

## David

Tena tatou katoa (Here we all are).

Ko kaiwhakahaere matua, kawai ki te iwi te tari Taiwhenua  
Ko maria Robertson ahou

E te whanau pani, aue to mamae (oh, it hurts).

Nui te pouri

Taumata te ngakau

Ka nui te aroha kia koutou katoa

E nga hau e wha, whakapiri tatou

Awhi mai, awhi atu.

No reira, tena tatou katoa

On 29 November, around 5:30am, I received a phone call I had least expected. I was told that our friend and colleague David Philp had died.

I always thought he would speak at a variety of leavings of my choice. I wasn't entirely sure when that would be, but I was sure he would.

Instead, I found myself navigating how to lead people, who were – and still are – profoundly impacted by such a loss. I speak to you today personally, but also - I hope - for the New Zealand public service plus the many people David influenced and worked with over many years.

David was a big man, with a big voice, and a big appetite for an international symposium such as this one. He was a fixture at ICAO meetings, both in person and virtual, and always had plenty to say. That said, he was easy to underestimate. He was easy to make assumptions about based on his big persona and his presence and mana.

He balanced that large presence with a deeply quiet and reflective capability. He was wise. He was considered. And he was ambitious for us all and our little country. In a more spiritual sense he was fully embracing and navigating a Te Ao Maori (our first peoples') course of travel for himself, our people, our customers and the communities we serve. For him it was a felt experience. His learning and leaning in to it was as immense as he was.

David would have celebrated 50 years of public service this coming January. Almost 19 years ago he found his calling as Manager of Passports, and was promoted to the General Manager of the NZ Passports Service 12 years ago. He led New Zealand, and the world, through the most fundamental shift in traveller identity we had ever seen. He had an enormous vision for change and he kept the horizon wide, and his passion deep.

Over the course of his career he achieved many things; too many to speak about and do justice to. A few standouts:

- he envisioned and delivered the first truly online passport service in the world, and proved (to a doubting global community) that it was not just possible to do, it was possible to do without compromising security and risk, and it was possible to do because it was the right thing to do. We just needed to rethink the problem to solve.
- He advocated strongly – internationally – to provide for gender marker x on identity documents out of respect for many people who do not identify themselves as simply male or female. Again, he was at the front edge of advocating for self-expression, for everyone.
- He had an unwavering commitment to lifting capability across developing nations in these areas too. Working closely alongside trusty sidekicks he went to all corners to do this hard work. Weeks away at a time, tough schedules, language barriers, dreadful working conditions at times. He totally embraced it.
- Aside from pursuing hard goals often against an incoming tide, the common vein was one of public service. He gave his entire working life to millions of New Zealanders. In fact, travellers the world over, are the benefactors of his vision. He was a genuine global leader without the fanfare of others who have disrupted global sectors like retail, space travel, social media, etc., and certainly without the financial benefits. But he was a genuine, legitimate disruptor for good and for equity of access to public services for all people.

There's lots of places where David's profound commitment to service is reflected. I can't speak to all of it, or even much of it. But there's a beautiful little black book with his fingerprints, heart, soul and mind all over it and through it. Every page is a reflection of what he represented.

Those same symbols of David - as our friend, colleague, mentor, mate and all round brilliant man - will be forever with us.

David, my friend, I say this on the global stage as I did just a few weeks before your untimely death - I love you. I cherished working with you. I celebrate everything you stood for and represented. Most of all, I miss you mate. Every day.

Now though, we hope you are resting in peace.

Kia hore te marino  
 Kia whakapapa pounamu te moana  
 Kia tere te Karohirohi I mua  
 I tou huarahi