



# Fencing New Zealand

(Fencing New Zealand Incorporated)

## President's Report 2024

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**Thank you to everybody for your support in what has been an incredibly strong year of growth!**

Every year when I sit down to write this Report I look back over the last 12 months and am reminded of what we've achieved, and how much we owe to our amazing group of volunteers who put so much effort in day after day and week after week to help run the sport and help our fencers grow.

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### HUI

It seems a long like time ago now, but it's only been a year since we held the first ever FeNZ Hui .

We had a fantastic turnout from all over our Fencing Community, and I would like to personally thank everyone for taking the time and effort to attend – especially those who travelled to be there.

As you'll all recall the priorities that were pretty clearly spelled out were:

- Address Safeguarding so that our members could feel safe in raising a concern or complaint and that there would be a clear path to resolution with consequences.
- Get our house in order to improve services, increase organisational capacity and reduce administration burden.
- Focus on growing the Base of the sport.

### Safeguarding

Huge thanks must go to Stephen Peterson, Alice Corin, Megan Ball, and the team from Luke Cunningham Clere who donated over \$120,000 worth of effort, reviewing most of our Polices and our Constitution, and importantly creating the new Complaints and Disputes Policy and Safeguarding procedure.

Thank you also goes to those of you who heeded the call to review it and contributed to its current iteration, which is now in use as we work through minor changes prior to formal adoption. Our next step is implementation which does need more of our community to volunteer to join a Welfare Panel from where we can draw committee members to run the process and ensure a safe, fair and balanced outcome for all parties.

### Getting It Right



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Probably the more significant change to date to help get this organised has been bringing Jane Parrett on board as the FeNZ Administrator. Jane works quietly in the background keeping everything on the straight and narrow, and ensuring things get documented and followed up, and that bills get paid.

Part of this is also creating better transparency into FeNZ Governance and Operational work backlog for you all, which is published <https://trello.com/b/fAlOj0X8/fenz-event-and-operational-items-public-board>

One of the more visible changes you will also have all seen, which I hope you are enjoying, is the President's Corner Newsletters. There is so much going on that it's difficult to keep up with it all, let alone tell everybody about it, but we are trying harder.

Then there's Sporty. Just before Christmas we signed a contract with this cool Kiwi company to implement a new affiliation system and offer a common event enrolment form for tournaments and nominations. With any system of this size we should all expect some teething issues as we get used to a new way of doing things, and I expect it will still take a while to refine its implementation, but it is now well underway, so thank you for bearing with us.

The end result should provide a platform for more streamlined processes, reducing double handling and the potential for errors across the board as we get it bedded in.

I also had the pleasure of welcoming Lee-Bin as President of Mid South Presidency and congratulate her on her work there in bringing the team together. I thank you for the leadership you've shown in helping our teams strive to work together for the benefit of fencers in the community both now and into the future.

## **Growth**

While most of the above is largely aimed at running things on a day-to-day basis, a key focus for our beautiful sport **has** to be growth, not just for the present, but also importantly long into the future.

Simone May has taken on the role of Development Director, initially charged with bringing people together to create the long term National Development Program. This will be a long reaching program and is taking time to put together. In the interim, with the help of Administrators and Coaches from around the country she has organised three successful national training camps and has administered the U15 development grant.

Refereeing is also a big part of growing our sport and we sent three Referees to sit FIE B grade exams in Kazakhstan. Thanks to the Oceania Fencing Confederation and the Department of Internal Affairs for financially supporting the team to get there.

At the close of 2023 we were sitting at 531 affiliated members, up from 416 at the end of 2022 meaning we had 28% growth in affiliated members across the year. We currently expect numbers



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to grow close to 600 for this year showing that we have not only bounced back post Covid, but are on a steady increase, boding well for the future.

## **What's next?**

In line with feedback, we are not going to run a Hui this year. Instead we will run a development planning workshop in Wellington on 4 May (with people that want to and are able to actively contribute) to our growth and development objectives. Invites will be out soon and let your Regional Presidents know if you would like attend.

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## **Oceania Junior Fencing Championships - Dunedin**

The one international event we hosted last year was the New Zealand and Oceania Junior Championships in July in Dunedin. While entries were more limited than we would have hoped, this was a huge event for our southernmost community to put on and on behalf of all the fencers who attended I send my thanks for your warm hospitality. A highlight for me personally was the scream of excitement from our guest Australian referee as she raced outside to experience snow for the first time ever.

Special congrats in this event go to all our Kiwis who made the Podium or Final 8 in their events, and importantly New Zealand's new Oceania Junior Men's Foil Champion Leo Zhou, Women's Sabre Champion Huiqiao Jiang, Men's Sabre Champion Tim Shires, Women's and Men's Individual Epee Champions -Sera Cox and Nolan Peterson; and both the NZ Men's Epee and Women's Foil Teams for bringing home their respective Gold medals.

