

80 years of advocacy and member service

New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association

1920

Speech therapy began in Christchurch at the School for the Deaf. It was to this school that children with difficulties travelled to for help with their speech. Adults with war injuries impacting speech were also directed to the school.

1920

1921 and 1922

Three teachers sent from the School for the Deaf to Dunedin, Wellington, and Auckland to initiate the first speech classes in New Zealand.



Above:

Miss Marion E. Saunders, first president and first director of speech therapy training.

1930

Miss Marion E. Saunders appointed to establish a speech class at the Normal School, Christchurch.

1930

1939

The Education Department altered policy enabling teachers interested in speech and hearing disability to set up speech clinics instead of classes.

1940

1942

Christchurch Teachers College chosen as first centre for formal speech therapy training – a one year course post 2-years of primary teacher training. Three students selected – Evelyn Widdowson, Grace Gane and Muriel Lister.

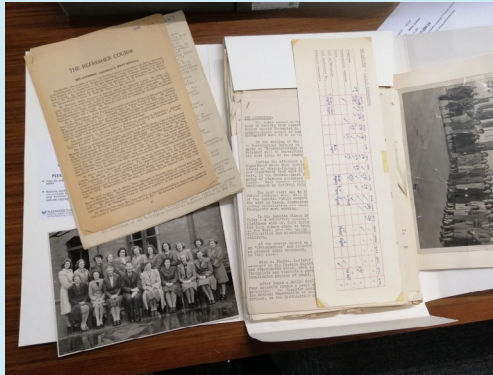


Above:

First three speech therapy students 1942.

1944

The Hutt Valley Speech Therapy Association formed. (Other regions followed – Otago, North Canterbury, Wellington...)



Left:

The first five years of NZST Journals.

1954

Annual general meetings and conferences moved to biennial events for ten years.

1950

1960

1946

The New Zealand Speech Therapists' Journal founded in May with Grace Gane as editor. A practical supplement of value to parents and teachers accompanied each issue.

The New Zealand Speech Therapy Association formed in Christchurch in August, during the first refresher course for therapists to be held in New Zealand. Thirty-three members recorded as having paid the first annual membership fee of £1.



Above:
Registrants at first refresher course 1946.

1965

Incorporated as a society, the New Zealand Speech Therapy Association (Incorporated).

1968

Speech therapy training changed to a two-year course following one-year primary teacher training.



Left:

Speech Therapy Journal supplement – 1959.

1970

“

Let us remember that we are part of a movement in New Zealand which is still active and growing. We must record now. It is almost a duty to write down something of what we like to recollect about our experience. Not all of it will find its way into print but. If written down, it will be there to be called on when needed. It should not be lost. It is our very own history, and it is precious.

Marion E. Saunders, April 1971 – quoted in *Looking Back with Joy – Recollections of an Early New Zealand Speech Therapist*.

1973

Marion Saunders' Trust Fund launched dedicated in perpetuity as a prize fund for original writing or research into matters or problems related to speech therapy.

Right:
Final diploma graduates 1988–9.



1979

Mary Roberts became advisor in speech therapy to the Department of Education.

1980

1978

The McKeracher Report recommended degree training in speech therapy.

1982

Movement from area executive to a national executive adopted with Lois Lawn as first president of new national format.

Marilyn Heine became advisor for speech therapy at the Department of Health to ensure that the training enabled therapists to work in health as well as education.

1983

Budget announcement that a Bachelor of Speech-Language Therapy would be set up at the University of Canterbury with open entry.

First edition of the NZSTA Bulletin published – for more practical sharing of professional news and events in addition to the journal.

1987

Speech-language therapy training extended to three-year diploma course post one-year primary teacher training.

1989

The first 25 students enrolled for the intermediate year of the BSLT programme with Jo de Seriere as head of department.

The last diploma students graduated.

1992

Speech-language therapists increasingly incorporate dysphagia as part of their remit. Inaugural dysphagia themed conference: *Speaking of Swallowing*.

Communication Matters first published.

1994

Adopted the standards contained in "Communicating Quality" (RCSLT). Standards were gradually modified to meet our unique cultural and geographical needs.

1996

50th anniversary of NZSTA.

Inaugural joint NZSTA and AASH conference: *Communication Partnership* – first of its kind with Australasia.

First Speak Week – a collaboration between Telecom, The New Zealand Disorders Trust and NZSTA.

NZSTA's position regarding ethics, standards, quality measures and complaints procedures articulated – a move towards self-regulation.

The *Asia-Pacific Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing* is launched – Bruce Murdoch as editor.

1990

1986

NZSTA joined a working party with representatives from health, education, and current lecturers. The goal was to integrate the needs of both health and education and ensure it underpinned the philosophy and content of the proposed Bachelor of Speech-Language Therapy at the University of Canterbury.

1993

Dame Ann Hercus launched the New Zealand Communication Disorders Trust. NZSTA donated \$1,000.

The first 14 students graduated from the BSLT programme.

1995

The outcome of the review of the BSLT programme at University of Canterbury secured the future of speech-language therapy education in New Zealand including masters and PhDs.

