

Coordinators' Report for the Annual General Meeting of the National Council of Home Educators NZ

Saturday 19 June, 2011

The past twelve months has been a year of growth for NCHENZ, numerically and financially. The services that NCHENZ offers have also expanded, mainly through the operation of the website. The addition of Majon and Stacey to the committee brought a fresh infusion of enthusiasm and new skills.

Individual membership levels are good, with the number of new members still increasing and the online renewal process operating effectively. The number of individual members is around seventy five, while group financial membership remains steady at eight. Developing strategies to improve the levels of group membership would be a worthwhile task for the new committee to address in the coming year. Financially, NCHENZ is in a comfortable position, as outlined in the financial report.

An innovation this past year has been the introduction of Quarterly Newsletters to keep our members more regularly informed about NCHENZ activities, and these newsletters seem to have been well received. We have also continued to offer Student ID cards for homeschooled students throughout the country. This service is much appreciated.

The website continues to be the main source of information and support provided by NCHENZ. This year's activities have included the addition of online forms for individuals and member groups to join NCHENZ as well as student ID card application forms. Twenty eight home education networking groups are now friends or group members of NCHENZ, receiving newsletters and other communications. The website has been upgraded to cater for these new resources.

A report of the liaison meeting between ERO and NCHENZ held on June 17, 2001, has also been added to the website. A copy of a letter written to Paula Bennett regarding the loss of exemption from work requirements for home educating parents has been posted on the website, as well as information for members concerning changes in the law related to this issue. And for a change in emphasis, an article on music in the community has been added. There is great potential for the expansion of services on the website, and I hope this topic will generate some useful discussion during general business.

Several issues affecting homeschoolers have arisen in the last year, and NCHENZ has been involved in liaising with other home education groups and individuals to work together for good outcomes. The change in the law regarding exemptions from work requirements has caused many home educating single parents a great deal of angst. NCHENZ supported the setting up of an email group to provide information and support to single home educating parents. In some parts of the country applicants for new homeschooling exemptions have been frustrated by what seemed a pedantic attitude by some MOE officers. This problem has been solved in Auckland with a change of personnel at the MOE office.

Access for homeschoolers to Cambridge International and changes to New Zealand University entry criteria have been two major issues for homeschoolers. The networking functions of NCHENZ have been well used to disseminate information and provide support to those from the homeschooling community involved in dealing with these problems. The Government has proposed in the budget a merger of ERO with NZQA. The implications of this for home edu-

cation are unclear, and this issue will be an item on the agenda of this year's liaison meeting with ERO hosted by NCHENZ, and scheduled for July 12, 2011.

The issue of amending the constitution in order to reapply for Charity Status has been a challenging one for NCHENZ over several years. This year, the members have been able to decide upon wording changes that, hopefully, will satisfy the Charities Commission and still retain the fundamental aims and objects upon which NCHENZ was founded.

As my term as coordinator concludes I would like to acknowledge the people who have facilitated this task. Firstly, my thanks go to Marianne Wilson, the previous coordinator, for her support and advice. Tarnya has done some sterling work on the website, making major improvements, even under the most difficult of personal circumstances. My thanks also to Michelle and Maddy, both of whom are also resigning from the committee this AGM, for their invaluable contributions in the roles of treasurer and minutes secretary. Last, but not least, I have been very much encouraged and inspired by the enthusiasm that Stacey and Marjon have brought to the committee this year, as well as the wonderful skills they have contributed to the task.

I see the future for NCHENZ as very positive. The number of homeschooling support groups now linked with NCHENZ confirms the need for a national networking system. There is great potential for NCHENZ to expand its services to the homeschooling community. Liaison with government departments continues to be an important function of NCHENZ. However, achieving these goals requires people willing to be involved. With the resignations at this AGM the committee needs two more people to function within its constitutional requirements. I hope that some more members will step forward and take up the challenge.