

# theword



Aphasia New Zealand Charitable Trust  
mate ngaronga reo

**Issue 61**

**Summer 2026**

## In this Edition...

From the Office .....	2
Community Aphasia Advisor News .....	3
AphasiaNZ's CAAs .....	4
News from government .....	5
Thoughts from Ron Collard.....	6
Online Groups and Education for Whānau.....	7
Primary Progressive Aphasia	11
Ashwin Deo's Conference Experience.....	12
"Be courageous and resilient" says Ray.....	13
I've Been Thinking by Nigel Sanson.....	14
Technology Corner.....	15
Our Contact Details.....	18
Can you help us?.....	19

**Save the Dates!**

**Online Events and Groups  
for the year!**

On page 7 - 10 🗨️



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## From the Office

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2026. When I started to write this section, I wanted to say that we hoped you enjoyed the holiday season. And I do still want to say that, but our thoughts are with everyone affected by flooding and slips. Our hearts are heavy, particularly here in the Bay of Plenty.

The office is open again and Kōrero Clubs are gearing up for the year. Some have started already and some will be starting soon. The groups in Christchurch are not starting until the beginning of March due to staff changes.

We are always on the lookout for Speech Language Therapists interested in aphasia who might have some hours free. Membership of NZSTA is not a requirement, but a qualification and relevant experience is necessary. If this sounds like you, please get in touch with me.

We are looking for Community Aphasia Advisors for central and south Auckland, Hauraki and Thames, Papamoa, and the Eastern Bay of Plenty. We would also be keen to explore the opportunity to have a Community Aphasia Advisor in the Nelson/ Marlborough region.

Funding remains tight. Thank you to everyone who has given us a donation – we really appreciate your support. Although we apply for



grants to fund the majority of our work, we cannot do it without your donations also.

We love to get your feedback – what you like, what you might like us to do differently, what you wish we could do... We cannot promise that we will be able to deliver on all your requests – but your voice is very important to us, and helps us to plan our services. You can [email us here](#) or ring our freephone number 0508 274 274 to let us know your thoughts.

*until next time... Kate M*

## Community Aphasia Advisor News

Eleanor Maxwell has left us to spend more time with her children. We will miss her but we are fortunate to be welcoming Mikaela Yung back to the CAA position in Christchurch. She starts again with us in mid-February.

If you live in Christchurch and need help, Nicole Lewis is in the office and will be covering urgent enquiries in the meantime. The groups in Christchurch will be restarting a little later this year.

Kate Ombler, who has been the CAA for Hauraki and Thames, and also the Papamoa region, is leaving us at the end of February as her family is growing! We wish her all the best.



## AphasiaNZ's Community Aphasia Advisors (CAAs)

### Auckland North and West – Nicole Chia

Email: [aucklandnw@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:aucklandnw@aphasia.org.nz)

### Auckland Franklin – Nicole Lewis

Email: [franklin@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:franklin@aphasia.org.nz)

### Auckland Central and South – Nicole Lewis

Email: [aucklandcs@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:aucklandcs@aphasia.org.nz)

### Waikato West Central – Christa Grbin

Email: [waikatowc@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:waikatowc@aphasia.org.nz)

### Hauraki plains and Papamoa – Kate Ombler

Email: [hauraki@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:hauraki@aphasia.org.nz)

### Tauranga – Kate Milford

Email: [tauranga@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:tauranga@aphasia.org.nz)

### Eastern Bay of Plenty – Vacant

Email: [easternbop@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:easternbop@aphasia.org.nz)

### Rotorua – Jude Thomas

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### Central North Island – Melinda Dakin

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### Whanganui – Rachel Wilson

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### Hawke's Bay – Maxine Bevin

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### Wairarapa – Sarah Martin

Email: [wairarapa@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:wairarapa@aphasia.org.nz)

### Wellington – Kate Daellenbach

Email: [wellington@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:wellington@aphasia.org.nz)

### Christchurch – Mikaela Yung

Email: [christchurch@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:christchurch@aphasia.org.nz)



Most CAAs work part-time hours and may not be able to respond to you immediately.

