



A message from the National Chairperson



Kia Ora everyone

It is my pleasure to bring you the first Butterfly Express Newsletter of 2015.

People First is getting stronger all the time and it's going to be another great year. It is wonderful to have so many great stories to share. We have lots of new people coming on board for projects like the Disability Action Plan working groups and they are all doing a marvellous job.

Make sure you check out the People First Facebook page. There are lots of interesting things on there from around NZ and the world.

Congratulations to Don Neal for his Leona Gitmans Te Aranga Award too.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter.

Hamish Taverner

Don Neal presented with award for self advocacy

Every year People First New Zealand honours a person with learning disability by awarding them the Leona Gitmans Te Aranga Award for self advocacy. The person who gets the award is chosen by members of the National Committee and the award is usually presented at the Imagine Better conference.

The Leona Gitmans Trust was set up by People First in 2004. Leona was a person who was passionate about people with learning disability and self advocacy. When Leona passed away, her parents asked her family and friends to make donations to People First rather than bring flowers to her service.

In November 2014 the award was presented to People First Blenheim Member Don Neal.

In his time with People First, Don has been:

- Secretary for Blenheim People First
- President for the Top of the South region
- the People First representative on the Workbridge Council
- involved in the Government's Disability Action Plan working group on employment
- on People First 'Speaking Up' and 'UN Convention' courses
- actively campaigning to get rid of the Minimum Wage Exemption permit.

Congratulations Don from all of us at People First NZ.

An honour well deserved.





2014 a big year for Robert Martin

Robert Martin nominated for UN Committee

In June 2014 the Honourable Tariana Turia, Minister for Disability Issues at the time, announced that Robert Martin would be New Zealand's candidate for the 2016 election of the **United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.



Robert Martin outside the United Nations, New York, USA.

If Robert is elected, he may be the first person with a learning disability in the world to serve on a UN Committee. Robert is already a well-recognised leader in the New Zealand disability community, having also helped to write the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.

People First National Chairperson Hamish Taverner extended his congratulations to Robert for his nomination on behalf of all of the members of the organisation.

Hamish said "He supports us People First members and he helps us speak up for our rights. He is the right candidate for the position. People with learning disability should be around the table and represented. By having Robert there, the United Nations will know more about people with learning disability and we will have a voice."

Becoming a Person – the biography of Robert Martin

In 2014 the long awaited book about Robert Martin's life was released.

Robert and others told the story to author John McRae, who put it all together.

The story starts off when Robert was a baby and his family were told to put him in the Levin Farm and Mental Deficiency Colony (later named the Kimberley Hospital and Training Centre). It tells of his childhood, the abuse he saw in the various institutions and foster homes he lived in, and the start of the New Zealand self advocacy movement in the 1980s.



National Committee member Jodie Turner congratulating Robert at People First National Office, Wellington.

The road to the United Nations has not always been an easy one but as Robert says "I couldn't have done it without my friends. I always felt like people were with me on my shoulders."

There has been a lot of interest in Robert's story since the release, both here and overseas. It has even led to an article with the NZ Woman's Weekly. The book can be purchased from a bookstore near you or online from Craig Potton Publishing: <http://www.craigpotton.co.nz/store/becoming-a-person>.

People First speakers in hot demand

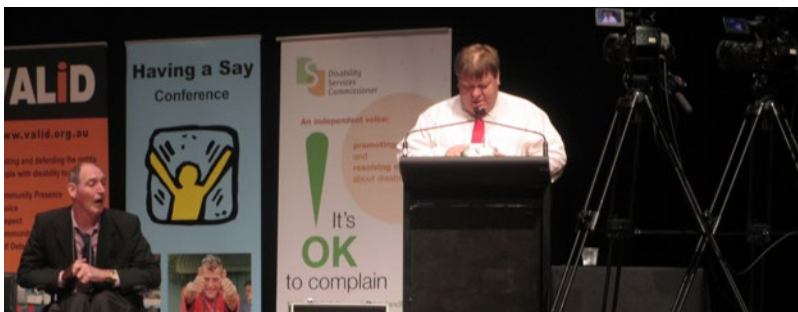
Over the last year, many members of People First NZ have been asked to speak at conferences as key note speakers and presenters.

