



Blind Citizens NZ

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Inc

Annual General Meeting and Conference

Friday 18 October and Saturday 19 October 2024

He Tāngata, He Tāngata, He Tāngata

**Sudima Hotel Christchurch Airport
550 Memorial Avenue Christchurch**

Funding, Sponsorship, and Support

Blind Citizens NZ is extremely appreciative of the extent of support we receive via funding, sponsorship, and in-kind support. We take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank:

- Accessible Information Communications (AI Comms)
- Blind Low Vision NZ
- Intopia
- JC Computing
- Little Rocket
- Microsoft New Zealand, Rod Park Technology Strategist
- Ministry of Social Development
- Optics Magazine
- Stebbings
- TBD Digital
- Blind Citizens NZ Members and Supporters, many of whom prefer to remain anonymous

Friday 18 October and Saturday 19 October 2024

He Tāngata, He Tāngata, He Tāngata

Sessions

1. Friday 18 October

9:00 am to 9:25 am	Mihi Whakatau Welcome Roll Call
9:25 am to 9:40 am	Official Opening
9:45 am to 10:30 am	Guest Presenter
10:30 am to 11:00 am	Morning Tea
11:00 am to 11:40 am	National President Address Business
11:45 am to 12:30 pm	Guest Presenter
12:30 pm to 1:45 pm	Lunch Tina
1:45 pm to 2:30 pm	Business
2:30 pm to 3:15 pm	Guest Presenter
3:15 pm to 3:45 pm	Afternoon tea
3:45 pm to 4:30 pm	Guest Presenter
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm	Business
5:40 pm to 6:10 pm	President's half-hour
6.15 pm to 7.40 pm	Dinner Hākari
7.45 pm to 9:00 pm	Business Whakakapi Adjournment

2. Saturday 19 October

9:00 am to 9:20 am Mihi Whakatau | Welcome | Roll Call

9:20 am to 10:15 am Business

10:15 am to 10:45 am Morning Tea

10:45 am to 11:40 am Guest Presenter

11:45 am to 12:30 pm Guest Presenter

12:30 pm to 1:45 pm Lunch | Tina

1:45 pm to 2:35 pm Business

2:35 pm to 3:20 pm Guest Presenter

3:20 pm to 3:45 pm Afternoon Tea

3:45 pm to 5:00 pm Business

5:00 pm to 5:15 pm Poroporoake | Closure, end of business sessions

7.00 pm to 9:30 pm Dinner | Hākari

Annual General Meeting Agenda Items

We advise:

- The order of agenda items as presented may change.
- The schedule of guest speakers is located at the end of this section.
- Resolutions Committee - there will be reports from the Resolutions Committee as required throughout the Annual General Meeting and Conference.

1. Apologies

2. Obituaries

3. Appointments

3.1 Resolutions Committee

3.2 Returning Officer

3.3 Scrutineers

4. National President's Address

5. Annual General Meeting

5.1 Outcome of 2024 Scheduled Election: two Member-at-Large positions | Report from Returning Officer Rose Wilkinson.

5.2 Confirmation of Minutes of Annual General Meeting and Conference, 13-14 October 2023.

5.3 Matters Arising from Minutes of 2023, not otherwise addressed within the Agenda (Attachment "A").

5.4 Notification of items of other business – the inclusion of items that have arisen since the close of the agenda on 30 August 2024 is at the discretion of the Chair.

5.5 Annual Report (Attachment “B”)

- National President | Chief Executive (combined)
- National Office, Performance Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2024 (Moore Markhams Wellington Audit)
- Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ)
- The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT)
- World Blind Union (WBU)
- World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Accessible Books Consortium (ABC)

5.6 Consolidated Audit of National Office and Branches, Performance Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2024, Moore Markhams Wellington Audit (Attachment “C”)

5.7 Appointment of Auditor (recommended by the Board)

5.8 Remits (Attachment “D”)

5.9 Membership Subscription Review Discussion Paper (Attachment “E”)

5.10 Pre-reading for Blind Citizens NZ Annual Conference Workshop on Digital Cash (Attachment “F”)

5.11 Proposed Inductee to the Memorial Hall of Honour (Attachment “G”)

5.12 Implementing Te Tiriti o Waitangi | Te Tiriti o Waitangi Advisory Group Discussion Paper (Attachment “H”)

5.13 Representative Appointments (Attachment “I”)

5.14 Branch and Network Representative Reports (Attachment “J”)

- Auckland Branch
- Rotorua Branch
- Whanganui Branch
- Taranaki Network
- Wellington Branch
- Nelson Branch
- South Canterbury Branch
- Otago Network
- Southland Branch
- Guide Dog Handler Special Interest Network
- Braille Special Interest Network

6. 2025 Annual General Meeting and Conference | (Attachment “K”)

7. Other Business as notified in Item 5.5

8. General Business (time permitting)

Friday 18 October

- 9:00 am to 9:25 am** Mihi Whakatau | Welcome | Roll Call
- 9:25 am to 9:40 am** Official Opening | Te Hui Bill Hamilton
- 9:45 am to 10:30 am** **Paula Tesoriero, Chief Executive Whaikaha | Ministry of Disabled People**
Topic: Whaikaha, What Next?
- 10:30 am to 11:00 am** Morning Tea
- 11:00 am to 11:40 am** National President Address | Business
- 11:45 am to 12:30 pm** **Maria Williams**
Topic: Be bold and step into the unknown – You're not made of sugar
- 12:30 pm to 1:45 pm** Lunch | Tina
- 1:45 pm to 2:30 pm** Business
- 2:30 pm to 3:15 pm** **Hon Louise Upston, Minister for Disability Issues**
Topic: Changes, challenges and opportunities within the disability issues portfolio, including the role of the Ministry of Disabled People as a stand-alone Government Department
- 3:15 pm to 3:45 pm** Afternoon tea

3:45 pm to 4:30 pm	Robbie Taylor, Senior Advisor External Stakeholders – Kaitohutohu Mātua Money and Cash – Te moni me te ukauka Reserve Bank of New Zealand – Te Pūtea Matua Topic: The Future of Money for Aotearoa New Zealand and exploring digital cash Gathering insights from the blind community
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm	Business
5:40 pm to 6:10 pm	President's half-hour
6.15 pm to 7.40 pm	Dinner Hākari
7.45 pm to 9:00 pm	Proposed Inductee, Memorial Hall of Honour Business Whakakapi Adjournment

Saturday 19 October

- 9:00 am to 9:20 am** Mihi Whakatau | Welcome | Roll Call
- 9:20 am to 10:15 am** Te Tiriti o Waitangi Advisory Group Discussion Paper (Attachment “H”)
- 10:15 am to 10:45 am** Morning Tea
- 10:45 am to 11:40 am** **Te Huia Bill Hamilton, Ngati Kahungunu, Nga Rauru, Ngati Raukawa**
Owner of TREATY SOLUTIONS
Topic: The Treaty belongs to all of us
- 11:45 am to 12:30 pm** **Andrea Midgen, Chief Executive Blind Low Vision NZ**
Topic: Future BLVNZ – address the hurt, client focussed
- 12:30 pm to 1:45 pm** Lunch | Tina
- 1:45 pm to 2:35 pm** Business
- 2:35 pm to 3:20 pm** **Matt Waight, Customer, Communications & Change Lead for the National Ticketing Solution**
NZ Transport Agency | Waka Kotahi
Topic: National Ticketing Solution: Motu Move – a Customer Experience

3:20 pm to 3:45 pm Afternoon Tea

3:45 pm to 5:00 pm Business

5:00 pm to 5:15 pm Poroporoake | Closure, end of business sessions

7.00 pm to 9:30 pm Dinner | Hākari

Contents

Attachment A, Matters Arising – Annual General Meeting and Conference 2023, Progress Outcomes Report	p 15
Attachment B, Annual Report	p 32
▪ National President Chief Executive (combined)	p 36
▪ National Office, Performance Report for the Year Ended	
30 June 2024 (Moore Markhams Wellington Audit)	p 47
▪ Summary of Financial Information, National Office Performance Report	p 70
▪ Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ)	p...73
▪ The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT)	p...86
▪ World Blind Union (WBU)	p...95
▪ World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Accessible Books Consortium (ABC)	p 109
Attachment C, Consolidated Audit of National Office and Branches, Performance Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2024, Moore Markhams Wellington Audit	p 117
▪ Auditor's Report	p 150
▪ Summary of Financial Information, Consolidation Performance Report	p 156

Attachment D, Remits p 160

Attachment E, Membership Subscription Review Discussion
Paper p 162

Attachment F, Pre-reading for Blind Citizens NZ Annual
Conference Workshop on digital Cash p 166

Attachment G, Proposed Inductee to the Memorial Hall of
Honour p 169

Attachment H, Implementing Te Tiriti o Waitangi | Te Tiriti
o Waitangi Advisory Group Discussion Paper p 174

Attachment I, Representative Appointments p 179

Attachment J, Branch and Network Representative Reports

▪ Auckland	p 181
▪ Rotorua	p 183
▪ Whanganui	p 183
▪ Taranaki	p 183
▪ Wellington	p 184
▪ Nelson	p 187
▪ South Canterbury	p 189
▪ Otago	p 189
▪ Southland	p 180
▪ Guide Dog Handler Special Interest Network	p 193
▪ Braille Special Interest Network	p 193

**Attachment K, 2025 Annual General Meeting and Conference
Celebration of 80 years**

p 195

Attachment “L”, Guest Presenter Bios

p 196

Attachment “A”

Matters Arising from the 2023 Annual General Meeting and Conference

Introduction

Outcomes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting and Conference were considered by the Board during its Annual Planning Meeting in November 2023. These, along with other items added to, or already on the work programme, were by agreement given a priority level of either:

- High – means the issue | activity will be progressed as a matter of priority (work will happen).
- Medium – watch for opportunities and act.
- Low – low threshold for action i.e. will not go hunting the issue, but remain vigilant i.e. if something is heard or an influencing person/entity asks, it will be pursued and action taken.

A brief commentary is provided where there is no reference of significance anywhere else in the Annual General Meeting and Conference agenda.

- 1. The Braille Crisis:** The Board resolved that before involving other organisations and carrying out an external review, that the issue needs to be scoped. Once there is an understanding of what would be in scope, consideration will be given to engaging with other entities such as The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust, Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ, and Blind Low Vision NZ.

The Chief Executive has brought together a small group of people (Braille readers and users) to scope what issues | topics should be included in the review. These will be presented to the Board at which time next steps in this work will be planned.

In the meantime, our Chief Executive has ensured Andrea Midgen, Chief Executive Blind Low Vision NZ is aware of the extent of concerns raised at the 2023 AGM and Conference. The time taken to scope the issues ensures Andrea Midgen has time to gather information that may be useful moving forward.

2. **Guide Dog Handlers:** Extreme concerns was expressed about a number of elements of Blind Low Vision NZ's Guide Dog Services. These concerns were conveyed initially to Blind Low Vision NZ's Acting Chief Executive, at which time engagement with the Manager Guide Dog Services Peter Hoskin began. Concerns raised by Blind Citizens NZ have been acknowledged on more than one occasion. Mr Hoskin met with the Guide Dog Handlers Special Interest Network where he acknowledged the extent of concerns and experiences shared with him. We acknowledge the commitment to continue engaging with Blind Citizens NZ to address concerns.
3. **Blind Low Vision NZ Library Service:** Engagement opportunities have informed the paper submitted to the RNZFB Board of Directors and Blind Low Vision NZ Chief Executive. The paper is included as an appendix to this report.
4. **Pedestrian Crossing Safety:** The variable types of pedestrian crossings, and the lack of consistency of implementation of these throughout New Zealand have been raised with Government Agencies, in particular the NZ Transport Agency | Waka Kotahi.

Our advocacy is ongoing and there is a definite acknowledgement of safety concerns arising from inconsistencies. Variations are significant, and situations arise in ways that are least expected. A position statement addressing the magnitude of these situations will identify for government agencies and local authorities expectations.

Appendix

Blind Low Vision NZ Library Services A World Class, Flagship Service?

Paper to RNZFB Board of Directors and Blind Low Vision NZ Chief Executive August 2024

Background

During our 2023 Annual General Meeting and Conference, there was discussion about the status of Blind Low Vision NZ's Library Service. Informed by a discussion paper to our AGM and Conference (refer Appendix 1), members shared a diverse range of experiences regarding a service that has historically been regarded a flagship of Blind Low Vision NZ. Blind Citizens NZ takes no pleasure in bringing forward the depth of concerns we have had brought to our attention. These shatter any thoughts or perceptions of Blind Low Vision NZ's Library Service being the world class, flagship service of some three-five years ago.

The following resolution passed at our AGM and Conference demonstrates the depth of feeling that existed then, and which exists today...

<begins> That the Blind Citizens NZ Board develops a paper for the RNZFB Board that captures members' concerns about their experiences of accessing and using the Blind Low Vision NZ Library Service. Key points of the paper to be highlighted are:

- expressing the voice of current and previous Library Service users;
- that the Service becomes fit for purpose today and for the future;

- a recommendation that a strategic direction is developed for the Library Service.

Feedback from our members indicates that many blind New Zealanders are disappointed in what they feel is a deterioration in the Service provided in recent years. <ends>

Next Steps | Capturing Members' Feedback and Experiences

The Board of Blind Citizens NZ resolved its approach would first of all be to gather further information from the blind community (blind, deafblind, low vision and vision-impaired people). This has involved wide-ranging engagement with individuals who currently use the Library Service as well as those whom for whatever reason have ceased to do so or know little if anything about its offerings.

Opportunities for engagement and feedback for anyone from the blind community have occurred via our:

- national publication Focus;
- organisational email lists (BlindDiscuss and MemberForum);
- National Information Line Bulletin on TellMe;
- two topic-specific online hui; and
- during scheduled online hui with the National President where people are free to raise any blindness-related topic for discussion.

The extent of information captured is consistent across a number of areas which we will expand upon in this paper...

BLVNZ titles registered with Accessible Books Consortium

Blind Citizens NZ holds a representative position on the Accessible Books Consortium (Consortium). As stated on its website “The Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) is a public-private partnership led by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). It includes organizations that represent people with print disabilities such as the World Blind Union (WBU); libraries for the blind; standards bodies, and organizations representing authors, publishers and collective management organizations.... The Consortium’s Global Book Service is an on-line catalogue that allows participating libraries for the blind and organisations serving people who are print disabled, known as authorised entities, to obtain easily the accessible content they need. The Service supports the goals of the Marrakesh VIP Treaty at a practical level.”

In our support of the Consortium we have previously brought to BLVNZ’s attention two areas where in our view, its contributions would be significant. The first is the importance of BLVNZ’s catalogue of books and other texts being published with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and | or the Consortium. Publishing content with each of these entities contributes towards increasing the breadth of reading material available both domestically here in New Zealand, and internationally. At the same time this raises the profile of the diversity of titles available in New Zealand as a direct result of BLVNZ’s excellent work. Once published with WIPO and the Consortium, aside from individual blind people gaining access, this enables other authorised entities to also have access. While aware some steps have been taken since 2022 when we first drew this oversight to BLVNZ’s attention, we are now almost two years on and it appears there is still much to be achieved in this area.

The second matter previously raised for BLVNZ's consideration is the importance of promoting | publicising to the blind community how they too can benefit from signing up as individual users of the Consortium's Global Book Service. While Blind Citizens NZ through our representative is active in this space, a strategic approach that demonstrates how BLVNZ intends to continually inform existing and potential users of Library Services of this tool, is needed.

Suggested Actions

- a. Develop a plan that identifies when the full range of BLVNZ titles and content will be published with WIPO and | or the Consortium.
- b. Identify how BLVNZ intends to routinely and widely promote the benefits of registering with the Global Book Service.

Catalogue and search functions

Based on people's experiences, it would appear that little if any attention is consistently given to ensuring BLVNZ's catalogue is up to date and fit for purpose.

Blind Citizens NZ is very aware that BLVNZ's Library Service is largely funded by the charity dollar. While this has always been the case, historically this has not detracted from the Library Service being a flagship, world class service. There is no doubt in our view, that users and those who have turned away from the service or who might be interested in trialing it, want and need BLVNZ's Library Service to be an exemplar.

In the context of the catalogue, the following points require urgent attention. The catalogue must:

- be available in the full range of blindness alternate formats including online;
- honour the 'Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled' and provide the same access to titles as the Accessible Books Consortium;
- have a search function with features that enable someone to easily browse online and to be able for example, to search for specific genres, authors, titles, filter by language, and whether read by a human narrator or text-to-speech | synthetic voice;
- include information about the full range of magazine titles and frequency of publications and their availability;
- provide information about new titles and | or magazines and also provide updates about what is no longer available;
- introduce inter-loan options;
- provide a facility to ask questions (online and | or of dedicated Library Staff) about what the service has to offer and to request titles | magazines that do not appear to be available.

Engagement with clients | members, Library Service users and organisations including Blind Citizens NZ

Our starting position is that BLVNZ must find ways of engaging with blind people and getting the diversity of feedback needed to inform decisions relating to Library Services. This is imperative. Blind Citizens NZ for our part consistently promotes ways of working together and co-designing services so as to mirror the intent of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

At the very outset of this topic, we emphasise consistency of feedback i.e. that BLVNZ's Library Service used to be world class and there is an absolute desire and need for it to return to this status. To achieve this BLVNZ needs to listen to, and hear what its users | readers are saying...

Putting to one side the very recent online 'survey' there has been very little if any active engagement with clients, members and | or Library Service users for several years. Decisions appear to have been made by management with or without input from the blind community. When the latter has occurred our understanding is that decisions have been based on feedback from a handful of individuals from the blind community who have been shoulder-tapped by management for input. There is no transparency in relation to these opportunities and people appear to be encouraged not to disclose to their blind peers any role they might have had. Perhaps an example where a handful of people from the blind community might have been involved in providing feedback is in relation to the use of synthetic | AI voice versus human narration.

Blind Citizens NZ is a member of the Roundtable on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities. We were surprised to learn at this year's AGM and Conference held in Western Australia in May, that while work undertaken in Australia indicates Australians prefer human narrators over synthetic or AI voice, that here in New Zealand the view differs. That in fact synthetic | AI voice was publicised as receiving positive support. For a statement along these lines to be made, Blind Citizens NZ is left wondering what research and | or engagement happened up until May 2024 to inform this view and how this was publicised to the blind community here in New Zealand. As we indicate in the next section, the feedback we have received is very different...

Human Narration versus Synthetic | AI Voice

In July following publication of an article by Donna Brookbanks and Romy Hooper (refer Appendix 2) in our national publication Focus, we held an online hui (Romy and Donna are narrators for BLVNZ's Library Service). This was well publicised and relatively well-attended with numerous apologies offered and many off-line thoughts and experiences shared as a result. On this occasion BLVNZ's Chief Executive Andrea Midgen and Head of Technology and Accessibility Nigel Waring were present.

This engagement opportunity was as equally valued by narrators as it was by attendees. Narrators made the point that it is invaluable hearing direct from Library Service users and those who have moved away from it. Knowledge gleaned informs their work. They shared that engagement | interactive opportunities such as the online hui are rare. Attendees welcomed news from narrators that they intend to create further interaction opportunities.

The point was made by BLVNZ that use of synthetic | AI voice is not a budget consideration. Rather it is a means of increasing the availability of magazines and introducing new magazine titles. In short, the turnaround is quicker. Even so, users are unimpressed simply because these are issued on a monthly basis by which time much of the information is perceived as out-of-date. The need for the distribution of magazines to occur more frequently (this used to happen) was emphasised.

There is frustration that long-standing magazines such as Consumer, Readers Digest and national geographic publications (New Zealand, Australia and America) have disappeared.

Magazine borrowers have expressed dissatisfaction about the Magazine Service. They perceive that decisions are being made without any engagement or consultation with them.

Suggested Action

- a. It is paramount that BLVNZ consults with borrowers whenever decisions that impact their access to magazines are being made.
- b. When a magazine ceases to be available, reasons need to be communicated and widely publicised.

While the use of synthetic | AI voice for the production of talking books and magazines may be considered a cost-effective and potentially quicker way to produce these items, feedback consistently identified a preference for human narration for leisure reading. Many Library Service users are accessing information on a daily basis using synthetic voice because they have no other option. A profoundly deafblind user made the point that reading books with synthetic voice is extremely challenging and they are unable to listen for long and therefore the enjoyment for them becomes non-existent.

A further criticism of synthetic | AI voice is that poor enunciation of foreign names and places, and pronunciation of te reo Māori, and other languages | dialects, detracts significantly from the person's reading experience. Likewise synthetic | AI voice does not for example, read | interpret well at all, graphics, images and | or crosswords.

Several attendees made the point they no longer borrow magazines or talking books from BLVNZ's Library Service because the quality has deteriorated. Note that reference to deterioration is not about New Zealand's quality of talking book narration, rather the quality of what has been purchased internationally and therefore available as a result.

There appears to be a lack of oversight of these purchases with respect to quality and language - many attendees commented about the number of titles in languages such as French and wonder why this is the case.

