



Blind Citizens NZ

Focus

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Would Hank have done it this way?

Editorial, by Allan Jones

I begin this editorial with a big thank you to all who made enquiries and sent good wishes regarding my health status. There were two or three voices I hadn't heard from for over 60 years. I appreciated hearing from you. I am pleased to be able to report that I am now in a recuperation phase, low on energy but feeling good in myself.

I thought I would take an opportunity to make some comments about hospital. Just after my operation I had a very positive event happen. A senior nurse approached me and asked if he could mentor a trainee nurse putting in a drip. First, he explained to the trainee what she needed to do then how she needed to carry out the procedure. Having this knowledge verbally, I found reassuring. I was able to feed this back to the nurses concerned, and the following day to their seniors.

I also found there is now less hierarchy with the nurses being able to give medication without having to refer to a senior nurse. Additionally, that besides nurses, there were several care-givers who assisted with showering washing etc.

Technology also played a big part in my care. If a drip wasn't performing, an alarm sounded. As you might imagine, sleep was a commodity that didn't come easily.

Food wasn't great, but then I was on nil by mouth for much of the time. I didn't have to suffer too much.

The main issue I had difficulty with, and this occurs not only in hospital, was health and safety. I understand the need for it, but I was keen to walk to the bathroom on my own without being pounced upon by helpers. When I mentioned this to a senior nurse, she replied "writing incident and accident reports is no fun". I didn't pursue the issue any further.

There were two humorous incidents I wish to share. My six year old grandson wrote me a birthday card saying he hoped I was enjoying being in hospital – oh the innocence of youth. The second incident was that a well-known Wellington guide dog was threatened with being kidnapped by an ardent admirer.

Now back to my usual editorial banter... There are four songs and two films I want to mention. I am sure some of you will remember Waylon Jennings and the song “It’s the same old tune”. It begins “it’s the same old tune fiddle and guitar where do we take it from here?” Later in the song there is a line “I don’t think Hank would have done it this way”. Dare I say that is my profound comment on the machinations that appear to be happening at the “foundry”.

The other three songs I want to mention are all covers, and in my opinion they are all good covers. I guess during lockdown I spent some time listening to cover versions.

The first cover is of a Beatles song from the album Revolver - their song is “For no one”, a song I believe deserved far more credit than it got. The cover is by Ricky Lee Jones.

The second cover is Neil Young’s “Sugar Mountain”. The cover is by a young innocent sounding Joni Mitchell.

The final song is a New Zealand classic, Don McGlashan’s “Dominion Road”. Tiny Ruins and Nadia Reid produced a great rendition of this song.

Now to films – there are two I want to talk about and both came out towards the end of last year. They each have a leaning towards disability, and I am sure they would be available on DVD (or perhaps Netflix by now).

The first film called Helen, is about the singer Helen Reddy. I was a little disappointed in this film as there is a lot more to Reddy that the film could portrayed. However, her theme song “I am woman”, could well be a theme song for half our Blind Citizens NZ members.

The influence this song had on American society was pretty amazing. Although I am a great fan of this song, my favorite Reddy song is “Angie Baby”. Incidentally all these songs I have mentioned need to be played as loud as you can, and sung along to forcefully.

The second film called Penguin Bloom, has a definite disability theme. A mother falls when a fence rail breaks and she breaks her back. There are several rants homilies in this film, which express disability attitudes. The first is the victim’s young son who blames himself for his mother’s accident. The second is the husband who becomes frustrated about his wife’s attitude to rehabilitation and the third is the mother of the victim who wasn’t keen for her daughter to take any risks in rehabilitation. I won’t spoil the story by talking about the bird, only to say that its squawking was for me, a little over the top and annoying. New Zealand actor Rachel House featured in this film as a rowing instructor. As she has done in several films I have been to lately, she plays a good part and is very believable.

Taxis and ride sharing vehicles still figure largely in the world of the blind. I am surprised that the failure of Uber to carry guide dogs still figures in New Zealand, especially as there have been several high profile cases in Britain, which have ruled against Uber doing this.

We also had an incident in New Zealand not long ago where a young blind woman was treated badly by a taxi driver. She was asked inappropriate questions and not taken to the flat she had given the address of. I am glad in this instance several blind taxi users gave her support and made very appropriate suggestions including producing a cell phone, and threatening to ring the police if this line of questioning persisted.

I also had an incident in Taupo where there are now two companies one of which has phone calls directed to Auckland. In my opinion their lack of local knowledge was appalling. The other company’s calls went directly to the drivers who certainly had local knowledge.

Both firms have Total Mobility but their upper limit for paying half fare is \$25.00.

During the week of 21 June, I attended a workshop hosted by CCS Disability Action on Enabling Good Lives.

There were two main parts to the workshop. Firstly, we were asked about what we wanted, to experience “a good life”. I throw up my hands about such workshops mainly because I have attended them in some form or other for the last 40 plus years. But this one had a difference. I felt there was more listening going on, and that it is important that they get this whole process right.