This is a wonderful opportunity for the organisation to keep building the confidence of members elected to National Committee positions and to also showcase the great talent there is amongst the entire membership.

It is important that people with learning disability continue to be invited to share their experiences and speak up about what the important issues are for the people they represent.

People First NZ is proud to be the voice of people with learning disability in New Zealand.

Speaking up at the 'Having a Say conference', Geelong, Australia



Robert Martin presenting his story



Jodie Turner during her presentation called 'Let's talk about words'

In February Robert Martin and Jodie Turner travelled to Geelong, Australia to represent People First New Zealand at the **Having a Say Conference**. They were assisted by Midland Regional Coordinator Nicolina Newcombe. The Having a Say Conference was hosted by the **Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability, also known as VALID**. The conference was run by a Local Organising Committee made up of people with learning disability and the theme they chose was '**Change your future**'.

People First Life Member Robert Martin said the opening key note speech of the conference. He talked about his life, growing up in an institution and travelling the world to tell people about self-advocacy.

Of the conference, Robert said "I think the biggest thing I've seen throughout the years (at VALID) is more leadership by people with learning disability. They took ownership of giving the presentations and Jodie was absolutely brilliant. It was just amazing to see how far people have come. Give people a chance and they take it with both hands. That's what leadership is all about."

Jodie Turner, President of the Midland Region, also presented at the conference. Her workshop was called 'Let's Talk About Words' and it was a great success. "I felt really good seeing that people in another country want the same changes as us, to get more respect" she said.

Jodie went to another workshop about making friends. At the workshop people introduced themselves and asked each other questions about what they like doing. Jodie made a new friend at this workshop to be with at the conference. "I really liked the whole conference. I thought it was very good. I really liked how people worked together as team to make the conference great."

People First New Zealand would like to thank NZ ASID for the funding that enabled Jodie to attend this conference.



Keeping Safe, Feeling Safe project in full swing

People First New Zealand was able to move its 'Keeping Safe Feeling Safe' (KSFS) project in 2014 after securing funding from the Ministry of Social Development's **Making a Difference Fund**.

Keeping Safe Feeling Safe is initially being rolled out in North Auckland and West Auckland. It is hoped it will eventually be part of a nationwide move towards greater awareness regarding the abuse of people with learning disability.

Keeping Safe Feeling Safe is based on a project that People First Project Manager Sue Hobbs was involved in developing in the UK. People with learning disability were fed up with being bullied and asked the police and social services to help.



Co-Project Manager Sue Hobbs, Member Advisors Manu Tapu and Sam Walsh, Minister for Disability Issues Nicky Wagner and Co-Project Manager Kaeti Rigarlsford

A series of workshops took place to identify what the issues were for people with learning disability with regards to accessing the Police and getting their legal rights. Police received training around communicating with a person with learning disability and disability service agencies and support services had training about hate crime, their roles and responsibilities.

Like the project in the UK, the 'Keeping Safe Feeling Safe' project that People First NZ is running aims to change the way people with learning disability are seen and treated across the police and social services when they report bullying, abuse and neglect.

People First staff and members will receive training so that they can deliver the KSFS workshops to people with learning disabilities, social services, the police and people who work with people with learning disabilities.

In October, a hui was held in Auckland. Participants from disability and violence prevention agencies made pledges to go back to their organisations and see how they could make positive changes in support of the work of KSFS.

The KSFS team have also met with Nicky Wagner, Minister for Disability Issues, staff at the Human Rights Commission and senior officers at the NZ Police National Prevention Centre, all of whom have expressed great interest in the progress of the project.

