



# Alzheimers

## Gisborne/Tairāwhiti

December 2025

**Tena koutou katoa.  
Nga mihi nui kia a koutou**

Welcome to our last newsletter for 2025.

We are now into what is often referred to as 'the silly season; which is rather a shame as it should be a time of preparing for a wonderful festive season, or the kiwi summer and maybe a holiday. However, Rayleen has some excellent tips for getting ready for this season and we have some other great stories that may be of interest to you as well bring a ray of hope for the days ahead.

I want to share some staff and volunteer news news with you too.

Also, be sure to check out our opening and closing dates for this festive season.

From all of us at Alzheimers Gisborne Tairawhiti, we wish you all a happy, safe and peace-filled summer season.

Tracy Robinson - manager



I had the delight of visiting Avna and meeting her beautiful 3 month old daughter, Ariene.

It was a huge thrill to have a cuddle with such a perfect and tiny person.

## Staff News Congratulations

Congratulations go to Judy Poulsen who graduated with a New Zealand Certificate in Health and Well-Being (Support Worker) Level 3.

Judy studied for this qualification at EIT one day a week for 10 weeks.

She now joins Debbie Hall as a qualified HCA Level 3 Support Worker.



**Well done  
Judy**

# Navigating a Less-Stressful Christmas



**Rayleen Wright**  
*Dementia Navigator*

As the festive season arrives, we want to send warm Christmas wishes to you and your loved ones. This time of year, can bring joy as well as challenges, so we hope you find moments of peace, connection, and comfort together. Small, familiar traditions—a favourite carol, a cosy cup of tea, gentle lights, or looking through old photos—can spark wonderful memories and create new ones too.

For carers, please remember that you matter as much as the person you support. Try to take breaks when you can, accept help from others, and keep plans flexible. A calm, slow-paced Christmas is not only okay—it can be truly meaningful.

For those living with dementia, simple routines and reassurance can make the season feel safe and special. Celebrate each smile, each shared story and each moment of togetherness.

## Holiday Care Plan

Anticipation anxiety in the days and weeks leading up to a holiday can be more intense than what is experienced on the actual day itself. Creating a plan for the holidays can decrease anxiety and provide reassurance in knowing that steps have been taken to access the best ways to cope with any challenges encountered. Here are ideas to consider for your unique care plan:

The biggest concerns going into the holiday season include;

- Stressors: List people, places, events, or circumstances that might be challenging. What options do you have in navigating through these stressors?
- Boundaries: What boundaries do I need to set with myself and others throughout this holiday season?
- Burn-out: What contributes to your personal burnout during the holidays? What are your symptoms of burnout?
- Support: List safe people and places (e.g., support group, church, etc.) that can serve as sources of support.
- Self-care: Identify ways that you can attend to your physical, emotional, mental, social, and/or spiritual wellness.
- Healthy anticipation: Identify aspects of the holidays that you are really looking forward to.
- Reset: Evaluate ways that you can decompress following the holiday season.

# Volunteers

*“Volunteers do not necessarily have the time: they have the heart.”*

Elizabeth Andrew

(author)



We are always indebted to our volunteers who help us support our clients to give them the best experience in the Sherwood Club. This support can range from sewing soft toys under Chris's watchful guidance, to cooking lunch for the clients in the kitchen. Our newest volunteer is Phil Simpson who works hard in our garden to ensure it is a place of beauty for us all to enjoy. Thank you, Phil, for doing this so diligently. Our garden is currently a haven for monarch butterflies and cheeky blackbirds, not to mention the array of beautiful flowers.



Our other volunteer group who are more behind the scenes are our board members who make up the governing body. The structure under which Alzheimers Gisborne operates, makes it essential that we have a board who the manager reports to. The board meets regularly to approve the payment of the accounts, wages and policies to ensure the business is operating at the level of best practice. At our AGM in November, we elected a new board and farewelled our long-term chairperson, Carol Shepherd. Carol has been on the board for 5 years, the past 4 as the chairperson. Her leadership will be hugely missed as Carol always had her finger on the pulse while leaving the manager to get on with the job of running our services on the day-to-day basis.



