



Message from the National Chairperson

Hi everyone

I hope that you are all having a good year so far. This year is set to be very busy, with the general election set for September. Members around the country are getting ready to invite MPs to meetings and ask them what their party thinks about important issues. See your Regional Coordinator for the list of questions we have put together.

I would like to point out the 2 campaigns we are supporting: the **Never Again campaign** and the **Access Alliance campaign**. These are really important issues for people with learning disability so please read the articles about them. It would be good if you can talk about these campaigns in your next local group meeting.

I would also like to say congratulations to Rosemary Scully for her Queen's Service Medal. It is such good news. Well done Rosemary.

David King



Awarded for commitment to Easy Read

In November the People First New Zealand National Committee was pleased to present the very first **Make It Easy award** to **CCS Disability Action - Northern region**.

The award has been created as a new way to thank organisations or individuals for their commitment to making their information easy for people with learning disability to read and understand.

In his speech, National Chairperson David King said "Having information you can understand means you know what you are doing and what you are talking about. Knowledge gives you more power to understand things. CCS Disability Action – Northern region has been 1 of the only disability service providers in the country to get their information put in Easy Read. We think they are a role model for other organisations to look at. Well done on your good work of leading the Easy Read charge."

The People First New Zealand Make It Easy award will be given out every year at the national AGM.

To talk to us about putting your information into Easy Read contact People First on 0800 20 60 70 or email alexia@peoplefirst.org.nz



People First Communications Manager Alexia Black, National Chairperson David King and CCS Disability Action Northern Region Communications Advisor Lucy Green.



#NeverAgain #EKoreAno campaign

The New Zealand Human Rights Commission has launched a campaign to ask the Government:

- for an independent inquiry into abuse in state care – this means it will not be the Government who looks into what happened
- for a public apology to those who suffered while in state care
- to recognise the harm that was caused to the victims
- to give the victims the support they need because of what happened
- to make sure this never happens again.

People First New Zealand National Chairperson David King has signed the petition on behalf of People First. He says “(People who were abused) should get an apology from the Government for the wrongdoing. Where people have passed away they should apologise to the family. The Government needs to work on solutions to stop this abuse from happening to anyone else. We don’t have the big institutions today but this can still happen to anyone with a learning disability – young or old, any gender. We need to make this stand.”

People First New Zealand Communications Manager Alexia Black says “Many People First New Zealand members and our friends suffered awful abuse in ‘state care’. People were locked away for decades. Even whole lives. Abused by people who had all of the power and control. Forgotten by society. Each time an elderly People First New Zealand member passes away without an apology for what was taken from them and done to them, another chance to restore some dignity is lost.”

- Sign the petition at www.neveragain.co.nz
- Like, comment or share the posts about the campaign from the NZ Human Rights Commission Facebook page or the People First New Zealand Facebook page
- Post a photo of yourself to Facebook or Twitter with a sign saying #NeverAgain #EKoreAno and link it to the campaign using the hashtags #NeverAgain #EKoreAno



NEVER AGAIN E KORE ANO

Access Alliance campaign #accessmatters

People First New Zealand is proud to be part of a group of disability organisations that are asking all political parties to commit to bringing in new laws around accessibility before the general election in September 2017.

People First New Zealand National Chairperson David King and National Committee Advisor Gordon Boxall attended the 'Access for All' Campaign Launch and Forum in Auckland on 27th February 2017. There, everybody had a think about how people could support the campaign.

David and Gordon thought of 3 reasons why People First New Zealand should support the Access Alliance campaign:

- 1. We believe we can make an important contribution to ensure the Accessibility for New Zealanders Act benefits all disabled people**
- 2. Some barriers are more hidden than others. Some are down to people's reactions and attitudes. We can help show you that if you take time to understand us, we can both benefit from the experience.**
- 3. Everyone can benefit if people with learning disability can achieve their dreams. Like everyone else's, our dreams are about having a job, choosing where we live and having friends. This Act will help us to be active citizens in our communities.**

You might be able to think of some more!



Signing up to the Access Alliance – Disabled Person's Assembly National Policy and Relationships Manager Dr Esther Woodbury and People First New Zealand National Chairperson David King.

For more information, go to www.accessalliance.org.nz

Applications now open for 2017 Card of the Year competition

People First New Zealand is happy to say that applications are now open for people to enter our Card of the Year competition for 2017!



Artists with a learning disability are invited to enter a piece of art they have made that uses the idea of a butterfly – like on the People First logo.

