



Wairarapa Branch, NZ Institute of International Affairs.

Annual Report, 2024

17 April 2025

The Wairarapa Branch enjoyed a busy year during 2024. We were able to attract a good range of speakers, and our social highlight was the successful fund raiser in conjunction with the NZ International Film Festival.

At the end of the year our members totalled 48, including two life members but we also have 27 affiliates bringing a total of 75. These numbers are down on previous years, most likely reflecting the constraints of fixed incomes on many of those interested in our Branch. (However it was encouraging that our first meeting of the 2025 year attracted in total 92 people. This reflects in part the wider advertising undertaken by members on our new committee.)

At this time last year we learned of the death of Gerald Hensley, a long-time member and supporter of our Branch. Perhaps I can best refer members and readers to his Kahu Despatches (kahudespatches.nz) a delightful blog containing writing, speeches and eulogies of his life. He was a great New Zealander and it was a privilege to know him.

The previous AGM (held in April 2024) resulted in a major change to the Branch committee, and the new committee took over a well-run and well-documented organisation. Our regular meeting place continues to be 'Rosewood' in Masterton, which has a very good public meeting room, and we are indebted to David and Lynette Dewes for making their facilities available to us.

Similarly our local newspaper continues to be willing to run an appropriate feature article each month, before our meeting, advising their readers of the speaker and the topic. The paper, the MidWeek, is now a part of the Stuff stable, but although the deadlines have changed, the local staff continue to be accommodating for our articles.

During 2024 we had three local speakers: Geoff Walker, Andrew Wright, and Martin Harvey. Our members particularly appreciated talks that were a little less academic and underlined the speaker's personal experiences.

None the less, the diplomats we invited (from Turkey, the UK and Australia) gave very good talks and each proved to be personable and compelling. The Turkish Ambassador generously gave the Branch two books for our library and, very tastefully, a number of boxes of genuine Turkish Delight to accompany our coffee!

Our Committee makes a point of meeting each of guest speakers before the meeting and hosting them to a light dinner. We regularly use Curry Twist, an Indian-themed restaurant which is in walking distance of our meeting venue. (This was an issue one evening, when a heavy downpour began just as we finished dinner and headed to Rosewood!) Committee members also took over the Chair's duties for two meetings when I was out of town.

The social highlight of our year was our Branch fund raiser in August, held at the local Regent 3 theatre, in conjunction with the NZIFF. The light-hearted drama "The Monk and the Gun" about the arrival of democracy in Bhutan, conveyed a strong underlying message within the story of a naïve young monk being sent out to buy a gun (apparently to protect the monastery). We filled the theatre, enjoyed a wine and cheese before the screening, and came away with a new perspective of life in rural Bhutan. The successful evening was made possible by the NZ International Film Festival and the management of the Regent 3 theatre.

In summary, the Wairarapa Branch is in good shape, is guided by an enthusiastic committee, and can look back on a very satisfactory year.

Note for Branch AGM: This year (2025) has begun well, with strong attendance at our first two meetings. Most of our committee are willing to remain on the Branch committee, and I appreciate their support and contributions. But please note that we are also happy to accept new members should they be nominated.

Of note on March 25th, I was invited to speak to the local Rotary Club about the NZIIA and the relevance of International Affairs to the wider public. The talk was well received and we gained 3 new members from this. I am happy to repeat that talk if you are aware of other clubs that might appreciate our message.

As Chairman I am trying to better manage my workload and I appreciate the willingness of committee members to take on some of those tasks – of which the major one is finding and arranging speakers.

Nonetheless, I am encouraged by the good start to this year, and I appreciate the support to our Branch of all our members.

NZIIA Wairarapa Branch, Annual Summary 2024

Date	Title	Speaker
22 February 2024	<i>To Uganda and Back</i>	Geoff Walker, Masterton
21 March	<i>Crucial April Elections in the Solomon Islands.</i>	Professor Jon Fraenkel (Professor of Comparative Politics in the School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations at Victoria University of Wellington).
18 April	<i>Israel and the West Bank – a personal view</i>	Andrew Wright, Greytown
16 May	<i>Talking Turkey</i>	Her Excellency Mrs Omur Unsay, Ambassador for the Republic of Turkey

20 June *Global Britain!* Mr John Pearson, United Kingdom Deputy High Commissioner

18 July *The Solomons, The South Pacific and New Zealand* Dr Anna Powles
(Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Defence and Security Studies at Massey University)

22 August : *The Monk and the Gun* (Bhutan) Film Fundraiser

19 September *Our relationship with Canada* Martin Harvey
(Recent New Zealand High Commissioner to Canada)

17 October *The Trans-Tasman relationship* Her Excellency Harinder Sidhu AM

21 November *The UN – does it have a future?* Colin Keating
(Former diplomat, public service Chief Executive, and practising lawyer).

2025:

25 February: *Jewish not Zionist; my experiences from Gaza to NZ.* Marilyn Garson

20 March: *NZ and Europe in unsettled times.* Rod Harris (MFAT)

17 April *'The new tariff war'* - Alan Emerson