



Blind Citizens NZ

FOCUS

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What does the Future Hold?

Editorial from Carolyn Weston

Here we go with another edition of our Focus Magazine. Next month, October, our National Annual General Meeting and Conference will be held in Invercargill. I hope those of you intending to join us at our AGM and Conference at the Ascot Park Hotel will find it interesting and enjoyable. Remember to bring your swimsuit so you can enjoy an early morning swim in the hotel's indoor, heated swimming-pool before breakfast and the start of our business sessions. That would be a refreshing wake-up call. Otherwise, you may decide to take a dip in the indoor spa pool after the evening's business and relax before heading off to bed.

I continue to marvel as we get older, at the way time flies. This year is no exception. I recently asked my 87-year old father if time slows down once one is over eighty years. His response was, as he grows older, time speeds faster and faster. I then began to think of what life would be like for blind and vision impaired New Zealanders in the future. Over the past fifty years, we've experienced vast progress in technology which now plays a major role in our lives. The introduction of driverless cars into New Zealand is now a reality, no longer a dream. Blind and vision-impaired people should be able to ride along our roads in these cars, without depending on sighted family members or friends to take us shopping, to work, an appointment, visiting, etc.

In some countries, robots already do some physical tasks such as working in a factory or doing housework. It won't be long before we will see more robots here in New Zealand, doing these tasks. In ten or twenty years, will we have robots doing home management tasks, which today are fulfilled by care-givers or support workers.

Blind people may even be prescribed with an electronic head-band which is placed over their forehead so audio information enables the wearer to receive visual impulses of their surrounding environment. You may recall the blind navigator on the Enterprise in the TV series “Star Trek Next Generation”, wore such a device. Today there are apps and other modes of technology providing oral information on your surrounding environment, transmitted to your iPhone or smart phone. Technology can open the world for blind and vision impaired people but if designers of new technology ignore or forget about our need for audible instead of visual information and outputs, we will continue to struggle to compete with our sighted peers for jobs and to live an independent life.

Many government ministries, companies, and organisations now provide forms on their website so customers can fill in a form on-line. Whilst this is a brilliant opportunity for us to independently fill in our own forms, security access programmes such as “Real Me” which identifies each individual who has logged into the programme developing their own identity profile, uses visual prompts allowing a person further access so they can fill in the form then store it in a private domain within the website. Other website programmes may use graphic identification systems to verify each individual meaning that if we can't see what's on the computer screen then respond to it, we are unable to progress further because our screen readers can't verbalise graphics, just text.

Other blind people may not have received training to fill in forms on-line. Whilst many people expect the Blind Foundation to train everyday computer skills to all blind people throughout the country, this isn't happening due to restricted resources. It is a higher priority to provide training to blind people who wish to study or work in the paid workforce. Others consider that blind and vision-impaired people should be able to access computer training from community agencies such as SeniorNet or a local adult educational institute.

This is a great concept but tutors and teachers working in the mainstream adult education arena don't have knowledge of our adaptive technology. For example, some years ago I enrolled and attended a computer course at the Southland Institute of Technology (SIT). The tutor didn't know anything about JAWS the screen reader I use and during the course, I found it difficult when experiencing problems when accessing websites as the tutor didn't know how to resolve these problems. At that time my son was living at home. He had considerable computer knowledge and he was permitted to come and help me during the classes. However, many blind people don't have someone available who can assist them in this fashion. Today my son lives in another part of New Zealand so I don't have this option anymore either. At present those of us who are older and not in paid employment or study are in a catch twenty-two situation, where we need to gain more generic computer skills to be able to do everyday computer operations such as filling a form in on-line, ordering groceries or clothes on-line or being involved in social media.

At present, in many regions throughout the country, especially in smaller cities and towns, it is even more difficult to access training to obtain these skills. Let's hope that within the very near future local tutors and teachers of generic computer skills can learn about adaptive technology so they have the confidence and knowledge to teach blind adults in their classes. Then we can join our friends in a SeniorNet class or another community computer course.

Another issue is the cost of equipment and technology. There have always been some blind people with the ability to purchase their own equipment and adaptive technology. However, many others are unable to do so due to lack of personal funds. The blind community should be grateful for the Sir Arthur Pearson Memorial Fund, which provides funding to clients of the Blind Foundation requiring equipment or some other commodity to assist with their sight loss.

This is a fund of last resort, and a financial contribution may be required. The Pearson Fund can consider requests for items which are considered a cost of blindness. This is defined as costs that a blind person incurs that are not normally incurred by a person who is not blind. Examples include day-to-day blindness items, glasses and items of adaptive technology such as computers, smart devices and adaptive software. The application process varies for each type of request so please contact the Pearson Fund Administrator for advice on 0800 24 33 33 or you can listen to the Pearson Fund Guide on the Telephone Information Service at option 3 3 or read the Guide online at <https://blindfoundation.org.nz/how-we-can-help/community-resources/financial-assistance/>

While we do not know whether other disabled New Zealanders (who do not have any sight impairment of any kind), can access disability specific funds such as the Pearson Fund, we who are blind should be grateful, especially to those people who came before us, and had the foresight to create this fund.

