



## Kia Ora Members,

Winter is upon us, which means it is time for the next edition of YHA News. You will be pleased to know that there is plenty of activity happening at our hostels around New Zealand. Of interest is the recent approval of a new hostel at Tekapo and implementing a smoke free policy across the entire hostel network. In addition, we are addressing some frequent questions regarding YHA Opoutere.

### YHA Lake Tekapo: We're getting a new hostel!

The Board recently made the final decision to go ahead with the proposed new development at Lake Tekapo. Construction is planned to commence onsite in September with the new 120 bed hostel open for business in July 2018. The plans include a licensed café adjoining the hostel.

We are delighted with the Board's decision as Tekapo is a key location for our network and is experiencing significant tourism growth. The hostel will be constructed on a new location which is closer to the centre of town. We're looking forward to welcoming guests into the new hostel next July. In the meantime the current hostel closes its doors on 31 July 2017 and will provide worker accommodation during the build.



### Aoraki/Mt Cook solar is live

We've just completed another of our recent solar projects, this time at Aoraki/Mt Cook. This install included a replacement of the reticulated hot water system, and addition of photovoltaic cells and solar hot water heating. The main communal bathrooms were upgraded at the same time and the roof was painted before the solar panels were fitted.

There are now four hostels in our network using solar energy: YHA Franz Josef, Wellington, YHA Nelson, and Mt Cook. They join the recent geothermal energy installation at YHA Rotorua in assisting YHA take another step in support of our commitment to environmental sustainability.



## Opoutere

As you may know, the Board is considering a proposal to close YHA Opoutere. Thanks for your feedback to date on the proposal, as the Board welcomes membership representation and participation.

For that reason, the Board met in early May with representatives of the 'Save Opoutere YHA Hostel' on-line petition as part of its consultation process. It was interested in gaining a deeper understanding of their perspectives on the future of YHA Opoutere. However, a number of very serious allegations were made during this presentation regarding YHA and management behaviour and actions, which the Board decided required investigation. A Board sub-committee was therefore established to undertake a full and thorough investigation. This was a significant (and expensive) piece of work which was completed throughout the remainder of May and into early June. The outcome was that the sub-committee concluded that the allegations were not established.



The Board has been made aware that certain representatives have been contacting members and interested parties, including staff, restating the allegations and asking them to speak out against YHA. This is unacceptable behaviour and is serious enough for YHA to respond through our solicitor to cease and desist making such statements.

It's important to restate that the Board is always open to working in a constructive way with any members who wish to engage with them in a manner that aligns with YHA's values of respect, integrity, passion and excellence.

The investigation thus postponed the Board's consideration of the closure proposal. With the investigation complete, the Board was able to consider the proposal at its June meeting. It has now asked management for further information and analysis of the situation with the Opoutere hostel and this is due later this month.

In the meantime, there is no change to the status of the hostel. Thank you for your patience through this time; the Board wants to be sure it makes the correct decision for the benefit of YHA as a whole.

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## Opoutere Q & As . . .

During the consultation process the Board and management have been asked a number of questions. We thought it would be helpful to share some of the common questions and our answers.

### Why the proposal to close YHA Opoutere?

The proposal to close has resulted from management making a recommendation that the hostel is financially unviable. The hostel has low occupancy for most of the year; on a recent weekend there was only one guest staying at the hostel. The hostel team has worked hard to run the hostel in a way that minimises its losses, however YHA is now facing significant investment both for compliance and to meet YHA's own standards. This includes a replacement of the electrical system which is required to reduce the fire risk to our guests.

### **Opoutere is such a beautiful place that it must be on every travellers' list to visit?**

Unfortunately, and surprisingly, Opoutere is not that popular with only 1% of YHA's guest nights being at the hostel. 60% of the guests are from New Zealand which is unusual, as for most other hostels only 20-25% of guests are from New Zealand. In addition, the hostel is generally busy during New Zealand summer holiday periods and long weekends only, indicating that it is being used as a domestic holiday destination rather than as traveler accommodation. And yes, Opoutere is a beautiful place, New Zealand is indeed fortunate to have so many beautiful beaches, mountains and wild places.

### **In the winter, why do you open Opoutere during the weekends only?**

Prior to 2008, the hostel operated on an 'open for business 365 days of the year' basis. In 2008 the decision was made to open for summer months only due to the extremely poor occupancy during the winter period. This model continued until 2010 when it was decided to open for weekends for the following reasons:

- To allow guests access to the hostel all year.
- It enabled YHA to offer employment to a manager on a year round basis as we had experienced considerable difficulties in sourcing a suitable applicant for a six-month contract only.
- It ensured a year round security presence at the hostel, thus safeguarding the property.

