



Grey Power New Zealand Federation Inc

December 2010

Bulletin

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Association News Letter

Grey Power December 2010 Bulletin

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The reports contained in this Bulletin are as presented at the November Board meeting or an abridged version by the individual named as author at foot of each article.

The only change made from the original submissions is change of type face to conform to the overall Bulletin format.

The next Federation Board meeting is scheduled for March 2011.

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Presidents Report

At the recent Board meeting the Retirement Commissioner Dianna Crossan attended to have a discussion on the Age of Entitlement for Superannuation. As the Commission was associated with Victoria University in holding the seminar on the Age of Entitlement with a suggested age of 67 years the Lobby group asked the Political Parties for their views on raising the age of entitlement with all stating that the age would not be lifted.

For those who have been in hard manual work some have difficulty in continuing to work until they reach age 65 let alone age 67.

I would like to congratulate the Christchurch and North Canterbury Associations on the way that they contacted their Members and supported them after the earthquake. This is an example to all Associations to have up to date contact lists and a plan on how to operate in the case of emergency.

I attended the launch of the Labour / Green Health Care report at Parliament. Three other Board Members and Association Members from the Wellington area also attended. This report has 14 recommendations which would be of benefit to many Members in need of care in a Rest Home or support at home. I see a need to keep these recommendations being discussed with all political parties and suggest that a forum of politicians answer questions and debate the report at the Federation AGM.

To all Zone Directors and Associations who organized and hosted meetings I extend my thanks.

I have asked the Strategy Committee to prepare a list of topics for both the Board and Associations to promote to all politicians in the lead up to the General Election. All the Board Committees will be reviewing policy to be progressed over the next 3 to 6 months.

Standards New Zealand has requested that we nominate a representative for two standards on health topics that they are reviewing and updating. As they asked for Dick Stark to attend as he was a member of the original group he has agreed to attend for the review and scoping meeting.

Dick Stark and I attended a meeting of the National Health Board where we were well received and had discussions on several health matters. This Board is appointed by the Minister of Health.

I am concerned at the Membership numbers as at 31 October and am sure that other Members will be as well. Having over 8000 un-financial Members is a concern.

I asked Graham Adams to prepare a submission on the Marine and Coastal Area (Tukutai Moana) Bill that is now before the Select Committee. Duncan McDonald attended the Select

Committee and spoke in support of Grahams submission. There appears to be a huge concern that this bill could restrict public access to beaches and I feel that our foreshore and seabed must remain in Crown ownership.

I extend thanks to our staff for all that they have so willingly done during the year. Best wishes to all Members for an enjoyable Christmas and a happy and rewarding New Year.

R Reid President

AGM in Hamilton All Go

Planning for the May 2011 AGM in Hamilton is well advanced. The Hamilton committee is working hard to secure serious sponsors. The final cost per head will be set early next year.

It is worth noting that some pub charities look favourably on applications for people to attend Grey Power AGM's. However, you must use the words Grey Power New Zealand Federation Inc, Annual General Meeting, in your application do not use the words Grey Power Conference.

Over sixty associations have indicated their intention to attend.

Dave Collins, President Hamilton Grey Power

Zone One

Well another year has drawn to a close and one can ask where the hell has time gone. It is amazing really as I am a year older from this time last year.

On with the job. All Association are functioning well in the Far North Zone. The Far North Association has been instrumental in raising around \$46,000 for a dialysis machine for the Kaitiā hospital and this is an achievement on its own as the Northland DHB was all for removing and closing down these sort of services which left patients a 3 hour journey each way to attend Whangarei. All the Associations will have held their respective Christmas functions by the time this is in print and all will be ready for the new year. Kerikeri Association is very stable with the odd new member joining but like everyone else could do with more.

Whangarei Association has been fortunate to obtain new executive members and committee members this year and is functioning nicely now which has relieved myself of a hell of a lot of work.

Kaipara Association is moving slowly along and they always put a good input into the Zone meetings.

Four Zone meetings were held this year and full attendance at all. Some very good ideas came from them as well. Whangarei hosted the Prime Minister at a public meeting and did very well with over 300 attending. The new sub-branch at Whangarei is still moving along and I will be paying them a visit as soon as I can.

The coming year is election year and all Associations will have to have a very wary eye on candidates. Your Local Body Portfolio is to put out a question sheet to take to political meetings so make sure you ask the questions of the candidates and get the answers. Water privatisation will be by far the biggest issue as we all know what happened when electricity was privatised.

May I wish all members where ever you may be a happy and joyous Christmas and a very prosperous New Year.

Jack Kerr Zone One Director

Zone Two

No Report Received

Zone Three

Zone Three held our quarterly Zone meeting in the last week of September. Attended by fifty delegates from eighteen associations, a good number of issues were raised and debated.

The Seabed and Foreshore legislation was discussed, and its potential impact on the Coromandel/Bay of Plenty was raised as a major issue. Coromandel in particular is already experiencing the blocking off of access to some beaches by local iwi.

Mercury Bay questioned the wisdom of allowing the advertising Finance Companies in the Grey Power Quarterly.

Federation Capitation Fee increase to \$6.00 from January 1, 2011 was unanimously supported by all present. There was general agreement by all that ample notice had been given and all understood the reasons for the increase. The general feeling is that capitation fee is very low for the service received by members.

Taupo Association spoke about referrals through the PHO's for Mental Health for Older Persons in helping with problems in this area in particular identifying depression being caused by incorrect or over medication.

Another issue raised, and forwarded to the Health Portfolio, concerned Waikato District Health Board correspondence with patients, the contents of the letters caused considerable stress and asked for information about the patient in an inappropriate manner. It is pleasing to report that once Dick Stark became involved the issue was dealt with very quickly and the situation rectified.

A number of associations have held local body election meet the candidate meetings with big turn outs being noted.

Bob Thompson Zone Three Director

Zone Four

Winter is not notable for Grey Power action, many across the country just struggle to keep warm, and a lot look forward to when life becomes more comfortable and cheaper.

The lack of real progress fixing the problems within the Aged Care sector continues to be our greatest frustration, especially in the associations closer to the Wellington local body region. We continue to bring concerns to the attention of anyone of influence, especially the DHBs, but the refusal to completely set aside the phone interviewing as part of care re-assessment is just blatantly stubborn. It is mainly the product of responsibility being passed between Ministry, DHBs and sub-contractors. We are still in there battling.

