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FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DESK

Kia ora koutou,

As we approach the end of another year, I'm thrilled to share some exciting updates from Epilepsy New Zealand. First, we've successfully adopted our new constitution, a significant milestone that positions us well for the future. The next step is reregistration, which are working towards with confidence ahead of the April 2026 deadline.

We're also proud to announce that Epilepsy New Zealand is now part of Health 15 led by Stroke Aotearoa. A collaborative network of health organisations committed to improving outcomes for all New Zealanders through worksite education and support, helping to lift the understanding and profile of Epilepsy.

Another highlight is the generous bequests we have received for epilepsy research that are about to be made available to the research community. In December, supported by the Neurological Foundation, ENZ will make available substantive grants to fund research into the better understanding of the causation of epilepsy, treatment and possible cure. Ensuring these funds make a lasting impact.

I feel very privileged to be part of the team here at Epilepsy New Zealand and want to thank all the team who work tirelessly to support our important mahi and who make such a difference in the community every day.

As we head into the holiday season, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all our supporters, volunteers, Board members, and partners. Your dedication makes everything we do possible.

Meri Kirihimete me te Hape Nū la / Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



[Email Tracy Here!](#)



Epilepsy NZ's Christmas Tree at [The Meteor Theatre, Hamilton](#)

CHRISTMAS OFFICE CLOSURE

Our office will be closed for the Christmas break from **Monday 22 December** and will reopen on **Monday 12 January**.

A skeleton team of staff will be available from **Monday 5 January** for non-urgent enquiries, but response times may be slower than usual.

If you or someone you support experiences an emergency during this period, please contact your local GP or phone **111** immediately.

Wishing you a safe and restful holiday season. ❤️

MAKE YOUR OWN ENZ CHRISTMAS TREE DECORATION

The flame is a symbol of light and hope, and this year ENZ has created a very special [Christmas Decoration](#). Please see our [Blog](#) to create the flame decoration for your tree.



**Growing their
mullets for
charity**

2025 CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Bring a Little Light This Christmas – Honour Dixon ❤️

This Christmas, we remember Dixon, a brave and vibrant 9-year-old who lived with Dravet Syndrome, a rare and severe form of epilepsy.

Despite immense challenges, Dixon inspired others through his generosity, humour, and love for creating joy - like his magical fairy gardens.

Before his passing on 23 September 2025, Dixon dreamed of growing and cutting his mullet with his best friend Jacob to raise funds for Epilepsy New Zealand (ENZ), helping families feel supported and less alone.

That dream lives on. On 19 December, Jacob and Dixon's cousin Davina will cut their hair in tribute.

You can honour Dixon's light by **donating** to the [Growing Their Mullets For Charity](#) fundraiser or directly to [Epilepsy New Zealand](#).

Every gift helps carry Dixon's legacy forward, bringing comfort and practical support to families navigating epilepsy.

[TO DONATE IN HONOUR OF DIXON - CLICK HERE](#)

[READ DIXON'S FULL STORY HERE](#)



NEW EPILEPSY RESEARCH GRANTS NOW OPEN!

Thanks to the generosity of recent bequests, Epilepsy New Zealand is proud to launch a new epilepsy research grants programme.

Thanks to our partnership with the Neurological Foundation, they will provide technical and administrative support to manage the grants process, while all funding decisions will continue to be made by the Epilepsy New Zealand Board.

We are now welcoming applications for:

Epilepsy NZ Project Grants – up to \$250,000

<https://grants.neurological.org.nz/grants/2026a-epilepsy-nz-project>

Epilepsy NZ Small Project Grants – up to \$20,000

<https://grants.neurological.org.nz/grants/2026a-epilepsy-nz-small-project>

These grants will support research projects that align with our donors' wishes, helping to improve understanding of the causes of epilepsy and advance treatment options.

If you are part of the research or clinical community, we encourage you to apply and be part of shaping a better future for people living with epilepsy.

Together, we can drive meaningful breakthroughs and bring hope to individuals, whānau and communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.



Check out the [Neurological Foundation Website Research page](#)



PARTNERING WITH HEALTH15 TO IMPROVE WORKPLACE WELLBEING

Epilepsy New Zealand is proud to be part of Health15 – a groundbreaking health and wellbeing initiative bringing trusted health services directly into workplaces.

Our CEO, Tracy Tierney, and Board Member Philippa Tolley were privileged to attend the [Stroke Aotearoa](#) Parliament Event, highlighting the importance of collaboration across the health sector.

Through shared knowledge and collective action, Health15 is helping build healthier, more supportive communities – and we're excited to add our voice and experience to this important mahi.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN

Looking for meaningful children's resources over the Christmas break?

Epilepsy New Zealand has supportive children's books available as downloadable PDFs – along with videos to help bring the stories to life:

- ✧ *Because You Are My Friend*
- ✧ *The Niggle*

There's also a [fun guide](#) on how to make your own [Niggle!](#)

These stories help children understand epilepsy, build confidence, and feel supported - because every child deserves to feel seen, understood and empowered.

If you would like hard copies of the books, please contact your [local educator](#).

[CHECK THE RESOURCES OUT HERE](#)



NEUROLOGICAL ALLIANCE Uses Milestone Birthday to Call for Government Action Before It's Too Late

Epilepsy New Zealand is proud to be part of the 20-member Neurological Alliance.