### **What criteria is there for determining which hostels are kept open and which are closed?**

YHA's hostel network is a dynamic model based on economics and visitor demand. For the entirety of its 85 years in existence, hostels in locations all around the country have opened and closed in response to where members want to stay. This means that the hostel network today is different from what it was in the 1970's and in another forty years it will look quite different again. YHA's preparedness to move with the times and keep striving to meet guest expectations is what keeps it relevant and successful.

### **If you close YHA Opoutere, wouldn't it weaken YHA as a whole?**

Ensuring YHA has the right-sized hostels in the right locations actually strengthens the organisation; by contrast, running hostels at a loss in locations with low visitor demand weakens the organisation. The imperative of keeping the network alive and flowing is why management worked so hard to reinstate a hostel in Christchurch after the 2011 earthquakes and why the Board has just made the final decision to build a larger hostel in Lake Tekapo.

### **What profits will YHA make if it sells the buildings and land?**

The land and the two main buildings at YHA Opoutere are leased from the local Council, so they are unable to be sold. The remaining six buildings are relatively small and would be unlikely to deliver a profit if they were able to be sold. If the Board makes a decision to close, then more than likely the assets that YHA owns on the site would be donated.

### **YHA's city hostels must make a significant profit, can't you use that to fund Opoutere?**

The larger urban hostels do generally cover their own costs but do not make a 'significant profit'. Opoutere has run at a loss for many years now and YHA simply doesn't have the cash reserves to continue to support hostels that can't cover their own costs.

### **If YHA is a not-for-profit, why are you so focused on the financial aspects?**

YHA is a public benefit entity and we are committed to the triple bottom line of 'People Planet Profit'. If we don't run a financially sustainable organisation, there will be no YHA to run. A quick read of the financials in the last YHA Annual Report shows that YHA operates on very thin margins, which is why we must always pay attention to the finances. We need to earn enough money to keep the hostel network functioning and at a standard that members want and expect.

## Young people are becoming more urbanised and are increasingly turning to indoor activities; yet YHA surely has a duty to promote the outdoor life?

YHA is committed to promoting the outdoor life and this can be seen on our website and via our marketing campaigns. YHA has a strong relationship with the Department of Conservation and promotes its Great Walks to members. It also partners with Te Araroa which is the walking trail that runs the length of New Zealand. There are a number of hostels such as YHA Te Anau, YHA Mt Cook, and YHA Arthur's Pass which are close to these walks and trails and which are especially promoted. However, it is also YHA's duty to provide the accommodation and travel experiences that our members expect, be it urban or rural, hence the provision in recent years of free Wi-Fi in hostels.

## Given YHA's commitment to environmental sustainability, shouldn't you retain the hostels in rural areas such as YHA Opoutere?

YHA works hard to educate young travelers and school groups about the environmental sustainability initiatives introduced at larger hostels such as YHA Franz Josef, YHA Rotorua and YHA Wellington. This includes heat recovery technology, solar hot water, solar photovoltaic and geothermal energy. This is not possible at YHA Opoutere due to low occupancy and location. Furthermore, all of our hostels promote environmental sustainability with many of them, including many Associate Partner hostels, operating either inside or in close proximity to National Parks. YHA Opoutere is not unique in its rural location.

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## YHA National Office has moved

Our National Office has moved locations, but only a few metres away. Our address remains the same, so there is no need to update your address book.

The move has taken some time and the team is settling in well. Check out some of the photos of our reception and work area. We have also attached a small map of where we have moved to in case you want to come visit us.



## YHA is going Smoke Free



YHA is going smoke free in all its hostel external areas. The decision to implement the policy was reached after persistent complaints regarding smoking, primarily in entrance ways.

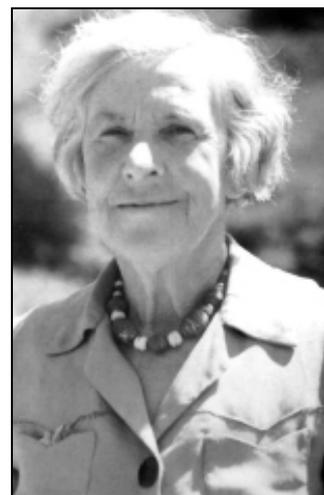
Appropriate signage will be placed at entry ways and public areas prohibiting smoking. This will also include vaping. These changes will be effective starting Tuesday 1 August 2017.

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## Cora Wilding Award applications - update

This year's Award is for up to \$5,000 towards the cost of a youth personal development training course or project that will benefit the awardee as well as their local community. Applications closed on 30 June and we received a record 58 applicants this year. That's 14 more than the previous year which was also a record! The Awards Committee will meet in mid-July to discuss the candidates and decide the winner.

