

# Report to the 2009 Annual General Meeting of the New Zealand Cancer Control Trust

## Background

The New Zealand Cancer Control Trust (NZCCT) is committed to a planned and integrated approach to reducing the burden of cancer in New Zealand through the development and implementation of a national cancer control strategy. The impetus to develop a national strategy was provided by a 1999 Cancer Control Workshop. The widely representative workshop participants unanimously called for the development of a strategy by a network of relevant organisations with a commitment to cancer control.

The New Zealand Cancer Control Trust was formed in February 2001 in response to this directive and with funding support from the Cancer Society of New Zealand and the Child Cancer Foundation. It subsequently obtained further funding from its founder organisations, the Genesis Oncology Trust and income generated through contract work for the Ministry of Health.

The Trust was the non-Government partner that worked alongside the Ministry of Health to develop and co-publish *The New Zealand Cancer Control Strategy* (2003). In this role the Trust liaised closely with other NGOs, health professionals and consumer groups to help ensure broad sector involvement in, and commitment to the Strategy and its initial Action Plan 2005-10.

Since its involvement in the development of the 2005-2010 Action Plan and organisation of the *From Policy to Action* workshop in 2003, the Trust has assumed a low-key approach to addressing its objects. The purpose of this report is to outline some of the Trust's key activities since 2004 and to affirm its ongoing commitment to advocacy for a planned approach to cancer control in New Zealand.

## Objects of the Trust

The objects of the Trust are:

- to reduce the burden of cancer on the people of New Zealand
- to oversee the development of a national cancer control strategy for New Zealand
- to develop a concept for a national cancer control agency
- to consult with, inform and educate consumer and professional organisations and relevant Government and non-government organisations about the need for a national cancer control strategy
- to monitor the implementation of a national cancer control strategy.

## Current role of the Trust

The Trust remains committed to its objects, with a particular focus on monitoring implementation of the Cancer Control Strategy. The Trust's commitment to the Strategy includes ensuring that it endures and is recognised as having been developed by the cancer community.

As an independent advocate for cancer control with links to international expertise, the Trust also maintains a watching brief on strategic issues that have a potential impact upon a planned and integrated approach to reducing the burden of cancer in New Zealand.

### **Key Trust developments and activities since 2004**

Professor John Gavin, Executive Director of the Trust from 2001-2008, was for a three year term until May 2008 an inaugural member of the Cancer Control Council. Though not a representative of the Trust on the Council, he kept the Trustees informed of general issues of interest to the Trust. John was particularly active in developing mechanisms for monitoring implementation of the Action Plan and in developing a strategic plan for research related to cancer control.

In June 2008 John represented the Trust and the Council as a speaker at a Council-sponsored symposium on Planning and Priority Setting in Cancer Control. His paper, *How the Cancer Control Strategy Action Plan 2005-2010 was Developed*, critically reviewed the development of *The New Zealand Cancer Control Strategy* and its current Action Plan.

In April 2008 the Trustees appointed Betsy Marshall as its Executive Director, following the decision by John Gavin to step down from this role. Since that time Betsy has represented the Trust as an invited participant at various meetings, including several organised by the Cancer Control Council. Prior to the 2008 election, she also coordinated the Trust's efforts to urge all political party health spokespeople to acknowledge New Zealand's unique achievements in cancer control and to make a commitment to build upon these in the future.

During 2008 the Trust appointed two additional Trustees. They are Dr Julia Peters, Clinical Director of the Auckland Regional Public Health Service, and Associate Professor Graham Stevens, radiation oncologist at Auckland Hospital with a conjoint appointment at Auckland University.

Other recent developments include:

- the successful registration of the Trust as a charitable entity by the Charities Commission
- representation of the Trust by Associate Professor Brian Cox on the Steering Committee for the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Cancer Control Congress in Como, Italy in November 2009
- the successful application by the Executive Director to the Genesis Oncology Trust for funding assistance to attend the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Cancer Control Congress from 8-11 November 2009.

### **Recent papers and submissions**

In early 2009 the Trust wrote to the new Minister of Health, the Honourable Tony Ryall, summarising New Zealand's achievements in cancer control and stressing the need for momentum not to be lost. Among particular issues highlighted were:

- the need for the urgent review and revision of the Action Plan
- opportunities for more cost-effective approaches to the primary prevention of cancer, including alignment of these strategies with other chronic diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes

- the need for continuing management and monitoring mechanisms to ensure successive action plans are appropriately implemented.

In preparation for a scheduled meeting with the Minister of Health in April 2009, the Trust prepared a briefing paper outlining the current burden of cancer in New Zealand and priorities for action. In addition to the issues outlined above, the paper identified the need to:

- clarify the roles and relationships of cancer control agencies, including the Cancer Control Council
- strengthen national consistency in cancer diagnosis and treatment services.

As specifically requested by the Minister of Health, the Trust submitted a brief paper to him on the role and membership of the Cancer Control Council. With regard to membership, the paper advised that:

- Council leadership and membership should provide the expertise to reflect the role of the Council
- emphasis should be upon expertise rather than representation of stakeholders.