The second aspect was to look at the principles of Enabling Good Lives. These mainly centre around respect, and systems surrounding disabled persons and their families from an early age. There is one aspect concerning me that needs correction as the principles were presented to us all in pictorial format. Luckily for me, Mr Google came to the rescue. I will have more to write about this in the next issue of Focus.

Finally, there were three worthy recipients of Queens’ Birthday Honours whom I know - Anne Hawker, Ruth Dyson and Richard Benge.

I am already looking towards our September Focus issue. My plan is to have an “accessible public transport” theme. This means I am looking for contributions that highlight what is good, or perhaps not so good, and how councils are responding to meet the needs of our community of people. Send your contributions by email to focus@abcnz.org.nz or by post to our National Office PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242.

It's a numbers game – or is it?

From Jonathan Godfrey, National President

Blind Citizens NZ supports the whole community of blind, low vision, deafblind, and vision-impaired people. It isn't even important which of those descriptions, or any other term that an individual wishes to use to describe themselves, just so long as we focus on the aspirations and lived experiences of anyone who cannot use sight to live in a vision-oriented world.

Many of our processes are open to anyone who identifies with our organisation's role to speak on behalf of the collective view of everyone who sees themselves as part of this community. On the other hand, some of our processes are restricted to those people who have shown their commitment by way of paying either an annual subscription or a life membership. This includes voting at meetings or in elections, and a fundamental right to receive any of our publications in an alternate format (Braille, large print, audio, email, etc.).

In theory, we could get involved in any business our members decide is important to them. As long as it doesn't breach our constitution or New Zealand law.

But for the Board to take action without seeking permission somehow, it must also align with our strategic plan. Blind Citizens NZ's current Strategic Plan states our purpose and our vision, what we value, and only then does it go on to outline goals and objectives.

Anyone can find out what Blind Citizens NZ stands for by reading our Strategic Plan. Our day-to-day organisational work aligns with that plan.

So, there should never be a question of whether we have a mandate to undertake our work. I say that we do have a mandate. It comes because people have paid to join and have a right to determine the organisation's strategic direction.

Members approved the Strategic Plan. That's a mandate, but quite importantly, members also have a right to evaluate performance against that plan.

Even though our work benefits everyone in the wider blindness community, there have been times when the number of people who are eligible to vote, is the yardstick by which our organisation's value to society is judged. Our number of eligible voters remains below 500. But of the 14,000 people eligible to receive blindness services from Blind Low Vision NZ (BLVNZ) today, are there any who can say they disagree with the purpose, the vision, the values, or the goals and objectives of Blind Citizens NZ?

Should we care if a significant number of the people benefitting from our work don't choose to pay a subscription? After all, even if every person eligible to receive blindness services paid a \$20.00 subscription, we would still not have enough income to do the work we do (\$20.00 times 14,000 people makes \$280,000 which is less than our current expenditure). Under our current rules, subscriptions received by members go to the branches. Those members living outside a branch are kept at National Office and go some way to helping fund smaller networks. That means that to fund our work through subscriptions alone, each of the 14,000 people would need to stump up roughly \$25 more than the current subscription.

If only half of them wanted to pay that much, it would double the burden on those that would pay. I hope you see that in the end, if a small number of people were left to share the cost, very few of us would be able to afford the annual subscription.

This situation is not unique to Blind Citizens NZ. There are other blindness consumer organisations, each serving a different subset of the 14,000 people in the blindness community. Many of the 14,000 people can join more than one blindness consumer organisation and many do.

Why? I can only surmise they gain different things from each of the organisations they join. If this is true, then surely joining other blindness consumer organisations should be encouraged, welcomed, and valued.

This inability to fund by subscriptions is not limited to the blindness sector though.

Our partner organisations in the DPO Coalition are unable to fund their activities on behalf of disabled people through member subscriptions alone. Much of the work done by DPOs and consumer organisations is funded by the charity dollar one way or another.

I'm not worried if people choose not to get actively involved in a DPO or consumer organisation as that's a matter of personal choice. I am hugely concerned though, that people might be unable to get involved. In the blindness sector I believe there is a DPO for everyone - Blind Citizens NZ. In a wider disability sense, there is a DPO for anyone who is disabled - DPA. As a leader of Blind Citizens NZ, I frequently ask myself if our organisation embraces the views of anyone eligible to join. I do think some of the lessons about inclusion learned through the challenges of 2020 show us we have room to improve, and anyone who thinks their organisation is perfect, is probably heading for a fall. In my view, every DPO and every consumer organisation must be continually looking to improve and raise its level of inclusion.

There is a saying that fits with this notion that comes out quite a lot at present... "if you don't include me, then you exclude me." I sometimes hear the word "you" replaced by "your actions" in the saying, to point out that active steps must be taken to get proper inclusion. As an organisation seeking the inclusion of blind people in all aspects of life, Blind Citizens NZ must surely strive to practice what we preach at all levels of our work if we want to be taken seriously.

