

## National Membership

The idea of a National Membership was presented at the FFNZ National Gathering.

The idea for this came from the following concerns:

- We have lost six clubs in the last two years, and are now down to 15 clubs from our heyday of 25. While two of our clubs recently combined with other clubs, most closed completely and those members were lost to Friendship Force altogether.
- Up until now it has only been possible to join Friendship Force in NZ if there is a club in your town or city. That means we are missing out on a lot of potential members.
- Results of the club survey confirmed that while there is still enthusiasm amongst members for keeping clubs going at a social level, there is increasing difficulty in finding both Club leaders and coordinators for journeys.
- Our aging membership (80% in the 70+ age group) means it is harder to attract younger members to our clubs. Also club membership doesn't seem to have the same appeal to the next generation as it did to the current one.

How a National Membership could work:

- Existing strong clubs would continue to operate as they always have, and can continue to apply for their own inward and outward journeys if they so wish.
- When a club is failing through lack of leadership, but the members want to stay involved in FF, they can opt to become National Members and pay their FFI affiliation fees through FFNZ. They can then continue to meet socially but without the need for formal leadership. The members can take full advantage of all FFI offers including applying for domestic and international journeys, and if there are enough members in their area to offer hosting to incoming groups, then they can apply to do so. (This new type of grouping could perhaps be called a 'Friendship Force cluster'.)
- New members in any part of NZ can apply to join FFI through a National Membership, and if enough members in one area join independently, they could form their own cluster for hosting purposes.
- New National members would pay their FFI affiliation fees through the National account, which would be passed on to FFI.
- The National Membership would be administered by the FRs and perhaps other members who are willing to get involved at that level.
- Challenges include indoctrinating new members into the FF culture. This can be overcome with education and personal contact or meeting through Zoom. Bobbie Mulholland is putting together a series of videos about FFI that will help educate prospective new members.
- The idea of NZ-wide inward and outward journeys fits into this new model. FRs Heather Ponder and Jan Harrison will be presenting on this topic.

Feedback from discussion group participants:

- The suggested name 'Friendship Force Aotearoa' did not find universal acceptance, and was dropped in favour of 'National Membership'.

- There was initial concern that this scheme could encourage clubs to close as an easy option.
- There could be a problem with members who do not understand the FF culture.
- There could be inward hosting challenges.
- However, reasons for liking the idea included:
  - It has the potential to build FFNZ at a time when we desperately need to increase membership.
  - The example of the highly successful Motor Caravan Association was held up as a model of how a national membership can work.
  - It gives members in failing clubs another option to continue being part of FFI and FFNZ, so we don't lose those members altogether.
  - The new model will fit in well with [my.friendshipforce.org](http://my.friendshipforce.org).
  - New members can connect to existing clubs if they wish, and we can hold occasional Zoom meetings with National members to keep them in touch with FF developments.
  - We have the resources and funding through the Domestic Fund to advertise for new members, and FR Graham Wigley will be outlining ideas for a marketing drive.
  - Using journeys for recruitment will be a key focus of attracting new members.

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