

Transcript: My Voice Matters 2020 General Election Forum

1.00 - 3.00 pm, Saturday 29 August 2020, via Zoom

Kia ora, welcome everybody, my name is Amy Hogan from the cerebral palsy Society of New Zealand, one of the founding members of the alliance, I will be the MC today, I am wearing red with multicoloured beads. Thank you to everyone who joined the web seminar today. We have had over 150 registrations, which shows how important the issue is for the community.

My Voice Matters is a non-partisan organisation, working to promote and produce productive and meaningful conversations with politicians about disability issues. The focus is on the rights of citizens and greater inclusion in our society.

I would like to acknowledge our panellists for joining us today. We have the Labour Party minister for issues with disability, as well as a spokesperson for children with a disability and rights. David Seymour, Jenny Mycroft and joining us we have Kelly who will be our sign language interpreter – thank you for joining us.

Before we start I would like to welcome Richard Perry.

SPEAKER:

I disappeared and just came back, if I missed something, please let me know. Am I supposed to do an introduction or are we waiting for people to come on?

SPEAKER:

We're just finishing the introduction.

SPEAKER:

OK.

SPEAKER:

We're just waiting to begin. Please forgive us for the technical issues but this is the first time we have transitioned to an online forum and there is a learning curve along the way.

SPEAKER:

I have got my camera on.

(SPEAKER SIGNS INTRODUCTION)

SPEAKER:

(SPEAKS MAORI LANGUAGE)

I was given the wrong link and unfortunately could not join at the time required, my apologies.

AMY HOGAN:

Thank you, Richard. It is important for disabled people to be informed about each political party and their stands on medical issues in order to make an informed decision. First, a few housekeeping rules, cameras and microphones will be turned off so we can focus on the panellists, the webinar will be on Facebook, Twitter and social media platforms with captioning also available.

Epic Studios will control the cameras <https://internetnz.nz/funding/> and microphones of panellists so you should only have two panellists at once, the person speaking, as well as the sign language interpreter.

Today the webinar is around six main topics, there will be a prepared question for each topic that represents the question from the community. After the candidates have responded, there will be an opportunity to follow-up with questions.

If you have a follow-up question, there are a couple of options – place the question in the chat at the bottom of the screen. If you have difficulty with that, Karen from Access Alliance is on the chat to help you.

If you are on Facebook or Twitter, you can put the questions or comments on those platforms. Angela from the Disabled Persons Assembly will read out the questions on camera. Please specify if your question is for a specific candidate or a general question.

Please keep your comments and questions short, respectful and kind. I will ask the candidates to introduce themselves and provide a description of yourself and surroundings to assist with accessing.

When we have 10 seconds remaining, we will bring the camera to the next person in line, so they can wrap up.

In the interests of fairness, we will alternate the starting order for each candidate as we go. For the introduction, we're starting with the Minister.

CARMEL:

Thank you for starting us off, Amy, and to Richard for the introduction. I am doing zoom in my son's bedroom which has become my office. Not much behind me except for a photograph of myself and my sons which is a few years old, one of them was 15 and the other was one year old at the time.

Can I start by saying it has been a real privilege for me to be the Minister for Disability Issues for the last three years. I enjoyed working with all of you, the Coalition, the disability organisations and all the individual disabled people I have had an opportunity to meet and work with over the last three years.

Can I say, it has been a constructive relationship, much of what we have achieved in the last three years, this could not have been done without your support and input and guidance, with respect to what we needed to do, as a government, alongside you. I really want to acknowledge you.

Many of the platforms for the next five or more years have been put in place, whether it be the updated disability action plan, the disability employment action plan, disability support action plan, the accessibility charter, and a range of things.

Look forward to working with you and thank you for having me in the debate – I look forward to questions.

>> Next, we have Alfred.

>> Thank you for your introduction, last time we met we were on stage and you were the MC, great to see you again. (SPEAKS MAORI LANGUAGE). And thank you for the wonderful welcome to all the people tuning in and thank you for the people from the disability community for the opportunity to be here with you today. I was fortunate to be given, this year, when Maggie Berry announced her resignation from parliament, the ability to be the spokesperson for disability. It has become the busiest portfolio I have had and a wonderful opportunity to engage and meet with the community and hear the hearts and minds of disabled people and their desires to live a life that is important. The key to enabling good lives is giving the community within the disability sector, the ability to have choice and control over their lives. We believe that is at the heart of everything we do when it comes to policy development as a government. Also the hearts and minds and voices of people in our disability community should be they have the choice and control of resources and opportunities that are before them as well.

Audio lost

>>Annexed we have (inaudible) speaking.

>>It is a pleasure to to be here, I know you Amy, with other hats on. I see this portfolio as one, this is my community, having been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis two and half years ago, I had had the portfolio for a couple of months at the point, it was incredible to have those connections already. As I slowly started to speak within the community at first about my own experiences of what my diagnosis meant for me, my own interactions with the health system, with work, we all became each other support, it became policy for the community by the community. I hope to some extent, and I also know that this is an incredibly diverse community, the way that I came to the portfolio first, was that before my election to Parliament in 2017, I had been a lawyer, practising in human rights law, I'd been the last of the family carry cases, they were cases that a lot of people in the disability community would be somewhat familiar with. -- carer. They involved family members are profoundly disabled loved ones who wanted fair pay for their care of their disabled loved ones so that they could remain in the community, have a choice, have that control, which should be the right of all disabled persons, the funded family care model had been failing them. They went through the courts, it was found to be unfair, but the last National party government passed law to cut them off from the human rights act, taking away the control and the remedy, it was so obscene.

>>Next, we have David.

>>Thank you very much Amy, and everyone else of being here today. I stand for the Act party whose principals are fundamentally based in the rights and dignity of every individual to leave their life to the maximum. My own experience of disability is that it shaped my life, my mother had polio, as a child growing up, everything we did was shaped by the world around us, the accessibility for someone who could not walk as well as others. I remember a certain politician, I won't name, who parked his car in a disabled space, my mum waving her disability card at him, and that shaped my view of that person forever. I think when it comes to the issues, we need to do better in terms of access ability, and in terms of services. The Act Party is very hard on politicians that want to take a lot of money, and give it to people for votes. We need to spend money where there is genuine need, where people have challenges that are not of their own making, they have no other way to overcome. That is where we need to target more effort and resource. I know I'm about to get cut off, I will leave it there, but I really look forward to this discussion. Think of having us.

>>Next we have Jenny speaking. Can you please describe yourself?

