



NZOPA

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER EDITION 2026



2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

COLLABORATIVE CARE IN ACTION - RELIVE THE MOMENTS!

Thank you to everyone who joined us for the NZOPA 2026 Conference. From thought provoking presentations to valuable conversations and connections, it was an inspiring opportunity to come together as a profession.

A special thank you to *Captured by Tahlia* for beautifully capturing the energy, learning and community throughout the event. Click below to access the Conference Image Gallery & Headshots

MEMBERS ONLY! Click below to find the slide shows from our Conference Presenters!

Gallery



Head Shots



Presentations



CAPTURED BY

Tahlia

ISPO 2027 WORLD CONGRESS



22-25 MARCH 2027 • BANGKOK, THAILAND

The International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics invites NZOPA members to join the 21st ISPO World Congress in Bangkok.

Connect with the global O&P community, discover leading professional insights and explore new ideas shaping the future of care.

For travel & accommodation savings ISPO's organising committee advises that a 30% preferential rate is available for selected flights and hotels through coordinated group bookings, subject to availability.

With demand expected to be high, delegates are encouraged to arrange bookings early.

Please reach out to Sean Tickner for any queries at isponz@nzopa.co.nz



ADVOCACY LEAD - EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

We are now inviting expressions of interest from Members who would like to take on this important new voluntary role on the Executive Committee.

About the Role

The Advocacy Lead is responsible for:

- Building and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders
- (government, ACC, Ministry of Health, other health organisations)
- Preparing or coordinating policy submissions and advocacy campaigns
- Monitoring regulatory and funding developments that affect the orthotics and prosthetics profession
- Keeping the Committee informed of relevant issues and opportunities



How to Apply

If you are interested in the Advocacy Lead position, please send a short expression of interest (maximum one page) to admin@nzopa.co.nz by **15 October 2026**

Your expression of interest should include:

- Your name, membership status and headshot/photo
- A brief summary of relevant experience and/or interest in advocacy / stakeholder engagement
- Why you would like to take on the role

Next Steps

- All expressions of interest will be reviewed by the current Committee.
- Eligible candidates will be put forward for a vote by the membership (details of the voting process will be confirmed once applications have closed).
- The successful candidate will be appointed as Advocacy Lead and will join the Executive Committee.

This is a valuable opportunity to help strengthen the voice of our profession at a national level. We encourage any member with an interest in advocacy and stakeholder relationships to consider applying.

EXEC COMMITTEE SPOTLIGHT

Hendrik Schoonwinkel

Role: Vice President

Location: Orthotics NZ, New Plymouth



“Whether I’m building orthoses or flatpack furniture, it all comes down to problem-solving, patience, and pretending I read the instructions.”

Can you tell us a bit about your background in orthotics and prosthetics?

Sure thing—my journey into orthotics and prosthetics started back in 2003 in South Africa, when I realised I could actually combine my love for problem-solving, working with my hands, and helping people into a single career. Magic, right?

Over the years, I’ve had the chance to work across a wide range of clinical areas, but compression therapy stole my heart early on (yes, I’m that person who gets excited about socks with science behind them). Now based in New Zealand, I’ve been fortunate to work with some amazing teams and even more amazing patients—people who remind me every day why we do what we do.

Today, I’m honoured to be serving as President of NZOPA. Some days it feels like herding cats in a wind tunnel, but I wouldn’t trade it for anything. It’s a privilege to advocate for our profession and support the incredibly skilled, passionate people in this field.

What inspired you to join the Executive Committee?

Honestly? A mix of passion, purpose... and probably a moment of questionable decision-making.

I’d been in the industry long enough to see where we were excelling—and where we were treading water. I joined the Executive Committee because I wanted to be part of shaping the future of orthotics and prosthetics in New Zealand, rather than just grumbling about things from the sidelines (tempting as that sometimes is).

It’s not always glamorous—there are more emails than anyone warned me about—but being part of a team that’s pushing for progress, advocating for our profession, and trying to make real, lasting change? That’s worth every Zoom call and midnight deadline.

What’s one goal you hope to accomplish through your work on the committee?

One goal? Just one? You’re cruel.

If I had to pick, I’d say I want to build stronger bridges—between clinicians, funders, educators, and our wider healthcare system. There’s too much brilliant work happening in silos, and it’s time we connected the dots.

I’d also love to leave behind a profession that feels more supported, more heard, and more united—where clinicians aren’t burning out trying to juggle patient care, admin, funding chaos, and the occasional existential crisis.

So yeah—big goals. But if you don’t aim high, you just end up writing a lot of minutes and wondering where the time went.

What’s something members might not know about you?

The Secret Life: Something members might not know about me? I moonlight as a garage-based problem-solver. If it’s busted, seized up, or mysteriously leaking, I consider it a personal challenge. Honestly, I get the same satisfaction from restoring a rusty hinge as I do from getting someone back on their feet—both require precision, creativity, and the occasional strong word.

Any advice for new professionals in the O&P field?

- First, never underestimate the power of good old-fashioned patience and listening. You’re not just fitting devices—you’re fitting into people’s lives, their stories, their struggles.
- Second, get comfortable with uncertainty. Not every case will be textbook perfect, and that’s okay. Problem-solving on the fly is part of the job—embrace it.
- Third, build your network—both inside and outside the profession. Relationships with funders, clinicians, and even patients can make or break your ability to get things done.
- And lastly, keep your curiosity alive. The field is always evolving, but the basics—compassion, craftsmanship, and communication—never go out of style.

Oh, and don’t be afraid to get your hands dirty. Sometimes that’s where the magic happens.

A Heartfelt Thank You

Celebrating our volunteers

As we reflect on the year that's been, we wanted to take a moment to properly acknowledge two people who have given so much to NZOPA — often without asking for recognition in return.

Caleb — CPD Lead, Behind the Scenes

Caleb's dedication to our CPD programme over so many years has quietly shaped how our members grow and stay at the top of their profession. That kind of behind-the-scenes work rarely gets the spotlight it deserves. His consistency and care, year after year, have been a real gift to this Association.

Marone — Conference Lead

Watching the 2026 Annual Conference come together this year was a reminder of just how much goes into an event like that — and how much of it rests on one person's shoulders. From the planning and logistics to the countless details that made 'Collaborative Care in Action' come alive, Marone's effort and organisation gave our whole profession a conference to be proud of. It simply wouldn't have happened without her.

Thank you both for everything you've given to NZOPA. As you move on to your next endeavours, we wish you all the very best.



NZOPA ACCREDITED ACTIVITIES



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

- Did you hear about an interesting new trend?
- Learn about a new technology or product?
- Want to hear from a specific clinician?

Let us know and our team can try to arrange to share this with members, whether it's a hands on workshop, or an online presentation - we want to bring members the information and educational opportunities that YOU want to see!!



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