1999

NZSTA official logo registered with a certificate of trademark registration from the Intellectual Property Office.



Left:

Evelyn Terris, Anne Buckley, Rosemary Hargreaves, Sally Claridge, Jo de Seriere.



Above:

Past NZSTA logo.



Left:
Programme
Accreditation
Framework working
party – 2002.

2002

Launch of the Programme Accreditation Framework reflecting both New Zealand and international values and standards related to speech-language therapy education. Framework updated in 2011 and will undergo a formal review in 2022–23.

2005

Massey University established the Bachelor of Speech and Language Therapy with Honours at the Albany campus, Auckland.

2010

Dean Sutherland appointed as first male president.

Established new NZSTA executive council portfolio of Māori and Multicultural Development.

2003

University of Canterbury programme successfully accredited against the NZSTA Programme Accreditation Framework.

NZSTA a founding member of Allied Health Aotearoa New Zealand (AHANZ) (formerly Allied Health Association of NZ) – a national voice for allied health professions.

Master of Speech Language Therapy Practice established at University of Auckland along with PhD opportunities.

2008

The Mutual Recognition of Professional Association Credentials signed at ASHA Congress in Chicago between ASHA, CASLPA, RCSLT, IASLT, SPA and NZSTA.

2000

2010

2013

Volume 16 the *Asia Pacific Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing* (APJSLH) published under a new title: *Speech, Language and Hearing* (SLH) – Michael Robb as editor.

2014

NZSTA, a founding member of the International Communication Project whose aim is to influence international health and disability policy. Over 50 organisations participate now.

2015

Karen Brewer established He Kete Whanaungatanga – a support network for Māori SLTs.

2016

Launch of yearlong advocacy campaign – Giving Voice Aotearoa including communication accessible awards and the development of communication access principles.

Successful bid to host an IALP 2022 congress (postponed to 2023).

2018

Establishment of a consumer reference group and consumer lead position.

At the United Nations' Universal Periodic Review for New Zealand NZSTA highlighted actions the Government can take to work towards the goal of a fully accessible society for Aotearoa.

2011

Judge Andrew Becroft appointed the first patron of NZSTA.



Above:
NZSTA Board with kaumatua,
Te Roro o Te Rangi ki Te Kuirau Marae.



Right:

Giving Voice Aotearoa
Consumer Representative:
Geneva Hakaraia-Tino.

2019

Appointment of kaumatua, Rukingi Haupapa (Te Arawa, Ngāti Whakaue) and the development of our NZSTA kaupapa including our waiata: Tōnā Reo.

NZSTA established a self-regulation model and began issuing annual practising certificates.

Third joint NZSTA and SPA conference: *Engaging, Collaborating and Empowering*, hosted in Brisbane

Postponement of biennial conference to 2021.



Left:
Tangata whenua and tangata Tiriti members come together to co-design the first Tiriti o Waitangi policy.

2022

A significant shift towards shared leadership, strengthened governance, and a growing Māori leadership within the Association.

The second wānanga for Māori SLTs and students was hosted at Kuirau Marae in Rotorua.

2024

NZSTA delivered major workforce advocacy by building on the 2023 workforce data, advancing the case for stronger workforce planning, training capacity, student support, scholarships, and retention.

The Te Rito 42 module bicultural competency e-learning modules were launched.

2020

2021

75 years on, the New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association continues to flourish. A vision of a thriving profession working in partnership to enhance lives is embedded with its values of kotahitanga, whanaungatanga, rangatiratanga and aroha.

Members number over 1,000.

Executive director role and three Māori tohu (awards) introduced.



Left:
Koha (cultural gifts) of glass kōauau gifted to the recipients of the tohu awards.

2023

NZSTA co-hosted the 32nd IALP World Congress-a major international event that raised NZSTA's visibility and connected members with the global speech-language therapy community.

NZSTA undertook major workforce data collection and business case development, laying the foundation for stronger advocacy for the SLT workforce.

There are 20 SLTs per 100,000 population in New Zealand, compared with >42/100,000 in Australia.

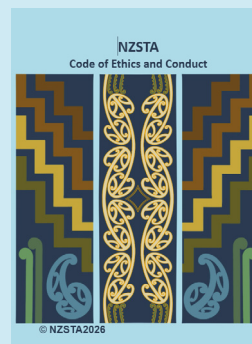


2026

NZSTA grew to more than 1,500 members

A landmark growth milestone, strengthening NZSTA's voice, influence, and responsibility as the professional body for speech-language therapists in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The year also saw major work on self-regulation, including a major rewrite of the Code of Ethics to ensure alignment with our Te Tiriti Responsiveness Policy.



Left:
Cover of Code
of Ethics 2026.

2025

NZSTA launched the Strategic Plan 2026–2030 and clarified advocacy priorities focused on workforce, access, public safety, communication and swallowing needs, and the future of the profession.

The Tiriti Responsiveness Policy, Programme Accreditation Framework and updated Scope of Practice were launched.

Annually, NZSTA hosts the SLT Leaders' Summit with all sectors represented - health, education, justice, disability, private practice, tertiary education and Māori and Pacific special interest groups.



Left:
SLT Leaders' Summit.