



Blind Citizens NZ

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Inc

Annual General Meeting and Conference

Celebrating 80 years 1945-2025

Friday 3 October and Saturday 4 October 2025

Ka mua, ka muri

Walking backwards into the future

**Brentwood Hotel
Kemp Street, Kilbirnie, Wellington**

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

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Sessions

1. Friday 3 October

9:00 am to 9:25 am	Mihi Whakatau Welcome Roll Call Pepeha
10:30 am to 11:00 am	Morning Tea
11:00am to 11:20am	Official Opening
11:20 am to 12:00pm	Guest Presenter
12:00pm-12:30pm	Guest Presenter Business
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 5:15 pm	Guest Presenter
5:15 pm to 5:30pm	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 4 October

9:00 am to 9:25 am Mihi Whakatau | Welcome | Roll Call

9:25 am to 10:10 am Guest Presenter

10:15 am to 10:45 am Morning Tea

10:45 am to 11:40 am Business

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 Guest Presenter

2:35 pm to 3:20 pm Guest Presenter

3:20 pm to 3:45 pm Afternoon Tea

3:45 pm to 4:15 pm Presenter

4:15 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:

- There is the potential for the order of agenda items as presented to 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 2025 Scheduled Election: two Member-at-Large positions | Report from Returning Officer Rose Wilkinson.

5.2 Confirmation of Minutes of Annual General Meeting and Conference, 18-19 October 2024.

5.3 Matters Arising from Minutes of 2024, 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 1 September 2025 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 2025 (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) Delegate
- World Blind Union (WBU) Global President
- 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 2025, Moore Markhams Wellington Audit (Attachment “C”)

5.7 Appointment of Auditor (recommended by the Board)

5.8 Remit (Attachment “D”)

5.9 Honorary Member-for-Life Nomination (Attachment “E”)

5.10 Where is the Accessible Tech in New Zealand | Discussion Paper from Auckland Branch Blind Citizens NZ (Attachment “F”)

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

5.12 Blind Citizens NZ Draft New Constitution (Attachment “H”)

5.13 Representative Appointments (Attachment “I”)

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

- Auckland Branch
- Taranaki Network
- Whanganui Branch
- Manawatū and Districts Network
- Wellington Branch
- South Canterbury Branch
- Otago Branch
-
- Southland Branch
- Guide Dog Handler Special Interest Network
- Braille Special Interest Network

6. 2026 Annual General Meeting and Conference | (Attachment “K”)

7. Other Business as notified in Item 5.4

8. General Business (time permitting)

Friday 3 October

9:00 am to 10:30 am Mihi Whakatau | Welcome
Roll Call | Pepeha: attendees to say who you are... You can introduce your personal self (tell us where you grew up, went to school, about your family etc.), or introduce your professional self (tell us what you do in your job, the people you work with etc.)

10:30 am to 11:00 am Morning Tea

11:00 am to 11:20 am Official Opening – **Don McKenzie, Life Member, Blind Citizens NZ**

11:20 am to 12:00 pm **Karl Le Quesne, Chief Electoral Officer, Chief Executive, Electoral Commission, Topic:**

12:00 pm to 12:30 pm Patron announcement | National President Address

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

1:45 pm to 2:30 pm Business

2:30 pm to 3:15 pm	John Sneyd, General Manager Regulatory Services, Regulatory & Identity Services, Department of Internal Affairs Topic: Secure, inclusive and empowering Digital Identity services”
3:15 pm to 3:45 pm	Afternoon tea
3:45 pm to 4:30 pm	Anne Shaw, Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Disability Support Services Topic: Update on Disability Support Services In 2024, after an independent review of Disability Support Services (DSS), the Government transferred responsibility for DSS to the Ministry of Social Development and established a Taskforce. The immediate focus of the Taskforce was to respond to the recommendations of the independent review. This session will provide an update on progress so far to stabilise and strengthen the disability support system so that it is fair, sustainable and transparent.
4:30 pm to 5:15 pm	Andrew Webber, Chief Economist, Social Investment Agency Topic: Monitoring and evaluation in the social sector is often limited by scarce resources and government contracting practices that focus on compliance and reporting rather than learning.