This year, the Alliance is celebrating 25 years since its establishment and is using this milestone to call for government action on neurological conditions - conditions that cost New Zealand billions of dollars each year.

The Neurological Alliance works to advocate for better outcomes for all people affected by neurological conditions.

"We want to work with the government to address the huge burden of neurological conditions," says Easton. "If we do nothing, future healthcare costs are going to skyrocket. The time for the government to act is now."

[Neurological Alliance Website](#)

WILLS MONTH - THANK YOU

ENZ would like to say **thank you** for supporting Wills Month 2025.

Wills Month is a time to encourage people to write a will whilst at the same time, consider leaving a legacy gift to a charity (after providing for your loved ones). Wills written through Gathered Here are completely **free** and include **free updates for life**. No matter how many times your plans change, you can update your will easily. Free wills can be written year round.

Be part of our mission. Leave just 1% to Epilepsy New Zealand and make a lasting difference for people living with epilepsy.

[GATHERED HERE FREE WILL WRITING](#)



LET'S TALK ABOUT MONTH

November was **Let's Talk About It!** month - a time to spark conversation, build connection, and bring epilepsy into the open.

A huge thank you to everyone who took part and shared their experiences. Your voices help raise awareness, challenge stigma, and remind others that they're not alone.

If you'd like to read some of these powerful stories, you can find them on our [Facebook page](#).

ENZ TURNS 70 IN 2026 AND PURPLE DAY IS FAST APPROACHING!

Next year marks an incredible milestone - **70 years of Epilepsy New Zealand** supporting, advocating for, and walking alongside people living with epilepsy across Aotearoa. It's a moment worth celebrating, reflecting on, and building from - and what better way to kick things off than with **Purple Day on 26 March**?

Purple Day is just around the corner, so now's the perfect time to get inspired, **save the date**, and start planning how you'll get involved.

HOW WILL YOU PARTICIPATE?

Here are a few ideas to spark inspiration:

-  Host a 70th birthday-themed fundraiser
-  Hold a purple bake sale, morning tea, or school event
-  Run a workplace/school challenge or **dress-in-purple** day
-  Volunteer your time to help raise awareness
-  Or create something uniquely **you** — big or small, every effort counts

Whether you're a school, workplace, community group, or individual, your involvement helps start conversations, reduce stigma, and support people living with epilepsy.

So go on - **mark your calendar**, grab your purple, and let's make next year a Purple Day to remember.

More resources and ideas are coming soon... but for now:

-  **Save the date - 26 March 2026**
(or anytime during the month of March).

[Let the planning begin!](#)



Sudden Changes in Temperature

Some *scientific studies have shown that there is a link between sudden changes in temperature and seizures



- Slowly switch temperatures to prevent it from affecting your bodily systems
- Switch off the air-con for some time before going out into the heat; to ease your body into adjusting to the temperature change
- Keep windows open to keep you cool; then temperature differences between indoors and outdoors isn't as different

*<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22212984/>



FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Have you checked out our **Summer Weather** mini-series on our Facebook page?

Summer often brings sudden changes in temperature, and for some people living with epilepsy, hot weather can sometimes be linked to increased seizure activity.

In the warmer months, you might move quickly from an air-conditioned room into intense heat. For some people, this rapid temperature change *may* act as a trigger. Taking a moment to let your body adjust when moving between different environments can help reduce this risk.

Our mini-series shares simple, practical tips to help you stay safe and well during the summer months – be sure to check it out on our [Facebook page](#).



YOUR EVERYDAY MOMENTS

♥ Help us grow our photo library – and celebrate life beyond epilepsy.

Do you, or someone you love, have epilepsy? We'd love to see photos of you living life to the fullest – at work, school, playing sport, enjoying hobbies, or spending time with friends and whānau.

📷 Send your photos to Bobbi at marketing@epilepsy.org.nz.

By sending your photo, you're giving us permission to share it on our social media, website, and other promotional material. If you're under 18, please make sure a parent or guardian sends the photo.

Let's capture life beyond epilepsy, together. Thank you for helping us spread awareness and challenge stigma! ♥

[ENZ Website](#)

ONLINE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

LIMITED **FREE** TRAINING STILL
AVAILABLE!

For Schools In:
Northland, Tauranga,
Eastern Bay of Plenty, Canterbury and
Hutt Region.



SEIZURESMT SCHOOLS

Do you have tamariki at school or are you a teacher?

Thanks to our generous funders free training for schools is still available in: Northland, Tauranga, Eastern Bay of Plenty, Canterbury and Hutt Region.

Epilepsy NZ's [SeizureSmart Schools](#) programme is an online educational programme designed to be completed at your own pace. It takes approximately 40 mins to complete. Please view our other online training offerings in the links below.

[SeizureSmart Schools • Epilepsy New Zealand](#)
[SeizureSmart Workplaces • Epilepsy New Zealand](#)
[SeizureSmart Disability • Epilepsy New Zealand](#)

 **FREEPHONE**
0800 37 45 37



If you require treatment advice please contact your health provider or ring 111 in an emergency

For general health advice, please ring 0800 611 116 - anytime

If you are experiencing mental distress, please call or text 1737 - anytime

Epilepsy New Zealand is a registered charity CC10611

Visit us at

www.epilepsy.org.nz

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