

NZMSA: Unite, Empower, and Represent

Kieran Bunn

University of Otago, Wellington

Kieran Bunn is a final year medical student based in Palmerston North and the 2017 New Zealand Medical Students' Association President. He is a previous President of the Wellington Medical Students' Association, and has completed a BMedSc(Hons).

We are fast approaching the section of the year where nostalgia sets in. We are far enough along that the goals that we never got round to have faded (I was definitely going to get both more exercise and sleep, neither of which, in a surprising twist, happened) and instead, our achievements start to loom out of the mists of memory. 2017 really has been an excellent year for NZMSA. We are here to unite, empower, and represent the medical students of Aotearoa, and in the last 12 months we have definitely scored a hat-trick.

Our three unifying pillars have been our main events for the year: the conference in Tauranga, the Clinical Leadership Forum (CLF) and Sports Exchange in Christchurch. As always, these events proved popular, so much so that the conference and CLF both received far more applications than there were available positions. The anticipation paid off, as both were superb events to simultaneously reach inward and get to know your future colleagues, and outwards towards poetry, music, and research which you may have lost track of during medical school. The teams that organised these three events did an outstanding job.

On the theme of unity, NZMSA also gained a closer partnership with Te Oranga. This was formalised through a memorandum of understanding, based on the principles of Te Tiriti, which will provide a framework for our two organisations to collaborate. It has already proved valuable, with the attendance rate for Māori students at our events higher than in previous years, and with NZMSA and Te Oranga running a powerful and unified campaign on the issue of student loan access. This is the culmination of excellent work from both Te Oranga and NZMSA, and it is one of the many steps NZMSA has, and will take to meet our obligations under Te Tiriti and unlock the potential that this entails.

While we are here to represent you, there is no way that NZMSA could have the capacity to speak for all of you, which is why we assist you in speaking for yourself. This year in part we did so by supporting the Land of the Long White Coat podcast from Joshua Smith, which gives advice on how to navigate the clinical realm, and where there be dragons to avoid. We also worked with Victoria Catherwood who created a documentary on the use of medical cannabis, which aims to educate medical students on its potential uses. These are just two examples amongst the many other small ways we supported individual voices.

There were two broad activities NZMSA undertook to upskill students: the focus months, one on the election and one on careers. The latter was about getting the resources to you so that you can start thinking about what you want to be when your legs evolve and you climb forth from medical school ocean to the land of clinical medicine. The former was in keeping with the drive from the New Zealand University Students' Association, to promote youth voting, but with our spin focusing on the health policies. Taking a tangent from the focus months and swerving into a parallel project, we have also been an active contributor to the

Choosing Wisely Campaign which aims to make you think about what tests and procedures are being done, and provide you with the tools to question or explain why these are happening.

Finally, I want to touch on representation in the field of wider health advocacy. We have spoken out about climate change, healthy housing, and vaccines. We have also had a focus on the lifetime limit on student loans, which we believe is an unjust, wasteful, and needless policy when it prevents you from finishing your medical degree. At the time of writing we are still waiting on the special votes to be counted, which may, due to our work in getting the Māori Party, NZ First, Labour, and the Greens to all adopt policies that would enable you to finish, resolve this problem. However, they may not, and I have no doubt that, if needed, next year's team will continue this campaign.

NZMSA only exists for you, and because of you, and I have had a delightful time being a part of this organisation. For those of you who have a break approaching I hope it is marvellous, for those who are heading into the world, I urge you to consider joining your professional body, the New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA), and your union the New Zealand Resident Doctors' Association (NZRDA). Like us, they will be there for you, and the most important realisation I have come to from my time in NZMSA is the incredible value of being united, empowered, and represented.

Conflict of interest: NZMSA President

Correspondence: Kieran Bunn, president@nzmsa.org.nz