This presentation looks at a different approach: shifting the burden of reporting from community organisations to funders; designing in hooks for robust evaluation from the start; and weaving simple evaluative questions into regular learning conversations. The presentation will cover how these principles are being used in the Social Investment Fund to generate more useful insights and support better decisions without adding extra burden.

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

Saturday 4 October

9:00 am to 9:25 am Mihi Whakatau | Welcome | Roll Call

9:25 am to 10:10 am Steve Wiggins, Chief Executive, Payments NZ
Topic: Payments NZ update – payments accessibility

10:15 am to 10:45 am Morning Tea

10:45 am to 11:40 am Draft New Constitution | Business

11:45 am to 12:30 pm Sheldene Seth, Communications & Engagement Manager, Able
Topic: Audio Description in New Zealand

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

1:45 pm to 2:35 pm Paula Tesoriero, Chief Executive, Whaikaha | Ministry of Disabled People
Topic: Working for equity – in the past, now and the future”?

2:35 pm to 3:20 pm Thomas Bryan Chair World Blind Union Built Environment Working Group | Martine Abel-Williamson, World Blind Union Immediate Past President
Topic: WBU Advocacy at an International Level

3:20 pm to 3:45 pm Afternoon Tea

3:45 pm to 4:15 pm	Robert Hunt Topic: Beauty is the judgment of the beholder
4:15pm to 5:00pm	Business
5:00 pm to 5:15 pm	Poroporoake Closure, end of business sessions
7.00 pm to 9:30 pm	Dinner Hākari

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Attachment “A”

Matters Arising from the 2024 Annual General Meeting and Conference

Introduction

Outcomes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting and Conference were considered by the Board during its Annual Planning Meeting in November 2024. 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. **Taxi Services:** This Remit was passed unanimously. The Chief Executive has remained in contact with YourRide over the past 12 months. Their commitment to keep Blind Citizens NZ informed has been upheld. Early in September 2025, YourRide reached out with information about their App now having a feature included for Total Mobility. This is in the ‘testing’ phase where Blind Citizens NZ is involved. A verbal update may be available at the AGM and Conference.

- 2. Electronic Voting:** The decision of Conference was for Blind Citizens NZ to work with other Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) to assist the Electoral Commission to make electronic voting available to all voters as an option for General Elections. There has been less progress than hoped. However, this is one of the topics the Chief Electoral Officer will be speaking to during our AGM and Conference. The same approach is required for Local Government. Local Government is interested in online voting. However, introducing this for the 2025 Local Body Elections was not possible, while a version of Telephone Dictation Voting has been introduced.
- 3. Blind Citizens NZ Membership Subscriptions:** The Conference decision to set Blind Citizens NZ's base membership subscription at \$10 per annum, or \$30 per annum for those who can afford it, has been implemented. The information has been widely promoted including in Focus. The Board considered any implications for Membership-for-Life. Costs to purchase Membership-for-Life are unchanged, as is the annual disbursement made to Branches by the National Office for each Member-for-Life.
- 4. Next Ticketing:** Blind Citizens NZ has continued to work with other Disabled Peoples' Organisations (DPO's) and Waka Kotahi | the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) to ensure that the National Ticketing Solution is fully accessible to all users. There have been delays with the roll-out of this system, which now commences in November with Christchurch. There may be a verbal update available at the AGM and Conference.
- 5. Safety of Guide Dogs in South Auckland:** Challenges faced by Guide Dog Handlers, blind people in general and students at BLENNZ were raised.

Although there was no formal resolution for the Board to progress, this is a topic Blind Citizens NZ has remained abreast of. Our primary points of contact are the Manager Guide Dog Services Peter Hoskin, and BLENNZ Principal Saul Taylor. They each are aware of our interest and willingness to support any initiatives and media.

