

# Purpose

Journal of the



**Amputees  
Federation**  
of New Zealand  
Incorporated

July 2015



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## PURPOSE

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**Editor  
Lorraine Peacock QSM**

**213a Bay View Road  
St Clair, Dunedin 9012  
Phone (03) 455-6347**

**Email  
info@af.org.nz**

**Website  
www.af.org.nz**

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# AMPUTEES FEDERATION OF NEW ZEALAND INCORPORATED

## The National Executive

### President

Mr John Ealand  
Blenheim

### Vice President

Mr Chris Ross  
Auckland

### National Coordinator And Editor of *Purpose*

Mrs Lorraine Peacock QSM  
213a Bay View Road  
St Clair  
Dunedin 9012  
Phone (03) 455-6347  
Mobile 027 4221298  
Fax (03) 455-9547  
Email *coordinator@af.org.nz*

### Committee

Mr Wally Garrett  
New Plymouth

Mrs Diane Walsh  
Havelock North

Mr Ken Te Tau  
Porirua

Mr Mark Bruce  
Christchurch

### Nominees to the NZ Artificial Limb Service

Mrs Kerry Wilfred-Riley  
Ms Paula Tesoriero

### Hon Solicitor

Mr Lindsay Trotman LL.M(Hons)  
Palmerston North

### Federation's Website

*[www.af.org.nz](http://www.af.org.nz)*

## GUEST EDITORIAL

As the Federation quietly approaches 70 years of existence since its inception as the NZ Civilian Amputees Association in April 1947, one is given the opportunity to reflect upon the growth and changes over the decades. I dare say the inaugural foundation members could not have possibly envisaged the organisation the Federation has now become. Those earlier people had such huge obstacles to overcome in getting funding from the appropriate authorities of the day. Today, so much of what is taken for granted by so many is solely due to the earlier work done by our forerunners.

Like many organisations, the current structure of the Federation has evolved over the decades to become what we have in 2015 - a Federation which is basically run by a group of very well-intentioned amateurs, apart from a couple of paid part-time positions currently occupied by very astute and capable people.

I believe the time has come for the Federation to take the next step and begin the transition process to become a totally professional group with full-time paid employees. With proper funding, such a new environment would be able to help a far greater number of amputees in NZ to receive the support we all deserve. Currently the Federation has less than half of the known total number of amputees in NZ as members of any of the nine Regional Societies. The Societies themselves are obviously not attracting enough interest, in their own way, for a variety of reasons. A burgeoning group of Maori and Pacifica throughout NZ are noticeably under-represented in our Societies. The young, the teens, the 20s, the 30s, and the 40s, are all under-represented in our Societies. We are not offering enough.

I believe that with a new structure in whatever form it takes and with full-time employees, we will have the energy and time to drive us forward. With the right direction, the new structure should have the mandate and the power to become an effective lobby group for all amputees, whatever the issues of the day. The support networks that are necessitated by amputees will have closer working relationships. These are very early days but the first steps of the journey are being taken.

*Wally Garrett*

## NEWS FROM OUR SOCIETIES

**Auckland & Northland** - Many of you may think that our Society has been rather 'dormant' lately, but rest assured plenty has happened in the past few months and the committee is working very hard to implement 'organisational' changes in the background. These may not be visible to everyone but in the long run will benefit the Society greatly. These include marketing, contracts and strategy - yes we are moving with a positive and vibrant step and it is great to see the enthusiasm within the committee. In the next few months you will see the engine start and things begin to move at full speed again...! (*Chris Ross, Secretary*)

**Waikato, Bay of Plenty & Districts** - A warm welcome to new secretary, Ruthie Coltrane (a great job done with the latest newsletter!) At a recent luncheon in Tauranga, Life Membership was presented to Betty Hubbard - congratulations Betty, an honour more than well deserved!

**Hawke's Bay/East Coast** - The usual full and informative newsletter included an article on Bea Wuts which is reproduced in this issue of *Purpose*. Bea's parents, Margot and Anton, are currently working on a children's book which the Federation hopes to publish before the end of the year - the target group for this project are young amputees up to the age of 7.

