



**ANNUAL REPORT  
of  
NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT  
PALMERSTON NORTH**

**presented at the AGM  
held on 19 September 2024**

**at**

**Kelvin Grove Community Centre  
68 Kaimanawa Street, Kelvin Grove,  
Palmerston North 4414**





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## Chairperson's Report



Welcome to the AGM for 2024 and a celebration of the 40th anniversary of Neighbourhood Support in Palmerston North. What magnificent longevity, especially as the organisation has been able to adapt to the many changes in our society since 1984 – although I have not lived in Palmerston North for all those 40 years. Shortly we will hear more about the history of this charity in the city.

I was a member of a Neighbourhood Watch group in a small North Island town in 1990. My membership of that group came about because of some peeping-Tom activity in my neighbourhood. As I was living alone at the time, it gave me real comfort to know my neighbours were watching out for me, and I returned the favour, particularly for the elderly widow over the back fence. I got to know my neighbours really well from that initial meeting to discuss the issue and form the street group. I knew I could call on them if I needed anything. I guess that was part of the focus in changing the name from Neighbourhood Watch to Neighbourhood Support. I understand that Neighbourhood Watch had connotations of nosy neighbours hiding behind twitching curtains watching your every move. Regardless of the name, I felt safe, more resilient and connected in my community and the peeping Tom was caught.

Now to the present day. Neighbourhood Support Palmerston North has a wide distribution (over 20,000 members) in the city from Pohangina Valley and Ashhurst through to Bunnythorpe and Linton. Alison, our manager, celebrated five years with Neighbourhood Support earlier this year. She has continued to be an excellent, dedicated employee promoting the work of Neighbourhood Support wherever and whenever she can. Our current strategic plan could just be a required piece of paper for the board, but Alison puts the goals of the organisation into action every day when she is working. She has a passion and deep understanding of basic human needs, such as removing social isolation barriers and the importance of being connected to others, of feeling safe within the community, above all at home. Alison's work is also about emergency preparedness, supporting people to build personal resilience for those times when things go wrong and we need a plan of how to get through.

Alison reaches into many homes to offer support and guidance via her weekly newsletter. Thanks to a sound relationship with the police, in particular our Police Liaison Officer, Phil Robinson, for the burglary, car break-in and car/trailer theft statistics for the week. Over the past year, the safety themes in the newsletter have been paramount. Here are some of the topics Alison has covered in the past 12 months:

The importance of reporting crime or unusual incidents as well as how best to report them; tips for keeping yourself safe online and avoiding being scammed; tips for keeping your car or trailer from being stolen or your vehicle being broken into, preventing a chimney fire, effective disposal of hot ashes, and tips for preventing house fires; electric blanket safety; safe use and disposal of lithium batteries; what to do in a vehicle accident; checking your headlights are working for winter; knowledge about both summer ice and black ice when driving; preventing mail and parcel thefts; reminders about back-to-school awareness as a driver; promoting the Staying Safe for Older Drivers course; advice and engraving for tradies to protect their tools and equipment; tips for keeping your home warm and dry; dealing with aggressive salespeople.

Alison also seeks out interesting information to help build resilience and encourage connections within the neighbourhood. For example, regular checks of battery supplies and emergency food; how to support vulnerable neighbours in an emergency; promoting the men's

support group in Kelvin Grove; the benefits of keeping some cash on hand for emergencies; providing avenues of support for and dealing with loneliness and stress; a month-by-month plan to prepare for natural disasters; different ways to check in with friends and family.

Alison gets lots of positive feedback from the community in response to the newsletters. You can read some examples on page xx of this report.

My focus as chairperson over the past year has been twofold. Firstly, to update the Strategic Plan with the other board members and ensure we have relevant and up-to-date policies to support what we have planned for the next three years. My second goal was to recruit some new board members from the community. It is important for a board to have stability and people with passion for the work of Neighbourhood Support. Mary Shaffer and David Parry have joined the board during the past year. Both are involved in their own street Neighbourhood Support groups. They bring with them a variety of skills and a sound understanding of what Neighbourhood Support is all about.

Finding people willing to volunteer in today's busy society can be challenging, so having our monthly board meetings over the lunch hour goes some way to addressing this. We meet monthly (apart from January) on the second Thursday of the month from 12 to 1.30 pm at the fire station. Thanks to FENZ for the use of their meeting room. Between meetings, board members offer their support to Alison in a variety of ways. For example, Senior Constable Phil Robinson, our Police Liaison Officer on the board, has attended some community meetings with Alison. Recently they tag-teamed in a meeting with a disability group who knew little about Neighbourhood Support.

