Headway

Headway NZ Incorporated

Annual Report

2025–26

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Welcome

Chair's Report

This year marks 45 years of Headway supporting people and families affected by brain injury and concussion. It is also the start of an exciting new chapter as we step confidently into our future as Headway NZ Incorporated. The name has changed; our commitment to the concussion and brain injury community, and the organisation's discipline in governance and strategy, has not.

It's been a tough year for the sector, with increased demand and less available funding. Against that backdrop, the Board's focus has been on clear governance, strong alignment to our strategic priorities, and disciplined financial management. I'm pleased to report Headway remains in a strong financial position, well placed to keep delivering meaningful impact into our communities.

Our new name reflects something real: communities across Aotearoa increasingly know and trust Headway as a national voice. The Board is backing that momentum – deepening key relationships and making sure we're ready for the opportunities ahead.

As I complete my first year as Chair, I'm proud to help carry forward what our founders built 45 years ago, and excited for what's next. With Stacey and her team leading the way, we'll keep working to change how Aotearoa responds to concussion and brain injury.



Agnes Wong
Chair
Headway NZ Inc

CE Report

What a year!

More people affected by concussion and brain injury have been supported, connected and informed this year than ever before. Connect Groups have expanded into new communities, our national navigation service has strengthened, and educational reach into schools, community organisations, and workplaces has grown.

Alongside our community services, we have launched significant projects in response to what our community told us mattered. The results are practical resources and tools such as the Concussion in Schools Kit and resources to help GPs better understand CTE.

The Headway Advisory Board was established this year, bringing leading researchers, clinicians and people with lived experience to the table. This group helps to ensure that our messages and actions are informed by the latest research as well as lived experience and helps us to speak up on the issues that matter.

Collaboration sits at the heart of all we achieve. Researchers, clinicians, funders, volunteers, community organisations and people with lived experience all work together to create impact and better outcomes.

Thank you to our staff, volunteers, partners and supporters – and above all, to the people and whānau who trust us to walk alongside them.



Stacey Mowbray
Chief Executive
Headway NZ Inc

Who We Are

Headway

Our Mission

Reducing the impact and incidence of concussion and brain injury through education, information, and connections.

Our Impact

Fewer injuries through prevention-focused education and behaviour change.

Better outcomes through improved knowledge, attitudes, and support systems.

Stronger communities where people are supported, understood, and valued.

Reduced societal burden easing pressure on whānau, communities and systems

How We Achieve This

We focus on three strategic pillars:

Voice for Change

We drive behaviour change, increase public awareness, and influence policies so that concussion and brain injury are understood widely and well-managed.

Fit for Purpose Services

We equip whānau, communities, and organisations with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to recognise, respond to, and prevent concussion and brain injury.

Collaborative System

We develop meaningful partnerships to lead change for a stronger, more equitable system of concussion and brain injury prevention, support and recovery.

What Grounds us

Everything we do is grounded in the following values and commitments



Lived Experience



Trusted research



Collaboration



Courage



Inclusion

Year at a glance 2025/26

Changing the way Aotearoa responds to concussion and brain injury — together.

