

Hi everyone

The weekend of 26 – 28 September 2008 was very action packed with the NZAHND annual Conference being held in Christchurch.

### **Solo Seal**

The weekend commenced with the Solo Seal Examination on the Friday night. Solo Seal is the highest accolade that you can achieve in Highland Dancing.

There were 4 candidates this year: Anna Millar, Jeana Wheeler, Katie Lawton and Jayden Withington. It was evident that all candidates had put in many hours of preparation for the big night. Everyone enjoyed the wonderful display of Highland Dancing.

I want to give special mention to Anna Millar who passed the Solo Seal Examination. Congratulations – it is an amazing achievement and we are all so proud of you!

### **Dance Development Course**

Saturday commenced with the Dance Development Course – a broad range of workshops were offered such as, Stretch and Strengthening, Boys movements, Stage Craft and Presentation and Foundation movements.

The main workshop of the day was a presentation by Julie Wylie, on the Highland Dancing preschool programme that has been developed by Julie Wylie and the Technical Committee. It was amusing to watch all of us (from aged 14 to 60+) participate by singing and doing hand movements to children's music.

The Course then concluded with two further workshops of judging up-skilling and a practical dance session for those that are young enough still to dance.

Thank you to the Technical Committee for running such a professional day and ensuring that there were a broad range of workshops.

### **Dinner Function**

Saturday night was the annual function. The night commenced with formal presentations of the diplomas to all the dancers that had completed their examinations.

To all those that received diplomas, you have put many years of hard work into sitting your exams and you should be proud of such an amazing achievement. I am sure we will see some of you in the future perform in Solo Seal.

To those that are nearly finishing their exams – you should definitely consider travelling to Conference to receive your diploma – it is a special night for your family and dancing friends to recognise what you have achieved.

The formal presentations then continued with the Bar presentations. These presentations recognise that someone has been a member of the Academy for a certain number of years. This year was a very special year, as it was the first time someone has been a member of the Academy for 60 years. And this year, there were 2 recipients. A special congratulations to Mrs Paton and Mrs Hills on achieving your 60 year Bar. You have both contributed so much to highland dancing over the years and I am sure you are an inspiration to the younger members.

Following the formal presentations, background music was played on the keyboard while we ate our dinner. This was followed by a night of dancing to a Band and then to the Pipes. The Diploma girls performed a Reel O'Tulloch, and then the boys (I won't say how old they are) performed a Boys Jig. I think the number of people up on the dance floor showed how much everyone enjoyed the night.

### **Youth Forum**

Sunday morning commenced with the Youth Forum – thanks to all those that made the effort to get out of bed, especially given day light saving and the late night before. See my Youth Forum Report for a summary of the issues discussed at the Youth Forum. It was great to see so many of you participate during this Forum – you all have such innovative ideas.

Make sure you also check out the photos of our jig dress fashion parade.

### **AGM**

Following the Youth Forum, the formal AGM commenced, this was a new experience for some of junior members who had never been to Conference before. It allowed them to watch and learn how a formal AGM is run.

This years annual Conference was very successful – thank you to the Balmoral Club, Executive and Technical Committees for organising such a great weekend.

Finally, if any youth member has anything that they would like to draw to my attention or even just to say hi, then please feel free to **email** me. I would love to hear from you.

Kim