

## **Living Streets Aotearoa President's Report 2023-24**

Kia ora koutou,

It's been another busy year for Living Streets Aotearoa as we continue our work to promote walking-friendly communities and to make life better and safer for people on foot.

I want to thank Vice-President Carina Duke, National Secretary Craig Stansfield, National Treasurer Robin Rawson, and Executive Council members Ellen Blake, Caroline McElnay and Chris Teo-Sherrell for all their work for Living Streets Aotearoa this year. I'd also like to thank our admin contractor Sally Pearce and our Comms contractor Philippa Sargent, both of whom were appointed shortly after the 2023 AGM, for all their work to make LSA run more smoothly and expand our reach on traditional and social media. Philippa is finishing her contract next month, and we will miss her comms expertise!

Carina Duke and Robin Rawson are standing down from their named positions at this AGM, although both are standing for re-election to our Executive Council. I'd like to thank them for their work as Vice-President and Treasurer respectively. Carina's expert knowledge in best practice for walking infrastructure, and her walking advocacy in and for Ōtautahi / Christchurch and the South Island more generally, continues to be invaluable, and Robin's expertise, energy and eye for detail has helped to greatly improve our financial management. I'm delighted that she intends to stay on Exec to help our incoming Treasurer.

Ellen Blake is not standing for re-election to the Executive Council. Ellen has been a tireless, passionate advocate for walking and for Living Streets Aotearoa for many years and has played a huge role in organising Living Streets Aotearoa events, including recent Walking Summits, the Golden Foot Walking Awards and Walk2Work Day. We will miss her energy and enthusiasm.

### **Events**

Our major events since the last AGM have been our annual Walk2Work Day and the biennial Golden Foot Walking Awards.

Walk2Work Day was held on 13 March 2024. Awareness of Walk2Work Day is spreading – on the day itself, we got a message from a Southland radio station asking if it could take part in the 2025 edition, which is encouraging!

Our Golden Foot Walking Awards 2024 were held at Parliament on 23 July, hosted by Celia Wade-Brown QSO MP, who of course is a former President of Living Streets Aotearoa. Many of the 20 finalists and 7 category winners were present at Parliament for the ceremony, which was also broadcast via Zoom. For the first time, we awarded an overall winner award, the Andy Smith Award, named after our former President who died so sadly and suddenly in 2021. This was awarded to Wilderness Magazine for its very successful Walk1200km programme, and the award was presented to editor Alistair Hall.

In the couple of weeks after the ceremony, awards and finalist certificates were presented to winners and finalists who couldn't be there on the night. We get consistent feedback about how much the recipients appreciate getting, and are motivated by, these awards.

This year, we had Golden Foot Walking Awards finalists from Kaikohe to Southland and gave awards and certificates to projects including a low-traffic neighbourhood, a sculpture trail, raised pedestrian crossings, and many more – you can find the full list on our website. My thanks go to Ellen Blake, Philippa Sargent, and Carina Duke for their work in organizing and publicizing the awards, and to my fellow award judges, Robin Rawson and Mike Mellor, as well as to Celia Wade-Brown MP, and Parliamentary staff.

Living Streets Aotearoa also played a part in organising the biennial 2WalkandCycle Conference, held in Wellington in March 2024, and I'm pleased to say that, as well as providing an early opportunity for walking and cycling advocates to gather following the election, the conference was also financially successful.

### **Walking provision, pedestrian safety and Government policy**

With the change of Government, and consequent change in political direction, following the 2023 General Election, we've been able to advance a couple of significant policy priorities, while others have come to a halt or are under threat.

On the positive side, following a meeting with Minister of Transport Simeon Brown on 21 May to discuss pedestrian safety and footpath provision, the Minister amended the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport to acknowledge the important contribution of walking and earmark 25% of the Walking and Cycling Improvements budget in the National Land Transport Fund for walking:

To recognise the importance of walking and how it interacts with other modes, 25 percent of funding on new improvements should be directed towards footpaths and other walking projects. (GPS on Land Transport 2024, p. 32)

Living Streets Aotearoa has consistently advocated for separate Walking and Cycling activity classes to be established, with each being properly funded, and we will continue to do so. Nevertheless, we regard this as a significant step in recognising walking's unique contribution to our transport system, and we're pleased the Minister decided to make this change to the draft GPS.

However, many other aspects of the Government's transport policies are not good for pedestrians. Total funding for walking and cycling has been cut, funding for walking and other low-carbon transport projects from the Climate Emergency Response Fund has been disestablished, and the speed limit reductions introduced by the previous Government are proposed to be rolled back, despite the strong evidence that this will lead to more pedestrian deaths and serious injuries. We will continue to advocate for safe, properly funded, purpose-built pedestrian infrastructure, and for slower vehicle speeds to reduce the risk of death and serious injury to pedestrians.

## **Living Streets Aotearoa's communications, media presence and social media**

With the expert help of Philippa Sargent, we have substantially increased our traditional and social media presence. While we've been in the media throughout the last 12 months on topics including safer speeds and scooters on footpaths, our Golden Foot Walking Awards 2024 received particularly strong media coverage both in the leadup and the aftermath.

On social media, we now have active Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter accounts, and our website is now more frequently updated with news and events. Our eBulletin is sent out 10 times per year to our members, supporters, and contacts.

The software running our current website will need a major upgrade in 2025. Therefore, we will be taking the opportunity to redevelop our website to ensure it has up-to-date content, meets contemporary website design standards, and is more easily navigable.

## **Ensuring a sustainable financial future for Living Streets Aotearoa**

As I reported at the 2023 AGM, we received a very generous bequest from the estate of Andy Smith, our former President, which has already enabled us to bring our admin and comms contractors on board. We are seeking to invest this bequest in ways which both provide enough money to cover our operating expenses and ensure the long-term future of the organisation, giving us a secure base from which we can look to expand our operations in pursuit of our objectives.

In line with decisions taken at our Executive Council Face-to-Face gathering in March 2024, we approached a number of investment advice companies for proposals to act as Living Streets Aotearoa's investment advisers, and we are currently deciding between these proposals. I anticipate that we will have an investment adviser in place, and will be implementing their advice, well before the end of this calendar year. I want to give especial thanks to Chris Teo-Sherrell and Robin Rawson for all their work in ensuring that we receive the best possible investment advice in line with our goals and values.

## **Updated Constitution**

The passage of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 required us to amend our Constitution to ensure it complied with the Act, and to enable us to re-register as an Incorporated Society, as required under the Act. We took the opportunity to make some additional changes, without changing our core mission to advocate for walking and for pedestrians. This revised Constitution, first presented to members at the 2023 AGM, was subsequently further revised on the basis of advice from members and was approved at a Special General Meeting held on 10 April 2024. We have since completed the re-registration process with the Companies Office.

Ngā mihi nui  
Tim Jones,  
President, Living Streets Aotearoa