Recognising a 30-Year Anniversary with NHPNZ

This year NHPNZ celebrates 30 years of advocating for natural health care practitioners throughout New Zealand. It's an achievement we are very proud of – but one that could not have happened without the enduring support of the natural healthcare practitioner community.

Today we reflect on the last 30 years and look to the future, presenting several video clips to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of all the individuals who committed their time and energy to help us promote and grow into the organisation we are today.

Of all the achievements, there's hardly a feat bigger than the 30-year anniversary celebration. When you've belonged to the same organisation for three decades, it's an event worth celebrating.

NHPNZ (formerly NZCHP) was launched in 1994, and since then, we have not stood still, but have grown and worked with great enthusiasm to meet the needs of our community.

History and Highlights of NHPNZ

Firstly, in 1992, three natural health practitioners namely Brian Murray, Gary Courtenay and Patrick Fahy who had all previously lived and worked in Australia met to discuss how we could prevent a similar situation which occurred in Australia with the implementation of the Australian TGA (Therapeutic Goods Administration).

Brian Murray had just arrived back in New Zealand after visiting with members of the Australian Charter, Mark Nicholson and Alan Rigert, and suggested that we set up a similar organisation here in New Zealand.

A short time after this meeting it was decided to bring a gathering of all the natural health practitioner community together to discuss the matter. A meeting was held at Valemma Wright's residence in Parakai, West Auckland. At this gathering a Task Force group was formed with several practitioners and subsequent to this gathering, Mark Nicholson and Alan Rigert came to New Zealand and a Memorandum document was drafted and the New Zealand Charter of Health Practitioners was born.

On the 4th September 1994, the Inaugural Signing of the Charter document took place at the Hyatt Kingsgate, Auckland where 55 practitioner associations joined the Charter.

Our voice has been critical

The Charter's main purpose was to contribute towards a process of positive change within the health care industry and to ultimately rectify the weaknesses in the current medically oriented system. The process for change is slow and difficult, and we certainly have no illusions about that.

Unfortunately, non-for profit societies don't run themselves

Life for us all is generally busy - we work, we raise families, we run businesses, we run households and unfortunately non-for profit societies don't run themselves.

We have always encouraged everyone to give a little of their precious time to help with planned important strategic initiatives necessary to maintain our status as a self-regulating profession, then a big task for just one or two people becomes an easy and manageable task among many people.

If the industry works together, we may avert the brutality. However, in being realistic in the big picture of today's environment, the reality for the health industry is that compassion has always given way at an increasing rate to profit.

Consumer Protection

NHPNZ's main emphasis is to uphold the welfare and health concerns of the health consumer by providing practitioners of the highest professional standard and qualification obtainable.

Insurance

Negotiating the best 'Professional Liability Insurance Protection Cover' for our members, so they are able to operate their practice with confidence. In the event of a complaint being made against their services, the practitioner insurance coverage in place is broad and extensive to cover all contingencies.

HDC — Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights

It is appropriate to acknowledge the achievements of our members who worked with the very first Health and Disability Commissioner, Robyn Stent, who was appointed to the position in December 1994. Several members met with Robyn at our offices, while the Code was being written and it was clear that Robyn understood that natural health care therapies are a valued contribution to society.

Kenneth V. McIver Ph.D. Government Health Liaison Director

Kenneth McIver, our Director of Research and government health liaison officer was always on hand to ensure the "Charter" was a voice to be heard and listened to always ensuring reviews, policy changes, and compliance with legislation involving practitioners within the health and disability sector were published to our members.

Ken spent many thousands of hours involved with the introduction of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Bill (HPCA), Proposed Regulations to create a New Zealand Register of Medical Devices, inquiry into the proposal to establish a trans-Tasman agency to regulate therapeutic products, several representations to the Health Select Committee, representation to meetings of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and exposed the shenanigans of the Cancer Foundation's sunscreen scam. The Cancer Foundation it appeared, were immune to prosecution for breaking the Fair Trading Act, when they were clearly advertising and selling sunscreen that does not offer the protection it claimed. The Cancer Society had to pull the defective product and give assurances to the Commerce Commission that their other products both complied and of the measures they planned on implementing, to ensure compliance in the future.