Wanganui association has produced an alternative paper on Federation re-organisation, to add to the very thoughtful one put together by a Wellington group. We are grateful that members are making the effort to think things through like this, and we are looking forward to opportunities for genuine national discussion.

Lew Rohloff has continued to supply good material to generate opinion on the rights and wrongs of our superannuation system. There seems to be some confusion about whether some national consideration is under way about this very relevant topic and major concern.

Many associations in Zone 4 took a very active part in the recent local body election process, by hosting election meetings. Across the associations, we also had a number of members standing for office.

The Zone continues to have very useful discussions across many concerns and issues. Many members agreed with a suggestion that the 2011 conference should have a theme, and there were several suggested possibilities. What is the Board thinking about this one?

It is excellent that most of our 21 associations are regular attendees at our zone meetings, despite in some cases a considerable drive to get to centrally placed Palmerston North. There is genuine effort to make the deliberations worthwhile, so that their fine efforts are not wasted.

Roger Booth Zone Four Director

Zone Five

It has been a very sad time in our Zone with the West Coast Mine disaster. So many lives lost and many of them young men.

I extend to all the families and friends of the miners my personal sympathy.

The Christchurch quake also affected many people and I am sure you have family, relations and friends who have lost homes or had major damage done to their property.

Thank goodness no loss of life.

Really impressive was the way communities rallied around and worked together to help each other. Society may be changing, but it is great to see the old community spirit coming through.

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Now the business part of the bulletin:-
The increase in capitation will be voted on at the next AGM in Hamilton. Whether it gets passed will be up to the Associations attending.

It takes a great amount of hard work to keep the members we have, so Associations will have to take a good hard look if the increase is passed. I know a number of Associations in this Zone have only one person of a couple renewing at the moment. This means innovative methods to increase membership.

Grey Power Federation has placed a submission against the repeal of the Foreshore and Seabed Act.

The Board is again assisting small Associations to attend the AGM. It is to come out of sponsorship.

When sending in Registration Forms to the AGM they should be stamped with the Association's seal.

The last Board meeting was excellent with ideas discussed and resolution on many matters. New President Roy Reid presided over this very successful meeting.

It was proposed that a working party outside the Board, be approached to look at the working of the Board. See if this can be improved and if so come up with recommendations.

Congratulations to Gordon Currie, President of Nelson Grey Power in obtaining a seat on the Nelson Marlborough District Health Board.

I take the opportunity now to wish all members of Grey Power in Zone 5 a peaceful Christmas and a New Year of good health.

Keep an eye out for those older people on their own and take care all of you.

Pam Schouten Zone 5 Director

Zone Six

The major talking point for Zone 6 over the last few months, has been the way the September Earthquake has affected many members in Christchurch and Kaiapoi (North Canterbury) associations, while other Zone 6 associations felt it, the most damage was in the fore mentioned associations.

The continuing aftershocks are causing additional stress for many of our members who are already living with ongoing stressful situations. Unfortunately with some peoples homes are either damaged beyond repair, or the structural damage is such, that they are waiting to see what is going to happen re repairs etc.

Both Christchurch and North Canterbury Associations had their telephone tree in operation, allowing members to be contacted within forty eight hours to check on their welfare. This is proving to be an ongoing situation, and Christchurch has formed a sub-committee to help people where required, as some people are awaiting

information from either insurance companies or the Earthquake commission. One Christchurch committee member namely Tui Brown, contacted over 90 members on the telephone or by car within 48 hours of the Earthquake to see if everything was alright. I consider this to be a very commendable effort, from a lady in her eighties, and who a few months prior had had her own personal tragedy losing her husband Bruce.

North Canterbury advise that the area serving up to 20,000 people has lost their after hours Drs service, this is being taken up with both the Canterbury Health board, and the Rural Public health board. This service was withdrawn without any public notice to the general public, although it appears that members of certain groups in the area, (namely groups that rely on government monies, such as Presbyterian Social Services, Maori Health, Plunket, and members of the Waimakariri District council, interesting both the councillor concerned and the Mayor lost their positions in the recent local body elections.

Our last Zone meeting held in October at Temuka was well attended by both delegates and observers from all associations in the Zone.

Many matters were discussed from Alcohol reform (Ashburton commented that the Liquor industry does not promote Lo-alcohol beers), GST off food, over the counter charges for payments of power accounts, ACC problems re affordability for ACC physio treatments.

A resolution was passed; *That at all Grey Power Board or Federation elections, the number of votes for each candidate be published to avoid any subsequent misinformation.*

During the lunch break a presentation was made to our former National President and his wife Mr Les and Mrs Ann Howard.

All associations appear to be getting good attendances to their monthly meetings.

Miles Jackson Zone 6 Director

Zone Seven

Associations in Zone 7 continue to be active and concerned for the areas they represent.

Some areas of debate include; Neurosurgery (BATTLE WON); unacceptable language in the Schools environment; Hearing Loss issues; Transport; Licensing Trusts; Power Charges; the Poverty Line; Rest Home and Elderly Care; Oral Health.

Discussion also involved that it seemed too many Petty Issues were taking Board Time and it was time Business took preference to Ego stimulation and that constructive, factual and realistic concern be given to the Aims and Mission of Grey Power.

Dick Stark, Zone 7 Director

Portfolio Reports

Superannuation and Taxation Committee

Since the last Board meeting the three Members who do research for this Committee have continued to advance their work and are now working together checking the statistics that they are producing.

John Logan continues to work on the shortfall of Superannuation payments based on Statistics Dept. figures. He is doing work on a comparison between calculating the rate of superannuation on the Median weekly household income compared to the current way the calculation is done based on 66% of the national wage after tax.

In his last message he states that the “median weekly household income” has increased from \$1034.00 in 2005 to \$1236.00 in 2010 a percentage rise of 19.5%. As Superannuation is calculated at the rate of 66% of the average wage after tax John believes that the current rate of Superannuation, if calculated on the median household income would be \$815.76 per week compared to \$511.06 as presently is being paid.

John feels that we should be widely advertising this shortfall and that we should not have to be proving where the calculation faults lie. Bruce Twiddle is also working on the above as well as taking out some stats on the so called “Baby boom bulge”.. Bruce has now got substantial proof that immigration is the cause of the bulge not a baby explosion as promoted by Government. The birth rate has been below the replacement rate since the 1960s. Immigration has been at a level that replaces the dead and the lower birth rate since 1940. New Zealand has had a negative population growth without immigration and has been for a considerable number of years.