I encourage any Neighbourhood Support members who have some time and interest in what we do to consider volunteering to support our work. You might decide to come on the board. However, there are other ways you can assist, such as talking to people you meet socially about Neighbourhood Support and the benefits of connecting with your neighbours. You could offer to help Alison with some flyer drops in areas where Neighbourhood Support is not yet operating. A big thank you to Adrienne Charlton who has edited this year's AGM report. A big thank you to Adam who helps with IT and William who continues to provide website support. If you have IT skills, you might be able to assist as we explore mapping Neighbourhood Support digitally across the city.

Several board members had a stall at the Hokowhitu shops back in March when the Sunday market was in progress. Even though I am quite a shy person, I thoroughly enjoyed engaging with passers-by about Neighbourhood Support. About 20 people registered their interest or signed up that day. The recurring themes were that they wanted to feel safe, be prepared for emergencies and wanted to get to know their neighbours. While we aim to get a neighbourhood group established in as many streets in the city as possible, if people want to join as individuals, that is okay too.

Two key projects have been underway in the past year. Seats in Streets involves placement of a Neighbourhood Support Palmerston North seat where it is likely people will sit and therefore potentially connect with others. I have seen this in action with a number of elderly residents stopping to rest on our neighbourhood seat while they are out exercising. It is also a great seat to use when organising small children and the dog before heading down the access path to the river walkway. Alison has had excellent engagement with both Horizon Education and Palmerston North Boys' High School art department. The students have designed and painted these newer seats. A big thank you also to Menzshed who build, situate and secure these seats and also help put up new NS street signs as groups form, or are updated, around the city.

It is hard to reach into every suburb at the same time, so the board decided to focus a pilot to connect a community as well as neighbours in Kelvin Grove. Jim Seumanu is both a board member and Group Contact in Kelvin Grove. Jim recognised social isolation happening, particularly with men in the area. As a result, three regular men's groups are underway. A monthly men's breakfast, a weekly coffee and chat group, and the Friday Night Palmy Men

5000 group who meet at Takaro Bowling Club to play social games, chat and enjoy some kai. The women of Kelvin Grove, not to be left out, have begun a group as well. The Kelvin Grove Community Association has made their hall available for these activities. It would be great to see similar groups form throughout the city and utilise other community venues.

As a charity, Neighbourhood Support Palmerston North needs to fundraise 100% in order to keep doing its work. Alison does an amazing job in writing successful funding applications. The current economic climate is making pools of funding from trusts and foundations smaller and much more competitive, so we thank the following organisations who recognise the importance of our work and have provided vital funding to keep us operating effectively during the last financial year – Neighbourhood Support New Zealand, Grassroots Trust Central, Pub Charity, Eastern and Central Community Trust, The Lion Foundation, PNCC Community Development Small Grants Fund, Lottery Grants Board, T G Macarthy Trust, Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS), and Mainland Foundation.

After two years as board chair, I am standing down. I'll remain an active volunteer and Group Contact. I thank my board colleagues and Alison for their support and dedication in making our city safer, more connected and resilient. May Neighbourhood Support Palmerston North continue to grow and flourish.

**Kathriona Benvie**  
**Chairperson**

## Community Activities



• Working closely with the Police, Fire and Emergency (FENZ) and many other organisations in our community, we promote and support the development of Neighbourhood Support groups throughout the Palmerston North City and areas-from Tokomaru to Linton, Ashhurst and the local rural area.

## Manager's Report



Neighbourhoods throughout Palmerston North city and the wider area continue to become more desirable places to live and work as residents connect to create safer and more resilient communities.

The past year has seen a steady increase in people registering with NSPN and encouraging neighbours to join as well, especially when they experience the benefits of knowing their neighbours, as well as receiving the informative weekly newsletter.

This year has seen a focus on empowering people who identify themselves as being vulnerable to make their own plan and decisions should there be an emergency and they are isolated and without their normal supports. I have developed a plan which

enables the vulnerable person to identify what supports they would need and who they can turn to for those supports in an emergency.

As part of this process, those identified in the plan are advised what their role would be and given a copy of the plan so everyone is aware of the requirements. This plan is then held by the vulnerable person so that, through their decision-making and planning, they are more likely to be capable of being self-sufficient in the first few days of an emergency. This is a more proactive approach than just putting their name on a register so they must wait for help to arrive.

Our 'Seats in Streets' has been a great collaboration involving funders Manawatu Menzshed, who make the seats, Resene, who kindly donated the paint for those being decorated, and the fine young people at Horizon Education and Palmerston North Boys' High School, who used their artistic abilities to brighten up the seats.

