

Social media drives 'intense' campaign

AN "INTENSE" campaign, with six candidates vying for the presidency, has resulted in the ousting of incumbent Marion Guy who lost to Wellington mental health nurse Grant Brookes by 430 votes.

"I have never been through an election like this one," said Guy, who has been president three times in the past 10 years. "It was a departure from the usual and an extremely intense campaign in some respects."

After a hard-hitting campaign involving social media, Brookes won 2275 votes to Guy's 1845, trailed by Melinda Jordan with 690; Margaret O'Connor with 620; Mairi Lucas with 414 and Shane Pleasance with 399.

The campaign, which was run externally for the first time by electionz.com with an online voting system, drew almost double the number of voters than the last election – 6263 of the organisation's 45,976 members, compared to 3731 (of 43,863) in 2012. However, this was still only just over 13 per cent of members, and far fewer than the nearly 20 per cent of members who voted in the 2001 presidential election when Jane O'Malley was elected.

Electionz.com chief returning officer Warwick Lampp, who ran this year's election, said it was a "very competitive" campaign with an incumbent facing strong challengers.

Complaints over candidates allegedly misusing their "normal day-to-day roles" and employer resources to get out and talk to members about their campaign for presidency, led to "some robust discussions with some candidates about their conduct", Lampp said.

It was also the first time social media

had featured strongly in the presidential campaign, which also raised a few issues, he said.

Brookes, who was a member of this year's district health boards' multi-



Chief executive Memo Musa

employer collective agreement negotiating team, said he was pleased he could deliver for all the members who supported him. He believed it was the combination of industrial and professional leadership he offered which drew the votes. He says he will be standing by his pledge to only accept a staff nurse pay rate by donating the difference back to NZNO.

"My preference, so I don't give any suggestion the role is worth less than the previous president has received, would be to accept the full salary and donate back the difference between my current staff nurse pay rate and the presidential pay rate."

This would avoid the suggestion the role was not worth its current salary of \$96,113.

"I don't want to poison the chalice for the next person, or for that matter, the kaiwhaka-haere who gets the same pay, to suggest she's not worth that. I want to do it, so membership fees are not used on my salary. It's just a matter of conscience, rather than saying the role is not worth that."

As for the gender issue – Brookes is now one of two male leaders of an organisation comprising more than 90 percent women – he acknowledges this is an issue for some.

"It doesn't seem to be a big issue with



Former president Marion Guy

members but I am aware it is potentially an issue," said Brookes, who re-iterated that his childhood – raised by a single mother in Dunedin in the 1970s – was immersed in women's liberation.

Having already been busy visiting members in Whanganui, New Plymouth, Hastings and Napier, he is planning to reach Northland, Southland, West Coast and Bay of Plenty by year's end. The most common issues people faced continued to be understaffing, high workloads, unpaid overtime and missed breaks, he said.

Brookes will be based in NZNO's national office in Wellington and formally took up his position at NZNO's AGM this month.

Guy said after a long settling-in period, following a new constitution and bicultural partnership model in 2013, she was very disappointed not to be able to complete work currently underway with regional councils and the colleges and sections, looking at their direction and fit within NZNO.

"I would have liked more time," she told



New NZNO president Grant Brookes

Kai Tiaki Nursing New Zealand. "I have no idea what I'll do. I was hoping for another three years, which would have cemented the work I had started. I feel like I just got started and now that opportunity has been lost."

She did not want to comment on the campaign, except to say "there is a review process in place with the board of directors".

It was the first NZNO presidential campaign for chief executive Memo Musa, who said it was great to see so many candidates passionate about NZNO and what it stood for. "I am really happy with the boost in voter numbers, which almost doubled. This is thanks, in part, to a combination of member engagement, participation, and the postal and e-voting run by electionz.com."

The approach of electionz.com was "helpful and pragmatic" and brought independence into the running of the election process, he said.

Election debrief in October

Musa said the board would be meeting Lampp in October to discuss the election "so we can be better prepared for the next elections".

Musa added he was "acutely aware" of the issue of having two male leaders in the top operational and governance roles in an organisation serving a workforce where approximately 93 percent of nurses and most nurse leaders were female.

"What is important to me is providing leadership and engaging with others to address gender equality issues, women's empowerment, and agendas that advance nursing and employment equity issues."

Newly elected vice-president Rosemary Minto, Tauranga nurse practitioner and inaugural chair of NZNO's college of primary health care nurses, said she hoped to raise NZNO's professional profile, not only among nurses, but also government departments and legislators. Minto replaces Karen Naylor, who did not stand for re-election. •