



Muscular Dystrophy  
New Zealand  
Southern Regions

# Southern Region Branch

Charities commission registration CC33429

## Winter Edition

### May 2017

#### From the Chairperson

Introducing the Newish Chairperson for MDA Southern Region.



I would like to wish a warm welcome to those of you who are new to our branch and I would like to take the opportunity to say hello to those who are not new but have not heard from me before, some of you know me from years gone by.

By way of introduction, my name is Robbie and I am a 62-year-old parent who has had 2 boys one of whom had SMA type 2 which initiated contact with MDANZ 30 years ago.

I have served on our committee before as secretary and on National Council as branch rep but that was a long time ago.

I work as a builder and am looking forward to the day that I can hang up my nailbelt, not too far away now... I am also a tramper and love the outdoors. My only experience in chairing a committee has been on our tramping club when I was president for a while. Barb and I live by the North Branch of the Waianakarua River in North Otago. We have been here 4 years and love our environment with a passion.

Last year we felt able to seek out some more active involvement within the branch committee. We realized what a massive job Raewyn had been doing for quite some time and that she could do with a hand. One thing led to another and here I am now coming to grips with this job and finding my way around the way things happen for this branch.

Because I am a tramper I tend to not beat about the bush if you'll pardon the pun, but to call a thing what it is. My hope is that this branch can become one where members become known to one another to a degree that suits all parties and serves to support one another and that we can value that support noticeably.

In some areas, this works and I am aware that certain member groups get together regularly which is great. I hope that this can expand and develop resulting in a sense of identity.

Some big positive changes have occurred for our branch in the past 12 months. The biggest thing is that we now have a fieldworker, Jo Smith, who in a short time has established herself as a major asset to members. If you have not met Jo yet I am sure that you will soon enough. Jo works energetically based from our HQ, the MS Rooms at 8 Baker Street in Dunedin. She has been traveling about in our large catchment and catching up with members offering support and information.

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Having a Fieldworker service does entail costs. Our branch funds this service directly and this requires us to be on the ball targeting organisations to raise the required funds. So, this vigilance is quite intense and so is the reporting side of running a charity with a much higher degree of accountability required. To help us in this area we are hoping to share the service of a new branch manager with our neighbours, Canterbury Branch. The appointment of this person will be made soon.

As a committee, we need to recognise the skills needed to keep up with developments and then apply these so that we provide the governance needed to keep all the balls in the air.

I have called a committee meeting to be held in Gore at the Croydon Lodge starting at 1.00pm. I want to invite any other member of our branch to attend this meeting. Your presence would be welcome, the discussions we need to have will be interesting and if it gets really boring I'll get my didgeridoo out and give you a wee blast on that. If you want,

we could meet for lunch at about 12 just adjacent to the meeting venue.

By coming you would meet others in the branch and help shape the branch into a thing of beauty. I know that we are different to a club, the thing we have in common is a lived experience of a neuromuscular condition, this is still plenty of reason to create a collective bond of support of and for one another because of the understanding that has come from this experience.

The discussion may well turn the other way and we may find that there is not enough support and energy to keep going as a branch, either way it is important for as many members as possible to be involved in this process.

Loss of the branch would not necessarily mean the end of any service from MDANZ, this is likely to continue in some form, but it would have a strong effect on the local identity of that service and to the faces of MDANZ that locals can relate to.

I hope to see you at our meeting, if you are intending to go please let me know if you are interested in coming for lunch as well so that arrangements can be made.

My contacts are:

Email: [robbie.verhoef@yahoo.co.nz](mailto:robbie.verhoef@yahoo.co.nz)

Mobile: 0210449437 (text or call)

Landline: 03 434 6353.



*Southern Branch Committee*

### **Fieldworker Update**

It has been a busy 6 months since the Fieldworker service began in Otago and Southland. Jo Smith has been getting out to the regions meeting lots of members, health professionals and community organisations. The service is growing in profile and has received an impressive 16 new referrals since starting.

Part of this promotion has happened via Otago Access Radio 105.4 where Jo creates shows that are broadcast live and available for download as podcasts. Just head to the following webpage <http://www.accessradio.org/AllEpisodes.aspx> and search Jo Smith, to listen to one of Jo's interesting shows.



The office established in Baker Street, Dunedin is now fully functional with plenty of space to hold a social get together. There is an established coffee group that meet in Dunedin twice monthly for parents of children with disabilities. This fun and friendly group is run by Parent to Parent and Jo can link interested parents with this group.

Jo is always on the lookout for ideas and is very keen to support and engage with our members – she has plans to run a men's only event soon. Please get in touch if you want to be more involved, have ideas for services in your area, or just want to meet up with others for social connection.

Fieldworker contact details:

Jo Smith  
Fieldworker  
027 509 8775  
Email: [joanne@mda.org.nz](mailto:joanne@mda.org.nz)

### **Seasons for Growth Pilot**

This programme is coming to a town near you soon! In collaboration with National Office in Auckland, the Southern Region Branch will be running some education and support programmes under a framework called "Seasons for Growth". This is a unique education

programme that uses the imagery of the seasons to illustrate the experience of grief, loss and adaptation to change.

Jo will be facilitating this programme, and offering a 3-hour adult seminar in Invercargill and North Otago, as well as a more in-depth 4 week group programme in Dunedin. Please contact Jo for more information.

### **Freedom Campaign 2017**

MDANZ awareness month is in September with a nationwide street appeal day on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September. We are looking for volunteers that could spare some time or are able to donate items for raffles. Your time and generosity is greatly appreciated. Please contact our Branch Chairperson, Robbie Verhoef.

### **Pneumonia Vaccine**

We are promoting the pneumonia vaccine to our members as winter approaches. The National Office will reimburse the cost of the Pneumovax 23 vaccine which provides cover for 23 bacterial strains that can cause pneumonia. The vaccine only does not have to be repeated every year like a flu vaccine and has a one-off cost between \$65 and \$80 depending on the fee your GP charges. Please discuss the pneumococcal vaccine with your GP. If your GP recommends you also have the Prevenar 13 vaccination (which is a much higher cost), you are welcome to apply to the MDANZ Member's Discretionary Fund for further help toward these additional costs. The Discretionary Fund has a specific process and criteria. To find out more please visit [www.mda.org.nz](http://www.mda.org.nz) or contact Miriam Hanna for information – toll free on 0800 800 337 or email [miriamh@mda.org.nz](mailto:miriamh@mda.org.nz)