Attachment “B”

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Inc

Annual Report

1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025

Board

National President Jonathan Godfrey ONZM

Vice President Chrissy Fern

Board Members Martine Abel-Williamson QSM

Peter Allen

Beverley (Bev) Duncan)

Andrea Courtney

Russell Lowry

Maria Stevens

Paula Waby

Staff

Chief Executive Rose Wilkinson ONZM

Administrative Support Emily Tilley

Finance Assistant Mary Yee

Accessible Information Advisor Thomas Bryan

Blind Citizens NZ Branches

Auckland

Headquarters

Otago

Southland

South Canterbury

Wellington

Whanganui

Blind Citizens NZ Geographical Networks

Nelson

Rotorua

Taranaki

Blind Citizens NZ Special Interest Networks

Guide Dog Handlers

Braille

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- National President | Chief Executive (combined)
- National Office, Performance Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2025 (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 – Country Delegate
- World Blind Union – Global Report, WBU President
- World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Accessible Books Consortium (ABC)

National President Jonathan Godfrey ONZM |

Chief Executive Rose Wilkinson ONZM

Report to Members 2025

Introduction

As we present an overview of our māhi for the past 12 months, this gives us reason to reflect on the issues we have addressed, our solutions-focused approach, and the influence we have had along the way. There is no doubt this is somewhat of a reality check... From our perspective, much has been achieved across the diversity of issues, topics, and the ever-changing landscape to which we have needed to continually adapt if we are to remain sustainable and relevant.

We might say the essence of Blind Citizens NZ's efforts is the very fact that this year, we celebrate a significant milestone, and we're in good company. That's to say, while 2025 is a celebration of 80 years for Blind Citizens NZ, the United Nations is also celebrating the same milestone, albeit that this occurs at a different time.

In reality, our theme reflects and draws attention to the way we work organisationally. Highlighting this for our 80 year celebration is the right thing to do, for in order to make a blind bit of difference, we must constantly be reviewing what we have done in the past, while looking at what needs to change to influence positive outcomes.

Ka mua, ka muri | Walking backwards into the future epitomises our history and may well assist us set the scene for the future.

Influencing positive change

Blind Citizens NZ has a proud history and organisationally, we have evidence to uphold this view. All outcomes over the organisation's 80 years reflects in some way, the voices of members as well as those who are on the peripheral, and who stay abreast of our work, contributing as they choose. For example, for each guest presenter, there is a connection to our history and some of the significant outcomes we've either contributed to and / or achieved. While some of these may be a 'stretch', they nevertheless exist. For example:

- Steve Wiggins, Chief Executive, Payments NZ: Blind Citizens NZ was the catalyst for banks introducing Talking ATMs, and remaining staunch about accessible EFTPOS terminals. We continue to work with Verifone and promote accessibility features on its EFTPOS terminals, and we influence banks through the Bankers Association.
- Karl Le Quesne, Chief Electoral Officer | Chief Executive, Electoral Commission: Blind Citizens NZ was instrumental in the introduction of Telephone Dictation Voting in General Elections, starting in 2014.
- John Sneyd, General Manager Regulatory Services, Regulatory & Identity Services, Department of Internal Affairs: Blind Citizens NZ played a significant role in the work that involved rebranding of the 18+ card to the Kiwi Access Card, which included increased security.
- Sheldene Seth, Able: whilst recognising advocacy over time by many individuals, Blind Citizens NZ has played an integral and ongoing role with respect to the introduction of Audio Description to New Zealand. Four workshops held in 2010 contributed to the introduction of audio described television programme content, also for live theatre, museums, and art galleries, etc.

There are so many ways that organisationally we influence change. This is not just about the Board, the Chief Executive and her staff. Blind Citizens NZ appoints people from our membership and / or the blind community as representatives across the many areas we strive to have a voice and influence positive change.

Often, our advocacy paves the way for Blind Citizens NZ to achieve representative status. Sometimes individuals are shoulder-tapped, and other times we call for expressions of interest. First of all, this is an opportunity to recognise our nationally appointed representatives and to thank them for the work they do on our behalf, i.e. Leyna Coleman to BANZAT, Pauline Melham to BLENNZ, Martine Abel-Williamson to the Accessible Books Consortium and our country delegates to the World Blind Union, Thomas Bryan and Jonathan Godfrey. Then there are opportunistic situations and others that happen because of our advocacy, such as Don McKenzie's representation with Maritime NZ's work to influence the introduction of accessibility on passenger ferries (excluding ferries that travel across the Cook Strait).