VOICE FOR CHANGE

22M+

Media impressions across 10 national stories

FIT FOR PURPOSE SERVICES

13

Connect Groups Kaitaia to the Bombay Hills

FIT FOR PURPOSE SERVICES

450,300

Information and advice contacts **nationwide**

COLLABORATIVE SYSTEM

+39%

Growth in new clients, stakeholders and partners

COLLABORATIVE SYSTEM

10

Schools supported through concussion education

COLLABORATIVE SYSTEM

28

Community and Workplace Training workshops

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook and **Instagram**

+100%

Engagement increase

LinkedIn

+76%

Growth in followers

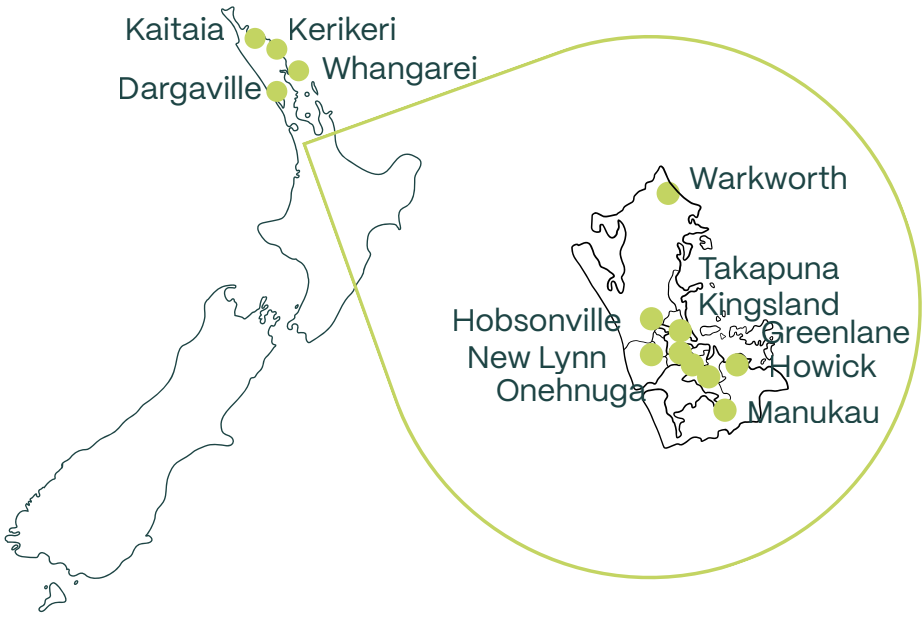
Website

26%

Growth in Active Users

Connect Groups

Established and operating by 30 June 2026
From the Far North to the Bombay Hills



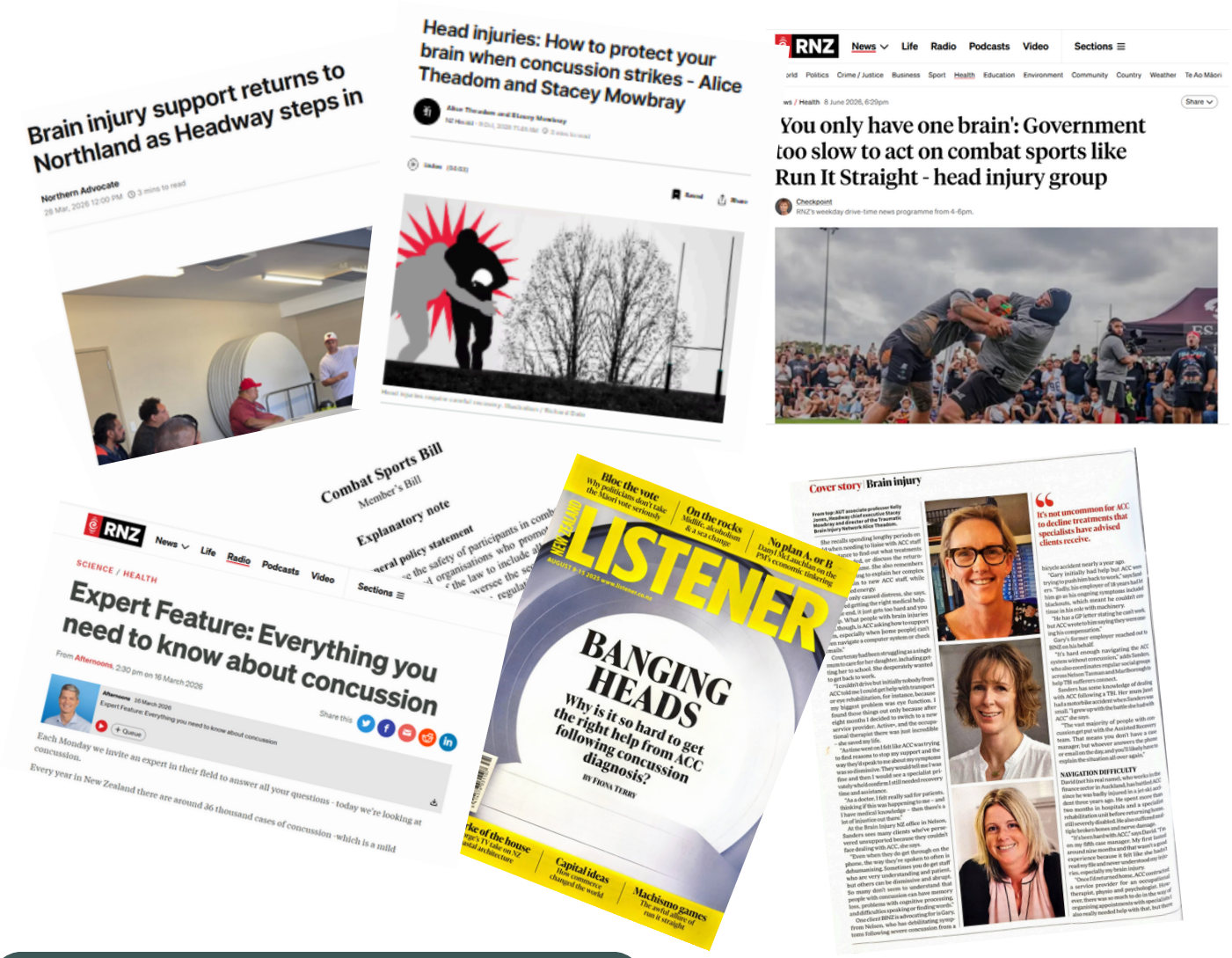
Our Three Pillars

A Voice For Change

Our public voice and advocacy are informed by the experiences and priorities of our community as well as the latest research. We give voice to what matters to our community.

In the Media

Headway's commentary reached an estimated 22 million media impressions, all helping to increase understanding of concussion and brain injury and publicly share what matters to our community.



Advocacy and Change

Our media presence and public voice led to action and change.

Headway was invited to contribute to what that change looks like through feedback on proposed law changes and a coronial inquest submission.



Best Awards and Diary of a Head Injury

Diary of a Head Injury is a powerful 7-minute film about one man's experience of brain injury. It won multiple awards including the Purple Pin at the Best Awards. Entering into these competitions ensured that it was seen by hundreds of thousands of people across the world. We were grateful to be the client on this project – increasing our profile and creating multiple opportunities for more concussion conversations.





Brain Health Week

From the University of Auckland to West Auckland Marae through to national media coverage, we shared a strong message about the importance of recognising and responding to concussion for best outcomes.









Our Three Pillars

Fit For Purpose Services

Sustainable services for individuals, whānau, organisations and community that develop understanding and confidence.

Connecting where it matters

