

Featherston Community Centre Chairman's report for 2021-2022

2021-2022 - A topsy-turvy time. But we weathered it well.

The Medical Centre has settled in as a good neighbor and we continue to work with Aruni to keep our relationship tight.

Having the Vaccination Centre here during the 2021-22 year may have subjected the building and grounds to some extra stress, but we generally came out of it in good shape. We'll have to get the car-park re-painted and we had to do a bit of re-decorating, but even so, having a regular tenant during that critical time really helped, so we won't complain.

The added foot traffic has built the FCC profile throughout the South Wairarapa and we continue to see new faces booking rooms and spaces.

Our new manager, Jo Baldwin, is working out well, showing great initiative and skill in both facility management and customer relations. We are thrilled to have Jo on board. I notice she refers to rooms as 'hers' and she certainly manages them as if they were her own, and our guests as her friends. Jo planned and executed the foyer refurbishment project and we now have a far better, more welcoming and effective reception area.

We also welcomed three new board members last year – Jack Sheppard and Ian Grigor were new members of the board team last year and Pratik Trivedi, an accountant living in Wellington, took up the treasurer role. Pratik has since returned to India on family business and we recently welcomed local Featherstonian business-woman Marianne McMillan in his place. Darrin Goulding has also joined our Board in the last couple of months and brings a wealth of skill and experience in public sector management and fiscal policy.

The board has worked together well in overseeing the policies and practices of the Community Centre. There is necessarily a period of settling in for each new member, during which time we discover each other's strengths and as this process unfolds, we will make better use of individual capacities and capabilities. Cheryl Linge has used her vast experience and knowledge, born from many years in corporate executive positions throughout the country, to great effect as secretary to the Trust Board.

With any luck, you will not have noticed that the Featherston Phoenix is under new governance. Annelise Schroeder has decided that she has done enough behind the editorial keyboards and the FCCT decided to take over the governance role in March 2022. From April on, the FCCT Board has been providing policy and financial support while allowing the new editor and designer team to concentrate on making a great local oracle work even better than it had been. Marisa King and Kristi Chalmers are working together to keep the news fresh and informative while providing low-cost advertising for our local businesses. The challenge will be keeping the news/ad balance right while maintaining good fiscal performance.

We hatched plans for two major projects during 21-22 which will be realised this coming year.

One is the kitchen upgrade.

What began as a simple upgrade to the existing kitchen area had grown legs and become a major re-imagining of the role the FCC could play among the other community organisations that keep our region functioning. One of the most fundamental services needed in our region is food security and resilience. We have developed a plan to install a new kitchen in the Matai room that will create a space which strengthens and supports food security needs in the South Wairarapa Community.

We aim to create a safe, friendly, and inclusive environment for our community members to learn and cook together.

The kitchen will enable us to provide services that can turn excess food from Waiwaste, Community gardens, School lunches and the Foodbank into 'ready to eat' or 'easy to heat' food. This food can then be distributed in multiple channels, like the community pantry, social service agencies, Foodbank, or local community groups that spot a need – such as sports clubs, kura or playgroups.

Jo has initiated dialogue with groups such as Age Concern and REAP Wairarapa to deliver educational workshops on budget food preparation and will be able to partner with local healthcare providers to deliver workshops or courses on nutrition. Programmes aimed at fostering better health outcomes.

The facility will also allow agencies to create hearty soups for our Foodbank to serve during winter parcel collections and it will make the FCC an integral part of the business continuity plan for local Foodbanks and support for our Emergency Hub in the event of a disaster.

These activities will also help foster friendships, build support networks between community members, and involve them more in the local food movement

The second is a re-think about the Toy Library and the facilities it can provide. We'd like to build a purpose-built facility with ancillary services that can work with the Medical Centre and provide support for families requiring medical attention.

We don't just service Featherston, we garner our customers from throughout the South Wairarapa and may well be able to formally offer our services to a broader base, perhaps eventually with branch representation in Greytown and Martinborough. This might see the emergence of a South Wairarapa Community Centres group.

Whatever the future, we will certainly not be waiting around for it. We have our ears to the ground, and we are preparing to meet it on our own terms. If any here would like to be a part of forming the community centres of the future, and actively and aggressively supporting the community needs throughout the South Wairarapa – come talk to me after the meeting.