I'm pleased therefore to observe that some branches and networks are continuing to use conference call facilities and Zoom in conjunction with face to face events and meetings so that people who cannot travel are included.

We need to find more ways to get people connecting with one another. We still have our National Feedback Line of course, and several email lists, none of which are restricted to just our members. However, we do need to think quite seriously about the thousands of people who join the blindness community who know next to nothing about the work that has been done, is being done, and will be done by Blind Citizens NZ for their benefit.

Surely those people also deserve a chance to have a say in what this work looks like?

In my view, the level of trust people have in an organisation is of huge importance in their willingness to engage with that organisation. We might just call it confidence. I believe that most blind, deafblind, low vision and vision-impaired people have confidence in the institutions we work with. By implication, we choose to work with the people we trust or have confidence in, but we only get to exercise our opinion on confidence when there is a choice to make. For most blindness services, we do not have a choice because there is only one service provider. The only choice we have is to accept a service or not ask for it.

So many people in our community do not know of the work being done by Blind Citizens NZ that has benefit to them, and they're not getting to make a choice. Who is keeping these people from getting the information they need?

Are these the same people that aren't hearing about the work being done to ensure they get the information we all need about the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme? Blind Citizens NZ is right there in the thick of the action with Government officials making sure we get the information we need, but this is what we've been doing for years.

Why? Why is it that we need to have Blind Citizens NZ working with Government officials like this? Surely, we should be able to have confidence that the Government will look after us? Perhaps I am actually asking if we all trust Government and every organisation that supposedly provides us with the supports we need.

This question of trust lurks behind so many aspects of our lives as individuals. We build trust with the people we live with, the people we work with, and those special people with whom we form the deepest of friendships. We also though, have trust, confidence, or at the very least, expectations of numerous public institutions around us.

When we go to the supermarket, we know what to expect. It's familiar to us. Supermarkets don't (generally) communicate the changes in the way they're going to operate. But their relationship with us is not all that personal really. When I went into the dairy near my children's primary school last year, the owner saw me arrive and told me about the latest rearrangements to his store that were required as we changed lockdown levels. That personal touch helped me gain confidence that he was interested in my well-being as a person and my needs as a valued customer. Well, that's the impression I was left with, and that's what matters. I can't say the same for all organisations in my world though. If there is one thing I learned from the events following COVID-19's intrusion into our lives, it is that the commitments made by people to each other matter to me.

I'm more sensitive about how much I can trust what people say and whether they'll deliver on their promises.

There are so many demands on my time today. My family and the students I work with head the list of priorities. I seldom get much choice about who I must work with in these respects, but the children whose parents treat me the best are the ones that get invited into my house to hang with my kids more frequently. The colleagues that treat me the best are the ones that get the best responses from me. That isn't trust, but it is respect for me as a person.

If someone wants my time, my energy, my knowledge, or to be welcomed into my household, they'll need to treat me with respect as a person, a parent, a professional, and an advocate. I really don't think that is much to ask. It is what I offer others in return. Most people see this is natural or normal for the way we conduct ourselves in our families, workplaces, and communities.

To be fair, this is the norm for me, but it is the exceptions to this rule that are the problem. The problem is made increasingly obvious when I and Blind Citizens NZ are treated with respect by so many Government officials, stakeholders and others who all stand to benefit from our work versus the relatively small number of people who actively demonstrate disrespect.

It is completely natural to prefer to work with those people who want to work cooperatively, in a mutually respectful manner. There are times however when we must work with people who do not respect our place as a Disabled People's Organisation mandated by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, or as an organisation established by blind people for blind people. Some of these disrespectful people have insufficient knowledge to form a decent opinion, and they can be forgiven for not knowing about our role (yet). There are others however, who should know better than to make a choice to disrespect the wishes of disabled people by dismissing their representative organisations.

In my view, it is time for people who do not respect disabled people and our representative organisations to move on. Disabled people are doing it tough enough without people putting our organisations down because they don't like what we say on behalf of our members and the wider communities we represent.

Another way we see disabled people and their representative organisations being put down is through comments like, "but it's only a small number of people saying that...", to which my gut response is "so what!"

I really don't care if 95% of people receiving a service are happy. The only number that matters is 100%. What gives anyone the right to say to one in every twenty people, your outcome doesn't matter. So, to anyone that thinks that 95% is good enough, I say "have the guts to say to the other 5% that they don't matter, and have the guts to say to the rest of us why we should stand by and let that happen."

Advocates and advocacy organisations spend our time working for the people that aren't getting what they need so we're often helping the 5% and being pleased for the 95%.

We all know though that we won't necessarily hold a permanent position among the happy and satisfied majority until such time as that majority is the 100%.

In early May, the RNZFB Board released a statement, one sentence of which reads.

"After considering issues brought to its attention by Blind Citizens NZ, the RNZFB Board has committed to taking a number of steps to review issues relating to its provision of services, relationships with clients, organisational culture (particularly focusing on employee relationships) and decisions around service changes".

