

Living Streets Aotearoa – President's Report 2022-23

Kia ora koutou,

It's been a busy year for Living Streets Aotearoa, both internally and in terms of our work as the New Zealand organisation for people on foot, promoting walking-friendly communities.

Before covering the highlights, I want to thank Vice-President Carina Duke, National Secretary Paula Wilkinson, National Treasurer Robin Rawson, and Executive Council members Ellen Blake, Gay Richards, Chris Teo-Sherrell, and Craig Stansfield for all their hard work for Living Streets Aotearoa this year – and also the many other LSA members who helped with the work at national level. In particular, I'd like to thank Mike Mellor for his work on submissions, and Meg Christie for her invaluable help organising the 2023 Walking Summit.

Gay Richards, our immediate past president, and Paula Wilkinson, National Secretary, are standing down at this AGM. I'd like to thank them both for their vital mahi over many years, and in particular, for the key role they played in getting LSA back on its feet after Andy Smith's most untimely death in 2021.

Before I talk about our external work in the past year, I want to mention some of the internal work we've carried out, the fruits of which you should soon see:

- Due to a very generous bequest from Andy Smith, our financial position is now stronger than it has ever been. Our Financial Report has more details.
- As a result of this, and for the first time in many years, we are now in a position to take on contract workers. We are currently advertising two part-time positions: a communications and campaign specialist, and an administration role. Once these positions are filled, they should considerably increase our capacity to work on behalf of pedestrians, and to support our members and the formation of new branches and local groups
- Due to the Incorporated Societies Act 2022, we've been required to review our Constitution. We've taken this opportunity to update the Constitution, and the revised Constitution is the subject of two resolutions to be considered at this AGM.

Our work promoting walking: taking opportunities, confronting threats

Delivering a successful Walking Summit was our top priority for 2023. Our fourth Walking Summit, and the first to be held in the South Island, was held in Ōtautahi Christchurch on 23-24 July. With 94 people registering, a wide range of speakers, panels and workshops, and many positive comments from participants, we think we pulled it off! Many thanks are due to the Summit organising committee, which consisted of Ellen Blake, Meg Christie, Carina Duke, Craig Stansfield and I, plus all the volunteers & contractors who helped to make the Summit a success – and to our sponsors, Waka Kotahi, Abley, ViaStrada and Healthy Families Ōtautahi Christchurch.

We have made significant steps in terms of Government policy on and attention to walking as a low-carbon, health-enhancing, people-friendly mode of transport, though we continue to face the twin

challenges of successfully advocating policy proposals for adoption, and getting good policies properly funded and properly implemented.

When the Government released its first Emissions Reduction Plan, we were very pleased to see the development of a National Walking Plan among the actions. We have been actively participating in the development of this Plan, which is led by Waka Kotahi. The key challenge now is to ensure that the many worthwhile actions in the Plan are approved, funded & put into practice.

Footpaths are for pedestrians, but businesses, Councils and the Government can't seem to resist the lure of cluttering them with tables, signs & vehicles. We continue to advocate for the rights of pedestrians to safe, well-maintained, unobstructed footpaths. To this end, we have:

- Campaigned for an end to e-scooter use on footpaths, both by means of a judicial review that was unfortunately unsuccessful, and in July-August 2023, via a social media and print media advertising campaign urging people to submit against the renewal of the 2018 e-scooter Gazette notice, which expires in September. We await a Government decision on this. Dr Chris Teo-Sherrell has played a key role in this campaign.
- Urged Waka Kotahi and Councils to follow Waka Kotahi's own guidance to build safe, separated infrastructure for pedestrians, and for cyclists. We see far too many proposals for second-rate shared paths! We've also submitted, often successfully, against various attempts to overturn proposals for separated infrastructure and force bikes onto the footpath.
- Continued our campaign against footpath parking – a highlight of which was getting Fair Go presenters to wave around our Yellow Feet at the end of their segment on the topic!

But pedestrian safety isn't just about unobstructed footpaths. We're also campaigning strongly in favour of safer road speeds. Alongside all this, we've posted on social media, made submissions, and talked to the media. We want to expand our role as the go-to organisation for the media to contact on issues that affect pedestrians, and increasing our comms capacity is one way to do this.

In the coming year, we want to encourage and support the establishment of more branches and local groups. Wellington Branch remains active, a Christchurch Branch is being established as a result of the Walking Summit, and we've recently heard of interest in setting up a Hawkes Bay branch.

In 2023, we changed from producing occasional e-Bulletins to sending out a shorter e-Bulletin 10x per year. We are also planning to make the wealth of resources on our website more easily findable.

The theme of this year's Walking Summit was "Walking into the Future". As the lowest-carbon, most fundamental form of transport, walking's future is bright – but all the same, walking, and the rights of pedestrians, are all too often overlooked. We want to amplify walking's voice to the point it can no longer be ignored.

Ngā mihi nui

Tim Jones,

President, Living Streets Aotearoa