We welcomed the opportunity to have representation on Blind Low Vision NZ's Braille Project, where we have two people, and recognise Juanita Willems' input towards influencing each of the scoping exercises.

Valuing Branches and Networks (Geographical and Special Interest)

Over the past 12 months, there have been some ups and downs with our Branches, and both Geographical and Special Interest Networks. Each situation is unique, there are learnings, and most importantly, there is no silver bullet when there is a downward slide. We believe it is important to recognise that Blind Citizens NZ is not alone with its membership experiences.

Both here in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally, membership organisations are challenged to know how best to manage any decline in membership, and whether to continue with subscriptions. At last year's AGM and Conference, the decision was made to introduce a change. For the financial year commencing 1 July 2025, annual subscriptions are now \$10 and \$30 for those who can afford it. This has been widely publicised and, in some situations, the change appears to make a difference. That's not to say our membership has increased, but there is evidence to support the view that some members appreciate the choice now offered.

We celebrate the fact that our Otago Network has gained strength over the past five-plus years and has been re-established as a Branch. Nelson Branch was disestablished in July last year, and we continue to nurture the concept of there being a Nelson Network – we certainly have the members, it's finding someone with the time to be the Coordinator. Manawatū and Districts is a new and functioning network, while we have some geographic networks struggling. By comparison, there is significant interest in our two special interest networks, as indicated by the need and interest in having side events before the AGM and Conference.

We have commented on changes in membership subscriptions. However, there continue to be notable challenges with respect to membership renewals and attracting new members. We now have the latter situation addressed as we return to being able to receive from Blind Low Vision NZ, contact details of newly registered members who agree for their details to be shared. Once the process is implemented, there will be a reach out from the National Office to Branches and Geographical Networks about the process as it unfolds.

While recruiting new members is important, the retention of existing members by Branches and Geographical Networks, including offering a welcoming environment, has greater significance.

Equally important is that, as of 1 July 2025, the status of financial membership becomes increasingly important. Branches, Geographical Networks, and the National Office are now required to provide information only to financial members. The provision that the Board introduced for anyone from 2018 through to 30 June 2025 on our database to receive all information, whether financial or not, ceased as of 30 June 2025.

Introducing organisational efficiencies

Work continues with Branches to move bank accounts across to ANZ Bank and to begin using Xero accounting software. At the outset, the Board did not anticipate the length of time this would take. However, it has become evident that each of these two tasks is not achieved as easily as initially believed.

That said, there is no doubt that once the move to ANZ happens, and Xero is utilised, organisational efficiencies very quickly become evident. It is important to mention that each of these decisions has been made by the Board on the recommendation of our auditor over several years, and that the Board requires the Chief Executive to implement its decisions. There are no exceptions to this work happening. We anticipate being in the position of proudly informing next year's AGM and Conference that all Branches have successfully moved to Xero, and those Branches that need to transition to ANZ Bank have achieved the required outcome.

Enhancing Communications

While we know there is always more that can be done in this space, there are mechanisms that are proving beneficial for Blind Citizens NZ. Focus, our national publication, continues to be sent to all members in their preferred alternate format (Braille, large print, audio, and electronically).

Up until June 2025, Focus was issued to all Ordinary Members on our database based on the Board's decision mentioned earlier in our report. It is also sent to all Members of Parliament, and now and then we will receive some feedback or a comment about issues and / or topics we've raised.

The digital divide is an issue about which Blind Citizens NZ is abundantly aware, and which we continually strive to address. There is no doubt, however, that we are at times less successful than we aim to be.

Communicating with members caught on the wrong side of the digital divide can prove challenging for Branches, Geographical and Special Interest Networks, and the National Office. Our National Information Line on TellMe is one option that assists us in overcoming this situation. While we are doing what we can to maintain this Bulletin, our TellMe presence has diminished since our Information Line Coordinator, Vaughan Dodd, passed away suddenly in late 2024. The Board is very aware that the Information Line is wanted, it is necessary, and that it meets the informational needs of many of our members who would otherwise miss out. Unfortunately, despite advertising, we have yet to replace Vaughan, whose contributions raised expectations and enhanced people's experiences with our Information Line.