At present clients of the Blind Foundation access blind rehabilitation and support services by enrolling for services, and then under-going a needs assessment. Once the client has identified their needs, services will be offered to address them. However, in the future Government ministries such as the Ministry of Health may not contract disability service providers such as the Blind Foundation to provide rehabilitation and support services to blind and vision-impaired people. Instead, the Ministry of Health may allocate funds through an option called Individualised Funding, for us to purchase these services from a service provider who offers blindness rehabilitation and support services. Individualised Funding is a mechanism that enables disabled people to directly manage their disability supports. It seems Government intends to fund more disability services such as those provided by the Blind Foundation this way, but we do not know when this funding model will be introduced.

Some of us will already be using Individualised Funding for personal care or household management. Whilst Individualised Funding will provide clients/customers autonomy, there will still be checks and balances such as a needs assessment that takes into account essential need and natural supports available to you. Individualised Funding gives you increased choice and control to choose who provides this support, and how and when you use it. Options range from engaging support workers and planning how your supports will be used, to employing your own care providers and managing all aspects of service delivery. The Ministry of Health contracts Host Organisations to support people using Individualised Funding, and they provide a range of services including ensuring and reporting to the Ministry of Health that funds are used for the purpose for which they have been allocated.

Another aspect we need to consider prior to its introduction to the blind community is how much money will be available to each client/customer for purchasing the services they need. Today we know Government doesn't contract the Blind Foundation to support 100% costs of the rehabilitation and support service it provides. Will Individualised Funding ensure that 100% of each person's needs are funded by Government, or will a user pay system be introduced to cover the shortfall from Government funds? If so, blindness rehabilitation and support services will become inequitable.

Also, once Individualised Funding is fully introduced, this should enable customers to purchase blindness services from one or more providers. Competition could improve service quality or not, depending on an agency's ability to market their services and manage their budget. While this could create further inequities, the problem is that we don't know. Funding of services is an important issue and we should all be prepared for new funding models in the future.

Maybe in time the world will no longer depend upon economic structures as we do now. Blind and vision-impaired people may become extinct due to medical and technical intervention. However, Governments will have to feed more funds into medical eye interventions to eliminate the incidence of sight loss before we see a huge reduction in the number of blind and vision impaired people in our world. Recently, the New Zealand Herald published an article reporting that about 20,000 patients were waiting for over-due hospital eye-appointments. Throughout the country, almost 70 people had experienced loss of sight due to the delay in their eye appointment. Such statistics in a developed country like New Zealand is appalling and we shouldn't hear news about patients who are not receiving much-needed medical treatment due to lack of Government resources.

We do not know what influence medical interventions and technology may bring about long-term. However there is no doubt in my mind, when looking back over the past fifty years, observing all the changes we've experienced, that the trend for patients not to receive medical treatment due to a lack of Government resource, will not just continue but increase.

The Board has recently appointed a new Focus Editor, which means this will be my last editorial. It is almost ten years since I took on this role. I hope you have found my writings interesting and stimulating. Also that these have given you the confidence to stand up and advocate on something that has bugged you. Such as children dropping their bikes over the footpath outside your local dairy, seeking control from your local authority on where they permit sandwich-boards to be placed, or making a formal complaint because a shop or restaurant wouldn't let you bring your guide dog into their premises, despite the law. I have to say I am looking forward to sitting back and reading our new Focus Editor's editorials.

To conclude, I wish the new editor good luck in their role, and I thank those of you for your assistance in providing your thoughts on some topics. As I say my goodbyes as your editor, I also thank you all for taking the time to read Focus.

Freedom to Choose

From the President, Jonathan Godfrey

Greetings everyone. It's been an action packed few months since I wrote my last column, both for me personally and for Blind Citizens NZ. I don't know where or when I first heard the three words of the title of my column, but they keep coming back and back to me in a variety of situations as a personal mantra.

Your Board has been gathering feedback on the Draft Strategic Plan over the last few months. The Board agreed to the statement of purpose "Blind Citizens NZ exists to give voice to the aspirations and lived experiences of blind, deafblind and vision-impaired New Zealanders." I've used this single sentence several times in public presentations and more often when I've been talking to people; it seems to work well for everyone I've spoken with, whether they be blind or sighted. The "aspirations" in the purpose speaks very loudly to me because it says we are looking for something different to what we have now. We may want to develop or grow as individuals in a very personal way, and we also want the best for each other as blind people. We need to have the right information to help us make the best decisions that allow us to make the most of the opportunities before us, and we want to decide for ourselves what it is that we each want. For me, that is about choices - the freedom to choose, and actually the freedom to decide not to choose.

