

62nd Annual General Meeting of Wellington Multiple Sclerosis Society

16 May 2026

President's Report

It is my pleasure to present my report to members for the Society's 62nd Annual General Meeting.

We have enjoyed a number of successes since we last met to celebrate our Diamond Anniversary year, many of which are covered in the reports from our Operations Team.

An important achievement was to reregister the Society under the Incorporated Societies Act 2022, which replaced the 1908 Act. The new Act strengthens governance, financial reporting, and dispute resolution for all incorporated societies. It gave existing societies 2 years and 6 months (from 5 October 2023 until 5 April 2026) to meet the reregistration criteria and complete the transition to governance under the new Act.

We updated the Rules of the Society, now titled the Constitution, and held a Special General Meeting in December 2025, where members voted to approve the Constitution and to apply for reregistration. I thank our members for supporting the reregistration process and I'm delighted to confirm that our application was successful.

Operating as an advocacy and advisory service for People with, or affected by, Multiple Sclerosis is challenging, given that our health and disability services nationally remain under extreme pressure. Many people with MS and their carers are not getting the help and funding of services they need. We have an important role to provide our clients with relevant, timely and helpful information and advice; the importance of our Community Advisers in providing this role cannot be over-emphasized.

Fortunately, the Wellington MS Society continues to be financially viable and has received several valuable grants and donations over the year, as detailed in our Treasurer's and Operations Reports.

There have been a few changes to both our Committee and Operations Team since the last AGM in May 2025.

We were delighted to welcome Alina Pescini to the Committee in June 2025 as Secretary, increasing our complement of voluntary Committee members to six. We would like to have more committee members and would welcome expressions of interest from members with relevant governance experience.

Following Philippa Scott's resignation last year, Debs Phillips joined us as Lead Community Advisor in July. With Maria Luisa Suarez having joined us in March 2025, we currently have two full-time Community Advisors supporting our clients. The third member of the Operations team is Suzie Linton, who has been our part-time Communications and Fundraiser since 2022.

Together Debs, Maria Luisa and Suzie are an awesome team and, on behalf of the Committee, I thank them for their dedication and valuable service to the MS community.

I would like to acknowledge others who support both the Committee and our Operations Team largely 'behind the scenes', particularly Murray Ruddel (Privacy Officer), Hamish Bockett-Smith (IT support), Sarndra Flay (as trustee of Dorothy Hamilton Memorial Trust and supporting engagement with members), Bianca Lucia-Clark (our promotional 'Face of MS'), Glen Sullivan (and the Wellington Gotham Knights Cosplayers) and Philip King (website services). We are extremely grateful to our donors and volunteers for their support, be it financial or through giving their time to help with our street collections and fundraising events.

We undertook a number of fundraising activities during the year, including Wellington Round the Bays, MS Awareness Week, Spring into Tawa, quiz nights at the Sprig and Fern in Petone and the HeyDay bar in Wellington – and a huge thank-you goes to Frederic Robichon, who raised more than \$1,000 participating in the Wellington Urban Marathon.

We also supported the Bangers to Bluff fundraising event, meeting up with our Lower North Island Cluster representatives Graham Walker (MS Taranaki) and Jeff Silvester (MS Hawkes Bay) – as the rally passed through Wellington.

The Multiple Sclerosis New Zealand Annual Conference was held in Wellington over three days at the end of April this year, with Committee members and Community Advisors attending from regional societies across the motu. This was a great opportunity for our team to share experiences with other MS societies, strengthen relationships and explore opportunities for collaboration.

A highlight of the conference was an evening event in the Legislative Council Chamber at Parliament hosted by Todd Stephenson MP (Parliamentary Private Secretary to Associate Minister of Health and the ACT Party's Health Spokesperson). The event was jointly presented by MS New Zealand, MS Wellington and the New Zealand MS Research Trust, with informative presentations from guest speakers Professor Henneke Hulst (Director of the Centre for Brain Research at the University of Auckland) and Professor Anna Ranta (Leading Neurologist and Researcher at the University of Otago in Wellington).

To celebrate World MS Awareness Day we will be hosting an Open Homes fundraising event on Saturday 30 May, initiated by Micah Rickards, an award-winning architect and a person with MS. This is a rare opportunity to view two architect-designed homes in Brooklyn and support MS Wellington, with tickets available through our website and Facebook page.

Finally, I would like to thank our Patron, Professor Anne La Flamme, and her team for their continued engagement with us and for personally presenting their latest research into the causes of multiple sclerosis and developments in treatments to improve the lives of people with MS.



Steve McCloskey - President
Wellington Multiple Sclerosis Society Inc.