



# Focus

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Blind Citizens NZ

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## **Songs – They Catch my Mood**

### **Editorial, by Allan Jones**

In introducing my first Focus editorial for 2019, I am going to quote three lines from songs, which assist me to cope with current happenings, which frustrate and annoy me.

The first is from the famous song American pie “I met a girl who sang the blues and I asked her for some happy news, she just turned and walked away”. When I look at E-bikes, electric cars and the current debauched regarding the Wellington buses this line rather appeals.

My second quote is from the Simon Garfunkel song, The Boxer; “a man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest”. The mayors and councillors of Auckland and Wellington respectively have not taken in to the account the dangers to blind pedestrians and older people, having these wretched scooters roaring along footpaths, in Wellington especially where there are a number of cycle-ways. I hope e-scooters will use these or where we are forced to share footpaths, a set up to divide pedestrian and e-scooters.

The third line from Harry Chappins Taxi, “she said we must get together but I knew it would never be arranged”. I would embarrass myself by taking this a step further to say it is a wonderful line.

Both Blind Citizens NZ and Blind Foundation members have made submissions to City Councils on the subject of E-Scooters. In Wellington, we are waiting to know what the rules will be, including pedestrian areas where e-scooters will be forbidden.

There are three other areas mentioned in the last issue of Focus, of which we must not lose sight. These are Blind Citizens NZ’s proposed new Constitution. I received my braille document and I have been slowly digesting proposed changes. As the Board prepares to celebrate Blind Citizens NZ’s 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, there is the challenge of what sort of organisation do we want in the future.

The proposed changes should guide us. Our March Focus edition comes late in the month, and will reach you around the time feedback on the draft Constitution closes. I hope you have all read the draft Constitution and taken time to offer feedback.

I believe we need to celebrate our achievements, and those who have been instrumental in achieving these goals. We also need to accept that in the years to come, Blind Citizens NZ will be a very different beast than what it is now. I also see 2019 as a time where we will witness Government's social change in health, education, and in disability services.

The pilot for the System Transformation in Mid Central is well underway. I am told there are challenges in the number of referrals that are being made. A parent of a young disabled man made the comment that it is up to us disabled persons to make the new system work. I am very aware of failures in past attempts to make change. The Royal Commission on Social Policy made a good four-volume door stop. Let's hope System Transformation does not suffer the same fate.

There is much happening around education. I understand there will be on line, streamed presentations regarding the future of our education system.

Outcomes of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group's work regarding the overhaul of the welfare system should soon be publicly available. The expert group was expected to deliver advice to the Government in February, on ways to ensure people have an adequate income and standard of living, are treated with respect, can live in dignity, and are able to participate meaningfully in their communities.

I will do my best to keep in touch with all policies of social change in regarding this work. Grand-parenting has often been mentioned and that would mean older beneficiaries wouldn't lose provisions previously given to them.

Another event of interest is the standing down of the Blind Foundation's Chief Executive, Sandra Budd. Sandra has been Chief Executive for 12 and half years. Twice during that time, Sandra has come to my assistance. Once when I lost my passport and the other is when I ended up in hospital in England. Sandra arranged for the RNIB to loan me a talking book machine. I wish Sandra well in her new endeavours.

I am pleased to receive a contribution from a Nelson-based member of Blind Citizens NZ, Chrissy Fern. Chrissy shares her impressions of the Blind Foundation's 2018, Annual General Meeting. Please, I would like more contributions like this, to publish in our Focus magazine.

Finally, in this editorial we have two pieces of good news. The first is to acknowledge and celebrate the birth of Emily Peat. Emily's parents, Karen and Murray, have both been active Blind Citizens NZ members. I first met them over 20 years ago. Karen was a young music student, and Murray was a fellow blind cricket player. Young Emily is very fortunate in having two caring parents to care for, and nurture her.

The second piece of news relates to changes at Radio NZ. They are to start an early morning news programme running from 5am to 6am. In my view, this will be a good alternative to the commercial hour on News Talk ZB. Also a new presenter, Koren Dan, has been named for morning report. He is a newscaster with considerable experience.

As our publication goes to print, we have experienced one of the biggest tragedies for New Zealand. There has been a coming together of everyone in our fair country, and Blind Citizens NZ joins in offering our collective condolences and support.

