

2006 President's Report to Living Streets Aotearoa AGM 3/11/06

We are now entering our fifth year of existence as Living Streets Aotearoa. Recognition of the importance of walking, nationally and internationally, is growing.

Tomorrow, the Saturday before the UN Climate Talks in Nairobi, there will be demonstrations and events in more than forty-five countries around the world, calling on world leaders to take the urgent action we need to prevent the catastrophic destabilisation of global climate. It is appropriate that the second NZ walking conference is happening at the same time.

Therefore, making towns and cities more walkable is one of the most important things we can do.

Living Streets Aotearoa is linked with a growing number of pedestrian organisations around the world. Earlier this year we joined the International Federation of Pedestrians. While local details may differ, local culture encourage diverse solutions and NZ innovation produce unique solutions, many aspects of walking's benefits and requirements are similar around the world.

We share the challenges of convincing retailers that their business fortunes do not depend on a single car park immediately outside their shop; convincing planners that promoting walking doesn't mean there's no room for other modes as appropriate; persuading councillors that voters care about safer streets and want an attractive public realm and that more people walking integrates benefits across social, environmental, health and economy. We share the difficulty that pedestrians don't identify as vocal advocates of walking since we are generally born with the equipment we need.

Our director has been business-like and effective in managing a wide range of projects we have been contracted to deliver and she has detailed them in her director's report. It's been a pleasure to work with Liz Thomas this year and see her breadth of understanding grow rapidly in the Transport sector and consolidate in local government, recreation and health. Lily Linton has contributed well both to the general office administration and to the process of Community Street Reviews. I'd like to thank the people who have contracted for specific projects and put in time and effort beyond the call of duty – Steve Abley, Brent Efford and Mike Mellor.

The Living Streets website usage and content has continued to grow. Our voluntary Webmaster, Robert Davies, deserves considerable credit. Accessibility has always been treated with the highest importance. It includes local and international links, events, maps, suggestions of who to consult and all our minutes and reports. Once the WalkIT database is fully functional we will re-evaluate what is held on www.livingstreets.org.nz

WalkWellington runs very informative walks for visitors every day in the summer. This is a most successful and rewarding initiative that could be replicated in other centres. Volunteers receive training on the routes' heritage and have their expense paid.

Living Streets Aotearoa's Executive Council members have worked hard on a number of activities from conference planning to strategic reviews of policy and communications strategy development. Meetings have been a combination of phone, email and face-to-face and our governance skills are increasing. Due to pressure of work, Hugh Barr has resigned during the course of the year. Debs Moir has decided to focus at the Wellington regional level so is not standing for re-election as Secretary.

Thanks for all your work with the newsletter, the maps advisory group and the data management you've done.

There was a very satisfactory turnout of Living Streets members at Walk21 in Melbourne. We take the need to keep our information and examples current seriously.

Sometimes a small organisation can find bureaucracy overwhelming but I am pleased that the individuals within the different transport agencies we work with are helpful, supportive of walking as an important mode of transport and recognise our role.

LSA continues to make the invisible visible, by bringing critical pedestrian issues to the attention of key national, regional and local agencies. I have seen tremendous growth in LSA since my first encounter in 2003. Their work with the likes of the Health Sponsorship Council (HSC), Land Transport NZ and the 2020 Communications Trust has led to the development of several projects that will immediately improve the walking climate in New Zealand. Examples include the WalkIT database, the biennial walking conference and the local user network development work. Let's not forget their contributions to shaping initiatives from the national walking strategy Getting there – on foot, by cycle.

LSA is also extremely active making submissions to both central and local government agencies on a range of strategies and plans. I haven't even mentioned my personal favourite, the highly successful 'yellow foot' awareness promotion. In addition to all of these notable achievements, LSA continues to work across sector boundaries to demonstrate how walking can deliver policy imperatives from the transport, environment and health sectors.

From Jason Morgan, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Transport

In 2007, we will need to extend that understanding to different sectors, including the media. We will also explore funding regional and national projects and research from the health and recreation sectors as well as transport and local government.

Kia kaha

Celia Wade-Brown