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In the matter of the Royal Commission into Historical Abuse in State Care and in
the Care of Faith-based Institutions

Brief of Evidence of Geraldine Woods on behalf of Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People for Institutional Response Hearing

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Solicitor

Julia White

General Counsel, Crown Response to the
Abuse in Care Inquiry
Julia.White@abuseinquiryresponse.govt.nz

Counsel

Rachael Schmidt-McCleave

Kate Sheppard Chambers
PO Box 5606, Wellington 6140
www.katesheppardchambers.co.nz
Rachael.Schmidt-
McCleave@kschambers.co.nz

Max Clarke-Parker

Meredith Connell
PO Box 24546, Wellington 6140
Max.Clarke-Parker@mc.co.nz

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 My name is Geraldine Woods. I am the Acting Chief Executive of Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People (**Whaikaha**). I have had this role since July 2022, when Whaikaha was established. I have over 20 years' experience in executive and senior management roles in the public service. Most of this experience has been roles working with the disability community, including as Deputy Director General Disability at the Ministry of Health and as Executive Director in Queensland, Australia, supporting the establishment of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
- 1.2 Prior to my current role, I was Strategic Advisor to the Whaikaha Establishment Governance Group, providing strategic and neutral advice as Whaikaha was being established.
- 1.3 As Acting Chief Executive, I am responsible for establishing the Ministry as a new Public Service departmental agency; building the confidence of, and partnering effectively with, the disability community; and working with service providers to ensure delivery of Disability Support Services without service disruption for disabled people.
- 1.4 The appointment of a permanent Chief Executive for Whaikaha is being managed independently by Te Kawa Mataaho – the Public Service Commission. I will remain the Acting Chief Executive until a permanent appointment is made.
- 1.5 I am joined in giving evidence before the Royal Commission by my colleagues:
 - (a) Amanda Bleckmann, Interim Deputy Chief Executive, Operational Design and Service Delivery, who can speak to operational settings, such as funded Disability Support Services, safeguarding of disabled people and standards;
 - (b) Hannah Kerr, Group Manager, Strategy and Policy, who can speak to the reasons that Whaikaha was established and its policy and strategic direction.
- 1.6 The purpose of this brief is to set out Whaikaha's response to the topics of interest identified by the Royal Commission (the **Commission**) in this inquiry. I will also provide the background to the establishment of Whaikaha as a new Ministry and its intended path forwards.

Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People

- 1.7 Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People came into effect on 1 July 2022. Whaikaha is a departmental agency hosted by the Ministry of Social Development (**MSD**). Whaikaha will also have a New Zealand Sign Language name which is being developed in consultation with community.

- 1.8 The predecessor agencies for Whaikaha are the Office for Disability Issues (**ODI**) previously housed in MSD and the Disability Directorate from the Ministry of Health (**MoH**).
- 1.9 The Disability Directorate's role within MoH was to commission, administer and support the delivery of disability services to eligible disabled people across New Zealand, as well as responsibility for the delivery of various strategies and action plans, including *Whāia Te Ao Mārama: The Māori Disability Action Plan*, and *Faiva Ora: National Pasifika Disability Action Plan*.
- 1.10 Almost all these services and their administration have transferred to Whaikaha. A small number of these services, which are predominantly health services, were agreed to remain in the health system and transitioned to Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand instead of Whaikaha.
- 1.11 Whaikaha will be responsible for:
- (a) driving better outcomes for all disabled people;
 - (b) leading cross-government strategic disability policy;
 - (c) delivering and transforming Disability Support Services;
 - (d) leading cross-government work to address accessibility barriers, once accessibility legislation is passed (expected to be enacted by 1 July 2023), guided by a Ministerial Accessibility Committee made up of, and representing, disabled people.
- 1.12 Whaikaha is early in its establishment and is still developing internal processes and the ongoing work programme and priorities.

Office of Disability Issues

- 1.13 As part of the Disability System changes ODI has moved from MSD to Whaikaha. Bringing ODI into Whaikaha ensures:
- (a) that there is a single point in government responsible for advising on cross government strategy;
 - (b) a greater profile for ODI functions;
 - (c) minimal confusion over the respective roles of Whaikaha and ODI;
 - (d) ensuring that Whaikaha starts with a cohort of staff with experience working within government from a disability rights-based perspective; and
 - (e) strong relationships with the disability community.
- 1.14 ODI's functions include drafting ministerial responses and answers to parliamentary questions, acting as the lead agency for the development and monitoring of the New Zealand Disability Strategy, providing policy advice on disability issues as well as working in partnership with Disabled People's Organisations (**DPO's**) in reviewing and monitoring the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (**UNCRPD**).