Lew Rohloff has also done a lot of work on the “Kiwisaver” savings scheme and the effect that it may have on Superannuation when the first withdrawals can be made from 1 July 2012. The lobby group asked all the political parties if a reduction to superannuation would be made when these savings are available. All answered that there would be no change and these savings would be in addition to the Superannuation payments. Your Committee is of the opinion that those who were unable to contribute due to age will be financially disadvantaged after July 2012.

There is uncertainty over the temporary GST payments being made from 1 October to 31 March 2011. It was understood that this payment would be in the calculation for next years rates but I have spoken again with MSD and this payment was made to cover the inflation cost due to the increase of GST on 1 October to 31 March. As next

years rates of Superannuation payments are calculated on the 31 December CPI figures we will only have the December quarter figures for increased GST inflation in next years calculation.

In the time leading up to the February Board meeting work will continue to be done to make further progress on the issues raised in this report.

R Reid Chair

Retirement Villages & Housing

Retirement Villages: During the period since the last Board Meeting, a representative of the Retirement Villages (RV) Portfolio attended another Auckland Region Retirement Villages Residents Association [RVRA(AR)]. Progress is slowly being made to involve all Villages in the area, with the aim that eventually a national Association may be formed for the benefit of all RV residents.

A representative also again attended the quarterly teleconference meeting of the RV Sector Group Meeting held on 7 October 2010. This meeting involves participants from all sections of the industry concurrently in the four centres at Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch. Grey Power attends as an RV stakeholder.

The discussions on the RV Disclosure Statement is continuing, with no resolution yet in sight. The aim of those associated with the Villages operator/owners is to reduce the information in the Statement, whereas Grey Power believes that as not too many Village residents or intending residents are fully aware of and so do not understand the RV Act 2003, the Disclosure Statement should fully detail the overall requirements of the particular Village, especially the financial requirements. We will continue with that as a requirement for Grey Power.

A representative of the RV portfolio attended an interesting first meeting arranged by the Retirement Commissioner, Diana Crossan, on the monitoring of the RV Act 2003 with residents, “to determine the scope of a project focussing upon residents of RV’s and their understanding of the RV Act 2003, regulations and codes, and the effectiveness of those in achieving the objectives of the Act and in protecting their interests”?

Bev James from Public Policy & Research Limited is undertaking the project. Bev considered that the meeting brought forward some “valuable, interesting and until then unknown information” and expressed her thanks for this insight. Further meetings will take place as soon as possible.

The joint Grey Power and Age Concern proposal on the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme is still with the Retirement Villages Association, and so is yet to progress further. The Department of Building & Housing is supporting Grey Power and Age Concern on this proposal.

As a result of Retirement Village advice being given to a Taupo Association member, some interesting information has emerged regarding the Weekly or monthly Village Outgoings payment on vacation of units. This will be followed up and if able to be of benefit to all RV residents, will be pursued vigorously. More detailed information will be given if/when successful.

Advice and assistance to RV residents is ongoing and will continue into the future.

Housing: Grey Power has strongly expressed its concern that Government are to hand over responsibility of a portion of the Housing New Zealand houses to the Salvation Army or similar organisations. This is effectively commercialising State Housing, and is considered unacceptable. All State Housing should always remain under the complete control of Housing New Zealand alone.

Roy Reid Retirement Villages Chair

Capitation Fees Increase Postponed

The increase of \$1 which was to have applied from 1 January 2011 has been deferred for one year and will instead apply as from 1 January 2012.

Although there has been strong support for the increase throughout the country, with a number of associations having already processed an increase in their subscriptions for this and other administrative reasons, a handful of associations have insisted on the Constitution being followed to the letter. Accordingly, at last week's Board meeting it was decided to place the matter before the AGM in May.

Graham Adams Treasurer November 2010

Kiwibank Deposits Grow

Members' deposits continue to grow steadily and stood at \$47.6m in 1486 accounts at the end of August.

Commission for the quarter amounted to \$10,858. Kiwibank's new 32 day notice Term Deposit with interest of 5% paid monthly (and therefore compounding) is innovative and should be well received by those looking for safety and accessibility. The total commission (excl GST) for the year is \$38,853.56 against budget of \$36,000.

Graham Adams, Convenor.

Report from the 50+ Portfolio

Perhaps the first debate re this portfolio should be whether the Grey Power Federation really wants to include 50-65 year olds in their organisation. If this debate is to occur the portfolio has information re the reasons for and against their inclusion which can be provided for those who are interested.

Correspondence: None has been received by the 50+ portfolio since the last Board meeting.

Work in progress: A discussion paper re draft policy has been written. Background papers have been provided for the portfolio team Issues arising from the lobby report noted. Issues from the previous portfolio team noted Issues for the new portfolio team to consider

Immediate Goal: to meet with the 50+ portfolio team to: Discuss the draft policy, write an issues, goals, strategy plan to encompass the work this portfolio requires.

General Information: As at September 1 approximately 12000 over 50s were registered as unemployed. Many more people 50-65 yrs old are on other types of benefits or are unqualified partners of superannuitants.

There have been changes to the abatement rates so that beneficiaries can earn \$100.00 per week now instead of the \$80.00 previously. Every dollar above \$100 is abated at the rate of 70 cents in the dollar. The abatement rate for the unemployment benefit remains unchanged.

Information please: If we are to lobby for improvements for those on the above benefits we require base-line information. So if you or any people you know in the 50-65 yr old bracket are having problems with WINZ or other agencies or have problematic personal stories to tell regarding late in working life redundancies and subsequent problems etc please let me know by contacting the Grey Federation Office.

Jan Pentecost (Portfolio Chair)

Alcohol Reform

Without quoting facts and figures (which are being published continually) perhaps it is time that Grey Power could initiate some constructive suggestions to address the harm and cost that is being caused by Alcohol to the quality of life for so many New Zealanders.

For many years this problem has been talked about, but instead of diminishing, unfortunately has grown, to the extent of the present situation where the affect of irresponsible cultures and disciplines is becoming the normal behaviour.

In Health issues alone the treatments required to service the results of excessive Alcohol abuse are excessive and also time consuming.