The outcome on this occasion is that users believe BLVNZ's Library Service has become a vault for files and that there is no longer any semblance of a library. We share a piece of feedback that arrived as a result of the article in Focus... <begins> I do not like AI or having AI read to me because it spoils the interest in books and articles. I am not looking forward to a time when I don't enjoy listening to a book because it is read by AI and not a human. Books are a very large part of my life. When I read a book, it is like discussing the book with someone who is human and not synthesisation. A book only comes alive when read by a human. Synthesisation does not communicate the feeling that the book wants to convey. I have found that I stop reading something when I find that the reader is not conveying feelings. <ends>

Dedicated Library Service Resource

There are many who have shared their frustrations and struggles when attempting to change their personal profile and | or preferences. Library Service users need to be able to change either of these options whenever they choose. The system should be easy to use. It should not be labour-intensive or technologically challenging leaving users reliant on seeking the assistance of BLVNZ staff. We point out that for while some people updating personal profiles and using technology may prove challenging, these situations appear to reflect a minority of users.

Users have reported changes being made to their profile and preferences without their knowledge. This should not be happening.

There must be robust mechanisms in place to ensure that whenever changes are made to a person's profile and | or preferences that there must be evidence of changes being requested.

Dedicated resources to support users when they need to speak to someone about the Library Service will go a long way towards raising the profile and usability of this service. Regardless of the situation or topic, the BLVNZ staff person needs to have an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the service.

Suggested Action: having an experienced Librarian will provide a depth of knowledge and expertise that currently is lacking within the Library Service. This is a much-needed commodity.

BLVNZ to support a range of mechanisms | devices to access BLVNZ titles | download books

One of the more significant areas of concern is how users access BLVNZ Library Service functions. Blind Citizens NZ acknowledges the diversity of apps and devices available to users and that BLVNZ may be challenged to support them all. That said, from feedback it is clear that BLVNZ does need to consider broadening the range of apps and devices to access Library Service functions. Alternately the apps that are currently in use need to be fit for purpose and meet the diversity of skill levels of users.

When considering each of these elements, Making better use of mainstream apps for local libraries has been signalled as important in the feedback we have received. However this raises the question of training – how do users get hands-on experience and training to use apps, and exposure to know what the options are?

Looking at apps, Libby used for local libraries, and Easy Reader used in conjunction with BLVNZ's Library Service are the two apps most individuals consistently commented about. Libby as it happens is the preferred option. Although Easy Reader is clearly not well-regarded here in New Zealand yet it is used in conjunction with blindness and | or print-disabled libraries and appears to receive positive feedback internationally.

As BLVNZ continues to review its options, the range of devices available for Library Users remains limited. In the meantime use of the service is falling away because what is on offer is failing the blind community. At the very least, BLVNZ could be promoting devices - people don't know what they don't know. On the other hand, once users learn about the plethora of low-end through to high-end devices on the market, they are literally 'blown away'.

The Alexa was initially touted as a solution for Library Users and others to access information, talking books, and magazines. Funded by the Government in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, around 6,000 Alexa units were distributed. Of this number and based on information shared during our July online hui, it's understood positive feedback has been received from around 2,000 clients | members. However, how this information has been gleaned is unclear.

Retracing the introduction of Alexa, there was a requirement for individuals to return whatever BLVNZ device they were using to access the library function. For some it was the Daisy Player or iPad and in some situations people had both options. However when people compared their experiences they discovered a lack of consistency had been taken by BLVNZ i.e. some managed to keep one device and for those with two, they retained them both.

Furthermore, while it's great to know some people are managing to make good use of their Alexa, many have found the library function far too cumbersome. Some have found other ways to do so and others have simply given up.

A guest presenter at Blind Citizens NZ 2021 AGM and Conference promoted a range of technologies and devices including the Envoy Connect, a low-end, affordable, easy to use player. While it has limited functions it is quite effective within those limitations. It is not however a solution that fits with the current memory stick option. Then there is high-end technology such as the Victor Reader Stream with greater functionality enabling users to access books that include DAISY structure. It has Wi-Fi and Bluetooth built in and users could actually download their talking books etc., direct to the player. We understand BLVNZ is introducing the Envoy Connect and look forward to learning more about this approach and all other low and high end solutions. Blind Citizens NZ looks forward to being part of any product evaluation.

Aside from specific technologies that enable individuals to access BLVNZ's library function, we recognise there are some who use their Smart Phone for the purpose of reading books and magazines. From the information we have gathered, it is clear the majority of people do not want to read leisure or educational material this way - this choice is imposed on them. They prefer to disengage from any device that might remotely link to work and distract from their reading. We emphasise there is an absolute lack of support for BLVNZ to rely on people using their Smart Phone for leisure and | or educational reading when accessing its library function.

Suggested Actions

- a.** BLVNZ to explore the need for a dedicated, fit-for-purpose app that meets Library Service user needs or, find out why it is that users are challenged with Easy Reader and resolve the situation.
- b.** Greater understanding of how people are using their Alexa with particular emphasis given to use of the library function – if people are not using it for this purpose factual information of the number of individuals along with their reasons is needed.
- c.** Blind Citizens NZ urges BLVNZ to ensure it focuses attention on devices that best meet the diverse needs of Library Service users and which easily connect to the library function.
- d.** BLVNZ to ensure that its Library Service is in a strong position to take advantage of international efforts to promote, protect and advance the DAISY format.

Modernising the Braille Library

As BLVNZ progresses its work to return the Library Service and related functions as a flagship for the organisation, this must embrace the Braille Library and the needs of Braille readers | users.

Until such a time as BLVNZ has Braille devices available for Braille users, books must continue to be available in both hard and soft copy Braille. Compatibility of devices such as the Brailiant Braille Display must therefore be accommodated.

It is essential for the Braille Catalogue to be kept up to date thereby keeping Braille readers informed of existing and new content.

Braille is a fundamental means of literacy and numeracy and of course accessing information. Blind Citizens NZ encourages BLVNZ to consider every element of a Braille reader | users' needs as steps are taken to refresh the Library Service. The availability of Braille devices and training is paramount.

Conclusion

The Board of Blind Citizens NZ thanks the RNZFB Board of Directors and BLVNZ Chief Executive for taking the time to review our paper. We are available to discuss this with you and to expand on any of the topics raised.

Final suggested action | recommendation: That Blind Low Vision NZ develops a strategic direction for its Library Service that aims to return the service to a world-class, flagship service for the organisation. The strategic direction must demonstrate a co-design approach that identifies how clients, members, current and yet to be users of the Library Service and organisations such as Blind Citizens NZ will be involved.

Attachment “B”

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Inc

Annual Report

1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024

Board

National President	Jonathan Godfrey
Vice President	Chrissy Fern
Board Members	Martine Abel-Williamson
Wendy Chiang	
Andrea Courtney	
Tewai Halatau	
Paula Waby	

Staff

Chief Executive	Rose Wilkinson
Administrative Support	Emily Tilley
Finance Assistant	Mary Yee
Accessible Information Advisor	Thomas Bryan
Minute Taker	Trudi Thomas-Morton

Blind Citizens NZ Branches

Auckland	Headquarters
Nelson	Rotorua
Southland	South Canterbury
Whanganui	Wellington

Blind Citizens NZ Networks

Otago

Taranaki

Guide Dog Handlers

Braille

Contents

Reports

- National President | Chief Executive (combined)
- National Office, Performance Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2024 (Moore Markhams Audit Wellington)
- Summary of Financial Information – National Office
- Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ
- The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust
- World Blind Union
- World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Accessible Books Consortium (ABC)

National President | Chief Executive

Report to Members 2024

Introduction

We are pleased to present an overview of our mahi from the past 12 months. The reality check when preparing our joint report to this year's AGM and Conference, is just how quickly time appears to have passed. Then, as we reflect on Blind Citizens NZ's organisational efforts since then, while a quieter year in many respects, there is still a lot that has been achieved across diverse issues, topics and a changed landscape.

The Board's approach to this year's AGM and Conference theme mirrors a conscious decision to recognise people. At the same time, the Board agreed the theme should be more meaningful than just for our annual event. It decided the theme should be a culmination of efforts throughout the year ending with the celebration of people at our AGM and Conference | He Tāngata, He Tāngata, He Tāngata. In short, the reality is that our advocacy, mahi, and collective efforts are all about people as we strive to achieve the best outcome possible at a given time.

Measuring progress against the Strategic Plan

Blind Citizens NZ's Strategic Plan identifies where Blind Citizens NZ is committed to making a positive difference. 'He Tāngata, He Tāngata, He Tāngata' aligns with our purpose which is '...to give voice to the aspirations and lived experiences of blind, deafblind, low vision, and vision-impaired people living in New Zealand (referred to as blind). We reflect on elements of our work that also align with various goals and respective outcome statements.

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

This time last year, we were waiting to learn the outcome of the General Election. Yes, we began to get a sense of the outcome the evening of our Conference Dinner. The political climate is much different now, and the sand has shifted. While the Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill may not have produced all that we were hoping it would have provided a platform to move forward. Hon Louise Upston Minister for Disability Issues has been extremely frank when speaking with us about her views regarding accessibility legislation. We respect to her approach and the importance of taking time to understand the myriad of views and needs. Our position has always been that legislation is not an end in itself and that advocacy is ongoing, regardless of the landscape in which we're working.

After many years the much-awaited review of the Total Mobility Scheme is happening. Blind Citizens NZ has been actively involved in this space where we have shared insights from the blind community. We also contributed to and informed the Review's Terms of Reference. We remain hopeful the Review will recognise the absolute need for this Scheme, and deliver positive outcomes for disabled people.

Accessible public transport is another priority for our community and therefore for Blind Citizens NZ. Engagement with the NZ Transport Agency | Waka Kotahi for example, addresses accessibility elements that make a blind bit of difference for our community of people. As several of the agency's public transport-related guidelines intersect with regional councils, it is imperative that we remain abreast of how these situations may impact and | or vary around the country.

Raised bus stop platforms and the positioning of cycle lanes that meander through the bus stop and potentially place blind pedestrians (and others) at risk, is an example of mahi happening in this area.

Our work with Verifone regarding their touch-screen EFTPOS terminal with accessibility features continues. Guidelines are needed and to this end, we have raised and are following up with Payments NZ, and Government officials. Our efforts have contributed to opportunities being created for blind people to test out these particular EFTPOS terminals in controlled situations, with guidance. We will have a couple of these available for people to check out during our two-day event.

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

Social media platforms provide a range of opportunities for Blind Citizens NZ to collect information, promote work streams, and to create greater community awareness that blind people can and do fully participate in society

After a spell of several years, we introduced in April, our monthly e-Bulletin. In this, we promote a range of information which is circulated to an audience including members, supporters, donors, government officials and stakeholders.

Facebook and our internal email lists are contributing mechanisms for us to raise awareness of Blind Citizens NZ and our work.

Goal 3: Blind people advocate on both a personal and systemic level

For the first time in several years, we held an Advocacy | Leadership Workshop.

Held over three days in Wellington, the programme is informative, inclusive, and adapted to accommodate the diversity of experience and knowledge of participants. Presenters for this event were Paul Hutcheson, Esther Woodbury, Thomas Bryan along with the National President and Chief Executive. The Board must now work out how often future events will happen.

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

The 2023 AGM and Conference identified concerns about the quality of a range of services provided by Blind Low Vision NZ. Guide Dog Services, Library Services, and learning Braille are amongst the services we have engaged with blind people to learn more about the extent of concerns raised and to advocate for improvement. Members of the Guide Dog Handler Special Interest Network welcomed the opportunity to meet with the Manager Guide Dog Services Peter Hoskin. Although disappointed to learn the length of time it would take to turn the service around, handlers were heartened to hear of his aspirations to improve the quality of service and meet basic expectations.

We offered blind people engagement and feedback opportunities as a means of gathering the diversity of their experiences using the Talking Book Library Service. We compiled the information and submitted a paper with recommendations to the RNZFB Board of Directors and BLVNZ Chief Executive.

The establishment of a Braille Special Interest Network earlier this year is a mere reflection of the importance of Braille as the primary literacy and numeracy tool for blind people. This is one mechanism through which we are collecting data to inform our approach about Braille services.

Online consultation with the Health and Disability Commission provided an important opportunity for blind people to share views and experiences to inform the Act and Code Review.

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

Blind Citizens NZ's involvement in the DPO Coalition might be considered a means to an end. Why? Perhaps because organisationally we place significant emphasis on this as a means of addressing issues that directly impact our community of people, and which intersect other disability communities.

Collectively, member organisations of the DPO Coalition focus on achieving the best outcomes for disabled people. While this may be challenging in a new political climate, it can also be energising and a catalyst for doing better and pushing forward with factual, evidence-based messaging.

Blind Citizens NZ is proud to be one of seven disabled people's organisations (DPO) that comprise the DPO Coalition. You will note our reference to seven whereas for several years it has been six. Yes, we have a new DPO. Mana Pasefika joined us in July this year. Moving on to the six remaining DPOs we have Blind Citizens NZ, Balance Aotearoa, Deaf Aotearoa, Disabled Persons Assembly (DPA), Muscular Dystrophy Association, and People First NZ. Each DPO plays a pivotal role within the DPO Coalition and that includes Blind Citizens NZ.

Topical right now is the impact on disabled people, carers, and whānau due to recent changes happening with Whaikaha | Ministry of Disabled People (which are ongoing) and the transfer of Disability Support Services to the Ministry of Social Development. Whatever the structure, the primacy of Whaikaha | Ministry of Disabled People is paramount.

The Independent Monitoring Mechanism (IMM) comprises the DPO Coalition, Office of the Ombudsman, and Human Rights Commission. The IMM's role is to monitor implementation of the Disability Convention which New Zealand ratified in 2008. This includes analysing legislation and policy, identifying priority areas for action, monitoring progress, and reporting to the Government. Last year we reported on the progress we'd made with the then Government to address the 2022 Concluding Observations from New Zealand's examination before the UN Committee. Working in a new political environment the process has needed to start afresh and the IMM continues its work in this space.

On the international stage Blind Citizens NZ holds its own. We hold both country positions on the World Blind Union with Jonathan Godfrey and Thomas Bryan appointed by the Board as our two representatives. Thomas Bryan's breadth of knowledge across accessible public transport, the environment, technology and information is recognised by the WBU at a global level. He is Chair of Access to the Environment Working Group, and is funded to travel to Cairo in November to attend the World Urban Forum 12, the premier global conference on sustainable urbanisation. Blind Citizens NZ proudly provides Martine Abel-Williamson in her WBU President's position, 'in-kind' and financial support, a four-year commitment that ends in November 2025.

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

To move forward, we sometimes need to take a step backwards. On this occasion we start by highlighting actions taken by the Board in 2022, having reviewed membership subscriptions for the first time in several years. The Board introduced a subscription-free opportunity for blind people who had not paid a subscription since 2018. The hope was that this approach would attract new members, and those people whose membership had lapsed for some time, to show more interest in local and | or national activities. It is important that more blind people know about Blind Citizens NZ, the work we do, and how they potentially benefit from the positive outcomes we achieve. A key point of difference between being financial or not is that anyone taking advantage of the opportunity would be excluded from involvement in democratic processes, both local and national. They would however benefit from all other organisational mechanisms, again both local and national.

As we move towards the end of this one-off opportunity (30 June next year) a further review of membership subscriptions is happening. The Board's plans to bring the discussion forward to this year's AGM and Conference was agreed earlier this year. This time, members are being asked for their views about the value of membership subscriptions. The pros and cons are briefly set out in the discussion paper publicised in our September Focus issue, and of course in our meeting papers.

Primarily through publicity in Focus (national quarterly publication), and online hui (Zoom), we have created a range of engagement opportunities for blind people. However the digital divide is alive and well and we acknowledge this becomes evident when holding online hui.

Of note is that we also use our TellMe Bulletin as a more accessible tool for promoting these same opportunities.

Online engagement opportunities include:

- Generic discussions with the National President held every six weeks.
- Blind Low Vision NZ Library Services – gather people's experiences.
- Establishing a Braille Special Interest Network.
- Total Mobility Scheme Review | consultants present.
- Whaikaha | Ministry of Disabled People funding related experiences (System Transformation and Enabling Good Lives).
- Health and Disability Commission | Act and Code Review attended by HDC officials.
- Synthetic voice versus human narration | magazines and talking books | talking book narrators Romy Hooper and Donna Brookbanks;

Branches and Networks are flexible in their respective approach to holding meetings and activities. Often attendance is offered in a hybrid manner even though in-person may be the preferred option. The flexibility of our infrastructure changing to support local needs and aspirations is evidenced with the transition of Branches to Networks i.e. Rotorua and Nelson, and in Otago we have the reverse happening. It is becoming a Branch.

Our Te Tiriti o Waitangi journey continues with small steps. The discussion paper with our meeting agenda will get us thinking about what it means to be a Treaty-based organisation.

Goal 7: Blind Citizens NZ is recognised for what it adds to the blind community and society.

Every effort is made within our control to promote the benefits of joining Blind Citizens NZ. We pointed out earlier that blind people can enjoy, with the exception of being involved in constitutional processes (voting and standing for election), all the benefits of being a member of Blind Citizens NZ, without paying a subscription. Organisationally we acknowledge the many competing interests that exist, both within and external to the blind community. Therefore Blind Citizens NZ's activities become one of the many choices that people have...

On the good news front, we are pleased to share that we have worked through a process with the Chief Executive Blind Low Vision NZ that enables us to once again promote Blind Citizens NZ to clients and members of BLVNZ.

Through our work with stakeholders, Government agencies and officials, Blind Citizens NZ has earned their confidence and trust. We do not take this outcome for granted as we continue to grow and maintain our networks and relationships.

Blind Citizens NZ's work in relation to the role we have with the All of Government Alternate Formats team directly benefits blind people and other disability communities. While primarily an 'information and advice' about accessible information, the work intersects with the accessibility of websites. It also involves monthly training sessions with government officials and others interested in learning more about producing accessible information and the full range of five alternate formats.

The Board carries out thorough processes when appointing people for national and international organisational representative roles. This approach extends to appointments made by the DPO Coalition on our recommendation. Blind Citizens NZ is respected for the knowledge, expertise, and collegiality our organisational representatives demonstrate in their respective positions.

Conclusion

Our annual report presents several opportunities. Not only to reflect on our mahi and contributions to society but also to acknowledge changes within the Board and National Office.

For the first time since 2021, we have an election with three candidates competing for two Member-at-Large positions. Wendy Chiang and Tewai Halatau's positions fall due for election this year. It is therefore timely to acknowledge the significant contributions of all Board Members. Mindful there is an election underway, we specifically recognise Wendy Chiang and Tewai Halatau. Ms Chiang has served five years on the Board first joining in 2019. Having served a two-year term she stood for election again in 2021 where she was re-elected for a three-year term. Towards the end of her term, Ms Chiang decided it was time for a break. She has made it clear that she will be back sometime in the future. Tewai Halatau joined the Board in 2021 and is standing for re-election for a further three-year term. By the time we come together for this year's AGM and Conference, we will know more about the election.

Turning our attention to the small team at our National Office who provide support to the Chief Executive – there are changes here too. In April, Emily Tilley was welcomed to the Administrative Support position.

Trudi Thomas-Morton joins the team in the new 'Minute-Taker' position which should free the Chief Executive up to spend more time on strategic and advocacy matters. To Mary Yee Financial Assistant, Thomas Bryan Accessible Information Advisor, and Emily Tilley Administrative Support, you can know that your respective contributions and support for Blind Citizens NZ are evident across many elements of our organisational. Thank you...

We also recognise and extend thanks to our supporters, donors, funders, and stakeholders for the diversity of support evidenced in so many ways. Last but by no means least we take this opportunity to thank our members and those from the blind community who are on the peripheral of our mahi, contributing, and learning more about Blind Citizens NZ. We are first and foremost a member-led, member-driven organisation – He Tāngata, He Tāngata, He Tāngata...

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

National Office Performance Report For the year ended 30 June 2024

Notes to reader

1. A summary of financial information for these accounts can be located at the end of the presentation of the Performance Report for National Office.
2. Page numbering applies solely to the audited Performance Report for National Office, and not page-numbers in this agenda.
3. All statements presented in the Performance Report should be read in conjunction with the respective Notes to the Performance Report.

