

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO 2011 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HALL, LOWER HUTT
ON WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2011**

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

After 18 years of existence, this organisation, which at the time it was founded, was one of a half a dozen organisations devoted to promoting better standards in the media, is now the only one still in existence. For that reason alone we are encouraged to continue our efforts and this year has been a good one.

We have successfully registered as a charity after initially failing because we were seen as a political lobby group. We see ourselves rather as having an educational role, and while funding is lacking we do not lack support.

I have appeared several times on National Radio to comment on programmes and some of our articles and letters have appeared in daily papers. Our best source of publicity continues to be our web site, but this year we extended our electronic reach to include Facebook and have had a good response from this.

Earlier in the year, one of our members, Donald MacDonald, was fined by the Broadcasting Standards Authority for what they claim was a trivial and vexatious complaint. Our executive thought that this was an offense against the spirit of the complaints legislation, which was designed to hear and adjudge complainants, not to financially penalise them. In this we have been supported by a number of important organisations and individuals including media commentators Russell Brown and Brian Edwards and the Media Science Centre, since what we are talking about is the importance of accuracy in the broadcast of news. We approached Tony Ellis, well known Civil Rights Barrister, whose firm has agreed to take a case against the BSA to the High Court on a Pro Bono basis. We are most grateful for Mr Ellis' assistance since we would otherwise be at the mercy of the BSA. (MOTION). We have opened a public appeal to support this action and are inviting people at this meeting to contribute to that cause.

PERSONNEL

Our secretary for the last five years has been Adrian Cooper of Christchurch, who has given exemplary service. He and his sister have had their home in Kaiapoi badly affected by the earthquake and for that reason, Adrian, who is not a young man, has asked for his resignation to be tabled tonight. He will be greatly missed, and your executive would like to propose a Vote of Thanks to Adrian and propose the making of a small gift to him in recognition of his service. (MOTION)

Elsa Kelly has been acting in his stead for some months and her help, especially with the preparations for this meeting, has been much appreciated

THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE

The media regulatory landscape in NZ is still pretty much like the Wild West . We have the least regulated system in the world, and a half a dozen groups like the Press Council and the Broadcasting Standards Authority, each with differing responsibilities, all applying different guidelines and operating under different pieces of legislation”.

Many people in NZ tend towards an unjustified complacency when it comes to the electronic media, and need bodies like ourselves to draw attention when it is needed. A glaring example continues to be the absence of a visible Watershed on NZ television, common elsewhere around the world, warning parents and caregivers that adult content follows.

“Media Matters” is not about suppressing the free flow of information, but about protecting our more vulnerable kids from coming to believe that porn fantasies are what fulfilling sex is about and that violence is a solution to their problems.

Text bullying, and paedophiles and rapists using the Internet to groom their victims, are all aspects of children’s lives which they have a right to expect society will protect them from.

The Broadcasting Standards Authority, set up over 20 years ago on a wave of laissez faire capitalism and a pervasive enthusiasm for all forms of freedom, has proven totally ineffective in curbing the excesses. Paul Henry was able to insult various sectors in our society over a long period of time without the BSA taking any action. His departure to Channel 7 in Sydney may be expected to lift both media standards and IQ levels in NZ immeasurably.

**John Terris
President
9-11-2011**