Jenny Hammond

Jenny Hammond devoted many years of service to expand and advance natural health care and protect the right for every New Zealander to have the freedom of choice and safety in the knowledge that their practitioners are qualified and professional. Jenny was instrumental in formulating the Practitioner Directory, and the Charter magazine for several years, a forum for promoting the "Chartered Practitioner" and the Natural HealthCare Profession. Thanks to Jenny's tenacity and many hours of toil and hard slog, Jenny always ensured reviews, policy changes, and compliance with legislation involving practitioners within the health and disability sector were published to our members.

Jenny was also instrumental in setting up and facilitating the amazing New Zealand Health Industry Awards & Benefit Gala Dinner's which were always well patronised and a grand occasion.

Trevor Pugh

Trevor spent thousands of hours to promote natural health standards within the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) with the development of 'Professional Educational Standards'. Our

aim was to form a stand-alone Health Industry Training Organisation (HTO) to cover exclusively natural health products and processes.

Trevor worked tirelessly to bring this about, but unfortunately, after all this effort and financial outlay, the then Labour government finance minister Michael Cullen, giving no valid reason, pulled the rug out from under us.

Dr. Janice Ann Priest

We cannot forget the tremendous support from Janice, a longtime member and supporter who worked tirelessly over the years to improve the health and well-being of the public.

Janice's, natural health media voice along with her Healthy Options magazine demonstrated that there was a greater awareness and interest in the natural health message right throughout society. The Health Options magazine was always very well presented, informative, easy to understand and caught the imagination of many readers. It was not an easy journey for Janice, but definitely worthwhile. There were no medals, no accolades, just the knowledge that Janice helped change the consciousness and as such made a tremendous difference in the natural health industry.

A special acknowledgement to the incredible individuals who made this long but exciting journey possible

Over the past 30 years, there have been countless wonderful, extraordinary, and special individuals who stepped forward and contributed significantly in various capacities to give their unprecedented support, time and effort when required.

Some more directly than others, but all equally important. While we proudly acknowledge NHPNZ as the product of more than 30 years of existence, it would not have been possible without the contributions of numerous people. These contributions took many forms, and I will not be able to cover them all, but I will do my best to recognise a few essential people who have made this organisation, and the accomplishment it represents, possible for us all.

That being the case, I must apologise in advance for not being able to name everybody individually as its difficult to remember and list everyone who helped, but I hope those whose names are not listed will recognise my gratitude by the general thanks I offer to everyone who helped us on this journey.

Firstly, throughout the first decade of establishing the organisation I received a steady supply of help from several individuals who provided support, assistance, encouragement, and advice. I appreciated their openness, patience, and interest which was invaluable.

I must begin by thanking Leanne James. I think the most crucial thing to say is that Leanne made it clear throughout my several years working with her that she was on my team. That is a quality that cannot be too highly praised. Leanne and her husband Mike fully supported the Charter's aims and objectives and Leanne was one of the first members to join the organisation.

Next, I wish to gratefully acknowledge Bob and Jan Arnold who stand out as a wonderful couple who travelled very long distances to attend registration board meetings. Bob and Jan's passion for natural health therapies and their willingness to share their many insights with exemplary enthusiasm and optimism showed that they are conscientious, responsible human beings. Truly wonderful people.

Royce McLean was always at hand to support the administration when required with unconditional support and unwavering encouragement.

I also must acknowledge the extra-special work and effort of Ken Mills our very first Charter secretary, the active participation of Dave Woodward, Dave Tremain, Mary-Anne Gabrielle, Patricia Wyllie who also deserves a spotlight in this group, as someone who never shied away from calling me out when necessary.

Melissa Jones for reminding me constantly to say what I need to say and nothing more, David Passell, Jan Kunst, also deserves special acknowledgement whose attention to detail kept the natural therapies board in line, Barbara Gillespie, Bernadette Andrews, John Gairdner as someone who seemed to appreciate my thinking, David Holden, Don Paterson.

Margaret McArthur deserves special acknowledgment not only as an effective contributor to educational standards but an exceptional teacher of her chosen natural health modality with an incredible ability to explain complex things in simple, accessible ways — a rarity in today's academic world.

There are many others who all contributed their talents to the success of the organisation over many years and our accomplishment would not be possible without this fantastic support system.

I believe it cannot be overstated how important a strong support group is. It has been an excellent time spent together during all these years fostering a community that attracts kind, generous, and hardworking people, and I am so glad to have been, and still, be a part of that. Because after all…each day you our practitioners make a difference by providing quality health care to the communities.

Our Stories — and achievements

The following will be familiar to all members and is a reminder of why NHPNZ exists and why we are passionate about its continuation as the peak body for natural health practitioners in New Zealand.