The artwork can be made in any way the artist wants to – as a drawing, a painting, a sculpture or a photo.

Applications are open until 31 May 2017.

You can get more information about the competition and an application form:

- from your People First New Zealand Regional Coordinator
- on the People First website:

<http://www.peoplefirst.org.nz/applications-now-open-for-2017-card-of-the-year-competition/>



Leadership Forum, 9-10th November 2016, Wellington

It is always an exciting time of year when the People First Leadership Forum rolls around. This time, forum participants spent two days learning all about the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.

Over 30 People First members from around the country attended 5 custom-made, accessible workshops on:

1. Human Rights.
2. The Human Rights system in NZ - focusing on the Code of Health and Disability Rights.
3. The UN Disability Convention.
4. The 8 General Principles of the UN Disability Convention.
5. How to use the UN Disability Convention in your life.

The workshops were based on **Te Pou's Education Programme Manual: Kia Noho Rangatira Ai Tātou; Human Rights and The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.

The pace and content of the workshops seemed to hit the right mark, with participants commenting:

"I learnt more about the UN Convention and the Code of Rights - there is a lot more rights that I was ever told about".

"I have been to other conferences but the material was hard to understand. This forum was good because information was in Easy Read and the presentations weren't too complicated".

The whakataukī for this year's Leadership Forum was:

Ma whero ma pango ka oti ai te mahi: with red and black the work will be complete.

This means when we all work together and everyone does their part, the work will get done. The colours talk about the traditional kowhaiwhai patterns on the inside of meeting houses.



Camilla Laurenson and Pip Fraser, members of People First Auckland.





People First New Plymouth members Robyn Edwards and Martha Nuku with the kowhaiwhai pattern that members put together through the forum.

Members put 9 panels of an artwork together over the 2 day forum, until the piece was complete. The pattern in the artwork is called Mangopare from Aotearoa and it represents the Hammerhead shark and ideas of strength, determination and fighting spirit.

Over the last 7 years it has been run, the People First Leadership Programme has had the biggest impact on leadership development for the organisation. It is often the starting point of people's journey to learning about human rights and speaking up. As the forum moves through the 2 days, members who are usually quiet and shy gain confidence to get up and include themselves in the feedback using the microphone.

People First needs strong leaders in the regions and local groups to keep the organisation strong and achieve our National Strategic goals, but the most important outcome from the Leadership Programme is for people to become leaders in their own lives. People First New Zealand aims to assist people to build the skills, knowledge and confidence to determine their own lives. The Leadership Forum Programme gives us the ability to start this process.

Thank you Te Pou for investing into the leadership of people with learning disability in New Zealand through People First NZ.



People First Dunedin members Corrina Wilson-Winterburn and Peter Wilson-Winterburn speaking up at the Leadership Forum.



Annual General Meeting, 11th November 2016, Wellington

The comments and feedback we get from our AGMs are always heartening. Supporters and funders who can make it to the meeting come away impressed with the creative and seamless way the organisation delivers the story of our work:

- financials and reports are presented in ways that members can understand
- leadership of the meeting is firmly in the hands of the National Committee – all of whom are people with learning disability
- the strength of the organisation's roots in self advocacy and democracy come through – with enthusiastic passing of motions, voting and lively conversation.

The AGM is a great place to step back and look at the success of the past year, at what we have achieved with all of the hard work that has been put in.

This AGM the organisation also wanted to focus on honouring some of the people who have contributed to that outcome:

- Robert Martin MNZM was congratulated on his election to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Pam Shanks was honoured for long service to People First New Zealand. Pam has worked for the organisation in many roles over the last 12 years.
- Long service volunteers were acknowledged for their time and effort to grassroots self-advocacy through the local groups:
 - Jenny Bootten – Auckland
 - Kirsty Linnell – Taranaki
 - Phil Dickson – Hutt Valley
 - Sue Kerr – Ashburton
 - Kath Bryant – Ashburton
 - Felicity Sim – Dunedin
 - Mike Hackman – Oamaru
 - Lisa Ward – Dunedin

Robert Martin MNZM was presented with a pounamu and a carved walking stick which was made by People First Kāpiti member Jason Donovan.



Midland Region President Craig Bellis, South Island Team Leader Pam Shanks and National Manager Cindy Johns.



Midland Region President Craig Bellis, long-service volunteers Phil Dickson and Jenny Bootten, Midland Region President Jodie Turner and National Manager Cindy Johns.