This extremely important outcome has come about because Blind Citizens NZ listened to people who could not find a way to raise their concerns for themselves. The Blind Citizens NZ Board determined that the only way forward was to go to the RNZFB Board. Rather surprisingly, even this action has met with criticism.

Criticism of Blind Citizens NZ, and even more surprisingly, the RNZFB Board for listening to the concerns of people. In effect, the critics are saying that the RNZFB Board has acted unwisely. Those critics need to stop and think that even if the problems are ultimately found to sit with a small number of stakeholders, there is still a problem that should be resolved.

I ask you to put the RNZFB Board's decision in context though. They must surely have decided that the problems are greater than being the bleating of a trivial number of irritated individuals in reaching a decision which will incur tens of thousands of dollars. They must have decided that the solution with its associated risks is a better action to take than to accept the risks associated with doing nothing. On behalf of all stakeholders who have concerns, whether they can speak for themselves or not, on behalf of Blind Citizens NZ, I thank the RNZFB Board for its resolve.

My response to the title of my column is a resounding "NO!" It is not a "numbers game" at all; it is not about numbers, it is about people, and it is most certainly not a game.

People's lives matter, every person's well-being matters, and, in the end, everyone deserves to feel like their futures and opinions matter.

When people see disrespect directed at themselves or their representative organisations, they lose trust and confidence. They are entitled to feel like they don't matter.

The RNZFB Board's decision to hold an independent review is a resounding statement that people matter. It is a resounding statement that says that the way Blind Citizens NZ has assisted people in our community bring a crucial set of concerns forwards matters. It is a massive vote of confidence in the work that Blind Citizens NZ does.

"TellMe" – the new home for Blind Citizens NZ's National Feedback Line

Since our National Feedback Line began in the 1990s, Blind Citizens NZ's bulletin has been hosted on Blind Low Vision NZ's Telephone Information Service (TIS).

We have a change in provider - you will now locate Blind Citizens NZ National Feedback Line by calling a different number. This is because we have transferred to a new service called "TellMe".

Created by AI Communications, the main difference, at least immediately, is that there is a new number to call - this is 0800 TellMe (0800 835 563). Also, instead of taking option 5 1, take option 1 1. You will then continue to leave messages and listen to bulletins in the same way. Like TIS, TellMe has local phone numbers in areas around the country. Take option 9 3 to hear these so you can get to know your new local TellMe number.

Our National Feedback Line provides an opportunity for members to remain abreast of work Blind Citizens NZ is doing. For anyone who does not have email or internet access, our feedback line enables you to remain informed about, and engaged with Blind Citizens NZ. You can make contributions by sharing personal experiences, you can ask questions, and you can leave news items for publication.

As new features happen, we will be sure to publicise these. In the meantime, check out our new home and give our National Feedback Line a call - 0800 835 563.

The power to choose - From Kylee Maloney

“It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities”.

J.K. Rowling - Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.

While old Dumbledore may have been right, he didn't know about the imbalance of power between agencies who give, and we disabled people who receive.

Based on the belief that those who receive are passive, powerless and dependent, the notion of charity, on which all our support services are currently based, seeks to redress economic and social needs without redressing any existing power imbalance between provider and recipient. However, the rollout of disability support transformation in New Zealand may herald much-needed change.

Traditionally, receiving disability supports involves approaching the appropriate agency who will, based on their arcane assessment of your capabilities, decide what you need, how much you would receive and how long the service would last — leaving little or no room for negotiation.

Under the ‘transformed’ system you work with an individual called a Connector who helps you examine your whole-of-life needs and comes up with an agreed amount of funding which you would either choose to self-manage or nominate someone to manage on your behalf. Crucially, the choice of how and where to spend that funding would be in your hands and not in those of an agency or a provider. With cash in hand, you then approach the service provider of your choice, knowing what you want and how much you can spend. Under the transformed system a provider could be from the mainstream, an established provider like Blind Low Vision NZ or an independent small business owner who may themselves be disabled.

Unsurprisingly, when given the choice of where to spend their newfound funds, disabled people are increasingly choosing to support an independent, fellow disabled specialist rather than the larger, established service providers. Such choice may be a direct reaction against historic dissatisfaction with traditional providers; it might be the need for the empathy, knowledge and flexibility of service offered by a qualified independent practitioner, or it may simply be that the power to choose exists. However disabled people are justifying their decisions, the situation is pleasing neither the allied health professionals and service providers who are losing business, nor the funders who are afraid the landscape is being taken over by so-called opportunistic disabled people only seeking to feather their own nests. Whichever camp you’re in, it all comes back to power: the power to choose where choice has historically been unavailable, the power to limit those choices in whatever way seems appropriate in order to preserve the status quo and the ultimate and emancipatory power to move from passive recipient to that of qualified contributor.

While our choices may indeed show our true selves, the power to make those choices remains with those holding the purse strings. We must, as BCNZ members, continue to work towards a day when our power to choose really will be commensurate with that of our fellows.