Contents

Page

Statement of Financial Performance	3
Statement of Financial Position	4 – 5
Statement of Cash Flows	6 - 7
Statement of Accounting Policies	8 - 12
Notes to the Performance Report	13 - 23

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Statement of Financial Performance for the year ended 30 June 2024

	Note	2024	2023
Revenue		\$	\$
Donations, fundraising and other similar revenue	1	6,097	20,610
Subscriptions from members	1	1,124	809
Revenue from providing goods or services	1	352,609	357,433
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	1	23,967	21,197
AGM and Conference	1	6,726	26,016
Legacies and Bequests		5,681	-
Total Revenue		396,204	426,065
Expenses			
Expenses related to public fundraising	2	661	602
Volunteer and employee related costs	2	158,489	153,347
Costs related to providing goods or services	2	337,914	293,326
Total Expenses		497,064	447,275
Operating surplus/(deficit)		(100,860)	(21,210)
Unrealised gain/(loss) on fair value changes		56,953	28,724
Net profit /(loss) for the year		(43,907)	7,514

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2024

Assets		2024	2023
		\$	\$
Current Assets			
Bank accounts and cash	3	525,933	667,589
Debtors and prepayments	3	35,091	7,582
Total Current Assets		561,024	675,171
Non-Current Assets			
		2024	2023
		\$	\$
Property, plant and equipment	4	6,053	8,880
Investments	3	1,083,744	1,029,165
Total Non-Current Assets		1,089,797	1,038,045
Total Assets		1,650,821	1,713,216
Liabilities			
		2024	2023
		\$	\$
Current Liabilities			
Creditors and accrued expenses	3	61,711	93,756
Employee costs payable	3	18,908	14,708
Other current liabilities	3	16,742	7,385
Total Current Liabilities		97,361	115,849
Total Liabilities		97,361	115,849
Total Assets less Total Liabilities (Net Assets)		1,553,460	1,597,367

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2024

Accumulated Funds	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
Accumulated surpluses or (deficits)	5	314,378	426,014
Reserves	5	1,239,082	1,171,353
Total Accumulated Funds		1,553,460	1,597,367



Jonathan Godfrey
National President



Christine Fern
Board Member

Dated: 30 September 2024

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Cash Flows from Operating Activities		
Cash was received from:		
Donations, fundraising and other similar receipts	6,097	40,610
Subscriptions from members	1,124	809
Receipts from providing goods or services	335,534	359,005
Interest, dividends and other Investment receipts	26,341	21,529
AGM and Conference	6,726	16,017
Legacies and Bequests	5,681	-
Net GST	(46,631)	43,141
Cash was applied to:		
Payments to suppliers and employees	(476,528)	(455,930)
Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities	(141,656)	25,181

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Statement of Cash Flows

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Cash was applied to:		
Payments to acquire property, plant and equipment	-	(1,945)
Payments to purchase investments	-	(4,543)
Net Cash Flows from Investing and Financing Activities	-	(6,488)
 Net Increase / (Decrease) in Cash	 (141,656)	 18,693
Opening Cash	667,589	648,896
Closing Cash	525,933	667,589
This is represented by:		
Bank Accounts and Petty cash	525,933	667,589

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Statement of Accounting Policies

Basis of Preparation

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated - National Office has elected to apply Tier 3 PBE SFR-A (NFP) Public Benefit Entity Simple Format Reporting - Accrual (Not-For-Profit) on the basis that it does not have public accountability and has total annual expenses of equal to or less than \$2,000,000. All transactions in the Performance Report are reported using the accrual basis of accounting. The Performance Report is prepared under the assumption that the entity will continue to operate in the foreseeable future.

Measurement Base

The measurement base adopted is historical cost with the exception of some investments which are carried at lower of cost or market value.

Presentation Currency

These financial statements are presented in New Zealand dollars (NZD) rounded to the nearest dollar.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

The Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated is registered for GST. All amounts are recorded exclusive of GST, except for Debtors and Creditors which are stated inclusive of GST.

Income Tax

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated - National Office is a registered charity and is wholly exempt from New Zealand income tax having fully complied with all statutory conditions for these exemptions.

Bank Accounts and Cash

Bank accounts and cash in the Statement of Cash Flows comprise all bank balances, on call cash funds and petty cash balances.

Debtors and other Receivables

Debtors and other receivables are measured at their cost less any impairment losses.

Creditors and other Payables

Creditors and other payables are stated at cost.

Property, Plant and Equipment

All property, plant and equipment is measured at cost less accumulated depreciation and impaired losses. Costs include expenditure that is directly attributable to the acquisition of the asset.

Depreciation

Depreciation is charged on a diminishing value (DV) basis over the useful life of the asset. Depreciation is charged at rates calculated to allocate the cost or valuation of the asset less any estimated residual value over its remaining useful life:

- Fit-Out 20% DV
- Motor Vehicles 20% DV
- Office equipment 30 - 67% DV
- Furniture and fittings 20% DV

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Statement of Accounting Policies

Depreciation continued

Depreciation methods, useful lives and residual values are reviewed at each reporting date and are adjusted if there is a change in the expected pattern of consumption of the future economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset.

Tier 2 PBE Accounting Standards Applied

Financial instruments

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated - National Office has elected to apply NFP PBE IPSAS 41 Financial Instruments: Recognition and Measurement for its financial assets. Financial assets are recognised when the Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated - National Office becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the financial instrument.

Equity and bond investments are held at market value at balance date. Interest income is recognised in the statement of financial performance using the effective interest rate method.

Dividend income is recognised in the statement of financial performance when the right to receive income is established. For public traded securities this is the ex-dividend date.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated - National Office derecognises a financial asset when either the rights to receive cash from the asset expire or are waived, or we transfer our rights to another party, provided certain conditions are met.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Statement of Accounting Policies

Financial assets at fair value through Statement of Financial Performance

Financial assets are classified as fair value through the Statement of Financial Performance with the goal of collecting cash flows and selling the asset.

Impairment of Financial Assets

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated - National Office assesses at the end of reporting date whether there is objective evidence that a financial asset or a group of financial assets is impaired. A financial asset or a group of financial assets is impaired and impairment losses are incurred if there is objective evidence of impairment as a result of one or more events that occurred after the initial recognition of the asset (a 'loss event') and that loss event has an impact on the estimated future cash flows of the financial asset or the group of financial assets that can be reliably estimated.

Revenue

Revenue is recognised to the extent that it is probable that the economic benefit will flow to the entity and revenue can be reliably measured. Revenue is measured at the fair value of consideration received. The following specific recognition criteria must be met before revenue is recognised:

- **Donations:** Donation income is recognised as revenue when received and all associated obligations have been met.
- **Interest income:** Interest income is recognised as it accrues, using the effective interest method.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Statement of Accounting Policies

Revenue continued

- **Legacies:** Legacy funds received for specific future investment purposes or to meet specific future costs, are recognised as income in the reported surplus or deficit and then **transferred from Accumulated Funds** to a "restricted" Reserve to be used to fund specific future costs of the entity, or to be used in accordance with the terms of the bequest.
- **Revenue received in advance:** Grant revenue is recognised as revenue when it becomes receivable by virtue of a contractual agreement being signed and an invoice raised. The Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated - National Office has a liability to repay the grant if the requirements of the grant are not fulfilled. A liability is recognised to the extent that such conditions are unfulfilled at the end of the accounting period.

Changes in Accounting Policies

There have been no changes in accounting policies which have been applied on bases consistent with those in the previous year.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 1: Analysis of Revenue

		2024	2023
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Donations,	Lotteries Commission	-	20,000
Fundraising and	Donations	6,097	610
other similar			
revenue	Total	6,097	20,610
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Subscriptions	Membership Fees	1,124	809
from members	Total	1,124	809
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Revenue from	Blind Low Vision NZ service	210,000	210,000
providing goods or	contract		
services	Calendar sales	4,742	3,429
	Disabled People's	17,744	12,949
	Organisation Govt		
	MSD Contract	120,000	130,376
	Other	123	679
	Total	352,609	357,433

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 1: Analysis of Revenue Continued

		2024	2023
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	Interest	17,290	7,878
	Dividends	2,894	3,344
	Gain/(Loss) on sale of investments	3,783	9,975
	Total	23,967	21,197

		\$	\$
Revenue Item	Analysis		
AGM and Conference	AGM and Conference	6,726	10,016
	Grants	-	16,000
	Total	6,726	26,016

Note 2: Analysis of Expenses

		2024	2023
Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Expenses related to public fundraising	Fundraising	661	602
	Total	661	602
Expense Item	Analysis		
Volunteer and employee related costs	Staff Wages	158,489	153,347
	Total	158,489	153,347

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 2: Analysis of Expenses Continued

Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Costs related to providing goods or services	Advocacy	4,724	2,044
	Advocacy Leadership Workshop	12,100	-
	AGM and Conference	63,351	61,274
	Board Expenses	34,392	38,860
	Te Tiriti o Waitangi Advisory Group	13,396	-
	Calendars	5,817	4,926
	Administration Expenses	123,356	102,315
	Office Expenses	80,778	83,907
	Total	337,914	293,326

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 3: Analysis of Assets and Liabilities

Asset Item	Analysis	2024	2023
		\$	\$
Bank accounts and cash	Cheque account balances	37,948	346,449
	On call account balance	487,365	320,597
	Imprest Account	500	423
	Petty Cash	120	120
	Total	525,933	667,589

Asset Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Debtors and prepayments	Accounts receivable	31,766	1,379
	Prepayments	3,325	6,203
	Total	31,091	7,582

Asset Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Financial assets at fair value through surplus or deficit	ANZ Managed Investment Portfolio	1,083,744	1,029,165
	Total	1,083,744	1,029,165

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 3: Analysis of Assets and Liabilities Continued

		2024	2023
Liability Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Creditors and accrued expenses	Trade and other payables	32,236	20,693
	Accrued expenses	32,244	31,728
	GST Payable	(2,769)	41,335
	Total	61,711	93,756

Liability Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Employee costs payable	Holiday pay accrual	13,107	14,708
	Wages accruals	5,801	-
	Total	18,908	14,708

Liability Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Other	Te Pou Funding – unspent funds	9,317	-
	Other	7,425	7,385
	Total	16,742	7,385

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 4: Property, Plant and Equipment 2024

Asset Class	Opening Carrying Amount	Purchases	Sales/ Disposals	Current Year Depreciation & Impairment	Closing Carrying Amount
Furniture and fixtures	1,591	-	(101)	(298)	1,192
Office equipment	3,809	-	(705)	(978)	2,126
Motor Vehicles	2,994	-	-	(599)	2,395
Computer Software	486	-	-	(146)	340
Total	8,880	-	(806)	(2,021)	6,053

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 4: Property, Plant and Equipment

2023

Asset Class	Opening Carrying Amount	Purchases	Sales/ Disposals	Current Year Depreciation & Impairment	Closing Carrying Amount
Furniture and fixtures	1,989	-	-	(398)	1,591
Office equipment	3,351	1,945	-	(1,487)	3,809
Motor Vehicles	3,742	-	-	(748)	2,994
Computer Software	694	-	-	(208)	486
Total	9,776	1,945	-	(2,841)	8,880

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 5: Accumulated Funds

2024

Description	Accumulated Surpluses or Deficits	Reserves	Total
Opening Balance	426,014	1,171,353	1,597,367
Surplus/(Deficit)	(43,907)	-	(43,907)
Transfer to Investment revaluation reserve			
Transfer to Reserves	(56,953)	56,953	-
	(22,116)	22,116	-
Transfer from Reserves	11,340	(11,340)	-
Closing Balance	314,378	1,239,082	1,553,460

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 5: Accumulated Funds

2023

Description	Accumulated Surpluses or Deficits	Reserves	Total
Opening Balance	467,629	1,122,224	1,589,853
Surplus/(Deficit)	7,514	-	7,514
Transfer to Investment revaluation reserve	(28,724)	28,724	
Transfer to Reserves	(21,223)	21,223	-
Transfer from Reserves	818	(818)	-
Closing Balance	426,014	1,171,353	1,597,367

Breakdown of Reserves Name	2024 \$	2023 \$
General Fund	640,608	624,358
Member for Life Fund	23,740	24,036
Leadership Fund	190,123	185,300
Branch Funds Brought to Account	48,518	48,518
Investment Revaluation Reserve	336,093	279,141
AGM and Conference Reserve	-	10,000
Total	1,239,082	1,171,353

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 6: Commitments and Contingencies

		2024	2023
Commitment	Explanation and Timing	\$	\$
Commitments to lease or rent assets	National Office lease for a further seven months (2023: 19 months)	16,024	43,494
	Photo-copier lease (2023: 10 months)	840	1,400
Total		16,864	44,894

Note 7: Related Party Transactions

		2024	2023	2024	2023
Description of Related Party Relationship	Description of the Transaction (whether in cash or amount in kind)	Value of Transactions	Value of Transactions	Amount Out-standing	Amount Out-standing
Branches	Large Format Calendar sales	1,661	989	1,053	-
Branches	Printing and postage charges	460	316	460	418

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 8: Events after the Balance Date

Events After the Balance Date:

There were no events that have occurred after the balance date that would have a material impact on the Performance Report. (Last Year: Nil)

Note 9: Related Party Transactions

Martine Abel-Williamson is a Board Director of the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind. The RNZFB have provided funding to the entity during the year. Martine Abel-Williamson is also on the Board of Blind Citizens NZ.

Thomas Bryan is contracted to Blind Citizens NZ in the position of Accessible Information Advisor. He is the Chief Executive's partner. Blind Citizens NZ have paid Thomas Bryan \$38,400 (2023: \$30,195) for work carried out in relation to his contract.

Summarised financial information – National Office

Revenue and expenses for the year ended 30 June 2024

Table:

Revenue	2024	2023
Donations, fundraising etc.	6,097	20,610
Subscriptions from members	1,124	809
Grants (Lotteries, BLVNZ, MSD)	352,609	357,433
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	23,967	21,197
Conference Registrations	6,726	26,016
Legacies and Bequests	5,681	-
Total operating revenue	396,204	426,065
Expense	blank	blank
Fundraising related expenses	661	602
Employee and volunteer related costs	158,489	153,347
Operating costs (national office)	337,914	293,326
Total operating expenses	497,064	447,275
Operating (deficit) surplus	(100,860)	(21,210)

End table.

Assets and liabilities at 30 June 2024

Table:

Current Assets	2024	2023
Bank accounts and cash	525,933	667,589
Debtors and prepayments	35,091	7,582
Total current assets	561,024	675,171
Non-current assets	blank	blank
Property, plant and equipment	6,053	8,880
Investments	1,083,744	1,029,165
Total non-current assets	1,089,797	1,038,045
Total assets	1,650,821	1,713,216
Total current liabilities	97,361	115,849
Total liabilities	97,361	115,849
Net assets	1,553,460	1,597,367

End table.

Accumulated Funds

Table:

Accumulated Funds	2024	2023	
Accumulated surpluses (or deficits)	314,378	426,014	
Reserves	1,239,082	1,171,353	
Total Accumulated Funds	1,553,460	1,597,367	

End Table.

Blind Citizens NZ Representative Reports

Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ)

From Pauline Melham, Blind Citizens NZ Representative

Introduction

As another conference approaches and I sit down to write my annual report, I can honestly say, I have thoroughly enjoyed my second year as your representative on the BLENNZ School Board of Trustees. October 2023 – September 2024 has been a busy period for the school.

I have attended all Board meetings this year, as well as being part of the recruitment and selection panel that recruited the new BLENNZ Principal, (see below).

The board is the same as last year, with one notable exception. Martine Able-Williamson has replaced John Mulka as the Blind Low Vision New Zealand Representative on the board. Welcome Martine, I personally enjoy having another blind ally on the board.

For reference, the board is as follows:

- Chris Gunn, Parent Rep, Board Chair
- Dave Cullen, Parent Rep, Vice Chair
- Kevin Manson, Parent Rep, Board Member
- Ross Meikle, Parent Rep, Board Member
- Tracey O'Sullivan, BLENNZ Staff rep, Board Member
- Justine Edwards, Homai Parent Rep, Board Member

- Pauline Melham, BCNZ Rep, Board Member
- Nigel Ngaiwhi, Kapo Maaori rep, Board Member
- Martine Able-Williamson, BLVNZ Rep, Board Member
- Karen Stobbs/Saul Taylor, BLENNZ Principal, Principal
- Janny Cooke, BLENNZ staff, Board Secretary

New Principal

Towards the end of last year, long-serving BLENNZ Principal Karen Stobbs announced her imminent retirement. This set in motion a search for a new Principal, which started with some advice from the New Zealand School Boards Association including the advisability of using a specialist education recruitment agency.

The Principal's recruitment and selection subcommittee were unable to start looking for a new Principal until Karen announced her retirement to the school in February, 2024.

The position was advertised in New Zealand and Australia but only New Zealand candidates applied. A mix of external and internal candidates were shortlisted and interviewed. We were impressed with the calibre of the field. The committee unanimously selected Saul Taylor as the new BLENNZ Principal.

Saul is a dual sensory specialist in education having gained qualifications and experience in working with children who are Deaf and children who are blind. Saul is one of the few dual sensory qualified teachers in the country. Saul has worked for BLENNZ for many years both in South Auckland and the Hawkes Bay and has held a Regional Manager's job at BLENNZ.

The committee were impressed with Saul's passion for the sector, his extensive experience, his leadership style and his commitment to Te Ao Maori.

Saul took up his post in June and was fortunate enough to have a brief but useful handover period with Karen Stobbs before she departed.

When Saul introduced himself to the full Board, he had the following to say about his vision for BLENNZ. As Principal he wants a school that:

- Truly values family and whānau and involves them in the school.
- Is connected with its local community;
- Has a strong relationship with the tertiary provider/s that train BLENNZ staff;
- Ensures there is a sound forward planning system;
- Operates high quality processes for selection and recruitment of staff and provides professional development for staff.
- Is recognised both nationally and internationally as a centre of excellence for the education of blind and vision impaired learners, including those with additional needs.
- Continues to offer the national service strands and that they make an optimal difference.
- No resource centre is an Island, that BLENNZ is a connected network from the regions, national service strands and the base school.
- Has well maintained campus buildings and grounds.

Saul is very keen on building positive relationships with sector organisations both in the education and blindness sectors. I have encouraged him to strengthen his relationship with Blind Citizens New Zealand.

We were pleased to see Saul at his second Board meeting in August, he's survived his first three months as Principal and has not run for the hills yet (smiles).

At the end of Karen's tenure, the Board presented her with some beautiful Pounamu (greenstone) gifts.

BLENNZ Strategic Goals

BLENNZ has four Strategic Goals, although Goal One and Two are often combined:

1. Biculturalism,
2. Focus on the National and Expanded Core Curriculum,
3. Improving Developmental Orientation and Mobility and Daily Living Skills, and
4. Supporting students with complex needs.

The board receives updates at least twice a year about the school's progress towards these goals, often in the form of informative presentations delivered by senior staff.

The last year of the current Strategic Plan is 2025 and the Principal, Senior Leadership Team and School Board will work together to create the next three-year Strategic Plan 2026-2028. If members have opinions about the direction that BLENNZ should be taking and particularly the Strategic Goals that should be taken forward during the next Strategic Plan, then it is critical that you share those opinions with both your BLENNZ and BLVNZ Board Representatives so we can influence the strategic direction of the school going forward.

Goals one and two

The Curriculum refresh work is partly on hold. With the formation of a new government late last year, the entire team at the Ministry of Education, working on the refreshed national curriculum was made redundant. Although both a new maths curriculum and a structured literacy curriculum are being developed and will probably be rolled out next year. We also know that the senior curriculum for Maths, English, Statistics and Te Reo are being developed.

BLENNZ are continuing to work on making the curriculum Te Tiriti honouring. The three other important facets to the curriculum are that it is inclusive, easy to understand and the learning that needs to take place is clear.

Overall, BLENNZ staff are comfortable with the introduction of the new Maths curriculum as they think it will work well for BLENNZ learners.

BLENNZ staff are still progressing with their work on the expanded core curriculum. This curriculum is made up of the following key elements:

- Developmental orientation and mobility,
- Everyday living,
- Access technology,
- Social skills,
- Communication,
- Sensory efficiency and,
- Life beyond school.

Goal Three

All BLENNZ teaching staff are being encouraged to include Developmental Orientation and Mobility (DOM) into the curriculum of all BLENNZ learners. RTVs are using the BLAST tool which helps to determine which students need DOM most urgently and what particular skills they need. Students can then be linked with the most appropriate person to teach that skill. Traditionally, RTV were 'not to go beyond the school gate' with a student. However, RTV whilst not DOM instructors, they are encouraged to be aware of the skills that they can teach and to embed this into the teaching with students that need it.

BLENNZ has just done a bulk order for an everyday living kit for each resource centre so that RTV can also include aspects of these skills into each student's curriculum.

Unfortunately, DOM is not taking place around Manurewa at present and students from BLENNZ Homai Campus and other students living in this area are being transported to other suburbs to undertake DOM. This is because there are a number of stray dogs in Manurewa at present and the council Dog Control Officer felt it was a case of when someone was bitten and injured and not if.

Goal Four

In the mid-year Board meeting, we received a presentation about supporting learners with complex needs. Typically, this is a learner who is blind or vision impaired and has other impairments that have an impact on their learning. The actual definition of a learner with Complex needs is "All ākonga have a right to access curricula regardless of their individual visual, sensory, medical, behavioural, cognitive and/or physical needs.

Some ākonga require more complex adaptations, interventions, and support to allow equitable access, hence the term complex needs”. Of note is that this definition does not contain a description of impairments that are ‘complex’. Instead, it acknowledges that BLENNZ has a range of children and young people and ways of supporting their needs, must be found and developed.

A group of interested staff have formed a Complex Needs Working Group. They started by gathering data about the number of learners with complex needs within BLENNZ. They’ve also gathered resources together about supporting these learners. It appears that the complexity of BLENNZ learners is increasing and so RTV knowledge and skills are having to increase in order to support those learners.

The next step is to survey staff about the Professional Development they need in this area and then start providing this.

A growing area of need is learners with Cerebral Vision Impairment or CVI. A CVI is where the eyes are not impacted but the child’s vision is affected because the pathway to the brain is impacted and so visual perception rather than visual acuity is affected. CVI can occur in conjunction with a vision impairment or separate to it.

A working group has been established between BLENNZ and the Ministry of Education to investigate this condition. It is believed there are likely to be many children affected, who could benefit from support but would not meet the criteria to be a BLENNZ student. Any resources developed as part of this working group will be made available to all schools.

Presentations and Questions

At most board meetings, the board is given a presentation about some aspect of the work of the school and wider network.

The first presentation was about literacy amongst blind learners and the way that was measured. There are two types of readers within BLENNZ those undertaking a standard literacy programme and those who are developing functional literacy that is, the ability to recognise symbols. BLENNZ is keen to teach every student according to their preferred medium. Some students use print, others use braille, for those who can access both, teachers will teach whatever format the student is most drawn to and then teach the other one later.

