

Epilepsy Waikato Charitable Trust AGM, 13th October 2015

**Chair’s report**

I welcome all attendees at the 2015 AGM of EWCT. The aim of the trust is to provide support to all those who live with epilepsy, and their families and friends, in the Waikato region. Through the epilepsy advisor and our team of trustees, EWCT has been able to provide an outstanding service to these people.

1. EWCT board members firstly want to thank Maria Lowe, our epilepsy advisor, for her many hours dedicated to providing service to those in our community, and her work in numerous other roles (noted below). Maria reports monthly to the EWCT board.

I also want to acknowledge and thank the board of trustees for their commitment to the aims of the trust and for their many dedicated hours in ensuring this aim is attained. Our special thanks go to our patron, Tim Macindoe, MP for Hamilton West, who continues to strongly support EWCT and our work and vision. Trustees Ai-Ee Teo (secretary), Faith Gibbs (funding), and Cyril Markham (treasurer) are also especially thanked for their very significant work on the trust.

I also would like to acknowledge our members who have shown their support and appreciation in many ways to EWCT.

1. Epilepsy advisor’s work

We have continued to grow under the enthusiasm and vision of our advisor, who undertakes numerous roles, including those summarised below.

*Support*

Maria has supported members and clients in the hospital and in their homes and work places. A new epilepsy support group has been formed in Tokoroa.

*Talks/training*

Maria’s work has included many educational talks to schools, families, and community groups in Hamilton and the wider Waikato region including the Coromandel Peninsula. She even made a special visit to talk to staff at Rangipo Prison, Turangi.

In-service training has made the community more aware of epilepsy and how to assist anyone having a seizure. Through these talks, those living with epilepsy will find themselves living in a more accepting and caring community. Educational talks continue to be seen as an important role of our advisor. Attendees can receive certificates of attendance from EWCT.

*Courses and social events*

Together with Methodist City Action, Maria also organised a weekly course “Cooking with Confidence” which has been very popular and well attended by EWCT members and people from other community groups. The course has aimed to develop skills and knowledge in cooking applicable to daily living and as a means of social contact. Another successful course run regularly by EWCT trustee Wade Limpus (together with Sharon Jeffries, Blind Foundation) is “Job Chat”.

Bi-monthly social get-togethers are held at Frescas Café where a warm welcome is assured. The mid-winter Christmas dinner in June this year was very well attended with many new members coming along. An annual outing is undertaken each year for members (we are scheduled to go to Wing Span, Rotorua, later this year).

*Referrals Waikato Hospital*

More contact has been made with the Neurology Department at Waikato Hospital this year, with staff asking Maria for support (referrals) for clients with epilepsy and their families. The client base has doubled over the past year based on these and other referrals. Staff of the Department have warmly acknowledged the assistance from Maria and EWCT in helping their patients/clients.

*Note*: EWCT **members** are people who have epilepsy, or people who have an interest or association with epilepsy, and who have opted to be registered on the EWCT database as members; **clients** are people who have received advice and support directly from the epilepsy advisor, and who have opted to be registered on the EWCT database as clients.

1. EWCT website and communication with members

The website is a very important tool for EWCT in education and in advising members and clients of upcoming events and recording events already held. It is run by our professional webmaster Antony Booker of **Spindle Media**

Content is managed and prepared largely by Maria and continues to provide information on all of the activities of EWCT, including as follows.

- Educational material, in the form of fact sheets including a number of new fact sheets prepared this year

- Social activities are advertised and continue to be well attended and enjoyed by us all, with ‘news alerts’ and ‘newletters’ advertising upcoming events prepared and emailed to members (or posted to members who have no internet access) every month or so

- EWCT also has a well-followed **Facebook** page run by Maria

- Digital storytelling: five new personal stories have been added to the blog site in the last year

- Google analytics help us to follow the most visited pages on the website and has been a valuable tool

1. New developments/activities this year

**Children’s book “Ben’s Buddies”**

This book, written by award-winning author Sharon Holt and illustrated by Deborah Hinde, was published late last year by EWCT. It was translated into te reo Maori by Dr Ray Harlow. ANZ Staff Foundation and Harcourts Foundation generously provided funding. The book, launched at a special function at Frescas Café, has proven to be very popular with children, families, and schools. Libraries throughout the country are requesting copies for their own communities. These are proudly provided (with a charge to cover postage and help build funds for possible reprinting). Interest has also been shown from the Epilepsy Association in the UK who have contacted the author of the book and Maria.

A second children’s book is now in the process of being developed.

**Seizure diary**

EWCT in conjunction with Seizure Support Northland has developed and published an epilepsy seizure diary, which has been provided free to many members and clients in the Waikato region and in Northland, and to the Neurology Dept., Waikato Hospital. It is a very valuable tool that can be used to help identify an individual’s seizure pattern, assisting them in managing the risks with the aim to reduce seizure events.

**Advisor’s car**

Funds from WEL Energy Trust and Sky City Hamilton Community Trust, and support from Royale Cars, enabled EWCT to purchase a Nissan Tiida car for the advisor to use. Acquiring this car, now nicely signwritten with our logo, has been a big step forward for EWCT.

**Epilepsy awareness week/month**

In the first week of November 2014, EWCT ran an “Epilepsy Awareness Week” to help the community be more aware of epilepsy and the EWCT trust. With a press release and special posters and stickers using the theme “Go car-free for epilepsy”, the week was very successful. We have planned a 2015 “Epilepsy Awareness Month” this November, each week of which will feature a different theme including “Go car-free for epilepsy”.

**Display stands at expos**

EWCT this year had stands (displays) at both the Wellbeing Waikato Show and The Women’s Lifestyle Expo, where we provided information about epilepsy and details of EWCT and its role in the Waikato. These are an excellent way to make a large number of people of the wider community aware of help that is available.

**New banner**

A new banner was prepared this year to go with our distinctive flag and other branding material such as our fliers and business cards featuring our logo.

**Business plan**

EWCT developed an updated business plan this year (with support from member Grant Goodman) in accord with our constitution that examined our current position and identified a range of strategies and goals for the short- to long-term.

**Revised constitution to meet new requirements of Charities Services**

Charities Services (previously known as Charities Commission) recently undertook a review of the written purpose statements of many organisations including EWCT, and asked us (and other charities) to revise the wording pertaining to the charitable aims of the trust as recorded in the constitution. Consequently, we revised and amended our constitution as requested. Our submissions were accepted by the Charities Services and our constitution has been amended.

1. Sponsors and donors

We really appreciate all who have donated to EWCT or sponsored our efforts in our latest financial year. Some sponsors have been mentioned above. With the greatest respect and appreciation to you all, I will mention some. The Lotteries Grant Board and G & J Gallagher Trust assisted significantly towards paying the advisor’s salary, WEL Energy Trust provided a major portion of funds for the car (noted earlier), and Sky City and COGS were also important funders. Other funding trusts have together provided the necessary funds to run EWCT, and all are acknowledged on our website and on our letterhead documents.

As we look into the future, our vision is to continue to provide services to people living with epilepsy, their families and supporters, and to enhance our support.

Jill Davies

Chairperson