Grey Power opinion is being listened to, so with the present Parliamentary debate highlighting new legislation on Alcohol and Licensing issues this could be the time to progress an experienced, realistic and factual opinion from our membership.

A suggestion that has been expressed relates to Education, and suggests that

A Team of Speakers be commissioned to travel to Schools to address assemblies, speaking and showing slides etc of the unsavoury effects excess and Binge Drinking can develop into.

This Team to be sponsored by the Liquor Trade and to be separate from each Schools teaching Curriculum.

If our membership is concerned over this issue I invite your Comments and Suggestions so our Health Committee can make submissions to the appropriate people. Please respond to the Federation Office.

Dick Stark Health Convenor

Health

National President Roy and I have met with the newly formed National Health Board and we feel that the Consumer Voice of Grey Power will be listened to by this Team.

Already some of our suggestions have been followed up.

We feel that at last there will be some controls over DHB's.

Oral Health is now on our Agenda and hopefully we can influence some pressure on the addressing of Older Peoples Oral Health Care which is long overdue.

Realistic Home Care and Rest Home Care are also on the Agenda.

Private Health Insurance opportunities continues to be debated as against the Grey Power Policy of total Public Health preferences.

We are still suggesting that Reviews are needed in the areas of Pharmacies Prescriptions and medication issues and also in the cost and servicing of Alcohol related problems.

Grey Power has been invited onto the reformed Standards Committee on Health and Disability Issues. We are still having satisfactory results mediating on behalf of members.

Dick Stark Health Convenor for Grey Power.

Membership

It was very pleasing to receive over 40 responses to the membership questionnaire and to see how diverse Associations are in the way they function.

We hope the summary of responses is of assistance to Associations in providing some ideas for events and functions, and ways to maintain members and attract new ones.

The responses did show we need to review in the way we "sell" Grey Power especially in respect of the 50-65 age group. We claim to be representing them but somehow they are not recognised enough. Superannuation is but one income source we are watchdog over. Perhaps this is the reason why we have trouble attracting younger members to our committee's both locally and nationally.

Associations have recognised it is really a local issue in respect of getting members to renew their subs promptly and following on from the very beneficial 2010 "join a friend" national campaign,

we hope Associations will, for 2011, consider trying something similar locally. If every Association had a prize for subs paid/renewed by say 30 April 2011 (include new members), it may prompt the "stragglers" to take part. A local Business may be worth approaching for such a "prize".

We do realise that all Associations are autonomous bodies and we cannot instruct them in how to run their Associations affairs but we must be available to assist Associations in any way we possibly can. The recent questionnaire has been a great help to us in understanding how Associations tick, and it is important that the Board regularly seeks the views of Associations in enhancing Grey Powers image.

On behalf of Judy, Roger and Graham, the Membership Committee wishes every member a very Merry Christmas and happy New Year and we look forward to the challenges of 2011

Errol Millar, Chair, Membership Committee

Law & Order

The Law and Order portfolio, in my opinion, needs an overhaul. It seems to me that the focus, which is currently on how law-breakers should be treated in prison, is not helpful to our members. It is patently obvious, and proved beyond doubt in other western countries, that imprisonment is not a deterrent from crime but rather a university for some. Therefore, we need to look at other, more positive, ways of dealing with offenders and keeping our people safe.

For this reason, I have written a draft change of policy, which is as follows:

Mission: To work to ensure the security and safety of all New Zealanders.

Aims and objectives:

1. To address the causes of crime in our communities.
2. To educate the community in its responsibility for the maintenance of law and order.
3. To treat all other persons as we would wish to be treated – with dignity and respect.
4. To support community projects aimed at the prevention of crime.
5. To promote positive alternatives to imprisonment for those who break the law, particularly in minor matters.
6. To lobby government to increase the number of drug and alcohol addiction treatment programmes available to prisoners while in custody.
7. To promote the concept of restorative justice in all spheres of community life.

I would very much appreciate comment on this draft policy, as well as suggestions as to a strategy along these lines which would be appropriate to take into the upcoming election year.

Kilian de Lacy Chair, Law & Order Portfolio

Office Administration

Christmas closing – 24th December to 24th January I will attend the office during this period to check mail and do banking that should come in.

ALL special benefit – Some associations have expressed what a useful tool this benefit has been when they have been holding membership drives etc. If any Associations are organising drives or stalls and require more of the yellow forms or other material, they should contact the office.

Cards/labels – Associations have been sent their cards for 2011 and they should order their labels (green for 2011) as soon as they require them. Associations should be made aware that a card label is generated separately for both parties under one number (ie Mr and Mrs) and therefore it is important that they have the initials of the 2nd party registered on the database. Many Associations only give initials of Mr.

Purging of un-financial and deleted members' details will take place at the end of the financial year – as you are all aware, only financial members receive Magazines after the June issue.

Pens are still available for purchase from the office.

Aged Care Report – The office received 100 copies on Thursday 28th October and they were posted on Monday 1st November in the monthly mail out to all Associations.

Website – I received a query from Sandra Greig asking for information to be posted on the website to inform potential members of the benefits and what would make them want to join Grey Power.

I have explained to her that the Grey Power Federation website covers the generic information of ‘The Grey Power NZ Federation Inc’, including general board information, AGM information and most importantly, contact details of all the Associations throughout the country.

I also explained that as each Association is autonomous and differ in what they offer it may only confuse potential members if we list benefits and then, upon joining, we inform them that they are NOT entitled to many of them. It concerns me that this could give rise to complaints of false advertising.

People can, from the website, contact their local Association to find out the benefits specific to that area and the costs involved in joining. I note that the Federation website does already include individual Association information such as dates of meetings, newsletters etc (information furnished by the individual Associations) and the website can (and does) include links to Association's websites should any of them wish that.

Some Associations wrongly think that the office staff are responsible for the data that appears

on the website when, in fact, it is the board that has determined the website content. If any board members have any information that they would like included on the site, they should run it past the president and send it on to Sharron for inclusion.

Publicity

Multiple Press releases have been circulated with regards the Aged Care Report, the SuperGold card free off peak travel, the GST increase, Meals on Wheels, Health Insurance increases to name a few. We have continued to approach and be approached by the media for comment on all these issues plus others such as ACC cuts.