The position of each seat is carefully chosen so it will have the most use and meet our commitment to provide an opportunity for residents to connect in a safe and non-threatening way. Connection has been especially important for those who are vulnerable and/or socially isolated.

Neighbourhood Support Palmerston North is committed to making our neighbourhoods inclusive. Often due to where people live, they come into contact, and have the opportunity to engage with, others whom they would not normally have met. This helps fulfil our desire for residents to be able to reach out, look out for and help each other. Being new to a street, community or even a country can be challenging, so we encourage our members to be the welcoming face for others.

Home ownership v. renting is certainly changing in New Zealand – currently less than 60% own their own homes – and by 2048, home ownership is predicted to have dropped to less than 50%. We are already reflecting on what this change could mean and also encouraging our members to be aware that people renting are no longer a minority and are often long-term residents.

One of our biggest challenges is the lack of funding. The past year alone has seen more funding applications being declined, which is of grave concern. We are a small charity making a big impact by being the vehicle to empower our members to connect, in order to make safe and connected communities. We are often able to plant the seed to inspire neighbours to make the place where they live, and the street they call home, somewhere they have pride in and a sense of belonging and ownership. Long may this continue.

When I talk to community groups or meet with our members, I am in awe of the 'extra mile' some people go to, to make their neighbourhoods connected and great places to live. Without

our Group Contacts, who keep their group lists updated and me informed, my job would much harder. It is an absolute pleasure to support our groups, and I am so grateful for the often-unseen time neighbours put in to support each other. It is a real privilege to hear from members who have made a difference in their neighbourhood, and it really underpins what Neighbourhood Support Palmerston North is all about.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge that I could not do this alone. I am supported by a fabulous board who encourage, challenge and inspire me, a Police Liaison Officer, Senior Constable Phil Robinson, whose support is vital to the work we do, Adam and the team at QCIT who provide IT support, and William Spriggs who continues to provide website support.

As Mahatma Gandhi so aptly put it: “Be the change that you wish to see in the world”. Through our members, we too are able to be the change we wish to see in our neighbourhoods.

**Alison Jarden**  
**Manager**

## Member Feedback for Neighbourhood Support Manager, Alison Jarden

With many thanks for so much informative/important information.

Thanks for reminders excellent!  
Much appreciated!

Thanks for the helpful information and motivation to do better with our neighbours.

I wish to thank you very much for your faithfulness in producing such an informative and friendly regular email re Neighbour Support !!..... much appreciated !!..... all the time and effort involved also !!

Your newsletters are great, in the past they used to be so sterile but you do a great job and they are so varied and interesting every week.

*I think the emergency plan for vulnerable people is a great idea. I consider myself in that category.*

Keep up the valuable work in our communities, to make them safer places, for all ages.

Another great email update from you! Thank you so much for the continued flow of information.

I needed to thank you again for keeping us so well informed and advising us of how to look after ourselves and our property. Thank you, and thank you for your time.

*I just want to say how much I appreciate the direction Neighbourhood Support is going in since it is under your leadership.*

## New Community Board Members

### **Mary Shaffer**



I became a member of the board of NSPN in August 2023, in response to an appeal in the newsletter for volunteers to join the team.

The weekly newsletter is always an interesting read, keeping us informed and connected to our local and the wider community, with helpful tips to keep ourselves safe and well prepared. This was the stimulus and opportunity for me to serve the community in a meaningful way, and at the same time, gain an insight into the general Palmerston North neighbourhood as well as my own locality. Having retired from the workforce several years ago, I realised this was a timely opening for me to make a contribution to such a valuable organisation.

After attending a board meeting as an observer, it quickly became apparent that the skilled and personable team of existing board members was one I wanted to be a part of.

I get at least as much from the experience as I put into it, so I look forward to the next year.

*Mary Shaffer*

### **David Parry**



As a Group Contact for a local Neighbourhood Support group in Palmerston North, I have seen first-hand the benefits that neighbours gain by meeting together for a regular social event. Community spirit is greatly enhanced; consequently, we tend to look out for one another and provide assistance should the need arise.

I joined the board because I would like to see this system become even more widespread than it is at present, so that others, too, will experience the same benefits as we do. In the relatively short period I have been on the board, I can see the dedication and determination of fellow board members, and especially our sole paid employee, Alison Jarden, to achieve that goal. Amongst other things, we aspire to aid community safety by banding together and, in doing so, we believe that our efforts will prove to be a significant deterrent to lawbreakers.

*David Parry*

## Neighbourhood Support in Action



**“Monthly Street Breakfast for Men”**

**Seats in Streets,  
produced by Menzshed**

