

# **Te Tau Ihu (The Top of the South Island) Convenor's Report to the Association of Psychotherapists Aotearoa New Zealand (APANZ) AGM 2026**

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Our group is a small regional group. Membership has varied according to a range of factors – people have been attracted to training in psychotherapy and then enthusiasm has changed, family commitments create an ongoing tension for some, and then people move into and out of the region more often than might be experienced in a larger city. We also include other professions who feel more at home in a psychotherapeutic mindset, with a psychologist and psychiatrist included in our cohort. A couple of senior members retired during the last year. Perhaps in part as a response to this, the group has felt more mobile, and it was more obvious that the structure of the last few years was less satisfying to the majority of members based on discussions as well as a reduced attendance. We'd been alternating between a topic-driven meeting, and a Balint-style supervision group.

A key discussion occurred at the end-of-year restaurant meal that we've had as long as I've been a part of the group. Only five attended and because of the intimacy, this promoted free-flowing discussion about what wasn't working so well in our group and ways that might promote change. We've rationalized the email list down from mid-20s to its current number of 14. From the beginning of this year, we've engaged in discussion about how to promote a more engaging group. It was apparent that it worked as a forum for collegial support, but that it wasn't optimal in the areas of supervision and extending our practice. Presentations still did occur on occasion, but because of the small numbers of attendees, it would be too onerous for this to occur regularly.

Some subtle but noticeable changes have occurred – we now pull in chairs from the square perimeter of the room in which we meet and form up a tighter circle, food and drink are brought - but mostly the group has abandoned the traditional agenda and has resolved to work with what is energising for the members who attend the four-weekly evening group. So far it has seemed to more immediately respond to supervisory and extending practice needs of members than our previous structure, and remains in process. Between 5 and 10 members attend on each occasion, with typically fewer as the days shorten and the evenings are colder. Topics are wide-ranging, including artificial intelligence, war, politics, cost-of-living, LBGTQI, screens and generational change. What seems to keep all of this alive is the members' internal search for meaning, it's application in our consulting rooms and examining psychotherapy as a practice in our current world context.

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Convenor