Further into the Draft Strategic Plan, you'll see "Goal 1: Blind people live in an accessible, equitable and inclusive society" and "Goal 4: Blind people receive the services they need to approach everyday life with independence, confidence and dignity." I invite you to take a slow read of the Draft Strategic Plan and tell us if it speaks to what you want from Blind Citizens NZ. I want each of us to have the freedom to choose the life we want and at the moment the key phrases that speak to me are "an accessible, equitable and inclusive society" and "everyday life with independence, confidence and dignity."

All too often in life, I feel my personal dignity being reduced because of the disabling situation I find myself in. Unfortunately, the vast majority of these situations come about because another person made a decision or took an action that left me short-changed somehow. Was it the person that didn't listen to my concerns about not being able to use the printer in my workplace now that it uses touch screen technology? Was it the person that decided the additional tools we as blind people need to travel with dignity in a variety of modes of transport are not able to be accommodated because they aren't in the budget?

These are questions that express my frustration, and they then lead to more expressive questions that are perhaps a little more challenging. For example: Should I have to pay for a service that leaves me feeling vulnerable or feeling like I am nothing more than a parcel to be manhandled around, told where to sit, when to stand up and when to sit down? These are real situations I've experienced, and I know other blind people have had experiences that are as, or even more, demeaning.

I recently attended the National Federation of the Blind's (NFB) Annual Convention held in Orlando.

I went for work reasons (teaching blind students about statistical software), but I couldn't help but soak up some of the culture I found in a large hotel complex hosting its fifth gathering of well over 2000 blind people bashing and crashing around independently.

Yes, there was a lot of noise, and perhaps some of us would cringe at the behaviours of some individuals, fiercely defending and demanding independence, but not once did I get any service from hotel staff that I felt was going to question my dignity in the week I was there.

I was a valued guest at reception, a valued customer in the market where I bought lots of tools and toys for blind people, and a valued diner at breakfast where I demolished another massive heart attack inducing American breakfast. I learnt a lot while I was overseas; a lot about the way blind people live in different places, and a fair bit about myself too.

I started writing this column on the day I heard of the passing of Sir Colin Meads, and so progress was a little slow as I listened to numerous commentators talk about the man and what it means to be a New Zealander. I was able to reflect on the way we work in New Zealand, as a society in general and how Blind Citizens NZ operates as a Disabled Person's Organisation in particular.

Kiwis tend to like to work with others more than working against them; we play the ball and not the man; we admire humility and modesty. These attributes were brought home to me as I attended the NFB Convention. Why? Because I felt very alone in that very large crowd of blind people at times because the kiwi in me felt quite at odds with the way the NFB works. I felt that speaker after speaker at the Convention promoted the need to fight, to stand up and be counted by joining others in their fight, and the language used was often combative and inflammatory.

In contrast, I remember my first Blind Citizens NZ Conference back in 2002, where I felt like I had come home. Yes, our members speak passionately about the issues of the day, and there are times when we do not agree with one another, but very seldom have I observed anything close to personal attacks or such heated debates that have led to long-held grudges.

I've been reflecting on the positive and negative aspects of my first NFB Convention; discussing it with my friends and family, both sighted and blind alike; and trying to work out how we can protect the Kiwi way in the work we do when others want to follow a more combative approach.

I can already hear someone claiming that we haven't tried hard enough to use the legal mechanisms available to us, which don't have to be combative. Yes, I think we ought to use every tool that is available to us, but perhaps we need to use the tools that are the most appropriate for each of us. Some of you might prefer to send an email while others will reach for the phone when it is time to let a decision-maker know what it is we need as blind people; some people will want to use Human Rights legislation to pursue some matters. At the moment, the momentum is with the Disabled Persons Organisation (DPO) Coalition and the Disability Action Plan. That is where my personal energy is going today, but when the time comes that progress towards getting the dignity I want in my everyday life is slowing to an unacceptable pace, I'll be more than willing to change my game plan.

The work being done through the DPO Coalition has led to some advocacy matters being progressed. A key example is the progress being made on getting an acceptable form of identification in place of the driver's licence used by many sighted people. Through the meetings held with Government officials where the right people came together, we discovered that the need for ID is a much bigger concern than we'd considered previously.

We'll still have to see what that progress looks like in the end, but this is an advocacy issue that has been coming up time and again for blind people over many years.

Another development (a little closer to my professional interests) is that of data. There is a cynical saying that suggests that if something doesn't matter it doesn't get measured (true enough), but that if it isn't measured then it doesn't matter (not always true). Data on the impact of disability has been a difficult exercise worldwide. Results from the census and survey questions used in NZ have not been directly comparable to the other countries we normally compare ourselves to.

That is undergoing change right now. We will see different questions in the next NZ census and we've already used them in a major survey called the General Social Survey. TO quote Statistics NZ, "We carry out the General Social Survey (GSS) to provide information on the well-being of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over. It covers a wide range of social and economic outcomes, and shows how people in different groups within the New Zealand population are faring." This time, for the first time, we, as disabled New Zealanders, are one of the identifiable groups.

