

Review: "Couch Stories"

Date: 7/03/14

Venue: Old St Johns

Reviewed by: Adrienne Matthews

"Couch Stories", created by locals Jo Firestone and Ro Cambridge, is Nelson's own brand of 'Moth' storytelling, a movement begun by American George Dawes Green in 1997 to celebrate the simple joy of telling stories. This particular edition allowed a range of current and ex local body/national politicians to talk about 'Anything but Politics'.

Each storyteller received a five minute slot and was required to talk about their own experience without notes or props.

MP Chris Hipkins presented a hilarious tale of unfortunate personal holiday events such as could only have come out of the pages of Lemony Snickett while Gail Collingwood had the audience in stitches with her experience of collecting irons and the opportunities this has afforded for friendships across borders.

MP Moana Mackey received the greatest applause of the night for communicating her passion for science and illuminating the lives of women scientists who made outstanding discoveries for which they were never credited and Judene Edgar (Tasman Councillor) inspired with her account of a month volunteering at an Aids clinic in South Africa.

Ali Boswijk, Marian Hobbs, Damien O'Connor, Megan Woods and Maryan Street covered topics as diverse as movie production, Catholicism, selling, inspirational women and the tradition of Solomon and Sheba but if there could have been a winner I would have picked MP Jacinda Adern for her spirited talk on 'pedestrianism', a story involving her great great grandmother Catherine Wiltshire. According to British Sports and Illustrated Weekly Catherine had "the most pluck around for everyone who wore petticoats". All this for being a winning 'pedestrian' - yes, honestly.

Diversity and surprise is at the heart of "Couch Stories" and it is wonderful to see this genre experiencing such public acclaim. Much was learnt from the ten storytellers and there was much laughter. A fine way to spend an evening.