On the plus side, our digitally connected members do get plenty of information via monthly e-bulletins, email lists, and other social media activities. These members and many others outside of Blind Citizens NZ are in a position to learn about our own activities, the work of our representatives, the organisations we work with, and information provided by Government agencies. We hold regularly six-weekly online hui opportunities for members to come together with the National President and talk about issues topical to the blind community. Additionally, topic-specific online engagement opportunities are held to gather information that supports our work.

Good Governance | Progressing and Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Since last year's AGM and Conference, our Te Tiriti o Waitangi Advisory Group has made progress on some of the tasks delegated for its attention. The most important of these is the recommendation from the Advisory Group to the Board for two members to be co-opted to the Board of Blind Citizens NZ. The Advisory Group decided to recommend two people from within its number. The Board welcomed and endorsed the recommendation to co-opt Peter Allen and Russell Lowry to the Board for a two-year term. Their respective terms started at the Board's August 2025 meeting. This is a positive step towards ensuring the needs of Kāpō Tāngata Whenua members are incorporated into all our work across the organisation, before decisions are made. Additionally, this provides a way forward. It allows time for the Advisory Group to develop a plan to engage during 2026 with Kāpō Tāngata Whenua members about a transparent and inclusive approach for them to select or elect people to the Board.

Guided by a discussion | meeting with Graeme Nahkies, BoardWorks, the Board has resolved that succession planning is an area that must be advanced in the coming months. The catalyst for this work is based on the fact that four current Board Members have served less than twelve months, while three Board Members have each served over 20 years. The Board is mindful that the 2025 election results cannot address what our external governance advisor described as looking like a sandwich without much filling.

Fostering Relationships

Our involvement in the Disabled People's Organisations (DPO) Coalition, and by virtue of this with the Independent Monitoring Mechanism (IMM), continues to provide opportunities for Blind Citizens NZ to promote the concerns and needs of our members, and others in the blind community. Often, when an issue is raised, such as we did with challenges people in the blind community face when required to produce identification, it will be the realisation and collective effort of all seven DPOs that gets an issue across the line for a Government agency to address.

Our rich history of actively engaging our membership well ahead of the time, when Government agencies come calling, means our position on issues is easy to determine and to communicate to other DPOs and Government officials.

We have begun to engage more regularly with our sister organisation Blind Citizens Australia. Many years ago, there was a reciprocal relationship where we endeavoured to attend their AGM | Conference and they ours. Several aspects influenced changes in this approach. It's great to have both the President Vaughn Bennison and Chief Executive Deb Deshayes join us in person this year.

In recent times, Blind Citizens NZ has held both Country Delegate positions to the World Blind Union. Our membership of the World Blind Union is not necessarily about the benefits to Blind Citizens NZ and | or New Zealand, but what our contributions are. Country delegates might be invited to be part of a global and | or regional committee, and it is these instances where our contributions come to the fore. Blind Citizens NZ has proudly supported both financially and in-kind Martine Abel-Williamson in her respective WBU roles as Treasurer, and most recently as WBU President.

Our financial contributions since 2016 are in the vicinity of \$80,000. During Martine's time as WBU President, reflections on achievements during her time highlight many situations such as:

- participation in the 'We're with U' concert to raise funds for Ukraine. A result of the solidarity is the thousands of dollars collected, and programmes now in place to support blind and partially sighted Ukrainians in Ukraine and displaced persons in Poland and other countries;
- meeting with Lego to help share the word about how Braille Bricks can be a fun tool for learning Braille.

Moving forward, as WBU Immediate Past President, while we will continue to provide financial and in-kind support for this four-year term, we are pleased to share that Blind Low Vision NZ will make a financial contribution towards costs.

The Board resolved that Blind Citizens NZ would become a full member of the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF). This is a step up from our Associate Membership status, which we have held for many years. The change in status means we have opportunities to be involved at a democratic level within the PDF.

