

## **Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa –**

Warm welcome to you all - our Guests, Tutors and Learners – thank you for joining us on this celebration.

40 years is a great achievement for any organization – but even more so for a not for profit organisation that has to fund and organise itself each and every year.

So, let's reflect on what has been achieved over the past 40 years.

The organization was formed back in 1977 as a part of the Workers Educational Association. Back then it was like the famous lines of Monty Python; the organization lived in a shoe box, not in the middle of the road but in the middle of someone's house! And that was how it was for nearly 10 years.

The 1980's were very lively and fertile years for literacy provision in Waitākere. Tutoring hours were funded by Unitec, group provision evolved alongside 1:1 tuition.

Subjects such as civics, nutrition, and literacy awareness for local businesses were developed. Much creative publishing of resources and learner stories happened. Quality standards were introduced. And ARLA, the national body which later became Literacy Aotearoa, was in its formation.

After a series of moves from people's houses and temporary premises, In the mid-eighties the organisation moved to a two storey house at 9 Henderson Valley Rd which was donated in 1987 by Myra and Richie Gilmour – (Jane's parents) - It was here that the organisation was nurtured and grown for some 20 years under the-stewardship of a series of committees, co-ordinators and tutors.

During that period and under the leadership of Carol Atkin as coordinator in 1995 that we received an honorable mention of the UNESCO International Reading Association Award.

A really vital part of the centre in Henderson Valley Rd which many people will remember, was the childcare which thrived until very recently, allowing learners and tutors alike to spend precious time together in the house.

In 2000, we became an incorporated society in our own right, Waitakere Adult Literacy Inc, fondly known by many as WALI.

2007 saw the organisation moving out of the house into its own space, the John Henry Centre (now Whanau House) in Henderson. This allowed adequate room for the first time for learning to take place under one roof.

Finally, 2010 saw the move to our current location at Great North Road in New Lynn.

So, if you were to list what we do, you might say:

- Providing small group tuition as well as 1:1

- Publishing Student Writing Books

- Publishing 'Learn to Learn' and our own readers

Holding Professional Development Workshops  
Offering Literacy provision in the workplace

BUT actually, what this organisation does is help people change their lives.

During the past 40 years we have worked with around **6000** people. That's 6000 lives changed - some small – some huge transformations, as some of you here today can attest to. That's something to be very proud of.

But a successful organisation is primarily about people at its heart, who live and own the values of the organisation – There are all our committee members, co-ordinators, tutors, past and present and many many others – too many to mention.

Our learners come from a range of backgrounds. Those who are NZ-born and for whatever reason didn't get the literacy they needed at school. Refugees who missed out on school and have low literacy in their own language, and Pasifika people who need more literacy to enable them all to succeed in a modern NZ.

But we couldn't do this without funding and support from a number of organisations. In particular over last 10 years we have had increased funding from the Tertiary Education Commission as a member provider of Literacy Aotearoa, from ASB Trust/Foundation North, Lotteries Commission, SkyCity Community, Portage Licensing Trust, Auckland Council and COGS.

Also important, through all the growth and government funding requiring increased compliance, we have managed to retain our student-centered 'kaupapa'; - our philosophy incorporating Ako - we are all "sometimes teacher, sometimes learner" - and our environment accepts us all and nurtures us as learners.

Last, but no means least, we never underestimate the huge first step that learners make when they walk through our doors, and we try and make our environment as friendly, relaxed and welcoming as we can.

So, what about the next 40 years? – well, literacy is as critical now as it has ever been, and we have adapted and expanded to include digital literacy as phone and computers become the new pens and pencils of our time.

We read of a future of increasing Robotics and Artificial Intelligence but history tells us as each new technology comes into play, literacy becomes more and more critical, not less, and we should never underestimate the impact literacy has on people's self-respect and their lives.

So thank you for your part in our organisation's success. Be very proud of what has been achieved so far and look forward to what we can achieve in the future.