The functions of ODI remain unchanged with the shift from the MSD into Whaikaha.

- 1.15 ODI's primary role is about reviewing and advising across government to ensure an alignment of services and policies with the UNCRPD and the New Zealand Disability Strategy. ODI gives effect to monitoring through its work with the Disabled People's Organisations Coalition (**DPO Coalition**) to review the Disability Action Plan 2019-2023 reports from agencies about the progress they are making. From the next six-monthly report, the reporting agencies will also include Whaikaha. It is important to note that ODI doesn't do this alone. It is in partnership with other government agencies, while ensuring that no agency monitors or reviews their own work programmes.
- 1.16 It has been common practice for ODI to have separate meetings with the Minister for Disability Issues. The Director of ODI maintained the ability for direct communication with the Minister's office and the Minister and was called upon as their principal advisor on disability issues. For example, co-leading New Zealand delegations to the United Nations during negotiations on what became the UNCRPD. This process has been maintained with the shift of ODI into Whaikaha.
- 1.17 This means that ODI has a meaningful level of autonomy when working with the Minister for Disability Issues. ODI is not bound to a particular agency's position but rather has an advisory and rights-based advocacy role which allows ODI to provide unconstrained advice which is informed by the principles of the UNCRPD.

Partnership and transforming the disability system

- 1.18 Whaikaha is committed to leading a true partnership between the disability community, Māori, and the Government, and to help transform the disability system.
- 1.19 Achieving these important overarching goals is an important step in ensuring that the errors of the past do not continue today. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (**UNCRPD**) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi are critical underpinning documents in that mission.
- 1.20 The purpose of UNCRPD is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all disabled people and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.
- 1.21 The UNCRPD was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006 and entered into force in May 2008. New Zealand played a leading role in the development of the UNCRPD and ratified it in 2008. It creates obligations that if fulfilled will reduce the risk, harm and neglect experienced by those who have brought their lived experience of harm and neglect to the Commission.
- 1.22 The Treaty and the UNCRPD work together as the whāriki and korowai of disability policy and the full realisation of human rights for disabled people in Aotearoa.

2 Whaikaha's response to the Commission

- 2.1 The Commission has asked Whaikaha to respond to a number of questions in this hearing. First though I wish to make some general comments on the evidence that the Commission has already heard.
- 2.2 Although Whaikaha was newly established on 1 July 2022, staff within the agency have been involved with elements of the Crown's response to the Commission and have been aware of the evidence given by survivors. In previous hearings, we have heard stories of the traumatic experiences of disabled people in care. This has included stories from both disabled people and their whānau of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, violence and cruelty. We have heard of institutions which did not provide adequate care and oversight for individuals.
- 2.3 We have heard of staff members who did not treat individuals in care with compassion and respect. We have heard of staff members who attempted to improve the environments of care institutions and improve the attitudes of other staff but struggled within a system that made improvements very challenging.
- 2.4 The abuse that people have experienced in these settings is completely unacceptable. We would like to acknowledge the bravery and fortitude of survivors, who have shared the stories of the hurt caused to you, to your whānau, or to others.

3 Scope of evidence

- 3.1 Whaikaha has been asked to comment on the following topics by the Commission:
- (a) Te Tiriti o Waitangi
 - (b) Priority Groups (Māori, Pacific, and disabled people)
 - (c) Monitoring, Oversight, and Safeguarding
 - (d) Funding and resources

4 Te Tiriti o Waitangi

- 4.1 Whaikaha will work in partnership with disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau with Te Tiriti o Waitangi (**Te Tiriti**) at the forefront. This will be a unique relationship between the Crown, disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori, that allows disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori to have a voice and an opportunity to input into the future of Whaikaha.
- 4.2 Whaikaha will be responsible for existing strategies that seek to give effect to the Articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi – including *Whāia Te Ao Mārama 2018–2022: The Māori Disability Action Plan (Whāia Te Ao Mārama)*, which was developed by the Ministry of Health in partnership with Māori disability stakeholders.
- 4.3 Whāia Te Ao Mārama is a culturally anchored approach to improving outcomes for tāngata whaikaha Māori. This framework aims to support tāngata whaikaha

Māori to achieve their aspirations and reduce systemic barriers they face, with the ability to have control over their disability supports, to participate in their communities and in te ao Māori, and to receive culturally responsive support services.