>>Very warm greetings to you all, (Speaks Maori language), My name is Jenny, I am MP on the list for New Zealand first. I am in my office at my home, although I have a backdrop screen, which I had for a previous meeting, I have not been able to manage to change that, it is Yoda from Star Wars. I will probably at some point work out how to change that screen. It is an absolute pleasure to be here today. I am human rights spokesperson, but I also found out that I have the disability portfolio handed to me from my colleague, the honourable Martin. I've got this portfolio to start taking care of. I'm looking forward to, out lockdown, engaging a meeting many of you. Our party come from a practical place in terms of policy. Is it reasonable? Sensible? We know that disability is a very broad church. What we want to do is make accessibility in an inclusive society. That will require the will of government, if we are in the privileged position after the election to be part of the next government, I would like to take up that mantle, pursue that. A little shout out to the Minister, just acknowledging the amazing work that she has done in this parliamentary term, bringing every cabinet paper in front of the cabinet with a disability perspective. I would like to acknowledge her. And another quick thing, I have broken my glasses, as you may see, I haven't been able to get them fixed in locked up. Lovely to meet you all. Looking forward your questions.

>>Thank you all, let's start with the first topic, education. Education is a crucial factor for all young Kiwis. It plays a pivotal role in shaping young people's future. However, many people living with a disability do not have access to fully inclusive education or integrated systems that ensure physical, psychological, and culturally appropriate system for education. What were your party do to ensure that primary, secondary and tertiary students have access to what they need from day one? So that they have an equitable chance at education and pathways to employment to contribute as Kiwis? And we're starting with Alfred.

>>So, we want every child, through compulsory or non-compulsory primary, secondary, tertiary, should have the right to education. The education act from 1989, article 6, three, clearly state that all children have the right to state school education,

even those with high learning needs. We have been proud as a country that we have a great record, however, it can continue to improve. Resources and gear need to be adequately available to support networks, support teams, learning and behaviour, different specialist services like speech, learning services, and the like. It is important to continue to ensure that those support services that are there, and that the wider family, carers, can support people with disability throughout the region occasion. A party has a proud record of doing that, we will continue to make those services available, a tertiary providers have their provisions available to them to have the physical accessibility and also new learning environments around technology, those platforms are also available for all of our students, so that they have the opportunities. The statement that I thought was quite telling and very wise was actually from Dave Farah when he said that -- Jade Farrar, it is the equity of education that is the most important. Our party supports that, I agree with that, we support the equity of education for all students in their educational journey.

>>I did not quite hear you Amy, but I suspect you are going to me. (Laughs) We need to have an understanding of disability that is inclusive, ranging from cognitive disability to the range of physical disabilities that children, young people and tertiary students may suffer from all live with. For us, inclusive education meant supporting every young person to remain in the mainstream education system, if that is what they wish to do. That means putting more funding into teacher aids, into our management system to cope in the classroom model. And also, into the infrastructure models that we need. Whether that is foresight impaired students, I am constantly horrified to find schools do not have the resources, do not even put markings on corners, making schools accessible in a profound way, whether it is having ramps, lifts back in terms of cognitively diverse students, we just went through the process of dealing with the mammoth education overhaul that was incredible, but for us as Greens, the main concern with the use of (inaudible), and children that had the most difficulty is where being put in humble situation. We worked with all politicians, to make sure there were solutions so that schools have a direction to resort to, de-escalation methods. The next step, and the next government for us will be to make sure that schools and teachers have the training, the resource to be able to access the escalation, so that every child in the classroom is taken care of, whether health or physical well-being. Lastly, I want to say that something else that horrifies me, the lack of resources in signage for people with hearing impairments in school. In 'The Post' COVID-19 well, this is something we can find. -- World.

>>These cut-offs are brutal, but I would echo that, our first objective should be that you should have the option of remaining within the mainstream system. It would be a mistake to ever think about reversing that. The second thing that I would say, we clearly have a lack of resourcing for a lot of people's needs, the way that the (inaudible) system works in particular, it seems to be that if the school really makes an effort, to help students with particular needs, they end up... More students gravitate to them, they don't have the resources to do it. So the incentive for a school, is to avoid serving students with special learning needs. I think we need to change that, by properly resourcing. When it comes to sign language, as you

mentioned, there is no reason why we can't be doing more of that in schools. In my view, we do not do enough. I suspect I'm going to get the awful cut off any second soon, I will cut myself off first.

>>Thank you, now we have Jenny.

>> (Muted)

>>You are on mute, Jenny.

>>Thank you. We would like to continue a conversation about a new paraprofessional workforce which we call health aids. We know that we have teacher aides at the moment, what we would like to do, is ensure that every student who require support has the support that they need in the classroom. If they have health needs, they should have a health aid. We can sit alongside the workforce, health aides come in behind the students, and to have teacher aids which will help support the teachers, in that tranche of work. That is one idea we are looking at. Another one is that we would like to continue the last tranche of support for training aids, which is up to 1200 in schools. We would also like to work with the sector for screening tools, funding resourcing models, that will meet the needs of children, particularly those that are challenged by dyslexia, (inaudible) and autism. We have another idea, like we have Maori language progression, we would like to get in and have sign language progressions much the same way in the curriculum. They would have Maori, English, and sign language, yet one to year 13. We think that would be a really great way to help to make our society, not just accessible but inclusive.

>> I agree with a lot was said in ensuring our schools are inclusive. The learning support action plan 2019-2025 will help drive progress toward an inclusive education system that we are all after. I really want to refer to some of the key priorities because we would want to continue with this work, now that a plan has been laid out. There are 60 priorities to the plans, learning coordinators, screening and identification of learning support needs, strengthening early intervention, flexible supports for neurodiverse children and young people, meeting the learning needs of gifted young people, improving education for children at risk of disengaging. They are the key priorities. If we are re-elected we will continue that work, alongside our disability sector, to make sure our schools are the inclusive learning environment that we are all committed to.

>> Thank you for sharing your views. We will now go to Angela who will relay any questions from the audience.

>> My name is Angela from the Disabled Persons Assembly, I am monitoring the questions today, and questions coming in from Facebook. First of all I want to let everyone know the cut-offs can be a bit brutal, but this is for accessibility reasons so the interpreters are mostly full-screen for our deaf attendees. I have a question that has come in asking our access would be able to access tertiary education, how will you ensure, your policies include children like them?

>> Let's stick with our order, if anyone has a particular comment for that question, maybe start with the Minister?

>> Sorry, it is a bit slow today, it is not you, it is me, I didn't get a chance to talk about the tertiary education strategy which has six priorities around what the government wants to improve to ensure we have a world leading education system. One of those priorities speaks to what you just discussed, working with young people who are disadvantaged in the labour market, to support them into a career. We want as many New Zealanders to access tertiary education as possible. That should be seen as possible through the mentorship program we're setting up as well and I have already seen some examples of where disabled people have had access to the apprenticeship programs, the different programs the government has on offer. And the ability to earn and learn at the same time is something that is really exciting for a range of New Zealanders including disabled young people who should have access to the same opportunities. We want to continue to monitor all the initiatives in place and ensure disabled young people have access to the same opportunities.

>> Does anyone else want to comment?