Organisational Sustainability

We are in no doubt that Blind Citizens NZ's financial position remains problematic. While we have sufficient funds to remain a going concern, we are slowly but surely chipping away at the reserves we have built up over 80 years.

Our primary funder is aware of the need to increase the total pool of funding to meet the rising level of funds needed by blindness consumer organisations. There are positive steps towards engagement and accountability. From our perspective, the work Blind Citizens NZ carries out potentially benefits all blind, deafblind, low-vision, and vision-impaired New Zealanders, which we continue to do with scarce resources. We continue to consider all options, mindful that our reserves often inhibit positive responses from potential funders such as Lotteries.

We are well on the way towards addressing legal requirements as per the Incorporated Societies Act 2022. Several mandatory aspects must be brought into the organisation's Constitution. The eight-week engagement has started, and we will have a great opportunity during the AGM and Conference to talk about specific elements of the draft new Constitution. Members can look forward to a new Constitution coming into force that ensures Blind Citizens NZ meets its obligations under the Incorporated Societies Act. Once that is finalised, and mindful that the current Strategic Plan ends in 2026, attention will turn towards the development of a new Strategic Plan.

Conclusion

We have provided a summary of happenings since our 2024 AGM and Conference.

Similar to last year, we have an election with three candidates competing for two Member-at-Large positions. Martine Abel-Williamson and Chrissy Fern's positions fall due for election this year. This is an opportunity to acknowledge the significant contributions of all Board Members, and as there is an election underway, we specifically recognise Martine Abel-Williamson and Chrissy Fern. Ms Fern has served six years on the Board, joining in 2019.

Having served a three-year term, she stood for election in 2022, where she was re-elected for a further three-year term. Towards the end of her term, Ms Fern decided she would not stand for re-election. Martine Abel-Williamson joined the Board in 2004 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. The position of National President was elected unopposed.

Now we turn our attention to the small team at our National Office who provide support to the Chief Executive. There have been changes to the 'Minute-Taker' position, which are being worked through. For the immediate future, this support is provided via an agency, and we will have Lisa Toon as the Minute-Taker at the AGM and Conference. A special thank you goes to Mary Yee, Financial Assistant, Thomas Bryan, Accessible Information Advisor, and Emily Tilley, Administrative Support, for your respective contributions and support. These are evident across so many elements of our organisational work. The team works closely with the Chief Executive and each other, and your contributions and support are valued.

We extend thanks to our supporters, donors, funders, and stakeholders for the diversity of support we receive, which is evidenced in so many ways. Most importantly, we take this opportunity to thank our members and those from the blind community who are on the periphery of our work.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

**National Office
Performance Report
For the year ended 30 June 2025**

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.
4. The verified audited accounts include, from pages 3 to 27 inclusive, the “Moore Markhams” audit certification stamp on the bottom right hand corner.

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Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025

Statement of Financial Performance for the year ended 30 June 2025

	Note	2025	2024
Revenue		\$	\$
Donations, koha, bequests and other fundraising activities	1	11,473	11,778
General grants	1	216,300	210,000
Government service delivery grants/contracts	1	135,417	137,744
Membership fees and subscriptions	1	1,480	1,124
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	1	17,353	23,968
Other revenue	1	21,669	11,590
Total Revenue		403,692	396,204
Expenses			
Expenses related to fundraising	2	660	662
Employee remuneration and other related costs	2	175,202	158,489
Volunteer related expenses	2	99,875	88,845
Other expenses related to service delivery	2		75,286
Other expenses	2		183,980
Total Expenses		535,003	497,064
Operating surplus/(deficit)		(131,311)	(100,860)

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025

	Note	2025	2024
Unrealised gain/(loss) on fair value change		67,633	56,953
		(63,678)	(43,907)
Net surplus /(deficit) for the year			