- 4.4 The implementation of Whāia Te Ao Mārama is overseen by the Te Ao Mārama o Aotearoa Trust: the Māori Disability Advisory Group (the **Te Ao Mārama o Aotearoa Trust**).
- 4.5 Whāia Te Ao Mārama is expiring this year and Whaikaha will work with the Te Ao Mārama o Aotearoa Trust, tāngata whaikaha Māori community and whānau on a strategy that either replaces or updates Whāia Te Ao Mārama.
- 4.6 Whaikaha also holds a contract with the Te Ao Mārama o Aotearoa Trust that provides increased resourcing for the Trust to partner with Whaikaha to advise on issues affecting tāngata whaikaha Māori, and to establish a leadership programme to build capacity and capability amongst tāngata whaikaha Māori. This aligns with Whaikaha's commitment to realising tino rangatiratanga for tāngata whaikaha Māori.
- 4.7 During the development of the new Ministry a partnership with tāngata whaikaha Māori was supported through the Iwi Chairs, Community Steering Group, Officials Steering Group and Governance Group. These groups included representatives from Māori, tāngata whaikaha Māori, and Pacific communities.
- 4.8 Whaikaha's leadership of the disability system will build on the existing Enabling Good Lives (**EGL**) and Whānau Ora approaches. The EGL approach is person-centred, with a whole-of-life focus that supports disabled people to determine and tailor their everyday lives, goals and needs. The Whānau Ora approach is a whānau-centred way of working to achieve transformational change that focuses on the strengths of tāngata whaikaha Māori and their families participating in te ao Māori, and Pacific disabled people and āiga.
- 4.9 To enable the rollout of the EGL approach, Whaikaha has a contract with Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu to partner with community members. This arrangement is designed to build capability and capacity in tāngata whaikaha Māori and Pacific disabled people, with resource going to Mana Pasifika and the Whānau Ora Interface Group. In collaborating on the design and scope of the national rollout, we will build community capacity and capability in EGL.
- 4.10 The EGL principles are strongly aligned with Whānau Ora in terms of strengths-based approaches, leadership of individuals and whānau in shaping their own futures, and commitment to building strong communities and the leadership and capability of individuals and whānau.
- 4.11 Both the EGL and Whānau Ora approaches bring a focus on building on the strengths of local community and whānau capacity, collective leadership and self-determination by disabled people. The principles and processes of both give effect to rangatiratanga, enabling disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau to have control and make choices.

5 Priority Groups

New Zealand Disability Strategy and Action Plan

- 5.1 Under the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000, the Minister for Disability Issues is responsible for determining a strategy which guides the work of government agencies on disability issues and provides the framework for the government's overall direction of the disability sector. The current strategy is the *New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026* (the **Disability Strategy**).
- 5.2 The vision set out in the Disability Strategy is that New Zealand is a non-disabling society – a place where disabled people have an equal opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations, and all of New Zealand works together to make this happen. There are eight overarching outcomes in the strategy including education, health and wellbeing and rights protection and justice.
- 5.3 Sitting underneath the Disability Strategy is the *Disability Action Plan 2019-2023* (the **Disability Action Plan**). The Disability Action Plan aims to deliver the eight outcomes in the Disability Strategy. It brings together programmes of work that agencies have committed to that relate to the outcomes in the Disability Strategy as well as some cross-agency actions. Work has been started by Whaikaha to transform disability support services using an EGL approach in accordance with the Disability Action Plan.

Enabling Good Lives and System Transformation

- 5.4 Disability system transformation is about fundamentally changing the purpose of the disability support system from being about provision of services to giving disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and Pacific disabled people choice and control over their own lives. A fundamental aspect of transformation is the implementation of the Enabling Good Lives approach across the system.
- 5.5 The Enabling Good Lives vision and principles and disability support system transformation emerged from several significant inquiries and initiatives.
- 5.6 The 2007 Social Services Select Committee Inquiry heard that disabled people often felt they had little control over the services they received, and funding was relatively inflexible. From the inquiry, the Ministry of Health developed a New Model for supporting disabled people. Other initiatives included Choice in Community Living in Auckland and Waikato, along with Enhanced Individualised Funding and Local Area Coordination in the Eastern and Western Bay of Plenty.
- 5.7 In 2011, a review by a group of disabled people and their allies produced the "Enabling Good Lives" report, setting out the vision for disabled people to have greater choice and control over their supports and their lives, and a set of principles to guide change.
- 5.8 In September 2012 the Ministerial Committee on Disability Issues agreed that fundamental change to the disability support system, based on the EGL approach, was needed.
- 5.9 The EGL approach has been demonstrated in Christchurch, since 2013, and the Waikato, since 2015. A prototype of the transformed system, called Mana Whaikaha, was established in Mid-Central in 2018.
- 5.10 In 2013, the *Putting People First* review looked into the effectiveness of the current Disability Support Services and recommended that the government put disabled people first in all decisions relating to residential services and lift the culture of the sector by supporting good achievement of best outcomes.

