



Fencing New Zealand

(Fencing New Zealand Incorporated)

Annual Report 2026

As you know, this is my last President's Report as, after four and half years at the helm, I am not standing for re-election as FeNZ President at this meeting.

Fencing in NZ is a small community and an even smaller group of volunteers are at the heart of it. Thank you to everyone who spends so many countless hours either working on Board or Regional issues, or for Commissions, or running tournaments and events, or handling complaints, or coaching in our clubs. You are the silent heroes of our sport, and I will be forever indebted to you.

I would particularly like to thank Amanda Hopkins who is also standing down. Amanda is our longest serving Board member and a tireless engine who has done so much for the furtherance of our sport over many many years.

I would also like to welcome the new Board members appointed at the last AGM, Kate Brill and Grant Twedde, the new President of Mid-South Hamish Clarke, and more recently the Interim President of Central Liam James to the Board. Your input over the last year / few months has been invaluable. I also welcome Carol Birdsall – the part time Fencing New Zealand Administrator to our sport.

After the extremely successful 2024 Commonwealth Junior and Cadet Championships held in Christchurch, 2025 was supposed to be a much quieter year. This gave the Board the opportunity to focus on the really big picture items for New Zealand that have needed to be tackled for many years.

PROCESS

With a requirement to redraft our Constitution to meet the new Incorporated Societies Act, there was a lot to consider - starting with our overall structure, and then moving through the organisation, reviewing our Purpose and Constitution, and then into the Commissions Terms of References, the people on each Committee, and their Policies and Procedures.

This was a massive undertaking and proved to be a bigger task than imagined. It has taken dramatically longer than anticipated, and is still in progress, but a lack of dedicated resource is one of the downfalls of a volunteer organisation.



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See [figure 1](#) below for a high-level summary of the steps that need to be taken in a review of this kind.

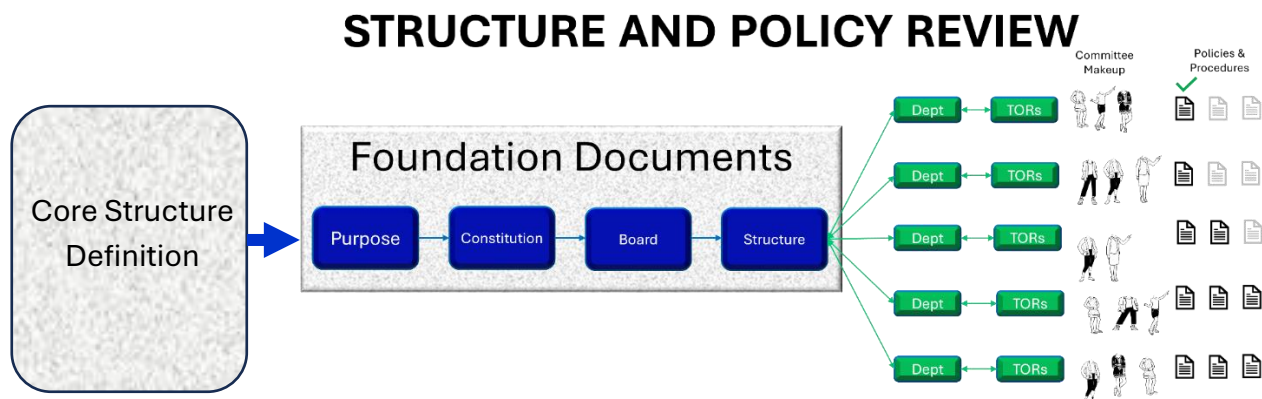


Figure 1 FeNZ Review

CONSTITUTION

The Constitution is the document that defines what an organisation does, how it does it, and the rules it will work by. It is the FOUNDATION document - generally fairly large - and takes an awful lot of patience just to read through, let alone to write.

To date there have been five bodies responsible for the sport in New Zealand – four Regions, and one National body – all with separate constitutions and rules, some of which conflict. Feedback was sought and after some debate the decision was taken to keep this core structure but amend the rules so that all entities must now comply with the FeNZ Constitution and be Incorporated Entities (including Regions, Societies, Businesses and Schools).