Our press release regarding Meals on Wheels resulted in animated discussion in Parliament and the cuts to this service have consequently not yet happened. It is an issue that we are still following.

The office has had a visit from a Japanese Group interested in finding out about the workings of Grey Power and our aims and objectives. They are visiting the country to look at various important Age Service providers.

Social Services

Paula Bennett has still not replied with regards to whether the GST increase to Superannuation affects special benefits and those in rest homes. I am continuing to pursue this.

Unfortunately, the Cost of Living survey was not put into the magazine but I am assured by the publisher that it will appear in the December issue. However, many Associations have secured responses from their members and we have consequently received almost 1000 returns. I do note that Zones 4 & 5 have not produced many returns and accordingly, I ask that all Zone Directors urge their Associations to support the survey as we need coverage throughout all of New Zealand.

I was pleased to be given assurances by the Minister of Transport that the Govt is committed to retaining the SuperGold Card free off peak travel.

Violet McCowatt

Local Bodies & Election Strategy

Most activities relating to Local Bodies has been around the October Local body elections.

Results nationwide have been very interesting with most areas particularly in the cities sitting Mayors and councillors being changed. This was very noticeable in the four cities (Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin) except Christchurch, and even here, it was felt only the media exposure that the sitting mayor got through the Earthquake allowed him to hold his Mayoralty,

when prior to the Earthquake polls were showing the sitting Mayor well behind in the polls.

In many areas while sitting councillors were voted out, some of the incoming councillors were themselves voted out in 2007, a period where rates in many instances were running at 10% plus, so the message here is associations will need to be vigilant of their new councils. Already the new Super city council in Auckland is forecasting a rates increase of between 3.9 and 6.00 per cent, well above the current rate of inflation of 2 per cent. We were told one of the main reasons for setting up the Super city council was cheaper rates, a myth that rang hollow at the time of release.

Christchurch, Selwyn and Waimakariri rate payers are already being told of big rate increases due to the recent earthquake as so much infrastructure has been damaged, while this can be acceptable in a one off situation, it would be of concern if councillors saw an opportunity to put some of their pet projects on the agenda under the guise of Earthquake re build .

Some major problems have emerged with the Local Health board elections, these elections are run under the STV voting system, a voting system that many people do not know much about.

As result there has been a large informal and blank vote, for instance in the Canterbury District Health board elections there was 16,003 eligible votes, 10,015 informal votes, and 23,033 blank votes. When some research was done into the reason for the large informal and blank votes, it was found that most people found having to rank candidates 1 to 7 to confusing, particularly elderly voters.

The other problem that emerged was it was impossible to contact some Health board candidates; some had no phone number, or e-mail address to put questions to. It was also noticeable a number of candidates did not respond to Questions when they were contacted. With most candidate activity centred on Mayoral or Council candidate, the Health board elections are not addressed the way it should be, both by governments and Grey Power.

It is obvious we have to ask question over the STV voting system, and also the representation, should we return to a Ward system of representation , and also questions has to be out earlier to associations to allow them to put candidates under the spot light.

Miles Jackson, Chairman- Local Bodies.

Energy

The committee prepared a presentation for the National Magazine, and were pleased with what we put together. In the report we spelt out six objectives on Energy Hardships, and Molly wrote an accompanying article with useful representation in graph form.

We have received some feedback, but hardly a significant reaction. However I think that we can take this as indicating that at least we are on the right track. We are keen to receive suggestions about ways of pursuing the objectives we have set, next year's elections certainly provide a platform, but what is the most effective way of using it?

An energy milestone has been the third reading of the Electricity Industry Act, which is by no means all good. Our biggest concern is whether as a result there will still be domestic consumer representation. Until now our interests have been represented on most of the advisory committees, although in all cases as absolute minorities. At least, when we are there, we are up with what is happening, and do get the chance to at least put our point of view. Not being there at all would be a lot worse.

We have made the appropriate requests for domestic consumer representation to be properly considered and appreciated, and there are signs that efforts, including our own, and of Molly in particular, are not being totally ignored.

Molly, who also leads the DEUN lobby group, has been invited to speak to the new Electricity Authority Board, we know she will make the most of this opportunity, and await signs of reaction to what she has to say. Watch this space. **Roger Booth** Energy Spokesperson

Magazine

Based on feedback the September publication has been generally well received.

Human interest stories, general letters to the Editor, and articles from Board Committee Chair are all welcome.

Under the terms of the Contract between Greypower and Waikato Business Publications Ltd, as from the December 2010 publication a 20% profit split will be introduced. The profit split is based on an agreed formula and profit distribution will occur 60 days after the month of invoicing. Only collectable debts will be included in the profit split calculations.

Because many regular advertisers say a December publication is to late for marketing purposes, it may be necessary next year to consider an early November production.

Terry King Chairman Magazine Committee

Lobby Report

Report on the Grey Power Board Lobby Trip to Wellington September 2010

The lobby group was Roy Reid, Federation President, Dick Stark Portfolio holder for Health, and Miles Jackson Portfolio holder for Local Bodies and Election Strategy. Mrs. Violet McCowatt withdrew for health reasons.

As a result of the Canterbury Earthquake many of the Ministers and MP, s were unavailable at times arranged in the proposed agenda and resulted in some hasty rearranging of various meetings. It was pleasing to see that all parties were working together to get the earthquake area into recovery mode. We extend our sincere thanks to all the MP, s who made their time available to meet with us. All meetings were an exchange of viewpoints and we received an opportunity to have a frank discussion with everyone that we met, with many requesting to meet with us on future visits.

Audiologists

New Zealand Audiologists, Karen Pullar Chair-person Himanda, Peter Stubbings President NZ Audiological Society, Janet Houghton President elect NZ Audiological Society, Hazel Armstrong Chief Advisor to NZAS.

We met with this group to discuss the way that ACC are treating those with noise induced hearing loss and trying to reduce the amount of entitlement to natural hearing loss in the elderly. It was noted that the ACC proposed regulations are ageist and contrary to the Positive Ageing Strategy because they will prohibit many elderly people from obtaining hearing aids resulting in the loss of quality of life, increased rates of depression, social isolation and dependence.

A case can be made to increase the hearing aid subsidy from 1 October if the GST component is not increased. The DHB,s needs a Budget item to provide Adult Audiology services. A need is also seen that ACC do not proceed with the proposed regulations and re-instigate the Accord process.

