

# Media Statement

30 August 2022

# Chief Executive, Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People appointed

Deputy Public Service Commissioner Ms Helene Quilter QSO has today announced the appointment of Ms Paula Tesoriero MNZM to the position of Chief Executive, Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People.

Whaikaha is a new departmental agency, established on 1 July 2022. The new Ministry represents a significant shift in how government works with and for disabled people. Its responsibilities extend beyond government-funded services and support, with a focus on how existing policy and operational settings influence disabled peoples’ opportunities to achieve their own outcomes and aspirations.

The Chief Executive of the Ministry is responsible for providing strategic leadership to the agency and across the system to achieve better outcomes for disabled people in New Zealand.

“I’m very pleased to appoint Ms Tesoriero to this role,” Ms Quilter said.

“Ms Tesoriero is well-known and a respected leader in the disability community. She is disabled and has a deep knowledge of the challenges and opportunities for the disability community.”

Ms Tesoriero was until yesterday the Disability Rights Commissioner at the Human Rights Commission, a position she held since 2017. She previously acted in the role of Chief Human Rights Commissioner from May 2018 – January 2019. Ms Tesoriero is an experienced Public Service leader. From 2010 – 2016, she was the General Manager, Higher Courts at the Ministry of Justice. In 2016, she was seconded to Statistics New Zealand where she was the General Manager, System and Partnership.

Ms Tesoriero is a Paralympian, winning a gold medal and two bronze medals at the 2008 Summer Paralympic Games in Beijing.

Ms Quilter said Ms Tesoriero has built trusting relationships with disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori.

“Ms Tesoriero is an authentic and experienced leader who is dedicated to improving outcomes for disabled people. She is well placed to take up the role,” Ms Quilter said.

Ms Tesoriero holds a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of Arts from Victoria University of Wellington. She also holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Public Management from Victoria University of Wellington. She was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2009.

She has been appointed for five years from 1 September 2022.

# **Biography**

Ms Tesoriero had been the Disability Rights Commissioner at the Human Rights Commission since 2017.

She was Acting Chief Human Rights Commissioner from 2018 to 2019.

For two years (2016-2017), Ms Tesoriero was General Manager, System and Partnerships at Statistics New Zealand.

Prior to this (2010-2016) Ms Tesoriero was General Manager, High Courts at the Ministry of Justice.

She was Manager, Service Design at the Ministry of Justice (2006-2010) and a senior legal advisor (2002-2006).

Ms Tesoriero has served in various governance roles including as Deputy Chair of Peke Waihanga-Artificial Limb Service and Deputy Chair of Nuku Ora (previously Sport Wellington) and is a life trustee of the Halberg Disability Sport Foundation.

Since 2015 she has been a member of the Sports Tribunal of New Zealand.

She was Chef de Mission for the New Zealand Paralympic Team for Tokyo 2020.

She was appointed this year as an honorary advisor to the Asia New Zealand Foundation

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