REPORT TO NZAP COUNCIL, JULY 2021

From the Newsletter Editor

Hello Council members,

I'm writing to you in my capacity as Newsletter Editor and to let you know about the status of the Newsletter. The email version of the Newsletter has had a slow and difficult gestation. Gabriela approached me about being the Editor in March, and here it is June and we've only just called for submissions.

While I do have a background in publishing, I was trained as a print designer (books, publications), and until the last few months knew nothing of online publishing. It has been a steep learning curve. Here's a bit of what I learned: for an email newsletter to look more like a newsletter and less like ordinary email, an email marketing program (EMS) must be used. There are zillions of such programs. I had originally thought we could use Substack, an email marketing program favored by not-for-profits—for example, our very own Claire is using it to publish the climate newsletter. For those of you familiar with The Spinoff from the Bulletin (a great source for NZ news)—they publish on Substack and were kind enough to tell me about their positive experience with it. However, I have been dissuaded from this idea by Nikky Winchester, who raised concerns about longevity (what happens when I inevitably leave if we've moved away from Wild Apricot?) and by the helpful and hardworking marketing/IT person I'm working with, Iain Graham. Iain said that Wild Apricot—the NZAP membership management software—has a newsletter program in its suite of applications, and publishing directly from this would keep us more easily connected to the membership database. There are dissenting opinions about the need for this (talk to Claire) but we're sticking with Wild Apricot for this year. There were also issues of email privacy considered with some mixed reactions—how much of a risk is there of having our email database hacked if we were to publish on Substack. This risk seems overstated to me, but I am allowing the concerns raised to steer me, for now. I am still not completely convinced that Wild Apricot is the software program to use long term, but I'm trusting that Iain can produce a Newsletter that is stable across devices for now.

After I sent a design template of the Newsletter to Iain for him to work from, we went through a difficult and frustrating patch trying to get the Newsletter look the same, or at least legible, across many different devices. Long story short it was not a simple task for Iain, and I'm not entirely convinced that we're there yet, but we're going ahead. Iain now thinks he has sorted the issue and we have called for submissions based on this belief.

My goal now is to develop some simple processes that we can implement to get the Newsletter published, and to create a document that describes these steps that so that future Editors can refer to it.

Please feel free to be in touch.

Marianna Ackerman