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2025

Assets		2025	2024
		\$	\$
Current Assets			
Bank accounts and cash	3	447,696	525,933
Debtors and prepayments	3	26,818	35,091
Total Current Assets		474,514	561,024
Non-Current Assets			
		2025	2024
		\$	\$
Property, plant and equipment	4	4,583	6,053
Investments	3	1,149,312	1,083,744
Total Non-Current Assets		1,153,895	1,089,797
Total Assets		1,628,409	1,650,821
Liabilities			
		\$	\$
Current Liabilities			
Creditors and accrued expenses	3	95,010	61,711
Employee costs payable	3	21,650	18,908
Other current liabilities	3	7,404	16,742
Total Current Liabilities		124,064	97,361
Total Liabilities		124,064	97,361
Total Assets less Total Liabilities (Net Assets)		1,504,345	1,553,460

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025**Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2025**

Accumulated Funds	Note	2025	2024
		\$	\$
Accumulated surpluses or (deficits)	5	195,194	314,378
Reserves	5	1,309,151	1,239,082
Total Accumulated Funds		1,504,345	1,553,460



Jonathan Godfrey
National President



Christine Fern
Board Member

Dated: 22 September 2025

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2025

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Cash Flows from Operating Activities		
Cash was received from:		
Donations, koha, bequests and other fundraising activities	11,473	11,778
General grants	216,300	210,000
Government services delivery grants/contracts	141,473	120,669
Membership fees and subscriptions	1,480	1,124
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	19,418	26,342
Other revenue	21,669	11,590
Net GST	10,152	(46,631)
Cash was applied to:		
Payments related to fundraising	660	662
Employee remuneration and other related costs	172,283	156,440
Volunteer related payments	99,875	88,845
Other payments related to service delivery	75,286	80,174
Other expenses	166,660	150,407
Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities	(92,799)	(141,656)

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025**Statement of Cash Flows**

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Cash was received from:		
Branch funds received	14,562	-
Net Cash Flows from Investing and Financing Activities	14,562	-
Net Increase / (Decrease) in Cash	(78,237)	(141,656)
Opening Cash	525,933	667,589
Closing Cash	447,696	525,933
This is represented by:		
Bank Accounts and Petty cash	447,696	525,933

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025**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.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025**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 – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025

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
- 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 - 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.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025**Financial instruments continued**

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.

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.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025

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 - 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.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025

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 2025

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 1: Analysis of Revenue

Revenue Item	Analysis	2025	2024
Donations, koha, bequests and other general fundraising activities	Legacies & Bequests	1,000	5,681
	Donations	10,473	6,097
	Total	11,473	11,778
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
General grants	Blind Low Vision NZ service contract	210,000	210,000
	Total	210,000	210,000
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Government service delivery grants/contracts	MSD Contract	120,000	120,000
	Disabled People's Organisation Govt	15,417	17,744
	Total	135,417	137,744
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Membership fees and subscriptions	Membership Fees	1,480	1,124
	Total	1,480	1,124

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 1: Analysis of Revenue Continued

Revenue Item	Analysis		
		2025	2024
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	Interest	9,853	17,290
	Dividends	2,697	2,895
	Realised Gain/(Loss) on sale of investments	4,803	3,783
	Total	17,353	23,968

Revenue Item	Analysis		
		2025	2024
Other revenue	AGM and Conference	16,636	6,725
	Calendar sales	4,687	4,742
	Other	346	123
	Total	21,669	11,590

Note 2: Analysis of Expenses

Expense Item	Analysis		
		2025	2024
Expenses related to fundraising	Fundraising	660	662
	Total	660	662

Expense Item	Analysis		
Employee remuneration and other related costs	Staff Wages	174,449	158,489
	ACC	753	-
	Total	175,202	158,489

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 2: Analysis of Expenses Continued

Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Volunteer related expenses	Board Expenses	48,299	34,392
	Te Tiriti o Waitangi	15,253	13,396
	Advisory Group		
	World Blind Union	36,323	41,057
	Total	99,875	88,845

Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Other expenses related to service delivery	Advocacy	442	4,723
	Advocacy Leadership	247	12,100
	Workshop		
	AGM and Conference	74,597	63,351
	Total	75,286	80,174

Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Other expenses	Calendars	6,047	5,817
	Administration Expenses	71,868	82,298
	Office Expenses	106,065	80,779
	Total	183,980	168,894