Trans-Tasman Joint Agency Treaty

The trans-Tasman Joint Agency Treaty, between New Zealand and Australia was thankfully shelved. This would have been another TGA in disguise and initiated a very bad marriage, considering the abhorrent activities of the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration which has resulted in Australian society paying a heavy price for the politics of the modern medical monopoly that is designed to enhance profits without improving health outcomes.

A point worth noting — Under the Joint Agency Treaty the definitions clearly stated that 'therapeutic' includes applying, therefore applying even the hands, as in a laying on of hands could be interpreted as a therapeutic action.

The **Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill** was introduced into our parliament in December 2006, **thankfully it was shelved in 2007.**

Natural Health Products Bill (defeated)

Therapeutic Products Act 2023 (currently in the process of being repealed)

The real intention underlying this type of legislation is to ensure that the profitable, patentable toxic and potentially dangerous prescription drugs do not lose market share to non-patentable proven safe beneficial and efficacious natural health care therapies and products.

For the last thirty years NHPNZ has devoted time, energy and finance to protecting the rights of qualified practitioners to practice, and the basic human right of consumers to have readily available natural therapies and natural healthcare products for the enhancement of their own and their families.

Medsafe Gag-Order

In December 2007 a notice was sent out by Medsafe in conjunction with New Zealand Food Standards Authority to all organisations involved in the manufacture, distribution and advertising of dietary supplements to inform of planned changes to the Dietary Supplements Regulations 1985, that were expected to come into effect in early 2008. The notice emphasised the importance of ensuring that the supply and promotion of products was compliant with current legislation and advised the sector of a combined planned compliance review and enforcement program to this end. Subsequent to the notice, we became aware that several practitioners received letters from Medsafe stating that their websites contained deceptive or misleading claims and were promoting or advertising their clinic or product for a “therapeutic purpose” — clearly a breach of the law.

Medsafe Issued natural health practitioners with basically a gag-order focusing a witch hunt on website owners and health stores selling natural products. Medsafe began to enforce their policies on natural health practitioners with their new guidance document for Natural Health Practitioners. Practitioners were no longer allowed to advertise general sales medicines! (Natural products not registered as drugs). Practitioners were no longer permitted to "display products that are labeled so as to state or imply a therapeutic purpose, unless those products have been approved as medicines; advertise or display product advertising that implied the product had a therapeutic purpose; advertise methods of treatment to prevent, alleviate or cure the diseases or conditions listed in Part 1 of the First Schedule to the Act (all known diseases); advertise methods of treatment to prevent or cure the diseases or conditions listed in Part 11 of the First Schedule to the Act;" and so on.

Health Freedom Campaign

In 2008 we became heavily engaged with Health Freedom campaigner Nicola Grace, spokesperson and organiser for Health Freedom NZ. The purpose of Health Freedom was to challenge the systemic discrimination against natural therapies in the health system by Medsafe, and a tremendous amount of time effort and funds were spent on the Health Freedom campaign to stop the therapeutic goods joint agency with Australia.

The Freedom of Choice campaign attracted thousands of protesters who turned out around New Zealand to campaign to squash the trans-Tasman Joint Agency.

Protest marches and rallies were held in Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, New Plymouth, Christchurch, Dunedin and Gore.

These Nationwide Protests Against the ‘Anti-Vitamin Bill' were very successful and showed that the public of New Zealand were outraged that the government was planning to abdicate its responsibility of health regulations to an Australian corporate entity named the Australia New Zealand Therapeutic Products Authority (ANZTPA).

Change of name decided

The society was formerly known as New Zealand Charter of Health Practitioners Incorporated until it was rebranded with its current name Natural Health Practitioners New Zealand (NHPNZ) in 2011.

Marion Miller

For over five years now, the current administration has been under the superb guidance of Marion Miller. These are very challenging times and Marion is very efficient, providing us with a very well-oiled machine.

The current executive board consists of Chair Patrick Fahy, Debbie Chase Paterson, Anna Goodwin, Bernie Bekker, Sandra Paul, Tony Boyce, Franciska Neuhäuser, Sharyn Crawford.

We have met many wonderful people who have helped shape us.

What has changed in 30 years?

New Zealand's public healthcare crisis worsens, with an aging population — more people with multiple conditions, widespread chronic illness all put increasing pressure on the health sector.

Where to from here?

We need to form a strong and united industry. Thank you for being a part of the life of NHPNZ.

Patrick Fahy

Chaiman — on behalf of the executive board

15th June 2024