When asked a question about their overall life satisfaction, 37.6% of the disabled people surveyed gave an answer in the range 0-6 on a 0-10 scale as compared to only 15.1% for nondisabled respondents. On a question asking if life is worthwhile, the two percentages were 25.2% and 11.8%. On asking if adequacy of income to meet every day needs, the proportions of respondents saying that they did not have enough money were 20.2% and 10.0%; when asked about the need for immediate or extensive repairs on their home, the percentages were 11.4% and 6.2%; and the list goes on. It is depressing, but this is a story that needed to be told and more importantly, needs to be heard.

The ability to add the real evidence from impersonal aggregated population data to the very personal anecdotal evidence from individuals is a game changer. We can put this evidence on the table when we meet with the people that can make a difference. I trust that they as Kiwis will be wanting to work with us to make this a better New Zealand for all of us. I look at those questions in the GSS and wonder what I would have answered, and why. In the end, I conclude that the questions where I have the freedom to choose are those areas where I would have answered at the highest (better) end of the measurement scale. That's what I want for all blind people.

Blind Citizens NZ Supports the newly drafted RNZFB Constitution - We encourage members to support this too

Since early 2016, the Blind Foundation's Constitutional Review Committee has worked steadfastly on the development of a new RNZFB Constitution. While the journey has not always been smooth, of note are the many opportunities there have been to influence the outcome. Blind Citizens NZ, along with several others, have made submissions and/or met with the Constitutional Review Committee along the way.

When thinking about the work that has happened and the extent to which changes have been introduced, the achievements overall are of significance, such as:

- the removal of proxy voting;
- there will be a mandatory period for members to consider proposals before they are voted on;
- when mandatory Board policies are to be amended there is a requirement to consult with members about those changes;
- there is greater clarity regarding processes involving members initiating proposals and/or special meetings;
- the Associate Director seat has been removed;

- there is greater clarity around and promotion of ways for members both individually and collectively, to seek information from the Board and hold it to account; and
- there are restrictions around the extent to which the Board can modify the Constitution without the approval of Members.

During its August meeting, the Board of Blind Citizens NZ, considered the draft RNZFB Constitution noting all the above points as well as self-determination. A key aspect for Blind Citizens NZ and individual members is the requirement for a preamble about self-determination to be included in the newly drafted Constitution.

Blind Citizens NZ's position on self-determination, is further emphasised in the remit from Blind Citizens NZ's Auckland Branch, and championed by Don McKenzie. This remit asks that in the event the new RNZFB Constitution does not include a preamble about self-determination, that Blind Citizens NZ should not support it.

The Board of Blind Citizens NZ is pleased to have this opportunity to state publically, its support for the preamble about self-determination, and changes overall. Additionally, on behalf of Auckland Branch, the Board advises the branch's intent to withdraw its remit on self-determination, when this arises during Blind Citizens NZ's 2017 Annual General Meeting and Conference.

The preamble about self-determination that will appear in the final draft of the RNZFB Constitution follows. Given all the changes introduced, including the preamble, Blind Citizens NZ encourages members to support the newly drafted RNZFB Constitution, and to ensure your vote counts at the Blind Foundation's Special Meeting on 11 November 2017.

Now to the preamble from the final draft of the RNZFB Constitution...

[begins] This Constitution and interpretation thereof is to be consistent with modern disability philosophy as expressed through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Disability Convention), the New Zealand Disability Strategy (Disability Strategy) and the principle of self-determination of blind people.

The Disability Convention promotes, protects and ensures the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and it promotes respect for their inherent dignity, requiring they are closely consulted and actively involved in decisions relating to them.

The Disability Strategy adopted in 2016 guides the Government's work on disability issues. The Government's vision is that New Zealand is a non-disabling society where disabled people have an equal opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations and New Zealand works together to make this happen.

The principle of self-determination of blind people was first incorporated into the Constitution of the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind (Foundation) in 2003. For the Foundation, self-determination means that blind people have the right to:

- full citizenship;
- personal autonomy, choice and control over their lives;
- be fully included in New Zealand society;
- equitable access to specialised blindness services and support to enable them to live effectively;
- individually and/or collectively shape the design and direction of these services and supports;
- effectively monitor the Foundation's accountabilities and performance based on transparency and access to information;
- elect the Board of Directors;
- individually and/or collectively advocate on their own behalf. [ends]

The next stage will shortly commence leading to the final step in the process i.e. the Blind Foundation's Special Meeting on 11 November 2017, to consider and vote on the newly drafted RNZFB Constitution. The Board of Blind Citizens NZ congratulates the Constitutional Review Committee, and reiterates its support for the preamble on self-determination and changes overall, in the newly drafted RNZFB Constitution.

Blind Citizens NZ Draft Strategic Plan 2018-2020

One of the many pieces of work the Board has invested its time in over recent months, is the preparation of Blind Citizens NZ's next strategic plan. The draft has done the round of branches and networks, and been publicised via other options including on our National Feedback Line Bulletin on the Blind Foundation's Telephone Information Service. It will now make its way to this year's Annual General Meeting and Conference for final discussion, and adoption. To make sure our members and supporters are privy to the approach Blind Citizens NZ will take through to 2020, the draft strategic plan is publicised in our September Focus issue. For those familiar with Blind Citizens NZ's strategic plans of recent times, you will note the difference here where a purpose, vision, and values are included.