The FeNZ Constitution and all the new Regional Constitutions are now complete, along with most of the clubs. Under the new Incorporated Societies Act, all revised constitutions must be submitted no later than the 5th of April this year or the society will lose its Incorporated status and have to reapply from scratch.



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STRUCTURE / COMMISSION REVIEW

Reporting into the Board, the current Management structure is made up of the following:

- Selectors Commission
- Officiating Commission
- Athletes Commission
- Coaching Commission
- Health and Safety
- Development

This structure has been in place for a number of years and it's also well overdue for review.

Following multiple discussions with our community and current Board and Commissions the Board has now developed a new draft structure with a focus to developing the sport. This is scheduled to be discussed and hopefully approved with the new Executive at their first Board meeting next month.

Once that is finalised and the Terms of References for each Commission are approved, the plan is to open up nominations to refresh the membership each of the Commissions and then get into reviewing each areas Policies and Procedures.

STRATEGY

In October, just prior to the Senior National/Oceania Champs, the FeNZ Board held a two day Strategy Meeting in Auckland.

The key long-term issues that were identified for improvement weren't overly surprising:

- 1. Communication**
- 2. Completing Actionable Items**
- 3. Stopping the in-fighting in the community**

Communications

An excellent draft Communications plan has subsequently been produced and is ready for implementation should the new Executive and Board approve it. Thank you to Lee-Bin Tee and Carol Birdsall for your work on this. The first step in this has been a resumption of the President's Corner Newsletter which anecdotally seems to have been well received.



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The main recommendation though is to appoint a small team to look after communication, rather than leaving it to the few volunteers who are already under time pressure to fulfill their normal FeNZ roles (on top of their day jobs).

This will be considered as part of the Commission re-structure expected to be initiated in the next few months, although also dependant on the new Executive's review.

Completing Actionable Items

This has been an issue for more years than most care to remember.

The core problem is the same. We are a volunteer organisation with a small group of overworked volunteers trying to complete this work after business hours in our spare time.

This is also addressed in the draft Commission Review.

In Fighting

Resolving this in a community that is dedicated to a sport that is Individualistic, highly competitive and is focussed on stabbing people is a challenge.

At that meeting the Board resolved to work maturely together and do everything possible to spread this culture through our community. The adoption of the Multi-Level Complaints Management Framework should help address this.

WELFARE COMMITTEE

The Welfare Committee was established following the first FeNZ Hui approx. three years ago and considerable work has gone into creating a mechanism to ensure the safety of the people in our community.

Thanks to Luke Cunningham Clere for all the work they put in (pro-bono) to help develop a sound and robust policy and procedure.

This has now been augmented by the development of the Multi-Level Complaints Management Framework

After some initial teething problems this has settled down into a strong process, and thanks to Liz Stewart and her team of volunteers. With one or two notable exceptions most of the back-log of issues have now been cleared. This is not an enviable job, and I would like to express my gratitude to everyone on this team for the job they do.



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SELECTION POLICY

One of the Policies that was really showing its age was the National Selection Policy. Thanks to Will Bishop and the team that painstakingly revised this last year.

While there will always be disagreements about how people should be selected to represent our country, the new Policy is a much needed refresh that is (hopefully) much more transparent and less ambiguous than the old version.

RANKING SYSTEM

The key functions for the Rankings System include:

1. assisting with Selection for International Competitions
2. providing seedings for all National Events at all age groups
3. providing seedings for all Regional Tournaments
4. providing a central database for results
5. providing athletes with a performance measurement system
6. providing Regional and National selectors and coaches fencer development measurement information

A team has been working on redeveloping this both from an objective's perspective (how are points allocated) and from a technical viewpoint. Significant development has gone into this – particularly with a view to automatically importing data and updating the system automatically which is nearing completion.

MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

Our membership in 2025 grew to 709 affiliated fencers.

Research from discussion with clubs however shows this reflects only approximately 31% of the people who actually train in our sport.

This continues to be extremely frustrating. FeNZ has developed a free membership for Club based fencers, simply to demonstrate the real size of the sport in this country when discussing opportunities with government and private organisations, including when seeking grants and funding.

Sport NZ were surprised when advised of the estimated number of people involved in the sport, commenting that this would change their perception from it being a small sport to a medium sized one.



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Getting accurate numbers is an absolute priority for the future development of the sport, however this relies on our all of our community providing this valuable information by affiliating.