Hey Social Cohesion for everyone in New Zealand

On 25 June the Government launched a significant programme of work to strengthen social cohesion in New Zealand and build a safer, more inclusive society.

This programme of work is part of the Government's wider response to recommendations from the 2019 Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attacks on Christchurch masjidain (mosques).

From 25 June to 6 August, you can give your views and feedback on a broad range of social cohesion proposals – from how we should define and measure social cohesion, to how it can be upheld and supported in law.

Everyone is encouraged to join the conversation and take the short survey. You can contact Blind Citizens NZ if you'd like a copy of the survey in your preferred format (audio, Braille, or large print). If you have access to the internet, you will also find the survey on MSD's website at either of the following links [Social Cohesion Consultation Hub - Citizen Space](#) or <https://tinyurl.com/3pk3fkj5>

Celebrating 75-years of Blindness Advocacy and “Working Together”

Blind Citizens NZ celebrates our 75-year history in blindness advocacy this October. We look forward to members, supporters and readers joining us when we come together at the Brentwood Hotel Kilbirnie Wellington, the weekend of Friday 8 to Sunday 10 October.

Our theme “Working Together” is indicative and symbolic of Blind Citizens NZ's proud history.

This recognises the many people who have been involved in, and contributed to the numerous successes achieved for and on behalf of the blind community.

A wide range of guest presenters are being finalised for the Open Day on Saturday 9 October. All are complimentary to this year's theme Working Together and celebrating 75 years of Blind Citizens NZ

Registration forms are available from your local Branch, Network, our National Office and our website. As always, there are options to suit individual needs. Please note that all registrations come through our National Office (not the hotel). Registrations close on Monday 13 September, so there is plenty of time to register.

If you will be a '**first time attendee**', and you are a financial Ordinary Member, you may be interested to know the Board is offering an opportunity for financial assistance. There are two conditions that must be met. The first is that you are required to make a financial contribution. The second is that you are required to attend the full three-day AGM and Conference, whether on a daily basis, or staying at the Brentwood Hotel. If you are a financial Ordinary Member attending for the first time, and would like to take advantage of this opportunity, contact the Chief Executive for further information via one of the following options:

- **Email:** admin@abcnz.org.nz and put "2021 first-time attendee" in the subject line;
- **Post:** PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242; **Fax:** 04-389-0033

Applications for financial assistance for first time attendees close 4pm, Friday 6 August 2021. The Board will make a decision about the number of members it can support following the close of expressions of interest.

To lighten the load a little with registrations, you can take advantage of the option to pay your registration in instalments. You can find out more and put a payment plan in place by contacting National Office.

Blind Citizens NZ 2021 scheduled election

From Rose Wilkinson, Returning Officer

Nominations for the election of two Member-at-Large positions close at 4pm, Thursday 19 August 2021. Ordinary Members, financial as at 19 August 2021 are eligible to stand for election.

Rule 10 Elections, clause 10.1, directs Blind Citizens NZ in its election procedures. In conjunction with publicising the election of two Member-at-Large positions, members are advised that:

- people currently in these positions are eligible for re-election;
- the term of office for each of the two positions is three years;
- successful candidates will commence their term immediately following the conclusion of the 2021 Annual General Meeting and Conference;
- the election for both 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.

Board Members whose terms conclude at the end of this year's Annual General Meeting and Conference in alphabetical order by surname are Ms Wendy Chiang and Mr Shaun Johnson.

If you are standing for election, please take the time to ask for, and become familiar with, the duties and responsibilities of Blind Citizens NZ's Board Members. This in part identifies the skills, experience and knowledge needed.

To be eligible for nomination 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 2021. If you are uncertain whether you meet the criteria, please contact our National Office to find out.

To be nominated: you need two people to support you. One will move and the other will second your nomination. You can choose whether to submit your nomination using the paper form, or the email process.

If using the paper form, signatures of each of the three members involved in the nomination are required. The email procedure similarly requires the same three people to confirm their respective role in the nomination process. It mirrors as closely as possible, requirements for the paper-based option. If selecting the email option, please be sure to contact the Returning Officer at National Office before commencing the process. Instructions unique to the email procedure must be followed.

All nominations must be received and in the hands of the Returning Officer by 4pm Thursday 19 August 2021.

Candidates are required to provide their CV at the same time as their nomination is submitted to the Returning Officer. Nominations and CVs 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

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

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 19 August 2021.**

Ballot material, in the member's preferred format will be circulated no later than **Thursday 9 September 2021**.

When voting closes: Completed ballots (votes cast by voting members) must be received at National Office no later than **4.00 pm, Tuesday 28 September 2021**. Vote counting will take place no later than Wednesday 6 October 2021.

Participating in Blind Citizens NZ election process: we have several options available for members to participate. Election (ballot) material about candidates standing for election is available in large print, audio, Braille, by email, and via our National Feedback Line on "TellMe", the new phone option we are using. If you are in any doubt about whether your preferred communication option for Blind Citizens NZ's election is correct on our records, please contact our National Office to check.