The best way to contact the office is by emailing [info@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:info@aphasia.org.nz)

### Central Otago – Alison Lunn

Email: [otago@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:otago@aphasia.org.nz)

### Dunedin – Meryl Jones

Email: [dunedin@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:dunedin@aphasia.org.nz)

### Invercargill – Megan Bell

Email: [invercargill@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:invercargill@aphasia.org.nz)

### Friends CAA – Nicole Lewis

Email: [admin@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:admin@aphasia.org.nz)



## News from Government - Whaikaha Ministry of Disabled People and Ministry of Social Development

The New Zealand Disability Strategy for 2026-2030 was published in December. There is an [easy read format, which you can find here.](#)

The Ministry of Social Development is consulting on a draft action plan for unpaid carers. The time available to give your feedback has been extended to 12 March. [You can find the information here.](#) There are also a couple of options for both in-person and online workshops. We would encourage carers to give your opinion – supporting people with aphasia does not always fit within the commonly-perceived definition of care, so it is even more important that your voices are heard.

There are also changes coming to the Total Mobility Scheme. From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2026, the subsidy for Total Mobility Card holders will reduce from 75% to 65%. Although this decision is final, you can have your say on other aspects of the Total Mobility Scheme. Consultation is open until 22 March 2026. [Here is the link.](#)

Don't forget - from the 1<sup>st</sup> February there are changes to the assessment and allocation of flexible funding for people with disabilities, their whānau and carers. All Needs Assessment and Service Coordination (NASC) providers around the country will do assessments the same way. Support for carers will be part of this assessment process.

Reassessments will be paused from February until October 2026, to give NASCs time to make the changes needed. If your circumstances change in this time, you can request an urgent reassessment.

## Thoughts from Ron Collard

Aphasia. 12/01/2026.

Most of what we say disappears. Yesterday's words fade quickly, and even words spoken a month ago are often gone for good. Maybe a single quote survives, but the rest dissolves into time. Speech is fleeting. It lives for a moment and then it is carried away.

For me, aphasia changed my relationship with words. Speaking is no longer easy. Thoughts move faster than my mouth can shape them, and words can spill out tangled or incomplete. This loss has been frustrating, but it has also revealed something unexpected.

Writing gives words a place to stay. On the page, thoughts slow down. They become clearer. I can return to them later, read them again, and understand what I was thinking at that moment. Writing does not rush me. It allows patience, reflection, and choice.

Because of writing, I have learned to keep things simple. I focus on what matters most. Perspective becomes easier when thoughts are laid out in front of me, instead of trapped inside my head. Writing turns confusion into order.

I now keep notes for the future—small records of who I am, what I think, and what I have learned. Without aphasia, I may never have discovered this gift. Writing has become my voice, my memory, and a quiet strength I did not know I had.

I know that AI has helped me do this if I take a moment to think about all of my thoughts on a certain subject and put them into AI I can have a testimony of all my thoughts on that subject.

– Ron.



## Online Groups for Whānau

AphasiaNZ runs several support and information programmes for whānau. We have support groups for family members of people who have aphasia due to stroke, and also for family of people who have progressive aphasia.

In addition, we run regular workshops for family members – these include Supported Conversation Training, Life History Book workshops, and – new in 2026 – Setting up a conversation environment.

The aim of these workshops is to improve communication, reduce frustration, and help you to have more enjoyable conversations. Flyers can be found on our website.

## Online Groups for people with aphasia

We have 4 online Kōrero Clubs each week for people with aphasia, and a Young Persons Group which meets each month. If you cannot attend a group meeting in person and would like to attend an online group, please reach out to us. Our first step, if we have not supported you before, is to make contact with you over the phone or videocalling so we can agree what support is most appropriate. There may be a wait time before we have space in an online group.

## Online Supported Conversation Training

We also offer training for partners and people with aphasia over Zoom. This usually takes the form of 3 or 4 sessions, tailored to your needs.





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# ONLINE EDUCATION FOR WHĀNAU

## Supported Conversation Training

Aphasia can be a barrier to conversation.  
Whānau of people with aphasia can learn how to adjust their own communication to improve conversations in their home.

Supported conversation training is a 2-part training programme where the whānau of people with aphasia learn strategies to communicate better with people with aphasia.

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## Life History Book Workshop

Aphasia can make it difficult for people to talk about themselves.  
A life history book is a creative way for people with aphasia to record their life's story to share with others.