Connect Groups are now powered by a volunteer-led model that let us reach further into local communities. Each month groups are delivered into 13 suburbs alongside weekly Friday Social Groups and special interest groups.

The research reflects what members tell us: peer support after brain injury improves quality of life, builds confidence, and creates a sense of belonging that clinical services alone can't offer.

We couldn't do this without our Connect Group Coordinators – thank you!

*"Connecting with Headway has been **transformational**. The difference between four weeks ago and today is huge. Everyone is very welcoming. This is very outside my comfort zone, but I'm so glad I came to the groups."*

-Mark











Website Launch

Thanks to the generous support of the Bromley family, our new website launched this year, and it's already reaching further: user growth is up nearly 30%, social engagement up 100%, and for the first time, people are donating directly through the site.

It's a living tool that will keep growing with our community's feedback, as we work toward **Headway.org.nz** becoming Aotearoa's go-to place for concussion and brain injury information.

Navigation

When asking for help is the hardest part

STEP 1
What people ask us

"I don't know if this is ok or should I seek help?"

"Who can help me understand my rights?"

"No one understands - I look fine but I am not."

STEP 2
Information and Advice

A navigator listens, then guides people to the right services and support – for both concussion recovery and long-term disability.

STEP 3
Their own next step

Information and understanding – so people can choose what happens next, with confidence.

Headway holds the **national contract** to deliver the Disability Information and Advisory Service. We partner with Brain Injury Associations to deliver it into regions where our team is not. The Ministry of Social Development helps fund this service for people not covered by ACC – and Headway extends free navigation to anyone affected by concussion or brain injury.

450,300

pieces of information and advice given nationwide this year.

*"Thank you so much for inviting me. I feel much more **empowered** after today."*

-Headway client, Whangārei

Accessible Education

Lunch and Learn is the new monthly, bite-sized session on topics like memory, fatigue and aphasia. It brings expert and lived-experience knowledge straight to people wherever they are. Every session is recorded and on our website so no one misses out.