We hope you will read the draft Strategic Plan 2018-2020. Most important is that you will find ways to offer feedback and/or your support, remembering you can do this in person if attending this year's Annual General Meeting and Conference.

Draft Strategic Plan 2018-2020

Purpose

Blind Citizens NZ exists to give voice to the aspirations and lived experiences of blind, deafblind and vision-impaired New Zealanders.

Vision

Blind, deafblind and vision-impaired people live the life they choose.

In the context of this document, the word “blind” encompasses all those who are blind, deafblind or vision-impaired who can identify with our goals.

Values

- We value:
- respect for the different ways each of us responds to the challenges of blindness;
- the shared learning and support received from the lived experiences of others;
- adherence to democratic principles that ensure our representations are broadly based;
- commitment to sustained effort in our advocacy;
- constructive, cooperative and mutually supportive relationships with other disability organisations;
- the principles and opportunities afforded by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the New Zealand Disability Strategy;
- our history and the role we have played in the lives of blind people since 1945.

Goal 1: Blind people live in an accessible, equitable and inclusive society

- We will advocate on the grounds of human rights and equity to those whose laws, regulations, operations, activities, attitudes or products create barriers to our full participation in society.

Goal 2: The community's response to blindness is reflected in affirmative actions and attitudes

- We will create greater community awareness and education around the abilities and capabilities of blind people to participate fully in society given the means and opportunities to do so, and will ensure blindness is always portrayed in a positive light.

Goal 3: Blind people are confident and successful advocates on both a personal and systemic level

- We will provide and support advocacy training for our members and demonstrate through collective action, how blind people can bring about change for the better in their own life and in the lives of others in the blind community.

Goal 4: Blind people receive the services they need to approach everyday life with independence, confidence and dignity

- We will assess the services of providers specifically funded to provide blindness services to ensure that the needs and expectations of those receiving them are being met; and will advocate for improvement in both quantity and quality where there is evidence of unmet need.
- We will advocate for a better service experience for blind people using public services, and support training for non-blindness-specific service providers in how to cater for our needs.

Goal 5: Blind Citizens NZ is recognised for its leadership in the blind community, and as a leading Disabled People's Organisation in the disability sector

- We will work with Government and our disability sector partners to translate the rights conferred under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Disability Strategy and the Disability Action Plan into tangible and practical outcomes that will create a non-disabling society for all those with a disability.

Goal 6: Blind Citizens NZ is a listening, receptive and responsive organisation that encourages people to want to belong

- We will maintain a consistent flow of information through a variety of media to the blind community and seek every opportunity to engage with blind people of all ages about the impact of blindness on their lives.
- We will promote and provide a safe and welcoming environment within our branches and networks for activities that encourage social interaction, peer support and the sharing of information and advice.

Goal 7: The value of what Blind Citizens NZ adds to the blind community and society in general is evidenced both in growing membership and funder support

- We will actively promote the benefits of joining our organisation to the blind community, with special attention to youth engagement.
- We will demonstrate to supporters and funders that we are a dynamic and constructive disabled people's organisation worthy of their financial support and backing.

Guide Dog Handler Forum

Yes, we are all go and well into preparation for our first ever, Guide Dog Handlers Forum. By the time this Focus issue arrives in your mail box, attendees coming to this Forum will be hearing snippets of information about the two-day event, and where applicable, learning about their travel and sundry other related-matters.

Our two-day forum is on Wednesday 11 and Thursday 12 October. Attendees comprise both existing and aspiring guide dog handlers, and whanau. Anyone who has questions about the Forum should contact our National Office (details at the end of this Focus issue).

Representative Appointments

In the March and June Focus issues, three representative positions were advertised. The Board considered expressions of interest for each of the three positions during its August meeting. Congratulations go to the following members on their respective appointments:

- Allan Jones, Focus Editor;
- Paula Waby, Workbridge Council representative;
- Mary Schnackenberg, Ministry of Health Disability Support Services Consumer Consortium.

Listening, Connecting, Engaging

2017 Annual General Meeting and Conference

There is still time to register and join everyone at this year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Conference. The theme is **Listening, Connecting, and Engaging**. There is so much information to absorb and share. This led the Board to explore what new and different ways there might be to communicate and engage about its work, and what members want to hear about.

The **Ascot Park Hotel, Invercargill** is this year's venue and already the programme for **Friday 13 to Sunday 15 October** inclusive, is looking full, with several thought-provoking discussions planned to happen. Bearing in mind there will be a 10am start time on 13 October, attendees are encouraged to plan travel and to arrive Thursday 12 October. Working around air-travel departures primarily, we will be finishing up no later than 11.30am, Sunday.

