



# New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association

*Te Kāhui Kaiwhakatikatika Reo Kōrero o Aotearoa*

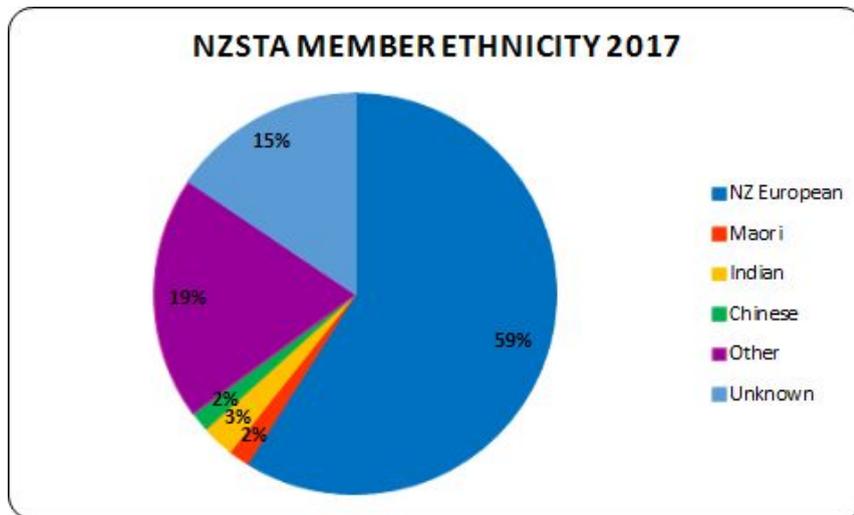
## **Briefing paper for Hon Carmel Sepuloni introducing The New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association.**

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce you to The New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association (NZSTA). We are in our 66<sup>th</sup> year as an Association. We are the professional body for Speech-language Therapists in New Zealand.

### **Key facts**

- Over 800 members nationally.
- We are not a government registered profession in NZ. We self-regulate members.
- Requirement for members to complete annual Continuing Professional Development – audited by the NZSTA.
- Code of Ethics and Ethical Complaints Process – NZSTA Principles & Rules of Ethics – <https://speechtherapy.org.nz/about-slt/ethics/>
- Membership is not compulsory, although many DHBs require employees to maintain membership.
- Accrediting body of the four speech-language therapy university programmes in New Zealand (The University of Auckland, Massey University, University of Canterbury (two programmes)).
- Responsible for the approval of international SLT qualifications.
- Writes own professional practice standards and endorses others.
- Member of the Allied Health Associations of Aotearoa (AHANZ).
- Member of the International Association of Logopaedics and Phoniatics (IALP).
- Signatory of the international Mutual Recognition of Credentials Agreement with the Royal College of Speech Language Therapists (UK), Speech, Audiology, Communication (SAC), The American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA), the Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists (Ireland), and Speech Pathology Australia (Australia).

Figure 3: Showing the diversity of our membership:

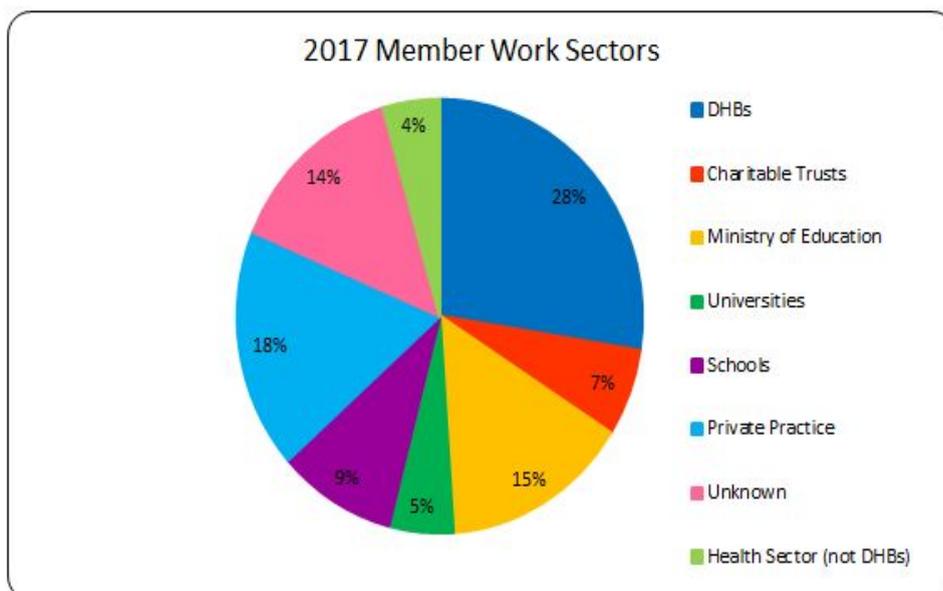


### **The role of an SLT**

Speech-language Therapists have tertiary undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications and extensive clinical training. In New Zealand we work within District Health Boards, the Ministry of Education, the not for profit sector, Board of Trustees Special Schools, Primary Care, private practice settings and the tertiary education sector. We work with people across the lifespan.

- We enable people with communication disability to communicate to the best of their ability and participate in all aspects of their lives.
- We support people with swallowing difficulties to eat and drink as safely as possible.
- We advocate for our clients and whānau.
- We collaborate with our interprofessional colleagues across health, education and justice sectors.

Figure 2: Showing where SLTs work across NZ:



### Key issues for New Zealand Speech-language Therapists

- We are not a government registered profession and membership is not compulsory.
- Members report challenges in meeting the needs of our clients and whānau given increasing caseloads and no changes to staff FTE. There is unmet need in many sectors. Access to Speech-language Therapy can be limited for several groups including, pre-school children, school age children with non specific diagnosis, adults requiring longer term rehabilitation and waiting lists for crucial services such as rehabilitation following head and neck cancer.
- Challenges are reported in retaining experienced SLTs due to the perceived limited career progression and low wages.

### Current projects targeting these issues

- The NZSTA has consulted with stakeholders and members on the topic of registration. The NZSTA is rolling out a self regulation framework from September 2018.
- NZ SLTs are involved in research projects that will provide important NZ relevant data on communication and swallowing disabilities in Aotearoa and evidence based approaches for treatment.
- Awareness campaign – Giving Voice Aotearoa – <https://speechtherapy.org.nz/about-slt/giving-voice-2>, Our vision is a communication accessible Aotearoa

### Call to Action for the Ministry

- Support our Association in mandating that all speech-language therapists are members of the New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association.

- Consider funding to target the unmet need in our health and education systems for those with communication and swallowing disabilities through improved access to speech-language therapists.
- Support our Giving Voice Aotearoa campaign and legislation that enables all New Zealanders to participate fully in their lives - accessible easy read information, accessible communication environments, the opportunity to communicate in any format and be involved in decision making about their lives.

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