

# PRESIDENT REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF COMPLEX CHRONIC ILLNESS SUPPORT (INC)

## **For the 2021/2022 period**

As we reflect on achievements throughout the past year, it is important to acknowledge the tireless efforts of our CEO Miranda Whitwell in steering the ship, and her team of dedicated staff.

This team has navigated the unprecedented situation that resulted from COVID-19 and transitioned our core services online, seamlessly. It has been a stressful and unusual time for all, but also a rewarding time with people able to connect from throughout New Zealand through our monthly online meetings, which continue to be delivered. We believe this helped mitigate the social isolation that comes with a pandemic. Picking up clients from around the country has warranted the creation of a new position this year to support members from outside of our core regions of BOP/Lakes. The team also grew with the acquisition of Waikato (officially launched in May 2021) and Wellington in February 2022. Although we did not have an official launch for Wellington due to COVID, we aim for a 2023 celebration. Being able to provide services to these regions has enabled us to become a national service provider and it demonstrates that what is provided is valued by the chronic illness community nationwide. We saw it fit to change the name from Field Officer to Health & Wellness Facilitator to better reflect the core aspects of our team's work with clients.

In July 2021 we celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our organisation with special guest speakers Dr. Ros Vallings, Dr Sarah Dalziel, and Emeritus Professor Warren Tate. It was a successful event with 102 attendees including Jan Tinetti, Labour MP. We also made connections with Angie Warren Clarke and Simon Bridges around that time and received an endorsement letter. We also met with MoH to discuss vaccinations and adverse reactions experienced by people with ME/CFS and advised them that people were reporting the development of ME/CFS type symptoms after vaccination. We presented the experts' views that some exemptions were warranted, despite being mandated to follow the Health Orders as a health service provider.

We have met with other ME/CFS organizations regularly, strengthening relationships. In May 2022 we combined efforts for the first time to mark World ME Day. The Learn From ME Facebook page was created for awareness and education, and a dedicated page on the ANZMES website features videos provided by ME Auckland, ANZMES, and us. It enabled us all to promote a united national message which utilised the global campaign led by the World ME Alliance.

In August this year we were selected to present at the Long Term Conditions virtual forum hosted by Health Navigator. We were one of approximately 15 presenters and Miranda Whitwell and Annabelle were part of a live Q&A panel. We have received many requests for information packs from medical professionals due to this forum, so consider it a success for awareness, recognition, and education. To have not only our organisation, but the condition ME/CFS spotlighted at this event was a significant win.

We are very pleased to have secured funding for the advancement of the Towards Wellness Programme as an online Hub. The team have been very busy recording the extensive content and we have the pleasure of launching this today. Details will be sent on Tuesday to all members. It is a professional, evidence-based programme that members can study in their own time in the comfort of their own homes. It is our hope that for those who are unable to travel to face2face sessions, this online hub is the answer, and that many members will see the value of investing in this award winning towards wellness programme.

As an organisation we are heavily reliant on donations and grants so this is something that as a board and organisation we need to address so that we develop a sustainable revenue model moving forward. We have enjoyed a period of growth with new regions and staff, but we are now in a period of consolidation, as we look to ensure we continue to deliver our core and vital services to those living with chronic illness throughout NZ.