President’s Report to the 2016 Annual General Meeting

This has been a busy and exciting year to be President of our Association. This report covers some of the highlights for 2015-2016.

The relationship with Wellington City Council

What a difference a year makes! In October 2015 we were reporting on making efforts to contact WCC officers to discuss longstanding issues with street cleaning and other maintenance, and the frustrations of not being able make progress with this. At the March meeting Jeanie McCafferty presented the first draft of a paper – “Newtown isn’t Rubbish but its Streets Are” – and we decided to write to the WCC CEO Kevin Lavery and invite him to come to one of our meetings. He came in May, with David Chick- newly arrived Chief City Planner, Geoff Swainson – Manager Transport and Solid Waste, and Deven Singh – Manager Transport Assets. Kevin Lavery heard our concerns and followed up with proposals that we have a working party with Council Officers and Contractors about our issues, and that WCC appoint an officer to liaise with Newtown. The working party has been delayed because one contract ended and the current one is temporary, but we have been invited to meetings at WCC to discuss problems, Council officers have come to NRA meetings, and we are developing good connections with key WCC personnel. In addition we have been consulted on the job description for the new WCC Newtown Community Liaison Officer, and the job has been advertised.

Many people have contributed to these outcomes; particular acknowledgement to Jeanie McCafferty, David Wilcock, Evelyn Hopkins and Steve Cosgrove for being active and persistent with street cleaning issues, and to Tom Law, Peter Frater and Jane Patterson for input into discussions with Jenny Rains, WCC Community Service Manager, about the new position.

Coincidentally while the above issues were being negotiated a longstanding WCC Long Term Plan commitment to redevelop community facilities in Newtown came to fruition. In this financial year (July 2016 – June 2017) there is $48,000 available to develop a concept through community engagement, to decide how to spend funding for capital projects of $610,137 in 2017/18 and $2,728,177 in 2019/20. Jenny Rains has asked our Association to take a lead role in the Community Engagement phase of this project. This means holding the $48,000 and contracting someone to do the work of engagement. I think that we are well placed to do this, and propose that we accept the invitation. Vogelmorn and Aro Valley have already been involved in similar projects, so we can learn from their experience.

Submissions

We have made submissions to Wellington City Council on the Town Belt Bill, the Dog Policy and the Animal Bylaw, and to Greater Wellington Regional Council on the Airport Runway Extension.
In May we made a submission on the **WCC 2016 Annual Plan** to the Governance, Finance and Planning Committee. It is preferable to make submissions on what should be in the Annual Plan during the pre-planning phase, but the call for such submissions came out in January and we don’t have business meetings in December or January. Anna Kemble Welch made a pre-planning submission in February on behalf of the NRA Festival Committee, proposing that WCC increase the funds available for events, but we didn’t manage to get any other ideas together. This year it would be good to discuss ideas in October and November, to be ready for the 2017 Plan.

The Festival Committee made a submission to the WCC Economic Growth and Arts Committee in April about the need for increased funding for the **Newtown Festival**. The positive response from Councilors was very heartening.

**Planning Issues**

In December we appeared at the hearing for **Plan Change 79**, opposing rezoning a property at 42b Riddiford. Although the rezoning was approved there were height limits imposed on any new building. The next step will be when any actual building plans are proposed.

We have been consulted by Residents on the plans for proposed developments at **4 Regent St** and at the **Mary Potter Hospice**. This is ongoing. My acknowledgements to Martin Hanley for his knowledge and experience with planning issues, and his willingness to put time and energy into these consultations.

**Other Consultations**

Association members have been involved with meetings about transport issues for the **Keep Wellington Moving** project run by GWRC, WCC and NZTA, and also about the future of the **Basin Reserve**.

**The Newtown Business Group Consultation**

In July the Newtown Business Group contracted Roger Tweedy to investigate ways of developing the Newtown Mainstreet. He consulted with a number of us in the process of doing this and in August reported back. One of his recommendations was that there should be **one Association for Newtown**, representing Residents and Businesses. The implications of this for our Association is something we need to discuss.

**Newtown Festival**

The 20th Newtown Festival Street Fair on Sunday March 6th 2016 was a great success, and this was acknowledged by a vote of thanks carried with acclamation at our March meeting. Copies of the Festival Report are available. Martin Hanley in his report will talk more about future plans.

**Keep Newtown Clean**

For a while after the NRA took over responsibility for Keep Newtown Clean we actively attempted to find a volunteer to take on the job of coordinator. This was unsuccessful and I took it on by default, but
I don’t regret it. We have a good routine going and I am pleased for our Association to have a presence on the streets in a ‘hands on’ fashion. Dave and Liz of SB Maintenance, graffiti removal contractors to WCC, are a great support. They are always there, and they do this as volunteers. Their efforts include visiting Newtown the day before, looking for what needs fixing, taking photos and preparing briefings for the KNC volunteers. They need a special vote of thanks, as do Newtown New World who donate all the supplies for the BBQ.

St Thomas’s Courtyard Garden Project

This started with doing some weeding as a Keep Newtown Clean activity in September 2015. We now have a joint project with St Thomas’s to completely renew the garden. It is right on Riddiford St and an important part of the Newtown streetscape. Cheryl Robilliard has donated her expertise in coming up with a plan, we have purchased plants and planting has started. It will take some time before the full vision is realised but it is underway. We applied for a Neighbours Day grant last year, and received $400. This went towards an afternoon tea in the Courtyard on 19th March, and also towards some of the garden costs. Many thanks to all who have donated time and expertise – and baking for the lovely afternoon tea!

Conclusion

I have enjoyed the experience of being President, and have learnt a great deal about all sorts of things, including WCC systems and planning processes. I am very grateful to everyone who has helped, by responding to emails, contributing to submissions, attending meetings, and in many other ways. A particular acknowledgement to Peter Frater, who was Treasurer for many years before standing down towards the end of last year, to Steve Cosgrove for taking notes at our meetings, and to Kevin Lethbridge for keeping the membership records.

I would be willing to continue in this role if that is the wish of the membership.

Rhona Carson
President.