

President's Report to the Association of Psychotherapists Aotearoa New Zealand (APANZ) AGM 2026

25 May 2026

John O'Connor

Kia Ora APANZ Members,

Korihi te manu	The bird sings
Tākiri mai i te ata	The morning has dawned
Ka ao, ka ao, ka awatea	The day has broken
Tihei Mauri Ora!	Behold, there is life!
E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā manu tioriori, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa!	

Carl Jung suggests,

the shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with [us] in some form. It cannot be argued out of existence or rationalized into harmlessness. This problem is exceedingly difficult, because it .. reminds [us] ... of [our] helplessness (C. G. Jung)

To associate, I suggest, is to bare our helplessness together, rather than in isolation. In this Association of creativity and challenge I am proud that we welcome the shadow material with which we all grapple, in the hope that we might come to know it more fully and perhaps even to befriend it, as we encounter our own helplessness, in the company of others.

As we all know only too well, our world is meeting the consequences in these turbulent times, of the human tendency to disown that which is uncomfortable within ourselves, that which we struggle to befriend; rather through projection we fling it out, into the other, often violently, and with sometimes horrifically destructive consequences.

It is I think therefore courageous indeed for us all to attempt the emotionally challenging task of welcoming that which it is our impulse to refuse. And it is an undertaking, full of creative possibility. For those of you new to our Association, and for those who have been part of it for a short or long time, we all discover no shortage of shadow material within and amongst us. As with any gathering of human beings, alongside warmth, love and generosity, there is also, inevitably, aggression, hate, violence and all the shadow material that makes us human: and yet, there is something in the specifics of our way of being in relation to shadow, in this Association, which I greatly admire.

We are willing to attempt to think, often deeply, about that which is troubling us, to attempt to pause and avoid the risks of simplistically enacting our disowned aspects: but rather, underpinned by a commitment to acceptance of our human connection to each other, and to this vulnerable planet, upon which we all depend, to attempt to understand, and more than that, to feel, that which we find unbearable.

Conference February 2026

I was so delighted to be with so many of us at our recent February APANZ Conference as we explored together "What we do in the Shadows". The tapestry of our Conference 2026 was

beautiful. The Conference commenced with Haare Williams, APANZ pae ārahi and Waka Oranga kaumātua; his words of aroha, spoken with such generosity. I am also so grateful to Margaret Poutu Morice, Cherry Pye, and Waka Oranga, who so generously provided such loving support to Haare and to the Conference. We were surrounded by the manākitanga of the mana whenua and held by the mauri of Te Wharewaka o Poneke. Joyce Slochower, our keynote speaker, presented with such relational care to an appreciative audience. And so many beautiful, wise and painful papers were shared by our own members during the Conference - received with enthusiasm and gratitude by the Conference attendees. At times as politically disturbing as these, being in the company of each other, is so vital. We were also so blessed by Lynne Holdem, Gabriela Mercado and Catriona Cairns, whose remarkable and distinguished service was so deservedly celebrated, complete with fireworks and the beautiful moana of Te Whanganui-a-Tara. My heart is left with gratitude, grief, and joy. Thank you to all, and especially our loving, dedicated, and incredibly skilful conference organisers Diane Zwimpfer, Eric Metcalf, Sue Morrison, Catriona Cairns, and Helen Florence.

APANZ Creative Activities and Future Governance: Appreciations and Challenges.

2025-2026 has been a busy and energising time for the Association. I am delighted that Alisa Hirschfeld and Kathy Davidson have taken up the role of new editors of the APANZ Newsletter and have recently published their excellent first Newsletter of 2026. And Kerry Thomas-Anttila and Anna Fleming are beginning preparations for the first edition of 2026 of Ata: Journal of Psychotherapy Aotearoa New Zealand, as its new editors. I am also so grateful to our dedicated Honorary Secretary who has carefully shepherded us all through the process of re-incorporation with the Company's Office under the new Incorporated Societies Act 2022. I am delighted to confirm we have been successfully re-incorporated. Thank you so much Vijay.