They also felt AAC should work with industry to prevent hearing loss.

AAC to sit down with the Audiologists in the manufacturer of hearing aids.

We support the Audiologists Moratorium over the proposed Hearing Loss Issue and hope to have a "Round Table" meeting with concerned parties.

Ministry of Social Development

At this meeting we met with Dianne Rogers(Chair), Warren Hudson,(Senior Services), Tim Bryers (Gold Card), Lyn Cousins (Older Peoples Policy), Derek Senior (Working Age

People), Natalie Lavery, Vivienne Jenner, and Denise Stephens (Office for Senior Citizens)and Brian Perry (Research)

As Senior Services have recently been formed into a separate division from Work and Income new Seniors Managers and staff are now working across the country, and are actively participating in local senior support networks. Their vision is to have older people happy, healthy and living in their own homes for as long as they can. They will try to make it easy to access entitlements, find out about support and assistance that is available to superannuitants. This service will build and be enhanced over a 3 year period. On line services will be expanded over the next two years.

The "Supergold Card" continues to attract new participants and the list is available to members on the website. The cards will no longer have an expiry date on them unless the holder is entitled to have a Community service card.

For information on the card the website is www.supergold.govt.nz

Older Persons Policy.

We had asked to be updated on overseas pensions being transferred to New Zealand and how section 70 of the Social Security Act applies.

Since 1938 New Zealand Benefits and Superannuation have been reduced by the value of an overseas pension, with people receiving New Zealand superannuation being the largest group affected by this policy. A quarter of all recipients of NZS were born overseas with 12% receiving an overseas pension and 50% of those born overseas receive no overseas pension. A direct deduction can take place if the person on NZS or his/her partner receives a STATE pension from an overseas country. Section 70 generally requires the dollar for dollar deduction of the amount of any overseas pension on 2 criteria.

1. Forms part of a programme providing Benefits and pensions for any of the contingencies for which a NZ benefit may be paid.
2. Is administered by or on behalf of the overseas Government paying the overseas Benefit.

Changes from 1 October 2010

Personal tax rates decrease

New Zealand rates increase

Temporary GST compensation of 2.02% until 31 March 2011. The temporary compensation will be replaced by the annual adjustment effective from 1 April 2011.

The Disability allowances also have a permanent increase of 2.02% from 1 October 2010.

We were also updated on unemployment of those over age 50. There were 12537 over 50 registered as unemployed at 1 Sept 50 -54 =5117 55 - 59 = 4031 60 -65 =3389 with the biggest number being in Auckland 4215 Otago /Southland 1326 and

Wellington 1185. This trend has continued during the recession.

Abatement rates have increased from \$80.00 to \$100.00 for unqualified spouse superannuation, DPB, Invalids and widows benefits. We also discussed the need for a 6 monthly review of Superannuation and benefit rates if there is a sharp increase to the inflation rate, as well as expressing concern over the shopping list used to measure price increases.

We had also asked for a Dollar figure to be stated for the level of poverty and were given the figure for single living alone as \$245 per week and couples as \$377 per week but as New Zealand does not have an official poverty line but publishes poverty figures from using a range of measures especially if a house is owned or rented so housing costs are deducted before setting a figure for poverty.

Office for Senior Citizens

They are preparing Bookmarks with safe driving tips to be distributed by the AA Service. Information for carers, for people with disabilities to enable them to be prepared for coping in a disaster. Get Ready Get Thru. www.getthru.govt.nz Positive aging strategy reporting on activity from both Central and Local Government. Web based reporting can be found on website www.osc.govt.nz.

We also expressed concern that the age of entitlement was being discussed but were assured that MSD are doing no work towards this. This was 3 hours well spent.

Dianne Crossan. Retirement Commissioner

We took the opportunity to discuss the removal of Married couple rate for superannuation and the Commission would also like to see the Unqualified spouse superannuation stopped and all entitled to receive superannuation get the same flat rate with an allowance for additional living costs for those who live alone.

Also sees a need for more provision of services for those aged over 90 years There is also a need to have a consumers group trained to speak on consumer needs.

Also discussed the need for ACC to pay 80% of income from earnings for those aged 65+ who work full or part time, especially now that the elderly are being encouraged to work after age 65. The retirement Commissioner stated she would like to see a seminar for real older people 90 plus, actually have their own case manager.

We look forward to the Commissioners 3 yearly report to Government due to be released in December 2010.

Director, National Health Board.

Mr. Chai Chuah

We asked that consumer groups needed to be represented on all Committees that make recommendations for the welfare and care of the various age groups.

The current Health system is not sustainable in its present form and the new National Board will do many functions that the District Health Boards had done and considerable savings should be achieved.

We raised the wastage of Medicines and the huge cost of the wastage.

There should be a delivery of better quality care and change will occur due to better monitoring of performance of all DHB,s.

After us stating that we considered there were too many bureaucrats in the health system, he stated with his own staff, he keeps asking them, have they talked to older people, have they ever been in a clinic, i.e. go out and see what is happening in the real world of health, we felt this was a refreshing view coming from someone holding a top position in the new Health board.

Chai asked that we attend a National Health Board meeting and he attend our Board meeting to discuss our concerns about Health.

Ministry of Health Disability Services

Sarah Hamlin and Anne Foley

This meeting was an opportunity to be updated on services being provided for the disabled..... We were briefed on the revised accreditation framework for health professionals undertaking assessments that could result in applications for equipment and modification services for people with disabilities.

More assessments to be done in the applicants home for the need to improve showers, steps and home needs. The Ministry will pay for all items with a cost of more than \$50.00.

Ministry expressed a concern that elderly people need to plan home renovations to meet the aging process well in advance of the need.

We suggested that Lifestyle Design be included in negotiations.

Leader Progressive Party

Hon. Jim Anderton

We were unable to meet with Mr. Anderton as he was attending to urgent Electorate work due to the earthquake.

As we wished to discuss Dental care for the elderly we met with David Cuthbert his Policy advisor and Sally Griffin his Secretary.

Mr. Anderton is advocating affordable dental care as 50% of New Zealanders do not receive regular dental care. He is developing a

subsidized system in conjunction with Dentists, dental therapists and hygienists but still has a long way to go.

David Cuthbert gave us a copy of a speech that Jim had made to Grey Power Mana Tawa Association in August.

