



## National President's Report

Our year in review, from July 2021 until the end of June 2022, can best be summed up as unpredictable. Covid-19 has had a huge impact and caused disruptions in all facets of daily life for much of the year. We all got very adept at changing plans and 'innovation' and 'pivoting' became real buzz words.

In continuing the theme of innovation, started by the online AGM last year, our Annual Reports are presented in a slightly different format this year, while maintaining the same detail of information.

From a governance point of view, we held our first ever online AGM in November 2021, after Covid-19 meant the cancellation of what was going to be a fabulous National Conference in Christchurch. We were very pleased to announce later that the 2023 National Conference and Annual General Meeting will be held in Christchurch, in conjunction with the Canterbury Conference Committee.

The 2021 AGM itself went smoothly, and it was pleasing to see so many of you taking the opportunity to join via Zoom, either from your own homes individually, or as part of a group. Our tech skills have improved immensely in these COVID times. At that meeting we officially farewelled Malvina Dick who had left the National Board. Her diligent and thoughtful contributions have been appreciated by all. We welcomed Sandra Matthews as a North Island Board Member. Sandra's skillset is a real asset to Rural Women New Zealand, and since joining the Board, Sandra has stepped into the National Chair role, which she manages very capably. Due to the complexities involved in making arrangements for voting processes for an online Remits session, this was delayed until March 2022 - another first for Rural Women New Zealand.

Yet more pivoting and rescheduling was required when a Regional Leaders Workshop scheduled for October 2021, fell victim to COVID-19 and proceeded as an online session instead of a face to face meeting. The National Leadership Team Hui which was to be held in February 2022 was cancelled due to COVID-19 and rescheduled for September this year when a very successful workshop was held.

The jewel in the crown of technology, 'innovation' and 'pivoting' was the NZI Rural Women NZ Business Awards hybrid event in November which involved three in person events at three venues around the country which were live streamed via Facebook. It was a fantastic event that came together seamlessly after a huge amount of work completed in a very short time, led so ably by Lisa, our Projects and Events Manager, with lots of support from the rest of our Office team and the staff and tech providers at each of the three venues.

Our Activator Programme has continued to grow, thanks to support from MPI, and the three events this year were filled to capacity by budding entrepreneurs in a very short time, with a waiting list for any available spots. We will be working on creating better follow up and further connection opportunities for participants both here and in the Business Awards in the coming months.

The Board has created a new Strategic Plan which was shared at Regional Conferences and other suitable events during the year. This plan sets out guidelines and milestones for our membership to work towards and gives our Leadership Team and staff clear direction and goals for work plans to build and reinvigorate Rural Women New Zealand to become the vibrant, relevant organisation that it needs to be to continue successfully into the future. We have also employed two Connectors to assist our Regions and Groups with their online presence and marketing, and a Contestable Fund to support new initiatives that aim to increase membership.

The Back Heels and Tractor Wheels podcast series has successfully built a strong following and continues to expose listeners to women with a passion for rural and is now an integral part of the profile of Rural Women New Zealand.

Devastating flooding in Canterbury in late May 2021 saw our Canterbury team come to the fore to support of those affected. Members created a team who prepared and delivered food packages to people, families and farms in the affected area, not just when in the immediate post flood period but for many months afterwards thereby continuing well into this reporting period. The value of the support given to those affected by the simple act of providing a meal in a time of need, and often a chat with those they were calling on was recognised with a very well-deserved Civic Medal from the Ashburton District Council as part of their Community Service Awards. There were other adverse weather events around the country



that saw Members spring into action to support their communities as well. At an international level, we sent funds to Associated Country Women of the World to support aid work in Tonga following a volcanic eruption and tsunami.

Our involvement in Associated Country Women of the World globally this year included my inclusion as a panel member at an Associated Country Women of the World Parallel Event as part of the United Nations 66th Commission for the Status of Women. This was again run online. The topic was Rural Economic Empowerment and Financial Independence Post Covid. The Triennial ACWW World Conference is being held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, next May and we have had a resolution accepted relating to Women's Employment Action Plans. We will also be presenting our successful resolutions from the last South Pacific Area Conference seeking that rural and gender analysis is applied to all legislation. We have nominated RWNZ member Claire Mahon for the position of Chairman of the Communications and Marketing Committee for ACWW worldwide.

It is a real pleasure to visit the Regions. It is so beneficial to meet you on your 'home patch' so to speak and get a real feel for how each of our Region's work. There have been some changes in the Regional Leadership Teams this year. I truly value all that our long-standing Members in leadership roles have brought to the table over many years. I would like to thank those who have stepped back which create opportunities for others to come through, injecting different perspectives and fresh ideas as we move forward towards our Centenary in 2025 and beyond. Again, this succession of leaders is a vital part of remaining relevant and vibrant going forward for the next generations of Members.