>> I would just say, I would want to say more about your child before answering. Often, we roll out a series of generic answers. In many cases there is quite specific needs that need to be addressed. If we knew more about what that is, we would be in a better position to say, what sort of policy, what sort of action could help your child with the specific challenges they face?

>> I would agree with what David has just said, if we knew what those were, and not knowing, I want to encourage the comments that were made. There are a lot more opportunities now in a changing workforce because of COVID-19, and there will be a lot of chances when we think about the new technologies coming on board. What we would be keen to do as the National Party, they talk about the STEM subjects, making sure those with a disability have as much opportunity as everyone else to be able to access those new career pathways that are coming into the new job sector.

>> Can I add something? Only if you have time, is that all right? I would add, I think we do need to approach tertiary education as something that is part of the basic human right to access. It is wonderful to have all the other options, but if someone wants to go into tertiary, it is a form of discrimination if they don't have access. With it it is we need to get our institutional buildings to an accessible model, or tailor make a solution for the particular young person that wants to access tertiary education and provide them with the assistance and technology they need. It is an obligation of government as far as our party is concerned.

>> The next topic, people with a disability can be disadvantaged when seeking employment but that does not mean they don't have important contributions to make. As of June 2019 the average employment rate was 70% for people not identifying as having a disability but 23% for the disabled community. Of that 23%, they were underemployed or finding work available. How would you access the support needs of those people?

>> From my conversations with my own community, people with MS have a range of physical disabilities. What I learned is people hide their needs from employers because they learned, even though disabled people are able to carry out a lot of different types of work, they are presumed to be unable to do that. The assistance they need is presumed to be far more onerous than it might be. Our policy is that we would make it an obligation of government to support where we can, employers, and the workforce as well to become more accessible. We would introduce building codes and accessibility regulation that would mean disabled people have physical access to a far wider range of workplaces. Also that there is better understanding, both in the public and private sector, about the needs of disabled persons. I am talking with the Australian Greens about affirmative action in that area.

>> Now we have David.

>> Thank you for the question, I would start with the observation that you cannot force an employer to create a job, you cannot force them to employ someone. I think we need to be cautious about the level of promises that some parties will make. What I can tell you, from my experience as an MP, charity begins at home. The government needs to start modelling good behaviour. I have been trying to help a woman with MS who applied to be a corrections officer. When they found out halfway through the process, they managed to cut her out of the applications process. The first thing we could do is actually have the public sector follow non-discrimination rules, that would be a good start, certainly for my constituents, and I suspect many others.

>> Next we will have Jenny speaking.

>> Thank you, both of you made very valid points. I would like to add to the conversation, New Zealand First, we would like to continue to support employment of Kiwis, support for employers as well, in particular pastoral support, both employee and employer. Providing pastoral care will help people feel they are valued and a contributing member of society. Certainly Work Bridge could do with some funding. We particularly like Work Bridge because they are a provider that enables people to be their best. Recently we have had discussions and looking at policies they would like government to take up. This is updating their fee for service contract model, focusing on careers, and rather than just getting a job. Focusing on a career is important, going into high schools in helping young people with disability actually focus on what career they want, and what steps need to happen, and how can they be assisted? It is about mentoring, the support service Work Bridge can provide, we feel that is very relevant. Also supporting and walking alongside people who want to become self-employed, getting a mentoring program so that business people who are disabled, who have been successful, they can walk alongside and assist and mentor young people who want to become self-employed.

>> We will now move on to the minister.

>> I was excited to launch the disability action plan a few weeks ago, I wanted to launch it alongside young, disabled people because their reality, in terms of being able to access employment, is very difficult. In the past, a lot of the emphasis on

unemployment has been put on Pacific, Young and Maori people and little attention paid to disabled people. We want to supply education, training and entry to employment, that (inaudible) to hire and succeed with disabled people, and the market for labour as well. There are three eras, and a lot of work to do. We underestimate the number of disabled people that are on benefits, 51% of those benefits are disabled or have a health condition but do want to work. I think this is a really important work stream.

>>Next we have, Alfred.

>>Thank you for the question. The National party has a key value of equal opportunity and equal citizenship for all people. It is very important for us that the opportunities for employment should be the same, whether people are disabled or not, all the policies that have been spoken about by other parties, as the national party we have also been part of that, the disability action plan, I was there. All those principles we support as well, as well as the workaround accessibility tech. We started Employability, program to change the culture, the thinking of employers towards employees that are disabled. Disabled employees take less sick days the nondisabled employers. They have less demands than what people perceive. Changing the culture, the thinking, the energies was pretty important to us. The last thing I want to add, which no-one has talked about, is the opportunity I saw in (inaudible) the old sheltered workshop, which gave an opportunity for part of the disability community to come together, through social enterprise, they formed a thriving enterprise that generated almost 98% of self-funding for that organisation. I think that what we can do, and should be looking at, is not just about opportunities to be employed, with big organisations or small organisations, but opportunities for start-ups, for those in the disability sector, so they can start their own initiatives, so that they can succeed as others due to. The National party is big on supporting that initiative, social enterprise, that is a big area that we focus on, especially in the disability sector.

>>We will now move on to Angela. We will assign the question to a participant, but other participants are also welcome to reply.

>>We have some questions coming in about sign language, this is a question from Mr Seppiloni, signing which has been an official language since 2006, but the people still struggle for equal opportunities, in conversation, even to function as equal members of society, this regards employment perspectives as well. What were your party do to progress access to the disabled community?

>>I would just like to acknowledge Rick, she played a major role, among many of the people who are probably participating today, in making sign language which an official language. That does not mean that we have the access that we like, I think there is agreement across the board that it can be improved. In recent years, we have got the stand up from the Prime Minister, that we have recent changes in more accessible formats as a result of COVID-19, this shows that the government is committed to making sure that New Zealanders have access to information. We will continue to work on that, also, the accessibility charter has been very important in the public sector, 39 out of the 40 organisations have signed up to that. That is

around making sure that people have access to information. Is the more that needs to be done? Absolutely. One of the issues that we are faced with is the workforce shortage, in terms of signers, having access to them. In terms of question time being signed, we were taking signers away from other work. There is a workforce shortage for signers. There is more to do in this place, and I am committed to doing that alongside you all.

>>I just wanted to briefly acknowledge the former Greens party MP that was incredibly important in empowering me, bringing sign language to the fore, participation to the fore. She acknowledged that there needs to be this specific support, for the hearing impaired or other disabled persons in their careers in politics. We want to roll that out into local government as well, so when people want to participate, take up those jobs, in a democratic context, they are supported, as the minister said, that will mean funding more interpreters, we don't have them in the workforce, we are very committed to that.