My profound gratitude to all branch conveners, and my fellow Council members for their dedicated and creative work. There is so much life in our Association, with new guidelines being provided to APANZ members in relation to AI by our Ethics Committee chaired by Kate Dent Rennie who continues to work so skilfully as our Chair of Ethics. Branch activities provide stimulating presentations and ideas to digest, as did the wonderful and stimulating collegiality of our recent conference organised by the Conference Committee. Alongside this we have the ongoing development by Claire Miranda and the digital communications team of the Nexus website and its many offerings for psychotherapy professional development. This committee is also planning some new communication initiatives so watch this space. The committee that is Whakaoho Aroha TTBC, with Susan Horne as Chair, is working tirelessly to assist the ongoing interface of te ao Māori in relation to psychotherapy within our Association and in this country. In addition, the ever generous and thoughtful Verity Armstrong's and Gina O'Neil's presence on the Council bring invaluable insight to strengthen the vital Te Tiriti relationship between Waka Oranga and APANZ. And we have new initiatives being planned, and creative and valuable contributions being offered from our public issues team headed by Rick Williment in relation to the many sociopolitical challenges we all face. Our ACP Chair Catriona Cairns and the ACP team provide our excellent training to registration as a Psychotherapist. And our Education Fund Committee with guidance from Jane Tuson supports the research and professional development activities of APANZ members. Kathryn MacKenzie is working assiduously as APANZ liaison between ACC and APANZ ACC registered practitioners. Jo McKenzie is central to the work of Whakaoho Aroha TTBC, and an invaluable and thoughtful voice on council. Jane Tuson works with dedication and great skill as our expert Honorary Treasurer. And Vijay Mahantesh, as Honorary Secretary, provides very able leadership. And

most importantly thank you so much to Carmel Lai our heartfelt, ever generous, loving and helpful administrator. We would be lost without you and I am so grateful. Thank you. It is a pleasure to be part of such a creative and hard-working team.

President-elect

And we do need the positions of President and President-elect to be filled by our membership at our June AGM. I have approached numerous people, about the possibility of taking up this position, but unfortunately, at the time of writing, without success. My term as President is due to end at the June AGM 2026, and I will not be available to continue after the AGM, either as President or as past President, if someone from the APANZ membership has not stepped into the President's role. Given that I am now in Australia, and more of my life and activities are focused here, I need more space to continue to build things in Australia for me and my family and continuing to fulfil many of the President's tasks would become too onerous beyond June 2026. I am happy to support someone to step into the role as President-elect and President, from the past President role, but do need some new leadership to emerge from amongst our membership.

With the above in mind, at the Zoom meeting on April 22 to which all members were invited, there was strong support expressed for more than one person to carry out the tasks and functions of President, in service of reducing the workload and supporting the Presidency. And at the APANZ Council meeting on 9 and 10 May Council decided to put forward a proposal at the 2026 AGM that both a President-Elect and a President be appointed by Council and announced at the AGM, and that the tasks and functions of the role of President be shared by the two people elected as President-Elect and President. This is very similar to our current model but with the emphasis being that whilst nominally one person is named as President-Elect, and one person as President, the roles and tasks of President will be shared equally between the two people appointed. [This will require one minor one word change to the APANZ Constitution, a remit for which appears in the AGM agenda]. We also remind members that they are warmly invited to attend the Annual Members' Forum, to be held on Monday 8 June at 7pm - 9pm where this and any other matters of interest to the membership can be discussed.

I also ask all branches to invite members to consider this challenge at their upcoming meetings. In addition, the recent and upcoming Mindfields zoom meetings on the fourth Monday of each month at 7 pm, are further opportunities to reflect on this challenge.

And should anyone want to discuss the President role with me, or have any interest in it, do feel free to contact me by email; johnnygj@xtra.co.nz.

Concluding Reflections

This will be my last AGM report as President of APANZ, before I step down at our AGM. I have been involved with APANZ since the late 1990s. I have seen us navigate much turbulent water, and tricky terrain. Statutory registration of our profession, the ongoing challenges of the climate imperative, bicultural engagement in relation to te ao Māori, profound differences in perspectives on the nature of our clinical work, being but a few of these. Such challenges have never been easy. They have required heart, courage, and a willingness to keep engaging across difference. And it is this capacity, the capacity to stay, rather than to retreat, to engage

when it is tempting to make wrong or bad, to learn, and to continually transform, which for me has been at the heart of my experience of our Association, and which I have so greatly valued. It is a capacity rare in our world, and one which I think is so precious. I look forward to continual engagement, as we grapple and celebrate together, our Association and the life of psychotherapy in this country.

John O'Connor

APANZ President