## **“I can’t” versus “I choose not to” - where are we at?**

### **From Jonathan Godfrey, National President**

Readers of my contributions to Focus should by now have worked out that I seldom pass up an opportunity to do something new or different. In my column this time last year, I talked about pushing back on the boundaries others put on my life because they don’t know what I am capable of doing, and I absolutely detest anyone doing so based on an assumption that blindness stops me without actually taking the time to ask me what I think. If I ever say, “I can’t...” it is almost always followed by “because” and a reason pointing towards the lack of accessibility that is preventing me from enjoying the same quality of life as my peers.

Last month, I had reason to find some speech notes where I said, “I do not have independence unless I have the freedom to choose what I will do”.

Quite soon afterwards, I was talking to a young blind woman about independence. I think she got the message that I don’t like the phrase “I can’t...” because it always points to a lack of independence for me. I hope that she also got the message that sometimes when she said, “I can’t...” I felt that actually she meant she was choosing not to, and that she had the power to make an active choice about her own future. This young woman can decide to do something about a number of her challenges, or that she has other priorities that take precedence right now. I’ll support her either way.

As I write my Focus contribution, it’s been a busy week, yes even for my standards. I do most of my teaching contact hours for the whole year in the first four weeks of semester 1, Amy and I are chasing a desirable property, and we’ve been preparing for the last donkey show for the season. I chose all of these things. I’ve made sure my work is structured in the best way to suit my personal circumstances; and I’ve chosen to take an active role in the donkeys.

What I did not choose was my local supermarket deciding that they would no longer provide a staff member to help me do my shopping. I've been a customer for just under seven years and while I might go shopping with friends and family members at times, there have been numerous times I've done it on my own. I know what I want to buy, I know in which part of the building products are to be found, but I cannot locate the individual items I want because I'm blind. I've tried online shopping but the process takes me longer than doing it in person; I tried the supermarket's scan and go service to help speed up the process, but they have removed that service for everyone. The news was delivered to me by a young woman who has helped me do my shopping on many occasions. She didn't make the decision but she was delegated the job of letting me know what her superiors had decided. I'm not sure how others would have responded, but I chose to ask for the email addresses of the people responsible for the decision.

A discussion has now started with the supermarket's owner. My problem is that the owner wants me to do things that no other customer is asked to do. Is it fair that I only do my shopping at certain times? Is it reasonable that I limit how much I purchase? I do not know how this will pan out, but my point is not that I'm doing some self-advocacy, but that it is the withdrawal of a service I've come to expect, often called a "reasonable accommodation" in law that means I am expending energy solving a problem that is not of my making. It turns out that I'm doing so because the supermarket doesn't want to serve a growing number of disabled people asking for a similar level of service.

The growing number of disabled people doing things independently really excites me. We are told that we have the same rights as non-disabled people; we're told we should expect the same dignity and quality of life, but do we really believe it ourselves? There is no single answer to this question, and certainly, there is room for discussion about the situation as it currently stands.

In my numerous discussions with blind and other disabled people, I find that our individual aspirations do differ and I know what I want isn't right for everyone else, but no one gave me any right to choose your lives either. I've copped some criticism for the aspirations I have for myself because they are too high for others to match - well, so what! It's my life and I'll choose my aspirations and what I do about them.

Then, I'll defend every other blind person's right to form their own aspirations and their right to choose for themselves; while I'm at it, I'll continue to support everyone else who like me wants to make sure that anytime a blind person says "I can't..." it has nothing to do with the attitudes of other people stopping us from living the lives we choose.

The second noteworthy comment of a personal nature on this topic was that I could do all these things because I have confidence. True, but did I always have my current level of confidence? If I'm honest, I probably did. My parents and many others around me told me to stand up for what I believed in, to stand up for others that couldn't stand up for themselves, to question the voice of authority if that voice was creating the problems, and to be proud of my achievements.

All of these things can be done without being rude or arrogant, but sometimes I find that people are quick to use this sort of language to describe behaviours of people who do stand up. Those of us who do stand up for our own rights or for the rights of others will say things that are challenging to the people who make decisions that disadvantage us, but if no one stands up for what is right, then nothing will change.

Over the years, Blind Citizens NZ has worked towards recognition that we are citizens too, and that this means we should enjoy the same rights and opportunities, as does any other citizen of NZ.

