

theword



Aphasia New Zealand Charitable Trust
mate ngaronga reo

Issue 62

Autumn 2026

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Phone: 07 220 9973
Toll free: 0508 APHASIA (0508 274 274)
info@aphasia.org.nz www.aphasia.org.nz

Aphasia New Zealand (AphasiaNZ) Charitable Trust
36 Cameron Road, Tauranga 3110
PO Box 13435, Tauranga Central, Tauranga 3141

From the Office

And just like that, autumn is well and truly here! The leaves have turned red and are falling in large quantities...

Next month, June, is Aphasia Awareness Month. This year we are focusing on awareness among whānau/family and friends.

- Do you have an idea for raising awareness?
- Would you like your family or friends to take part in an education session with a Community Aphasia Advisor (CAA)?
- We will work with you to make this possible!

Primary Progressive Aphasia Awareness Day was on 10th April this year. Did you see the webinar featuring Christa, our CAA for remote support, talking with Winifred Henderson, Senior Educator for Dementia New Zealand? If you missed it, [you can view it here](#).

Our financial year ends on 31st March so we have been calculating our work over the past 12 months. Yet again, we have done more work! We now have waiting lists for our online Kōrero Club meetings, and we often have a wait for the iPad loans. It is challenging to find funding for new iPads for our loaning programme, and to buy the apps for the devices. We also find that it can be hard to secure funding for online work that often takes place at a national level. This work includes 4 Kōrero Club meetings, our whānau support group, our Young Persons Group, the education workshops and our PPA support group – and more.



Our name, Aphasia New Zealand (AphasiaNZ) Charitable Trust, is rather long, and one of the problems with this is that it is not possible to put the whole name in when making a payment or donation online. Now that the banks check that the name matches the account number, this has become an issue. We are looking at what we can do about this and we appreciate your patience. If you have any concerns, please ask us for help.

We are still seeking interest for the role of Community Aphasia Advisor in 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. Sometimes, this feels a bit like a chicken and egg situation – we need to have a signed contract to seek funding, but we cannot offer a contract without some funds in place.

I am off to Government House in Wellington in a couple of weeks to attend an Investiture Ceremony. I am excited, if a little nervous!

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



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AphasiaNZ's work in 2025-2026

Aphasia New Zealand (AphasiaNZ) Charitable Trust is focused on providing high quality, professional support, information, training and resources for people affected by aphasia.

Our Mission is to empower people with aphasia to participate in their communities.

THE DIFFERENCE WE ARE MAKING

Over **1100** people with aphasia receiving support at any one time.

648 group meetings held around New Zealand with **5351** attendances.

1570 contacts providing individual support for people with aphasia and whānau

38% increase in home visits to support people with aphasia compared to the previous year.

Over **2000** followers on Facebook and **560** followers on Instagram receiving regular information and advice

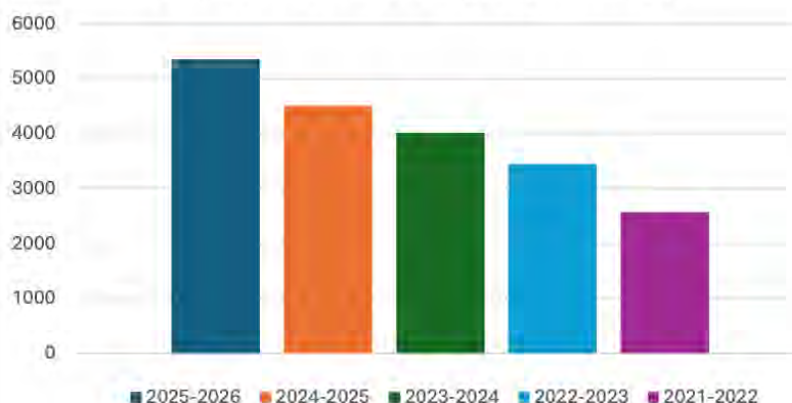
188 online group meetings held with **1396** attendances – Kōrero Clubs and support groups.

45 iPad loans to people with aphasia for therapy support.

Over **900** people subscribed to our newsletters

54 workshops and events providing education to over **1400** attendees – an increase of **40%** on the previous year.

Number of contacts in group meetings



Community Aphasia Advisors (trained Speech Language Therapists) across New Zealand provide free support services and raise awareness of the impact of aphasia.

Thank you to all our donors and funders – we could not do this without you!



Aphasia New Zealand Charitable Trust
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giving a voice to people with aphasia

Community Aphasia Advisor News

We held a team meeting in Auckland last month. It has been a while since we met in person – and we had a productive day. We talked a lot.... this is something that Speech Language Therapists are usually good at! We discussed things that are going well, challenges, and plans for the future. Not everyone could join in person, but here's a photo.



From left to right in the front row – Megan, Southland CAA; Mikaela, Christchurch CAA; Sarah, Wairarapa CAA; Nicole C, Auckland NW CAA.