Consider your preferred voting option: you have the choice of three options when voting in Blind Citizens NZ elections. It is important to remember 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 "TellMe" (phone option). For many reasons, we encourage you to try "TellMe", as this offers a truly independent, confidential, and empowering voting experience. Using "TellMe" means you can independently do all the things you need to do in an election – you hear about candidates standing for election, and you cast your vote.

Casting your vote using "TellMe" means you are in control of your involvement through every step of the process. This includes that you can be certain your vote will be received by the due date and time.

The postal vote option offers less certainty around your vote arriving by the closing date for votes to be received. If you would like to know more about using "TellMe", and / or casting your vote using this option, please contact our National Office.

Seeking nominations for the Beamish Memorial Medal, and the Johnston Cup for Leadership

Annually there is an opportunity for Ordinary (financial) Members, to submit nominations for the Beamish Memorial Medal and Johnston Cup for Leadership. The Board receives all nominations and makes a decision about each of these awards. Of note is that their decision remains confidential until Blind Citizens NZ's Annual General Meeting. This is when the Board will present organisational awards. Here now, is information about each of the awards and the respective closing dates.

- **Beamish Memorial Award:** this is the most prestigious award Blind Citizens NZ has the honour and privilege of awarding to anyone within the organisation. Recipients of this award must be Ordinary Members of Blind Citizens NZ. They must have made an outstanding contribution to society in their particular field of service to the community, to be eligible. If you know someone deserving of this award, who meets this criteria, and for whom recognition is needed for their outstanding efforts, send the information to National Office. When you submit your nomination, you should provide the person's name, their contact details, and information and reasons to support your nomination. Beamish Memorial Medal nominations must be received at National Office no later than **4pm, Monday 30 August 2021.**

Johnston Cup for Leadership: Blind Citizens NZ aims to encourage members to accept leadership responsibilities inside and outside the blindness community – to develop an environment that recognises them for their leadership wherever and whatever that might be or mean for them. This award encourages and recognises leadership potential from amongst Ordinary Members of Blind Citizens NZ. If you know someone whose leadership has contributed in a demonstrable way, or has assumed leadership responsibilities that exceed their role, send your nomination to reach National Office **by 4pm Wednesday 25 August 2021.**

Talking Medication Labels: Safety and Independence in the Palm of Your Hand

Introduction: Blind Citizens NZ is networking with EVATech around its ScripTalk product. ScripTalk has the potential to benefit people from the blind community here in New Zealand. We are sharing information as the product may provide additional options and choice for readers, with respect to independently accessing medication details. So please do read on...

EVATech offers numerous free prescription labelling solutions for blind, vision impaired, low vision and deafblind. ScripTalk is the most popular option because of its versatility and availability on both a physical device as well as mobile devices. ScriptView, Dual Language and Braille are other solutions offered by EVATech. All of these accessible prescription labelling solutions are 100% free to anyone who requests them at a participating pharmacy. EVATech knows assistive technology is extremely expensive and prioritises keeping these services free to anyone who needs it.

Anyone who is unable to read prescription labels can have all their medication label information read out loud with FREE ScripTalk Talking Labels. ScripTalk is 100% free to any patient that uses a participating pharmacy.

ScripTalk is a device that reads specially programmed labels that are attached to prescription bottles by pharmacists. These special labels give patients real time access to all of the printed label information, including patient name, drug name, dosage, instructions, prescription number, date, pharmacy information, warnings, and patient education leaflets. All ScripTalk users have some level of print impairment and depend on ScripTalk to safely and independently administer their own medications. Studies have shown that vision impairment is a factor that can affect an individual's ability to safely administer their own medications, which can result in medication errors.

The side effects of medication errors vary from minor illnesses and reactions to major events like seizures, hospitalisations and sometimes in drastic cases, death. ScripTalk saves lives.

A little information about EVATech – for the last twenty years, En-Vision America with its ScripTalk product, has worked with 15,000+ pharmacies and 30,000 customers across the United States and Canada. EVATech is the international arm of En-Vision America, and is working closely with agencies throughout New Zealand to make this free device a reality.

No matter where you are in the world, EVATech encourages agencies and advocates to reach out for more information. Medication safety and independence is EVATech's priority.

For more information a local New Zealand number is now available for customers, advocates and pharmacists to learn more about the ScripTalk service. Call +64 4 886 6834, leave a voicemail and Richie will contact you within 24 hours. If you wish to learn more, visit www.evatech.com. Our site is 100% accessible. Online forms are available throughout the site to reach Richie directly. If you wish to email, please contact him at rlefebvre@evatech.com or inquiries@evatech.com.

How easy is it to get your prescription medicines?

For some people, picking up a one-off prescription, or uplifting repeat prescriptions from your local chemist or pharmacy can pose challenges. When a pharmacy delivers prescriptions, that can make a difference.

Blind Citizens NZ is sharing information that may be useful to readers, especially if you face such challenges.