- 5.11 In 2016, following the publication of the *Putting People First* review, the Disability Directorate in the Ministry of Health published “*The Prevention and Management of Abuse: Guidance for Safeguarding in Disability Support Services’ Funded Services*”. This guidance document will remain in use for services funded by Whaikaha and will be updated in the coming months to reflect the current context.
- 5.12 In 2021 Cabinet agreed to implement the EGL approach to disability support services nationally.
- 5.13 Feedback from disabled people and whānau whaikaha Māori involved in the EGL demonstration sites has been positive. Those who have access to the new system report a greater ability to manage their own lives and to choose service providers that work within a culturally responsive context, aligning with disabled people’s cultural continuity and tino rangatiratanga of tāngata whaikaha Māori.
- 5.14 As the EGL approach is rolled out nationally, disabled people will have greater choice over their living arrangements, including living in the community. Evaluations have found that many have an increased sense of choice and control, social connectedness and have benefitted from the use of flexible approaches to funding to improve their lives and wellbeing.

Representation of Māori, Pacific and disabled communities in system transformation

- 5.15 Governance for the work of EGL is currently provided by the Enabling Good Lives Governance Group, which includes representatives from the National Enabling Good Lives Leadership Group, the Te Ao Mārama o Aotearoa Trust and the Whānau Ora Interface Group. These groups represent, respectively, disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori, and tāngata and whānau whaikaha and Pacific disabled people. Within the programme there is a dedicated approach to building capacity and capability of tāngata and whānau whaikaha Māori. This work has been developed in partnership with tāngata whaikaha Māori and the implementation will be led by tāngata whaikaha Māori.
- 5.16 Alongside a national implementation plan, tools have been developed to support a deeper understanding of what an EGL approach looks like in practice, in partnership with representatives from the disability community. National tools, such as the Connector Guide, Managing Personal Budgets and a monitoring and evaluation framework have been endorsed by the community in anticipation of scaling.

Faiva Ora

- 5.17 As already mentioned Whāia Te Ao Mārama and the Te Ao Mārama o Aotearoa Trust, which oversees Whāia Te Ao Mārama and is Whaikaha’s partner on matters relating to tāngata whaikaha Māori. A parallel group, the Faiva Ora Leadership Group, was established in 2010 to provide advice and guidance to the Ministry of Health on disability support services responsiveness to Pacific disability issues.
- 5.18 Faiva Ora comprises Pacific disabled people, family and carers, community leaders and disability workers, who advise on government programmes to ensure they are responsive to Pacific people. The Crown’s relationship with the Faiva Ora Leadership Group has shifted to Whaikaha after its establishment.

- 5.19 With guidance from the Faiva Ora Leadership Group, the Ministry of Health developed a Pacific disability plan to seek improved health outcomes for Pacific disabled people and their families. The fourth iteration, *Faiva Ora 2016-2021: National Pasifika Disability Plan (Faiva Ora)* seeks to support individuals to engage with communities and address challenges faced by Pacific disabled people. The principles of this plan include to enhance Pacific cultural identity and build relationships between Pacific people and their communities.
- 5.20 Responsibility for Faiva Ora moved to Whaikaha on its establishment. Work has begun to develop a new Pacific disability plan. This will be continued under Whaikaha.

Safeguarding children in care

- 5.21 In 2019, the Government repealed section 141 of the Children, Young Persons and Families (Oranga Tamariki) Act 2017, concerning disabled children in extended care arrangements. The section allowed families to leave disabled children in foster or residential care indefinitely, without the same legal safeguards that non-disabled children would receive when placed in out of home care. Due to the repeal of the section, disabled children now have access to the same rights as non-disabled children to be returned home after a reasonable period, with access to an independent advocate if necessary.

