

Co-chairpersons' Report for the 2026 AGM of the Epilepsy Waikato Charitable Trust

Welcome and Acknowledgements

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou i tēnei rā. Nau mai, haere mai ki te hui a-tau o te Epilepsy Waikato Charitable Trust.

Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

Welcome to all members, trustees, and guests - here in person or via the 5g - for this 2026 Annual General Meeting of the Epilepsy Waikato Charitable Trust (EWCT).

This one is difficult, in that the Board must announce that - despite our best efforts - EWCT have become another casualty of a charitable sector strained by increased demand colliding with decreased resourcing.

An alarming reduction in funding was noted by the Board at EWCT's 2025 AGM. Tracey Morgan and Jacqui Elphick can be commended for securing funds from multiple community and corporate grant providers. And special thanks go again to our treasurer, Ashita Bhudia, who has managed to eke out the (very) petty cash for longer than we believed possible. But the sad reality is that EWCT's funding successes of the last financial year are notable predominantly for their shrinkage (see governance, below); and operations are hampered by a Board comprised of full-time workers who are well-intentioned but time-poor.

Financial reports reviewed at a recent Board meeting indicated EWCT has sufficient resources to play the same meaningful role in the lives of those affected by epilepsy, only until the end of October 2026. Even this was facilitated in part by the generosity of David Nicholls, who resigned from his part-time administrative role then continued his work on a volunteer basis and as a member of the Board. Thank you David! (If only we had been paying you enough for this to make a significant difference!)

Ultimately, the Board believes we have a duty of care to our members, our community, and our superlative staff member, Esther Little. To fight the good fight but be realistic in defeat. So this evening we sadly seek your support to wind down EWCT and pass the baton to similarly-directed charitable organisations.

Governance Matters

Funding granted has dropped universally; for example, Hamilton City Council Community received 104 applications, with total funding requests exceeding \$776,697. We applied for \$15,000.00 and received \$2,000.00. We are grateful to Hamilton City Council for their ongoing support and we are not singling them out to criticise them, it is to illustrate the drop in the amounts granted across all our funding avenues. As such we are no longer able to meet our operational costs.

The Board has notified Epilepsy New Zealand that our members will be missing a significant source of support in the Waikato region. ENZ aims to ensure that, when in need, our community can turn to them.

2026 in brief

The primary mission of EWCT has been to support people with epilepsy, along with their wider whānau - including their families, their friends, and their communities. We have been a significant presence in the Waikato region, with our resources also reaching people affected by epilepsy across Aotearoa.

With this mission in mind, EWCT stood for those touched by epilepsy at a range of forums. Our staff member, Esther Liddle, has been a strong presence at Parliament, where she presented on the potential consequences of the Disability Support Services Bill (Tracey Morgan and Esther Liddle), and the Summary Offences (Move-On Orders) Amendment Bill (David Nicholls and Esther Liddle). In total EWCT made 13 submissions to Parliament.

Monitoring devices and alarms update

EWCT is having to end its agency status with Seizure Alert Australia <www.seizurealertaustralia.co.nz>. We are still in the process of working through details regarding remaining stock, notification of relevant agencies etc. We have suggested some suitable candidates as replacement agents to Seizure Alert Australia however the final decision is theirs obviously.

Financial Performance

As noted at the 2025 AGM, the prevailing economic conditions have put EWCT at considerable risk of insufficient capacity to fulfil our commitments to members and staff. That risk is now reality. The Trust will cease operating effective 31 October 2026.

As per section 10 of the EWCT Constitution, the trust is looking at disbursement of assets to at least two other organisations that will be local to the Waikato and not nationally focused. Some remaining inventory (such as books, diaries etc.) may be disbursed to other local organisations where members may continue to get the most benefit from them.

Conclusion

Board members and staff, trustees and supporters, members and volunteers have changed somewhat over the years. (Well, some of you have been around for the duration!) But our purpose has always been singular. Thank you, all, for your support to serve those who are affected by epilepsy. While EWCT may no longer be here, we can continue, each of us, to be a supportive presence in many ways.

Ngā mihi nui,

Tracey Morgan and Rebecca Cupples

Co-Chairs, Epilepsy Waikato Charitable Trust