ZOOM Pharmacy may be an option worth exploring. All new customers receive a “welcome” phone call from a pharmacist, during which individual needs can be discussed and actions agreed to.

This might include cutting tablets in half, printing large labels etc. Customers are welcome to call and discuss anything with a pharmacist during our opening hours.

Through ZOOM Pharmacy you will get prescriptions delivered to your door, and repeat medications sorted for you. All funded prescription medicines are free to ZOOM Pharmacy customers. ZOOM offers free delivery for 4 or more medicines. For 1-3 medicines there is a delivery charge of \$6.50.

To find out more about ZOOM Pharmacy you can phone them on 0509 966 622, or visit their website at [ZOOM Pharmacy. FREE prescriptions! Great service](https://zoompharmacy.co.nz/) or <https://zoompharmacy.co.nz/>

Otherwise, to get started, the easiest way is to ask your GP or clinic to send your prescription directly to ZOOM Pharmacy. Once it is received at ZOOM, a pharmacist will call you to discuss the prescription and to answer your questions. Then, ZOOM packs up your medicines, and organises delivery to your door by a NZ Post courier in 1-3 working days, anywhere in New Zealand.

Voice Activated Blood Glucose meters: ZOOM Pharmacy also holds the national contract for Voice Activated Blood Glucose Meters. A person simply needs to ask their GP, clinic or diabetes nurse to call ZOOM on 0508 966 622 to request a free meter to be delivered to their door.

Let's Celebrate - Martine Abel-Williamson, newly elected World Blind Union President

On 24 June, the World Blind Union announced the outcome of its election of officers for the coming four years.

Blind Citizens NZ extends its heartfelt congratulations to Martine Abel-Williamson, the newly elected President of World Blind Union. A total of 280 WBU delegates internationally, have supported Martine, who is elected by acclamation (unopposed).

Martine is in no doubt about the expectations there will be as WBU President. She says “the timing is amazing... I am so honoured to be able to hold this position on behalf of the 253 million blind and low vision people from around the world. The support of my peers to take on this role is great. I believe they are really saying one doesn’t have to live in a large, wealthy country to make a difference. New Zealand has shown leadership during the COVID-19 Pandemic over the past year and a half. Together with my fellow officers, I will continue to prioritise the wellbeing of blind people across the world. I’m surrounded by a great team and our work for the WBU’s new quadrennium has just begun.”

From 2007 to 2017, Martine represented Blind Citizens NZ as one of New Zealand’s two country delegates at both regional and global WBU events. During that time, and subsequently as WBU’s Global Treasurer, she has demonstrated her commitment to making a blind bit of difference for all blind, deafblind, low vision and vision-impaired people across the world.

Congratulations once again Martine!

Breaking News – Blind Citizens NZ wins international award

As our June publication goes to print, we have learned Blind Citizens NZ has won the American Council of the Blind’s “Audio Description Project's Audio Description Achievement Award in the International category.” The award is made to “...individuals and/or organisations for outstanding contributions to the establishment and/or continued development of significant audio description programs in each of three areas: media, performing arts, and museums.”

The award will be announced by the American Council of the Blind on Tuesday 20 July 2021, during a plenary session at its virtual Conference and Convention.

While recognition is to Blind Citizens NZ for the advocacy we have undertaken in this area over many, many years, we know that so many of you have supported our efforts as well. A big thank you to members and supporters who continue to reinforce our collective efforts to make a blind bit of difference, and on this occasion, we refer specifically to audio description. As it happens, July 2021 is the 10-year anniversary of audio described television programmes becoming a reality. A pilot was carried out in March 2011, where we started with two hours of audio description a week with Coronation Street.

In publicising our success in winning this award, we take this opportunity to thank Able, New Zealand's primary producers of audio description and captioning content for television programmes here in New Zealand. Able nominated Blind Citizens NZ for this award. As it happens, Able is recognised internationally for the quality of its work. It has itself recently been awarded the Access Alliance's People's Choice Accessible Business Awards in the media category. The award recognises the work Able carries out, not just around television programme content here in New Zealand, but also in relation to New Zealand produced films, and its work with Government and others to ensure media is accessible.

Memorial Hall of Honour - a call for nominations

Blind Citizens NZ's Memorial Hall of Honour is an awesome opportunity to recognise people for their outstanding effort(s) and achievement(s). Nominations for induction to the Memorial Hall of Honour are sought. The following criteria should guide your thinking if you believe there is someone you feel worthy of being put forward for the Board's consideration:

- a)** an inductee may be any blind or vision-impaired individual who was born or lived in New Zealand;
- b)** in order to evaluate a contribution in the context of a lifetime and avoid controversy that may attach to the living, all inductees must be deceased

- c) An inductee must be one who has either:
- made a substantial and outstanding contribution over many years towards the advancement of the interests and wellbeing of the blind in New Zealand; or
 - through their trail-blazing efforts or personal example, inspired others in the blind community to overcome the barriers to participation in a sighted world.

