

**Annual Report May 2023**

Tēnā koutou

I've been privileged to be the President for 12 months.

I'm immensely grateful to everyone who has contributed to our mission *To empower people with MS and their whānau to live their best lives*. The other day I was reminded of the importance of keeping our mission and vision, *People with MS and their whānau living well with MS*, close. They're why we do what we do, from our clients, to our wonderful donors and funders, our amazing team and our committee members who volunteer hours of their time. Our mission and vision keep us on a path of continuous improvement, innovation and commitment.

I'd like to acknowledge our community advisors (Jo Dean, Lacey Reedy, Gillian Fry and Shona Daubé) and our fundraising and communications extraordinaire Suzie Linton. I'm in awe of their dedication, adaptability and knowledge. They took on new challenges including moving to an electronic records system with openness and enthusiasm. It was sad to see Gillian and Shona move on. They invested a great deal of themselves with us and are very much missed.

Thank you to our Patron Anne La Flamme and her students for generously sharing their knowledge and work. Last year's AGM was a great example of the importance of connection and sharing for research and I'm looking forward to hearing the latest updates from Anne.

I'd like to thank our wonderful committee; Alarna Sharratt, Chelsea Quinn, Ross Judge and Steve McCloskey. I'd like to thank Laura Dempsey and Eric Daubé who stepped down from the committee. Laura and Eric have given many years to Wellington MS, generously sharing their expertise and time. I couldn't have done this job for the past 12 months without our wonderful committee members.

I'd also like to acknowledge the other Central and Lower North Island cluster societies. The past year has brought much closer relationships with the other committees and our team has continued to share with and learn from their counterparts in the other regions.

Like many charities, we're experiencing funding challenges. We're grateful to the people and organisations who have donated to us, supported us through automatic payments or the IRD wages donation scheme, fundraised on our behalf or awarded us grants: Pub Charity Ltd, NZ Lottery, T G McCarthy Trust, Jack Jeff's Charitable Trust, Trust House Limited, Four Winds Foundation, the Department of Internal Affairs through COGS Wellington City, Whitireia and Wairarapa, Kapiti Coast District Council, Upper Hutt City Council and Eastern & Central Community Trust. We were also fortunate enough to receive funding from the Lotteries Covid 19 Care in the Community Fund and Z Good in the Hood. We're in the lucky

position of being able to draw on the Dorothy Hamilton Memorial Trust to manage the gap between our income and expenses. Heartfelt thanks go to our trustees. We've also been fortunate enough to benefit from private bequests, from members who have made provision for Wellington MS in their will, our heartfelt thanks for the generosity of these benefactors and their families.

In the past year we've explored new fundraising opportunities and held a wonderful movie afternoon at the Light House Cinema in Petone. Our committee and team put on a lovely afternoon tea ahead of a popular raffle draw and a much enjoyed screening of Mrs Harris Goes to Paris. It was heartening to see the crowd enjoying their afternoon. There were lots of laughs and gasps throughout the movie.

We'll be holding our street appeal this year. It's a big task and we've already begun the work needed to make our appeal a success.

We've been advertising for new committee members and new trustees. I've been excited by the responses we've received and am very hopeful we'll be welcoming new members and trustees soon.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as President. I'm looking forward to the next year with excitement.

Ngā mihi

Heather Davey  
President on behalf of the Wellington MS Committee

## Operations

The Wellington MS team currently has three members: Jo Dean (Lead Community Advisor), Lacey Reedy (Community Advisor) and Suzie Linton (Communications and Fundraising). Our team is part-time.

Our community advisory service covers Wellington, Porirua, Kapiti Coast, Hutt Valley, and Wairarapa and provides services for clients and their whānau. Our services include education and information for clients, whānau, healthcare professionals and others, assessment, advocacy and support, referrals and support groups. It's been wonderful to have the support groups back up and running. The inability to hold these groups during COVID had increased the vulnerability and isolation of some clients. These groups provide important connections for our clients and our team has been encouraged to see support group members connecting outside organised support group meetings.

We were fortunate to get grants to support our community advisors to work extra hours to undertake welfare checks with our clients and to transition to an electronic record keeping system. The welfare checks were really well received, and our community advisors were able to provide extra assistance including advocacy, education, referral and support. Bringing the systems to life and transferring paper records into the electronic system required a huge effort from the team and some upskilling.

The work of the team was made easier with a Kia Rio hatchback 1.4L car, which is perfect for zip-zapping around visiting clients. The car was made possible through funding from Trust House Foundation, the Four Winds Foundation and Pub Charity Limited. The new car has reduced our maintenance costs which has meant more money being available for our community advisory service.

Our other car is more than 10 years old. We're looking to replace that in the coming year.

The team receives referrals from a broad base including people with MS, whānau, neurology, medical and allied health teams and have good working relationships across a broad range of services. These relationships enable the team to better support clients.

The Communications and Fundraising spaces are busy with Suzie identifying new funding opportunities, managing applications and accountability reports, newsletters, social media and our website. She's also been exploring and creating case studies to promote the work and services of Wellington MS and for education and fundraising.

The environment in which we provide our services is changing. There are new requirements for charities, changes in the health space, increased competition for funding and MSNZ is undertaking work on strategy and providing a nationally consistent role description for community advisors. In the coming year, we'll be focusing on our operating model, informed by the changing environment and possible opportunities to work more closely with the other MS regional societies in the Central and Lower North Island cluster.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the team this year, including Hamish Bockett-Smith for his IT expertise.

### **Our Committee**

We have five members who are all volunteers; Alarna Sharratt, Chelsea Quinn (Secretary), Heather Davey (President), Ross Judge (Treasurer) and Steve McCloskey (Health and Safety). During the year we farewelled Laura Dempsey and Eric Daubé. This was a big loss for us and we're recruiting new members.

We met every third Tuesday of the month (except January) via Teams. Virtual meetings are essential for involving people from across the Wellington Region.

We're a small organisation and our role has a mix of the strategic and operational. In the past year we've focused on funding and fundraising, been challenged by deciding whether and how to have a street appeal, bringing a more structured approach to our meetings, changing the operational reporting to balance our information needs with the reporting burden for the team, recruitment, grappling with the changing environment and looking at the role of Wellington MS and how we can best provide the right support for our clients and their whānau in a sustainable way. We've learnt lots from operating in a COVID environment and from our connections with MSNZ and the other regional societies in our cluster.

### **Financial Report**

Our financial report is provided separately.