

APRIL 2024

From the CE

While I still find myself doing a double take when writing '2024', I'm even more taken aback by the fact that it's already April!

That said, I've been impressed to see the significant outcomes being achieved across Spectrum Foundation, Spectrum Care and Homes of Choice in recent months.

From Gig Buddies' two fantastic 'Gig in the Park' events to seeing 35 new inductees attend our recent pōwhiri (including four new international interns) and now planning the opening ceremony for one of Homes of Choice's new developments – there's a lot going on and a lot we can all take pride in.

Within the Group, we've had some recent changes, including farewelling our Spectrum Care Board Chair, Ronelle Baker, who moved into the role of Kaihautū (Chief Advisor Māori) at Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People. We've recently appointed a new Board Chair and will look forward to introducing them in the next issue of Across the Spectrum.

We've also welcomed several new colleagues to the organisation, including our recently appointed Chief Information Officer Mike Paine and Whānau Engagement Lead, Regan Herbert. The Whānau Engagement Lead is a newly created role which champions effective partnerships between Spectrum Care and the disabled people and whānau we support. Keep an eye out for more about Regan and what he's bringing to the role in the next issue.

On a more sombre note, budget cuts and fiscal constraints remain significant concerns for disabled people and whānau, and our sector in general. Of recent note were changes to benefit payments which involve rates being benchmarked to inflation rather than net average wage growth. The Government's own Regulatory Impact Statement has noted that disabled people will be negatively impacted and face greater barriers to participating in their communities and meeting their essential needs. We are meeting with ministers and endeavouring to bring greater attention to the disproportionate impact changes like this have on all disabled New Zealanders.

There have also been disappointing delays in the Pay Equity claim – an update features later in this issue.

Despite these headwinds, we've seen positive progress in other areas, such as the signing of a formal agreement between Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People and the National Enabling Good Lives Leadership Group. This agreement signals a significant commitment to Systems Transformation, which will bring greater choice and control for disabled people and whānau.

Spectrum Foundation Group wholeheartedly supports this work and will continue to prioritise activities that ensure all disabled people have equal opportunity to live good lives.

He waka eke noa [We're in it together]

Sean Stowers

Chief Executive

Spectrum Foundation Group

Making a difference in inclusion and accessibility – one person at a time

Gig Buddies is a new programme, delivered in partnership with Spectrum Care, in which disabled people are matched with volunteers who share the same interests and passions.

Once paired, the 'buddies' go out together to gigs, movies, museums, sporting events or whatever they like!

Going to live events is often something taken for granted. But for many people living with disability, going to a gig, watching live sport or just meeting up with friends comes with additional challenges.

“Most disabled people want to go out, have fun and hang out with their friends, but it's not always that easy,” says Gig Buddies Project Lead, Hans Matig-a. “Even if an event is accessible, many people aren't confident enough to go out by themselves.”

That's where Gig Buddies comes in. Buddies are paired based on mutual interests, like music tastes, sports and hobbies, so they both get to do something they enjoy.

“It's all about helping people to build genuine relationships,” says Hans. “You have someone there that you know, that you can trust, but they're not working. They're not paid to be there. They want to be there.”

Hans and his team are working closely with other organisations to create accessible and inclusive events that are open to all. In February, they co-hosted their first gig alongside Auckland Council's Music in Parks, which was a resounding success.

Gig Buddies rounded off the summer with their second 'Gig in the Park' event on Saturday 30 March in Victoria Park. These free events featured live music, performances, market stalls, arts and crafts, and food trucks. The aim was not to create 'disability' events, but rather 'inclusive' events that were accessible for those with physical access needs and offered dedicated quiet space and 'chill-out' zones for those with sensory needs.

Check out Gig Buddies Auckland on Facebook or visit gigbuddiesauckland.org

Spectrum Care represents at the Illuminate Night Market!

At the recent Illuminate Night Market, hosted by Recreate New Zealand, some of the people we support had the opportunity to showcase their handmade products and creative works.

Illuminate is an all-inclusive night market organised by young New Zealanders to celebrate the talents, passions, and successes in our community. All performers, artists and stallholders at the event have lived experience of disability or come from a youth community that actively challenges the status quo.

The market showcases the work of several individuals and groups who have created their own path to employment, and demonstrate the potential and capabilities of disabled rangatahi, whilst giving customers the opportunity to explore locally made, socially conscious products.

The Spectrum Care stall was busy all evening; the handmade jewellery, coasters, t-shirts, and poi were in high demand, and workshops with the drumming group and performances by Easy Beats DJs keeping customers entertained whilst they browsed.

Farewell to Spectrum Care Board Chair

Ronelle Baker

Ronelle Baker (Ngāti Porou, Te Aitanga a Hauiti, Ngāi Tāmanuhiri, Ngāti Apakura and Ngāpuhi) joined Spectrum Care in June 2022 as our first Board Chair with lived experience of disability.