Centennial planning is underway, with a Committee formed to consider the possibilities for us to celebrate this very special milestone in 2025.

Our National Project "O is for..." supporting Ovarian and Gynecological Cancer awareness and fund raising for our three charities of choice, Cure Our Ovarian Cancer, Talk Peach, and K9 Medical Detection ended on the 30 June 2022, along with our financial year. Many events were held around the country in relation to this project which is very close to our hearts, and considerable funds have been raised. Thank you to all for your wholehearted support of this project.

At a policy level, our respected voice for rural women, their families and communities continues to be a very important part of Rural Women New Zealand's role. We have a refreshed approach to our Policy hubs ready to launch and look forward to this becoming a draw card for women living rurally to have input into policy decisions affecting rural New Zealand through RWNZ. Health reforms are a focus and will continue to be in the coming year. A lot of work has also been done in relation to rural connectivity issues this year, and we continue to monitor issues in our other portfolio areas including a myriad of issues in relation to RMA reform. School bus transport and safety is another area that has been a focus.

In July this year our National Office moved premises, with prolonged technology difficulties adding another layer of complexity to our operating world. However, we are working our way through these now and by next year will be looking forward to smoother processes.

Our Chief Executive, Gabrielle O'Brien, has been with Rural Women New Zealand for eighteen months now, and is a key part of the organisation. Gabe's very personable manner, along with her proficiency in the Chief Executive role is ensuring that we are working towards the goals set in the new Strategic Plan as effectively as possible, given the circumstances we found ourselves in during the last year.

My fellow Board Members are all extremely passionate about Rural Women New Zealand. We each bring different skills and perspectives to the table while working extremely well together.

Our staff are integral to the operation of Rural Women New Zealand. Their passion for the organisation and the work they do is truly commendable.

You, our Members contribute so much to the organisation and your communities. You are the face of RWNZ locally.

I am so very proud of our whole Rural Women New Zealand team and thank you all for what you do to Strengthen, Support and Connect our People and Communities in the name of Rural Women New Zealand.

**Gill Naylor**  
**National President**



# National Office Report

It would be an understatement to say that it has been a challenging year for the National Office team. Not content with just dealing with the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, we also had the build-up to moving premises at the end of June.

Despite the challenge of deferrals, postponements and cancellations of many in-person events, we were very pleased to be able to deliver an online Annual General Meeting, a hybrid online/in-person NZI Rural Women NZ Business Awards and online Remits Sessions over the past year. Lisa Thompson, our Project and Events Manager, has shown that necessity really is the mother of invention!

Our relationships with our partners, stakeholders and sponsors continue to thrive and we increasingly identify opportunities to grow and diversify the involvement of them in supporting the work and Members of Rural Women New Zealand.

Our relationships with Ministers, Members of Parliament, Government Departments and other NGOs provide us with ongoing opportunities to ensure the needs of rural women and their communities are acknowledged and recognised and Angela provided a great example of this in her presentation with Claire Williamson at the TUANZ (Tech Users Association of New Zealand) Symposium. Meanwhile, Felicity, who is often the voice you will hear when you contact the office, continues to develop her juggling skills with support to Members, assistance to Regional committees and support to the Board, always with a warm welcome and a friendly smile.

In this year of upheaval, it has been fantastic to see developing and new initiatives grow. The audience growth for the Black Heels and Tractor Wheels podcast series which is skilfully produced by Mia is an example of this. The development of the new Strategic Plan and being able to discuss this with Members at Regional conferences has been particularly rewarding after a prolonged period with few opportunities for face-to-face events. The addition of our Regional Connectors, Kylie and Marianne, and launching the Contestable Fund adds opportunities for regional growth and support.

We were sorry to farewell Lucy Tayler in June and are very appreciative of her work, predominantly in the finance role but also as our process guru. The finance role has been temporarily filled by Alison Lyall on a contract basis and I thank her for her hard work over the last few months and at a particularly busy time of the year. I also wish to thank the National Board for their support of the National Office team over the past year. We are very fortunate to have a governance group with such a diversity of skills and experience. As we plan for our centennial celebrations in 2025, the National Office team is focused on working together with the Board and Members to strengthen our current membership offerings and build a strong organisation for both new and existing Members. We look forward to our continued engagement with you all.

**Gabrielle O'Brien**

**Chief Executive**