Nominations for inductees should be received at National Office no later than 4pm, Monday 9 August. These will be considered by the Board at its August meeting.

Please support our income generation efforts

Blind Citizens NZ has both Charitable and Donee status. Income received through donations, bequests and payroll giving for example, go a long way towards supporting the many facets of our work such as advocacy, promotional campaigns, communication and community education. Here is information about making us the recipient of a bequest or legacy. You can contact our national office for further information about making a donation and/or payroll giving...

Making a Bequest: 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 021 222 6940 / 0800 222 694

Email: bequest-info-blindcitizensnz@groups.io

Medical Certificates - Update from Work and Income

There are some changes to Work and Income rules. They are changing back to the way they were before COVID-19.

Work and Income is restarting two-yearly medical reassessments.

Medical Certificates

- A medical certificate tells Work and Income about how your disability or health condition affects whether you can work.
- You can get a medical certificate from your doctor.
- You only need to show us a medical certificate/information when we ask you for it.
- We will write to you when you need to send us a new medical certificate/information.
- We stopped asking for these during COVID-19, but we are starting these again.
- If you're ready, we can help you prepare and look for work, or think about what training or education options might be useful.

Income stand-downs

Work and Income is also restarting initial income stand-downs for people applying for a benefit.

From 25 July 2021 Work and Income will let new clients know when they apply for a benefit whether they will need to wait one or two weeks before they start getting payments from us.

Contact Us

- Go to workandincome.govt.nz; or
- Call us on 0800 559 009, 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 1pm, Saturday.

Reminder - Cheques are being phased out

A reminder to members that cheques are slowly but surely being phased out. As we know, several banks have already stopped receiving cheques. This includes our own ANZ Bank used by National Office. This means we can no longer accept cheques.

There are banks prepared to assist people with their payments. While the services banks offer vary we encourage cheque-users to utilise whatever options your bank has available, to assist you. If you are unsure, give them a call, or pop in to see them.

Internet and phone banking are options – using either of these can often depend on having the technology and/or confidence to use them. For someone new to these options, it can take time to build up the confidence to try them. It is worth the effort. We encourage you to talk to your bank to learn more about what might best work for you.

As mentioned, Blind Citizens NZ's National Office can no longer receive cheques. We know the challenge(s) this will present for many of our members when renewing your membership with us. We suggest one option is discussing the situation with your bank. They will assist to set up a one-off payment to enable you to renew your membership of Blind Citizens NZ. Or you can set up an annual payment so that it's paid at the same time each year. You get to pick the date, and the amount you pay. Including your name and a reference to membership renewal, as well as letting National Office know, will ensure the deposit is quickly linked directly to you. If in doubt, and we can be of assistance, contact our National Office for guidance. To make payments through your bank, or via the internet, Blind Citizens NZ bank account details are: 06-0230-0002634-00.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us here at National Office by:

- Phone: 04-389-0033 or free-call 0800-222-694; or
- Email admin@abcnz.org.nz

Membership Join / Renewal Form, 30 June 2022

Membership renewal falls due 1 July annually. Return your completed membership form along with your subscription to our National Office (or hand to your local Branch Treasurer). For our National Office post to: PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242.

To avoid hassles with cheques, we encourage paying your membership subscription by internet banking. Blind Citizens NZ's bank account details are: 06-0230-0002634-00. Please include your name and the reference "MembSub". Ideally, let National Office know you have renewed your membership using online banking.

Queries by phone to 04-389-0033 / 0800-222-694; or email admin@abcnz.org.nz

Full Name: _____

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 options below, and delete information that does not apply to your membership renewal.

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 (select from) **Board / National Office**, or **branch activities.**

Blind Citizens NZ – Board and National Office

Board

- **National President:** Jonathan Godfrey: a.j.godfrey@massey.ac.nz
- **Vice President:** Christine (Chrissy) Fern: fernmeek@gmail.com
- Martine Abel-Williamson (Member-at-Large):
martine.the1@xtra.co.nz
- Wendy Chiang: wendy.chiang@gmail.com
- Andrea Courtney (Member-at-Large): andycoute@gmail.com
- Shaun Johnson (Member-at-Large): shaun.zdots@xtra.co.nz
- Paula Waby (Member-at-Large / WBU Representative):
paula.waby4@gmail.com

Focus Editor, Allan Jones

Email articles to: focus@abcnz.org.nz

Post: PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242

National Office

- **Physical:** Ground Floor, 113 Adelaide Road, Newtown, Wellington.
- **Postal:** PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242.
- **Phone:** 04 389 0033; 0800 222 694.
- **Fax:** 04 389 0030.
- **Website:** <http://www.blindcitizensnz.org.nz>
- **Facebook Page:** <https://www.facebook.com/BlindCitizensNZ/>
- **Email:** admin@abcnz.org.nz
- **Chief Executive, Rose Wilkinson:** rwilkinson@abcnz.org.nz

Blind Citizens NZ is appreciative of donations received from our members and supporters, and for funding from Blind Low Vision NZ.