He also said if Mr. Anderton leaves Parliament this policy will be picked up by Annette King for Labour.

Oral health is not a health target for the current Government. Another problem is a shortage of Dentists in the provincial areas and this could be overcome by extending the same scheme for Doctors having their student loans paid if they agree to work in hard to staff areas. We are asked to support the campaign for affordable dental care for the elderly as lack of dental care is a major factor in poor health.

We suggested an immersion scheme similar to the medical Doctors scheme be investigated.

Hon Luamanuvao Winnie Laban

We met to hear a verbal report on the meetings that she and Sue Kedgley had held throughout New Zealand on Rest Home Care and Home Care. A written report is nearing completion and will be released in the near future.

Ministry of Health

Alison Randall DHB and PHO

Elizabeth Knopf and Ann Foley Elder care

Doctors in semi rural and rural areas. The cut back of hours is requiring long distances to be travelled at high cost and in many cases loss of subsidy resulting in an emergency visit to the Doctor after hours being unaffordable.

We also made a case for increased subsidy to keep many smaller rural rest homes open as is the case with a rest home with 17 beds in Golden Bay facing closure.

Minister of Finance and Deputy Leader National

Hon. Bill English

We discussed the increase of GST and the effects that this will have on those on lower fixed incomes due to increased prices. The need for increased subsidy for rural health care and rest home care and asked if he would fund the shortfall in funding to the Collingwood Rest home so that the integration of health services in Golden Bay has a chance to succeed. The cost of after hour's doctor's visits was also raised with the North Canterbury situation as an example. We also raised the continual increases to food prices and the effect this would have on inflation and the need for a six monthly review if the inflation rises as some commentators are predicting. We also raised the

question of Kiwisaver payments from 1 July 2012. He sees these payments being in addition to superannuation.

He also stated that a rise on the eligibility of Superannuation was not on the "radar at present" As well we raised the need to discuss having some of policy objectives being included in his party policy manifesto.

Hon. Annette King Labour Welfare.

We discussed the future of National Superannuation in regard to the introduction of Kiwisaver payments as from 1 July 2012. She assured us that her party saw Kiwisaver as a saving scheme and payments from it would be in addition to superannuation.

We also had the opportunity to discuss the need for regular reviews of the Superannuation and Benefit payments if there is an increase in inflation and food prices.

Also discussed State House tenants' having to vacate after ten years of residence, She was against this policy.

Hon. Darren Hughes Labour Transport

We discussed the need for a continuation of Road safety courses for older drivers, a need to reduce the blood alcohol level for drink drivers, compulsory third party insurance to be included in motor registration fees. He felt the need there was still a need for the Driver Education course (Safe with age). We also discussed Gold Card Travel

He also stated he had a bill in the ballot to lower the alcohol test from .080 to .050 something the government reneged on, when recommended by the Law commissions recommendations. Failing it being drawn, this was likely to be Labour policy going into the next election in 2011.

Hon Damien O'Conner Labour Rural Affairs

A discussion was held on the retention of Rest Homes and Medical services in rural areas. He also saw a need for more private money to be invested into rural services but is aware that the financial return is a barrier to such investment. Rural areas also have no choice of services due to limited supply.

Made a comment that all major surgery in the South Island could end up in Christchurch under the present political regime.

Green Party

Dr. Russel Norman Co-leader Green Party, Sue Kedgley, and Kevin Hague Green Party Health.

This was an opportunity to discuss Green policy. We also discussed Home care and Rest

Home care as well as rural health care and the provision of after hour's medical services.

The Law Commission report on alcohol was discussed and the need for change to licensing laws.

Russell is willing to attend any Association meetings on request.

Minister of Social Development

Hon. Paula Bennett,

We were told that her Department had contacted 16500 receiving superannuation in the Canterbury district to check on their welfare needs as a result of the earthquake. They had also endeavoured to visit all those aged over 80 years to check that were coping with daily needs.

We also questioned the rates for Single Sharing and a Married couple as quoted by the Prime Minister in a letter to superannuiants. The rates were misleading.

We also spoke about a need for a six monthly review of benefits if the inflation rate rises quickly after 1 October.

Disability payments will be adjusted for the GST increase.

Ross Robertson Labour

Senior Citizens

This was a time to discuss a wide range of topics that are of a concern to the elderly.

He saw an opportunity for Abbyfield type housing being established but also staffed by a registered Nurse to provide oversight to medical needs for residents. Ageism needs also to be addressed.

Minister of Revenue, Associate Health

Hon Peter Dunne Leader United Future

Had a discussion on Superannuation. He sees Kiwisaver as a secondary savings scheme which will supplement superannuation. We also discussed the provision of after hours Doctors services in semi rural and rural districts. The effect the increase in GST will have on living costs. He was also prepared to discuss any new policy initiatives that we may wish to promote to him in the lead up to the election.

Hon. Phil Goff Leader Labour

He raised his ideas on removing GST from healthy foods if elected as the government. He predicts that over half of New Zealand households will be worse off as a result of the cuts to income tax.

We were invited to send him policy issues that he could consider to be included in their manifesto. Also discussed the issue of Kiwisaver on superannuation from 1 July 12... He will treat these funds similar to a private superannuation

scheme which will not reduce the level of superannuation payments.

He is happy to discuss any policy issues that we have at any time.

We also raised concern about the increasing food prices occurring; Sue Kedgely was concerned about the high fruit and vegetable prices that supermarkets are charging, in the present supermarket duopoly situation, particularly to the small grower, who is dictated by large grocery concerns, as to what they will buy at their price. Small growers are getting around this by organizing growers markets.

We also raised the situation where supermarkets are raising prices prior to the advent of GST.

Age Concern

We met with Ann Martin CEO and Lesbeth Gronback

We took the opportunity to discuss Health including after hour services retention of smaller rural rest homes and the provision of better and affordable Dental care for the elderly. Superannuation and the proposed change to age of entitlement as being discussed by the Retirement Commissioner. There is also ongoing work being done jointly by both of groups on Retirement Villages Codes.

Minister of Health

Hon. Tony Ryall.

The Minister advised that he had a report suggesting that rest homes need 80 beds to be viable. We dispute this figure as it would mean the loss of many smaller rest homes that operate well in smaller communities. We also discussed the closure of the Collingwood Rest Home in Golden Bay and asked that the Minister ask the DHB to integrate this home into the integrated health service currently being implemented and for Government to fund the shortfall.