Guest speakers include a panel of past and present National Presidents of Blind Citizens NZ from 1993 to present. Aine Kelly-Costello will present on the topic of blind youth and communication. Disability Rights Commissioner Paula Tesoriero is joined by speakers each of whom has a specific focus on human rights and/or legislation.

Graeme Nahkies from BoardWorks International talks about organisational procedures that contribute to the Board's work programme.

Costs for accommodation and meals are always a key consideration for everyone. In this regard, the Board, with the support of the Ascot Hotel's support and competitive pricing, has taken steps to ensure accommodation and meal costs are on a par with those for last year. When considering attendance involves three nights' accommodation (not two), and all meals from dinner Thursday evening, through to Sunday's morning tea, the package is great i.e. costs are \$542 for single accommodation and \$400 per person for shared accommodation. Additionally, even at this stage you can take advantage of our registration instalment plan, to avoid taking that hit when a large sum of money needs to be paid. To complete your plans to attend, contact our National Office on 0800 222 6940 or email us at admin@abcnz.org.nz for full details.

Blind Citizens NZ Board Structure and Processes

The Board has been giving serious thought over recent times, to its own processes and operations and how these may be impacting on Blind Citizens NZ as a whole. To this end, the Board is bringing to this year's Annual General Meeting and Conference, a discussion paper entitled "Blind Citizens NZ Board structure and processes".

Circulated to branches and networks during July 2017, the discussion paper explores a number of governance-related items in which the Board feels change may be beneficial. Items the Board is raising for consideration, discussion, and guidance from attendees at this year's AGM and Conference include:

- The abolishment of extra-ordinary elections forthwith.
- Reducing the number of Board Members to eight, with the option of a reduction to seven at an appropriate time.

- Delegating to the Board the authority to appoint up to two co-opted members for a period not exceeding two years and who need not be financial ordinary members of Blind Citizens NZ.
- Increasing the term of office for Board members to three years.
- Reviewing the position of World Blind Union Representative, as a board position and that it become an appointed position subject to expressions of interest in future.
- That the Annual General Meeting and Conference discuss what remedial action can be taken to attract people to put themselves forward for the Board.

The discussion paper in its entirety is available on our National Feedback Line Bulletin. You can read this by selecting options: 5 (consumer organisations), 1 (Blind Citizens NZ), 4 (Blind Citizens NZ organisational documents), 8 (Memos to Branches), then select the option for Memo 17.

Blind Citizens NZ 2017 Election Update

Rose Wilkinson, Returning Officer

This election update will alert financial ordinary (voting) members of an election that is underway. Additionally, this informs everyone there will be no election for the positions of National President, and four Members-at-Large. At the close of nominations, 4pm Thursday 24 August, the incumbents were each re-elected unopposed.

At approximately the same time as the September Focus issue arrives in your mailbox, financial Ordinary Members will be receiving ballot material to vote for one of two candidates standing for election to fill the World Blind Union Representative vacancy. Candidates standing for election to this position in alphabetical order by surname are Áine Kelly-Costello and Paula Waby.

Expressions of Interest - Representative on the Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ Board of Trustees

Blind Citizens NZ is calling for expressions of interest to fill the position it holds on the Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ) Board of Trustees.

BLENNZ is a special character school, providing education services to blind and low vision learners (including those who are deafblind, or have additional special needs) from birth (or diagnosis) to age 21. Centred at its residential campus at Homai, through its Visual Resource Centres and mainstream schools attended by blind and low vision learners BLENNZ provides services throughout the country. Jonathan Godfrey has been in this role for three years and has made it known he will not be seeking reappointment.

If you are keen to commit to a three-year appointment and meet the following expectations, the Board is keen to hear from you.

You will be eligible for consideration provided you:

- have experienced the education system as a blind person at primary and/or secondary level;
- understand the implications of special education as it relates to the core curriculum;
- identify with the needs of a wide range of students who are at different points in the schooling process; and
- can demonstrate familiarity with Blind Citizens NZ's position on life-long education.

Having read the requirements of this representative position, if you believe you meet them, and above all, that you are passionate about making sure blind and low vision students get the best education they can, then please consider putting your name forward for this role. Additionally you are encouraged to request information about the duties and responsibilities required of Blind Citizens NZ's representative from National Office.

We need to receive expressions of interest by **4pm, Thursday 9 November 2017**. You can submit this via any of the following options:

- Post: PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242;
- Email: rwilkinson@abcnz.org.nz;
- Fax: 04-389-0030

Cyril White Memorial Fund

Closing Date for Applications – 2 October 2017

The Cyril White Memorial Fund facilitates funding opportunities that encourage and cultivate leadership skills and qualities among blind, and vision impaired people. Blind Citizens NZ, together with the Blind Foundation, are responsible for publicising these opportunities. The next round closes on 2 October 2017 (noting 1 October is a Sunday).