We should be able to vote in secret, we should be safe from marauding scooter riders, and we should be able to conduct our everyday lives with confidence and dignity. One challenge plaguing blind people for many years has been our difficulties proving our identity, especially if we have not been able to afford a passport. I've got my new Kiwi Access Card and it now sits right beside my credit and EFTPOS cards, ready for immediate everyday use. Sure, it took a bit of planning and patience to get all the necessary (printed) documents sorted out, but the work was worth it and I recommend taking the steps towards getting your own Kiwi Access Card soon. Actually, the hardest thing for me was waiting for something to be sent to me at my home address, but the rates notice did come in the end!

So, where are we at? Blind Citizens NZ is working on reducing the number of situations that lead to sentences starting with “You can’t...” or “I can’t...” and raising the number of times you get to say “I choose to...” or perhaps even “I choose not to...”, but remember, you do not need to justify your choices to me. You can ask for advice, help, support, guidance, or whatever else you want to call it, but you cannot ask me to make up your mind for you. If you do ask me to choose, my answer will be 17, 42, or the “one on the left”.

Post script: The donkey show went very well and ended with me leading a pair of donkeys (Barnaby and Biskit) around a very large open space, proving to the judge that I had control of them both and that they were operating as a team. The red ribbon for first place is quite satisfying.

Post-post script: I will soon be signing documents for a little farm. Lucky I have a new ID card, which I can present as evidence of my identity.

**Editor Comment:** Jonathan keep us up to date about your supermarket battle. In Wellington, I shop in some supermarkets more readily than others, which offer assistance. Only once have I been asked “haven’t you got a caregiver?”

## Celebrating Success

This article, while celebrating success, has a tinge of regret also...

On Friday 22 February, the Board received with regret, Vaughan Dodd's resignation from his Member-at-Large position. He provided reasons for this unexpected decision, which needed to remain confidential for a short period. The reason for Vaughan's resignation is significant, and is now in the public arena. The Board of Blind Citizens NZ hopes you will all join in congratulating Vaughan on his new role with the Office for Disability Issues, and celebrating his success. Blind Citizens NZ is pleased to publish the announcement made by the Office for Disability Issues on 12 March.

"The Office for Disability Issues (ODI) is pleased to announce the appointment of Vaughan Dodd to a Senior Advisor role in the ODI.

As we welcome Vaughan we also welcome Archer, Vaughan's guide dog - both will be popular in the ODI team.

Vaughan brings to the role:

- 11 years' experience as an Auckland Regional Disability Advisor in Service Delivery for the Ministry of Social Development;
- many years working in the disability sector, including 12 year's work with the Royal New Zealand Blind Foundation.

Not only is Vaughan leaving his Disability Advisor role, he is also leaving Auckland to live in Wellington (the best little capital city in the world!). Vaughan has both a post-graduate Diploma in Rehabilitation Studies and a Bachelor of Arts from Massey University.

In the voluntary sector, Vaughan has served passionately in leadership roles with Blind Citizens NZ as a long term Board Member including some years as National President. He has been a strong advocate and advisor for disability rights in those roles.

While Blind Citizens NZ is pleased with Vaughan's appointment, that delight is somewhat diminished by the knowledge that Vaughan's ODI role will mean that he will need to move on from his leadership role with Blind Citizens NZ.

Vaughan will be in the office for his first day on March 22. Welcome, nau mai, haere mai Vaughan (and Archer)."

In response to his changed circumstances and related publicity, Vaughan said, "I was enjoying my return to the Board after a lengthy absence, but this new opportunity came unexpectedly. One of the nice things about today's announcement is that Blind Citizens NZ and ODI coordinated the news, so that Blind Citizens NZ's membership would receive this alongside distribution to the larger stakeholder group. I have seen how Blind Citizens NZ is held in very high regard as a DPO leader, and I will always be grateful for Blind Citizens NZ, which positively contributes to my own development. I will turn up at Conference and in other ways contribute to the wellbeing of Blind Citizens NZ through continued interest and support."

**Note:** The Board has deferred plans for a special election to fill this vacancy. Arrangements for special elections to fill current vacancies on the Board will be planned following the 2019 Annual General Meeting. The Board's plans will therefore be determined by the outcomes of proposed constitutional changes and the scheduled election.