Exploration of these issues led your Board representative to ask questions about the following items:

1. Where do BLENNZ learners go after BLENNZ?
2. Are BLENNZ learners equipped with the right technology for now and into the future?

Currently, BLENNZ is only able to report on outcomes for our Homai Base School and Transition learners. I have requested that BLENNZ launch a six-month post school survey to determine what learners are doing once they leave school.

I have also talked extensively about the use of assistive technology. BLENNZ learners use a range of technology to support their learning including, iPads, Braille notes and laptops. The concern I have raised is that whilst iPad and iPhones are innovative and useful and largely built accessible, they are seldom used in the workplace. In order to be successful in most workplaces learners will need to be proficient in the Windows environment and with Microsoft Office products. Furthermore, they will need to use either a screen reader or magnification software or a combination of the two. In summary students need the technological skills to go into the workplace (if they are able to) and hold down a job and BLENNZ must teach what is going to most help the learner.

In other words, the BLENNZ, families and MoE need to think about the futures of learners and not just what suits budgets or ministry contracts. Unfortunately, students and their families are often unaware of the employment context and what is required to be successful in the workplace.

BLENNZ Child Protection Review

Last year BLENNZ decided to carry out an independent Child Protection review. The purpose of the review was to examine the school's child protection policies plus any incidents that had occurred during the past five years. The BLENNZ Board wanted to check that our Child Protection policies and procedures were fit for purpose. This review showed that BLENNZ has very good procedures in place but there were some minor areas of improvement which the school is now in the process of completing.

All staff have been made aware of the updated and clarified procedures, these were discussed at the most recent regional staff days.

A child risk register has been created and only selected staff have access to this.

All BLENNZ staff will undertake a Child Matters refresher course over the next three years and a small number of key staff will undertake the more in-depth five-day Child Matters course.

Accumulated Funds

Last year the Board agreed to use some of the BLENNZ accumulated funds on four special projects.

The projects are:

1. Improve Developmental Orientation and Mobility for learners – as a result five Registered Teachers Vision have been funded to attend the Massey University papers on DOM, all five learners are progressing well;
2. Improve access to counselling – Four counsellors were appointed to work with children and their families around the country. The counsellors are forming a tight knit group, they are based at various locations around the country and they all have students on their caseloads.
3. Improve access to Sports;
4. Improve Access to Music and the Arts.

The latter two programmes have been slow to start and the board awaits further confirmation about the progress of these projects. At this stage, very little money has been spent on the last two projects and it is not envisaged that more money will be spent until the programmes have a clear and agreed plan moving forward.

Marrakesh Treaty

BLENNZ is a new authorised entity under this treaty. BLENNZ can create accessible copies of documents and is in the process of signing up to the Accessible Books Consortium, which will allow the organisation to share books with other signatories of the Marrakesh Treaty around the world.

New Satellite Classes and Class Numbers

Last year, members may recall that I wrote about a new satellite class for BLENNZ learners being built at James Cook High School in Manurewa.

The building would be a shared space accommodating both students from Rose Hill Special School and BLENNZ. The project was paused but in June the board was informed that the project had been given the go ahead once more. Originally, this was going to be a two-storey facility but it has been reduced to a single-storey building. No further details are available at this time.

Last year the Homai Base school was full and BLENNZ had to turn away four families from the school. The Homai base school only takes students with two or more impairments. One of those impairments has to be a vision impairment that has a significant impact on the child's ability to access the curriculum.

BLENNZ needs to consider whether it wants to create more classes at the Homai Base School. In the short term, this could be achieved through using some of the BLENNZ Early Learning Space, which is currently underutilised. This would allow one more classroom of six students to be enrolled at the school. In 2026, the James Cook Satellite Unit will be completed and some of the Homai Base School senior students could go there, which would release space at the Base School.

School Engagement

The Board have been asked how BLENNZ can increase engagement with family and Whanau of BLENNZ learners as well as the wider community. Any suggestions would be welcome. Whanau evenings are proving very popular.

At time of writing your Board representative is planning to go to the Wellington BLENNZ wine and cheese evening in order to meet parents whose children access the Wellington Visual Resource Centre.

Also to meet members of the National Assessment Team. All Board members are encouraged to become involved in their local BLENNZ activities.

During my last two visits to BLENNZ there has been evidence of a lot of brightly coloured tulle (fine netting that a ballerina's tutu is made of). BLENNZ is hosting the Special Schools Ball this year and aside from the tulle, there is a great deal of excitement about the event, which is shared between BLENNZ and three other Auckland Special Schools, Rosehill, Sommerville and Parkside.

Earlier this year, Senior students on an immersion course were given an opportunity to talk to professionals working in the areas they are interested in working in and this was very well received by the students. I did raise with the board, that it would be a good idea if BLENNZ learners were able to meet blind people doing those jobs, as well as sighted people. Meeting a blind person in the career you are interested in would provide students with a role model.

New School Van

The board agreed to the purchase of a new school van for BLENNZ. The current vehicle was no longer fit for purpose and a vehicle was needed so that a class of six, all of whom might be in wheelchairs could be taken on a school trip. Given the schools healthy financial position, this was agreed to by the Board and will hopefully be ready for use by early 2025.

New Sensory Room

After one of the recent board meetings, I was lucky enough to be able to visit the new sensory room at BLENNZ.

This is a wonderful space with different coloured lights, sounds and sensory toys and is designed as a space for students who have become upset to unwind and relax. It is a wonderful facility and I am sure it will get a lot of use.

Conclusion

It has been another busy year for BLENNZ and its learners. BLENNZ appears to be in good space, with good staff morale and many new developments that have benefitted blind and vision impaired learners.

The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT)

From Leyna Coleman, Blind Citizens NZ Representative

Introduction

It has once again been a pleasure to serve on BANZAT as Blind Citizens NZ's representative. A lot of our time was spent on preparing and then hosting the ICEB General Assembly in Auckland. We continue to promote Braille both face-to-face and on social media. I will also report on last year's AGM, The Trans-Tasman Certificate and the BLENNZ Braille Challenge.

BANZAT AGM 2023

Our AGM was held at BLENNZ with observers on Zoom. In fact all of our meetings last and this year have been at BLENNZ and we are grateful to them for this. There were quite a few trustee changes. Maria Stevens was once again elected as our Chairperson. Mary Schnackenberg has resigned from the trust. We agreed to appoint her as Secretary-Treasurer. A full list of all the current trustees, who they are and when their terms expire can be found on the BANZAT website. We appreciate each of the trustees' contributions and their organisations for supporting them.

International Council on English Braille (ICEB) 8th General Assembly

The biggest event of the year for BANZAT was hosting the International Council on English Braille's 8th General Assembly.

This took place at the Grand Millennium Hotel in Auckland from 25-30 May. The Assembly is held every 4 years and this is the first time it has been held in New Zealand.

I was not an ICEB delegate this year but attended as an observer. My thanks to the Board of Blind Citizens NZ and BLVNZ (my employer) for their support. I thoroughly enjoyed being part of the Assembly and congratulate Banzat on all their hard work. There were lots of interesting sessions, including demonstrations and presentations of new and upcoming equipment and technology. Braille music also featured, with our own Chantelle Griffiths and Dr Wendy Richards presenting two papers. Recordings of the sessions are available on the ICEB website. In fact if you use a pod catcher or podcast player, you can search for ICEB and access the recordings that way. This is a great opportunity to keep up with what is happening with Braille in the English-speaking world.

Braille Transcription Course

Last year Banzat received a grant to run a course for blind people who wished to become transcribers. In February this year 6 participants met in Auckland to begin the course. The first part of the course was a weekend in Auckland where participants learned some basic formatting and Braille production skills. Throughout the year there have been Zoom sessions for the same participants to hear from a variety of speakers and presenters. We have also been able to enlist help in The Generator, a fund run by MSD to help people start their own businesses.

This will give these people the support they need to set up a transcription business. This has been a highlight for Banzat as we've wanted to get this course up and running for some time.

Trans-Tasman Certificate in Proficiency in UEB

Last year we didn't have any candidates sitting the Trans-Tasman exam. This is partly because Massey University have decided to use the UEB Online qualification. Both BANZAT and ABA (the Australian Braille Authority) wish to continue the exam as we believe it tests knowledge of important concepts such as correct formatting and Braille Te Reo Maori. We have candidates this year but it is too early to report results as the exam is sat in October. I will report on these results next year.

Included as an appendix to my report you will find the full set of resolutions from the 8th General Assembly.

BLENNZ Braille Challenge

Last year's Braille challenge saw a range of students achieve various Braille-related goals. Several adult Braille readers joined the students virtually to talk about their Braille journeys. It was great to hear the students' enthusiasm as they put plans in place to reach their goals. The challenge was once again a big success and is likely to continue.

How To Keep in Touch

I'd like to remind everyone that there are several channels of communication you can use to keep up with Braille-related news here and internationally. BANZAT's website (www.banzat.org) has information about Braille in New Zealand as well as information about the trust.

We maintain a Facebook page and the NZ brl email list. For Braille news in the broader English-speaking world, check out www.iceb.org.

The International Council on English Braille has a presence on social media. They also have a newsletter. The website has some useful resources.

Conclusion

As always I am grateful to the Board of Blind Citizens for their support. I am proud to be a BANZAT trustee and will continue to support and promote Braille as the primary literacy medium for blind people.

Appendix: International Council on English Braille | Resolutions from the 8th General Assembly | 30 May 2024

Resolution 1: full implementation of technical UEB in braille hardware and software

Whereas many developers/manufacturers of braille hardware/software have not yet fully implemented or adequately maintained the Unified English Braille (UEB) code with respect to mathematics and science and

Whereas inconsistent implementation leads to inequitable access to education, especially in STEM fields and

whereas blind learners and students who use braille consequently are experiencing serious challenges in learning mathematics.

Therefore, this 8th General Assembly of the International Council on English Braille resolves to appeal to all developers/manufacturers of braille hardware and software to take due care to make sure that the Unified English Braille (UEB) code with respect to technical material is fully implemented and appropriately maintained in software and hardware still being supported, to such a standard that it can, with confidence, be used in educational settings.

Resolution 2: improvement of UEB translation tables used in braille translation software implemented in screen readers and braille devices

Whereas, Unified English Braille (UEB), now widely adopted as the standard in countries where English is spoken as a first or second language, has as one of its primary development principles the ability for accurate electronic translation to be done both from print to braille and from braille to print; and

Whereas, some translation packages used in popular screen readers, even when they are largely accurate in translation from print to braille, still yield significant errors when the user types in contracted braille for translation to print; and

Whereas, these preventable inaccuracies in translation to print stand in the way of the use of braille for outward digital communication and unnecessarily create an overall impression that typing in contracted braille is unreliable; and

Whereas, some translation packages do not present these over-arching braille-to-print errors at all, demonstrating that problems in translation to print are not inherent to contracted UEB; and

Whereas, issues in translation to print may contribute to another issue that causes inconvenience for users--that is, the needless persistence of the use of "computer braille" within UEB by some screen readers for certain input fields; and

Whereas, a significant category of braille-to-print translation errors involve observance of numeric mode rules, creating obstacles to full implementation of mathematics in braille software and devices;

Therefore, this 8th General Assembly of ICEB resolves to:

1. Call upon braille translation software developers to prioritize the improvement of braille-to-print tables of Unified English Braille in software that is used in screen readers and braille devices;
2. Work with software developers to help bring about such improvement so that electronic braille can be both read and written with accuracy; and
3. Call upon screen reader developers and manufacturers of braille devices to no longer require a switch to computer braille in input fields.

Resolution 3: reference document to facilitate international use of music scores in braille

Whereas, music braille is not formatted in the same way in all countries, which causes an impediment to international exchange of music scores, therefore this 8th General Assembly of the International Council on English Braille resolves to:

1. Task its Music Braille Committee to draft a reference document describing the various ways in which music scores are transcribed in the ICEB member countries in order to better facilitate international exchange of braille music scores.
2. Collect examples of music formats showcasing transcription differences among countries for transcribers, end-users and software developers to use as a guide to country formatting.

These examples should include:

- A piano piece of medium complexity,

- A vocal piece,
 - An ensemble for score layout,
 - A guitar piece or other solo instrument, and
 - A vocal piece with chords.
4. To work towards harmonising formats in ICEB member countries where practical.

Resolution 4: Wikipedia articles on braille

Whereas, at present, a search of Wikipedia results in 5,343 articles that mention braille; and

Whereas, some of these articles mention braille tangentially, but many do relate to the tactile reading code; and

Whereas, many of these articles contain errors and/or notions about braille that are not correct; And

Whereas, the ICEB Research Committee has already edited the main Wikipedia article on braille.

Therefore, this 8th General Assembly of ICEB resolves to:

- Charge the ICEB Research Committee to undertake a review of the Wikipedia articles that directly relate to the work of ICEB.
- Determine which articles are priorities for revision, based on which will have the greatest impact.
- Revise and update those pages that contain errors or represent braille as outdated, unnecessary, or in any way misrepresent the ICEB view of braille.

Resolution 5: Accessible Books Consortium Catalogue

Whereas, The Marrakesh Treaty has dramatically increased the cross-border availability of braille books throughout the world;

Therefore, this 8th General Assembly asks its full members to:

1. Check if blindness agencies in their countries are uploading braille titles they have produced to the Accessible Books Consortium Catalogue, and, if not, to explore the barriers preventing this from happening, looking for available solutions and
2. Survey within their countries in order to gauge the uptake in the use of digital books/materials thus strengthening the case for member countries to share as much of their content as possible to the Accessible Books Consortium.

Resolution 6: Technical braille symbols

Whereas, Unified English Braille (UEB), now widely adopted as the standard in countries where English is spoken as a first or second language;

Whereas, UEB is the primary method for reading and writing technical material in braille in most of those countries;

Whereas, the Nemeth code contains several additional mathematical symbols not available in UEB,

Therefore, this 8th General Assembly resolves to assign UEB symbols for technical symbols not currently available.

World Blind Union

From Thomas Bryan, Blind Citizens NZ

Country Delegate

General Updates

Since last year's AGM and Conference, the Board held an election for the primary role of WBU Country Delegate. Our National President Jonathan Godfrey was appointed to this role. Both roles terminate by the AGM and General meeting 2026.

Highlights of the year

- For me personally the highlight of the year was attending the Asia Pacific Region's Midterm General Assembly held in Phuket hosted by Thailand Association of the Blind. In attendance were the WBU President, WBU CEO, other WBU representatives and Country delegates from our region. See below a summary of some of the key addresses/activities.
- Over the last year several webinar events have been promoted and hosted by several international organisations including WBU. While these often are in the middle of the night for us here in New Zealand, by registering even if you can't join the webinar, often these are recorded so you can access them at a more reasonable time. These opportunities are promoted via Blind Citizens NZ email lists. Some of the topics have included:
 - Accessible Pharmacies,
 - Breaking down Accessibility Barriers through Localisation, and
 - Global Trends on Accessibility and Urban Development.

WBU Access to the Built Environment Working Group

As Chair of the WBU Built Environment Working Group we meet online. This is a bit of a challenge due to all our different timeframes so often our meetings are 11:00pm or 6:00am NZ time, to ensure no one is up too late or too early.

The strategic objective for this group is promoting full access to the environment for blind and partially sighted persons including safe and independent travel and access to transportation.

Over the last 12 months the working-group have provided input into WBU relevant position statements, sharing information on the built environment, what's happening in each of our parts of the world, and international research into the built environment.

One of the highlights of the year was a presentation from Chantelle (a member of the working group) from Vision Ireland. She spoke about their new Wayfinding Centre. This represents a €7.825m joint agency investment and is further bolstered by significant support from the private sector and other contributors. It is home to various modes of transport including a Luas carriage, a DART carriage, a Bus Éireann coach, a double-decker Go-Ahead Ireland bus and the forward fuselage section of an Airbus A319 aircraft, as well as a street scape replicating the built environment surrounding public transportation, including lighting, acoustics and hazards.

The centre will simulate real-world public transport scenarios to provide confidence and familiarisation training to individuals with access needs, empowering people through practical training and hands-on experience, knowledge and the opportunity to explore all aspects of transport in a safe and controlled environment.

It will also provide a space for training professionals such as transport operators, architects, designers, engineers and students responsible for future transport systems and designing the built environment.

You can read more about the centre at:

[About - The WayFinding Centre](#) (and at <https://thewayfindingcentre.ie/about/>)

This year for the first time the working-group will be attending an event and so will be able to meet face to face in November. We have been invited by WBU to attend the World Urban Forum 12. The forum is to be held in Cairo. This is a great opportunity to not just attend but participate in such an event. My costs are covered by the WBU.

WBU Asia Pacific Region

As mentioned, my highlight was the Mid-term Region General Assembly (MRGA). This is held every 4 years and hosted by one of the countries in our region. Last November it was held in Phuket. The theme of the MRGA was Connecting Community, Information and Life.

I summarise the events here...

The WBUAP-MRGA was held in a resort-type location similar to a school or university campus. Accommodation blocks were scattered around the complex with the conference venue at one end of the complex. The main reception and restaurant was at the other end of the complex.

There were approximately 89 people who attended from across the region, over 200 locals and about 15 exhibitors. Besides English there were 3 languages translated: Thai, Chinese and Mongolian.

Day 1, WBUAP Board and Policy Council Meeting

This was held on the morning of Sunday 26 November. Guests and observers included Ms Diane Bergeron from CNIB, Monthian Buntan (life member) Thailand, and Rose Wilkinson (support person | Blind Citizen's NZ).

Items discussed included:

Briefing from Apple (lead person from Thailand Association of the Blind – host country) and her team on the upcoming WBUAP-MRGA programme.

Four people from the WBUAP were appointed to pull together the Phuket Declaration. This is a statement at the conclusion of the MRGA.

Other items included:

- Table Officers meetings and WBUAP representation.
- WBUAP's Strategic Plan.
- Communications Committee provided an update.

Technology and exhibitors included:

- Dot - manufacturers of the Dot Watch and Braille/Graphic Tablets.
- Paperless Braille Slates.
- Braille displays from a number of suppliers.
- Sonnar interactive library, mobile phone apps and smart speakers (such as Alexa).
- Thailand Association of the Blind and other local disability agencies selling items made by blind and/or disabled people.

Day 2, Opening of the Midterm Regional General Assembly (MRGA):

The formal opening was done by dignitaries including welcome remarks by the Governor of Phuket. Also, Mr Varawut Silpa-archa, Minister of Social Development and Human Security.

Welcome remarks included recognition of the many issues and barriers facing blind people today such as an aging population and medical conditions, both of which have an impact. The Minister went on to say that government and the like, need to understand the needs first before making changes. He shared with us that he had tried being disabled and can only admire what the blind achieve.

He talked about the difference treaties and legislation are making such as the:

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Marrakesh Treaty.
- Anti-discrimination and the need for it to be rights based.

He went on to describe the new Disability Service Centre which has been established in Thailand. We heard that:

- Disabled people are strongly encouraged to enrol for support services to better understand their needs and the support they need.
- An education/awareness campaign has been launched to improve the betterment of life for disabled persons
- Access to information, access to transportation, and employment were areas that needed to be reviewed to improve the rights of persons with disability.

- Partnerships with agencies and disabled peoples' organisations are essential to support disability community. People need opportunities.

His closing comment was encouraging us all to 'Make the mission impossible, possible.'

There was an address from the President from our region Li Qingzhong (English name Peter). He expressed thanks and appreciation to the Governor, and the Thailand Association of the Blind (TAB) for the work and organisation that has gone into making this event happen. Peter went on to summarise the work of our region over the last year.

Keynote Address | Martine Abel Williamson, President of the World Blind Union

I highlight some key phrases from this address that struck... Phrases in a few words that in my view say much more!!!

- It's not our blindness that defines us.
- Advocacy and holding agencies to account.
- Lego braille bricks making a difference as a teaching tool.
- Marrakesh Treaty has been in place for 10 years and what this has meant.
- COVID, if people are already downtrodden then the impact can be worse.
- We need to be at the table and be part of the solution - partners are not being told what we need.
- R R: Ready, Responsiveness and Recovery.

Sessions were wide ranging...

Smart Cities for the Blind in Modern Society: This session was a panel discussion followed by questions. All panel members were clear there is a lot to do in this space to ensure we (blind people) are not left behind.

Procurement and universal design for all, are key requirements to ensuring our cities work for everyone. Education and awareness are key if city planners are to get it right. This is something for all our organisations to consider. Design and rollout must incorporate universal design and best practice.

Country Reports: Each country's representative was provided the opportunity to present their report, and to expand on specific topics or answer any questions from the floor. Unfortunately, not all countries submitted a written report.

Information needed for our reports was outlined in the template we received for completion. Many reports included general statistics, improvement of opportunities and challenges. Some of the areas highlighted amongst the reports include:

- Marrakesh Treaty;
- Audio Description;
- Employment opportunities and trends;
- COVID recovery;
- Education and support;
- Public transport and independent travel;
- ICT information;
- Communications;
- Technology;

- Smart Cities; and
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Of special note in the Australian report there was recognition of two people. Every second year, Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) presents the David Blyth Award to someone who has made a significant contribution to the lives of people who are blind and vision impaired. BCA presented Ben Clare, WBUAP Chair of the Oceania subregion the David Blyth Award. This recognises his work in promoting organisations of blind people in the Pacific, and his commitment to individual training and organisational capacity building as demonstrated by his various voluntary activities.

