

# Whakatāne District Grey Power Association Inc.

## **AGENDA - Annual General Meeting 18-May-22**

**Date:** Wednesday 18-May-22

**Start Time:** 10:00 am

**Venue:** Knox Presbyterian Church, 83a Domain Road, Whakatāne.

**1. Welcome and apologies** - *Moved, Seconded*

**2. Correspondence In & Out** - *Moved, Seconded*

**3. Minutes of previous AGM held May 2021**

Matters arising from these Minutes (if any)

*Moved, Seconded, & Approved*

**4. Treasurer's Report – June Goodhew**

- Financial Report (Treasurer – June Goodhew) - *Moved, Seconded*

- Membership & subscriptions review (Siva Panadam)

**4. Defibrillator demonstration**

**5. President's Report – Victor Luca**

**Title: Who are we, what we've done and where are we going?**

The President will give a 15-30 minute talk covering a review Grey Power's mission and the associations past achievements. He will also review what it is that the Whakatāne GP have been doing, and what our aims are going forward.

**Discussion.**

**6. Nominations & Election of Committee Members**

President, Secretary, Treasurer, Committee members.

**7. General Business**

**8. Morning Tea**

Scrutinizers: Sandy Milne & Carolyn Jacobs.

# Whakatāne District Grey Power Association AGM Report

18-May-22

Victor Luca – President

It is once again time to take stock of what we are, what we have achieved and where we want to go. It is amazing to think that a year has passed since I accepted a nomination for President of our association and was voted in by a landslide majority on 19-May-21.

I wish that I could report that the year in review has been one of plain sailing. Regrettably, nothing could be further from the truth. March of 2021 saw the end to the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. After a short and hard initial lockdown in early 2020 we were fortunate to more-or-less be able to resume life as usual for much of 2021. That is, until the Omicron variant came on the scene early this year.

Thankfully, the impacts of Omicron have been somewhat attenuated due to the fact this COVID-19 variant appears inherently less pathogenic. The bug also encountered a much less immunologically naïve population with most New Zealanders either immunized through vaccination, or through having been infected with the virus. Nevertheless, just under 1,000, mostly older New Zealanders, have so far lost their lives. This number of deaths is about 100 times less per million of population than most other developed nations. So a combination of good luck and good management has seen us get through COVID-19 with relatively low casualties, so far.

We need to remind ourselves that we are now in our third year of this pandemic and, although things are looking up, the bug has not gone away and neither has the possibility of additional variants coming onto the scene.

Many of us are coming to grips with the fact that we may never rid ourselves of this virus. At the same time I am keeping my fingers crossed that we are not struck with nastier variants in the future. The strategy going forward appears to be to resign ourselves to having live with it.

COVID has had an impact on the normal operations of our association this year and we have had to cancel many monthly general meetings in the interests of safety.

Nevertheless, we have managed to have some very good meetings with interesting speakers including Nigel Clarke and Bevan Gray from the Whakatāne District Council speaking on solid waste and three-waters reforms respectively. These are two important matters for our entire community and issues that Grey Power members need to keep abreast of.

Another important speaker was Ian Finch who addressed the forthcoming health reforms. I would argue that no matter is more important than health to most of our membership and that

we need to keep a very close eye on this reform. Although we took all reasonable precautions to keep people safe, our general meetings had only modest attendances, most probably due to COVID. I do not doubt that turn-out has been affected.

As an advocacy association it is important that the membership is well informed regarding what is going on in these areas, and that the numbers continue to grow.

Our first several committee meetings of 2021 involved some introspection and an attempt to focus on defining the problems that we have as a society.

We placed a high priority in the past year on advocating in the areas of health, living affordability, transport and so forth. Going forward, I would like to see more attention given to the enormous existential threat to our descendants that is climate change. Whilst most of us wont be around when the impacts of climate change really start to bite. However, our kids and their offspring will be here. We need to be good ancestors!

Due to the importance of health to all of us, and the fact that the association had made some previous unsuccessful attempts to get a specific case of health privatization on the agenda at the national level, this was a natural place for us to start our advocacy.

The high point of our year of advocacy on health has been the unanimous endorsement of a remit calling for a halt to the privatization of our health system at the Zone 3 association meeting in March (see below). This remit now goes to the federation AGM to be held between the 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of July in Wellington. I will be seeking to get federation endorsement at that meeting. From there it is onto government who will hopefully start to take notice. If we can kick this goal, then I for one will be extremely pleased. Grey Power will have done its job!

Considering what we do, an effective communication strategy is absolutely vital. In that regard the committee has several channels open to communicate with members and the community and them with us.

We now have a new website that remains a work in progress. We are also regularly posting newsletters in the Whakatāne Beacon on the last Friday of each month advertising what we are doing. This is our shop-front and communications need to be short and catchy. Those newsletters are intended to function as a sort of summary with further detail being posted on the website. I appreciate that not all members have access to the internet but it is a case of one step at a time. We probably need to revive our social media presence (facebook).

Grey Power Associations New Zealand-wide have done some terrific things in the past. Let's build on this good going forward for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

It would be a great shame if future meetings were just about socializing and morning tea. The meetings should be events where we become better informed, have good debates, make plans and develop strategies for future advocacy.

Below I include a copy of our remit.

## Halt to Further Privatization of Health

*That Grey Power lobby to halt the ongoing privatization of our Health System without a sound economic business case for each proposed implementation and corresponding solid evidence of improvements to the health outcomes for New Zealanders.*

### Explanation

Our present health system is undeniably a two-tier system giving preferential access and superior treatment to those that can most afford it and evidence suggests that it is becoming increasingly privatized [1,2].

- Today, about 35% of New Zealanders have private health insurance [2] enabling the insured to get prompt and premium treatment while the remainder get the waiting list. Many Grey Power members cannot afford private insurance.
- It is well known that the public system subsidizes the private system [3].
- The level of privatization of the system over time is increasing by stealth suggesting that the *for-profit* motive is becoming more entrenched.
- Our primary healthcare providers, General Practitioners, effectively operate private businesses. Many folk struggle to pay the consultation costs.
- Pathology services are almost completely privatized (a virtual monopoly) and other specialist services such as dentistry, radiology, cardiology and urology are either already either partially or fully privatized.
- Your ability to get healthcare in our supposed public universal system depends on your position on the socio-economic ladder irrespective race, culture, color, religion *etc.*
- Health authorities can show no proof that privatization has led to economic efficiencies or improvements in health outcomes.

If we continue down the present path of increasing privatization, there is a danger that we will end up with a health system that resembles that of the United States which has the highest costs by far of any in the OECD country and the worst outcomes by far [4]. The appalling response of the fully privatized US health system to the COVID pandemic is strong evidence of the failure of fully privatized systems.

The belief that private is better and the market will deliver must be dispelled if better outcomes for Grey Power members and their descendants are to be achieved.

### References

[1] For an analysis of our health system see this presentation given to Grey Power members in October 2020.

<https://www.whakatanegreypower.com/events-1>

[2] See Grey Power quarterly magazine for a review paper.

<https://www.whakatanegreypower.com/post/your-health-and-the-health-system>

[3] Penno, E.; Sullivan, T.; Barson, D.; Gauld, R. Private choices, public costs: Evaluating cost-shifting

between private and public health sectors in New Zealand. *Health Policy* **2021**, 125, 406-414.

[4] Geyman, J. COVID-19 has revealed America's broken health care system: What can we learn? *Intern. J. Health* **2021** 51(2), 188-194.