## **Blind Citizens NZ's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2020**

The Board of Blind Citizens NZ is especially keen to hear from members about topics that will inform its thinking and preparation to celebrate in October 2020, 75 years of Blind Citizens NZ's existence. With the exception of Greg Newbold's appointment to write about events since 1995 i.e. the 25 years through to 2020, the Board has made no other decisions.

Time is moving on, and the Board will be considering ideas and feedback at its June meeting. This March Focus issue is a great opportunity to remind everyone of the Board's request for ideas and feedback, which are crucial as these will inform its thinking and decision-making.

Aspects the Board is especially keen to hear about include:

- Ideas about where to hold the 75-year anniversary celebration.
- Should the celebration coincide with the usual dates i.e. in 2020 this would be Friday 9 to Sunday 11 October?
- Are there international guests we should invite?
- What about speakers, presenters and their topic(s): are there people you believe should be included in the programme?
- What topics should there be for speakers and presenters?
- Is there a theme the 75-year celebration should take – if so, what do you suggest?

The Board wants and needs to hear from members, branches and networks. Please send your feedback for the attention of the Executive Officer. This closes at 9am, Monday 10 June 2019. All feedback and ideas will be compiled for the Board to consider at its meeting on 22 and 23 June 2019.

## **My Impressions of the Blind Foundation's 2018 Annual General Meeting - By Chrissy Fern**

This meeting was attended by eight Blind Citizens NZ Nelson Branch members (Mike Stevens, Amanda Stevens, Karen Wilson, Andrea Kepes, Rodger Curry, David McNamara, Lisette Taylor and myself); and Blind Foundation members, staff and Board Directors; both in person and by phone link from locations across the country.

Board Chair Rick Hoskin commented that it was a pleasure to be in Nelson.

Though surprisingly not recorded in the official minutes that attendees have received, he asked at Roll Call that members identify themselves, as 30 was the minimum needed for a quorum in order for the meeting to go ahead. We got to 32! I was astounded that it was such a close call and that the AGM of such a large national entity could so nearly have to be postponed at the last minute. This shows how important it is for members to take an interest in our organisation that is the main provider of services for blind and visually-impaired people in New Zealand.

The results of the 2018 Election of Directors were also a surprise to me, with only 835 valid votes, which apparently was an increase for the first time in several years. There was no change of Directors. Rick Hoskin, Carolyn Weston and Peter Hoskin were re-elected. With a total of ten candidates standing, a low voter turnout can mean that valid vote numbers per candidate are spread within a short range. Yet another reason why it is important for members to take a part in these processes.

As Rick Hoskin stated in his Chair's Report, 'Currently we support a little less than 13,000 people. About half of this number are members. Though the recent election has shown improvement, a little under 13% of these members take up their right to vote. I suggest that we want to do better than this. We need to continue to have a good balance of broad experience, business skill, diverse knowledge and sector understanding around our Board table.'

Guest Speaker David Lepofsky, Canada's leading disability rights advocate who has been a cornerstone campaigner in creating provincial accessibility legislation, which obligates organisations, spoke about his 25 years of being involved as a volunteer doing disability activism and community organising.

He stated 'that inclusion, participation and accessibility are on all of our agendas; and whilst everyone is busy with their own priorities and busy workloads, it only needs one organisation to step up who says 'we are going to make this happen' and to band together with others, for the momentum to grow and grow and then things do truly happen.'

The 2018 Chair's Award was given to Aine Kelly-Costello. She is an inspiring young woman, living her life without limits, and making huge contributions to the blindness community. The award recognised roles and contributions including:

- Blind Foundation Policy and Advocacy Advisor / Community Organiser for the Access Matters Campaign.
- Intern-Digital News Producer at Newshub.
- Co-host of the 2018 Arts Access Awards.
- Member of Blind Citizens NZ 2018 Governance Review Panel and presenter at their 2017 and 2018 Conferences.
- Disabled Persons Organisation representative to the Disability Action Plan Education Advisory Group.
- Assisting at BLENNZ Music School Programme and Australian National Braille Music Camp.

Lisette Taylor from Nelson asked two questions of the Board; firstly regarding the lack of employment opportunities for members that she thinks the Foundation should be advocating around and secondly about her concerns about the Blind Foundation's rebranding exercise. Following responses from staff, the Chair thanked Ms Taylor for her questions as they give an opportunity to relay answers to everybody in respect of these matters.