**Taranaki** - We are hosting a games challenge in August at Hawera South Taranaki Club - other Societies are invited to come along and join in - pool, darts, indoor bowls and table tennis. The trophy is up for grabs. We are actively involved with DAG meetings (Disability Action Group) and attended the Health Quality & Safety Commission NZ meeting in New Plymouth - very informative and interesting. Our monthly meetings continue to be very well supported and this is very pleasing. Moving the meeting venues around the province certainly contribute to this. (*Wally Garrett, President*)

**Manawatu** - A lunch meeting will be held in Wanganui on Saturday 11 July, with a guest speaker talking on the help amputees can give acting the part of trauma victims in CD and other emergency exercises. We are also planning an aqua aerobics class if there is sufficient interest. Janice Frost is doing a great job liaising with members in and around Wanganui. (*John Maher, Secretary*)

**Greater Wellington Region** - In April we were delighted to present Don Milward with Life Membership in recognition of long and

distinguished service to amputees. The annual conference this year kept our committee busy, Mary's cake was amazing (*it certainly was!* - Ed.). We received a grant from the Lottery Grants Board to support our Field Officer and welcomed a new member Meryl Knowles who features in this edition of *Purpose*. (*Ken Te Tau, Vice President*)  
(*Great to have you on board as a member of the Executive Ken - Ed.*)

**Canterbury & Westland** - A sub-committee has matters well in hand for hosting the National Conference next April. We have said goodbye to committee member and newsletter editor, Sue Lemieux who has returned to Florida to live.

(*Eileen Popplewell, Secretary*)

(*A warm welcome also to another new Executive member, Mark Bruce, President of the C/W Society - Ed.*)

**Otago & Southland** - A mid winter dinner planned to take place in Balclutha was cancelled due to rather extreme weather conditions (maybe blame should also be apportioned to a certain event taking place at the Stadium - great outcome!). The Balclutha dinner has been rescheduled for August and the annual quadrant multisports, golf and barbecue will be held in November.

(*Lorraine Peacock, Coordinator*)

**Newsletters** of Regional Societies are available on the Federation's website ([www.af.org.nz](http://www.af.org.nz)), along with other useful information.

**SUPPORT YOUR REGIONAL AMPUTEE SOCIETY  
IT SUPPORTS YOU!**

**PUBLICATIONS** available (no cost) from the National Coordinator or Regional Society Secretaries

**A New Challenge - Advice for New Amputees** (a 32 page booklet)

**An Ongoing Challenge** - A 60 page publication which covers a wide range of topics and includes personal profiles of 11 amputees.

**A Challenge with Purpose - A History of the first 50 years of the Amputees Federation of NZ Incorporated** (275 pages)

**The Amputee Society of Otago & Southland Inc. - The first 60 years** (146 pages)

**NZ AMPUTEE GOLF**

2015 Tournament - Waiheke Island - 2/3 November  
For further information email [wayne@whj.co.nz](mailto:wayne@whj.co.nz)



## NATIONAL CONFERENCE - APRIL 2015

The Official Opening by our Patron the Governor General made it a special occasion at the Amora Hotel in Wellington when we gathered for our 68th National Conference. In his welcoming speech Sir Jerry Mateparae said the support given by our organisation was “critical to the life journey and development of amputees and their families”. Sir Jerry applauded the judgment of the Federation in having the Give it a Go! youth camp running alongside the Conference, saying that it was “great timing to give hope and encouragement



to young people who had gone through the trauma of losing a limb”. He referred specifically to Holly Robinson and Anna Grimaldi, both of whom are preparing for the 2016 Rio Paralympic Games, and he then mingled and chatted to those present with many photos being taken.

Guest speaker on the Saturday afternoon was Professor Dirk De Ridder, the subject of his talk being “Why does the brain create phantom sensations and how can they be treated?” Professor De Ridder said that pain, including phantom pain, is a connection problem in the brain and the brain is unable to tolerate not having this information. If a person has a finger amputated, the brain can manage; if a bigger amputation, the more the brain has to re-organise and the worse the phantom pain. It had been found that pre-operative pain predicts the development of phantom pain and pre-operative anaesthesia (at least 24 hours before the operation) prevented phantom pain. Unfortunately there are no ready answers to suit one and all and to date a cure has not been found for everyone.

On Sunday morning, Ben Lucas, CEO of the NZ Spinal Trust gave an inspiring talk “Opportunity Knocks” on the path his life had taken since becoming a paraplegic. Ben will be Chef de Mission of the 2016 Paralympics.

Sunday morning also involved the Give it a Go! Youth Camp attendees who the previous day had taken part in a range of adventures, with white water rafting being the most popular. Here’s what 22 year-old



Rosanna, a first time attendee, had to say:

*This was my first amputee weekend. I have had my new leg for only about eight months and had a wonderful time in Wellington. It was awesome to meet other amputees and exchange stories, facts and make new friends. I thoroughly enjoyed kayaking, rock climbing and white water rafting. It was a new experience with my new leg. My favourite was the white water rafting. It was a new experience. It was really fun going down the rapids and getting tipped out of the rafts by each other. We had beautiful weather when we were rafting and the views going down the river were really pretty. I absolutely loved meeting*



*new people from both the camp and the conference. It was cool listening to their stories and to learn from them. Overall it was a terrific weekend, one I will remember for a long time.*

*(The GIAG group with the Governor General)*

A "first timer" at Conference was Meryl Knowles who has kindly allowed us to share her story....

