

This is my first report as Chair of the Wellington Branch of the Muscular Dystrophy Association of New Zealand.

One of the first decisions made by the new committee following the AGM in March 2015 was to employ a new part time fieldworker.

As our current field worker Dympna had been appointed as a research assistant for the MD-PREV study she would be splitting her time between her field worker role and her work on the research study.

It was therefore decided, in order to maintain field worker coverage that we would aim to recruit a field worker based in the central North Island on a part time, fixed term basis.

A number of applications were received and after interviewing shortlisted candidates we were pleased to offer the role to Penny Piper.

Penny is based in Hawkes Bay and she is responsible for the provision of the field work service on the east coast of the North Island as far north as Gisborne and the Manawatu (Palmerston North) region. Dympna retained responsibility for the Hutt Valley/Wellington region and west coast of the North Island up to Taranaki.

Penny's employment is due to terminate on 30 June 2016. The branch committee will consult with the fieldworkers along with National Office (the employers) so a decision can be made on the future make-up of the fieldworker service in the MDAW region beyond this date.

It was decided that we would trial holding committee meetings by Skype this year, particularly as one committee member does not live in Wellington.

I would have to say this was partially successful. My intention going forward would be to suggest to the incoming committee that we aim to have a couple of face to face meetings in the coming year with the rest by Skype and review again at the end of the year.

Wellington branch members had the opportunity to meet with the new CE, Ronelle Baker when she visited Wellington in October and a meeting at the Workingmen's Club in Petone was well attended. This provided an opportunity for Ronelle to introduce herself and outline her vision and future goals for MDA and for members to raise any issues they wished.

This year we tried a new venue for our Christmas function which was the Quality Hotel in Cuba St, Wellington.

The central city location proved to be more suitable for some members who had found it difficult to attend functions in previous years in Upper Hutt which resulted in a good turnout. It would therefore seem to be a good venue for this function again this year.

The branch aims to obtain enough income through donations, fund raising and grant applications to fund the office manager and field worker positions. Historically the Wellington branch has struggled to raise funds but in 2014 with the implementation of a strategic funding plan we ended up with a small surplus of just over \$1,700 which was a very good result.

Unfortunately, this year despite our best efforts a large drop in grant income combined with an increase in expenses has resulted in a deficit for the 2015 financial year (1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015) of approximately \$24,000.

National Office employs and pays our office manager and fieldworkers and we then reimburse National Office. While there are agreements in place with National Office which means they will cover a shortfall in funding in regard to salaries a deficit of such magnitude is of serious concern.

I think it will be difficult in the current environment of numerous demands on a shrinking pool to increase our grant income above current levels.

I will be raising the issue of the deficit and funding issues with the CE prior to the National Council meeting in Wellington on 16 April.

I know that when Liz Mills took on setting up the Wellington branch as a separate entity having a Wellington fieldworker was a top priority.

Hopefully, with the help of NO a plan around future funding can be developed so that we can maintain the fieldworker service.

Finally, I would be the first to admit that I underestimated how difficult it would be to carry out my role as chair while working full time and managing my condition.

Hopefully, if I am re-elected to the position I can manage the demands on my time more successfully in the coming year.

I would like to thank the committee for their input and support and I would like to especially thank Margaret for all her hard work over the past few years. I wish her all the best for her retirement.

Peter