Cyril White was a pioneer in the blindness advocacy movement, and is it this that led to the establishment of the Cyril White Memorial Fund following his death in 1984. Eligibility of applicants is primarily about those eligible for full registration with the Blind Foundation. In addition, projects that are likely to be of direct benefit or interest to blind and vision-impaired people are eligible for consideration.

If you have a project or activity and want to find out whether this meets the fund criteria, contact us for full details. Then when you submit your application, you will be confident you have ticked all required boxes, and most of all, that you meet the eligibility criteria.

We must receive applications to the Cyril White Memorial Fund by 4pm, 2 October February 2017 (noting 1 October is a Sunday). These should be for the attention of: Cyril White Fund, C/ Blind Citizens NZ, PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242. Alternatively, by email to admin@abcnz.org.nz including in the subject line, Cyril White Fund application.

Blind Citizens NZ - World Blind Union Committee Vacancy Expressions of Interest Invited

Are you interested in international blindness matters? Do you have a yearning to put this to good use? If you do, then read on...

Our World Blind Union (WBU) Committee exists to support the role of the WBU Representative. This committee comprises up to four financial Ordinary (voting) Members of Blind Citizens NZ, plus the WBU Representative. The term of office for all four positions is two years, and runs concurrently with the term of office for the WBU Representative. You will have already read in this Focus issue, that an extra-ordinary election to fill the WBU Representative position is underway. As it happens, we have a vacancy to fill on the WBU Committee also. The term of office for all positions concludes at the end of Blind Citizens NZ's 2018 Annual General Meeting and Conference.

Our September Focus issue is a great opportunity to publicise the vacancy on our WBU Committee and call for expressions of interest. Therefore, if you meet the criteria and are interested in filling the vacancy, submit an expression of interest along with a profile that reflects your involvement in and interest of Blind Citizens NZ and blindness issues internationally. Please be aware there is a 1,000 word-limit. Additionally, we have a set of guidelines that will assist you to compile your profile (CV) when sending in your expression of interest. You are encouraged to contact National Office for these.

We need to receive your expression of interest by **4pm, Thursday 9 November 2017**. You can submit this via any of the following options:

- Post: PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242;
- Email: rwilkinson@abcnz.org.nz;
- Fax: 04-389-0030

Blind Citizens NZ joins the Access Alliance

You too can support the Accessibility Matters Campaign

Blind Citizens NZ is a member of the Access Alliance Steering Group. In conjunction with our organisational advocacy programme, Blind Citizens NZ is lending its support for accessibility legislation (Accessibility for New Zealanders Act). The Access Alliance, which leads the Access Matters Campaign, is a coalition of disabled people, disability organisations and supporters.

Blind Citizens NZ takes this opportunity to promote information about the Open Letter, which you too can support. The Open Letter petitions leaders of political parties, calling them to commit to the introduction of accessibility legislation, including enforceable accessibility standards. The Open Letter is available in audio and braille from the Blind Foundation, electronically from the Access Alliance website <http://www.accessalliance.org.nz/> and large print and electronically from Blind Citizens NZ i.e. email us at admin@abcnz.org.nz or phone 0800 222 6940. The open letter:

- Calls on leaders to show leadership this election by committing their party to introducing accessibility legislation, including enforceable accessibility standards, in the next parliamentary term.
- Urges leaders to recognise that increased accessibility presents one of the largest opportunities for social and economic development for all New Zealanders.
- Requires leaders to invest in the wellbeing of all New Zealanders by acting to ensure that jobs and workplaces are accessible to everyone, including 14,000 New Zealanders with disabilities who are ready and able to work, yet struggle to gain employment.

You can find more information about the Open Letter and details of the proposed Accessibility for New Zealanders Act, and the Access Matters campaign at <http://www.accessalliance.org.nz/>

“Feeling Rubbish” Makes a Blind Bit of Difference

From Auckland Branch, Blind Citizens NZ

The Auckland Branch of Blind Citizens NZ has launched Feeling Rubbish, a guide to help blind and vision impaired Aucklanders sort household rubbish by touch.

Paul Brown, former Chair of the Auckland Branch, said, “Thanks to a 'zero waste' grant from Auckland Council's Waste Minimisation and Innovation Fund (WMIF), I'm very proud to launch the first guide on reducing waste that we could find specifically aimed at blind and vision impaired people. As Aucklanders, we intend to make more than a blind bit of difference by dealing with our waste responsibly.”

Written by Vicki Hall, with the help of blind and vision impaired members from the Auckland community, Feeling Rubbish is available in audio CD, braille and large print as well as electronic formats. To further help distinguish between soft plastics and composites, “rubbish rings” with samples of rubbish have been created to help us identify the different types of packaging and waste by touch, and where to put it.

We launched the guide at our AGM on 5 August. Auckland Councillor Penny Hulse, Chair of the Environment and Community Committee says the council is committed to support community groups who share their goal of zero waste by 2040.

“Feeling Rubbish will help our blind and vision impaired community to sort household rubbish and recycle as much as possible, as well as help make their lives a little bit easier. This is a very exciting project and I am thrilled at the innovative ideas in the guide. It is full of information that is relevant to everyone, and I hope it will inspire other Aucklanders and communities beyond Auckland to find new ways to reduce, reuse and recycle.”