Day 3

This was yet another day packed with informational sessions. The first session commenced with a panel discussion. This then moved into 3 separate concurrent sessions led by the panellists. Following the panel discussion facilitators reported back to the full MRGA.

The Panellists were:

- Miyo Ito of Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR Japan).
- Chan-yau Chong Chief Executive Officer at CarbonCare InnoLab.
- Latoa Halatau-Talagi, Co-Chairperson of the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF).

The moderator for the session was Nantanoot Suwannawut. Each panellist provided an overview of their role/organisation and their topic. This was a taster for the next session where I was a facilitator for one of the sessions:

1. Access to Resources by Miyo Ito, AAR Japan. Facilitator Helen Freris, WBUAP member.

2. Community Outreach, Latoa Halatau-Talagi, Co-Chairperson of PDF. Facilitator Thomas Bryan, WBUAP member.
3. Leadership, Chan-yau Chong, Chief Executive Officer at CarbonCare InnoLab. Facilitator Takei Tetsu, WBUAP member. English name Tony.

During the reporting back from each of the workshops, facilitators were asked to provide an overview and then answer questions from the floor. This too, was almost like a panel discussion.

In my session “Community Outreach” presented by Latoa Halatau-Talagi, Co-Chairperson of PDF the session was nice and relaxed. This was great as people felt comfortable in asking questions as La provided an in-depth overview of the history, work and purpose of the Pacific Disability forum and what community outreach looks like for them.

Sub-Regional Meeting (3 Regions):

The three sub-regions for the WBUAP are:

1. East Asia.
2. Pacific and Oceania.
3. South-East Asia.

During this last session of the day, we broke into our sub-regions. New Zealand is part of the Pacific Oceania Region.

This was a very small group with a couple of representatives from Australia, Rose, myself, and one or two online.

The online option was challenging and eventually people gave up. There was no ability for two-way discussion between people present in person and those online.

Our sub-region Chair Ben Clare was unable to join us, so Helen Freris from Blind Citizens Australia presented the report. Highlights of the report include:

- The majority of activity in the subregion this year revolved around new and renewal of membership of blindness organisations to WBUAP. June, we formally welcomed Kiribati for the first time, joining through the Kiribati Association of the Blind and Vision Impaired (KABVI.)
- In September, Samoa, re-joined WBUAP.
- Tonga and Fiji through the Tongan Vision Impairment Association and the United Blind Persons of Fiji, continue to be members.
- There is also interest from newly formed blindness associations in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. Papua New Guinea is currently a member country but is not financial.
- The Marrakesh Treaty is generating a lot of interest and there are hopes the WBU can provide formal training to member organisations in the region. Excluding Australia and New Zealand, Kiribati is the only signatory to the Marrakesh Treaty and our members across the Pacific are keen to lobby their governments to sign the treaty.
- Member organisations wish to explore ways they can become more involved in WBU activities, especially events like the MRGA and the General Assemblies. Financial barriers are complex and difficult to overcome.

These are just a few of the items from Ben's report. What his report highlights is the work and support that will be needed if we are to continue to grow the region and support our fellow neighbours.

That evening the Thailand Association of the Blind, volunteers and staff hosted us all at the Gala Dinner. Besides a huge range of food, a real banquet, there was entertainment with the evening concluding with a jewellery (pearl earrings and pendent) auction. The money raised was then donated to the region.

Day 4

The final day was set aside for reports and updates. The day concluded with the Phuket Declaration and closing remarks. Reports tabled/considered included:

- Reports from the WBUAP Board and Policy Council;
- President's report;
- Treasurer's report (which I presented);
- Secretary General's Report.

The region agrees we are keen to establish a regional office in order to support members and assist in the growth of the region. One of the obstacles that impacts on providing support be it attending WBUAP-MRGA, becoming a member, or providing training and support, or rolling out initiatives, is the regions financial status. While we have tried to identify possible funding streams, often these end up being tied to a specific country or have restrictions on how the funds can be used.

Marrakesh Treaty

Marc Workman WBU Chief Executive (Global Office) provided an update from WBU about the Marrakesh Treaty. He pointed out that 17 countries from our region have signed up to the Treaty and 10 countries have implemented it.

Marc also talked about the partnership with Sonnar to provide access to information and books to the blind community in Ukraine.

Marc highlighted that there is still more to do to get more countries from around the world and our region on board.

Sub regional reports

- Key areas from these include:
- Ongoing promotion of the white cane and White Cane Day.
- Employment.
- Marrakesh Treaty.
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- The need to focus on digital and technology and ways to ensure people are not left behind.
- Life after COVID and growing the region.

Communications Committee: For a number of years Mary Schnackenberg has been the editor for East Wind the publication for our region. Mary advised us last year that she would be stepping down from the role once the January 2024 edition was sent out. As a direct result a communications committee was established to assist the new editor in her role.

The new editor (and Chair of our Communications Committee) WU Jing (English name Crystal from China). Additional Committee Members are:

- Robyn McKenzie Australia,
- WONG Yoon Loong Malaysia
- Thomas Bryan New Zealand.

Massage report: Two seminars were held – one online and one in person. We heard that the online massage seminar was a great success. Next seminar is to be held in 2025

While COVID had a huge impact on the massage service and the ability for blind people to work, things are now much improved.

Phuket Declaration: After some wordsmithing the Phuket Declaration was read out a couple of times and then passed. There are 12 key areas listed in the Declaration. Some of these we (Blind Citizens NZ) are already advocating to central government on, such as implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, employment, ICT, and the Marrakesh Treaty. Other topics such as smart cities and growing/support for the wider region will require consideration.

In conclusion, the WBUAP-MRGA was a full-on Assembly. Highlights for me include:

- Face to Face meeting with my WBUAP Board and Policy Council colleagues.
- Meeting and engaging with other country delegates and our sharing of information.
- Hands on opportunity and meeting with technology suppliers.

WBUAP Board and Policy Council Meeting

Since our meeting at the MRGA, we continue to meet every couple of months online. The communications committee continue to develop its workplan.

We are transitioning from the great work that Mary Schnackenberg provided as East Wind editor and the work of AI Comms supporting and managing the website and other resources. A letter of thanks was sent to Mary thanking her for all her work in supporting the region over many years.

Upcoming events

- A seminar on accessible technology for blind and partially sighted people is to be held within the upcoming Technology Forum of the China Disabled Persons Federation in December this year.
- 2025 Massage seminar to be held in South Korea.
- WBU General Assembly & World Blindness Summit 2025 in São Paulo, Brazil, September 2025.

Conclusion

You will see it has been a full-on year with lots happening. There have been a number of opportunities to showcase New Zealand and to report back on international events and how other countries are dealing with similar issues and concerns. I also would like to acknowledge the Board of Blind Citizens NZ, Rose Wilkinson Chief Executive, WBU staff, the WBU President, and the WBU Asia Pacific Board and Policy Council for all their assistance, support and encouragement over the last year.

World Intellectual Property Organisation Accessible Books Consortium

From Martine Abel-Williamson, Blind Citizens NZ's Representative

Introduction

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Accessible Books Consortium, which was launched at WIPO headquarters in June 2014. This annual Report on the Accessible Books Consortium is prepared in the framework of the Assemblies of the Member States of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) is a public-private partnership that seeks to implement the objectives of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled (“the Marrakesh VIP Treaty”) at a practical level. ABC does not have a separate legal personality, rather it is an alliance of stakeholders led by WIPO. ABC has an advisory board that provides technical expertise and fosters communication with its stakeholders. In addition to WIPO, the board includes a total of 15 members from among the beneficiary, rightsholder, authorized entity and donor constituencies. The following organizations hold permanent seats on the board:

- DAISY Consortium;
- International Authors Forum;
- International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment;
- International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions;
- International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations;
- International Publishers Association;

- World Blind Union; and
- WIPO (in its ex-officio capacity).

ABC's goal is to increase the number of books in accessible formats and to distribute these to people around the world who are blind, have low vision, are dyslexic or have mobility impairments that impact their ability to read the printed word ("people who are print disabled").

Key results from the past decade are highlighted below:

- the number of titles in the ABC Global Book Service catalogue grew from 224,500 titles in 2014 to one million titles in 2024;
- an application for beneficiaries was developed and launched in 2021 so that people with print disabilities who are patrons of participating authorized entities (AEs) can search the ABC catalogue and immediately download accessible format copies to read at their convenience;
- ABC established training and technical assistance projects in how to produce accessible books in over 40 low-income countries. Nearly 20,000 educational titles were produced in national languages in accessible formats by ABC partners through funding provided by ABC;
- the ABC Online Course in Accessible Book Production for NGOs, including the ABC Online STEM Course, was developed in 2020, together with the DAISY Consortium, to respond to challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These two online courses, which are used during ABC training and technical assistance projects, are currently available in four languages: Arabic, English, French and Spanish. As a result of these online courses, a greater number of organizations serving people who are print disabled now have the capacity to produce accessible books;

- the [ABC Online Course on Accessible Publishing Concepts](https://tinyurl.com/bdzzmnmv) (and <https://tinyurl.com/bdzzmnmv>) also developed together with the DAISY Consortium, was released in 2022 in four languages (Arabic, English, French and Spanish) as an open, free, self-study course intended for those who want to gain a high-level understanding of critical concepts in accessible publishing; and
- the ABC International Excellence Award for Accessible Publishing has now become an important annual event in the field of accessible publishing.

Activities of the Accessible Books Consortium

ABC Global Book Service

The ABC Global Book Service (“the Service”) is one of the world’s most diverse online catalogues of books in accessible formats. The Service provides participating AEs with the ability to search, order and exchange accessible format copies of works across borders at no cost. The Service's cloud-based platform enables participating AEs to pool their collective resources by sharing their respective catalogues and accessible format copies of works with each other.

The Service, which counted 11 participating AEs in 2014, has now grown to over 135 members, including ten new AEs that joined in the past year. About 35 per cent of all AEs are located in countries that have either not joined the Marrakesh Treaty or have not transposed the provisions of the Treaty into national law. This means that the AE and people who are print disabled in the country cannot fully benefit from the entire ABC catalogue. See Annex I for the list of AEs that signed the agreement to join the Service.

The Service has one million titles in 80 languages available for cross-border exchange for those AEs located in countries that have both joined and transposed the provisions of the Marrakesh Treaty into national law. Participating AEs delivered a total of 164,000 accessible digital files from the ABC catalogue to persons with print disabilities in 2023. Additionally, we note that for those AEs located in countries that have not ratified or implemented the Marrakesh Treaty, the ABC Global Book Service still provides an opportunity for cross-border exchange due to its 30,000 titles for which permissions have been obtained from rightsholders.

While the main ABC application is a library-to-library service (the “AE application”), ABC also offers a beneficiary application (formally known as the Supplementary Application) at no cost to participating AEs. The beneficiary application gives patrons of participating AEs located in countries that have both joined and transposed the provisions of the Marrakesh Treaty the ability to search for, and immediately download, accessible format copies of works contained in the ABC catalogue. The beneficiary application contains a catalogue of over 400,000 accessible format copies of works available for direct download. Currently, 41 participating AEs have agreed to offer the ABC beneficiary application to their patrons, 14 of which are located in developing or least developed countries (LDCs).

In 2023, WIPO concluded an agreement with Dolphin Computer Access, an accessibility software developer in the United Kingdom, to make the ABC catalogue available in Dolphin EasyReader, a multilingual reading application specialized in accessible books. The ABC catalogue will be made available through the Dolphin EasyReader application at no cost for use by patrons of participating AEs, enabling them to search, download and read accessible books, all within a single contained environment, directly on their device of choice.

Regrettably, longstanding discussions to establish a portal for a federated search with third parties have been brought to an end with no fruitful conclusion. The idea had been to provide a central location for the public search, discovery and exchange of the largest number of titles in accessible formats in the widest possible range of languages.

Future ABC Global Book Service Activities

ABC officially launched Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) in 2023 and will promote their use with participating AEs that are located in countries that have both joined and implemented the Marrakesh Treaty and that have the technical capacity to utilize them. The ABC APIs provide AEs with the ability to make the ABC beneficiary catalogue of over 400,000 accessible format copies available in their own user interfaces. In this manner, beneficiaries can gain direct access to these ABC accessible format copies using the website or application that is most familiar to them.

Training and Technical Assistance

The ABC model for training and technical assistance aims to equip organizations in developing countries and LDCs with the ability to produce educational materials in national languages to be used by primary, secondary and university students who are print disabled. ABC provides training in the latest accessible book production techniques through an online platform that incorporates interactive sessions with expert trainers. Once participants complete the ABC Online Course in Accessible Book Production for NGOs and/or the ABC Online STEM Course, ABC provides funding to the partner organization so that its personnel can utilize their recently acquired skills to produce educational titles in accessible formats for students who are print disabled.

Many of the trainees are themselves blind or have low vision or other disabilities. ABC's online courses are inclusively designed, with navigable lesson content, accessible quizzes, described images and captioned videos. The courses teach participants how to make accessible books using production software that is also entirely accessible. All of the ABC online courses were migrated to the WIPO Academy e-learning platform in 2023.

E-Training and Technical Assistance Activities

The Government of Australia signed an agreement with WIPO in March 2024 contributing to the FIT for ABC training and technical assistance projects in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Region, which will improve educational and employment outcomes for people who are print disabled in these areas.

Funds will also be used to host a two-day "Right to Read" Awareness Raising Conference for the Pacific Islands in November 2024, to be held in Australia. The purpose of the conference is to encourage the ratification/accession of the Marrakesh Treaty by Pacific Island States, as well as the promotion of the work of ABC.

Accessible Publishing

ABC promotes the production of "born accessible" works by publishers, i.e., books that are usable from the start by persons who are print disabled. In particular, all publishers are encouraged to:

- use the accessibility features of the EPUB3 open standard for the production of digital publications; and
- include descriptions of the accessibility features of their products in the information they provide to distributors, retailers and others in the book supply chain.

ABC organizes the ABC International Excellence Award for Accessible Publishing each year to recognize organizations that provide outstanding leadership and achievements in the advancement of the accessibility of digital publications to persons with print disabilities.

To further the objective of “born accessible” publishing practices, publishers and publisher associations around the world are invited to sign the ABC Charter for Accessible Publishing, which contains eight high-level aspirational principles relating to digital publications in accessible formats. Currently, 145 publishers have signed the Charter, including seven new signatories that joined in the past 12 months.

Future Accessible Publishing Activities

This year’s ABC International Excellence Award for Accessible Publishing will be presented on December 4, 2024 during the International Publishers Congress to be held in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Within the context of the European Union’s Directive on accessibility, ABC continues to collaborate with rightsholders to maximize awareness amongst publishers and distributors of the need to comply by June 28, 2025 with the respective national provisions implementing the Directive’s accessibility requirements for digital publications.

Local activities and advocacy topics

As reported a year ago, the Chief Executive (CE) of Blind Citizens NZ has been tasked to reach out to publishers and publisher associations to urge them to sign up to the charter, mentioned above and to become upskilled in accessible publishing.

International Council of English Braille (ICEB)

The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT) hosted the 8th General Assembly of ICEB (25th - 29th May) in Auckland.

I presented at that occasion on the topic of the work of the WIPO ABC, which both BLENNZ as well as BLV have signed up to as authorised entities in NZ.

Then, as some of our members informed us, it seems as if BLV is not as yet uploading all their titles onto the Global Book Service to enable either other libraries and/or individuals to benefit from reading those. Advocacy to this regard is ongoing.

Also, now that BLENNZ has been accepted as AE, Blind Citizens NZ will need to work alongside them to enable members to access their titles in a more timely fashion, as well as urging them to inform WIPO of its full catalogue, including new titles, transcribed for youth such as Braille music titles.

Attachment “C”

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Inc National Office and Branches

Performance Report

For the year ended

30 June 2024

Contents

Non-Financial Information	Page
Entity Information	3-5
Statement of Service Performance	6-7
Financial Information:	
Statement of Financial Performance	8
Statement of Financial Position	9-10
Statement of Cash Flows	11-12
Statement of Accounting Policies	13-16
Notes to the Performance Report	17-26
Audit Report	27

Notes to reader

1. A summary of financial information for these accounts can be located immediately following the Audit Report.
2. Page numbering applies solely to the audited accounts, and not page-numbers in this agenda.
3. All statements presented in the Performance Report should be read in conjunction with the respective 'Notes' to the Performance Report.
4. The verified audited accounts include, from pages 3 to 27 inclusive, the "Moore Markhams" audit certification stamp on the bottom right hand corner.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated (Blind Citizens NZ)

Entity Information for the Year ended 30 June 2024

Incorporated Society: Registration Number 223080

Charity: Registration Number CC41040

Entity Information

Purpose

Founded in 1945, Blind Citizens NZ is New Zealand's leading blindness consumer organisation and one of the country's largest organisations of disabled consumers. Often referred to as a Disabled People's Organisation (DPO), Blind Citizens NZ works to heighten awareness of the rights of blind, deafblind, low vision and vision-impaired people (hereafter referred to as blind), and to remove the barriers that impact upon our ability to live in an accessible, equitable and inclusive society.

Entity Structure

Governance: Blind Citizens NZ's constitution identifies the composition of the Board whose role is to ensure effective governance of the organisation. There are seven positions all of which have a three-year term – the National President and six Members-at-Large. The National President's term concludes in October 2025. Each year by rotation, two of the six Member-at-Large positions are elected. Financial voting members (blind people ourselves) vote for all elected positions.

The Board may co-opt up to a maximum of two financial Ordinary (voting) Members. This includes the position of World Blind Union Representative, an appointment made by the Board. When this person is not already a Board Member, co-option of the WBU Representative to the Board is mandatory. The Board appoints the Vice President from amongst elected Board Members.

Operational: There is one full-time staff member (Chief Executive) one part-time position (Administrative Support) with contracted financial, and project-specific support.

Branches and Networks: We have six geographical branches around the country, three networks, and a Headquarters Branch for members who do not reside within the boundaries of a geographical branch or network. The development of additional networks is ongoing. Branches and networks (geographical and special interest) support the organisation with various activities, peer support and meetings held throughout the year.

Representative Positions

National representative and appointed positions are publicised for expressions of interest amongst our members. Well-documented procedures guide the Board in its decision-making and appointments. Representatives and appointees are required to consult about agenda items for their consideration, to submit and speak to topics on behalf of Blind Citizens NZ, submit written reports to the Board following meetings, and annually to the Annual General Meeting and Conference of Blind Citizens NZ.

Blind Citizens NZ is one of six organisations that comprises the Disabled People's Organisations (DPO) Coalition.

Blind Citizens NZ is represented internationally on:

- The World Blind Union (WBU) – 2 positions.
- Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) – 1 position.

Blind Citizens NZ is represented nationally on:

- Bankers Association Focus Group.
- Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ).
- The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT).

Blind Citizens NZ has local representation on:

- Auckland Transport Public Transport Accessibility Group

Main Source of Funding

Blind Citizens NZ relies predominantly on the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind (Blind Low Vision NZ) to fund (from the charity dollar) our core service | business, which is advocacy. We have a three-year contract with the Ministry of Social Development. Additionally, Blind Citizens NZ receives revenue from donations, membership subscriptions, and interest from investments.

Main Methods Used by Entity to Raise Funds

Blind Citizens NZ's main method of funding is by way of a Funding Agreement Contract with Blind Low Vision NZ. Grant funding may be obtained by way of funding application(s) to the Lotteries Commission, Te Pou and other similar funding entities.

Reliance on Volunteers and Donated Services

Blind Citizens NZ relies heavily on branches, networks, members and supporters to volunteer their time and assist us progress our work. Board Members are volunteers – they do not receive any financial recompense for their time. Volunteers contribute to our activity outputs such as providing content for Focus (national publication), newsletters, social media, presentations, and representative appointments.

Contact Details

Physical Address: Ground Floor, 113 Adelaide Road, Newtown, Wellington 6022

Postal Address: PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242

Phone: 04-389-0033; 0800 222 6940

Fax: 04-389-0030

Email: admin@blindcitizensnz.org.nz

Website: www.blindcitizensnz.org.nz

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BlindCitizensNZ/>

Statement of Service Performance

Description of Outcomes

Through our activities as a disabled people's organisation, and New Zealand's leading blindness consumer organisation, we strive to improve the lives of blind, deafblind, low vision and vision-impaired New Zealanders. We do this by contributing to raising awareness of our rights, and influencing the removal of barriers that impact on our ability to live in an accessible, equitable and inclusive society.

