

R User Group Report to the 2017 AGM

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General Update

Membership number for the Auckland and Wellington R users group has been increasing steadily. Wellington has 282 members as of December and about 30-50 members are regularly attending our talks. Auckland has 974 members and has recruited two more volunteers this year to help with organising meetings.

NZSA, Auckland University, MBIE and Harmonic Analytics have continued to provide sponsorship to support R users group activities.

Richard Penny (NZSA CPD subcommittee) and Shirley Wu (R users group representative) have exchanged emails recently about joining forces to offer introductory R training to the data science community. Both the Auckland and Wellington R groups are very keen on this idea and will work with the NZSA CPD committee to progress this further.

Auckland R Users Group

The highlight for Auckland this year was having Hadley Wickham presented to the group about 'Expressing yourself with R'. Associate Professor Ross Ihaka was also invited to give a talk, Ross had to decline the invitation due to a very busy schedule.

Wellington R Users Group

Wellington has had an excellent line-up of speakers this year, recent meetup topics include deep learning, practical big data issues and R Shiny. The highlight for this year was having Peter Ellis (ex MBIE Manager Sector Trends) talked to the group about his work on forecasting the NZ 2017 General Election using R and Stan in August. Most of the Wellington talks can be found from our YouTube channel 'Wellington R Users Group' (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCShfawUp5QCly3mZTu7ptwA>).

We conducted a survey in July this year to help better understand membership profile, preferred meeting formats and topics of interest. Dealing with big data in R was the most requested topic, followed closely by R Shiny. Members were also interested in interactive plots, non-R related data analysis work (i.e. topics with a statistical computing lens in general) and integration between R and other tools or databases.