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## Presentation on setting up a conversation environment

Presentation on setting up a conversation environment:  
Having certain resources and items on hand can go a long way to improving conversations with people with aphasia.  
This presentation is designed to help whānau create a great conversation environment.



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# UPCOMING EVENTS

## on Zoom 2026



**Thursday 19 March**  
**10am - 12pm**

Supported Conversation Training  
(first session)

**Thursday 30 April**  
**10am - 11:30am**

Supported Conversation Training  
(follow-up session)

**Thursday 28 May**  
**10am - 11am**

Life History Book Workshop

**Thursday 18 June**  
**5pm - 6:30pm**

Presentation on setting up a  
conversation environment

**Thursday 10 Sept**  
**5pm - 7pm**

Supported Conversation Training  
(first session)

**Thursday 22 Oct**  
**5pm - 6:30pm**

Supported Conversation Training  
(follow-up session)

**Thursday 12 Nov**  
**10am - 11:30am**

Presentation on setting up a  
conversation environment

**Tuesday 24 Nov**  
**5pm - 6pm**

Life History Book Workshop

**For more information or to register please contact Christa Grbin.**

**email: [waikatowc@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:waikatowc@aphasia.org.nz)**

**phone: 021 086 34362**





**When:**

**Feb 17th, March 17th, April 28th, May 26th, June 23rd,  
July 21st, Aug 18th, Sept 15th, Oct 13th, Nov 10th**

**Time:**

**5:30pm - 7pm**

**Where:**

**on Zoom**



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## Focus on Primary Progressive Aphasia

Primary Progressive Aphasia Awareness Day will be held on 10<sup>th</sup> April this year. What awareness activities can you do? Contact us if you have an idea we can share for you.

The International Speech and Language Therapy/Pathology Primary Progressive Aphasia Network [www.speechtherapypa.com](http://www.speechtherapypa.com) encourages connections between international researchers and offers peer support, and information on how to deliver appropriate services to people with PPA and their families.

This year, they are holding an International Conference on PPA –

What: Advancing Interdisciplinary PPA Research and Care.

When: 16<sup>th</sup>- 17<sup>th</sup> July 2026

Where: University College London, London, UK

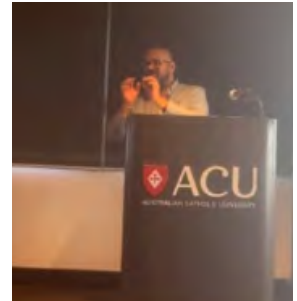
We were pleased to read about the positive results from the Communication Bridge telehealth trial last year run by researchers at the University of Chicago. You can [read the news about that here](#). The team are now working on the next stage of the trial – Communication Bridge 3.

The take-home message is that developing personalised goals focused on communication participation is important. Developing strategies to reduce barriers to communication was part of the intervention.



## Ashwin's Experience at the Australian Aphasia Association Conference 2025

Ashwin Deo, a valued member of the Wednesday Online Kōrero Club, attended and spoke at the Australian Aphasia Association Conference in Sydney in November 2025.



During his speech, he shared his personal story of experiencing a stroke in October 2019, his online speech-language therapy sessions during the COVID-19 pandemic, and his journey of recovery since then. Ashwin spoke about the aphasia groups that he's been involved with and expressed his gratitude to the speech-language therapists (Ellen Fallow, Louise Hume, Patty Govender, and Megan Trebilcock), AphasiaNZ and Community Aphasia Advisor (Nicole Lewis), and all the other health professionals and volunteers who have supported him over the years. He expressed his passion for supporting people with aphasia and offered encouraging words of hope – reminding people that *"you will get better, just take your time"*. He also emphasized the importance of staying *"positive to go forward"* and *"to love life and the good people around you"*.

Ashwin thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to speak at the conference, meet others with aphasia, and connect with health professionals. He found the conference both informative and motivating, and he's already looking forward to the next conference in 2027. You can watch a part of his conference speech on [his Instagram page here](#). Ash's Instagram handle is **@lifeafterstroke1**



## Be Courageous and Resilient!

Ray Ropata is a long-time member of our Johnsonville Kōrero Club.

This past spring, Ray left his government job. What next? Well, he courageously launched a clothing line – ME MATE URUROA. (See the fab t-shirt in the photo!)

*"I might be a bit crazy"* he said to the aphasia group. But we knew it was brave and inspired.