Being a new member to the amputee family of six months, I was not sure what to expect from my first conference. I must admit it was a bit daunting to say the least. I felt like a fish out of water but then realised I was not the only one in this situation. Everyone made me feel so welcome and it did not take long for me to make a small group of new friends.

The first day we went on a field trip to the Weta Workshop, it was an amazing tour, the only stalemate for me was that there were no disabled toilets, I tried to use the local service station and again no luck. My wheelchair was too wide to fit through the door. I headed back to the hotel and finally found a compliant toilet. Note to self "wear prosthetic leg tomorrow". I enjoyed the speaker on the subject of phantom pain. The second day was less eventful as I wore my prosthetic leg, making it to the bathroom was so much easier. Word

about my escapade got around the group and everyone was so helpful. I also enjoyed the speaker from the Spinal Trust, an amazing life he has led and he has not let his disability hold him back. The Give it a Go! Youth Camp attendees were an inspiration and after hearing about their antics with white-water rafting and kayaking, I thought, "if they can do that then I can tackle what is to come in the future for me". My amputation has taught me patience, to accept the help



offered and to take each day as it comes. I also want to acknowledge the guidance and support of the Amputee Society of the Greater Wellington Region and I look forward to next year's conference in Christchurch.

*(Thanks Meryl. Unfortunately, we found out later that Weta did in fact have disabled toilets but they were in a different part of the building and the staff on duty that day didn't know about them! - Ed.)*

*Many thanks to our Conference sponsors -  
Ossur Asia Pacific, Otto Bock Australia, IWalk,  
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## **AN 'EASY CARE' SUMMER SALAD GARDEN IN POTS**

*by Liz Rogers*

Winter is an ideal time to plan your 'easy care' garden. Picking fresh lettuces, tomatoes and a range of tasty herbs throughout summer really adds flavour and interest to meals. There are so many different and interesting lettuces grown now. Herbs may include mint, parsley, chives, basil and coriander. When planting garlic, the rule of thumb is to plant it on the shortest day (22nd June) and harvest it on the longest day (22nd December). Nasturtium plants are another possibility. They are easy to grow in pots and have the most colourful flowers which are safe to eat and make a salad look so attractive.

Choose a sunny spot. If challenged for space, this may well be on a verandah, up against the house, or on your deck. Tending a garden in a range of different sized pots without having to stoop is a great way to go. You may choose something simple like a plastic table for your pots or you may decide that a more permanent structure of layered shelving meets your needs and lifestyle. Planning in winter means you have plenty of time to organize and gather what you

need, and to set it up. It's fun deciding what your choices will be for the coming season.

Some thoughts on what you may need:

- A structure on which to place pots, perhaps a table, form, or tiered shelves
- A range of different sized pots and accompanying trays – neighbours, friends and family may well help out here with extras they don't need.
- Potting soil
- Propagating tray and seeding soil – optional
- A system for watering, a hose, jug, watering can or even a drink bottle
- Gardening gloves
- Selected seeds, or you may wish to buy young plants in springtime
- Grafted tomatoes provide a sturdy start. Sweet 100 tomatoes are small and sweet – perfect for salads and grow well in a special 'tomato mixture' in a large pot, well staked.



The marvellous thing about setting up your garden early is that you talk with friends and family about it, and it can become the focus for practical birthday and Christmas presents.

Once spring comes sow some of your seeds in small pots or a propagating tray inside in a sunny spot. One or two seeds per pot allows them to grow sturdy under your tender care. It gives you such a wonderful feeling of achievement to see the very first shoots sprout forth. Keep the seedlings damp being careful not to over water. When frosts have subsided, transfer seedlings to larger permanent containers outside. Watch over them carefully and you'll know when they need watering. Once you begin your own garden it's hard to give it up and you tend to experiment with a wide range of vegetables and herbs. Enjoy!

*(Many thanks Liz - bring it on!)*

### **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

and any other contributions to *Purpose* are very welcome. If you have anything to share with readers, please send it to the Editor at 213a Bay View Road, St Clair, Dunedin, fax to (03) 455-9547, or email to [info@af.org.nz](mailto:info@af.org.nz).