Description and Qualification (to the extent practicable) of Blind Citizens NZ's Outputs

Advocacy (personal and systemic)

Blind Citizens NZ works in areas that are blindness specific and where barriers and challenges are faced, such as but not limited to:

- Audio Description
- Education
- Accessible Public Transport
- Access to information and the environment
- Employment
- Pandemic and emergency responsiveness

Submissions and Select Committee Appearances

	2024	2023
Number of national submissions	2	5
Number of local submissions	7	17
Number of Select Committee appearances	-	2

Blind Citizens NZ National and Branch (Community) Meetings

	2024	2023
Number of meetings members have participated in	23	22
Number of attendees at meetings	406	377

Activities / Events

	2024	2023
National AGM and Conference - input from members on issues topical to the blind community to inform Blind Citizens NZ's work.	1	1
Members and guests who attended	71	75

Information, Publications and Awareness

Number of issues of Focus national magazine produced	4	4
Number of Focus recipients per issue (distributed in Braille, CD, large print, and electronic formats)	705	780
Website – number of unique visits	10,691	7,482
Number of Facebook likes and engagements	9,000	8,970
Number of calls made by members to glean and or share information on the Feedback Line (national and branches)	7,260	8,435
Number of hours in total, members have engaged on the Feedback Line (national and branches).	773	837
Number of International White Cane Day resources (posters, 2 types of pamphlet, banners, feet-shaped statements)	5	5
Number of Branch Network Newsletters produced	20	22
Number of recipients of Branch Newsletters	1,327	1,191

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2024

Statement of Financial Performance

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
Revenue			
Donations, fundraising and other similar revenue	1	17,730	34,714
Subscriptions from members	1	3,430	3,900
Revenue from providing goods or services	1	355,987	361,736
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	1	50,567	36,558
AGM and Conference Fees	1	6,726	16,494
Legacy and Bequests		5,681	-
Other Income	1	-	6,217
Total Revenue		440,121	459,619
Expenses			
Expenses related to public fundraising	2	661	602
Volunteer and employee related costs	2	162,665	154,387
Costs related to providing goods or services	2	376,251	334,926
Grants and donations made		2,024	395
Total Expenses		541,601	490,310

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2024

Statement of Financial Performance continued

	Note	2024	2023
		\$	\$
Operating surplus/(deficit)		(101,480)	(30,691)
Unrealised gain/(loss) on fair value changes		56,953	28,723
Net profit/(loss) for the year		(44,527)	(1,968)

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2024

Statement of Financial Position

Assets	Note	2024	2023
		\$	\$
Current Assets			
Bank accounts and cash	3	626,763	771,022
Investments	3	489,202	210,398
Debtors and prepayments	3	39,373	8,545
Inventory	3	-	64
Total Current Assets		1,155,338	990,029
Non-Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	4	37,896	48,670
Investments	3	1,083,744	1,299,165
Total Non-Current Assets		1,121,640	1,347,835
Total Assets		2,276,978	2,337,864

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2024

Liabilities	Note	2024	2023
		\$	\$
Current Liabilities			
Creditors and accrued expenses	3	63,732	93,647
Employee costs payable	3	18,908	14,708
Other current liabilities	3	20,492	11,136
Total Current Liabilities		103,132	119,491
Total Liabilities		103,132	119,491
Total Assets less Total Liabilities (Net Assets)		2,173,846	2,218,373

Accumulated Funds	Note	2024	2023
		\$	\$
Accumulated surpluses or (deficits)	5	934,764	1,047,020
Reserves	5	1,239,082	1,171,353
Total Accumulated Funds		2,173,846	2,218,373



Jonathan Godfrey
National President



Christine Fern
Board Member

Dated: 30 September 2024

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Statement of Cash Flows

Statement of Cash Flows

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Cash Flows from Operating Activities		
Cash was received from:		
Donations, fundraising and other similar receipts	17,327	13,637
Subscriptions from members	3,430	3,900
Receipts from providing goods or services	338,916	380,922
Interest, dividends and other investment receipts	42,942	36,784
AGM and Conference fees	6,726	26,494
Legacies and Bequests	5,681	-
Other	-	6,217
Net GST	(46,972)	43,363
Cash was applied to:		
Payments to suppliers and employees	(510,285)	(493,342)
Donations or grants paid	(2,024)	(395)
Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities	(144,259)	17,580

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Cash flows from Investing and Financing Activities

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Cash was received from:		
Receipts from the sale of investments	-	-
Receipts from the sale of property, plant and equipment	-	10,000
Cash was applied to:		
Payments to acquire property, plant and equipment	-	(1,946)
Payments to purchase investments	-	(43,111)
Net Cash Flows from Investing and Financing Activities	-	(35,057)
Net Increase / (Decrease) in Cash	(144,259)	(17,477)
Opening Cash	771,022	788,499
Closing Cash	626,763	771,022

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
This is represented by:		
Bank Accounts, Savings Accounts and Petty cash	626,763	771,022

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Statement of Accounting Policies

Basis of Preparation

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated's Board has elected to apply Tier 3 PBE SFR-A (NFP) Public Benefit Entity Simple Format Reporting - Accrual (Not-For-Profit) on the basis that it does not have public accountability and has total annual expenses of equal to or less than \$2,000,000. All transactions in the Performance Report are reported using the accrual basis of accounting. The Performance Report is prepared under the assumption that the entity will continue to operate in the foreseeable future.

Measurement Base

The measurement base adopted is historical cost with the exception of some investments, which are carried at lower of cost or market value.

Presentation Currency

These financial statements are presented in New Zealand dollars (NZD) rounded to the nearest dollar.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated is registered for GST. All amounts are recorded exclusive of GST, except for Debtors and Creditors, which are stated inclusive of GST.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Income Tax

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated National Office is a registered charity and is wholly exempt from New Zealand income tax having fully complied with all statutory conditions for these exemptions.

Bank Accounts and Cash

Bank accounts and cash in the Statement of Cash Flows comprise all bank balances, on call cash funds and petty cash balances.

Debtors and other Receivables

Debtors and other receivables are measured at their cost less any impairment losses.

Creditors and other Payables

Creditors and other payables are stated at cost.

Property, Plant and Equipment

All property, plant and equipment is measured at cost less accumulated depreciation and impaired losses. Costs include expenditure that is directly attributable to the acquisition of the asset.

Depreciation

Depreciation is charged on a diminishing value (DV) basis over the useful life of the asset.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Depreciation continued

Depreciation is charged at rates calculated to allocate the cost or valuation of the asset less any estimated residual value over its remaining useful life:

- **Fit-Out 20% DV**
- **Motor Vehicles 20% DV**
- **Office equipment 30 - 67% DV**
- **Recording equipment 30% DV**
- **Furniture and fittings 20% DV**

Depreciation methods, useful lives and residual values are reviewed at each reporting date and are adjusted if there is a change in the expected pattern of consumption of the future economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset.

Tier 2 PBE Accounting Standards Applied

Financial instruments

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated has elected to apply NFP PBE IPSAS 41 Financial Instruments: Recognition and Measurement for its financial assets. Financial

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated derecognises a financial asset when either the rights to receive cash from the asset expire or are waived, or we transfer assets are recognised when the Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the financial instrument.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Financial instruments continued

Equity and bond investments are held at market value at balance date. Interest income is recognised in the statement of financial performance using the effective interest rate method.

Dividend income is recognised in the statement of financial performance when the right to receive income is established. For public traded securities this is the ex-dividend date.

our rights to another party, provided certain conditions are met.

Financial assets at fair value through Statement of Financial Performance

Financial assets are classified as fair value through the Statement of Financial Performance with the goal of collecting cash flows and selling the asset.

Impairment of Financial Assets

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated assesses at the end of reporting date whether there is objective evidence that a financial asset or a group of financial assets is impaired.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Revenue

Revenue is recognised to the extent that it is probable that the economic benefit will flow to the entity and revenue can be reliably measured.

Revenue is measured at the fair value of consideration received. The following specific recognition criteria must be met before revenue is recognised:

- **Donations:** Donation income is recognised as revenue when received and all associated obligations have been met.
- **Interest income:** Interest income is recognised as it accrues, using the effective interest method.
- **Legacies:** Legacy funds received for specific future investment purposes or to meet specific future costs, are recognised as income in the reported surplus or deficit and then **transferred from Accumulated Funds** to a "restricted" Reserve to be used to fund specific future costs of the entity, or to be used in accordance with the terms of the bequest.
- **Revenue received in advance:** Grant revenue is recognised as revenue when it becomes receivable by virtue of a contractual agreement being signed and an invoice raised. The Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated has a liability to repay the grant if the requirements of the grant are not fulfilled. A liability is recognised to the extent that such conditions are unfulfilled at the end of the accounting period.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Changes in Accounting Policies

There have been no changes in accounting policies which have been applied on bases consistent with those in the previous year

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Note 1: Analysis of Revenue

		2024	2023
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Donations,	COGS	8,965	10,549
Fundraising and	Grants	-	2,000
other similar	Donations	8,765	22,165
	Total	17,730	34,714

		2024	2023
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Subscriptions from	Membership Fees	1,687	3,068
members.	Membership for Life	1,743	832
	Total	3,430	3,900

		2024	2023
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Revenue from	Blind Low Vision NZ	210,000	210,000
providing goods or,	service contract		
Services	Calendars sales	2,711	2,786
	DPO / Government CE	17,743	12,949
	Meeting Fees		
	MSD Contract	120,000	130,375
	Other	5,533	5,626
	Total	355,987	361,736

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Note 1: Analysis of Revenue Continued

		2024	2023
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Interest, dividends, and other	Interest	43,890	23,239
investment revenue	Dividends	2,894	3,344
	Gain/(Loss) on Investments	3,783	9,975
	Total	50,567	36,558

		2024	2023
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
AGM and	AGM Recoverables	-	707
Conference Fees	Conference Fees	6,726	15,787
	Total	6,726	16,494

		2023	2023
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Other Income	Depreciation Recovered	-	6,217
	Total	-	6,217

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Note 2: Analysis of Expenses

Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Expenses related,	Fundraising	661	602
to public f/raising	Total	661	602

		2024	2023
Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Volunteer and	Staff Wages	158,489	153,347
employee related	Other	4,176	1,040
Costs	Total	162,665	154,387

		2024	2023
Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Costs related to	Advocacy	4,724	2,044
providing goods or	Advocacy Leadership	12,100	-
services	Workshop		
	AGM and Conference	66,514	69,342
	Board Expenses	34,392	38,861
	Te Tiriti o Waitangi	13,396	-
	Advisory Group		
	Calendars	4,391	4,505
	Administration Expenses	142,842	117,558
	Office Expenses	97,892	102,616
	Total	376,251	334,926

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Note 3: Analysis of Assets and Liabilities

Asset Item	Analysis	2024 \$	2023 \$
Bank account and cash	Cheque account balances	131,186	442,832
	Savings account balance	494,827	327,512
	Imprest Account and Petty Cash	750	678
	Total	626,763	771,022

Asset Item		2024 \$	2023 \$
Investments	Short Term Deposits	489,202	210,398
	Total	489,202	210,398

Asset Item		\$	\$
Debtors and prepayments	Accounts receivable	30,886	1,190
	Prepayments	3,325	6,204
	Interest Receivable	2,345	1,151
	GST Receivable	2,817	-
	Total	39,373	8,545

Asset Item		2024 \$	2023 \$
Inventory	Calendars	-	64
	Total	-	64

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Note 3: Analysis of Assets and Liabilities continued

		2024	2023
Asset Item		\$	\$
Financial assets at fair value through surplus or deficit	ANZ Managed investment Portfolio	1,083,744	1,029,165
	Term Deposits	-	270,000
	Total	1,083,744	1,299,165

		2024	2023
Liability Item		\$	\$
Creditors and accrued expenses	Trade and other payables	31,488	20,275
	Accrued expenses	32,244	31,748
	GST Payable	-	41,624
	Total	63,732	93,647

		2024	2023
Liability Item		\$	\$
Employee costs Payable	Holiday pay accrual	13,107	14,708
	Wages accruals	5,801	-
	Total	18,908	14,708

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Note 3: Analysis of Assets and Liabilities continued

		2024	2023
Liability Item		\$	\$
Other Current Liabilities	Te Pou Funding – unspent funds	9,317	-
	Other	11,175	11,136
	Total	20,492	11,136

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Note 4: Property, Plant and Equipment

2024

Asset Class	Opening Carrying Amount	Purchases	Sales/ Disposals	Current Year Depreciation & Impairment	Closing Carrying Amount
Furniture and fixtures	1,592	-	(101)	(298)	1,193
Office equipment	4,502	-	(705)	(1,108)	2,689
Recording Equipment	112	-	-	(20)	92
Motor Vehicles	41,979	-	-	(8,396)	33,583
Computer Software	485	-	-	(146)	339
Total	48,670	-	(806)	(9,968)	37,896

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Note 4: Property, Plant and Equipment Continued

2023

Asset Class	Opening Carrying Amount	Purchases	Sales/ Disposals	Current Year Depreciation & Impairment	Closing Carrying Amount
Furniture and fixtures	1,990	-	-	(398)	1,592
Office equipment	4,211	1,945	-	(1,654)	4,502
Recording Equipment	136	-	-	(24)	112
Motor Vehicles	56,256	40,000	(43,783)	(10,494)	41,979
Computer Software	694	-	-	(209)	485
Total	63,287	41,945	(43,783)	(12,779)	48,670

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Note 5: Accumulated Funds

2024

Description	Accumulated Surpluses or Deficits	Reserves	Total
Opening Balance	1,047,020	1,171,353	2,218,373
Surplus/(Deficit)	(44,527)	-	(44,527)
Funds from Branch	-	-	-
Transfer to Investment Revaluation Reserve	(56,953)	56,953	-
Transfer to Reserves	(22,116)	22,116	-
Transfer from Reserves	11,340	(11,340)	-
Closing Balance	934,764	1,239,082	2,173,846

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Note 5: Accumulated Funds continued

2023

Description	Accumulated Surpluses or Deficits	Reserves	Total
Opening Balance	1,098,117	1,122,224	2,220,341
Surplus/(Deficit)	(1,968)	-	(1,968)
Funds from Branch	-	-	-
Transfer to Investment Revaluation Reserve	(28,724)	28,724	-
Transfer to Reserves	(21,223)	21,223	-
Transfer from Reserves	818	(818)	-
Closing Balance	1,047,020	1,171,353	2,218,373

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Note 5: Accumulated Funds continued

Breakdown of Reserves

	2024	2023
Name	\$	\$
General Fund	640,608	624,358
Member for Life Fund	23,740	24,036
Leadership Fund	190,123	185,300
Branch Funds Brought to Account	48,518	48,518
Investment Revaluation Reserve	336,093	279,141
AGM and Conference Reserve	-	10,000
Total	1,239,082	1,171,353

Note 6: Commitments and Contingencies

		2024	2023
Commitment	Explanation and Timing	\$	\$
Commitments to lease or rent assets	National Office lease for a further seven months (2023: 19 months)	16,024	43,494
	Photo-copier lease (2023: 10 months)	840	1,400
Total		16,864	44,894

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024

Note 7: Events after the Balance Date

There were no events that have occurred after balance date that would have a material impact on the Performance Report (Last Year: Nil).

Note 8: Related Party Transactions

Martine Abel-Williamson is a Board Director of the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind. The RNZFB have provided funding to the entity during the year. Martine Abel-Williamson is also on the Board of Blind Citizens NZ.

Thomas Bryan is contracted to Blind Citizens NZ in the position of Accessible Information Advisor. He is the Chief Executive's partner. Blind Citizens NZ have paid Thomas Bryan \$38,400 (2023: \$30,195) for work carried out in relation to his contract.

Independent auditor's report

To the Members of Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Note: The formal document of the Independent Auditor's Report includes on the top right corner of each page, the Moore Markhams logo.

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying performance report of Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated on pages 5 to 25 which comprises the entity information, the statement of service performance, the statement of financial performance and statement of cash flows for the year ended 30 June 2024, the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024, and the statement of accounting policies and notes to the performance report.

In our opinion:

- a)** the reported outcomes and outputs, and quantification of the outputs to the extent practicable, in the statement of service performance are suitable;
- b)** the accompanying performance report presents fairly, in all material respects:

the entity information for the year then ended;

the service performance for the year then ended, and

the financial position of Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated as at 30 June 2024, and its financial performance, and cash flows for the year then ended;

in accordance with Public Benefit Entity Simple Format Reporting – Accrual (Not-For-Profit) issued by the New Zealand Accounting Standards Board.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit of the statement of financial performance, statement of financial position, statement of cash flows, statement of accounting policies and notes to the performance report in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (New Zealand) (ISAs (NZ)), and the audit of the entity information and statement of service performance in accordance with the International Standard on Assurance Engagements (New Zealand) ISAE (NZ) 3000 (Revised). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the ‘Auditor’s responsibilities for the audit of the performance report’ section of our report.

We are independent of Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated in accordance with Professional and Ethical Standard 1 (Revised) ‘Code of ethics for assurance practitioners’ issued by the New Zealand Auditing and Assurance Standards Board, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Other than our capacity as auditor we have no relationship with, or interests in, Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated.

Board's responsibilities for the performance report

The Board are responsible for:

- a)** Identifying outcomes and outputs, and quantifying the outputs to the extent practicable, that are relevant, reliable, comparable and understandable, to report in the statement of service performance;
- b)** the preparation and fair presentation of the performance report on behalf of Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated which comprises:
 - the entity information;
 - the entity information
 - the statement of service performance; and
 - the statement of financial performance, statement of financial position, statement of cash flows, statement of accounting policies and notes to the performance report in accordance with Public Benefit Entity Simple Format Reporting – Accrual (Not-For-Profit) issued by the New Zealand Accounting Standards Board, and
- c)** for such internal control as the Board determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the performance report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the performance report, the Board are responsible on behalf of Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated's for assessing Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Board either intend to liquidate Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the performance report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the performance report is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (NZ) and ISAE (NZ) 3000 (Revised) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the decisions of users taken on the basis of the performance report.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (NZ) and ISAE (NZ) 3000 (Revised), we exercise

professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the performance report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated's internal control.

Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.

Conclude on the appropriateness of the use of the going concern basis of accounting by the Board and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the performance report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated to cease to continue as a going concern.

Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the performance report, including the disclosures, and whether the performance report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

Perform procedures to obtain evidence about and evaluate whether the reported outcomes and outputs, and quantification of the outputs to the extent practicable, are relevant, reliable, comparable and understandable.

We communicate with the Board regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

This report is made solely to the Members of Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated. Our audit has been undertaken so that we might state to the Members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Members, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Moore Markhams Wellington Audit | Qualified Auditors, Wellington, New Zealand

30 September 2024

Summarised Financial Information

Consolidation of National Office and Branches

Revenue and expense for the year ended 30 June 2024

Table:

Revenue	2024	2023
Donations, fundraising etc.	17,730	34,714
Subscriptions from members	3,430	3,900
Grants (Lotteries, COGS, BLVNZ, MSD)	355,987	361,736
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	50,567	36,558
Conference Registrations	6,726	16,494
Legacies and Bequests	5,681	-
Other Income	-	6,217
Total operating revenue	440,121	459,619
Expense	Blank	Blank
Fundraising related expenses	661	602
Employee and volunteer related costs	162,665	154,387
Operating costs (national / branches / networks)	376,251	334,926
Grants and donations made	2,024	395
Total operating expenses	541,601	490,310

Revenue	2024	2023
Operating (deficit) surplus	(101,480)	(30,691)
Unrealised gain/(loss) on fair value changes	56,953	28,724
Net profit/(loss) for the year	(44,527)	(1,967)

End table.

Assets and liabilities at 30 June 2024

Table:

Current Assets	2024	2023
Bank accounts and cash	626,763	771,022
Investments	489,202	210,398
Debtors and prepayments	39,373	8,545
Inventory / stock	-	64
Total current assets	1,155,338	990,029
Non-Current Assets	Blank	Blank
Property, plant and equipment	37,896	48,670
Investments	1,083,744	1,299,165
Total non-current assets	1,121,640	1,347,835
Total Assets	2,276,978	2,337,864

End table.

Table:

Liabilities	2024	2023
Current Liabilities	Blank	Blank
Creditors and accrued expenses	63,732	93,647
Employee costs payable	18,908	14,708
Other current liabilities	20,492	11,135
Total current liabilities	103,132	119,490
Total Assets less Total Liabilities	2,173,846	2,218,374

End Table.

Accumulated Funds

Table:

Accumulated Funds	2024	2023
Accumulated surpluses (or deficits)	934,764	1,047,021
Reserves	1,239,082	1,171,353
Total Accumulated Funds	2,173,846	2,218,374

End Table.

Funds held by Branches as at 30 June 2024

Auckland: 87,412.84

Nelson: \$10,179.21

Rotorua: \$40,890.55

Southland: \$17,388.06

South Canterbury: \$229,999.39

Wellington: \$26,987.88

Whanganui: \$177,911.48

Attachment “D”

Remits to 2024 Annual General Meeting and Conference

Auckland Branch

Remit 1: Taxi Services

Conference calls on the Board of Blind Citizens NZ to work with other Disabled Peoples' Organisations (DPO's) and the creators of the YourRide Taxi Application to make this App accessible to all users and to incorporate the usage of Total Mobility.

Explanation

Ihail was an international app that could be used both here in New Zealand and overseas. It was reasonably accessible however with the development of YourRide, ihail have chosen to leave the New Zealand market. YourRide is not accessible to all users and attempts to contact them and discuss this have failed. Many of the taxi companies that are contracted for Total Mobility are advertising the YourRide App and yet it will not accept Total Mobility information.

Remit 2: Electronic Voting

Conference asks that the Board of Blind Citizens NZ work with other Disabled Peoples' Organisations (DPO's) to assist the Electoral Commission to make electronic voting available to all voters as an option for General Elections.

Explanation

At the 2023 General Election New Zealanders who lived outside the country were able to vote online. The process worked as follows – they:

- logged into the system;
- downloaded an accessible PDF form;
- cast their vote and signed with an electronic signature; and
- lastly uploaded the completed form to the system.

There is no reason why this could not be made available to voters in New Zealand in particular Blind, Deaf Blind and Vision impaired communities: allowing us to cast independent secret votes. This would assist New Zealand in meeting its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (UNCRPD).