>>Can I add a comment too? Talking about (inaudible), you may not be aware that when (inaudible) came into Parliament, there was a request of the speaker to provide some funding. The speaker decided no, the Green party could put up the funding, New Zealand first actually disagree with that. What we did, we offered to cut our party funding from our budget to put the funding towards what was required for her to do her job in the house. That force, as other parties came on board, they said they would join New Zealand first, that put pressure on the speaker to fund from the Parliamentary budget. I suppose, this is a way that Parliament can come together, work in a cross party, bipartisan managers were people with disability in the house.

>>Annex topic is housing, disabled people find it much more difficult to find accessible homes. Despite there being relatively little or no additional cost to (inaudible). It is also being revealed, there is little awareness of how housing is accessible. What were your party do to make sure people have access to accessible housing? We will start with David.

>>I will just start with housing, by recognising this is a problem for everyone. Every sector of society is facing a shortage of housing, fundamentally because we made it too difficult to build it, we have underfunded infrastructure, if you could build it you can't. Need to solve that problem. I don't think it is a disability specific problem, if you solve that problem, then your options open up to have higher standards for accessibility, you know that in a world where it is easier to build homes people are going to meet those standards. What are some of the things that make it difficult? Well I would say that the government monopoly on infrastructure funding. The resource management restrictions on developing, the council monopoly on inspecting new buildings, omitting the range of boarding materials, -- limiting, these make it harder to build housing, if we solve these problems, we could then solve the accessibility problem as well. Anyone who says they're going to solve the accessibility problem without solving the underlying problem, frankly has not thought enough about the size of the challenge.

>>Next we have Jenny.

>>Universal design is about making housing available to all people, whatever stage they are at in their lives, especially people that have mobility aids, wheelchairs, impaired vision. Particular, our seniors, they have more disabilities as they get older, and also the very young. Having universal design is very important in New Zealand, we are very open to conversations about future new builds being accessible. There is a case for new housing stock in the future, it is cheaper, less destructive to build universal design features into a new home, then it is to retrofit at a later date, it costs 10 times less to do a new build with universal design than to do a retrofit. That is something we need to think about. We can also add in some other features, every carport should have a plug in for an electric vehicle, those of the sorts of things that we need to really consider when we are designing and building new homes, once we get the ability to get through council in the first place, as someone who has spent two years trying to get resource consent, I know how frustrating it is to get through that process. Some of the features that we need to look at, what do homes have to have? Accessways? Transitioning them from inside to our door without steps and stairs. Although sorts of things. Designing them from the get go, whether you are renting a property, whether it is a home for yourself. Whether you are looking at the long-term value, the saleability down the track, if we have that in our consciousness, we will create properties not just to live in now, but for the future.

>>The accelerating accessibility program that we have committed to really does encompass the issues that we face with regards to housing. I will say that it is important that we see the change reflected in the public sector. It is good that a target has been set for 15% of new housing build meeting full universal design standards, often people like to think a higher target is needed. I have every confidence we will reach that, but we need to continue to watch that. We need more public counselling to make sure that we can meet the need, we have committed to that already, we have increased the stock, and the intention is to provide another 8000 moving for. Public housing is definitely one of the areas that we need to focus on, ensuring that we do have accessible housing. Before and, one of the worst constituent cases I had in opposition was a woman who is tetraplegia, living in a van with her husband and small child, because she could not get access to accessible housing. We eventually got her there, but we should not have scenarios like that.

>>To me? To deal with the issue of accessibility, you have to first deal with affordability. We agree, our position is similar to what David said, you have to deal with infrastructure. We have made an announcement that if we are fortunate to become the government, we will repeal the RMA, it often adds 1/3 of the cost of building a house. There are three costs, regulations, the cost of the build and the land. So by relieving, removing 1/3 of the cost, not removing the accountability on the build, that will then make it more affordable, that makes a more accessible in the way we design and build. The National party in 2016 started looking at design principles , lifetime principles. This is not just about people with disability, but an ageing population means that you have to design houses from the beginning to the end, so they can accommodate the lease transitions, more opportunity as people age, as more disabilities come for people, the age journey. We would continue down that line. It is not just about a quota system, within the housing corporation, you need

to start looking at change, reviewing it, looking at transitioning over time, universal design, lifetime principles throughout the build cycle, throughout the sector as well. That is our commitment to creating affordability, which creates better accessibility.

>> Like others, we acknowledge, and it is nice to see the National Party acknowledge there is a broader crisis in housing, finally. We have a very detailed Homes For All plan that addresses housing for everyone. Whether it is the state housing build and whether it is clearing the backlog or rental regulation so people in rental homes are warm and dry and have secure tenure, or whether it is rental by, and having affordable homes at every stage of buying. Accessibility is woven into every stage of that. We're talking about a marginalised community, systemically marginalised, the disability community can't compete in the free market and expect them to provide for accessibility – we need building codes and we need to overhaul the building code to make sure they are dry are not making people sick and there is stock available to a minimum standard. That is an acknowledgement that housing is a human right.

>> Now we were moved to Angela for question from social media.

>> So many questions coming in, it is wonderful. A question for David Seymour, can you explain how your policy, which will leave the building of houses to the private market, how it will incentivise the building of accessible houses.

>> A great question, a couple of things there, most of the building of homes is done by the private market, even public housing is built by private contractors. Our view is the inspection of building standards should not be done by councils, councils should have been removed from that role. There is a difference between who builds it, who does the inspection, and what the standards are. In my view, there should still be standards of accessibility, particularly in workplaces. This goes back to my introductory comments, I think government wastes a lot of money, and government regulation, government does poor quality regulation, but my background and philosophy of individual rights and dignity, around spending and regulation in disability, that is one area where we should. That does not mean we need council doing building inspections, they limit options, they are hopeless, they created leaky buildings in the process.

>> Our next topic is transport. Disabled people across New Zealand faced difficulty with no or limited availability to dress what systems as well as limited infrastructure. Although Auckland transport is relatively accessible, the infrastructure to crossings, footpath and access to services, to get to services, is still very difficult. Considering the New Zealand Transport Association and others are encouraging less use of private cars, and greater use of public transport, and they have released a national policy for urban development, and it promotes higher density housing, what will your party do to ensure that people living with mobility impairments will have equal access to transport and be able to live around their community without a car, using public transport? We will start with Jen.

>> One of the areas I would like to talk about is our seniors. As a senior you are more likely to be identified as disabled. One of the grants available is called a

Community Connects Grant, we would like to expand on that particular grant to support communities to become age friendly. The fund, from an infrastructure perspective, we can further enhance the grant and turn it into a community accessibility plan with the aim of creating age friendly communities. We would like to see the fund target projects to promote inclusion, the contribution of older people in community life, and support the community to prepare for an ageing population. That is something we would like to see a focus on if we were returned to government after the election.

>> Now we will have Carmel.