Kaeti Rigarlsford, Co-Project Manager, 'Keeping Safe Feeling Safe': "We want to see every adult in New Zealand being more aware and being able to stand up and speak out when they see abuse happening, in their community, in their workplace, in their home environment and on the street".

Sue Hobbs, Co-Project Manager, 'Keeping Safe Feeling Safe': "Everyone has the right to be safe and to feel safe. Many people with learning disabilities do not report abuse because they do not think they will be taken seriously. 'Keeping Safe Feeling Safe' will help to change the way that the police and other people take reports so that people are safe and get their rights in law the same as everyone else in New Zealand".



Hard at work: participants at the October 'Keeping Safe Feeling Safe' hui

Disability Action Plan



Every 3 months representatives from Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) meet with Chief Executives from the Ministerial Committee for Disability Issues.

The meetings cover how work from Disability Action Plan is progressing. Here is People First NZ National Chairperson Hamish Taverner speaking up at the February 13th 2015 meeting.

In 2014 a new Disability Action Plan for 2014-2018 was signed off by representatives of the Government and Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs). The Plan is different from previous ones in that it has been worked on together by disabled people and the Government.

There are **4 parts** to the Disability Action Plan:

- 1. More jobs and opportunities**
- 2. Make sure disabled people are safe and feel safe**
- 3. Changing the disability support system for the better**
- 4. Making the community easy for everyone to access.**

Each part has **actions**. The actions are the work that will be done. Each part also has a **working group** made up of government departments, disability services and DPOs. Work is now well underway in each of the working groups and People First NZ is very busy making sure that people with learning disability are represented in this work.

The Easy Read version of the Disability Action Plan has been translated by the People First NZ **Make It Easy** Translation service and is available on the People First website:

<http://www.peoplefirst.org.nz/news-and-resources/easy-read-resources/>



Enabling Good Lives Waikato

Enabling Good Lives is a new way of providing disability support that gives disabled people and their families more choice and control in their lives. About 100 people in the Waikato are going to be trying out Enabling Good Lives starting from July.

Hamilton members Glen Terry and Portia Johnson have been visiting day services in the Waikato to tell other people with learning disability about the changes that will be happening for some people.

Portia decided to help spread the word about Enabling Good Lives because she wants people to know “that there is something out there now to make their lives better”. Portia says she likes “doing speeches to make a difference”.

Glen is also on the Enabling Good Lives leadership group. This means that he is making decisions with other disabled people, families and service providers about all of the changes that are being made. Glen says “to me Enabling Good Lives means showing disabled people new ways of doing things so that they can be who they are, do what they want to do, and go out there and live it.”

Even though only a few people are going to be able to try out Enabling Good Lives at the start, everyone can think about what makes a good life for them and what supports they would like so that they can get there. Portia said “I think I am changing the way people want their future to look like by talking about Enabling Good Lives”.



Portia Johnson



Glen Terry



Glen Terry and Portia Johnson presenting at a vocational service

2014 National Leadership Forum

In November, the National Leadership Forum was held in Christchurch. For the fifth year running, the Leadership Forum saw leaders from each region of the country come together for 2 days of sharing.

The 6 regional projects for 2014 were:

- 1. Northern: Conflict resolution and dreaming about my future**
- 2. Midland: Visiting schools and other educational institutions to speak up about what would make things better for disabled people at school**
- 3. Central: How to sort out hassles in your People First group**
- 4. Top of the South: How to make complaints at your disability support service**
- 5. Mid-South: Democracy and voting**
- 6. Southern: Medical mayhem**

Having a national forum is helping strengthen People First as an organisation. It is providing People First with a platform to work with more people with learning disability from across New Zealand, let them know about People First and they can then see and experience the benefits of being part of a Disabled Person's Organisation. The most important goal of the project must be to empower people with learning disability to have a stronger individual voice, to build people's confidence and to improve people's knowledge about human rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



Top of the South Leader Ian Armstrong answering a question



Northern Region President Raymond Thoumine helping Midland member Melissa.



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