As a huge bonus our guide has been endorsed by our own National President, Jonathan Godfrey, who is a gardener with some 30+ fruit trees and he practises composting, worm farming and bokashi management of his household and garden waste. Speaking at the launch, Jonathan told us that our guide explained in about an hour of reading how to manage rubbish, which he had needed to learn the hard way by attending several workshops for sighted householders.

Auckland Blind Foundation library borrowers should by now have received the CD version of the guide. It's up on Booklink for smartphone users and also on TIS at menu option 4 1 1 1 1 4. We've posted large print copies to our Auckland Branch members who have chosen large print as their format, and braille copies to branch members who have braille as their format. The accessible PDF version is at <http://makethemostofwaste.co.nz/media/1390/feeling-rubbish-accessible-pdf.pdf>. More copies of Feeling Rubbish are available from the Auckland Branch Secretary, Mary Schnackenberg, phone 09 520 4242 or email mary@lansink.co.nz.

Telephone Dictation Voting the way to Vote

If you are not already registered to vote in the General Election by Telephone Dictation Voting, you have until 7pm, Thursday 21 September to register – phone 0800 028 028. If you are already registered, voting by Telephone Dictation Voting opened Wednesday 6 September.

Information, including a short video and accessible resources, is available online here

<http://www.elections.org.nz/events/2017-general-election/voting-2017-general-election/telephone-dictation-voting>

This information is also available on the Blind Foundation's Telephone Information Service.

Please Support Our Income Generation Efforts

Blind Citizens NZ has both Charitable and Donee status, which is important for anyone thinking about the mutually beneficial outcomes of payroll giving and making us your charity of choice. Income received through donations, bequests and payroll giving for example, go a long way towards supporting the many facets of our work such as our advocacy campaigns, promotional campaigns, and communication and community education. Making us the recipient of a bequest or legacy, is another way you can support us. We include information about each of these options.

Payroll Giving: this is an easy simple way for an employee to donate to a charity of their choice, such as Blind Citizens NZ. When an employee donates to a charity through their payroll, they receive a tax refund immediately. For all other types of donation, the donor must wait until the end of the tax year to receive their tax refund. One of the key benefits of donating through your wages (Payroll Giving) is that as an employee you may decide to donate your refund to the charity as well. Charitable Payroll Giving is optional and not all employers will participate. Blind Citizens NZ has Donee Status, and is eligible to receive payroll gifts. There are five steps to Payroll Giving donations.

- 1.** Ask your employer if payroll giving is an employee benefit. Advocate for Blind Citizens NZ, and outline why you are passionate about the organisation. Some employers match payroll gifts with a contribution of their own.
- 2.** If payroll giving is available, provide your employer with the bank account details for Blind Citizens NZ. If necessary, provide contact details for the Executive Officer Rose Wilkinson.
- 3.** Decide how much you can afford, and how frequently you will donate, considering the immediate tax benefit.

4. Notify Blind Citizens NZ that you are making a payroll gift. Your employer may transfer the money into Blind Citizens NZ's bank account without any notification.
5. Tell all your friends and colleagues about how the good work of Blind Citizens NZ supports you. Encourage your work colleagues to support us.

Making a Bequest: Through our efforts and your financial support, we are working on the removal of the barriers we face so we can make our mark in the world. We are not an organisation helping blind people. We are blind people ourselves putting our own personal time and energy into pursuing our vision of a world in which we can be fully independent and able to contribute to our full potential. During the past 12 months, Blind Citizens has been extremely fortunate to benefit from legacies, and we take this opportunity to recognise generically, the generosity of those people and their families.

Your Will can make a lasting gift and Blind Citizens NZ would be extremely grateful for any contribution. If you choose to leave a gift to Blind Citizens NZ, suggested wording for your will is:

I give and bequeath (_____) percent of my estate to the **Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated** to be applied for general purposes. A receipt taken by my trustee as being given on behalf of Blind Citizens NZ will be a complete discharge to my trustee for the legacy.

To find out how we inform those who have pledged their support to us, if you have questions or you wish to make a contribution contact:

- Rose Wilkinson 04-389-0039
- **Email:** bequest@abcnz.org.nz

Personnel - Blind Citizens NZ

Board

- **National President:** Jonathan Godfrey (Management Committee)
jonathan@tactileimpressionz.co.nz
- **Vice President:** Martine Abel-Williamson (Member-at-Large / Management Committee): martine.the1@xtra.co.nz
- Andrea Courtney (Member-at-Large): andycoute@xtra.co.nz
- Geraldine Glanville (Member-at-Large): gbglanville@xtra.co.nz
- Shaun Johnson (Member-at-Large): shaun.zdots@xtra.co.nz
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Blind Citizens NZ is appreciative of donations received from our members, and for funding from the Blind Foundation, Lotteries Grants Board, Think Differently, and Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nui.