## OUR JUNIOR PARALYMPIAN!

by Margot Wuts

Not being the most sporty family on the planet, we travelled up to Cambridge for the junior disability games with a few nerves, most of which were felt by myself, Bea's mum! It has been pretty much a constant feeling since having Bea, being out of our depth and definitely far away from anything resembling a comfort zone, and this experience was no different. Bea has always pushed herself far and beyond what we have expected, through pain, judgement and certain failure (or the perception of such). Because of this we knew that



this experience had the potential to be a truly wonderful one for Bea, who had just completed an athletics day at school during which she ran 200 metres on her stumps without stopping when the year before she stopped many times. Although this was a huge accomplishment for her, it still doesn't feel that way when everyone else has finished the race before she is even halfway through. This is what I mean by the perception of failure because Bea is definitely a champion. So, yes I was excited, although not as much as Bea herself and only an hour after we arrived Bea had her first race, swimming butterfly. She came first.

This experience heralded a couple of days where a hugely competitive nature came to the fore in our wee daughter. She competed in all the swimming styles and was part of the winning relay team, she ran, long jumped, wheelchair slomed, threw the discus, rode horses, a bike, and a rowing machine, and fell in love with archery, so in love with archery, and won a beautiful trophy for her amazing display of learning and

determination. The weekend wasn't just amazing for the opportunity to try lots of new sports, Bea was able to feel like one of a crowd, like she could have a wee look at other people's differences and just be interested, the shoe being on the other foot, so to speak! My favourite moment was watching Bea in her wheelchair, she has never really used it but because everyone else was, if she was sore she just sat down and relaxed, and her body language was amazing. She allowed herself comfort.

I know that Bea is now a permanent fixture on the Hawke's Bay team and she will be training for next year. It would be extremely hard to imagine not going and I can only feel so incredibly grateful to all of the organisations and people who make this event possible. It really was an amazing experience, and I can't wait for next year! Not nervous at all!

### **DHB DISCHARGE PLANNING**

In 2009 the MOH provided funding support to the Amputees Federation to work alongside District Health Boards to ensure that amputees are provided with timely and necessary support when returning home from hospital. Over a period of 12 months workshops took place at all 21 DHBs when the topics discussed included time-frames for housing modification, early assessments and applications for equipment. As a result of this project, the majority of DHBs introduced guidelines for discharge planning.

Several years down the track we would be interested to hear about the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction experienced by new amputees in particular when they faced (or are yet to face) what can be the daunting prospect of returning home after an amputation. If you would like to be part of this follow-up, please contact your Society Secretary or the National Coordinator to complete a brief confidential questionnaire.

### **A REQUEST FOR SPONSORS**

If you know of anyone who would like to advertise in *Purpose* and thus support a worthwhile cause, please ask them to contact our Marketing Coordinator at *info@af.org.nz*



## AFFILIATED AMPUTEE SOCIETIES

| Region                             | Secretary/Contact Person   |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Auckland & Northland               | Chris Ross<br>P O Box 36-170<br>Northcote<br>Auckland 0748<br><i>anamputeesociety@gmail.com</i><br>Mobile 0274220221       |
| Canterbury & Westland              | Eileen Popplewell<br>P O Box 26-148<br>Christchurch 8148<br><i>ceallaigh4@xtra.co.nz</i><br>Phone (03) 349-9415            |
| Hawke's Bay/East Coast             | Diane Walsh<br>25/18 Durham Drive<br>Havelock Nth<br>Hastings 4130<br><i>daisym@paradise.net.nz</i><br>Phone (06) 877-4294 |
| Manawatu                           | John Maher<br>27A Alfred St<br>Palmerston Nth 441<br><i>jmaher@orcon.net.nz</i><br>Phone (06) 354-7023                     |
| Nelson & Marlborough               | Claire West<br>5 Cape View<br>Nelson 7010<br><i>jcjcape@slingshot.co.nz</i><br>Phone (03) 545-1410                         |
| Otago & Southland                  | Lorraine Peacock<br>213A Bay View Rd<br>St Clair<br>Dunedin 9012<br><i>lorrstan@xtra.co.nz</i><br>Phone (03) 455-6347      |
| Taranaki                           | Christine Windle<br>238 Egmont St<br>Patea 4520<br><i>christinewindle@xtra.co.nz</i><br>Phone (06) 273-6088                |
| Waikato, Bay of Plenty & Districts | Ruthie Coltrane<br>P O Box 15-130<br>Dinsdale<br>Hamilton 3243<br><i>ruthie.coltrane@gmail.com</i><br>Mobile 0273664540    |
| Greater Wellington Region          | Ken Te Tau<br>27 Waiho Tce<br>Elsdon<br>Porirua 5022<br><i>tetau@paradise.net.nz</i><br>Mobile 0274876599                  |

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