***Me mate ururoa*** is part of a whakatauki (Māori proverb)

*"Kaua e mate wheke, me mate ururoa".*

This is translated to mean "Don't die like an octopus, die like a hammerhead shark."

In use, the deeper meaning is to **be courageous, resilient and determined, especially in the face of difficulty.**

Ray – you inspire us all to keep trying, even when things are tough.

***Ka pai Ray!***

For more information on Ray's clothing line contact him via email:

[ray@memateururoa.com](mailto:ray@memateururoa.com).



Photo: Johnsonville Kōrero Club members Ray and Rosalie at the launch of Ray's clothing line, ME MATE URUROA.





## I've Been Thinking... by Nigel Sanson

I have been thinking... what is the word "idiom" about?

Idioms are 'history stories' with non-literal or figurative meanings, like "the last straw". Originally many idioms were meant literally.

"The best thing since sliced bread" was the first commercial slicing machine in the US in 1928. It was the "greatest forward step in the baking industry."

"Add insult to injury" is from Aesop Fables from the 18th century. It is about a bold man and a fly. The man was bitten on his head, by the fly. He tried to swat it, but ends up hitting himself. The fly then taunted him, asking what he'll do to himself.

"Jump on the bandwagon" originated from political campaigns in the 1840s. A circus clown invited the politician to join his circus bandwagon, which was successful as a way to attract public attention for the upcoming show.

### Word of the Season

"Estival" or "Aestival" (adjective). Relates to Summer.

### Joke of the Season

How do you make a sheep sweat?

*"Invite it to a baaaa-bq"*



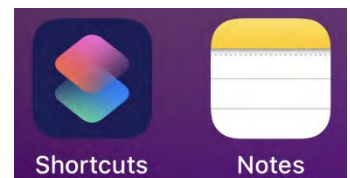
## Technology Corner

### Aphasia Card for iPhone

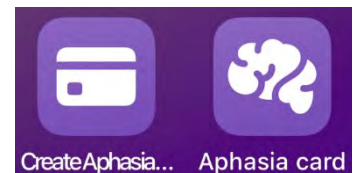


The **Aphasia Tech Hub** is part of the **Queensland Aphasia Research Centre (QARC)** and helps people with aphasia use technology. They have created an **aphasia card** that you can personalise and use on your iPhone.

You will need the Shortcuts and Notes Apps to download and use the aphasia card.

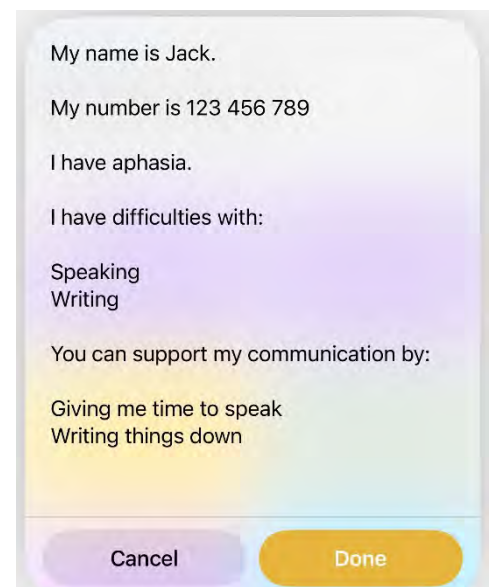


When creating your aphasia card, you can **include essential personal information and preferences for communication support** which will be read out loud. Here is an example →



You can also **add pictures, videos, and even voice recordings.**

Here is a **step-by-step guide** on how to create your own personalised aphasia card on your iPhone:



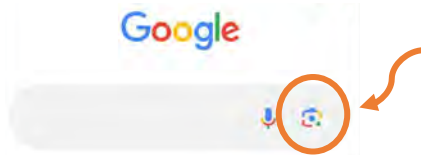
[https://scribehov.com/viewer/Create\\_your\\_own\\_Aphasia\\_Card\\_on\\_iPhone\\_bFTfz3xWSyStkWrVAjLVDw](https://scribehov.com/viewer/Create_your_own_Aphasia_Card_on_iPhone_bFTfz3xWSyStkWrVAjLVDw)

If you need any help with setting up your own aphasia card, please contact your local Community Aphasia Advisor or the AphasiaNZ office.