>> We hear horrible stories all the time, including a friend on this call at the moment, we always hear about issues with public transport, there have been efforts to make it accessible but so much more work needs to be done. It is good to see the New Zealand Transport Agency has a plan under the disability action plan, it is about improving the transport system to enable safe and equitable access to economic opportunities for all. If we can't access public transport, it becomes difficult to access employment or educational opportunities. There is also accessible streets, this is a collection of changes designed to increase safety and accessibility of our footpaths, shared paths and cycle paths, and that works underway. We are committed to accelerating accessibility in New Zealand and that work program is underway. We are looking at legislation and there is a cross parliament group, which is fantastic, parliamentarians championing for accessible legislation and there is cross-party support for the program and changes moving forward.

>> Next we have Alfred.

>> Thank you, I am one of the co-chairs for the Parliamentary champions of accessibility legislation, Carmel is correct, there is a bipartisan approach that rises above the politics of the day but remains a piece of legislation that is supported by all of Parliament because of the importance it has. Things in regard to transport, I want to acknowledge the Trust, and the role they play, they give technical advice for both building and technology but also transport as well. I have supported that as well. One of the most important things I have heard in this sector is that the voice of the disability community being at the forefront of some of the thinking and designing of both policy, and there hasn't been a lot of that, and there is a need for more of that. The National Party supports that, when we talk about some of the design and implementation of this, we need to have the voice of the community, and that is the name of the program today, their voices in the design and implementation of the programs we are all talking about, at the policy level, the National Party endorses and supports it.

>> Obviously the Green Party is really big on funding and supporting accessible, safe and convenient public transport for all sorts of reasons, including the health of our planet. We do have a specific policy that government should implement the recommendations of the 2005 Human Rights Commission enquiry into accessible public land and transport, specifically on public transport, to revise the national standards for accessibility. For example, all buses should have visual and audio displays and announcements. Small infrastructure changes like that that have been

overlooked for so long, that are so profound, for people living with a disability. To support the development of intercity bus and train travel, that is accessible as well. The other thing is, and someone else mentioned foot paths, our policy is that central government should fund the maintenance of foot paths so they are all to a national standard, safe and accessible for people, and we know that affects seniors, people living with a wide range of disabilities, and profoundly impacts the lives of people in terms of just going outside and accessing their local shops, accessing work and education. We have a quite detailed policy on this, if only we could start with those standards and implement them as a government. Which is why we have said there is now a work stream, but we need to move fast (laughs).

>> Next we have David.

>> A couple of thoughts, one about accessibility of streets. Six months ago I did half a day in a wheelchair in a very flat part of Auckland and discovered that the things that don't seem very difficult seem like Mount Everest when you're trying to push a wheelchair. In fact, I still have the callous on my hand from six months ago. I think Street design is really important. I think demanding better, like they have in British Columbia, from public transport is important. Let me also say this, if people want to take public transport, good on them, but my first priority is accessibility. I think the open hostility to private transport that we get from Auckland Transport and from councils around the world is a major attack on the accessibility and mobility of people with a disability. Public transport is great, make it accessible, if you want to use it, that is fine, but the top priority should be mobility and accessibility. For a segment of the disability community, continued access by private vehicle must be maintained and not be reduced by some of the politics that is anti-car that is around the world right now.

>> Now we will move to social media for the many questions we have coming in.

>> Quite a few people are asking about how your parties will enable the human right to accessible and affordable travel. The ties of the question directed at Minister Sepuloni. As Minister for Disability, do you support a free public transport system going nationwide?

>> I can't say we currently have a policy on that but it is something I would be interested in exploring. To think where you have got groups and disabled people are disadvantaged in the labour market, and a range of other things, why would you not promote access to transport so they can access other opportunities. It is definitely something, with my Labour Party hat on, I would like to consider, it is something worth looking into.

>> On behalf of the Green Party, yes, for sure, the more groups of people who want to access public transport, who have the access and who have affordability as a barrier, we know the disabled community has specific transport needs and income disparities we are trying to address and talk about, but if we can provide a public service like that, it would take pressure off and we absolutely support it – it is also good for the planet.

>> I would like to add that New Zealand First has paved the way without Super Gold Card and being able to access free public transport at certain hours, you can jump on a ferry and head off with the Super Gold Card. We don't have a specific policy, we would have a discussion on that, it is a conversation we would take forward on with a disability accessing free travel.

>>The next question is about accessibility rules. This is about how to design a website, delivering services that enable disabled people to fully benefit on the same basis as others. In July, the cabinet social well-being committee, instructed the government to draft disability legislation, how will your party support the creation of robust and accessible legislation so all Kiwis can participate irrespective of access needs?

>>We have been doing a lot of work in this space mac I would like to acknowledge access Alliance, we have taken so many people on the journey with us through the work that Access Alliance has done. The engagement with business, with other partners has been crucial, to make sure we are at a place where we can explore legislation properly. Other countries have accessibility legislation. We are seeing some changes across the departments, (inaudible) has already appointed someone to look at legislation, the Treaty of Waitangi celebrations must be made accessible, we are working on that. Agencies are working in the right direction, but we want legislation to lock that down properly.

>>Thank you, Amy. As I said previously, I have been honoured to be a pro chair, along with (inaudible) it was just resigned from Parliament, we have supported in a bipartisan way, the accessibility legislation through parliament. We need a whole system change, the way we think, act, the way we fund resource, those areas that are really important as well. For instance, if I take the health sector, the way it is funded, the times that I have been involved as the spokesperson of the last six months, I have learnt that we do not fund that appropriately and well. A good example, what Doctor (inaudible) says is it is a block of cheese, funding that comes in, based on population mass, but it does not have the ability to be flexible, that is the most important thing about a culture change. The accessibility legislation is about changing the system so it works more appropriately for those who are in the sector, in particular, one of the things that Garth said, he was happy about the nine years at the National Party, who is very happy with the disability fund which allowed a bespoke approach for care and support for the community, and outcomes focused. That is the line that we would take around accessible legislation, more flexible, adaptable to the needs of our disability community.

>>We support the access alliance accessibility act, what I like about it, is it sits without standards and timelines for compliance. It is something we need, it is what an already systemically marginalised group needs. It applies to a broad definition of disability is - sensory, psychosocial, mental health... It would cover website design, for example, for an organisation, and also physical accessibility to a building. That is what we need. More than anything, the design of the Act, involving the community itself, at a governance level, we often get marginalised groups being consulted with, that does not necessarily guarantee our input is taken account of, it also means that

people are deciding for us what issues affect us, what is a able bodied white man going to decide for other populations? We need meaningful consultation. The Green party will take that act to consultation with Parliament.

>>I think the British Colombians are the world leaders. We should be looking to replicate that legislation here in New Zealand. I just finished by making the point that once we go down the roots of trying to categorise people, say that some people are able to see and understand, others aren't, we take ourselves to a very dark place.

>>Next we have Jenny.

