



8 June 2018

## **Re: Closure of the Christchurch Vegetarian Centre (CVC) – Further Information**

Dear Member

Following our letter last week letting you know of the probable closure of our Christchurch Branch, we'd like to thank those who got in touch with us. It was very helpful to know what the main concerns and questions are and we'd like to take this opportunity to answer those.

### **Closure on 30 June 2018**

There were no objections to dissolving the Christchurch Branch, so this will go ahead at the end of our financial year on 30 June.

### **How is this process determined?**

As a membership-based society, the NZVS is answerable to its members. It is an incorporated society and a registered charity, and as such is governed by the Charities Commission and its own constitution. The dissolution of the Christchurch branch will strictly follow the rules governing it.

### **How does the NZVS structure work?**

The NZ Vegetarian Society is structured through a National Executive Committee with branches in Wellington and Christchurch. These branches hold their own accounts, receive part of the membership fees paid by their local members and manage NZVS events in their cities. The Christchurch Branch has also enjoyed charitable status via the NZ Vegetarian Society, and has received funding from the NZ Vegetarian Society not only in the form of membership funds but also lump sum contributions, since its formation.

### **Why were Christchurch members not informed before now?**

We apologise for the lack of consultation with our members. Unfortunately the process hasn't been in our full control. The CVC committee voted to close the branch and we were then informed in person at our national committee meeting the following week.

This decision should have been made after consultation with Christchurch members and the National Executive Committee. The decision wasn't expected and it took some time to look at the options and the legal requirements of closure of this branch, as it is a registered charity in itself.



### **Why did the CVC Committee decide to leave the NZVS?**

When we became aware that the CVC committee was considering a name change and rebrand, we advised the CVC committee that their constitution does not allow a name change, and that to do so would also mean the branch was no longer representative of the NZVS, which is a Vegetarian (including vegans) Society. If the branch was not representative of us, it would lose its charitable status and NZVS financial backing.

The CVC committee took this into consideration and voted to close the branch and form a new organisation called the Christchurch Vegan Society (CVS).

### **Why can't the CVC change its name to Christchurch Vegan Centre?**

This cannot be done for two reasons:

1. The constitutions of NZVS and the Christchurch Branch do not allow it.
2. The membership of the NZ Vegetarian Society and the Christchurch Branch is made up of both vegetarians and vegans. This name would exclude a large portion of those members.

The NZVS believes a vegetarian organisation is effective because among other reasons, many perceive it as easier to achieve, and therefore are more likely to take that step, albeit sometimes as a step on the way to veganism.

### **What's so bad about calling it vegan?**

Nothing, except our membership is made up of vegans, vegetarians and non-vegetarian supporters. Naming our branch "Vegan" specifically excludes the majority of our members. Over 50% of our members are vegetarian, while about 30% new members are vegan.

As an organisation, though we are strongly supportive of veganism, we are also strongly supportive of vegetarians and everyone on the veg~n path. Our name needs to reflect this. And of course, even if we wanted to, there is already a Vegan Society in NZ.

### **Why can't you change your name to the "NZ Vegetarian and Vegan Society"?**

In some ways we'd like to, but we found in our rebranding process a few years back that "vegetarian" is already a very long word in a logo. Also, as we've said before, vegans are vegetarians so our name includes everyone and we've made a concerted effort to ensure everyone knows they're included, hence the use of the term "veg~n".

### **Conflict of Interest**

With the CVC Committee being the same as the CVS Committee, with the same President, there has been a serious conflict of interest during this process. We've tried to manage that as best we can though it has created some difficulties.



### **Why can't the CVC keep its assets for the new CVS?**

The assets held by the CVC have been raised under the NZ Vegetarian Society Christchurch Branch name. They have mostly been raised in one of four ways:

- Capitation portion of NZVS Membership subs from Christchurch members
- Lump sum payments from the NZVS
- Grants gained through the CVC's charitable status (made possible from being a branch of the NZVS)
- Fundraising events and activities by volunteers

The CVC Constitution clearly states: WINDING UP OR DISSOLUTION:

Clause 13 ((2) In the event of the winding up or dissolution of the Branch:

- (a) The Branch's debts, costs and liabilities shall be paid;
- (b) No distribution may be made to any Member;
- (c) The remaining money and any other assets shall be forwarded to the National Society Executive Committee to be used in the application and promotion of the objects of the National Society.

This means that to simply gift the money to a new organisation is not lawful. Additionally, in this case, the CVS is not a registered charity, meaning there are no systems for accountability at this stage.

### **What about the CVS?**

In respect for the good work the CVC has done for the Christchurch vegetarian community over the years, and the work they have put into raising some of their funds, and also in the interests of maintaining a co-operative relationship with them, we have tried in good faith to help them in several ways:

- Sponsoring the 2018 Vegan Expo by paying \$22,000 towards venue hire and management.
- Offering an interest-free loan to provide cash flow during their set-up period.
- Offering to consider other support (for things in line with our aims) once the CVS is a registered charity.

### **Why close the Christchurch Branch rather than installing a new committee?**

This option was considered and if there had been objections to closing the branch after our recent letter we would have had a Special General Meeting to decide how to move forward.

We felt that if there was an organisation in Christchurch providing the social events that the CVS intend to continue, having a strong branch of our own would simply duplicate what was already being done and potentially create division within the Christchurch veg~n community.



This wouldn't be good for the cause. We have volunteers in Christchurch who are willing to hold stalls and some additional social events.

They will need help though so please, *if you're interested in volunteering for us, let us know!*

**What will happen with Christchurch membership fees now?**

As always, some will go towards our veg~n advocacy, your magazine and Christchurch events.

**Are Christchurch members still going to be represented in Christchurch?**

Absolutely. Graham French, who was a long-standing vice-president of the CVC for many years, is your local contact. Graham intends to hold vegetarian-friendly pot-lucks and movie nights and also organise NZVS stalls at local events. He can be contacted via (03) 389 7822 or at [g.ffrench@xtra.co.nz](mailto:g.ffrench@xtra.co.nz). (Note: To ensure everyone is included, NZVS events are usually vegan so everyone can eat everything.)

Closure of the Christchurch Branch does not preclude a new representative group of the NZVS being formed in the future. If Christchurch needs that, we can indeed set one up.

**So why belong to the NZVS if the Christchurch branch is now closed?**

Although local events are extremely valuable in providing both a community and support for veg~ns, the NZVS is a national organisation and as such keeps the big picture in mind.

Along with providing events and stalls throughout NZ, the NZVS also provides nutritional advice and information, makes government submissions, runs a school competition to get young people thinking about the impact of their choices, runs the Vegetarian Society Approved product certification, and is soon to launch its own Vegan Certification programme, and more.

Membership donations from Christchurch members, which were previously received by the Christchurch Branch for use in providing events and other activities for the community, will still be available to be used for the benefit of Christchurch veg~ns.

The Executive Committee of the NZVS thanks all Christchurch Branch committee members over the years for their hard work on behalf of the NZVS and veg~nism, and wishes the Christchurch Vegan Society all the best as we all move forward working towards a kinder, healthier world.

*Executive Committee  
NZ Vegetarian Society*