

## **AGM Chairs Report 2021**

### **Whanganui Literary Festival Trust**

9 B Peakes Rd, Whanganui 5.30 pm, 29/9/21

It is my honour and task as Chair to report on the operations of the Literary Trust since our last AGM.

Our aim as a Trust is to organise Literary Festivals in Whanganui. In doing so, the Trust will:

- Promote reading and literacy within the wider community;
- Foster, and facilitate, educational seminars on writing, publishing and other related activities to the public;
- Present and promote books and their authors to the people of Whanganui and other interested people from outside the area;
- Expose Whanganui readers and others to the authors of books they have enjoyed reading, and:
- Provide other support and assistance consistent with these charitable purposes.

The 2020 – 2021 period has certainly been an interesting period for us all, with the impacts of Covid 19 producing change across all areas of the arts world. We have felt the impacts of lockdown and variations on daily life throughout our region but we have maintained our usual routine of organising the 2021 Festival twelve months ahead of time.

Heather Johnson resigned from the Trust in August 2020, as a result of her re-location to Wellington for work. We were sorry to lose her but she has assured us she will continue to help us as a volunteer during the authors' weekend of the 2021 Festival.

In October 2020, we began compiling our long list for authors for the 2021 Literary Festival. By December, we had finalised our list to the following authors: Deborah Challinor, Mary Holm, Brannavan Gnanalingam, Tom Sainsbury, Cynric Temple-Camp, Christine Leunens, Pip Adam and David Hill. All authors had accepted by the end of January, including that of Dr Hinemoa Elder who accepted our invitation to be the 2021 Festival key note speaker.

In January 2021, the Whanganui District Council confirmed that \$6000.00 had been set aside as funding for the Festival. We were also successful in our grant application to Creative New Zealand, with \$7650 allocated to us, our largest amount of funding from CNZ to date. In May, we were granted \$7577.00 by The Lion Foundation to help cover costs for venue hire and brochure and poster expenses.

In February, Katherine Lockton submitted her resignation as Secretary due to her relocating to Blenheim to live. In March, Helen Frances tendered her letter of resignation from our committee, citing over commitment in her work load. Helen

has been a stalwart of our Trust since before 2017 so we were extremely sorry to lose her. However, fortunately for us, Helen has remained as supportive of the Literary Festival as ever and assists us with small projects where she can. At the same meeting, Brenda Baxter agreed to be our new Minute Secretary.

As part of the Artists Open Studio Weekend on 27 March, we helped Joan Rosier-Jones organise a Works in Progress event at the Alexander Library. Six local authors were asked to read part of their works and members of the public showed their appreciation by contributing to a koha collection. It was well attended with over 30 people present and left people wanting to hear more from each of the six authors present.

Since November 2020, we have been fortunate to share a common love of literature with the Embassy of Ireland in Wellington and we now receive various invitations to Irish literary events in the capital as and when they happen. It is my belief that networking is an important (and most enjoyable) part of being on a committee and one never knows where a social relationship may lead to. We continue to enjoy the connection we have with Peter Ryan, Irish Ambassador to New Zealand and with his Embassy.

On 10 July, the Trust held a Brochure Launch event at the Gonville Library. With wine, cheese and nibbles, the event was a big success with over 50 attendees and good coverage by the River City Press. It was a reminder to us that we have a loyal following of supporters in Whanganui and they want us to maintain the tradition of organising a biennial literary festival every bit as much as we do!

On August 18, the country went into Alert Level Four lockdown. It soon became clear that a decision needed to be made about the future of the 2021 Festival. On September 13, the WLFT Trust made the difficult decision to postpone the 2021 Festival to mid-February 2022. The new dates for the Festival are set to 16 – 27 February.

Jenn Falconer has continued to offer her home as a venue for our committee meetings and this offer is warmly appreciated by our committee. Apart from a few exceptions, we hold our meetings at Jenn's place at 5.30pm on Wednesday's, usually on a monthly basis.

We continue to maintain close links with fellow Whanganui organisations such as the Sarjeant Gallery, Space Studio & Gallery, the Davis and Gonville Libraries, Paiges Bookshop, Whanganui & Partners and the Whanganui District Council.

A big thanks must go to those individuals, and other businesses and organisations who have supported us with our planning for the 2021 (now 2022) Literary Festival. Thank you, too, to our Treasurer, Brenda Collins who has spent much time and energy promoting the 2021 Literary Festival on Facebook for us. This has been much appreciated.

Finally, to my fellow Trustees and committee members and Joan, our Patron, we could not do what we do as a Literary Festival Trust without you.

I look forward to working with you all in the year ahead.

Nga mihi nui

Mary-Ann Ewing

Chair of the Whanganui Literary Festival Trust  
September 2021