At the back – Nicole L, Friends CAA; Jude, Rotorua CAA; Christa, Waikato and Remote Support CAA; Kate M, Tauranga CAA and Team Leader; Meryl, Dunedin CAA; Kate D, Wellington CAA.

Not pictured: Mel, Central North Island CAA; Maxine, Hawke's Bay CAA; Rachel, Whanganui CAA; Ali, Central Otago CAA.



AphasiaNZ's Community Aphasia Advisors (CAAs)

Auckland North and West – Nicole Chia

Email: aucklandnw@aphasia.org.nz

Auckland Franklin – Nicole Lewis

Email: franklin@aphasia.org.nz

Auckland Central and South – Nicole Lewis

Email: aucklandcs@aphasia.org.nz

Waikato West Central – Christa Grbin

Email: waikatowc@aphasia.org.nz

Hauraki and Thames - vacant

Email: hauraki@aphasia.org.nz

Tauranga - Kate Milford

Email: tauranga@aphasia.org.nz

Eastern Bay of Plenty – Vacant

Email: easternbop@aphasia.org.nz

Rotorua – Jude Thomas

Email: rotorua@aphasia.org.nz

Central North Island – Melinda Dakin

Email: centralnorth@aphasia.org.nz

Whanganui – Rachel Wilson

Email: whanganui@aphasia.org.nz

Hawke's Bay – Maxine Bevin

Email: hawkesbay@aphasia.org.nz

Wairarapa – Sarah Martin

Email: wairarapa@aphasia.org.nz

Wellington – Kate Daellenbach

Email: wellington@aphasia.org.nz

Christchurch – Mikaela Yung

Email: 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

Central Otago – Alison Lunn

Email: otago@aphasia.org.nz

Dunedin – Meryl Jones

Email: dunedin@aphasia.org.nz

Invercargill – Megan Bell

Email: invercargill@aphasia.org.nz

Friends CAA – Nicole Lewis

Email: admin@aphasia.org.nz



Thank you to Virginia & Maurice

For 14 years, Maurice and Virginia Gibbens have graciously led their own aphasia group in Lower Hutt. This year, they stepped down and asked if AphasiaNZ would pick it up. We have, but these two are a tough act to follow!



In 2011 Virginia suffered a stroke resulting in expressive aphasia. Initially she could hardly speak a word. On discharge they had six speech therapy sessions, but were told that was all that was available. A chance remark by an SLT alerted them to an aphasia group meeting fortnightly at Hutt Hospital.

They attended the group which was mainly people with aphasia, but few carers. Maurice stayed with Virginia, keen to learn how he could help her.

After a few meetings, the hospital management informed them that they were no longer able to spare a therapist for the group. The group could continue but there would be a \$35 per hour fee for the room. Unhappy with this, Maurice persisted, seeking a resolution, but found no solution.



So the two of them set up their own group. The Lower Hutt Seventh Day Adventist Church generously offered their hall for a small (non compulsory) donation, and Maurice took on the role as facilitator. The group has varied in size and membership, but has remained a strong, supportive group through the years.

Since 2011 Virginia has had further strokes, and her aphasia has worsened. They have close supportive family nearby and a strong bond. Virginia remains tenacious and vibrant, and although speech is difficult, they remain keen to spread the word about aphasia. (Here, Virginia would likely look directly at you and say "That's RIGHT!"). Virginia's understanding is excellent, and not much gets past her at the groups!

Virginia and Maurice have been and remain ambassadors for aphasia in our area. Many have benefited from their efforts. At AphasiaNZ we are also grateful for their work, their trust in us, their continued presence and input at our Kōrero Clubs, and of course Virginia's sparkle in her eyes. We thank you!

Online Workshop for Whānau

The next opportunity is our Life History Book workshop which is being held on 28th May at 10am. To secure your place at this, please email Christa [at this link](#), or head to our website where you can find all the details about how to register.

AphasiaNZ iPad Lending Program Update

for Speech-Language Therapists

The AphasiaNZ iPad lending program aims to support people with aphasia by providing access to aphasia therapy apps (not AAC) for home practice, and self-directed learning, under the guidance and recommendation of a Speech-language Therapist (SLT).

The program is primarily for people with aphasia who do not have their own device. These individuals can borrow an iPad for up to four months. A shorter, two-month loan option is also available for those who already own a device but would like to trial the therapy apps.

The **iPad lending guide for SLTs** outlines the **eligibility criteria** and **loan process**

- [iPad-Lending-Information-for-SLTs-and-Professionals.pdf](#)

If you have any questions or would like to talk through the iPad lending program, please feel free to get in touch with Nicole (admin@aphasia.org.nz) or with your local Community Aphasia Advisor (CAA).

Feedback from people with aphasia and SLTs

We gathered feedback from both people with aphasia and SLTs to better understand what is working well and where improvements are needed. 10 people with aphasia and nine SLTs across NZ completed the survey.



What is working well?

Overall, feedback has been very positive. People with aphasia found the iPad loan beneficial and reported that the iPad and therapy apps, particularly Tactus Therapy apps, were easy to use. They also noted improvement in their communication skills.