*We thank Carol for her commitment and service to our organisation and wish her well in her retirement from Alzheimers Gisborne.*

# The New Board

## 2025 -2026

Special welcome to our new members  
Catherine Chrisp and Ray Kitchen.  
See back page for the full board.



*"When you fall in love with your partner,  
you fall in love with their brain."*

This is a quote from Sir Richard Faull who, at 80 years of age, is semi-retiring from his role as the Director of the Centre for Brain Research.

In a lifetime dedicated to unlocking the mysteries of the human brain – while honouring the traditions and values of his iwi – Sir Richard Faull has become one of the most respected figures in both global neuroscience and Māori health. From his whakapapa roots in Taranaki to the world-class research labs of Auckland, his work stands at the intersection of cutting-edge science and cultural integrity.

Born on 21 October 1945 in Taranaki, Sir Richard Faull descends from Ngāti Rāhiri and Te Āti Awa, communities that imbued in him a deep respect for whakapapa, whenua and the sacredness of the human body.

He studied medicine at University of Otago, graduating in 1970, and later earned a PhD and later a DSc from University of Auckland.

It was during his time at Otago, as a medical student, that Faull first encountered a human brain. According to him, he was “spellbound” - a moment that would define his future.

Over decades of research, Sir Richard made discoveries that challenged long-held assumptions about the human brain. For example:

- His team was among the first to demonstrate that the *adult human brain can generate new neurons*, debunking the idea that brains were fixed and could only deteriorate.
- He played a key role in studies on neurodegenerative diseases – including Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, Huntington’s disease, epilepsy and more – helping to improve understanding of how these illnesses affect whānau and communities across Aotearoa.

Currently Sir Richard (also Professor) is the patron for Alzheimers New Zealand.

## Nau mai Abbey and Charlotte Te Manawa Taki Healthy Aging team Health New Zealand



We were delighted to host Charlotte Foley and Abby Webbon from the Aging Well/Commissioning section of Te Manawa Taki, which is the region we report to in the health sector. As part of the commissioning team, they are responsible for the contract which Alzheimers Gisborne reports to Health NZ.

This contract mostly funds the Sherwood Club. While we are extremely grateful for this funding, we are always telling our funders that there so much more to our work than the Sherwood Club which can only cater for 20 people 3 days a week. We have another 50 people living with dementia in the community who would benefit from our services. Some of this cohort come along to the Active Brain Network (ABN) which has been supported through funders such as the Sunrise Foundation and Lotteries.

It has been so great to have this interaction with these two ladies who were keen to meet our ABN members, along with other community clients and care partners. The meeting gave us all an opportunity to tell them what we do; how good we are at it and what would we like to develop in the future. There were 23 in attendance with some great sharing and honest feedback.



Fingers crossed it will lead to an increase in our funding, but if nothing else, it lets the Healthy Aging team know what is actually happening in this community and the needs of our people.





## Spud in a Bucket Weighed up for Another Year

We wound up this year's Spud in a Bucket competition with the weigh-in at Bunnings on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> December.

Entries were down this year, with only 167 people opting to buy a spud to plant in their bucket and of these, only 83 brought their bucket in for the weighing and counting process.

While each year, fewer people enter we have the regulars who come back annually several of whom have won prizes year after the year. This year we tried to encourage more young people to enter by lowering the entry fee to \$10.00 for under 12-year-old.

It needs the encouragement and enthusiasm of the parent (or grandparent) to support the younger age group to enter but the smiles of delight on the faces of the younger entrants is the real bonus. They take ownership of their buckets and it's like opening a Christmas gift when the children see the potatoes come out of the soil.

Gino Maffoni (pictured with his parents) was one such entrant. At age 3, was encouraged by his parents to take full responsibility for nurturing his seed potato, something he took on board with real determination. What Gino did not realise that after his 9 potatoes had magically been revealed when the soil was removed from the bucket, he could take them home. His Dad said Gino's amazement continued when he learned that you could cook and eat the potatoes.



