

Annual Report ITANZ 2006 – 2007

It is with great pleasure that I am once again reporting on the activities of myself and ITANZ (Intersex Trust Aotearoa New Zealand) in this past year.

A year of milestone events: the first and most significant has been our decision to move the Trust out of recess where it has been since 2000. This action has only been possible, due to renewed interest and support in the Trust its past work and achievements, as well as its potential for the future, here in New Zealand and overseas.

A catalyst was my being invited to attend the American 2006 premier in Austin Texas of Kirsty Mac Donald's award winning NZ Documentary film Black and White. The film narrates the collaboration of myself and photographer Rebecca Swan in her beautiful book photographic essay Assume Nothing which has so powerfully brought the issues of intersex, gender diversity to an international audience.

Then, subsequently being able to attend and present at the most significant Intersex Medical Conference of the last decade (GLMA – San Francisco) where for the first time ever intersex issues were one of the main focus areas. Reflecting on the conference and its great complexity reinforces for me the view that has been forming over the last few years. Intersex remains an issue that most people struggle with, it continues to be shrouded in negativity, shame, secrecy, stigma, and while some things have changed, much needs to still be done. It is my belief that we will not get real change until the issue has an informed awareness in mainstream society. We will do that through education and training and continuing the opportunities to present intersex, healthy vibrant intersex images and intersex issues in the media in ways that inform, diminish, destroy confront old myths and fears.

My being invited onto the Advisory Board of Advocates for Informed Choice, the worlds first Trust set up to look after Intersex children and the Law. I first met Anne Tamar-Mattis, the Trusts founder in 1996 at the inaugural gathering/retreat of Intersex People, Activists, Historians and Educators in California.

Having for the first time our own web site www.ianz.org.nz thanks to the generous gifting of two new supporters Drew Mackenzie and her partner Anthony. The web site has generated a new exposure and interest in our work and resulted in increasing requests for information, speaking engagements and training.

Then in March 2007 a follow up trip to Tasmania Australia where I was able to continue Intersex Educational Training work that first started in 2000.

Participating in the Human Rights Commission's Transgender Enquiry.

The visit to New Zealand in April this year of one of the worlds for most experts in Intersex issues Professor Milton Diamond, my being able to travel around New Zealand and speak with him. Trustee, Dr Margaret Sparrow hosting a Grand Round Lecture by Professor Diamond at the Wellington Medical School. Professor Diamond invited to and agreeing to support the aims and objectives of ITANZ.

The re launch of the trust at a wonderful event at the Paramount Picture theatre where Black and White had a repeat sellout showing at the Real Queer film festival.

Attending this years Counselors Association conference in Dunedin as a key note speaker.

And finally for me personally being made redundant from the place I have worked earned my primary living for the past eight years as an educator trainer. Most of you know that my work for the trust has had to be after hours and or sneaked into holidays. Being made redundant has forced me to a major life rethink focus.

I am currently the only person in the world who is intersex, a trained teacher, an educator and a qualified counselor with expertise in the field of gender and sexuality. It seems to me I need to find a way to fund this work I am skilled and have a desire to do! The treatment of intersex children continues to be inconsistent; much of what is done continues to be informed by normative practices that reinforce secrecy and shame. We must, I believe work to change the shame and obtain what Professor Diamond calls securing an **open future** for all intersex children.

We have multiple generations of intersex people who have grown up in situations that have not always contributed to healthy senses of self.

We need effective health care models for all of us with variant (intersex) bodies.

We need models that are respectful and informed.

We need professionals who can recognize damage and trauma from the past and work with us to secure the best health options for the future.

The bulk of the educational and training work of the last seven years has been at conferences and overseas venues where I have been invited and costs associated with attending paid for by the conference or sponsors.

There is both a need and an opportunity to do the work on a more full time, supported and organised basis. I would see the trust enabling the funding and structure to continue developing organised professional training and education programs and then working to build a capacity (more than me!) both here in Aotearoa, New Zealand, Australia and then the wider Pacific.

As I look forward, the last ten years has given us a wonderful platform on which to build, I see:

- A reinvigorated trust board.
- Us adjusting our governance and reporting structure to meet the new legal requirements for not for profit Trusts.
- Moving our finances away from survival mode into something that is viable and sustainable.
- Making a real contribution to the planet where difference is valued and appreciated and the birth of an intersex child is no longer seen as something to hide and be ashamed of.
- Where medical treatment and support nurtures open futures and repairs damage from the past.

To all who have contributed, inspired, supported over the past year, thank you so much. Without you this inspiring moving forward would not be happening.

Arohanui

Mani B Mitchell (CEO ITANZ)