

Robert George MARTIN (MNZM)

Date and place of birth: 13 August 1957, Wellington, New Zealand

Working languages: English

Current position/function:

- Advisory role and life member of People First New Zealand, an advocacy group for persons with learning disabilities
- Evaluator of Disability Support Services, a government organisation responsible for the planning and funding of government disability support services
- International leader and role model for persons with learning disabilities
- Committee member and immediate past chairperson of Frozen Funds Charitable Trust, dedicated to funding projects by and for persons who use learning disability and mental health services.
- Committee member, IHC Whanganui
- Self-advocacy for Idea Services Vocational Centre.
- Advocate for other individuals with learning disabilities
- Fellow, NZ Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability
- Fellow, Paul Harris - Rotary
- Member of Balance New Zealand
- Sought after speaker

Main professional activities:

Leader - Robert is a leader in the New Zealand disability community. As a representative of Inclusion International, he played a significant role in the negotiations on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and he is a professional evaluator of disability support services funded by the government. Robert was appointed as a member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in recognition of his services to persons with disabilities.

Chairperson - Robert is immediate past chair of Frozen Funds Charitable Trust, dedicated to funding projects by and for persons who use learning disability services. He was also formerly Chairperson of Inclusion International's Self Advocacy Taskforce (1996 to 2008).

Speaker - Robert is a respected and sought after speaker in New Zealand and internationally on self-advocacy and the rights of persons with disabilities. He regularly travels the world speaking to organisations, families and persons with disabilities about topics such as the right to live in the community, deinstitutionalisation, the right to work, the right to have the life of your choice, and reasonable accommodation. Robert is an internationally recognised expert on the rights of persons with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community under Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He recently accepted an invitation extended by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to speak at the Day of General Discussion on Article 19.

Advocate – Robert is a leading advocate in New Zealand and around the world on the rights of persons with disabilities, in particular the rights of persons with learning disabilities. He has a unique mix of lived experience of disability, passion for disability rights, and a wide range of international advocacy experience.

Other main activities in the field relevant to the mandate of the treaty body concerned:

Robert was a long standing member of the Inclusion International Council and was Chairperson of Inclusion International's Self Advocacy Taskforce from 1996 to 2008. Through this involvement, Robert has advocated for the rights of persons with disabilities to make their own decisions and for those decisions to be fully realised through supported decision making. These roles and Robert's personal skills ensured that his contribution was highly valued in the negotiation and development of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Robert strongly believes in the power of the Convention to be a paradigm shift in how the world sees and interacts with persons with disabilities.

Educational background:

Robert has had limited formal education as he spent his childhood in large institutions and foster homes throughout New Zealand. This experience has given him a great interest in ensuring that all persons with disabilities have the opportunity to live in the community from birth. Robert has continued to learn throughout his adult life, teaching himself to read through his passion for books. Robert enjoys playing a variety of sports and has donated considerable voluntary hours as a rugby and football coach, referee and cricket umpire.

List of most recent publications in the field:

With Robert's help, John McRae wrote a book about Robert's life called "Becoming A Person: The Biography of Robert Martin" (Craig Potten Publishing, November 2014). Robert has also made many speeches that have been heard by thousands of people around the world. His words have affected changes in policies and practices which have made a positive difference for persons with disabilities.