VALID – Having a Say Conference

8-10th February 2017, Geelong, Australia

VALID is a not for profit organisation managed by a committee of disabled people and family members. Each year VALID hosts the Having a Say Conference. It is the largest conference for disabled people in Australia. There were about 1,000 people at the 2017 conference.

People First New Zealand National Committee member Craig Bellis travelled to Geelong this year, with Life member Robert Martin and National Funding Manager Janet Doughty. Robert gave the key note speech of the conference and spoke about his involvement in writing the Disability Convention and his new role as an Independent Expert on the United Nations Committee for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The conference is quite unique, in that it is designed to be accessible for people with learning disability. Quite a change for Craig, who is used to attending conferences in New Zealand and said “it was pretty good and it had a good atmosphere. You didn’t see any doctors or lawyers”.

People First New Zealand ran a workshop called “The UN Disability Convention: the biggest hammer in your speaking up toolkit”. It was very well attended with 35 people taking part.

Craig’s thoughts about the workshop were, “I think it went really, really well. Everyone was participating, asking good questions and people were getting the answers right”.

Robert said of the workshop, “It was really professional. We made a good team, the three of us”.

The hardest thing for Craig, Robert and Janet to hear at the conference was the fact that there are still people with learning disability living in institutions in Australia. Even though we still have a long way to go for people with learning disability to achieve full human rights, we can be proud of the steps we have made in New Zealand, with our last large institution closing down 11 years ago.



Craig Bellis, Robert Martin, David from Australia and Funding Manager Janet Doughty at the People First New Zealand workshop.



2016 Leona Gitmans award for self-advocacy

People First New Zealand would like to congratulate Carolyn Thomas of Rotorua on being awarded the 2016 Leona Gitmans Award for Self-Advocacy.

Carolyn is a loyal, committed and passionate People First member. At her local group she takes an interest in all the members. She buys small Christmas presents for everyone and organises a mid-winter Christmas for every June meeting. She is a great baker and always comes to meetings with cupcakes to share. Amazingly, she makes a butterfly cake for each anniversary of the People First Rotorua group and regional meetings. She ices the cake herself in the traditional People First colours of purple and green.

Carolyn has been involved in many projects, including:

- a Midland regional leadership project
- speaking to service providers about how self-advocacy impacts her life
- providing training for new employees of a local service provider - what it is like to receive services and support that is below standard
- changing Taxi drivers' attitudes towards disabled people.

This award is named after Leona Gitmans, a woman who was very passionate about self-advocacy. People First NZ has a trust called **The Leona Gitmans Te Aranga Trust** and every year the People First National Committee chooses a member to receive the award. People First New Zealand has many great supporters and The Gitmans Family have been supporting People First for over 10 years. As well as a pounamu, certificate and \$500, Carolyn was also presented with a mattress topper from SlumberTop – the business of The Gitmans family.

Another way the Gitmans family support People First is by having a write up on their SlumberTop website encouraging people to donate to People First. See it here:

<http://slumbertop.co.nz/about/#support>



People First New Zealand would like to thank the Gitmans family for their continued support of self-advocacy in New Zealand. To find out more about SlumberTop see their website:

<http://slumbertop.co.nz/about/>

Services to the New Zealand disability community

Article from the Otago Daily Times

Rosemary Scully says she does not know who nominated her for a Queen's Service Medal but she is delighted to have received one.

The medal is the latest accolade for the intellectual disabilities researcher and advocate.

Ms Scully, who has an intellectual disability, is a life member of People First, a self-advocacy organisation run by and for people with intellectual disabilities.

She had also been involved with IHC at both local and national levels.

Advocating for the rights of people with disabilities was something she saw as a privilege, she said.

"I just like helping people. I don't do it for the glory, or the money, I just do it to help people because I like to."

She was particularly proud of her involvement in the establishment of a women's group for women with disabilities.

She had also addressed the needs of disabled women as co-researcher on the project "Identifying and addressing general life concerns of women with intellectual disabilities" conducted by the Donald Beasley Institute.

Equally important to promoting the rights of women was ensuring people had equal rights to work, she said.

She had sat on the Workbridge Council for many years to ensure more people knew about their rights, she said.

While the New Zealand disability community was stronger now, it still faced challenges. She hoped her medal would inspire others from the community to take on leadership roles.

"I hope it encourages all people with disabilities to follow their dreams and realise there is no such word as can't."



People First Southern Region member Phyllis MacPherson, Regional Coordinator Gerry O'Farrell and Rosemary Scully QSM.



