

The Friends of the Library, as it was known then was set up in the late 1980s. Rosalie Blake, then Head Librarian can recall Cr Tony Ryder putting \$10 on the table saying that he wanted to be the first Friend. The name was changed to the Friends of the Horowhenua Libraries in 1994. The purpose of the Friends in those early days was to support the library and its staff to show the council of the day how much the library meant to the users.

In 1998 the then Chairman, Robin Brassington was instrumental in the Friends becoming an incorporated society, mainly because of the large sums of money being handled. Local solicitor Roger Downey helped draw up a constitution.

Bringing the importance of the library to the council was a continuing focus for the Friends. In 2000 there was a major campaign "Hands Up for the Library" which raised considerable public awareness towards the need to extend the library in Levin. A 12 metre-long petition of handprints was carried across Bath Street to the council by a large number of children. However, the funds available then were directed instead towards other projects.

By 2006 plans were underway to create a new library in Levin with the purchase of the Countdown building. The Friends launched a major fundraising campaign raising \$50 000 used to purchase the armchairs in Te Takere.

The Friends of the Horowhenua Libraries was registered as charitable entity in May 2008. In 2012 the Friends was honoured by the council with a civic award. By this stage Te Takere was completed and the award acknowledged the considerable contribution from the Friends.

From 1997 the library had been run by Te Horowhenua Trust. However, in 2016 the council decided to dissolve the trust and to take the library back as a council operation. This was a difficult time for all concerned, and for a time it threatened the continuing existence of the Friends. However, the need for financial and other support for the libraries and their staff is as great as ever.

The Friends of the Horowhenua Libraries is in great heart. We still have a huge number of volunteers assisting at our libraries mending and processing books, shelving and tidying, and delivering books to the housebound. The monthly morning teas are proving very popular. They provide an opportunity for members and volunteers to meet. Fundraising is a major part of the work with twice yearly book sales, an annual bridge tournament and various other one-off activities such as the successful "Grandmothers' Secrets" event held in 2017. The money raised supports the large print and audio books, books for babies, digitising local papers for the "Papers Past" project, sponsoring library events at Te Takere, providing equipment for the Shannon Library, and equipment for the children's area of Te Awahou Nieuwe Stroom at Foxton.