Manager's Report

Annual General Meeting 2026

2026 has been a much-welcomed year of stability for Alzheimer's Gisborne/Tairāwhiti, following several years of unplanned and unwanted changes.



While we farewelled Azure Hyde after four years in the Sherwood Club, she gave us plenty of warning, allowing us to advertise and secure her replacement, along with some restructuring of the position. Syméia Maia was appointed as the Sherwood Club Facilitator. This role had not had a permanent appointment for three years, so Syméia's arrival has brought much-needed stability to the team.

The Sherwood Club is now back to full strength, with two staff working three days a week, supported by a wonderful team of volunteers. My thanks go to Judy Poulsen, who has worked through a multitude of variations in hours to ensure we remained open and fully staffed while we made various appointments.

The Sherwood Club roll remains constant at around 26 clients enrolled, with an average of 18–20 people attending on each of the three days we are open. There is always ongoing discussion about increasing the number of days the Club operates. However, our contract with Health New Zealand/Te Whatu Ora increased by only 2% this year and has not had a significant uplift in funding since it was first signed in 2016.

In addition to catering for people living with mild to moderate dementia mate wareware through our day programme, we endeavour to support other people living with dementia in the community. We currently have more than 60 additional clients registered with us. Our Dementia Navigator, Rayleen Wright, works with these clients. Some attend the Active Brain Network, while others are supported through regular contact, including monthly phone calls.

In addition, we support 95 care partners. A small number have signed up for the Carer Support Group, with a smaller number attending on a monthly basis. This group has been coordinated by volunteer Janet Willson alongside Rayleen for the past seven years.

Janet has indicated that she will be standing down at the end of the year. Our very sincere thanks go to Janet for her commitment to this organisation, which extends back to the previous three and a half years when she was the Manager. We hope to continue to see Janet from time to time, as we are not quite ready to let her go from our whānau.

Another service gaining momentum, and one that is clearly meeting an unmet need in our community, is our **Good Grief programme**. Run by Rayleen Wright, who is a trained grief coach, the programme now has three strands supporting people experiencing anticipated grief while living alongside someone with dementia mate wareware; those who have lost a loved one through the **"After the Storm"** programme; and an ongoing support group for people who have completed the programme. This programme recognises the unique and often difficult grief experienced by care partners when the person they love is still physically present but has changed significantly from the person they once knew.

Worldwide, the number of people living with dementia mate wareware continues to grow. This trend is reflected in Gisborne, with more than 700 people in Tairāwhiti estimated to be living with dementia mate wareware. This number is projected to reach around 1,210 by 2050. *(Reference: Alzheimer's New Zealand statistics.)*

We would love to extend our outreach to more people living with dementia mate wareware and their whānau. However, with more than 60% of our funding needing to be sourced through community grants, fundraising and philanthropic funders, our options are very limited. This continues to be one of the major challenges facing our organisation.

We remain very dependent on our volunteers to support us in the Sherwood Club, the garden and on the Board. Last year, our volunteer hours reduced by 300 hours, which equates to approximately seven hours a week. This is equivalent to being short of two volunteers in the Sherwood Club each week. There were certainly times when it was a stretch to meet our ratio of one staff member to five clients, which put our ability to provide person-centred care under strain.

However, our 2026 survey results indicate that we are maintaining a high standard of care for our Sherwood Club whānau. This is supported by very affirming and grateful feedback from our care partners. This is a significant achievement for a small team and demonstrates the commitment of our staff and volunteers to providing quality, person-centred support.

Looking Ahead to 2027

As we look towards 2027, I am pleased to report that our contract with Health New Zealand/Te Whatu Ora has been renewed for three years. This gives us added security, although the funding round remains an annual process.

We have also entered into an additional contract with Health New Zealand for community education and public information sessions. Currently, we plan to deliver four formal sessions a year, with other opportunities to provide information about dementia mate wareware averaging approximately one per month. These are usually presentations to community groups or health providers.

The funding for this work was previously only $500 a year. Health New Zealand recognised that this was not sustainable and has significantly increased the contract to $26,000 a year. However, this also includes a requirement for us to research and establish a Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) programme in Gisborne.

Work on this is already underway, with training scheduled for October with Dr Kathy Peri from the University of Auckland. This is an exciting opportunity for Alzheimer's Gisborne/Tairāwhiti and has the potential to provide another valuable service for people living with dementia mate wareware in our community.

In Closing

Looking back over the year, I am proud that, despite the challenges of funding, staffing and volunteer shortages, we have continued to provide consistent and meaningful support to people living with dementia mate wareware and their whānau. We have maintained our core services, strengthened our team, continued our community education work and secured greater funding stability for the next three years.

In closing, my thanks go to my staff, Rayleen, Syméia and Judy. We are a small team who often have to pull together in creative ways to ensure our services can continue. Alongside the Board, and with the

governance support they provide, we are able to fulfil our passion for delivering the best possible services and support for all people living with dementia mate wareware and their whānau.

Thank you to our staff, volunteers, Board members, funders and supporters and, most importantly, to the people living with dementia mate wareware and their whānau who allow us to be part of their journey.

Tracy Robinson



The Sherwood Club 2025-26