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## **International Events**

### **Australia Junior Championships**

Well done to everyone who attended this, with many strong performances, and of course massive congratulations to the New Zealand Junior Men's Epee A Team for winning the Teams event in Melbourne in February

### **Australia Youth and Cadet Championships**

Special mention must go to our phenomenal team of 43 fencers who attended the 2023 Australia Youth and Cadet Championships in Sydney in July. Congrats to everyone who made the journey, and of course especially to Leo Zhou for bringing home the Individual Gold in Cadet Men's Foil.



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Thanks to Robert Gastaldo-Brac and Kirsten Hansen as Managers, and Mary Black, Sheldon Ogalvie and Anya Kamynina who coached the respective teams.

## **Oceania Cadet Fencing Championships – Tahiti**

In September we also had a strong contingent attending the Oceania Cadet Championships in the tropical paradise of Papeete in Tahiti.

Once again our young athletes showed their potential for the future, with Emi Mason taking the Gold in Women's Epee, the NZA Team winning the Gold in the Women's Epee Teams and Nolan Peterson winning the Gold in Men's Epee.

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## **National Events**

Aside from all the International events and the Qualification events listed above, there were also multiple National events to be organized – the Cadets and U-15 Championships in Auckland in April; the Presidents Cup in Wellington in May; North Island Champs in Auckland in July; NZ Secondary School Champs in Wellington in August, and Senior Nationals in Christchurch.

Thanks you to all the Regional Organizers who made this events a success, and of course to Heather Claydon once again for travelling the country to act as DT at the majority.

Thanks also to all the Referees who gave up their time to come along and officiate at these events. Your help at these is truly truly appreciated.

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## **Coaching**

The Coaching Commission were busy as well last year, specifically around running the OFMA / Global Fencing Masters Online Level 1 Epee Coaching Course in the first half of the year.

Thank you to Martin, Judit, Dave and Robert for all the effort you put into running these, and congrats to everyone who qualified at the end of the course.

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## **The Coming Year**



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The coming year I'm sure will be dominated by our two international events – the Oceania Veterans Championship in Fielding in June, and then the hosting of the Commonwealth Junior and Cadet Fencing Championships in Christchurch in July.

Responses from our Commonwealth Member Countries indicate that there will be at least **nineteen countries** sending teams to the latter, and, at last count, over **four hundred and ninety athletes** competing. This is a truly massive event for our country and I encourage everyone to do everything you can to help this be the success we know it can be.

This is not just a Mid-South event – it is something that the whole country needs to get behind, and it promises to leave a long-term legacy after it's over, both in the spirit of collaboration both here and internationally, but also in the amount of equipment that will remain for use across the country long after it is over.

The future of our incredible sport is looking stronger by the minute thanks to the team that is coming together to help, and it is massively appreciated!

On top of this we can also look forward to a busy year from an Administrative point of view as we consider the impact of the new Incorporated Societies Act and our structure and Constitution – all of which have to be reviewed and potentially amended.

This year is of course also an Olympic year, with the top competitors in the world assembling in Paris in late July. Good luck to all our athletes currently competing to get there. Kia Kaha!

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## Closing

Last year was a strong year for the growth of our wonderful sport here, thanks of course to all the amazing people involved in running our it:

The Officiating Commission: Heather Claydon.

The Selectors Commission: Kyle MacDonald, Rachel Rowlands, Steve Martin and Anya Kamynina.

The Coaching Commission: Martin Brill, Robert Gastaldo Brac, Judit Flizsar and Dave Barson.

The Athlete's Commission: Hanna Choi; Sheldon Ogalvie; Zoe Congalton; Sam McArthur and Zach Dodson.

Our Health and Safety Officer: Alice Corin, and now with assistance from Megan Ball.

I also have to thank and congratulate Anya Kamynina who has spent much of the last year travelling to multiple FIE and other tournaments around the world, working tirelessly representing us as a B Grade Referee.



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And of course thanks go to the Board of FeNZ - Sam Parish, Lee-Bin Tee, Nicole Martin, Pete Butler, Steve Peterson, Steve Martin , Alice Corin , and Amanda Hopkin, and all the Tournament Organisers and Referees who make tournaments and events happen.

As always I want to personally thank each and every one of you, as well as all our Coaches and Referees . Our fencers owe you all a huge debt of gratitude

And finally to all of our fencers –you are an amazing group of people, and please know that we are working to grow a platform for growth and success to support you all into the future.

Our sport is growing – last year set an excellent foundation, so now is the time we can really start to push it into the future. We can only do this if we work together – accepting our differences and putting them aside for the betterment of the future of our sport.

To grow our beautiful sport in this country we need to walk the same path together. Let's discuss our differences on that journey, without letting them distract us from reaching our goals.

David

*David Elder*

*President Fencing New Zealand*