>>Everyone has made very valuable contributions to this part of the discussion. In terms of the accessibility legislation framework, that piece of work that has been undertaken by cabinet, with the social well-being committee, I would like to wait and see what shapes up from that in terms of what the outcomes are that we will see. Access Alliance, I joined the group a little while ago, it has been a real privilege to sit in on some of the meetings, not all of them, but the ones I have been able to get to, really helped me to understand the absolute needs right across society for access of disabled people across New Zealand. I think that the work... I just want to reiterate what I said earlier, that the work that this government, all three parties have been very supportive of this work, Green party, labour, and New Zealand First, under Honourable Carmel, even cabinet papers have to have a disability focus, to filter down through this work, in also is a bit. That has signified a shift in government focus. Yes, there is a lot more to be done, it was certainly very good start. I would like to shout out to Carmel.

>>We will now switch to Angela for the social media question.

>>OK, I have a question here for Jenny, "as the spokesperson for broadcasting, will your party make sure that funding is put into place to make sure that augmentative, alternative communication, AAC, users get access to (inaudible), as they don't currently have the option?"

>>Our broadcast policy has not yet been released. One of the really important aspects of broadcasting is that we tell New Zealanders our stories. To be able to tell our stories, visual, audio, imprint, it is a way to connect each other. Having an ability to hear them, see them read them, if that ability is hampered, we need to do something about it.

>>Next we have the health and disability review. The recent health and disability review did not adequately improve the voices of disabled people and their families. The disability classified under the review. Will your party, in government, consider crafting an independent entity for disability?

>>Thank you Amy for the question. The first thing that we would say, is look at the role of the disability Commissioner, we will talk with her about her roles and responsibilities. To change the system, we need to know where the right places, changes should be. One of the things that came up really clearly, Amy, is the feedback from the health and disability report, with the lack of representation of voices. We have seen it when government uses a common tool, a convenient tool of

having an advisory committee, people who give them advice, but their roles are based on representative democracy, not participative democracy. The National Party things we need to do better than that, we will ensure that whatever we design, regarding disability or other policy, the voices, the concert, the design, the thinking, as to what works best for the community, is in line with the statement that we all know, "nothing about us, without us." We think that is critically important.

>>I think this links back to what I was trying to express before, communities need to have input into all decisions that affect us, not just have government decide what is specific issues to us, so we get input on one issue, as you can see, housing, employment, education are all mainstream issues that in particular affect the disability community and members of that community in different ways. We would have an entity in place to recognise the disability community, we have seen this in the well-being department, we have seen the interconnectedness of different industries, bringing a cohesive approach. It is about how we integrate the body into the whole of government work stream. We are trying to do that this term, it is progressing well, we would support that entity being created, and the whole of government being connected well to it.

>>David?

>>I'm probably be different on this issue. I do not favour, Act does not favour creating another entity to resolve the problem. Often creating another entity, office, whatever, is a way of avoiding the problem. The principal here should be that government should operate in a way that listens, understands the perspective of the people that it is trying to help, it should do that not just in one special group, but across all of its activities, as it is the right thing to do. My fear is that some politicians might get elected and put in place a body, then they have put that issue in one contain space, they've not made the systemic change across government to observe the right principles, the right thing to do. That is my starting point, I do not support the idea of an entity, I think we should adopt the right principles.

>>Jenny?

>>It is not often I agree with David (Laughs), However that is a valid point about creating entities. And New Zealand First, we don't think there should be new entity, we think the health system does not do well currently at supporting disabled people, in the current system. We need to change the system as a result. In terms of the health and disability review, we really were disappointed, there was a gaping hole, a missed opportunity not to engage and speak directly to changes in thoughts and views and experiences of the disability community. We think that that was a real disappointment. We would like to ensure that... I would just refer to the book, it is on page 44 of the review, the model that has been put forward, we can't agree with, he does put for example "the (inaudible) authority, separate to one side." This will put the disabilities space separate to one side. True accessibility for all New Zealanders need to come under the general framework. That is a system that ensures that we don't have segregation based around race, specific needs. We need to make sure as a whole that all New Zealanders have access, equitable access to health services that they need.

>> I am like Jenny, I don't usually agree with David but I agree with some of what he said today, I understand where he is coming from. I would need to know for sure they could make the difference. Setting up a (inaudible) is never the right way to go, the Office of disability punches above their weight and play an important role in terms of advocacy across the different government agencies. David mentioned it, we need all the government agencies and agencies outside of government to be engaged in ensuring we are accessible in meeting the needs of all New Zealanders. We need to keep an eye on that. Can I say, in terms of the Health and Disability Systems review, moving forward, that work is not over, I want people to have a strong voice on the recommendations in there and ensure they influence what does happen, moving forward, or what does not happen moving forward, we need to continue to work on that.

>> Now to Angela for social media questions.

>> OK, we have a question here that has been uploaded the most of all the questions coming in, I will use this as an opportunity to ask it: there is a discrepancy between individuals, the person who asks the question has been denied funding, but others in a similar situation were approved for it. Can you please advise how your party will lessen the inequity between Ministry of Health and ACC. If we could go to Alfred for that?

>> Thank you, Angela, for the question. It is a bit hard to respond to it when you don't know the specifics, as we would normally do with a constituent case. ACC may be different because it is often for the individual, that is why a person would go there, whether it is a group going to the Ministry of Health... It is hard to respond to that specific question, but at the same time, if there is inequity in regard to the fact they have the same issue, and was responded to differently from one department to the other, there is an area there within the system that needs to be challenged. If it is the right thing to do it needs to be changed. Without knowing the specifics, it is quite hard. ACC often take on an individual case, where there has been a concern raised, if it is the Ministry of Health, it may be a group that have potentially got an issue of concern, therefore the responses are different.

>> There is a huge inequity in disability funding between those born with, or who acquire a disability, this question relates more to that, the different funding between someone who is under the Ministry of Health or ACC.

>> I responded to a constituent who, for over 12 years with ACC, were not treated appropriately in the opportunities they had, they were referred by the ACC to the Ministry of Health and were caught in the middle. It was a case of medical misadventure that cause the disability of the person mentally and physically. I was the advocate when they eventually went to court. We got the funding available to that person. In that situation, I can say, we were able to be successful. I have to say, there is an area inside the system that needs to be changed in regard to the assessments of the individual, especially in the areas of medical misadventure. Again, that is the response I could give to that question. Thank you, Angela.

>> Can I respond to that question, I know what they mean. It is a very unequal system, and living with chronic illness I know how that works. The Green Party has a specific policy on that we released for the election as part of our Property Action Plan. And it came to overhauling the welfare system we brought an eye to disability and chronic illness. We want to reform the ACC to become an agency for comprehensive care, creating equitable social support for people with a health condition with a minimum payment of 80% of the minimum full-time wage, and access to care in the funded model. We know ACC has a much more sustainable funding model and can support people in a really different way that people in the public health system have not been able to access, both in terms of support and healthcare access. I totally get it, thank you for bringing it up.