"I'm so grateful that I've found this group - It's the best thing that's happened to me"

"These engagements genuinely enhance his quality of life, and we are very grateful."
— parents of a Headway client

"You've made a huge difference in my life. I feel a sense of openness and acceptance and that new friendships are possible."
— Making Headway, August 2025

Our Three Pillars

Part of a Collaborative System

Nothing here happens alone. Researchers, clinicians, funders, corporates and community organisations share the belief that concussion and brain injury deserve better understanding and support — and every partnership means more people get the right help, sooner.

The people and organisations who made this year's work possible.

HeadSmart Schools

with Freemasons Foundation and AUT



Teenagers have the highest number of concussions in the country, and schools can play a key role in recovery. Thanks to Freemasons Foundation, Headway is piloting support in South Auckland high schools – focusing on simplifying and clarifying concussion management.

AUT's research team sits alongside us, independently measuring what changes as the programme runs — so every student gets a safer return to learn and play, and we can show what's actually working.

Brain Health after Contact Sports Survey

with AUT, University of Auckland and Dementia Northern

New Zealanders are worried about their long-term brain health after contact sport. The findings of the survey are guiding action and change. With BPAC, we're building a resource so GPs nationwide have the latest evidence on repeated head impacts. And in collaboration with Brain Health Research Institute, a shared position statement has been released: one evidence base for the whole sector to work from.



Planning Day with BHRI



Neurological Foundation Brain Bank

Together, we can do so much more.

Community and Workplace Training

When the people around someone — family, colleagues, teachers, frontline workers — understand what they're seeing, that person recovers better and gets the right support sooner. That's why training is central to what we do, and why we want every community service in Aotearoa to recognise brain injury and know how to respond.

It works both ways. When we train a partner organisation, referrals in both directions get better — whoever we send them, and whoever they send us, is met by someone who already understands. This year that meant working alongside Auckland City Mission, VisionWest Auckland and Christchurch, and HELP.

ASSOCIATION OF EMERGENCY CARE TRAINING PROVIDERS NEW ZEALAND

"Their presentation on concussion was insightful, inspiring, and exceptionally well received by our attendees."

— AECTP Board - AECTPNZ Emergency Providers National Conference.



Working Together in the Community



Auckland City Mission



Vision West



Schools Presentations



KPMG



Hoani Waititi

Story Spotlights



My Year as a Navigator

PJ Borell, Headway Navigator

Not every client story I've been part of this year has had a perfect outcome, because as we know, brain injury recovery can be complex. But looking back, a lot of the best progress happened due to the relationships I've built with wraparound services doing good mahi in their own communities.

Over the last 12 months I've sat in a lot of hui, with ACC navigators from Te Ara Tūhono, wraparound services like MUMA in South Auckland, Ringa Atawhai in Whangārei, Te Hiku Hauora in Kaitaia, Hoani Waititi Marae, and disability support services like Taiaho. Plenty of community hui too, just turning up and being part of the system rather than sitting outside it.

Strong connections make a real difference. My handover process is much stronger now, and I'm working a lot more collaboratively with the services already on the ground. I've watched some genuinely complex cases get good support, because I've taken the time to learn and understand the community someone's actually living in, and what support and services are already there for them.

I've learnt that we can support someone with a brain injury much better when we work together.

"Thank you so much for inviting me PJ. Honestly, that helped a lot more than it may seem. I'm very very grateful."

-Dave



Headway Navigators
- Nicola Cottle and PJ Borell

Inspired by Resilience

Roopashree K R, Headway Volunteer

I moved to New Zealand from India with a background in neurosurgery and experience caring for people with brain injuries. My work had been clinical at hospital focused on diagnosis, treatment, and supporting patients. Joining Headway as a volunteer helped me see brain injury from a different perspective.

Headway has helped me understand what happens beyond the hospital and gain insight into everyday challenges after brain injury, including loneliness, changes in confidence, independence, and social connection. I have been inspired by the resilience of people living with brain injury.

The social meetups have shown me how important it is to feel that you are not alone. These gatherings create a sense of belonging. We are all, in our own way, travelling this journey together.

Over time, I have come to know people by name, their strengths and challenges and realised noticing when they are absent can send a simple but powerful message: you matter, and someone cares about you.

As a doctor, I learned how to treat a condition; through Headway, I have learned that healing and wellbeing extend far beyond hospital walls, and community, friendship, and belonging can be just as important as clinical care. I am deeply grateful to be part of Headway and for the lessons, friendships, and perspectives that will stay with me throughout my personal and professional life.



