

AGM REPORTS 2 MAY 2010

CHAIRPERSON OF WELLINGTON BRANCH COMMITTEE

At the AGM last April 2009 in my Chairperson report, I said *'The committee are keen to put the past year behind us, move forward, focus on our members and strengthen our branch'*. With a lot of hard work the committee has achieved this and my own expectations have been met and exceeded.

In March 09, the committee first discussed setting up a Field Worker Service with Miriam from NO. We were told that along with employing a FW, we would need to get an office and an Office Manager and their job would be to do administration tasks and write/source funding applications for grants through the various Community Trusts, Pub Charities and Lotteries etc to keep our branch financial. These grants are to pay for the field worker service - salaries, mileage, accommodation, rent etc. As well as grants to help members with things they need, which excludes things that are funded through the Government and health agencies. Once the start-up funds (that National Council has allocated us, two years of \$90k) are used (end of 2010) then funding will have to be sourced from elsewhere and the FWS will eventually be funded by the branch but with some help from NO. Initially the staff would be paid through National Office who would manage our \$90k grants. First step was to decide on the location of the FWS. Office space and equipment would need to be sourced by us. Second step was to hire staff; a part time office manager and a full-time field worker.

OK, we had our guideline to follow and obviously there was going to be lots to keep us busy. I was then and still am now totally committed to the growth and development of MDA Wellington branch.

I had a further meeting in April, in Auckland with Chris Higgins and Miriam, this was to iron out details, ask questions and also ask for help from NO as we had come to the conclusion that they had a lot more expertise than we did in hiring and managing staff, writing job descriptions, writing job ads etc. Thankfully, Chris and his team did all the hard stuff although the committee were kept in the loop and decisions were made after consultation with us.

We still had to find an office, set it up with furniture and equipment, sort out a telephone system, have input into job descriptions, ok the shortlist plus Heather, Jo and myself plus Miriam were on the interview panel - we interviewed 10 people over two days (the shortlist from 60 applicants).

It was a really busy time for the committee and for me personally this whole process has been a huge learning curve and I was involved with things I hadn't been involved in before and dealt with issues that I didn't even think I could handle let alone achieve.

In October 2009, Wellington branch started a branch office and a field worker service. It's taken off and already it's making a huge impact...

Marty Davis our Field Worker is making huge inroads already and we cannot fault the great job he is doing. His commitment is great. He has already had face-to-face contact with 33% of our branch members and has sent letters to all Members who he has not yet had direct contact with - introducing himself, the Field Worker role, and inviting contact / feedback / enquiries. With having a reliable car he has been able to travel all over our branch area, including Gisborne.

There is plenty of feedback that comes back from members through Marty, regarding MDA issues. I am really pleased that Wellington branch members are now starting to finally get a voice and feel comfortable to express their opinions/concerns through Marty, which he passes on.

Margaret Stoddart our Office manager says the Branch office in Petone has been kept busy ever since it opened. She has worked with disability equipment and needs for the past four years and has a wealth of knowledge. We are lucky to have her and Marty as part of our team. Margaret has taken over the newsletter, which is full of information and happenings and gets positive feedback.

A week before Christmas Wellington branch received a fantastic Christmas present. The Lions Foundation gave us a grant for \$24000.00 to purchase a branch car, this has been a huge boost for our branch.

Our Christmas function was hugely successful with over 35 members and families. Members travelled from Gisborne, Hawkes Bay, Wairarapa, Kapiti and the Wellington area to join the committee for lunch at the 'Brick and Bottle' in Petone!

A big thanks to the members, who participated in Bow Tie fundraising this year. A huge thank you needs to go to Rae Mahoney from Gisborne and her family who raised just over \$5000. Year after year Rae never fails to raise a sizable amount during bow tie fundraising week and this year was another awesome effort.

The Wellington branch committee have been working together really well. We added two new members last year and I think this year there will be more. Thanks for all the generous time and efforts put in by the Wellington Branch committee over the last year - a dedicated group of people who find time in their already busy lives to volunteer and support MDA Wellington branch.

We all can look forward to another positive and exciting year for Wellington Branch and I am positive that our members will be proud to be part of our branch.

Liz Mills
Chairperson

BRANCH REPRESENTATIVE ON NATIONAL COMMITTEE

I have been the branch rep now since November 2008 and it is now a positive, supportive council to be part of - I really enjoy it and am pleased to be involved in it. With Helen Melrose as Chairperson and a team of really able and switched on councillors as well as Chris Higgins, who is there in his role as MDA CEO, it runs like a well oiled machine. I think the fact that four councillors have just been elected unopposed to the National Council for a further one year term of office speaks volumes and is testament to the good things being achieved.

Because the MDA is a member owned and member driven organisation, the National Council are very aware that there has to be greater transparency in how the National Council communicates with the Association's members, and information needs to be made available to members. This is why after each National Council meeting, *MDA CATCH-UP* is either emailed or posted out to all MDA members - a regular newsletter that keeps our members informed about key themes and decisions made at National Council. It keeps members up to date with what is happening in their Association and it gives members the opportunity to have a say as part of the decision making process. Meeting minutes and other documents are posted on the members only page of the MDA website.

In the past year the National Council have set up or are in the process of setting up documents and strategies that make sense and strengthen the MDA as well as making our organisation as a whole run more efficiently.

The National Council has spent a lot of time considering a proposed new draft constitution for the Association. This piece of work has arisen in response to the recommendation in the 2008 PricewaterhouseCoopers report that the constitution be modernised. Council members and the National Council's Constitution and Governance Committee, made a number of changes to the draft, which ended up at version 5. The proposed new constitution is in many ways very different from the existing one, and all members are encouraged to have a look at it, and are invited to make comment and give feedback on the consultation draft.

The next stage will be to review the four branch constitutions - our one is old and out-dated and not user friendly - so this will be really good!

We will hold a special general meeting of members to formally adopt the new constitution a bit later this year.

The National Council has finalised the wording for the formal agreements between the Association and the MDA Branches, which will now be sent to each Branch committee for formal ratification and signing. These documents follow an extensive period of consultation with members and Branch committees, and for the first time formalise and clarify the roles of, and relationship between, the MDA nationally and regionally.

Liz Mills
Branch Rep