

Commonwealth Youth New Zealand

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

FOR 2014-15



www.commonwealthyouth.org.nz

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our first year of existence has been about learning and articulating what Commonwealth Youth New Zealand stands for. Although having a focus on growing our membership base is important, the executive took the decision to better shape the values of the organisation and to properly define CYNZ's purpose and values structure.

We also took steps to grow and build on relationships and to work out the kinks that we found in the Rules and in the very rigid organisational structure. In order for the executive to function properly, it has recommended that the membership vote in favour of making some minor changes to the Rules. To some, the proposed changes may seem merely like name changes, but they will have a huge effect in the daily operation of the executive.



After facing some minor challenges around the incorporation of the organisation, CYNZ was granted incorporated status by the Registrar of Incorporated Societies in early 2015, and a bank account was created soon thereafter. This has caused some minor setbacks, but also gave us another opportunity to think about how we will use funds and to establish our fundraising strategies.

At the upcoming AGM, the executive will present a comprehensive events plan for the coming year, and an outline of our strategic direction and goals for 2015-16.

I am proud of the work my team has done this year and how they have overcome a range of challenges, all while maintaining the highest and most scrupulous standards that you, as a valued stakeholder in our organisation, could hope for.

I hope this document provides you with a clear view of our operations in 2014-15. I look forward to facing a range of new challenges and opportunities in 2015-16, and building on CYNZ's already numerous successes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Aaron Hape'.

Aaron Hape
Executive Director

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OPERATIONS

During the course of 2014, the executive identified a number of issues that caused inconvenience to the running of the organisation. The main issued pertained to the rigidity of the Rules in regard to the positions on the executive, in that the responsibilities of the National Student CHOGM and Events Manager were too wide-ranging and too numerous for any one person to manage effectively.

The executive also found that the role descriptions did not allow for as much fluidity as was hoped – to that end, the executive has proposed that minor changes be made to the Rules to allow for people to be appointed to serve in three set roles – the Executive Director, National Policy Officer, and the Administration Officer (effectively just a name change from Secretary-Treasurer) – and into three general leadership roles where portfolios, such as event management, external communications, and oversight of educational programmes, will be allocated to those who's strengths best fit those responsibilities. People can also now be co-opted into four other general executive positions without set portfolios to assist those people with set responsibilities.

The set positions will be given the broad titles of Communications Officer, Events Officer, and National Student CHOGM Coordinator. These will join the Executive Director, National Policy Officer, and the Administration Officer in the daily running of the organisation.

These changes will make it much easier for the executive to function on a day-to-day basis, but also still provide a high level of accountability to the board and to the membership.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

CYNZ's Facebook presence has drastically increased thanks to targeted advertising of events and boosting popular posts to extend the reach of the page. Many of our supporters have also encouraged their friends to like our page, which has helped greatly in increasing our presence. On 1 January 2014, the page had 281 Likes. As at 16 March 2015, 727 people like our page – a 158% increase in that time period.

Our Twitter presence also increased dramatically, from 41 likes on 1 January 2014 to 357 followers as at 16 March 2015, a 770% increase. The challenge here is to get active engagement, not just people following our account. This requires more targeted work and a person dedicated to involving our followers in one-on-one conversations.

375 Twitter followers



16,433 website views



727 Facebook Likes



Our website, has had 6046 unique visitors and 16,433 page views since our last AGM. The main challenges for the website is to not become a dumping ground for any content that we cannot find a suitable place to post. Content needs to be relevant and current – for example, posting guest blog posts needs to coincide with major occasions or celebrations.

CYNZ also now has a LinkedIn page. In terms of posts, this is currently very much an exercise in copying and pasting from our Facebook page. However, the aim with this is to use it to tap into the young professionals market, and to have on-going engagement with our partners and those who we invite to attend and speak at our events.

The monthly newsletters have had a good response rate. On average, the newsletter is opened by 55.26% of recipients – this is massively above the industry average open rate of 16.75%.

All of these indicators show that we have an extremely active supporter base. The challenge for the executive is to now engage these members in our events programme and to get National Student CHOGM alumni to attend events and involve them in event management. From April, the responsibility for CYNZ's social media and communications will be delegated to the new Communications Officer. This person will also carry out a communications audit and work with the National Policy Officer to create an internal and external communications plan.



MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the organisation now stands at 175 individuals, up from 60 members at the AGM in April 2014. Note that these 60 members were Student CHOGM alumni from conferences held before 2014 and were automatically made CYNZ members at the AGM. The 45 delegates from Student CHOGM 2014 were made members at the conclusion of the 2014 conference. 70 people applied to become members in their own right in the last calendar year. The executive set a goal of signing up 40 members by the 2015 AGM, so I am very pleased that we have exceeded this goal.

In 2014-15, the executive made the decision not to charge for membership. This decision was based on the fact that we wanted to build a critical mass of solid supporters, which we pegged between 130-150 people. We also did not feel comfortable charging for membership when we ourselves had not yet articulated the organisation's values structure or views.

In 2015-16, we will be charging membership levies. This has been set at \$5.00 NZD. Current members who renew will also be charged \$5.00 NZD.



RELATIONSHIPS

We've focussed much of our energy on growing our relationships with other liked-minded organisations. Nationally, we have worked with UN Youth, particularly the Wellington branch, in looking at examples of how youth programmes can be delivered efficiently and effectively.

Globally, we now actively collaborate with our Canadian and Australian friends at MYCommonwealth and CommonYouth Australia on areas of common interest. As new organisations with similar focuses as CYNZ, it's helpful for us and for them to compare notes and offer each other advice.

Recently we became a partner of the United Nations My World Programme. This provides us the opportunity to use already established tools to see what issues most matter to our members in a post-Millennium Development Goals world.

I am pleased to say that CYNZ's relationship with the Commonwealth Secretariat is growing and positive, as is the relationship with the New Zealand branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. We have also built on already established relationships with a number of High Commissions based in New Zealand.

Over the next year we will begin to solidify these relationships and build other youth and Commonwealth-focussed organisations into our outreach programme



POLICIES

Our National Policy Officer has established a number of internal policies. These will be presented to the membership at the 2015 AGM. All members of the board and executive will be required to abide by these policies. They cover a number of issues and are as follows:

- Anti discrimination
- Budget planning
- Bullying
- Code of ethics
- Confidentiality
- Conflict of interest
- Media relations
- Risk management
- Sexual harassment
- Social media
- Sponsorship
- Transparency and accountability

These policies can be found in the “About Us” section on our website.



FINANCES

As at 16 March 2015, CYNZ had a balance of \$0.00 NZD. In the last financial year, the organisation had no income or expenses – this is in part due to not being able to create a bank account until the organisation was incorporated. However, after a letter asking members for donations was sent in March, a number of financial pledges have been made and will be followed up on in due course.

This year, applications will also be lodged with a number of organisations, including an application to the Ministry of Youth Affairs for the 2016 round of Youth Fund allocations in preparation for activities in 2015-16.



EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

In May, in partnership with the British High Commission, we were able to host five visiting Members of the UK Parliament for a roundtable discussion on the Commonwealth. This event prompted many of our newer members to attend, and it eventuated that we became oversubscribed.

Also in May, CYNZ supported the Youth Week celebrations that occurred across the country. Our members attended celebration events in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, at which their contributions were well received.

June also saw a number of our members supporting National Volunteer Week. Our members were asked to contribute their stories of volunteering and were able to survey a wider range of volunteering initiatives that they were interested in.

July saw me travel to the Scotland in my capacity as Executive Director to participate in 33Fifty, the Commonwealth Youth Leadership Programme. In the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games, I was able to engage and collaborate with 99 other young leaders and find common ground on issues that our respective organisations faced.

CYNZ again played an instrumental role in organising the National Student CHOGM in late July. This conference saw a number of external speakers from organisations like the New Zealand Defence Force and the Council for International Development run plenary sessions and engage with delegates. 2014 also saw a larger number of active conference organisers and assistants put their hands up and help to make the conference a success.

Our first major event was Commonwealth Day. In Auckland, around 20 CYNZ members attended the annual service hosted by RCS Auckland. In Wellington, CYNZ was invited by the Mayor of Wellington and Scouts New Zealand to attend the formal raising of the Commonwealth Flag on the waterfront. Around 40 CYNZ members joined the large congregation at Wellington Cathedral for the National Observance service and the following reception at Parliament.

This year sees CYNZ shift up a gear in delivering a more comprehensive events programme outside of those events that we will work with out partners on running that all of our members can enjoy and benefit from. Beginning in April, we plan to run a bi-monthly speaker session where a community, NGO, diplomatic, political or youth leader is invited to engage with our members. We are also aiming to hold regular catch-up sessions with our members so they have an opportunity to engage with other like-minded individuals who share CYNZ's values.