David McNamara, also from Nelson, asked about technology, and whether the Foundation would employ someone else in the South Island to help people with computers. Catherine Rae, staff member, responded, pointing out currently there are two people in Christchurch and two in Dunedin who service the South Island.

I then commented ‘that yes it is wonderful to have those people in Christchurch and Dunedin, but Nelson is a long way from there. I am not sure of the number of members in the Nelson area but it is quite substantial and, particularly in the area of technology, we could do with more Blind Foundation staff assistance in this area.’ The Board Chair responded that if the Person Directed Service Model when fully operational, does not fully address the large waiting lists in the specialist services like ACATS and Adaptive Technology that he presumes they will have to respond by increasing staff.

I then asked about timeframes the Person Directed Model would be rolled out and whether the Nelson region would be waiting a number of years. Ms Rae responded that ‘The pilots will run to the end of March 2019 and through that period we will be making an assessment of its success before we start to look at rolling out further. So definitely, there will not be a three-year wait period. Our digital systems are being designed along with the Person Directed service so we’re actually shaping this up for the future quite quickly.’

Further questions were asked by three members from Wellington and three from Kapiti, with responses given by the Board Chair and Blind Foundation staff. It was great to have the opportunity to share our concerns as members with the Board and staff and receive an immediate response.

The venue for the 2019 Blind Foundation AGM will be Whangarei. The Chair commented that he ‘hopes that next year those from Nelson might consider coming into the [Blind Foundation Stoke] office and joining the meeting via Polycom phone.’

I found this two and a half hour meeting most interesting, educating and inspirational; not realising previously how easy it could be to communicate freely with those at the top of the Blind Foundation ladder.

I would like to encourage all members to consider attending future Annual General Meetings in person or by phone-link, and take the opportunity to have your say on what issues affect you, or listen in and support your fellow members.

## **Blind Citizens NZ 2019 Scheduled Election**

### **Rose Wilkinson, Returning Officer**

Positions for election this year include National President, and four Member-at-Large positions. Although there is consultation on a draft Constitution, formal notice of the scheduled election process set out in Ruling 10 (Elections), of the existing Constitution directs Blind Citizens NZ in its current election procedures.

In publicising the 2019 scheduled election procedure, and the call for nominations, please be aware:

- people currently in each of these positions are eligible for re-election;
- the term of office for all positions is two years;
- successful candidates will commence their term immediately following the conclusion of this year's Annual General Meeting and Conference;
- the election for all four positions happens at the same time, by a ballot of all eligible Ordinary (voting) Members;
- nomination forms and / or email nomination procedures are available upon request from National Office.

Here now, are the details about timelines and the procedure for the election of all positions. Additional information about positions is available upon request from the National Office. You will also locate information on Blind Citizens NZ's website. Anyone standing for election is encouraged to take the time to ask for, and become familiar with the duties and responsibilities of Board Members.

Additionally, the skills, experience and knowledge needed for these positions. Contact details for Blind Citizens NZ's National Office and our website are located at the end of this Focus issue.

Now to the timelines and procedures...

**To be eligible for nomination for any position, you must:**

- a)** live in New Zealand; and
- b)** have been a financial Ordinary Member of Blind Citizens NZ for at least 24 months of the past five years, up to August 2019. If you are uncertain whether you meet the criteria, please contact our National Office to find out.

**What you need to do for your nomination:** you need two people to support you. One will move and the other will second your nomination. There are two ways you can complete and submit your nomination i.e. by paper, or email. If using the paper form, signatures of each of all three members involved in the nomination are required. Email procedures similarly require the same people to confirm their respective role in the nomination process. If you choose the email procedure, you are required to contact the Returning Officer prior to commencing this process. This is important, as there are instructions unique to the email procedure that must be followed i.e. the email process mirrors as closely as possible, requirements for the paper-based option.

Nominations close at 4pm Thursday 15 August 2019. They must be received and in the hands of the Returning Officer by this date/time. Candidates are required to provide their CV at the same time as their nomination is sent to the Returning Officer. These should be sent to the Returning Officer at one of the following:

- **Post:** Blind Citizens NZ, PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242;
- **Fax:** 04-389-0030;
- **Email:** [election@abcnz.org.nz](mailto:election@abcnz.org.nz)

**Once nominations close:** If the maximum number of nominations for the five positions is received, no election will be needed. Candidates will be declared elected unopposed. However, if nominations exceed the number of positions being elected, an election will then be held.

