



2023-24 Annual report from the board chairman

Introduce the board

- Marianne McMillan - treasurer
- Jay Jensen - secretary
- Darrin Gould
- Lynda Moore

Two missing

Rupert Watson – resigned

So many – too many! – years and I’m just on the fringe of things now. Fantastic achievements on many levels at the Centre. My perennial advice is to keep looking for good potential Board people, so the shoes don’t get too big to fill.

William Aitkenhead

Was to have addressed us tonight in his field of expertise as a Principal Adviser in International Policy, around the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases.

As one of the **very few self-funded community centres** in the country, the Featherston Community Centre has more than met the brief – we believe we have raised the bar.

A couple of years ago, **thanks largely to COVID and to the Regional Growth fund**, the property received a massive makeover.

Earlier this year we secured [support from the Meridian Energy Community De-carbonisation Fund](#) to upgrade the heating system. Since then, you will have seen [with see](#) the old diesel boiler and its cast iron radiators replaced by a brand-new centralised HVAC (air conditioning) system with WIFI remote control access.

[Part of our new strategic plan includes making decisions that consider our environmental impact. Replacing the legacy heating system for electric/clean heating \(and cooling\) has been a huge thing to achieve and plays well with those strategic goals.](#)

There will no doubt be some **acclimatisation to the new regime**. Learning new concepts such as accepting a single set temperature for the whole building and effecting local adaptations by wearing appropriate clothing and keeping windows closed.

The **new kitchen** has become a reality, with the final funding and touches being lined up for completion once the HVAC system work is out of the way.

These improvements are not without a **dark side**.

It has become apparent that some look at the excellent condition of the facility, the modernisation, and the quality and scope of our tenancies and think they see a **government-funded and controlled entity**. This misconception causes a lamentable lack of care and a reticence around fiscal support. It may also have made us a target for theft ([kitchen supplies](#), loads of firewood and a tank or two of diesel fuel going missing). Our own hard work effectively shooting ourselves in the collective foot!

The fact is, that a significant proportion of Jo Baldwin’s time is spent fund-raising. The board has recently established a **funding sub-committee**. This group will explore long-term funding streams, and supporter and bequest schemes. This will require some targeted recruitment and a broad media

propaganda program if we are to change public perception and put our Community Centre top of mind when people are making decisions about their philanthropy spend or **their bequest arrangements**.

The Toy Library still features high on our list of upcoming development. We have a concept plan which is still evolving and may yet include the Community Patrol vehicle housing and security. This will be a significant project and will open the door for another project close to my heart – **a short-term childcare facility** that will work in with the Medical Centre at fixed times to help them provide better service to parents requiring privacy for their medical appointments. Watch this space – as they say.

Our board is still strong and capable. We are fortunate to have some very skilled members who are active on the national and/or world scene in their chosen specialities – and yet they still find time to work for the benefit of the community they have chosen to call home.

As you know, the Trust has extended its brief by taking on management of the **Phoenix News**. Centre Manager Jo has been pivotal in developing the newspaper, marshalling the efforts of a team of content managers and editorial volunteers to produce what we believe is a worthy vehicle for Featherston news and views. A huge vote of thanks goes to Kristi Chalmers who provides the signature layout and graphic services.

Jo is the 'secret sauce' that make the Community Centre such a success. Her compassion and empathy have been felt by all who come within her ambit and the essential community spirit that is thus engendered has made the building a home for so many of our community members.

Last year, Jo identified a segment of South Wairarapa Community who typically fall through the cracks that inevitably exist between existing social services. People who may need one or more support services, but don't know it – either because they have not heard of them, or don't have the tools or expertise necessary to access, or even approach the relevant agencies. We **developed a 'Support Hub' approach**, which, currently lacks concrete form, but the nature of the problem is such that 'form' is the very antithesis of what is needed. The support hub is flexible to the point of elasticity – analogue rather than digital and responding to the need as perceived at the time. Its existence is the **extension of Jo's character** and is difficult to bottle – but is effective and affecting.

One of the by-products of this project is the realisation that the Featherston Community Centre Trust has a **broader remit** than the town that bears its name. Our constitution mandates care for Featherston and the South Wairarapa, so in keeping with that direction, we are discussing a name change for the Trust. Our preference would be for the **South Wairarapa Community Centres Trust**. The new Trust would keep its core values and vision but will actively seek to work with agencies in Greytown, Martinborough and out to rural South Wairarapa – Pirinoa, Ngāaui and further afield, to embrace, nurture, and directly support communities throughout our district.

Having Peter back home at the office, keeping the wheels turning, has allowed Jo time to delve into these peripheral issues and to unearth otherwise opaque opportunities. His effectiveness has been enhanced by the advent of our newest recruit – Renee – who is developing new projects and programmes, often creating support material herself. Were thrilled to welcome her among us.

Another recent project is the redevelopment of **Featherston info website thanks to funding from Fab Feathy as one of their wrap-up projects. The website now functions as an archive of Fab Feathy's mahi, a source of information for visitors and locals and home to into** the Featherston **Biz Engine, Featherston's new Business Association**. The website is a is is intended to be a vehicle for promoting the-our business community, made up – of course – of Featherston community members.

Thanks to the Board – new and old

Paul Mason
Chairman
Featherston Community Centre Trust Board.

Commented [JB1]: is the right wording? Discrete sounds like a privacy thing.... 'concrete' 'hard' 'firm' 'complete'?

Commented [JB2]: Yay!!