori, disabled people, and marginalized communities. As a disabled woman who also identifies as queer, Prudence draws from lived experience to support their work.

**Susan Martell** | *Legal Supervisor Associate, Aotearoa Disability Law Incorporated*



Susan Martell is a passionate advocate for disability rights and a leading voice in disability law in Aotearoa New Zealand. As a senior legal advisor at Aotearoa Disability Law (ADL), Susan supports disabled people to understand and uphold their legal rights, with a particular focus on human rights, health law, mental health, and supported decision-making.

With a background in both community and legal advocacy, Susan brings deep empathy and expertise to her work. She is committed to advancing equity and access to justice, ensuring disabled people are empowered to participate fully in decisions that affect their lives. Through her role at ADL, Susan regularly provides legal education, individual advocacy, and systemic input to improve policy and legal frameworks.

Susan is a strong believer in the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and works in partnership with Māori and tāngata whaikaha Māori to advocate for culturally responsive approaches to disability rights. Her work also includes contributing to national conversations around legal reform and the need for more inclusive, accessible systems. Respected across the sector for her integrity, compassion, and legal acumen, Susan continues to champion a more inclusive and rights-based approach to justice in Aotearoa.

**Darryn Aitchison** | *General Manager, Youth Law Aotearoa*



Darryn Aitchison is the General Manager of Youth Law Aotearoa. He has worked as a lawyer for 20 years, including 16 years in the community law sector. He has extensive knowledge of access to the justice sector, and strong relationships with Community Law and the broader legal profession. Darryn is from Ōtepoti (Dunedin) but has lived in West Auckland with his partner and three children since 2004. He loves cooking and riding the 30km commute to work.

**Paul Gibson QSO** | *Independent Disability Consultant, and Chair of the NZ Disability Strategy Justice Working Group under Whaikaha Ministry of Disabled People*



Ko Taranaki te maunga  
Ko Kaponga te turangawaewae  
Ko tangata tauwi whaikaha au  
Ko purapura ora au  
Ko Paul Gibson taku ingoa

Paul has both personal and family experience of disability. He was the first Disability Rights Commissioner at the Human Rights Commission and chaired the Global Alliance of Human Rights Institutions Disability Caucus. He was a Commissioner on the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith Based Institutions. He has been involved in Disabled People's organisations, and chaired DPA. He has worked in disability service providers, and was Chief Executive of Visible, preventing and responding to the abuse of disabled people.

He currently is the chair of the NZ Disability Strategy Justice working group, which has completed a draft justice section for consultation. After disability community feedback is received, the justice section will be incorporated into a finalized updated strategy by the end of the year.

**Kate MacKay** | *a member of TLANZ's Mental Health and Disability Law Committee, The Law Association of New Zealand*



Kate MacKay is a Law and History graduate from the University of Auckland and a member of The Law Association's Mental Health and Disability Committee. It was her strong passion for social justice and her own experiences with being neurodivergent that led her into the mental health and disability law field, using her voice and expertise to advocate for those who need it most. She is particularly interested in bringing awareness to the overrepresentation of neurodivergent people in the criminal justice system and looking at ways to address this pressing issue. During her studies, she wrote a research paper on ADHD and the criminal justice system and published a condensed version on The Law Association's LawNews platform. She has also led several bill submissions on behalf of the Mental Health and Disability Law Committee, including submissions on new drug driving and medicine law reform, focusing on how proposed legislation should be amended to avoid negatively impacting people with ADHD in particular.

She is currently completing her Professional Legal Studies course before entering the legal profession, where she hopes to continue her work in relentlessly advocating for the rights of neurodivergent people and those with mental health conditions and/or disabilities

## **Tania Thomas** | *Director of Advocacy, IHC New Zealand*



Tania Thomas is a respected leader in the disability sector in Aotearoa New Zealand, with decades of experience advocating for the rights, choices, and wellbeing of disabled people and their whānau. She currently serves as the Director of Advocacy at IHC New Zealand, where she advocates for systemic change to support people with intellectual disabilities to live full and inclusive lives.

Tania is also a long-standing contributor to the Enabling Good Lives (EGL) movement, an innovative approach to disability support that places disabled people and families at the centre of decision-making. She has played a key role in advancing the principles of self-determination, inclusion, and community-based support, and continues to be a trusted voice in conversations around disability system transformation.

Of Ngāti Kahu descent, Tania is deeply committed to upholding the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and ensuring that tāngata whaikaha Māori are supported in culturally grounded and mana-enhancing ways.

Tania's vision is a future where every disabled person is supported to lead a life of their choosing, with the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in their communities and thrive.