6 Monitoring, oversight, safeguarding

Monitoring of the transformation of disability support services

- 6.1 Whaikaha has co-developed a Monitoring Evaluation Analysis and Learning Strategy with the community, for the transformation of disability support services. This strategy aims to ensure a developmental approach to monitoring and evaluation, providing stronger opportunities for safeguarding responses. The approach of the strategy is supported by the disability community and will be implemented incrementally from 2022.

Development, monitoring, updating of, and compliance with care standards

- 6.2 The Minister of Health has approved the updated Ngā Paerewa Health and Disability Services Standard (**Ngā Paerewa**) for use under the Health and Disability Services (Safety) Act 2001. Ngā Paerewa came into effect on 28 February 2022, and apply to all providers of residential care, disability services and home and community support services.
- 6.3 Ngā Paerewa reflects the shift towards more person- and whānau-centred health and disability services. People are empowered to make decisions about their own care and support in order to achieve their goals, with a stronger focus on outcomes for people receiving support.
- 6.4 Among the outcomes for providers, Ngā Paerewa seeks to ensure that individuals are safe, with effective safeguards to protect from discrimination, abuse, neglect and re-victimisation. Additionally, individuals are informed, have effective communication channels and the ability to make complaints.
- 6.5 A safeguarding framework was developed as part of Mana Whaikaha in the MidCentral region in 2018. Connectors in Mana Whaikaha have been trained in

the safeguarding framework. Further work has been undertaken within the development of Kaitūhono, or Connector, guides to strengthen capability in this area.

- 6.6 Whaikaha has agreed to resource Te Puna Aonui's (previously known as the joint venture business unit) Diverse Communities Project for Disabled People. The project involves implementation of a Safeguarding Framework to protect vulnerable disabled people from abuse and neglect. This will be done through additional funding to support the evaluation of the programme as a key element to demonstrating the success of the project and to support increased engagement with tāngata whaikaha Māori to inform future work.
- 6.7 Whaikaha has also recently taken on responsibility for Action 28 of *Te Aorerekura: The National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence*. Action 28 is a pilot in Waitemata that focuses on the "development and implementation of a Safeguarding Framework and Interagency Safeguarding Approach (SAFA) to prevent, report, investigate and respond to alleged family harm and other forms of abuse, neglect or harm of disabled adults"
- 6.8 Action 28 will also be integrated into the Disability Action Plan which includes six monthly progress reporting to the DPO Coalition and the Office for Disability Issues.
- 6.9 People with intellectual disabilities who are supported under the Intellectual Disability (Compulsory Care and Rehabilitation) Act 2003 have a specific set of rights that are monitored by District Inspectors, lawyers appointed under the Act to ensure that their rights are not breached. These rights include access to company, communication, and healthcare. There are also additional safeguards around the use of restrictive practices.

Supervision and monitoring of staff, caregivers and third-party care providers

- 6.10 A substantial number of discussions and checks occur prior to contracting of third-party care providers. Contracted providers are walked through multiple guidelines that they must agree to, observe, and be audited on. These include guidelines around abuse and neglect. This also includes requirements around minimum standards for staffing and legal checks.
- 6.11 In addition, Whaikaha will be developing a comprehensive Disability Workforce Strategy and implementation plan to support a transformed disability support system and the ongoing development of the disability workforce.
- 6.12 Once a provider is contracted by Whaikaha, they are subject to multiple oversight, monitoring and evaluation processes. These include:
 - (a) **Portfolio Managers** – Portfolio managers visit providers, discussing the service, and ensuring issues raised at previous meetings or audits are resolved. Depending on the findings from a specific meeting, Portfolio Managers may schedule extra visits, initiate an audit, or change the provider's risk level.
 - (b) **HealthCERT** – Residential care provided in any premises (including aged care premises) for five or more disabled people must be

audited by independent designated auditing agencies, and to be certified by HealthCERT. Providers are audited on a regular cycle by HealthCERT and are certified for between one and five years, dependent on findings. Ongoing audit concerns lead to increased monitoring by the Portfolio Manager and the Quality and Performance Team at Whaikaha.

- (c) **Audit and evaluation** - Whaikaha commissions external evaluations and audits of disability providers, using independent and experienced auditors and evaluators. Audits and evaluations funded by Whaikaha work in alignment with the audits against the legislatively required Health and Disability Safety Standards, managed by HealthCERT. These contractors identify areas that require improvement to better the quality of services and to ensure the achievement of quality-of-life outcomes and the safety of people who use the service.
- (d) Evaluations are completed on a sample of all service types, prioritising services that are higher risk, are required as part of the Midpoint evaluation between HealthCERT audits, those in response to concerns raised through complaints, or to concerns raised by Portfolio Managers. All requirements are followed up to ensure compliance with requirements is met by the provider.

