

# The ARANZ Advocacy Team

## Kathleen Stringer

The Council of ARANZ work together to promote the understanding and importance of records and archives in New Zealand. While each member works as part of the team, members also have specific portfolios to address certain aspects of the goal.

The advocacy team works as watchdog for archives, as well as the people who work in the fields of archives and record management. Much of our activity is focussed on making submissions to Archives New Zealand regarding their disposal notifications or to comment on a government department's retention and disposal schedules, which are released via the Archives New Zealand website. Other submissions and letters we have worked on in 2019 include amendments to the Copyright Act, concerns regarding the on-going management of the Community Archive, and Archives New Zealand's reading room changes.

21 November saw the first meeting of the ARANZ Council since the September 2019 AGM and elections. This was an opportunity to bring all councillors together and talk through kaupapa for the 2019-2020 year. High on the list of items was Archives New Zealand's announcement to reduce their reading room hours.

The proposed reduction has been of topic great interest for the records and archives community, and the ARANZ Council. The Council discussed a number of issues, particularly for those traveling from around New Zealand to access archives held in Wellington. We also noted, with concern, the lack of consultation and communication around these changes.

In early December the Advocacy arm of the Council wrote a letter to Chief Archivist Richard Foy, on behalf of all ARANZ members, stating these concerns and more. Richard Foy provided a written response in mid-December, emphasising the points below:

1. The changes are being made with a view to maximise access

- in particular through digital access. This has grown by 36,767% in the past decade, while in-person visits have declined by 38%.

2. Reducing reading room staff will allow for increased focus on digital access, and enables work on the replacement for Archway, which is expected to go live in 2021.

Following this response, Eric Boamah met with Richard Foy in person. The meeting provided greater insight, a key takeaway being that these decisions are in a trialling phase and will be open for review in 9-12 months' time. It appears that there may be measured flexibility for researchers on a case-by-case basis. However, Anna Green's article sums up the continuing concern around this move. The ARANZ Council is aware that these changes will have on-going effects for the records and archival community. We will continue to maintain a strong presence as discussions with Richard and Archives New Zealand move forward.

The Advocacy team work for you, the members of ARANZ. If there is an issue that you would like us to act on upon, let us know. It may be a regional matter that we are unaware of, or it may be a situation that concerns or affects a few members only. Whatever we can do to promote or safeguard records and archives, or assist and support our members, please let us know.