YHA New Zealand's founding mission was to motivate and inspire young people to pursue personal development by exploring New Zealand and the outdoors. The Award aligns with that mission and the Awards Committee is always very impressed with the quality of applicants who are seeking to make a difference for their community. There are a number of excellent applications this year so we are looking forward to hearing who the lucky winner will be.



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## AGM reminder

This year's AGM will be held on Saturday 28 October in Wellington.

Please book your bed directly with YHA Wellington by calling 04 801 7280 or emailing [agm.beds@yha.co.nz](mailto:agm.beds@yha.co.nz). Accommodation for Friday 27 October is offered to YHA members at a 25% discount. Honorary Life Members are free of charge.

We'll continue our tradition of a dinner on Friday night followed by the AGM and lunch the following day. We're planning to hold Saturday's AGM at Te Papa so you will have the afternoon to explore the museum exhibits. The AGM registration form is attached for you to fill out and return at your convenience.



Please let us know if you would like us to send you a printed copy of this form.

## Awards and Nominations

Nominations will open for elected positions on Friday 28 July 2017. This will include Board Members and Honorary Vice-Presidents. Nomination forms and the Candidate Handbook will be available from the Returning Officer via a link on the AGM page of the YHA website.

Service and Merit Award nominations will close for Honorary Life Member, Distinguished Service Award, and Certificate of Merit on Friday 4 August 2017. Nomination forms are available on the YHA website. <https://www.yha.co.nz/about-us/annual-general-meeting/#awards>

Notices of Motion, both General and Constitutional, will also close on Friday 4 August 2017. Again the relevant forms are on YHA's website. <https://www.yha.co.nz/about-us/annual-general-meeting/#noticesofmotion>

National Board has approved a Constitutional Notice of Motion to amend the Honorary Vice-President's tenure (as requested by the 2016 AGM) and update Board member eligibility criteria to align with the Charities legislation.

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Thanks for reading YHA News and thanks to Amanda Howard who works here in National Office for helping me put it together for you. The next edition is due out in October so please send me any news that you have. It's a very cold day here in Canterbury and snow is expected throughout the country this week. Time to head to the slopes and strap on the skis.

Regards



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View from YHA Aoraki/  
Mt Cook this week.

Taken by Trish Gilden,  
YHA Property Team



# YHA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## WELLINGTON 28 OCTOBER 2017



National Board invites all members to join them for the Annual General Meeting (AGM). This will be held 9:00am on **Saturday, 28 October 2017** at Te Papa on 55 Cable St, Te Aro, Wellington.

### **Timetable for the Weekend**

#### **Friday 27 October**

A pre-AGM dinner will be held on Friday evening at Copthorne Hotel, 100 Oriental Parade, Oriental Bay, Wellington. This is a five minute walk from the hostel.



#### **Saturday 28 October**

Breakfast will be available in the kitchen at YHA Wellington for those members who are staying at the hostel. Members not staying Saturday evening will check out prior to 9am and the start of the AGM. Luggage storage will be available. There will be a shuttle to the meeting venue at Te Papa with lunch to follow at the close of the meeting. The afternoon will be the perfect time to wander around and enjoy the exhibits. Afterwards, the shuttle will return members back to YHA Wellington.

### **Accommodation Booking Information**

All accommodation bookings are to be made directly with the hostel by **22 September 2017**.

Please think about your room preferences before you email: [agm.beds@yha.co.nz](mailto:agm.beds@yha.co.nz)

Bookings by email are preferred.

Or alternatively you may phone the hostel on:

**04 801 7280** and ask for **Lisa** (Monday through Friday only).

### **AGM Registration**

If you wish to attend the AGM, please complete the registration form underneath and return to Office Administrator, *YHA National Office PO BOX 436, Christchurch 8140* by **Friday 22 September 2017**.

If you wish to register online the link will be live the week of 21 August 2017.

## Registration

Name(s)				YHA membership no
Email address				Phone
<b>Dietary requirements (please circle):</b> ➡	Vegetarian	Gluten-free	Vegan	Other:
<b>Event</b>	<b>\$ per person</b>	<b>Number of people</b>	<b>Total to pay</b>	
Friday welcome dinner	<b>\$ 35</b>			
AGM	FREE \$ 0			
Lunch	FREE \$ 0			
<b>Total due</b>	<b>\$</b>		<b>\$</b>	
<b>Payment type (please circle)</b>	<b>Cheque</b>	<b>Visa</b>	<b>Mastercard</b>	
<b>When choosing <u>credit card</u> payment, please enter the card details</b>	<b>Expiry date</b>		<b>CSV</b>	
	<b>Credit card number</b>		<b>Name on credit card</b>	
<b>Signature</b>				