



President's Report (Age Concern Hamilton) 2017-2018

It is my responsibility and pleasure to present the Annual Report on behalf of the Age Concern (Hamilton) Council for the year ending June 2018. This is my third year as President.

Age Concern Hamilton is a people-centred agency: in this case, the focus is placed upon seniors in the Hamilton/Waikato communities. Our mission statement states:

We provide responsive services and support to the wellbeing of older people in their own community.

Important components of this aspirational statement include providing a wide range of suitable services; these services are usually located close to where older people live; well-being (physical, psychological; social; cultural) is a crucial element; in whatever we engage the response is both supportive and as immediate, as practicable.

The breadth and depth of this work is discussed by the Executive Officer in his report but suffice to add that in order for our activities to be effective we need the continuing help of paid staff, Council members and a vast labour force of volunteers. Both the governance and operational groups need to be in harmony. In this particular Age Concern, I proudly attest to the collaboration making possible the considerable positive outcomes.

As expressed in the 2017 report, the ways in which a community/city treats older people can be taken as a measure of concern for community wellbeing. We are conscious of the unfortunate reality for some of our senior citizens – rising costs of living when on a fixed income; finding suitable accommodation when a housing crisis looms; being subject to elder abuse and neglect, usually from those close to us; not having someone to share our thoughts and feelings (social isolation). People throughout this organization continue to combine their resources and talents to maximise positive outcomes for older people. There is a real attempt to make this city into a truly Age-friendly environment going beyond the official rhetoric.

The period of this report covers both anticipated and unanticipated events. Since the previous report Aotearoa New Zealand has become acquainted with a new coalition government which on the surface has a more socially conscious agenda. It is our hope to capitalise on this situation by better promoting the issues faced by our older citizens. To this end, ACH's connections with the Age Concern New Zealand (ACNZ) assume greater significance. We are fortunate to have the National President, Peter Oettli, on this local Council; he is complemented by Gill Lawrence from ACH on the national board. Hence, the benefits work both ways: we regular get updates of the national agenda from Wellington and the central Age Concern is more aware of localised issues, in this case, from Hamilton.

ACH is aware of the importance of maintaining a regional presence through regular communication and meetings with Board members from Tauranga, Rotorua, Thames, Taupo and New Plymouth. Increasingly at both governance and managerial/staff levels we share perspectives and policies that may improve our services. This bid towards "regionalisation" is a conscious strategy to continue to build the reputation and good work of Age Concern whether in urban or rural sectors. One of the new initiatives is in developing a further site of Age Concern activities/services in Taumarunui, along similar lines to the previous successful co-operation with Thames that allowed that town and the Coromandel Peninsula to have access to services associated with Age Concern.

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Celebrating Age Centre 30 Victoria Street Hamilton 3204 New Zealand

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This Annual Report includes details of the operations of Age Concern Hamilton by our enterprising Executive Officer, Brent Nielsen. ACH is grateful for Brent's on-going commitment to improve the quality and scope of our services. There is a delicate balance between sustaining the effective patterns of work from the past based on "what really works" and to incorporate innovative approaches. The Taumarunui initiative is the outcome of several persons' work but Brent's dedication to this project is an example of innovation. In this Annual Report Brent reports on "core business" of this Age Concern in delivery of services to older people in the Hamilton/Waikato region – the Accredited Visiting Service, the Supportive Service, Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention, Health Promotion, a Shopping Service and a distinctive Education Programme. The tireless energy of all staff, through their enthusiasm and dedication, has enabled the maintenance of these important services, most delivered under contract. A challenge awaits us because of this relative financial dependence on securing contracts. We may need to think more extensively yet in terms of marketing and fund-raising.

The strategic direction of Age Concern (Hamilton) remains the Council's responsibility. The Treasurer's Report points to our still strong financial situation but we cannot remain complacent. Through our risk management strategy we continue to monitor risk in different spheres to maintain our confidence in continuing to provide effective and relevant services.

There have been minimal changes within the Council of Age Concern (Hamilton) during this financial year. We are fortunate to maintain a group with considerable expertise across many domains (legal; financial; strategic; research-informed; strongly community-anchored). I am especially indebted to Vice-President, Gill Lawrence, who has joined with me on many occasions to address emergent matters; Richard Jerram as our "legal mind" has been dedicated to helping to sort any legally-oriented matters; Evelyn Weir has been a major force behind addressing issues, previously having been National President; Peter Oettli from his national profile is always to the fore in our deliberations; Geoff Brazier for his longstanding wisdom and extensive networks; Paul Methven and Graham Borland, as relatively new members, continue to provide very insightful perspectives; Peter Mirams continues to help keep finances in a proper order. Finally, Irene Bryant, who joined the Council at the same time as myself (around 2011) has been the voice of rural women on ACH Council. Irene has indicated she will not seek re-election for the 2018-2019 year. We are grateful for her commitment and enthusiasm for our collective work. Overall, this Age Concern is indeed fortunate to have such a store of wisdom at its fingertips to support the work of dedicated staff. For myself, I am stepping down as President after around 30 months but I still intend to remain on the Council.

In its governance work, members of Council engage in on-going discussion of current issues affecting the needs of older people in Hamilton and the Greater Waikato. This occurs not only in full Council meetings but with more intensity in sub-committees - some ad hoc and some on a continuing basis. Special thanks to Council colleagues who have led such working groups on Finances, Risk Management, Celebrating Age Centre facilities, Sponsorship and Fund-Raising to address a specific issue. A case in point is the recent decision by the Hamilton City Council to divest itself of running community facilities. Along with the Executive officer, Council members have had to consider whether to stay or go from this building. The outcome has been that the operations of the CAC have become the responsibility of ACH, a decision that enables us to control business operating within this venue and uphold our autonomy.

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I am appreciative of all Council members' extra time and voluntary effort. Further, we are fortunate to have the excellent services of Marcia Black, Administration Manager for her expertise in financial operations and of Anne Clarke, Minutes Secretary, for her thorough recording of our Council deliberations.

The Council has been deliberate in fostering effective relationships with other kindred organizations. We have strong connections with growing numbers of other affiliated agencies such as the Rauawaawa Kaumātua Charitable Trust and we continue to enhance the work and reputation of ACH in providing meaningful services to seniors. Last year I reported on the need for us to provide more value-added benefits to members as part of a more enhanced marketing plan. We have been fortunate to recently recruit Leonie Woutersen on the staff to focus on recruitment, and benefits to members. We continue as a Council to reach out to other groups whose kaupapa is consistent with ours so we can be relevant to more diverse seniors.

To conclude, this has been another year of exciting developments and continuing challenges which have been effectively negotiated by the solid work of committed staff and Council members with whom I am proud to be associated. We rely on strong support from members, friends and stakeholders. Members and friends of the Age Concern Hamilton remain essential to our work and we appreciate this on-going support.

Professor Brian Findsen
President

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