Remit 3: National Ticketing

Conference calls upon the Board of Blind Citizens NZ to work with other Disabled People's Organisations and Waka Kotahi | the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) to ensure that the National Ticketing Solution is fully accessible to all users.

Explanation

Disabled people will either be further marginalised or gain huge benefits from the National Ticketing Solution. Blind Citizens NZ's position is to ensure the National Ticketing Solution leads to both national accessibility and usability of the infrastructure for disabled people.

Attachment “E”

Membership Subscription Review Discussion Paper

Background

At Blind Citizens NZ’s 2022 Annual General Meeting and Conference, the Board submitted a discussion paper about membership matters. This is an area the Board continues to focus on.

Before sharing the next steps, we reflect on outcomes of the subsequent Special Meeting of Members held in March 2023 which required the Board to implement the following process...

<begins> That Blind Citizens NZ as per the Membership Subscription Review proposal, offers individuals who have not paid a subscription in the last five financial years to be given access to Blind Citizens NZ events as if they have paid a subscription, with this offer ending on 30 June 2025.

What this means is that for anyone who has not paid a subscription since 2018, that for the next two years to 30 June 2025 inclusive you:

- will receive information such as newsletters and notices of meetings from your local Branch or Network;
- will receive Focus, along with updates informing members of our work from National Office;
- can participate in activities including General and Annual General meetings, but you can’t vote or stand for election to the Board, a Branch Committee or a Network. <ends>

Constitutional Requirement | Membership Engagement Plan

Membership matters are primarily set out in Rule 5 Membership. Rule 5.2.3 states: “Annual subscriptions for Ordinary Membership shall be set at rates to be determined by the Annual General Meeting from time-to-time.”

This requires the Board to bring the matter to an Annual General Meeting for discussion. The topic is also identified in the Membership Engagement Plan as an action to occur in conjunction with this year’s AGM and Conference.

Related actions are as follows... Item 5: Review the organisation’s annual membership subscription rates and any impact this may have on prospective members and those overlooking membership renewal.

Actions Involve:

- The Board taking a paper to the 2024 AGM and Conference that considers whether the rates should remain the same, or should there be one rate i.e. \$10 regardless of whether the person is waged or non-waged.
- Consider whether there are other ‘membership’ elements that should be refreshed for discussion at the same time (during this year’s AGM and Conference).

Points for discussion

Blind Citizens NZ’s membership subscriptions include an unwaged rate (\$10) and waged rate (\$20).

This applies to both Ordinary and Associate Members. Branches retain membership subscriptions which contribute towards supporting expenses for various activities, travel to and from General and Annual General Meetings, and other costs such as for newsletters etc. Annually, Branches receive a \$20 payment from National Office for each Member-for-Life registered with their Branch. National Office covers costs for items such as Focus which is distributed to all members, and Branch and Network Representatives to attend in person, the national AGM and Conference.

The Board has heard from some Branches and Ordinary Members that membership subscriptions should be the same rate for unwaged and waged membership categories. In some instances, it has been suggested that Blind Citizens NZ do away with membership subscriptions i.e. that these should not be charged.

In addition, the Board is aware for example, that of the seven disabled people's organisations that are members of the DPO Coalition, Blind Citizens NZ is the only DPO currently charging a membership subscription.

The Board is asking Ordinary Members for your views – should subscriptions be one rate regardless of being unwaged or waged. If so, what should the rate be?

Should Blind Citizens NZ stop charging a membership subscription? If this happened what would the implications be for Branches, Networks, and those who have chosen to make a one-off payment for our Membership-for-Life category?

If there is no membership subscription, then consideration must be given to identifying how someone becomes a member of Blind Citizens NZ.

There is a requirement under section 26 of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 that in part addresses this situation. This makes it clear there is a requirement for someone to consent to being a member of an organisation.

Next Steps

This paper is being presented to the 2024 AGM so that it can be discussed. It is also being publicised in this Focus issue to reach as many of our members as possible.

The views shared at the AGM and Conference will be a starting point. The Board welcomes further contributions from Ordinary Members, Branches, and Networks by 20 November 2024. The Board will then give further consideration to this matter at its November meeting.

The Board is clear that all decisions need to be well-informed. It is not intending for there to be any sort of decision reached at this year's AGM and Conference.

Related decisions will be reached by the Board at its November 2024 meeting. One of its decisions may be to convene a Special Meeting of Members early in 2025 to further discuss this topic.

Attachment “F”

Pre-reading for Blind Citizens NZ annual conference workshop on digital cash (Friday 18 October)

Workshop purpose

A brief introduction about digital cash – also known as central bank digital currency - which the Reserve Bank of New Zealand is consulting New Zealanders on this year.

Robbie Taylor will lead a discussion and ask questions. During this time, notes will be taken by the Reserve Bank of New Zealand and used as additional input from Blind Citizens NZ to the consultation on digital cash. This workshop aims to gather insights and ensure considerations are made on solutions that ensure digital cash is inclusive and accessible for disabled communities.

Digital cash materials in alternate formats

On the RBNZ website [you will find the alternate formats](#) of all consultation materials about digital cash. Consultation for people using these alternate formats closed 30 September 2024.

Workshop questions for discussion

1. What are the main opportunities for improvements you see in making payments and managing money today?
2. In what ways could digital cash help disabled communities to use and manage money?
3. What would you need to have in place for your communities to start using digital cash as a form of payment?
4. How could we make digital cash barrier-free?

5. We know that trust is important when we think about money and finances. What would make you trust digital cash?
6. As technology evolves, how can we ensure digital cash remains inclusive for all, especially for those with varying levels of digital literacy?
7. Can you provide examples of where technological changes have been positive for your community? What made those changes successful? (i.e engagement with audience)
8. How would you prefer to provide ongoing feedback as digital cash develops?
9. There may not be enough time today, but we also want to ask you about physical cash (banknotes and coins) and access to cash services. What is the best way for us to engage with you on these topics:
 - a) Access to cash services – how are you finding ATMs/screens without buttons? Has the decrease in bank branch teller services impacted your ability to use cash?
 - b) Banknote design – how you find the identifying features on banknotes and coins.
 - c) Your cash use – what you use cash to pay for and why?

Workshop output

Notes taken during this meeting will be used as additional input by Blind Citizens NZ to the consultation on digital cash. We want to ensure that this submission reflects the collective insights and experiences of blind citizens. Following this meeting, we will provide a summary of discussion and outline the next steps to maintain transparency and continued engagement.

Participants from the Reserve Bank of New Zealand Tē Putea Matua:

- Robbie Taylor, Manager, Money and Cash Policy
- Marnie Woodd, Senior Adviser External Stakeholders
- Tali Maulgue, Service Designer, Digital Solutions
- Alex Sutton-Lalani, Adviser, Money and Cash Policy
- JC Somers, Senior Analyst, Money and Cash Policy.

Attachment “G”

Proposed Inductee to the Memorial Hall of Honour

Recommendation

That the Annual General Meeting and Conference endorses the Board's recommendation to induct Margaret (Cissie) Jarrett (1926- 2014), into the Memorial Hall of Honour.

Cissie Margaret Jarrett (nee Bryan, Mitchell) | 1926-2014

Cissie Jarrett was born October 1926 in Gisborne to sighted parents although vision-impairment was not uncommon amongst many of her extended family. Once her sight impairment was recognised, Cissie's upbringing was to provide the impetus she needed to enable her to make her way in a predominantly sighted world where she would play, work and enjoy life to the full.

As a young child, she was sent to the Blind Institute where she boarded and went to school. Relishing her time at home, she would later reminisce about how lucky she felt about going home during the school holidays when many of the other students living further afield could only do this at Christmas.

After finishing her schooling (around age 15) she returned home to Napier to spend time with her family, helping out with chores and looking after children. Married in 1953, Cissie and her husband lived in Napier where they started a family. They had two sons, the youngest being vision-impaired.

Given her own childhood experiences boarding at the Blind Institute and only returning home for holidays, the family decided to move to Auckland. This enabled the youngest son to attend the Blind Institute school.

It was about this time that Cissie first experienced the power of advocacy. Aware of the importance of learning Braille, she had no qualms about going head to head with the RNZFB and the then Chair of the Board, and those in authority at the Blind Institute school. These were the days when students with some vision were made to use large print. They were made to sit at the front of the classroom where they were often ridiculed if they could not read what was on the blackboard. Cissie's advocacy for her son to learn Braille eventually won out and so set the scene for others who followed. This meant her son was taught Braille, preparing him for later years when his sight would deteriorate.

Cissie's first job after moving to Auckland was in the Blind Institute Women's Workshop. Blind women employed by the Blind Institute worked in the Talking Book Library, transcription services, retail shop, workshops, or the organisation's national office. Most of her work in the Workshops at this time involved packing cards, and tissue packs, folding inserts for cardboard boxes, and counting out items such as curtain hooks and preserving jar lids. She realised there were women there with low levels of education or who had other disabilities and who struggled when counting and identifying items for packing.

Before long, Cissie became assistant to the workshop manager, a sighted woman. It was at this time that she began raising concerns about significant employment disparities between men and women at the Institute. Rates of pay for women were far less than for men, they did not receive bonuses and bathroom facilities were downstairs, outside, and across in another building.

By comparison, men were well paid with production bonuses, with their bathroom facilities inside their workshop environment.

Cissie became an advocate for these women. She supported them in their jobs, taught them to count, and found ways to assist them in other tasks. Her advocacy led to toilets being installed in the women's workshops, and improved pay conditions including bonuses. It should be remembered these were the days when a woman's place was in the home, raising children, cooking meals and not venturing into the wider world. It wasn't the norm to be working, and footing it as an equal alongside men, let alone challenging them for better working conditions. She was therefore an early champion for women's rights.

When the Workshop Manager retired, Cissie applied for the position. After several discussions that focussed on her disability and gender as opposed to what she could do, she was appointed to the role. However, because management decided she could not do all the tasks that other managers before her had done, and even though she disagreed, she was not called a manager. Regardless, she was one of the first blind women to be appointed to a position of responsibility in the Women's Workshops.

While Cissie had some residual useful sight, she taught herself to maximise what sight she had, while preparing herself and others for this to deteriorate over time. She was a champion for blind people to develop and use blindness skills. Many of the skills she developed such as cooking, cleaning, knitting, and other craft work, were learned from her mother and other blind role models. She relied on large print and Braille for recipes and patterns.

In the mid to late 60's along with a few other blind women, Cissie was instrumental in establishing a blind women's support group called the Home-Makers.

They provided peer support to each other and advocated as a group about issues that impacted on them. Cissie was always immaculate in her presentation personally and she was house-proud. There was no way you would hear Cissie use her lack of vision as a reason for her clothes or hair being untidy. She was compassionate and introduced women who had led sheltered lives to new experiences such as going to a hairdresser, shopping for clothes, and taking pride in their appearance.

After some time in the workshops, Cissie was offered the position of retail shop Manager. It was here that items made in the workshops were sold.

The mid-1970s was a real time of change. Many issues came to the fore including the closing down of hostels and the retail shop. While there were a small number of blind directors on the RNZFB Board, there wasn't enough support for the hostels or retail shop to remain open.

This was also the era when blind people organised themselves to march up Queen Street Auckland and naturally Cissie was one of the stalwarts involved. Cissie and others hosted meetings in their homes where plans were made to raise concerns publicly about how blind people were being treated by the Blind Institute and the lack of services for blind people. Cissie coordinated many of her friends from the Home-Makers Group who in turn called upon their husbands and others to assist. Posters and flyers were printed. Again Cissie was central to organising activities. This involved printing flyers and, along with many others, walking the streets of Auckland putting them in letterboxes, and visiting many of the shops in Newmarket where blind people shopped. Shopkeepers supported these efforts, putting posters and flyers on show. Most shopkeepers even asked what else they could do to support the growing protest movement against the Blind Institute.

In her spare time, Cissie would always be hands-on organising afternoon teas for Auckland Branch meetings and events, and for other activities such as NZ VIEW. Even in her 60s, you would find Cissie playing Blind Hockey. In her retirement, Cissie was still active in the blind community, attending branch meetings, the national AGM and Conference, and as always looking out for and helping others.

When she moved to Hamilton in early 2000, she took up square dancing. She entered national competitions and was the only vision-impaired person in her group. It was no mean feat to learn square dancing in her 70s. Dancing, singing (she could yodel), and playing cards as well as her craft work were among her passions. Cissie was an active member of the Dominion Association of the Blind (now Blind Citizens NZ) and remained a member for most of her life.

As an early advocate for the rights of blind women and for women generally, Cissie can claim to have been at the forefront. The example she set at a personal level and in the help she gave others to overcome any real or perceived barriers they might attribute to their vision loss, were just part of what she gave back to her community.

Attachment “H”

Implementing Te Tiriti o Waitangi Te Tiriti o Waitangi Advisory Group Discussion Paper

The Te Tiriti o Waitangi Advisory Group’s mahi began in response to an outcome of Blind Citizens NZ’s 2021 AGM and Conference. This asked the Board to amend the Constitution to include a specific Māori representative position on the Board of Blind Citizens NZ. The Board recognised it had much to consider before making significant constitutional amendments.

Its first step was to establish the Te Tiriti o Waitangi Advisory Group (Advisory Group). This comprises Daniel and Harete Phillips, Jo and Francis Twomey, John Puhara, Victor West, Maria Stevens, and Tewai Halatau. The Chief Executive provides administration support to the Advisory Group.

At the beginning of our journey, we agreed we needed guidance which is why we invited Te Huia Bill Hamilton to work alongside us. He has been a Treaty educator for more than 30 years and has experienced senior leadership in government, business and Maori organisations.

When considering developing Blind Citizens NZ as a Treaty based organisation, we need to have an understanding of the Treaty and how it applies to our organisation.

We have developed a Treaty framework based on the following:

- The Treaty belongs to all of us.

- The parties to the Treaty are Tāngata Whenua (first peoples of the land) represented by their Rangatira, and Tauwi (landed or landing peoples) represented by the Crown.
- The Crown was given an authority to set up their government (Kāwanatanga).
- Rangatira retained their right of self-determination (Tino Rangatiratanga) and the Crown agreed. Their taonga were to be protected. This is the greater area of breaches by the Crown through colonisation.
- Tāngata Whenua were given the same rights as British subjects (citizenship). They were guaranteed to participate in their communities as equals.
- Tauwi gained an authority to belong (Tūrangawaewae). Full protection of their rights and responsibilities as citizens of New Zealand.

When considering how this applies to Blind Citizens NZ, the Board assumes all of the rights and responsibilities of the Crown especially in advancing the rights of all members. Tāngata Whenua members should retain their Rangatiratanga and their taonga will be protected to enable them to live as Māori within the organisation.

The Advisory Group has developed a framework to assist the organisation to give effect to the Treaty. It is based on:

- **Partnership:** The Board and Rangatira will share decision-making at all levels of the organisation. This is consistent with the human rights standards of “nothing about us without us” and our right to “participate in decisions that affect us.”
- **Protection/revitalisation:** The organisation will revitalise and protect taonga that are important to Māori members to enable them to enjoy being Māori in the organisation.

- **Participation:** The organisation will advocate for equality and non-discrimination for Māori members so they can enjoy the same rights as all others in their communities.

The Advisory Group has developed some recommended actions that will assist the organisation to implement the Treaty.

As an Advisory Group, we have agreed to explore three actions at the side event on Thursday 17 October where everyone is welcome to join us. We will share and discuss our thinking during the AGM and Conference.

These following three actions give life to Articles 1, 2 and 3 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi...

Partnership | Action One

There is an absence of Tāngata Whenua at Board level.

Recommendation 1: That Māori members select two Rangatira to participate at Board level.

Protection/Revitalisation | Action Two:

The organisation is not strong in how we support Māori culture including tikanga and te reo Māori. Blind Citizens NZ is a mainstream organisation striving to be culturally inclusive and to do more about te ao Māori. A starting point is beginning to establish organisational tikanga i.e. a Māori way of doing things. Blind Citizens NZ is taking small steps. For several years we have, during our AGMs and Conferences, done Karakia. In 2023 we introduced Mihi Whakatau in conjunction with our 'welcome', and Poropoaki when closing our event.

The Advisory Group's aspirations are that collectively we do better at our AGM and Conference to ensure these are comfortable and culturally inclusive.

Recommendation 2

That together we develop a tikanga for Blind Citizens NZ that builds on what we have developed to date including:

- Karakia.
- Mihimihi (Whakatau, Poroporoaki).
- Waiata.
- Use of reo.

Participation | Action Three

Kapo (blind) Māori do not enjoy the same outcomes and opportunities in their communities as other blind citizens. Discrimination happens when statistics continually favour one ethnicity over another. It is proposed that Blind Citizens NZ pay attention to this situation and identify ways to collect data that would inform organisational policies and influence change.

Ways of collecting data need to be identified and where data does not exist, then it should be requested. Stats NZ for example, may have data that identifies the situation for Māori within the blind community versus the rest of the blind community. Having this data enables Blind Citizens NZ to consider what can be done for Māori to have better access to resources, outcomes, care, etc., and contribute towards identifying unmet need. The Board would be informed about what needs to be done in an advocacy and policy context.

Recommendation 3

That Blind Citizens NZ develop a programme of work that identifies if there are inequalities in outcomes for Kapo (blind) Māori and implement a programme of change if discrimination exists.

Attachment “I”

Representative Appointments

Introduction

The Board has the delegated authority to make appointments to national representative positions. Where practicable, the Board makes those decisions at its Annual Planning Meeting. It will also make decisions during the course of the year as and when required. For informational purposes, the Board shares with the Annual General Meeting, news of the appointments it has made.

Appointments made in the past 12 months

The Board has made the following appointments since the 2023 Annual General Meeting. Unless otherwise stated decisions were made at the 2023 Annual Planning Meeting.

1. **Secondary World Blind Union Country Delegate:** The Board invited Mr Bryan to continue as Blind Citizens NZ’s Secondary WBU Country Delegate through to 31 March 2026. He accepted the invitation.
2. **Blind Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ):** Mrs Pauline Melham’s term concluded in December 2023. The Board reappointed Mrs Melham for a further term which concludes in December 2026.

- 3. Primary World Blind Union Country Delegate:** Expressions of interest in this position were publicised in the December 2023 and March 2024 Focus issues. The person successful with their expression of interest for the Primary WBU Delegate position is appointed to the Board.

The Board appointed a panel to address expressions of interest, short-list candidates, interview them, and bring a recommendation to the Board of the preferred candidate for appointment. Ms Chrissy Fern was the Board's appointed Convenor. The Panel carried out the required tasks and presented a report and recommendation to the Board's July meeting. The Board supported the Panel's recommendation to appoint Mr Jonathan Godfrey to the position of Primary World Blind Union Country Delegate. The term of office concludes at the end of March 2026.

At all times the process recognised conflicts of interest of anyone on the Board with whanau standing for the position, and | or existing Board Members. They were not present for any of the discussions or decision-making all of which were held 'In Committee'.

Attachment “J”

Branch and Network Representative Reports

Auckland Branch, from Carolyn Peat

The last year has been a very busy one for the Auckland Branch. In December we had a wonderful Christmas function that was catered by Stan and his team at the Foundation on George Café. Our branch is very thankful for the support Stan and his team have given us with hosting our monthly committee meetings and our general meetings. They also hosted a high tea for our members in June which everyone enjoyed.

Conference in Auckland gave recognition to both Mary Schnackenberg and Clive Lansink for their ongoing commitment to Blind Citizens NZ and they were presented with updated Beamish Memorial Medals.

We had a general meeting before conference, and one in March that included a presenter from the Health and Disability Commission talking about how we could make a submission on improving the code of rights. We also had a demonstration of how members can access the information on TellMe through Alexa.

In July we had a combined Annual General Meeting and General Meeting where the representative from the Health and Disability Commission came back with an update on the process for improving the code of rights.

The AGM saw new people join our committee, however before that we must acknowledge the contribution made by Vaughan Dodd who left us earlier in the year, due to work commitments.

Our new committee members are Rebekah Gray and Suzie Bailey who are featured in our August Newsletter.

Speaking of Newsletters our branch Newsletter is a combined effort from our committee members. We are encouraging them to step up and give us interesting articles for our members to read. We have also expanded the way in which we communicate with our members and the wider community with the establishment of our Facebook page which is administered by Karen Plimmer.

The Consumer Delegates Group has also been reconvened to discuss the ongoing problem with consumer access to Blind Low Vision premises and our Vice Chair Latoa Halatau-Talagi represents us on this group.

We are also thankful for the money we receive from both the Auckland and Manukau Community Organisations Grants Scheme (COGS). This funding enables us to run our branch taxi scheme and we have been able to extend that scheme to assist members to attend community events outside the blind community. It also funds the Information Line on TellMe.

We have also had to make changes to how our Info Line is managed due to the heavy workload of the committee. We have chosen to reduce the line to every first and third week of the month rather than a weekly line. One of the major issues is that not many on the committee have a landline and it can be tricky to record the line using a mobile phone.

We continue to be involved in local groups with representation on the Public Transport Accessibility Group and Capital Projects Accessibility Group through Auckland Transport by Carolyn Peat.

Our Chair Sue Harris and Secretary Paul Brown represent us on the Universal Design Forum through Auckland Council and we are in contact with members who are on the Disability Advisory Panel for Auckland Council. We have also made submissions on the following issues:

- Auckland council's Storm Resilience Plan.
- The Civil Defence Emergency Management Plan.
- The Auckland Council's Long-Term Plan.

