

## Chairs Report April 2019- April 2020

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou kotoa.

Welcome to the end of another successful year for the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network (OHRN) in a world that has had a major shock with Covid -19. A shock that has made us very vulnerable in the overall ecological balance.

NGO's are also vulnerable as organisations. Any effective NGO needs to implement the foundations of a small business to succeed and be effective. However, unlike a small business it relies largely on volunteer time, energy, skills and passion. The wonderful progress we have made over the last year is a credit to us all. Thank you to everyone who has volunteered their time and positive energy, and to all the organisations, businesses and funders who have so generously supported us. Our ability to work effectively with others both as individuals and as an organisation will ensure our continued success.

Our sustainability, growth and development is very dependent on the support of funders. A huge thank you to the Rata Foundation, Environment Canterbury (ECan), Christchurch City Council (CCC)/ Spreydon Cashmere Community Board, generous donations from our members and businesses including the Tannery, ENGEO, Real Communications, Photo and Video International, Hydro Response, Hanafins, the Fermentist, Pheonix Design & Print, Renne Hayley Hair and Ashli and Rogue. This funding has enabled us to employ a part time Project Administrator which supports the running of events, communications, and administration task for the OHRN. It has also enabled us to take on additional accounting support and expertise which is essential as we continue to evolve.

Over the course of the year we have organised and delivered a range of successful events. All of which have contributed to increasing the community's awareness of the OHRN and the issues relating to the health of the river. The legendary, Mother of All Clean Ups saw tonnes of rubbish being picked up along the banks of the Ōpāwaho Heathcote, the Avon Ōtākaro and Avon Heathcote Estuary. Our Community Group Workshop brought all the OHRN community groups, residents associations and key individuals from ECan and the CCC, who we work with, together in one room. Participants shared the unique characteristics of their areas along the river, and projects within these areas. At our AGM in June, Nicholas Head, senior ecologist from CCC, provided a great presentation and discussion on prevalent weeds in and along the banks of the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River.

World Rivers Day saw a hive of activity along the river. Working bees were held at Farnley Reserve, Roimata Food Commons and Cherry's Early Learning Centre. A joint information hub with the OHRN, Christchurch West Melton Zone Committee (CWMZC), Predator Free Ōpāwaho and Predator Free Port Hills was located on a busy walking route along the river opposite Zeroes Cafe. We had a successful World Rivers Day Photographic Competition, exhibition and prize giving at the South Library. The new school division provided the overall winner.

A huge crowd turned up for our River Walk as part of the CCC Walking and Heritage Festivals. Walkers enjoyed the range of speakers who brought the river to life with stories and issues from both the past and the present.

The OHRN participated in Estuary Fest. Our continued involvement in this event is important as it reinforces the link of the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River to the Estuary. It was the perfect

opportunity to display our newly developed Ōpāwaho Heathcote Catchment Infographic banner. This banner consolidates information regarding the river and its catchment in a large visual format. Thank you to EOS Ecology for working with us to produce this. It is aimed as a starting point for further public communication projects around the values and issues of the river and its catchment.

Our continued advocacy via submissions to the CCC & ECan Annual Plans and hearing process and National Policy Statements regarding Freshwater Policy and Whitebait Regulations is a key component of our work. It emphasises the ongoing need for solutions to be developed at all levels to help resolve issues contributing to the poor health of the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River.

This year we have also been a member of the Strategic Leadership Group for the youth led 'Healthy Opawaho' project. The evolution of this project aligns with our overall purpose and provides an exciting focus for initiatives along the river.

Our involvement in the newly formed Cashmere Stream & Port Hills Working Group, facilitated by the CWMZC, has enabled us to be part of a team to begin scoping and developing initiatives to reduce the amount of sediment that is entering Cashmere Stream and the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River.

A huge thank you to all the community groups that are so active along the river throughout the year with all your working bees. Your energy is not only benefiting the health of the river but also providing a focus for families and communities to connect and enjoy time together beside the river.

Scientists are warning of worse pandemics than Covid-19 if we do not stop the rapid destruction of nature and loss of biodiversity. Biodiversity is a protective factor against zoonotic diseases such as Covid-19.

Our continued passion and work for the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River is a small contribution to the overall protection of nature and our involvement within it.

Noho pai - stay well  
Kia haumara - stay safe

Annabelle Hasselman