Over the past year and a half, she brought her significant capacity as an operational and strategic leader to bear on both our current activities and future trajectory.

Perhaps even more influential than Ronelle's extensive professional capabilities, however, has been her calm, strong demeanour. Ronelle is surrounded by tapu and mana, and her time here at Spectrum Care has been a period of kaitiakitanga, or sound stewardship.

Ronelle has proven herself time and again a tireless advocate for improving wellbeing, equity and inclusion for disabled people and their whānau – further attested by her concurrent roles as Principal Advisor Accessibility for Stats NZ and Children's Commissioner at Mana Mokopuna (Children and Young People's Commission).

While her departure from the Spectrum Care Board is a loss for our organisation, Ronelle's appointment to Whaikaha's Executive Team as Kaihautū (Chief Advisor Māori) is a significant opportunity for her to drive and amplify the voice of tāngata whaikaha Māori and embed Te Tiriti o Waitangi in Whaikaha.

We offer our congratulations to Ronelle and, on behalf of all at Spectrum Foundation Group, our Executive Team and Boards, our thanks and appreciation for her service.

Pay Equity update

What's been happening in our pursuit of better pay rates for care and support workers.

In July 2022, a pay equity claim was raised by unions on behalf of care and support workers. Spectrum Care was one of the 15 employers named in the pay equity claim.

For a year and half, we've worked with the unions and the other named employers to address gender-based undervaluation of the support work role. However, at the end of 2023 Te Whatu Ora – who is the lead funding agency – called for an independent review of the work that'd been completed by employers and unions.

While further progress on the claim has been delayed while this review was completed, the report is now with Te Whatu Ora.

We've been disappointed by the delay and remain committed to achieving a prompt resolution that'll ensure this valuable workforce is paid fairly for the important work they do on behalf of disabled people and their whānau.

We'll keep you up to date in future issues of Across the Spectrum...

Upgrades completed and new builds about to open!

Over the past few months, we've completed comprehensive upgrades on several of our Auckland properties.

The projects encompassed a range of repairs and renovations which aimed to make the properties more accessible and improve the living environment for the residents.

Internally, the buildings underwent full interior repair and painting, including the installation of new flooring throughout. Wall strengthening and electrical upgrades were completed to ensure the safety and efficiency of the home, and the bathrooms and showers were updated to improve comfort and accessibility for years to come.

With the completion of these renovations, the benchmark scoring of our property portfolio has risen, reflecting our commitment to maintaining high standards across our housing assets.

In other news, we're close to completion on two brand new developments in South Auckland. The first, which is expected to be completed by April, contains two ground-floor units, both of which are fully accessible and suitable for families or those looking to live independently.

Additionally, we're making good progress on a larger development which contains six one- and two-bedroom units, three of which are accessible.

Over the coming months, we'll aim to invest in projects and developments which not only address structural and functional features, but create safer and more comfortable environments and improve the lives of our residents.

Applications now open for the Outcomes Fund!

The Outcomes Fund is a type of individual funding available for people supported by Spectrum Care.

After a three-year hiatus, the Spectrum Foundation Board has decided to reinstate the fund for people within Spectrum Care residential services.

The Outcomes Fund was established to make an immediate difference in the lives of people we support by removing barriers that disabled people often face with regard to health and wellbeing, housing, education, employment, and self-determination.

Spectrum Care's Philanthropy and Impact Team are now accepting applications for the next round of funding. People we support can apply for up to \$2000, which can be used for items or services that empower access to:

- health and wellbeing
- housing or more independent living situations
- education
- employment
- relationship-building opportunities within the community.

This could include things like medication, dental care, classes or costs associated with getting a job or setting up a small business, for example work clothes, transport or equipment.

Please note that the Outcomes Fund is only available to those in Spectrum Care residential services. People must apply themselves, but a staff member can support this process. Priority will be given to people who have never received this fund before and funding will not be provided for items or services that are available through other funding.

To find out more about the Outcomes Fund, email info@spectrumfoundation.org.nz, or phone Konrad Kurta on 021 243 6299.

Want to make a difference in the lives of disabled New Zealanders?

If you'd like to support Spectrum Foundation by making a donation you can do so by:

- Visit: www.spectrumfoundation.org.nz/donate
- Internet or phone banking
Payee: Spectrum Foundation
Account: 12-3113-0000406-00
Code: Donation
Reference: Your name

For more information, contact Konrad Kurta on 021 243 6299, or at konrad.kurta@spectrumfoundation.org.nz.

Every dollar makes a difference. By donating now, you'll be directly supporting projects that benefit disabled people in our community.