INSURANCE

FeNZ Insurance Policy was renegotiated last year.

The previous version had included coverage for clubs and coaches, however our Insurance advisors pointed out that we cannot be certain that these external parties would always be fully insured under FeNZ's policy.

As such the Policy was revised – dramatically reducing the annual Premium and saving our members a considerable amount each year.

Clubs and Coaches were advised they would need to establish their own Insurance going forward.

REFEREEING

Developing quality Referees is essential to the future of our sport. It's pointless learning to be a good fencer if the referees don't understand and enforce the rules correctly.

- **FIE B Grade Licenses**

In September FeNZ and the Oceania Fencing Federation funded three NZ Referees to attend the FIE B Grade Referee Eams in Wuxi in China.

Congratulations to Parth Travedi who is now an FIE B Grade Epee Referee, and Daniel Ko who is now an FIE B Grade Sabre Referee

- **Per Diems**

After many years of no change, in order to attract more quality Referees to National tournaments, FeNZ has increased the per diem to \$100.00 per full day, or \$50.00 per half day.



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GRANTS

- **FIE Equipment Grant (Oceania)**

Every year a Grant of F6,000 (Swiss Francs) worth of equipment is given to three countries within the Oceania Region to assist with development of Fencing in Federations.

Once again last year Fencing New Zealand was one of these recipients, and this time the Grant was for five Favero 7 Scoring boxes and four sets of spools and wires. This Grant was approved by the Oceania Federation on condition that one of these boxes would in turn be gifted to Samoa.

The remainder are shortly to be distributed around the Federation.

Thank you to the FIE and OFC for such a generous donation.

- **Olympic Solidarity Grant**

Stop Press (13/03/26) - Thanks to the work of Development Director Simone May, Olympic Solidarity – via the NZ Olympic Committee – has granted Fencing New Zealand US12,000 to be spent on the National Activities Programme for 2026.

Further details will follow now that the funding has been approved.

CONGRESS

- **Collaboration**

Every year for the last four years I have attended the FIE Congress on behalf of FeNZ. This is a meeting of all the Federation Presidents from around the world and in my opinion, it is **vital** that our representation at this meeting continues well into the future.

Congress is a place where relationships are formed over time, and opportunities for international collaboration are created.

Of importance to Fencing New Zealand, at last year's Congress in Bahrain, British President Pat Aiyenuro was elected to the Executive Committee of the FIE. Pat is a good friend to New Zealand, and her appointment brings a significant change to the balance of the COMEX Committee.



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- **Junior Olympics**

This was a clear example of the importance of NZ sending a representative to Congress. In November we were advised by the NZOC that was “unlikely FeNZ would receive a quota spot” for the Dakar Junior Olympics. Following meetings at Congress with members of the FIE COMEX, we were subsequently advised by the NZOC that “NZ has now been shortlisted for one male or female quota in Fencing.”

Good luck to our young athletes who are now able to work on qualifying for this prestigious event.

INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENTS

- **2025 Oceania Senior Championships**

In 2025 New Zealand hosted one International Tournament - the Oceania Senior Championships, combined with the NZ Senior Championships in Auckland, with 190 competitors in the Senior events, and 45 in the Veterans events.

Thank you to the organisers, particularly the perennial Heather Claydon, for organising such a quality event and making it run so smoothly.

Congrats to the several NZ fencers who are now proudly Oceania Champions.

- **Overseas Events**

Fencers from New Zealand travelled all over the world competing in multiple international events. These included World Champs, the World Uni Games, Asian Champs, World Cups, FIE Grand Prix Events, Australian Events, and multiple other international events.

Our location in the world gives New Zealanders some pretty amazing lifestyle advantages, but the “tyranny of distance” is a major issue for our small fencing community.

The Board strongly encourages as many of our fencers as possible to travel to as many international events as possible whenever possible, to enable you all to be prepared when it comes to the major pinnacle events such as Asian Zone and World Championships, and hopefully in future both the Youth and Senior Olympics.



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CLOSING

In closing I would like to thank all the volunteers who do so much for our sport on a daily and weekly basis, and I wish the new Executive well in growing our sport both on the domestic and international stages.

Kia Kaha

David

David Elder

President Fencing New Zealand.