- 6.13 Using the Enabling Good Lives approach Whaikaha will be developing a new model of support for residential services including national best practice guidelines and a code of conduct. This work will include a review of all of the current service specifications and contract wording to develop the new model of support and a learning and monitoring system that promotes effective compliance.
- 6.14 Whaikaha acknowledges the importance of open and transparent complaint processes, and the need for multiple complaint avenues. When a complaint relating to abuse is made to Whaikaha, the Ministry handles the complaint in its entirety, responding and storing information in a repository.
- 6.15 A complainant can also make a complaint to the Health and Disability Commissioner or the Human Rights Commission. Where a complaint is lodged elsewhere, details are shared with Whaikaha. Information on how to make a complaint is available on the Whaikaha website and we are continuously working to improve our complaint procedures to ensure the process is accessible for all disabled people.

Data collection and record keeping

- 6.16 There needs to be significant improvement of data collection for disabled people. ODI has been working with other government agencies on this. Work to date includes encouraging disaggregation of data by disability and other demographics including ethnicity as well as working with disabled people to understand how we can better monitor outcomes, particularly from a te Ao Māori lens. Work is also underway to develop a 'disability indicator' to inform future data collection. This work will further allow government agencies to better identify gaps in data and apply key considerations for disabled people in terms of data collection, analysis and dissemination.

7 Funding and resources

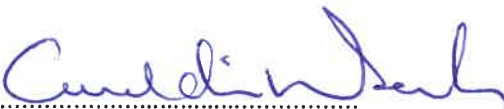
- 7.1 The purchase and delivery of disability support services for people with long-term physical, intellectual and/or sensory impairments is a key function of the new Ministry. The budget for provision of these services is approximately \$2 billion annually. An additional \$704m was allocated through Budget 2022 to address ongoing cost pressures over the next four years across disability support services.
- 7.2 A wide range of services are funded, ranging from equipment to support and retain independence, through to support with daily activities (eg. personal care, shopping, cleaning etc), as well as support to family carers (payment for care and respite so they can take a break).
- 7.3 Disability support services provided by Whaikaha are delivered by 484 providers holding 751 contracts for service. The main providers are residential support, home and community services, respite, supported living, disability information and advisory services, and services under the High and Complex framework.
- 7.4 The number of people receiving disability supports has been growing significantly over the past years and this trend is expected to continue.
- 7.5 Budget 2022 also included a new initiative for Disability Support System Transformation to implement the EGL approach of \$100 million (over four years) to more of the disabled population and their whānau; progressing beyond the current three sites (Christchurch, Mid-Central, and Waikato) towards a national rollout of the EGL approach. This will include an overarching safeguarding framework.
- 7.6 A national model for delivery of the Disability System Transformation, based on the EGL approach and implementation plan, will show how the funding will be used and the phasing of the expenditure. Whaikaha intends to introduce greater flexibility for funding acknowledging that individuals are the experts in own lives and will be given greater choice and control.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 This concludes Whaikaha's response to the topics of interest identified by the Royal Commission.
- 8.2 In this brief, I have shared the reasons that Whaikaha was established and its goal in driving better outcomes for all disabled people. We are an agency that seeks to uphold the articles of te Tiriti o Waitangi and UNCRPD to support disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori, Pacific disabled people, whānau and carers.
- 8.3 Using the framework of the Enabling Good Lives approach to transform Disability Support Services, we aim to give disabled people more choice and control over the lives and the supports they receive, leading to better outcomes for disabled people and their families. We have monitoring, oversight and safeguarding mechanisms to ensure the safety of disabled people, and we are continuously working to improve our complaint procedures to ensure the process is accessible for all. We are committed the ongoing development of

safeguarding frameworks. Ultimately, we believe this will support the prevention of abuses such as those shared with us in these hearings.

- 8.4 We acknowledge how difficult this process will have been for survivors and their whānau and the difficulty in sharing these very personal and distressing stories. Terrible stories of abuse, and from Whaikaha's perspective in particular the abuse of disabled people, highlight the importance of our agency's work in the future. We will be very interested in the Royal Commission's findings and recommendations, and again thank the Royal Commission and survivors for sharing your stories with all of us, and creating an opportunity for change.

Signed: 
Geraldine Woods

Date: 8/8/2022