Making new connections with Rural Women NZ

On 16th February, Midland region members Rainus Baker QSM and Carolyn Thomas presented alongside Rural Women NZ to raise awareness of the achievements of people with learning disability in the region. In rural areas, people with learning disability have less opportunities to be recognised in their communities.

Members in the Midland region identified that they want to make their voices louder, and so approached Rural Women NZ – an organisation that has as its focus for the year the 3 C's: Communication, Connection and Collaboration, leading to a 4th C which is Community.

It was a lot of hard work to pull the event together, but connections such as these are so important to making sure people with learning disability are seen and valued in local communities. Rainus said "I enjoyed co-facilitating the workshop in another town, speaking to a group of people I don't know and supporting regional work. I would like to do more work to help communities understand us more."

Carolyn said "I was a bit nervous at the start, but by the end, I felt my voice getting louder. I think we need to go out more and tell people about us."

Great work team!



Back: Carolyn Thomas (People First Rotorua), Margaret Scrimgeour (Rural Women NZ), Dorothy Warren (Rural Women NZ), Rainus Baker QSM (People First Whakatāne).

Front: People First Midland Regional Coordinator Yi Liang Small).

A night of glitz and glamour



Robert and Lynda Martin at the New Zealander of the Year awards 2017.

People First New Zealand would like to congratulate Life member Robert Martin on his recent nomination for the Kiwibank Local Hero Award at the 2017 New Zealander of the Year Awards.

These awards celebrate people who use their passion for New Zealand, to make our country a better place. The awards are an opportunity to honour extraordinary Kiwis whose selflessness, creativity, and vision make us proud to call New Zealand home.

As Robert said in his speech "I wouldn't be here without the support of my friends with learning disability, the community, my wife Lynda, People First New Zealand, other organisations and the New Zealand Government. No man is an island."

Keep up the great work Robert!

People First New Zealand Inc. Regional Presidents and Coordinators 2017

Northern

President
Raymond Thoumine

Coordinator
Kaeti Rigarlsford

Midland

President
Jodie Turner

Coordinator
Yi Liang Small

Central

President
Penelope Banfield

Acting Coordinator
Pam Shanks

Top of the South

President
James Carr

Coordinator
Anne Marie Kirkpatrick

Midsouth

President
Craig Bellis

Coordinator
Margaret Matheson

Southern

President
David King

Coordinator
Gerry O'Farrell



Contacts

National Office Address:

Level 4, 173-175 Victoria Street,
Wellington 6011

Mail Address: PO Box 9199,
Marion Square, Wellington 6141
Phone: 0800 20 60 70,
(04) 381 3242
Fax: (04) 381 3242
mail@peoplefirst.org.nz
www.peoplefirst.org.nz
www.facebook.com/peoplefirstnz

National Manager:

Cindy Johns
(04) 381 3242
(027) 6841 061
cindyjohns@peoplefirst.org.nz

National Finance Manager:

Crystal Fang
(09) 579 1588
(027) 688 8048
crystalfang@peoplefirst.org.nz

Communications Manager, Easy Read Translation Service:

Alexia Black
(027) 428 9747
alexia@peoplefirst.org.nz

Funding Manager:

Janet Doughty
(027) 869 9790
janetdoughty@peoplefirst.org.nz

North Island Team Leader, Northern Region Coordinator,

Kaeti Rigarlsford
(027) 575 4000
kaeti@peoplefirst.org.nz

Northern Region President

Raymond Thoumine

Midland Region Coordinator

Yi Liang Small
(027) 526 3387
yi@peoplefirst.org.nz

Midland Region President

Jodie Turner

Central Region Coordinator

Anne Marie Kirkpatrick
(027) 856 2230
annemarie@peoplefirst.org.nz

Central Region President

James Carr

South Island Team Leader

Pam Shanks
(027) 440 0279
pam@peoplefirst.org.nz

Top of the South Acting Region Coordinator

Pam Shanks
(027) 440 0279
pam@peoplefirst.org.nz

Top of South Region President

Penelope Banfield

MidSouth Region Coordinator

Margaret Matheson
(03) 366 4210
(021) 931 715
marg@peoplefirst.org.nz

MidSouth Region President

Craig Bellis

Southern Region Coordinator

Gerry O'Farrell
(027) 542 4916
gerry@peoplefirst.org.nz

Southern Region President

David King



0800 20 60 70



mail@peoplefirst.org.nz



www.peoplefirst.org.nz



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