In response to a request for feedback from the Cancer Control Council, the Trust also developed the submission “The Status and Review of the Cancer Control Action Plan” in May 2009. The submission outlined the Trust’s views on why review and updating of the Action Plan is needed at this time, the risks of deferring this process and a manageable process by which revision could occur. The paper also highlighted that integral to the review process is the active involvement of those responsible for policy (Ministry of Health), service delivery (DHBs and NGOs), up-to-date evidence (academics and researchers) and ongoing monitoring and periodic review of implementation (Cancer Control Council).

## **Conclusion**

While significant achievements in cancer control have been made over the past ten years, New Zealand continues to be faced with a rising number of people with cancer and death rates for some types that are high by international standards. Since the development of the Cancer Control Strategy and Action Plan, the Trustees have remained committed to the Trust’s role as an independent advocate for cancer control and to offering their collective expertise, particularly regarding issues that could impact upon New Zealand’s ability to sustain a planned and integrated approach to reducing the burden of cancer in this country. Among the issues likely to be of concern to the Trust in the near future are the proposed major changes to the health system and the opportunities and risks they pose to cancer control in New Zealand.

Betsy Marshall  
Executive Director  
30 September 2009

## **Trustees of the New Zealand Cancer Control Trust (NZCCT)**

**Associate Professor Brian Cox** (NZCCT chair) is a full-time medical cancer epidemiologist, specialist in public health medicine and Director of the Hugh Adam Cancer Epidemiology Unit, Department of Preventive and Social Medicine, University of Otago. He has extensive knowledge and experience of screening for cancer and is chair of a working group of the International Cancer Screening Network (ICSN) of the National Cancer Institute, USA that co-ordinates the sharing of experience between 40 cancer screening programmes worldwide. He has just completed 6 months at the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and during a Senior Fellowship with the Agency, convened a meeting of international experts, including preparing a report on integrating HPV vaccination into screening programmes for cervical cancer. He also was a secretariat member for the recent IARC monograph on the relationship between low vitamin D and cancer. He was a member of the Cancer Control Steering Group that developed the Cancer Control Strategy and a member of the Cancer Control Taskforce that developed the Action Plan.

**Professor Chris Cunningham** (Ngati Raukawa, Toa Rangatira) is Director of the Research Centre for Maori Health & Development, Massey University at Wellington. He serves on a number of committees concerned with improving Māori health including the Quit Group and the Hepatitis Foundation of New Zealand. He is on the Advisory Boards of several national and international research programmes and is involved in research projects focusing on cancer with colleagues at Massey and Otago Universities. Previously a Director of the Hutt Valley District Health Board, he was also a member of the Cancer Control Steering Group.

**Professor John Gavin** is Emeritus Professor of Pathology at the University of Auckland School of Medicine and formerly Executive Director of the NZCCT. Professor Gavin, has been involved in academic quality audit of Universities in both Australia and New Zealand, is an honorary Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Pathologists, author of over 200 publications including three doctoral theses, and he was a member of the Cancer Control Steering Group and the Secretariat of the Cancer Control Taskforce. He is a Trustee of the Genesis Oncology Trust and chairs the Trust Grants Assessment Committee. He recently completed a three year term as a member of the New Zealand Cancer Control Council.

**Betsy Marshall** is the Executive Director of the NZCCT. She has served on numerous national advisory committees, Ministerial reviews and working parties relating to cancer screening and was the Cancer Society of New Zealand representative and witness at the Gisborne Cervical Screening Inquiry. Ms Marshall was a member of the Cancer Control Steering Group and of the secretariat of the Cancer Control Taskforce. In 2005 she was a plenary speaker on the development of the NZ Cancer Control Strategy at the first international Cancer Control Congress. She also is a Trustee of the Genesis Oncology Trust. In 2002 Ms Marshall was awarded the Queens Service Order for Community Service.

**Dr Julia Peters** is a public health physician and currently Clinical Director of the Auckland Regional Public Health Service. She has worked at all levels of the health sector and has substantial experience in implementing, leading and improving screening programmes at a national level. She led the establishment of the National Screening Unit in the wake of the Gisborne Inquiry. She has a strong interest in systems approaches to health issues, monitoring, evaluation and medical education.

**Associate Professor Graham Stevens** is a radiation oncologist at Auckland Hospital, with a conjoint appointment at Auckland University, reflecting significant teaching and research activities. As Chair of the Radiation Oncology Work Group (advisory to the MOH), he drafted documents on the utility of PET scanning and brachytherapy in NZ and the business case for PET in NZ. He was a chapter leader for the Australia New Zealand Melanoma Guideline and was instrumental in New Zealand's involvement in this venture. He was chair of the NZ Melanoma Reference Group for the guidelines and co-convenor of the highly successful NZ Melanoma Summit (2008). He has strong interests in health systems in cancer in NZ, with publications relating to lung cancer.