SLTs found the iPad loaning process straightforward and reported that they would recommend the program. The Tactus Therapy apps were identified as the most useful.

Benefits highlighted by SLTs included:

- Improved communication outcomes
- Greater independence in rehabilitation
- Increased confidence in using an iPad
- Opportunity to trial both an iPad and apps before making long-term decisions

What are the challenges?

Engagement remains an area for improvement. Most people with aphasia reported using the iPad only a few times a week. However, evidence suggests that consistent practice is key. For example, using Tactus Therapy apps for just 20 minutes a day over four weeks can lead to significant improvements in people with chronic aphasia (Stark & Warburton, 2018).



SLTs also noted challenges including:

- Navigating the iPad and apps
- Technical issues
- Reduced engagement

While half of people with aphasia reported having good support, those with more severe aphasia or limited confidence using technology reported not having enough support.

Another key challenge relates to timing. Most SLTs requested an iPad loan at the beginning of the community SLT service; however, due to the limited timeframe of the community SLT service, they were unable to provide support for the entire four-month period.

Addressing the challenges

We are continuing to simplify the iPad setup and explore ways to encourage more consistent daily use.

To maximise SLT involvement, we recommend requesting an iPad before the start of community SLT. This allows the person with aphasia to begin using the iPad as soon as therapy starts, ensuring SLT support is available for most of the loan period.



Wendy's Story and iPad Loaning Experience

My name is Wendy and I suffered a stroke in October 2024. I was 60 years old at the time.

Like most people I had never heard of Aphasia prior to my stroke, let alone knew what it was.



When my Speech Language Therapist mentioned the organisation Aphasia NZ, my husband and I quickly did some research. Amongst other things we learnt about Aphasia NZ, they had a scheme to loan an iPad.

After contacting Nicole, with the support of my SLT, I was very fortunate that an iPad was available immediately.

When the iPad arrived, it was fully loaded with a large variety of programmes, each designed to aid speech and language. Each app had something different to offer, depending on where you are at with your recovery. The one I found that suited my needs was Tactus Therapy.

Language Therapy and Advanced Language Therapy

The modules include Comprehension, Naming, Reading and Writing, then onto Advanced versions of the same name. I truly thought I would never read again, but with the help of the iPad and the programme, slowly but surely, I regained my confidence to read again. It started off slowly and then progressed to my reading a novel! The writing was a little more difficult, and it is still a work in progress.

During my sessions with the SLT I was able to practise with the loaned iPad on each module; she was able to monitor my progress and suggested ways I could improve. Eventually I got the 'go ahead' to tackle the Advanced Version!

I was able to practise with my husband, which gave him a baseline of what I should be doing and the things I should be practising.

More importantly, it gave me the option to practise alone, anywhere and anytime I liked. Such as travelling in the car — instead of sitting watching TV, I could use the iPad to do a module, or two.

Having the iPad opened up a new world to me. Without it, I probably would not have thought about how technology could aid my recovery. It gave me confidence to explore further — maybe there are other apps available (technology is racing ahead)? This prompted me to use Facebook (on my phone) to join groups about Aphasia, Stroke NZ and Speech Language Therapy.

So much so, that I purchased an iPad after the Aphasia NZ loan period ended. I also purchased a version of Tactus Therapy. I am still using the programme today, in particular the 'writing' module.

Having the iPad loaned to me by Aphasia NZ undoubtedly changed my life and aided in my recovery. It contributed to my renewed confidence and the feeling that 'I'm not doing this alone'. I cannot thank Nicole and the entire team at Aphasia NZ enough.

Technology Corner

What is Helperbird?



Helperbird is a browser extension and app designed to improve how people read and interact with websites, PDFs, and documents.

One of its features includes **Microsoft's Immersive Reader** which helps people read, understand, and engage with digital text more easily.

- It **removes distractions**, such as adverts.
- It lets you **customize text** such as increasing spacing between words and lines, changing font size, narrowing text columns, summarising pages into bullet points or main ideas.
- It **reads text aloud** while each word is highlighted.

Click on the link if you would like to watch a **video tutorial** of Microsoft's Immersive Reader -

<https://www.helperbird.com/features/immersive-reader-for-chrome/>

The Aphasia Tech Hub at the Queensland Aphasia Research Centre created an **aphasia-friendly guide** on **how to install Helperbird** on your browser -

https://scribehov.com/viewer/Installing_Helperbird_Browser_Extension_on_Microsoft_Edge_pNerKOQJTbWJVtaCFho_bg

For more information about the different features that Helperbird has to offer, click on the link - <https://www.helperbird.com/features/>.



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 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

Through our website:

www.aphasia.org.nz



On our Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/AphasiaNZ

Through your local Community Aphasia Advisor:

(email addresses are above)

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.



Aphasia New Zealand Charitable Trust
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giving a voice to people with aphasia

Thank you for your donations!

Your donations, whatever the amount, are very important to us and help us to provide information, resources and Community Aphasia Advisor (CAA) services across New Zealand.



\$10 covers 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!