The main winner in the adult section was Nathan Peach. Nathan picked up 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the heaviest yield with 1410g of potatoes coming out of his bucket with the biggest crop of 38 spuds.

Another family affair who are regular winners, are the Hodgetts. This year, Mum, Rebecca was second place with her yield of 36 Spuds and a weight of 1275 g. Another familiar supporter of us is Janet Willson, whose spuds weighed in at 1198g.

The youngest winners on the day were both 2-year-olds; Hineraumati Karaka who won the heaviest crop at 942g and Florence Venema came in 3rd with 630 g.

In the over 5 to 12 age group, Destiny Hodgett, aged 12, picked up a double first with a huge crop of 28 spuds at 1106 g in weight. Her sister, Cyrstal, 10, was second in weight with 936 g Emilie Murphy 10 year of age, was third with 741 g.

Our thanks to the Rotary Club of Gisborne for their support on the days and a huge thanks to Bunnings for the sponsorship of the prizes. The funds raised from the event go back into running our services for all people affected by dementia in Tairawhiti.



Rececca Hodgett's pictured with Matt Tomlinson-Moulds, the activities organiser from Bunnings.



Regular Spud entrant and part of the Hodgett's whanau, Cyrstal with her second prize.



One of the youngest entrants and prize winners, Florance Venema, was only 2 when she first entered Spud in a Bucket last year.



Above:

Janet Willson who signs up every year for the competition and was a prize winner again this year, catches up with Azure Hyde.

With thanks to



Above:

The Rotary Club of Gisborne, without whose help we could not run the competition.



Left: Emilie Murphy called in to the office to collect her prize, with her Mum.

## MRI Scans, How Can they Help?

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) technology used in research is increasingly more powerful than ever before, especially in research centres such as the Matai Medical Research Institute, here in Gisborne. MRI can detect extremely subtle signs of brain disease, long before symptoms appear.

Wouldn't it be great if every hospital was equipped with the latest MRI technology (which currently they are not). This would facilitate early detection of neurogenerative diseases such as Alzheimers, Parkinsons and multiple sclerosis meaning earlier intervention treatment, medication or therapeutic programmes put in place.

Associate Professor Miriam Scadneg of University of Auckland and Principal Investigator at the University's Centre for Brain Research has found that neuroinflammation has a fundamental role in neurogenerative disease. Professor Miriam says that inflammation is the brain's early response system that, if left unchecked, can lead to diseases.

**It is estimated that 1 in**

**3 Kiwis will have some  
form of a neurological  
condition.**



**Neurological  
Foundation**  
A pathway to hope

With thanks to; Headlines National Magazine, Neurological Foundation, Vol 148, Spring 2025

**Thank you to our financial funders**

**Te Whatu Ora**  
Health New Zealand

We receive a grant from Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora which partially funds the operation costs of the Sherwood Club

  
**Sunrise Foundation**

Thanks to the Sunrise Foundation for support of the Good Grief programme





At the time of getting this newsletter to print, our raffle had not been drawn. The playhouse, valued at \$10,000.00, was generously donated by Geoff and Carolyn Taylor of Mitre 10. We would like to take this opportunity to publically thank Geoff and Carolyn for their continued support of Alzheimers Gisborne.



And thank YOU, so many of you who bought tickets in the raffle.

Farewell to  
2025  
and  
Welcome  
2026

**The Sherwood Club and offices  
close on 19 December at 3.00pm**

**We re-open on  
7 January 2026**

**Meri Kirihiomete me te tau hou**





*Gisborne/Tairāwhiti*

## Board Members

Chair: Catherine Chrisp

Deputy Chair: Warwick Callender

Treasurer/Manager: Tracy Robinson

Minute Secretary: Sandra Elsmore

    Bonnie Scandlyn

    Lynn Omer

    Sam Noble

    Claire Jones

    Ray Kitchen

    Michelle Duley

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