>> Thank you for all the contributions, and particularly for the questions and bringing up different topics we have not covered. Somewhat shockingly, I managed to keep everyone on time, we have some time for extra questions from the audience. We will move to Angela for those questions.

>> A question came in about the violence and abuse toward disabled people, an important issue for our community, there are many situations where we rely on others for personal care. We note that a specific workplan to look at this issue was proposed in 2015 under the Ministry of Social Development. There is no mention of this in the latest Disability Action Plan 2019-2023. Held a party look at issues of violence and abuse toward disabled people? Perhaps everyone could have a go at that.

>> I would certainly be interested in having a conversation. When we look at violence across the board, particularly violence against our seniors, that is an area that New Zealand First is interested in and what we can do from a policy setting point.

>> I will pick up from there, I want to say that the Disability Rights Commissioner has been very strong on that and she met with the joint venture a couple of months back to discuss how we could respond more strongly toward the issues that disabled people face, with regard to family and sexual violence. That work is in motion. Also, we have our regular monitoring mechanism meeting, we discuss issues and report back against our progress on the Convention of Rights of People with a Disability. We couldn't get it onto the agenda last time, but I signalled I wanted to get it on the agenda for the next meeting, we have another meeting in November with the IMM but I think we need a stronger focus on this issue.

>> I would like to highlight the work of the Undersecretary on Domestic and Sexual Violence, the first person to take up that role, what she has done with it that has been revolutionary in the way the work fits in the budget is the way she was able to achieve the highest level of budget set aside for responding to domestic and sexual violence in that first budget, \$320 million, because she connected all different ministries and departments across that work stream, whether it is Justice, Health, MSD or Disability. The point is, different populations have different needs and there is different outcome points that all should be connected to one another. For the Green Party that is a real priority. I know it was within the COVID-19 response as

well. We knew there was going to be a spike in domestic and sexual violence during lockdown, and we communicated back to our different communities we serve, in looking at their specific needs and the ways all of the different responders, different government departments, could cater to that.

>> I wanted to acknowledge the work that Jan has done but also want to remind everyone that this has been going on for some time. It goes back to the 1970s, a lot of work has been done with a lot of people championing issues around family, sexual and domestic violence. To our disability community, can I apologise, the truth is, it was raised in 2015, but the reality is we dropped the ball. I say that on the half of the whole of Parliament and government. We progress in other areas, this is an area we have not progressed. To be honest, it is not good enough, I want to apologise and say sorry to you. We have let you down. The only commitment we can make from here on in is to do the work we should be doing, that we have been doing for everyone else. It is all the policy and practice, but more importantly putting you at the heart of designing whatever we do, it has to be with you. The Simpson Review should be a real reminder of the fact that it is not about getting the community to engage with recommendations not even made by then, it should be recommendations the committee makes. If I become the Minister for Disability, I would have you front and centre helping design the policy in this regard to domestic and family violence, you will be at the forefront of whatever we plan and do.

Chevron alright, time for another question. We have got another question that has been uploaded a lot in the Q&A, it is asking if the panellists can please describe how they are working on the urgent need for appropriate facility based respite so that ageing parents, who are caring for their young, adult children with complex needs, can access the brakes they need. In the greater Auckland region, it seems as though purpose-built facilities with round-the-clock care are starting to close down and nothing is being done to support parents who urgently need the overnight respite now. David, would you like to start?

>> First of all you have to recognise it is a legitimate need in our society we want to fund and want to make it a policy – it is Number 1. Number 2 we have to think about the (inaudible) I was part of the closure of the Laura Ferguson Trust, it is a conflict situation I don't want to go into, but what is clear is with the best will in the world, a group of well-meaning people have not been able to provide a range of services, including some respite care, and I think that is a touchstone for finding out what it takes to allow a wider range of people to actually provide the respite care that people need which we are not doing at the moment. I agree it is worthwhile, let's use LFT as a touchstone for getting it right.

>> I agree that we recognise this is a need, and supporting both funded family care reform and also, in general, recognising family carers and their needs as they age and the clients that are represented by that. Ageing parents, with adult children with high needs, we do agree there is a need for further support, but we probably need to work more on that.

>> I would like to follow on from that, I agree that we need to take a look at this issue. I have a constituent who has a son in his 50s, she is in her 70s, not only her

having respite care so she can have a break, that is an issue, but her biggest concern is what will happen to her son when she passes away. For her, that is a terrifying thought, she... That literally keeps her up at night. Yes, we need to look at what respite care means but also what other situations like this, when a parent passes away, what society do, how do we step in then? Those other conversations we need to go to at some point.

>>I will just add quickly, the system of respite is raised with me all the time, across the country there are inconsistencies, it's something we need to take a closer look at.

>>I would like to respond by saying that it was under Tony when he was the Minister for health, the (inaudible) care policy came through, it was the first in the world. Under our health system, there is no legal ability to hold to account, it is a big, complex issue around ethical misadventure, other areas regarding litigation. One of the areas where we supported the amendments, as they change, as part of it two-step process, aside from family funded care, the other issue is about respite care as well, we would continue to support that process, where there is adequate support for those who are both carers, supporters of those carers, and also giving them respite support as well.

>>We have time for one more question from social media. Is a great and requested to end with. This person wants to know how you as a candidate have been a champion in the disability sector and what your party will do to engage with the disability sector if elected?

>>I have Alfred on the screen, if you want to run with it?

>>I was just waiting to be unmuted. I remember that Jade asked me one time under iSpeak as an interview, we had a school performed, when they were performing, there was a song and dance. To the normal human eye, it was uncoordinated and out of tune, but I began to weep inside myself, what I saw was the ability, the freedom, that was not caught up in a normal human responses to the fear of being who you can really be. It was at that moment that I realise the beauty of what we miss out on seeing what our disability community have to offer. If we pause long enough, allow ourselves to be still, we can see the beauty, potential they have to offer. I remember saying to Jade that this role or responsibility that I have is such an honourable one, if there is anything that I can do, it is to allow the potential, the true potential of the disability community of what they can teach us, so-called able people, about what life can really be, unencumbered by the fears and responsibilities that we have. Again, my commitment to that is ensuring the working alongside, hearing voices, allowing the disability community to lead us, into areas where even we struggle to find answers to solutions within the community. I think that is the commitment that I would make as a spokesperson on behalf of the National Party.

>>I don't think of myself as a champion, although I have been Minister for three years, I'm working with a whole heap of people to give me advice, guide me with regards to what needs to be done. In my role, it is taking that on, making sure that I get by in from government colleagues and others as well. I just acknowledge everyone who has been part of giving me this advice over the last three years. Jenny

raised something that was important, going into the election, there may be a new government. That is about having a minister at the table. I recognise how important it is. There is a disability segment in each (inaudible). It was a cut-and-paste job at the beginning, there was not enough of a consciousness, attention paid to that. We work very hard with agencies to make sure they are paying attention. I want to acknowledge that the Minister has a role to play with taking issues that you raise forward, ideas that you raise forward, but I'm generally not the champion for the disability sector.

