

NZOSS Presidents Report

Rachel Hamilton-Williams

4th August 2011

Thank you to the committee and members for having me as the president of NZOSS this year. In particular for their support I'd like to thank Don Christie & Peter Harrison. I haven't been able to put as much into the job as I'd anticipated when I stood for the role, so my apologies for that, sometimes life just gets in the way.

Good luck with the next year, and I look forward to getting involved again when time permits.

A rundown on issues and achievements.

Membership

A shaky start to the year on the OS Chat list, with a bit of fallout and fall off of membership associated with it. I don't think we've recovered those members. Hopefully the new members system will mean we remind people to renew their membership annually, we can move forward with a membership drive converting "chat members" into financial members, and welcome corporate members.

Website

New website went live in time for the NZOSA Awards. It's generally seemed to go well. The new membership module went in before EOFY. Thanks to Dave & Egressive for all their work in some fairly trying circumstances.

NZOSS Awards

Catalyst outdid themselves organising the awards, lots of great projects and some really difficult judging decisions were made. It was a great evening, and a good opportunity to meet some of the committee & members in person.

Software Freedom Day

Was a good day/week with lots of participation, the Society assisted the organisation and effectively provided a loan and financial support.

Liason with Standards New Zealand

Matthew Holloway has been representing NZOSS on the Standards review group to mirror the work of the ISO/IEC Committee (JTC1) on Information Technology and regularly reporting. Some suggestions for other member organisations to co-opt were made.

Patents

Some battles have been won, but it appears the war continues. Peter Harrison does sterling work in this area. The news that Microsoft have withdrawn their XML Office patents in 30 countries is down to his and other NZOSS members' work.

Also, we continue to campaign hard to make sure the Patent Bill is passed with computer programs covered by an exclusion. There has been a big push back by the IP law community

and multinationals that has needed to be countered. We acknowledge the role that other organisations and businesses have had, including the NZCS and InternetNZ.

Earthquakes

Our sympathy went out to Christchurch businesses and members this year, and the February earthquake in particular was very disruptive. We passed along information on various support initiatives and encouraged members to give help where they could. That E-gressive has managed a “business as usual” service for the website & extra development has been very much appreciated.

Many of the earthquake support initiatives used Open Source Software and the community got some credit for that.

Government Procurement Policy

The Ministry of Economic Development & Department of Internal Affairs have had All of Government Procurement Policy review/implementations this year. Don Christie has been our Government Liason.

NZOSS Journal

There was a great deal of work done to get an NZOSS Journal focused on all things “open” off the ground. Unfortunately work commitments have meant that it hasn't quite managed to make it out to the public.

Labour Party Policy

There is an ongoing opportunity to educate the Labour Party IT spokesperson Claire Curran and other Labour Party Ministers on the importance of Open Source, of fair procurement policies, and the other elements that go into an environment that fosters a diversity of NZ business's. Don and I have met with Claire several times and she is open to being given information around procurement in particular.

Personal thoughts for next year:

I'm not sure if it was the Christmas break, or the disruption caused by the CHCH earthquakes to things like our website upgrade programme, but it seemed like we were very slow getting back into it in 2011. 2010 had a lot going on, and the NZOSS awards were very inspiring, but that momentum didn't carry through into this year.

Other organisations I'm involved with have their EOFY at the end of the calendar year, and so have their AGM in February or March. It works for them as a way to make sure the year gets off to a good kickstart.

There is some angst displayed from time to time about a lack of financial members to the society. While it would certainly be good to increase our pool of members so that there are more people to help out on committee, and opening up opportunities to do more outreach work etc, I think that while we have a strong Open Chat group we shouldn't be too dispondent.

Rachel