**Financial Ordinary Members have a say:** Ballot material (names of people standing for election, information they have provided about themselves, and voting information), will be sent to all Ordinary Members recorded as financial on the member database at National Office as at **4pm, Thursday 15 August 2019**. No later than **Thursday 5 September 2019**, ballot material will be distributed in the voting member's preferred format.

**When does voting close:** Completed ballots (votes cast by voting members) must be received at National Office no later than **4.00 pm, Tuesday 24 September 2019**. Vote counting will take place Thursday 26 September 2019.

**Candidate information:** Blind Citizens NZ has several options available for members to participate in our election process. Election (ballot) material about candidates standing for election is available in large print, audio (CD), braille, by email, and via our National Feedback Line on the Telephone Information Service (TIS). If you are in any doubt about whether your preferred communication option for Blind Citizens NZ elections is correct on our records, please contact our National Office to check.

**Choose your preferred voting option:** When casting your vote, you choose one of three options. Please note that the way you vote, can be different from the way you choose to receive your election (ballot) material. You can cast your vote using the large print form, the braille-card option, or TIS. We encourage you to try TIS as this offers a truly independent and empowering voting experience. TIS means you can independently do all the things you need to do in an election – you hear about the candidates standing for election, and you cast your vote. You can also be certain your vote will be received on time.

When using the postal vote option, there is less certainty around your vote arriving by the close of voting. If you would like to know more about using TIS, and/or casting your vote using this option, please contact our National Office.

## **Blind Citizens NZ World Blind Union Committee Expressions of Interest Sought**

The Board is calling for expressions of interest from financial (voting) members of Blind Citizens NZ with an interest in international blindness topics, knowledge of the World Blind Union, and who have an interest in joining Blind Citizens NZ's WBU Committee. The purpose of this Committee is to support the role of the WBU Representative, Paula Waby. I

The WBU Committee comprises up to four financial Ordinary (voting) Members of Blind Citizens NZ, plus the WBU Representative. The term of office for each of the appointed committee positions is two years, and they run concurrently with the WBU Representative's term of office.

There is room on this Committee for up to two more people. Interested financial (voting) members should submit an expression of interest, with supporting information. This should include your interest in international blindness topics/issues, knowledge of World Blind Union, and your involvement in Blind Citizens NZ. There is a 1,000 word-limit. Expressions of interest close at 4pm, Monday 16 April 2019. Please send via one of these options:

- Post: PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242;
- Email: [admin@abcnz.org.nz](mailto:admin@abcnz.org.nz)
- Fax: 04-389-0030

## **Accessibility Charter**

Work between the Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) Coalition, and the Ministry of Social Development in relation to the current Disability Action Plan, led to the creation of an “Accessibility Charter”. Often a DPO will take a lead role on behalf of the DPO Coalition to progress an action. On this occasion, Blind Citizens NZ was that DPO, and we worked closely with MSD and the DPO Coalition to achieve this significant outcome. The Accessibility Charter was adopted during 2017.

The Accessibility Charter documents the Chief Executives statement of commitment after considering Article 9 – Accessibility, of the United Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Chief Executives of the Disability Forum are committed to ensuring that the public sector is accessible for everyone. As Government departments and agencies sign the Accessibility Charter (now 37 out of 39), this requires their respective Chief Executive, and Communications and Information Technology managers to sign the charter, which then endorses their organisation's commitment to accessibility, and mandates staff to work towards an accessible environment.

Blind Citizens NZ encourages you all to become familiar with the Accessibility Charter, and to utilise this in your personal and / or organisational advocacy whenever the need and / or a challenge arises.

Government Departments and Agencies that have signed the Accessibility Charter therefore recognise the need for accessibility across the breadth of information, forms, services, etc., intended for the public that they produce and / or provide.

The **Accessibility Charter** states the following...

Our organisation is committed to working progressively over the next five years towards ensuring that all information intended for the public is accessible to everyone and that everyone can interact with our services in a way that meets their individual needs and promotes their independence, and dignity.

Accessibility is a high priority for all our work.