>>OK, we have had some really great and interesting comments. I think the key thing here to remember is that our voice does matter, please remember to have active representation among the disability community. We would now like the candidates offer their closing statements to this forum today.

>>Sorry, it kept muting. I just want to acknowledge what the Minister just said, to say that none of us are champions for the disability sectors as much as representatives with that responsibility that she has been taking so seriously, bringing disability perspectives that we interact with in our work with the community, and policy-making. What I was struck with when I first went public with my MS diagnosis, when I was finally comfortable with that, was the outpouring of love and support from the community, both people saying that they couldn't believe that someone was having a similar experience to them, and also people offering their support as experts, which you all art from the community. Being a representative is making sure that the voices are given a platform, it is in every area of policy, whether it is work, education, roads, environmental issues. People in the community have perspectives on all those things.

>>We now have David.

>>Thank you for unmuting. I'd also like to answer the previous question, I hope I can have a little bit more time. I agree with Carmel, we are not seeking to be a champion, I have always taken disability seriously, as a local MP I have fought for five years for (inaudible), a tetraplegia teenager who was horrifically treated by the ADHG. I managed to get her better housing, but I'm still fighting for her today. We had a conference call yesterday. There have been several other constituent cases, one which I alluded to. When someone comes to see me as a constituent, it is of course, confidential. I have always made myself available, whether going on the body walk around Mount Eden, it is important that members of Parliament, sometimes seen as leaders, sometimes I wonder about that, they make themselves available, appear to be embracing the disability community. I have always thought to do that. I will also advance a position as my closing statement, the role of government is to make sure that it is there as an insurer of people who have situations and conditions that they cannot in any way avoid, we should be generous, spend and regulate when it comes to accessibility legislation, a variety of educational options, when it comes expenditure on school and healthcare. That is one area where the role of government needs to do a good job. This is an area where it is different. I think that is a normal position today, others think it is my experience with my family. I've tried to make the point both sides of politics. I will continue to do so, I think we can do a lot

better than we have, not with another working group, but a change in principle that disability is something that does have a role to do something about as the ultimate insurer in our society. Thank you very much for time, thank you for listening, thank you to the fellow candidates and the organisers. I hope you have a wonderful afternoon.

>>Thank you. Jenny? You are on mute.

>>My apologies. I have a couple of concluding remarks. Really, I think the statement, Alfred spoke about this earlier, a statement we do here in the disability community, "nothing about us without us," every day that as a guiding principle for parliamentarians, in all the policy work we do, in whatever portfolio space, if we can take the voice of the disabled through our conversations, through our policy development, then basically we are enabling a completely accessible society, which enables those in the disability sector to fully be involved in their lives and function to the best of their ability. I think really what I have learnt in my short space being involved with Access Alliance, and some constituency work, one of the cases I have mentioned, what I have learnt is a lesson in humanity. If we can take this lesson, what those in the disability sector can teach us about having compassion, walking in someone else's shoes, then all of the work we do will be enhanced by that. For a New Zealand First MP, it comes down to what policies we can make that are coming from a practical place. How will it affect you? Is it reasonable? Sensible? Practical, above all? That is the policy guidelines that New Zealand First takes R including, I would like to say thank you all very much for your attendance today. A shout out to all my candidate mates, as well. We have got one more week of Parliament, hopefully we will get through that and then out onto the campaign trail, have some great discussions belong this one. (Speaks Maori language) It has been a pleasure to be part of this today.

>>I think it is me, but you cut out, Amy.

>>Can I start by acknowledging all of my colleagues who are in this debate. I have found the disability portfolio to be one of the least partisan. A party believes in inclusiveness, fairness, the fact that every New Zealander has the right to live a meaningful life, realise their potential, that underlies our commitment to disabled people, moving forward together. Can I acknowledge everyone who is listening, and those who are not able to tune in today who have been part of the journey working with me over the last few years, laughing with me, advocating with me, and lots of meetings. I think we have made a lot of important platforms for the next few years, I discussed some of those earlier. It will now be about continuing that work, to make New Zealand a fairer place, making sure that disabled people are not overlooked, it has happened too often. I just acknowledge all of you, given that this is a political debate, I will say vote labour, let's get moving.

>> Finally, we have Alfred.

>> The word Kia ora doesn't mean hello, it interprets as may you live long and may you live well it is meant to be a statement that has a moral compass to choose the right things to do. At the heart of what I do and what I, as an advocate for the

disability sector do, is to ensure our people live long and well. It is the driver behind the work of the National Party and at the core of our principles and values and I think that is really important, anything we do, whether it is by policy, any intent we have, any action we have in our community, serving our community and constituents, has to be with the intent that we want them to live well. That is the beating heart of enabling good lives, one of the platforms that we put together, as a policy and a form of legislation, so that our community, our disability community, control the choices that determine their lives and their pathway and their journey as well, and the opportunities they have. We would continue to do that and that is really important, we will support them. Anyone listening, I encourage you, every three years you get to choose, it is a report card you get to look at, the government of the day, the party proposing what they have, you get to ask questions, I would say, look at our values, our vision and judge us by the leadership of who we are, what we say and what we mean, that is critically important to the choice you have as well. I would hope our character and values speak for themselves. To all my candidates out there, I wish you well, to Amy and the team, Jade and Angela that organised this, to the Alliance and all the other people in our community out there (SPEAKS MAORI LANGUAGE) all the best, have a great afternoon and great day.

>> In our original plan we did have a station set up looking at accessible information for people who wanted to vote and have access to it, in the online voting we have people in the chat who can answer any people who want information on the election or voting. I want to say a huge thank you for everyone for their patience with our first technical setup, this is the first time we transitioned entirely to online, thank you for your patience, particularly at the beginning. This was a hugely collaborative effort, many organisations and many meetings to make this happen. Thank you to our main organisers, Angela from the Disabled Persons Association, the New Zealand Disability Organisation and the Access Alliance who organised this for us. Thank you to Angela and Jade who manage the technology and registrations and Josh on our social media. A huge thank you to Deb for contributing the New Zealand Sign Language interpreters, it was very generous. And CCS Disability Action. Finally, the live captions. Last but not least, a huge thank you to our panellists for the time, thank you to the audience for joining us. You can watch this again, feel free to join in the hashtags on Facebook or Twitter #MVM2020 or My Voice Matters NZ. Thank you very much.

>> I will jump in. Thank you to Amy for being the MC, you did a wonderful job. We're heading over to Richard now to do our closing. I think we are having difficulties with the screen share. Maybe Jade... Thank you.

(SPEAKER SIGNS CLOSING KARAKIA)

(INTERPRETER SPEAKS MAORI LANGUAGE)