Roopa & Mark with the Friday Social Group at Greenlane

Connection Changed Everything

Mark, Headway Client

Late 2025 everything changed for Mark. A brain injury took the identity Mark had built over a lifetime, and coming home from rehab, nothing felt the same.

Joining a Headway Connect Group wasn't an easy decision. “I didn't even really want to do it," he admits. But he joined, and for the first time, he found himself somewhere he didn't have to explain himself.
"It was a space that felt genuinely safe.”

Alongside the group, Headway's information and resources gave him something just as valuable: the ability to revisit things in his own time, at his own pace.

What surprised him most was how far that confidence travelled. "Competence leads to confidence," he says.

He's since become an informal role model in his own recovery community, something he never set out to be. Reviewing his goals recently, he realised he'd already achieved several without even noticing – and new ones are now firmly on the table.

Headway People

Governance Board

Headway is governed by a board of committed volunteers responsible for strategic leadership, financial stewardship, and ensuring the organisation delivers on its mission. They bring professional strengths and lived experience to inform their leadership.



Agnes Wong
Chair



Michael Helps
Board Member



Peta Fraser
Board Member



Darren Tiddy
Board Member

Headway Team



+ 27
Volunteers

Advisory Board

The Headway Advisory Board is a group of independent experts who provide advice and guidance to inform decision-making and strengthen the impact of Headway's work.



Professor Melanie Bussey
Professor in Biomechanics



Rich Easton
CEO of the Neurological Foundation



Dr Josh Faulkner
Neurorecovery and Contextual Sciences (NRCS) Lab Lead



Dr Sarah Knowles
Scientist, research leader, lived experience.



Keith Woods
Clinical Psychologist, Neuropsychologist



Professor Alice Theadom
Professor of Brain Health at AUT, Director of the Brain Health Research Institute (BHRI)

Financial Performance

Financial highlights

FY 1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026 · Headway NZ Incorporated

$651,794
TOTAL INCOME
Government contracts, grants, commercial activity and donations

$675,835
TOTAL EXPENDITURE
Salaries, service delivery and running costs

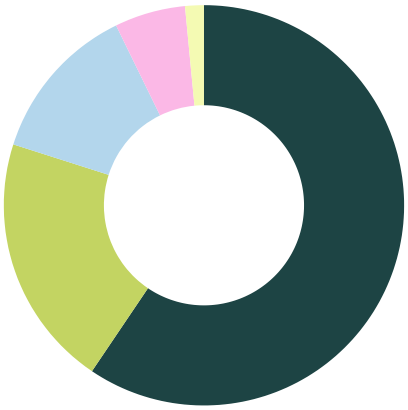
($24,041)
RESULT FOR THE YEAR
Approved as part of this year's budget — investing in our community

Where our funding is spent

85%
of spending goes directly to the people delivering our services — staff, volunteers and regional partners.

15%
goes to running the organisation — rent, insurance, governance and admin.

Where our funding came from



- Government contracts & grants — 59.5%
- General grants — 20.5%
- Commercial & service delivery income — 12.8%
- Interest & investment — 5.7%
- Donations & fundraising — 1.5%

DIAS Contract (MSD)

$362,070
government contract for national disability navigation

↓ $245,246 (68%) paid directly to regional Brain Injury Associations to deliver locally

Why our assets grew

In 2022 our Board recognised that Headway House was no longer fit for purpose and sold it. The proceeds are paid in structured instalments through to October 2027, tagged for a future, fit-for-purpose facility for the brain injury community.

Of our net assets, $1,000,000 already received from this sale sits outside our day-to-day operating position. Most of this year's asset growth reflects this structured settlement, not our operating result.

The full Performance Report is available on the Charities Services website.

Thank You!

The people and organisations who stand behind Headway make this impact possible. Every grant, every donated hour and meaningful connection helps people living with brain injury feel supported, understood and less alone. Thank you.

We're deeply grateful to the funders whose support keeps our services running and growing.

To everyone who donated this year, **thank you.**
To our **volunteers, thank you** for the time, skills and heart you give so freely.

Ngā mihi nui, from all of us at Headway.

Headway

Headway NZ Incorporated

Charity Registration Number: CC28717

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