# AI Tools and Accessibility Settings

The **Aphasia Tech Hub** also made some **step-by-step guides** to help people with aphasia use other tools.

## Google Lens



Google Lens is an AIpowered image recognition tool that helps you **search for information using your camera**.

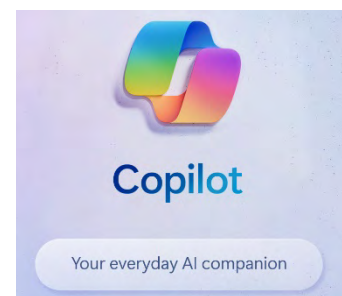
If you have difficulty naming physical items, signs, or places, Google Lens can help you find the name, show you more pictures, and provide the meaning of the item.

Here is a guide on how to use Google Lens:

[https://scribehow.com/viewer/Google Lens on iOS UxchgDJQQ5Wvp ozj48i-ag](https://scribehow.com/viewer/Google+Lens+on+iOS+UxchgDJQQ5Wvp+ozj48i-ag)

## Copilot

Copilot is an AI-powered assistant developed by Microsoft. If you have difficulty writing a message or email, Copilot can help you.



Here is a guide on how to use Copilot:

[https://scribehow.com/viewer/How to write an email using Copilot hmXaw72QSB2F2p8IzooSdg](https://scribehow.com/viewer/How+to+write+an+email+using+Copilot+hmXaw72QSB2F2p8IzooSdg)



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## Apple Live Speech

*(Available on iPhone XS or later)*

Apple Live Speech is an **accessibility setting on iPhone** that **changes your typed words into speech**. If talking is hard, you can type what you want to say and your phone will speak for you.

You can also **save common phrases** to use again.

For example, you can make a Café list with phrases like:

- "I'd like to order a coffee."
- "May I have milk and sugar, please?"

While Apple Live Speech can be used in person when talking to others, it can also be **used during phone and FaceTime calls**.



For example, if you need to make a doctor's appointment, you can create a few phrases that you want to use and save them in Live Speech. When you make the phone call, you can activate Live Speech and click on the saved phrases that you want to use and it will read the phrases out loud.

Here is a guide on how to setup and use Live Speech:

[https://scribehow.com/viewer/Apple Live Speech An2LIYDDTfaSInKKd6U\\_Gw](https://scribehow.com/viewer/Apple%20Live%20Speech%20An2LIYDDTfaSInKKd6U_Gw)



## Our Contact Details



**You can get in touch with us in the following ways:**

### **By writing to us:**

AphasiaNZ, PO Box 13435, Tauranga Central, Tauranga 3141

### **By making an appointment and visiting us:**

At 36 Cameron Road, Tauranga 3110

### **By calling us:**

In the office on (07) 220 9973, *OR*

On our free phone number **0508 APHASIA** (0508 274 274)

### **By emailing us:**

[info@aphasia.org.nz](mailto:info@aphasia.org.nz)

### **Through our website:**

[www.aphasia.org.nz](http://www.aphasia.org.nz)



### **On our Facebook page:**

[www.facebook.com/AphasiaNZ](http://www.facebook.com/AphasiaNZ)

**We look forward to hearing from you**

*E tatari ana matou ki te whakarongo ki a koe*

*If you have prior governance experience and an interest in serving as a Trustee for AphasiaNZ, please do get in touch with us at the office.*



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## Can you Help with a Donation?

Your donations enable us to provide information, resources and Community Aphasia Advisor (CAA) services across New Zealand.



**\$10** will cover the cost of one person attending an online Kōrero Club meeting.

**\$20** will send a resource pack to a family affected by aphasia.

**\$50** will print a copy of the NZ Stroke and Aphasia handbook.

**\$300** will fund one Kōrero Club meeting.

Donations can be made online into the AphasiaNZ bank account, or by credit card via PayPal or Stripe. The easiest way to donate is to visit our website.

As AphasiaNZ is an approved donee organisation, you can claim a tax credit for all donations over \$5.00 if you earn income.

If you are interested in [payroll giving](#), please get in touch. This is an easy way to give us a regular donation, and you receive the tax credit instantly.

**[Please click here to donate online today!](#)**

And lastly.....before you go... People with aphasia- can you spot our deliberate spelling mistake?? [Email us](#) to tell us where it is!