I would like to conclude by thanking all the volunteers that have assisted our branch over the last year and also thank the Auckland Branch Committee for their support and help with my role as branch representative.

Rotorua Branch

In April this year, at a Special General Meeting of members, a resolution was passed to disestablish the Branch, and to establish a Rotorua Network. At its May meeting the Board endorsed this approach.

Mrs Margaret Wattam is the elected Coordinator for the newly established Rotorua Network.

Whanganui Branch

Late report – to be circulated separately.

Taranaki Network, from Bev McCulloch

We have been going for a year now. Looking back, most of our meetings and get-togethers provide opportunities for us to socialise, share meals and refreshments and provide peer support for each other.

Some of our group have spent time walking around with a City Councillor showing where crossings need to be. They have pointed out where many of the tactile markings direct people to the centre of the road, and not leading pedestrians straight across.

Some of our group are involved with the running of Enabling Good Lives Taranaki.

At a personal level I resigned from the local Community Committee as I didn't want to sign a Code of Conduct. However, I remain representing Blind Citizens NZ, organising functions for the Centre.

Wellington Branch, from Pauline Melham

It was another busy year for the Wellington Branch of Blind Citizens and whilst we may not have achieved everything we set out to do, we certainly achieved some of our goals.

After a successful conference in Auckland where the branch was represented in person by Pauline Melham, Thomas Bryan, Alan Jones and Patrick Boyd and online by numerous members across the weekend, our next big event was our annual Christmas party. As usual, the party was held on a Saturday afternoon in early December, 2023. Just over twenty people attended the event, which was wonderfully catered by Blue Carrot Catering and I think this was appreciated by everyone. Christmas was celebrated by a Christmas quiz, hosted by Pauline and a secret Santa. There are whispers that this year's Christmas party might run along similar lines.

This year most of our committee meetings, which we hold monthly over zoom have been in the early evening and this seems to have worked well for most participants.

This year, we've had three general meetings so far which have included:

- A meeting at Blind Low Vision in Wellington where our guest speaker was an Audio Describer based at Te Papa, who spoke about her work and had some museum exhibits to show us;
- A successful trip up the Kapiti Coast for our mid-year meeting, which we held at a meeting room in the local swimming pool complex. This meeting allowed members from the Kapiti Coast to join without them having to make the trip to Wellington. Former National Chair Doug Johnston, spoke about his as a leader of Blind Citizens and the importance of leadership;
- Our AGM was held in August where remits were discussed and a committee appointed.

The committee of Blind Citizens Wellington is as follows:

- Chair, Carl Haliburton
- Secretary, Janet Palmer
- Treasurer, Pauline Melham
- Branch Representative, Pauline Melham
- General Committee, Thomas Bryan, Patrick Boyd, Mahendra Bali and Mary Fisher

The committee thanked Owen Palamountain for over twenty years' service as Treasurer and Allan Jones for approximately forty years' service on the committee. The committee also thanks Jane Mehaffey for her many years' service, both as a Branch Secretary, Branch Representative and general committee member. Jane is stepping down to concentrate on her health, but tells us she might be back another year.

At the time of writing, the committee are just trying to set up a workshop for the new committee to be held to bring us all up to speed with our roles and responsibilities. It looks like this will be held on 7th September, 2024.

Apart from Committee Meetings, the Branch also:

- Sponsored a child and her family, who are on the role of BLENNZ Wellington to attend the Christmas Pantomime at Wellington's Circa Theatre. As I was also at that event, I can report that the family definitely enjoyed their outing.
- Run a weekly feedback line hosted by Thomas Bryan. Part of that feedback line service is the reading of the death notices which takes place twice a week. The committee thanks Sue for her dedication to this difficult job.
- Work closely with Metlink and Wellington City Council on issues that impact on blind people. This is mostly in regards to bus services for example, we have successfully advocating to have the plastic bus platforms removed and changed to a more permanent, durable and less hazardous substance. We also liaise with them about cycle lanes. Metlink are very good at providing us with updates to bus services and roadworks.
- Recently we also provided feedback on Wellington's strategic plan. Any work with Metlink and Wellington City Council is ably led by Thomas Bryan who sits on the Wellington City Council's Transport Advisory Committee.
- Purchased our own Zoom Licence for committee and general meetings.
- Applied for and received a COGS grant, which we are using in various ways but particularly to help members to get and from meetings by providing a significant transport subsidy.
- Providing partial sponsorship for members attending national conference.

I have enjoyed being Branch Representative this year and I look forward to another year in this role. One of the things I've appreciated is meeting with the other Branch and Network Representatives, discovering what their Branches are doing, and thinking of ways that we could do things differently as a result.

Nelson Branch, from Chrissy Fern

At the Annual General Meeting of Nelson Branch held on 22 July 2023, Chrissy Fern was re-elected as Branch Chair. Also re-elected to the Committee were Mike Stevens as Branch Representative, Jo-Kate Sinclair as Vice-Chair, Betty Blair, and Secretary | Treasurer Lennane Kent. The Committee has held 6 face-to-face meetings in the past year. We are grateful to Blind Low Vision NZ for allowing us to use the meeting room at their Stoke Office at no cost. Past Treasurer Steve Richards has continued to assist us with financial matters.

Nelson Branch has held General Meetings in September 2023, and February and April 2024; all in the Lounge of the Stoke Methodist Church Complex. We have greatly appreciated Nelson Lioness and Soroptimists Clubs for continuing to provide transport and serving afternoon tea for our General Meetings. Our thanks also go to Dick and Barbara Watson who have assisted at our General Meetings; with setting up and packing away, ensuring members are seated safely and other tasks such as being the microphone runner. The Committee hosted lunch at Styx Restaurant in December 2023 to wind up the year and thank our willing volunteers.

To keep our members informed Nelson Branch Committee produced newsletters in September and November 2023; and February, April and July 2024.

In October 2023 the National AGM and Conference held in Auckland was attended in-person by Branch Representative Mike Stevens, Chair Chrissy Fern and Secretary | Treasurer Lennane Kent.

Branch Members Rodger Curry, Karen Wilson and Mike Stevens, have continued to ably advocate on many local issues including: pedestrian safety at traffic light intersections and with obstacles on footpaths; concerns with electric buses; and mobility car parks in shopping centres. They have attended regular forums for Nelson | Tasman Accessibility for All (A4A) and Disability Providers.

Nelson Branch has made submissions to Nelson City Council on the Long Term Plan 2024-2034, and the review of the Commercial Occupation Policy Urban Environments Bylaw 2022 regarding concerns about proposed changes that relate to footpaths.

On Saturday 15th June 2024 Nelson Branch celebrated 40 years since its establishment in May 1984. We enjoyed a lunch at Club Waimea shared with current and past Branch Members. Guest speakers who joined us were: local Labour Member of Parliament Rachel Boyack, Nelson City Council Mayor Nick Smith, Blind Citizens NZ National President Jonathan Godfrey and Chief Executive Rose Wilkinson. Mike Stevens was presented with a well-deserved Blind Citizens NZ Meritorious Service Award for giving over 10 years of service to Nelson Branch and the community of blind, deafblind, low vision, and vision-impaired residents of the Nelson | Tasman region.

Nelson Branch unfortunately has had an ongoing decline in membership in recent years. At the Branch AGM held on 20 July 2024, 16 Ordinary Members were recorded as financial, with 11 attending the meeting.

As there were no nominations for any Committee positions and after much discussion, it was voted unanimously that it be recommended to the Board of Blind Citizens NZ that Nelson Branch be disestablished and that a geographical Network be established in the Nelson area.

South Canterbury

Late report – to be circulated separately.

Otago Network, from Juanita Williams

The Otago Network has had a busy year with advocating across several different areas, we have been working with Fulton Hogan to continue to educate the staff about safety for blind people and also on how to assist a blind person should they need too.

We have ongoing work with the bus companies and the regional council as well as the taxi company to provide education and awareness on the issues facing the blind community.

We have continued to have a successful coffee group once a month and have had talks with Kathryn Harkin from Te Whatu Ora about accessible changes within the hospital, this includes the ability to have a phone call or email of appointments and other relevant information that would normally be sent via letter.

Paula Waby and I spoke to the Dunedin City Council and the Otago Regional Council about our submission for the Otago Southland Regional Land Transport Plans 2021-2031, this was our first submission since I have been the coordinator so was a great learning experience.

We had a successful AGM with 16 people in attendance and during this meeting a vote was taken to establish a branch in Otago and we are very excited that the board approved our request and we are making progress on this with a meeting planned for the 9th of November to formalise this and work on the next steps.

We have a Christmas lunch planned and are looking forward to starting the following projects: a guide dog handlers get together and also the establishment of an in person Audio book readers club.

As a coordinator I have been extremely humbled and proud of the members that have stepped up to help out with coffee groups and meetings and also to support several of our members that have had ill health or falls, checking in and providing meals and a phone tree to ensure they have support.

Southland Branch, from Robyn Garden

The past year, like other years has been busy and varied. Committee members have been very involved in areas of their particular interest.

Meetings

- Committee meetings have been held monthly, except for December. These are always well run thanks to our efficient sighted secretary and our chairperson. They both work tirelessly for our community. These meetings have been very well-attended by committee members.
- General Meetings: Since my last report, there have been two General Meetings, one in April and the other, which was held in conjunction with the AGM, in August. These have been well-attended by members and there is always the opportunity for a catch-up over refreshments.

- AGM: This was held on August 10th. Office bearers remain the same. Two committee members resigned and one new member joined the committee. The AGM concluded with a lunch.

Thanks go to the Waikiwi Lions Club for driving members to and from these events and also to the Invercargill Licensing Trust for their financial support.

Advocacy

We continue to advocate and provide blindness education. This year it has included the following:

- We have met with medical students from Otago University on two occasions in the past year. The first was with 4th year students via Zoom and the second with 3rd year students in person.
- We have made several submissions, met with and spoken to the Invercargill City Council (ICC) and other local bodies. These have included:
 - A submission was made to the Otago and Southland Regional Councils regarding regional transport in their long term plan. A submission was also made to the ICC's long term plan.
 - Advocating for the return of audio announcements on Invercargill buses.
 - A 'walk around' the CBD with other members of the disabled community and council staff looking at access for the disabled.
 - Contribution to the Total Mobility Scheme review.
 - Contribution to the Footpath Policy in Invercargill as part of a Combined Disability Group.
 - Some members, along with other disabled people, took part in a protest regarding proposed changes to disability funding.

Other involvement and activities

- Two or three of our members regularly visit other members in Rest Homes. These are social visits and are enjoyed by all.
- Our chairperson, Carolyn Weston and a Blind Citizens NZ member, Hannah Pascoe, present a monthly show on Invercargill community radio. This called 'Blind Spot'.
- Having a demonstration EFTPOS machine has helped many of our vision- impaired community become more confident in the use of it.
- We continue to produce regular newsletters, usually three a year. This gives us another avenue for communication with our members.
- We are encouraging members to access TellMe. Our secretary creates a Meeting Summary and puts this on TellMe. This is much more reader-friendly than full minutes. As well as members receiving agenda and newsletters in their preferred format, TellMe is a useful location to keep everything together.

We will continue to try and boost our membership. However, it is pleasing to see a good turnout of members at our General Meetings and look forward to working together to improve things for our community.

Guide Dog Handler Special Interest Network, from Bev Duncan

Since the conference in October 2023, the Guide Dog Handlers Special Interest Network has met by Zoom 3 times. We met in March, and May. We held our AGM in August. By the time we get to conference, we will have also had our informal meeting face-to-face at the Sudima Hotel.

Before each meeting I not only send out an email to the list advising of the upcoming Zoom meeting, I advise others of the said meeting on the National Information Line for a couple of weeks before the meeting so that people who listen to the bulletins can join in if they wish. Every time I have put a notice of the meetings up on TellMe we have gained new members of the network.

At the meeting in March we had a meet and greet session with Peter Hoskin, head of Guide Dog Services, who not only told us of his background which was interesting in itself, he gave a very inspirational and aspirational talk about how it's going to take 5 to 10 years to fix the service. Following that meeting current Guide Dog Handlers are now receiving bags of food for their dogs free of charge. They have started producing Korero Kuri again which will help to keep handlers up to date with things happening at the Guide Dog Service. One item I noticed in the Korero Kuri was that the Service has imported 2 Poodles from America which will in time increase the number of poodles being matched with members who have allergies to dog fur.

At our May meeting the idea of having a presentation from Marc Gillard who we believe is currently working at the Guide Dog School in San Rafael, however, we have written to him asking him to join us on Zoom on a Saturday morning NZ time to no avail.

Marc is an orientation and mobility instructor as well as being a guide dog instructor. He has worked at a number of guide dog schools both in Australia and the States. He has worked with people who are totally blind, those with low vision and with people with a dual sensory disability.

The meeting in August was the AGM for the network. I was re-elected unopposed as the coordinator.

It was decided that we would write to Peter Hoskin at Guide Dogs to ask him to give us an update and milestones as to how things are progressing now that he has been there for over a year. We hope to meet with him on Zoom in November.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the members who regularly attend the Zoom meetings. I also thank the note-takers Pauline Melham, Robyn Garden, Paula Waby, and Teri McElroy. Last but not least we thank the Board of Blind Citizens for the use of Zoom and for Rose's support of the network, it is very much appreciated.

Braille Special Interest Network

Late report to be circulated separately.

Attachment “K”

Preparation for the 2025 Annual General Meeting and Conference

Preparation for 2025

Next year's AGM and Conference will lower North Island. Locations and venues that broadly fit into this geographical area will be explored. Suitable options will be provided to the Board for a decision.

Speakers and Theme for 2025

Our 2025 AGM and Conference will be Blind Citizens NZ's 80-year milestone celebration.

This year's AGM and Conference is an opportunity for Branches, Networks, and members to offer suggestions for themes, guest speakers etc. All possibilities will be considered by the Board at its 2024 Annual Planning Meeting.

The Board encourages everyone to give some thought to these elements so please do bring your ideas along ready to share.

Attachment “L”

Guest Presenter - Bios

Note: For each of the two days, guest presenters are in the order they are scheduled to appear

Friday 18 October 2024

Paula Tesoriero MNZM, Chief Executive Whaikaha | Ministry of Disabled People

Paula provides strategic leadership to Whaikaha and across the disability system to achieve better outcomes for disabled people and tāngata Whaikaha Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Paula is well-known and a respected leader in the disability community. She is disabled and has a deep knowledge of the challenges and opportunities for the disability community.

Paula was previously the Disability Rights Commissioner at the Human Rights Commission, a position she held since 2017. She also acted in the role of Chief Human Rights Commissioner from May 2018 – January 2019.

Paula is an experienced Public Service leader. From 2010 – 2016, she was the General Manager, Higher Courts at the Ministry of Justice. In 2016, she was seconded to Statistics New Zealand where she was the General Manager, System and Partnership.

She has served in various governance roles including as Deputy Chair of Peke Waihangā — Artificial Limb Service and Deputy Chair of Nuku Ora (previously Sport Wellington) and she served on the Board of Paralympics NZ. She is a life trustee of the Halberg Disability Sport Foundation and is an honorary advisor to the Asia New Zealand Foundation.

Paula is a Paralympian, winning a gold medal and two bronze medals at the 2008 Summer Paralympic Games in Beijing.

Maria Williams

I grew up in Ōtautahi and moved to the bright lights of Tamakimakaurau to look for work after finishing my degree. I lived there for many years and took up a secondment opportunity in te Whanganui-a-Tara 11 years ago - this is now where I call home.

I embraced opportunities to take up long distance running and triathlon at an older age and this led to the experience of representing NZ on the world stage in both disciplines. Currently I am enjoying ocean swimming in Wellington and looking forward to competing in five long distance swims around NZ this summer.

I work in bus operations at Metlink. Prior to this I had a service design role at Corrections and a health and disability focused service delivery role at MSD. My first positions after becoming totally blind were in the Adaptive Technology classroom and then the Employment Service at the Blind Foundation. I was inspired by the resilience and innovation of the vision impaired people who helped me adapt to my sight loss and learning to garner support where needed facilitated my future employment and athletic achievements.

Hon Louise Upston, Minister for Disability Issues

Hon Louise Upston has been the Minister for Disability Issues since April 2024. She is also the Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector, Minister for Social Development and Employment, and Minister for Child Poverty Reduction. She has served as the MP for Taupō since the 2008 election.

Louise held a number of Ministerial roles in the Fifth National Government, including the portfolios of Corrections, Education, Land Information, Local Government, Women, and Tertiary Education Skills and Employment. She also served as Government Chief Whip.

Prior to entering Parliament in 2008, Louise was self-employed as a project management consultant. She also held directorships in a number of trusts and companies involved in property, tourism, management, and consulting. Louise holds an MBA from Waikato University. She lives in Karāpiro, south of Cambridge.

One of her more recent media releases was with her colleague the Hon Simeon Brown (Minister for Transport). The media release speaks to the direct and pragmatic way that she intends to address disability issues.

“The Government will be cracking down on people who misuse car parks for disabled people, ensuring towage fees do not leave tow-truck operators out of pocket, and adjusting parking fines for inflation, Disability Issues Minister Louise Upston and Transport Minister Simeon Brown say.

“Increasing penalties for people who misuse mobility parking will level the playing field for disabled people by helping prevent unnecessary disruptions in their day-to-day lives,” Ms Upston says.

“Parking in an area reserved for disabled people is the epitome of arrogance. We need to get tough on this selfish behaviour, and that is why we are taking action. The current \$150 penalty will increase to \$750, reflecting the seriousness of this offence.

“The penalty for abusing mobility parking in New Zealand is far too low compared to other countries, like Australia. Increasing this will send a very clear message that this behaviour is not okay, and our Government is serious about addressing accessibility issues.”

Robbie Taylor, Senior Advisor External Stakeholders – Kaitohutohu Mātua

Money and Cash – Te moni me te ukauka

Reserve Bank of New Zealand – Te Pūtea Matua

Robbie manages the Reserve Bank of New Zealand – Te Pūtea Matua Future of Money and Payments work programme. In this role, he leads the Reserve Bank’s research and advice on physical and digital cash, stablecoins, payments and fintech. He also chairs the Reserve Bank’s Fintech Working Group and is on the Board of Fintech NZ.

Prior to joining the Reserve Bank of New Zealand, Robbie had roles at the New Zealand Treasury and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. In these roles he advised on a range of capital markets, insurance, and other financial policy related projects. He served as New Zealand’s Adviser to the Board of Directors of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, was New Zealand’s Deputy Ambassador to Vietnam, and negotiated a range of trade agreements, including the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement. He has a LLB/BA from Victoria University of Wellington.

Saturday 19 October

TeHuia Bill Hamilton

Ngati Kahungunu, Nga Rauru, Ngati Raukawa Owner of TREATY SOLUTIONS

Over the past 20 years, TeHuia has held a range of senior management and governance roles, all with a focus on Maori development, Maori engagement, the Treaty and human rights. These include roles with the Human Rights Commission, Te Puni Kokiri and NZEI: TeRiuRoa. He has also chaired and been a member of Trusts, Iwi Boards and NGOs/Charitable Organisations, including the board of Ngati Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated.

His venture into business included ownership of two restaurants.

He has provided education and strategic advice to agencies, businesses and NGOs, including Treasury, the National Iwi Chairs Forum and the Tindall Foundation.

Te Huia is a skilled facilitator, educator and presenter.

Matt Waight, Customer, Communications & Change Lead for the National Ticketing Solution NZ Transport Agency | Waka Kotahi

Matt is a specialist in supporting business transformation and behaviour change. Matt is responsible for enabling customers to transition from current ticketing solutions across the country to the new National Solution.

The National Ticketing Solution is a partnership between NZTA and the 13 Public Transport Authorities to provide a range of easy-to-use payment methods for all public transport across New Zealand.

Andrea Midgen, Chief Executive Blind Low Vision NZ

Andrea joined Blind Low Vision NZ in January 2024 as Chief Executive, bringing in-depth experience in organisational leadership & strategic development, financial acumen, and stakeholder management. Andrea's leadership principles are 'to be curious and to be kind, it is all about He tāngata He tāngata He tāngata.'

Andrea is a proven leader, with a wealth of CEO and senior executive experience in the not-for-profit and corporate sectors. Throughout her career, she has consistently demonstrated a clear sense of vision, mission, and purpose.

Andrea served as Chief Executive Officer of the Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) for over seven years.

During her tenure, she unified forty-two independent societies into 'One SPCA,' significantly improving animal welfare, income streams, fundraising initiatives, and growing sustainable income streams through the national expansion of Op Shops.

Before joining the SPCA, Andrea was Group Strategist and CFO for Southern Cross Group. Prior to her role with Southern Cross, she held various senior executive roles at Vodafone. At Vodafone, she culminated her career as Director of Customer Operations and gained valuable governance experience as Chair of the Vodafone New Zealand Foundation. Her earlier roles included Financial Controller and Executive Sponsor for a \$500 million multi-year Australia/New Zealand system replacement.

Andrea's career began in an accounts office while she pursued her Chartered Accountant (CA) qualification from Unitec Te Pūkenga. Her career and leadership journey included leading finance teams in New Zealand's building insulation and road transport industries and England's air cargo industry. Returning to New Zealand, Andrea joined Ericsson Cellular as GM Operations during the early days of mobile phones. Outside of work, Andrea enjoys hiking, yoga, volunteering, reading, jigsaws, and spending time with her husband, son, family, and friends.