We were told by the Minister that progress is being made in reducing middle management staff in the Ministry and DHB with approx 700 less people now employed, the bonding scheme is working well with 300 more Doctors employed as well as 1000 extra nurses. More operations are being done and all Cancer treatments are now being done in New Zealand.

We discussed the Home care and Rest Home care and were given copies of the report on Aged Residential Care Service Review written by Grant Thornton. More money is being spent on home care this year and the Minister is hopeful that the funding will be better utilized.

We also raised the way some of the interviewing went on by the contracted people for the review of the Home Help back in June. We advised the Minister of a situation in Christchurch,

where a couple was told at the initial interview, an hours shopping was replacing an hours cleaning, this was not required as they are capable of doing their own shopping. The Minister requested details of this instance, where he intended to follow it up. This information has subsequently been sent to him, where he has a Ministry of Health official looking into it.

Also raised the costs involved in treating drug and alcohol related illness.

We also raised the need for after hour Medical care to be available in semi rural and rural areas to save cost of travel and added fees. A nurse led service is a possible way of overcoming this problem.

As the Minister was concerned about a news release on the Meals on Wheels cuts in Helensville we gave him copies of the minutes from the meeting between the DHB and the people who service was to be cut.

Labour - Greens

Rest Home and Home Care Report

We met with Annette King, Winnie Laban, Sue Kedgley and their support staff and were briefed on the Draft Report which they hope to launch in October and those Associations that took part will be invited to attend.

Stuart Nash Labour Taxation

Stuart asked us for a meeting so that he could discuss a policy that he is developing in regard to taxation for those receiving superannuation. As this is only in its formative stage we agreed not to release details but will be invited to comment again. We also discussed the Banking system and the big outflow of profits from overseas owned banks. He sees an urgent need for growth in Kiwibank.

Labour Health.

Hon. R Dyson and Iain Lees-Galloway

As Iain is also part of Ruth's Health team she wanted him to meet with us and take part in the discussions.

We discussed the same items as discussed with the Minister of Health but received a different view point on the matters raised. As Ruth had been working in her Electorate dealing with the problems residents are facing after the earthquake she updated us on her thoughts on what needed to be done.

Minister Senior Citizens and Civil Defence

Hon. John Carter.

Most of this meeting was an update on the Ministers involvement with the earthquake.

We expressed our thanks for the work that had been done by staff of the Ministry of Social Development n checking on the elderly in the Canterbury area.

He was also concerned that many of those un-insured will be those with no mortgage and many Elderly could be affected as they have not needed insurance to meet the mortgage insurance requirements.

He has asked that we keep him informed of any problems the elderly in Canterbury may have.

He congratulated the Christchurch and North Canterbury Associations on the way that they had contacted their Members and the support given.

Minister of Justice and Minister of Commerce

Hon. Simon Power.

We discussed the Legal aid system and were assured that Legal aid would be available to all who need it but the abuse of the system has been dealt with.

The ever increasing cost of food was discussed and the way food prices have been going up in recent weeks and the 1 October GST increase still to be added.

We also discussed the Law Commission Report on Alcohol and the measures that the Government intends to implement. We see a need for the Board and Associations to make written submissions to the Bill when it comes to Parliament. We suggested that Liquor Trusts be set up to control the sale of alcohol but the Minister was not keen on this and thinks Local Bodies can manage licensing in their own areas if they are prepared to do the Work. Smaller Councils may opt out and this would be covered in the Bill.

Minister for ACC

Hon. Nick Smith.

We discussed the natural hearing loss that ACC are applying to hearing loss claims and raised several questions as to why the ACC are dismissing claims. We asked that more work be done with the ACCORD group.

The Minister wants to have a share of costs between ACC and Health Subsidy.

We also raised the high cost of the ACC levy on motor registration and asked if this could be reduced and a charge be made on a user pay basis paid on the price of petrol.

The Minister was concerned that this may not work as tax on Petrol is dedicated to Roads

We also discussed the cost of the Emissions trading scheme and the money being invested into Forestry.

The Minister raised the retention of the Joan Whiting Rest Home and assured us that he was working with other Ministers to find a suitable outcome. This was a very cordial meeting and we were impressed with the way that the Minister received us and his open and frank replies. .

Over all this Lobby trip while suffering several disruptions due to the commitments Ministers had relating to the recent earthquake, we consider it very worthwhile, it was evident that while several Ministers were having trouble meeting original appointments , they were determined to meet with Grey Power at some time during the three days.

A major highlight was the meeting with the Director of the new Health board Mr. Chai Chuah.

R Reid, D Stark, M Jackson

The Men of Pike

They came from near and far away
The men of Pike to work that day
The afternoon shift way down deep
Beneath the mountains oh so steep
A long way in but further out
The afternoon shift sets about
A job not flash but hard and trying
A job that holds the risk of dying

From seventeen to sixty two
They start their shift to see it through
For one his first, for all their last
How could they know there'd be a blast?
For all at once no siren whining
Suddenly the worst in mining
Dust and rubble fill the air
A loader driver thrown clear
Just one other finds the light
The rest are hidden from our sight

And so we learn as news is spread
The news that mining families dread
It's up at Pike there's an explosion
Faces drop and hearts are frozen
Who, how many, where and why ----
Will they make it ---- will they die

Fathers, husbands, brothers, sons
Coasters, Kiwis, Aussies, Poms
Mates and friends who we are seeking
Methane gas from coal seams leaking
Vents exploded, phones unheeded
Level heads and strength are needed
The world above unites as one
To bring the missing to the sun

Rescue teams are standing by
As holes are drilled and experts try
To find a way that's safe and sound
To rescue those beneath the ground
Could robots work where men are mortal
To pierce the dangers of that portal
But alas all effort fails
The darkness of the mine prevails

A second blast of rock and thunder
Hope and prayers are rent asunder
A nation weeps and Coasters mourn
Pike falls silent, dark, forlorn
A hole remains within the ground
Devoid of joy, of life, of sound

Another hole within the heart
Of those forever set apart
From those they loved who went to toil
Digging coal beneath the soil
Those who gave their lives that day
To work a shift for honest pay
They wait at rest within their mine
The men of Pike, the Twenty Nine

Sean Plunket
As Forwarded from Mile Jackson