This means:

- meeting the New Zealand Government Web Accessibility Standard and the Web Usability Standard, as already agreed, by 1 July 2017;
- ensuring that our forms, correspondence, pamphlets, brochures and other means of interacting with the public are available in a range of accessible formats including electronic, New Zealand Sign Language, Easy Read, braille, large print, audio, captioned and audio described videos, transcripts, and tools such as the Telephone Information Service;
- having compliance with accessibility standards and requirements as a high priority deliverable from vendors we deal with;
- responding positively when our customers draw our attention to instances of inaccessibility in our information and processes and working to resolve the situation;
- adopting a flexible approach to interacting with the public where an individual may not otherwise be able to carry out their business with full independence and dignity.

Our organisation will continue to actively champion accessibility within our leadership teams so that providing accessible information to the public is considered business as usual.

## **Ways to be informed about Blind Citizens NZ's Work**

There are several ways members can receive information about what Blind Citizens NZ is doing. Receiving minutes of Board meetings, news bulletins, submissions, etc., are ways you can remain in the loop. We have an email distribution list, National Feedback Line on the Blind Foundation's Telephone Information Service (TIS), and website. If you are interested in chat-type email lists, we have a generic list where members share and discuss a diverse range of blindness-related information, and we have our Facebook Page.

You can be added to Blind Citizens NZ circulation lists by emailing [admin@abcnz.org.nz](mailto:admin@abcnz.org.nz) and letting us know how you prefer to receive information. To join Blind Citizens NZ generic email discuss list, send your email to, [blindcitizensnz-blinddiscuss+subscribe@groups.io](mailto:blindcitizensnz-blinddiscuss+subscribe@groups.io)

We are developing additional mechanisms for more regular updates about what we are doing. We would like to hear from members with your ideas, about communications and ways to engage with you all. You can phone, email, or post your thoughts and suggestions to National Office, for the attention of the Executive Officer. Contact details are located at the end of this Focus issue.

## **Membership Renewal Reminder**

Membership renewals fall due on 1 July annually. Mindful of the opportunity financial Ordinary Members will have to vote on Blind Citizens NZ's proposed new Constitution, it will be important to ensure you can vote. If you are uncertain whether you are financial, please check by contacting our national office, or your local branch treasurer. Being financial as at 30 June 2019 or later, on the National Office membership database, is particularly important if you intend to vote on the proposed new Constitution. You can contact National Office to check whether you are financial by phoning 0800 222 694, or email to [admin@abcnz.org.nz](mailto:admin@abcnz.org.nz) (include "membership query" in the subject line). To assist with membership renewal, a form is located on the next page.

## Blind Citizens NZ - Membership Renewal Form

Return your completed membership renewal form along with your subscription to our National Office.

Membership renewals (and your subscription) can be posted to PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242. Cheques should be made payable to Blind Citizens NZ.

Or, if you prefer, you can renew your membership online (internet banking). Our account details are: 06-0230-0002634-00. Please include your name and the reference "MembSub".

Queries by phone to 04-389-0033 / 0800-222-694; or email [admin@abcnz.org.nz](mailto:admin@abcnz.org.nz).

**Full Name:** (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms): \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone No:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I prefer to receive information (select preferred format):** Braille / Audio / Print / Large Print / Email

**Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please select your membership category from the choices below, deleting information irrelevant to your application – enclosed please find:

- \$ 10 / \$20 = one year's unwaged / waged **Ordinary Membership**.
- \$ 10 / \$20 = one year's unwaged / waged **Associate Membership (sighted friends and family etc)**.
- **\$300.00** = my one-off payment for Membership-for-Life.
- A donation of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is included. My donation should be utilised for (please select): **branch activities** or **Board / National Office**.

**RNZFB Member Registration Number (if known):** \_\_\_\_\_

## Personnel - Blind Citizens NZ

### Board

- **National President:** Jonathan Godfrey (Management Committee) [jonathan@tactileimpressionz.co.nz](mailto:jonathan@tactileimpressionz.co.nz)
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- Shaun Johnson (Member-at-Large): [shaun.zdots@xtra.co.nz](mailto:shaun.zdots@xtra.co.nz)
- Murray Peat (Member-at-Large): phone 021 081 66126; [murraytp@xtra.co.nz](mailto:murraytp@xtra.co.nz)
- Paula Waby (World Blind Union Representative / Management Committee): [paula.waby4@gmail.com](mailto:paula.waby4@gmail.com)

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**Blind Citizens NZ is appreciative of donations received from our members and supporters, and for funding from the Blind Foundation, and the Lotteries Grants Board**

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