## **Nan Jensen** | *Director, Better Lives Legal*



Originally from New York City, Nan Jensen moved to Denmark in 1988, where she met her husband. In 1995, they relocated with their twin boys to Aotearoa New Zealand, where they have mostly lived since. Nan is the mother of four adult children and shares her home with two dogs. She and two of her children are autistic, an experience that grounds her deep commitment to disability rights and justice.

Nan is the Director of Better Lives Legal Limited, The Disability Trustee Limited, and Spectrum Care Limited. She serves on the Steering Committee of Aotearoa Disability Law, a specialist community law centre, and sits on the boards of VisAble Charitable Trust (as Co-Chair) and Artmakers Trust. She is also an active member of Parafed Waikato and the EGL Waikato Leadership Group.

Known as a passionate and slightly cynical disability law advocate, Nan brings both legal expertise and lived experience to her work. She regularly delivers workshops on key disability law topics including Supported Decision-Making, Planning for Adulthood, and Education Law. Her advocacy is driven by a firm belief in justice, equity, and the right to self-determination for all disabled people.

# Moderators

**Tarewa Cowan** | *Governance and Operations Liaison Officer, Kāpō Māori Aotearoa NZ (Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Pourou)*



Tarewa from Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Porou works for Kāpō Māori Aotearoa NZ (KMA) as their Governance and Operations Liaison Officer. Her focus is on co-ordinating a kāpō, tangata whaikaha specific rangatahi group and working with Te Kahui Tumuaki (KMA Governance Board) as their board secretary. Her recent work includes being a community rep on the Justice Working Group for the Refresh of New Zealand Disability Strategy.

Tarewa has grown up immersed in the disability community since a child and has taken on lessons passed down by her kaumatua and kuia into her work. Day to day, she is a Māma to active two-year-olds and living life to the fullest while being a pillar of support for those she works with.

**Caleb Simpkins** | *Legal Intern, Simpkins Legal Barristers and Solicitors*



Caleb Simpkins is a newly admitted lawyer with a deep-rooted connection to the legal world. The son of prominent criminal defence lawyer Max Simpkins, Caleb grew up immersed in the realities of the courtroom, assisting behind the scenes in high-profile cases including murder trials and coroner's inquiries. His decision to pursue law was shaped not only by family influence but also by a strong desire to support those navigating the justice system during their most vulnerable moments.

Caleb has mild cerebral palsy, which slightly affects his handwriting and speech. Despite this, he has developed strong coping strategies and support systems that allow him to thrive both personally and professionally. His resilience and dedication have earned him a place at Simpkins Legal, where he is already making his mark and will soon be junior alongside his father on a murder trial.

Outside of the courtroom, Caleb leads an active lifestyle, mountain biking, golfing, going to the gym, and spending time with friends. He believes in the vital role of defence lawyers in ensuring fair representation and access to justice. Passionate about making a difference, Caleb approaches his career with both heart and determination, committed to serving his community with integrity.

## **Dr Huhana Hickey MNZM** | *Academic, Disability Rights Lawyer*

See **Dr Huhana Hickey (MNZM)** bio in the Speakers session.

## **Kera Sherwood-O'Regan** | *National President, Disabled Persons Assembly New Zealand*



Kera Sherwood-O'Regan (Kāi Tahu, Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe) is a social impact strategist and disability & climate justice advocate based in Ōtautahi. Known for her international work on climate change and its intersection with Indigenous and disability rights, she was named one of BBC's 100 Women of 2023.

She has participated extensively in United Nations climate processes - with the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change and the Sustained Ability Disability and Climate Network, including delivering High Level Closing Addresses for the Indigenous Peoples and Disability Caucuses at the COP 25 and 27 climate conferences respectively.

At home in Te Waipounamu, O'Regan serves as National President of the Disabled Persons Assembly – Aotearoa's pan-impairment Disabled People's Organisation; and as Impact Director at social impact agency, Activate, where her mahi focuses on story sovereignty, co-design, and community driven social change.

Her writing includes co-authoring two works within Climate Aotearoa, ed. Rt. Hon. Helen Clark: From threat to opportunity: Climate change and health in Aotearoa with Dr. Rhys Jones, and Nothing about us without us: Climate change and disability justice with Jason Boberg. She has also contributed to Bronwyn Hayward's Children, Citizenship and Environment; and The Intersectional Environmentalist by Leah Thomas.

O'Regan is a Climate Reality Leader; Center for Australian Progress Campaigning Fellow; UNLEASH Innovation Lab 2019 Global Talent for climate change; and a regular public speaker and commentator, bringing an intersectional lens to climate change and social justice issues.