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 3: Analysis of Assets and Liabilities

Asset Item	Analysis	2025	2024
Bank accounts and cash	Cheque account balances	92,010	37,948
	On call account balance	355,067	487,365
	Imprest Account	500	500
	Petty Cash	120	120
	Total	447,696	525,933

Asset Item	Analysis	2025	2024
Debtors and prepayments	Accounts receivable	14,070	31,766
	Prepayments	12,748	3,325
	Total	26,818	31,091

Asset Item	Analysis	2025	2024
Financial assets at fair value through surplus or deficit	ANZ Managed Investment Portfolio	1,149,312	1,083,744
	Total	1,149,312	1,083,744

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 3: Analysis of Assets and Liabilities Continued

		2025	2024
Liability Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Creditors and accrued expenses	Trade and other payables Accrued expenses GST Payable	62,287 28,279 4,444	32,236 32,244 (2,769)
	Total	95,010	61,711
 Liability Item	 Analysis	 \$	 \$
Employee costs payable	Holiday pay accrual Wages accruals	15,036 6,614	13,107 5,801
	Total	21,650	18,908
 Liability Item	 Analysis	 \$	 \$
Other	Te Pou Funding – unspent funds Other	- 7,404	9,317 7,425
	Total	7,404	16,742

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 4: Property, Plant and Equipment

2025

Asset Class	Opening Carrying Amount	Purchases	Sales/ Disposals	Current Year Depreciation & Impairment	Closing Carrying Amount
Furniture and fixtures	1,192	-	-	(238)	954
Office equipment	2,126	-	-	(651)	1,475
Motor Vehicles	2,395	-	-	(479)	1,916
Computer Software	340	-	-	(102)	238
Total	6,053	-	-	(1,470)	4,583

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025

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 2025**

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 5: Accumulated Funds

2025

Description	Accumulated Surpluses or Deficits	Reserves	Total
Opening Balance	314,378	1,239,082	1,553,460
Surplus/(Deficit)	(63,678)	-	(63,678)
Transfer to Investment revaluation reserve			
Transfer to Reserves	(67,633)	67,633	-
	(15,979)	64,497	48,518
Transfer from Reserves	28,106	(28,106)	-
Branch Funds	-	(33,955)	(33,955)
Brought to Account			
Closing Balance	194,194	1,309,151	1,504,345

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated
National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025

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 2025

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 5: Accumulated Funds

Breakdown of Reserves	2025	2024
Name	\$	\$
General Fund	651,911	640,608
Member for Life Fund	23,583	23,740
Leadership Fund	166,850	190,123
Branch Funds Brought to Account	14,563	48,518
Investment Revaluation Reserve	403,726	336,093
Establishing/Re-establishing Branches Reserve	48,518	-
Total	1,309,151	1,239,082

Note 6: Commitments and Contingencies

Commitments	2025	2024
	\$	\$
National Office lease – Current Portion	42,155	16,024
National Office lease – Non-Current Portion	70,258	-
Photo-copier lease – Current Portion	1,085	840
Photo-copier lease – Non-Current Portion	362	-
Total	113,860	16,864

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated
National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 7: Related Party Transactions

Description of Related Party Relationship	Description of the Transaction (whether in cash or amount in kind)	2025	2024	2025	2024
		Value of Transactions	Value of Transactions	Amount Outstanding	Amount Outstanding
Branches	Large Format Calendar sales	1,104	1,661	-	1,053
Branches	Printing and postage charges	89	460	-	460

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)

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2025**Notes to the Performance Report****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 \$37,874 (2024: \$38,400) for work carried out in relation to his contract.

Summarised financial information – National Office

Revenue and expenses for the year ended 30 June 2025

Table:

Revenue	2025	2024
Donations, koha, fundraising, bequests etc.	11,473	11,778
Subscriptions from members	1,480	1,124
Grants (BLVNZ, MSD) and Government service delivery grants contracts	351,717	347,744
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	17,353	23,967
Other Revenue (Conference Registrations, Large Print Calendars etc)	21,669	11,590
Total operating revenue	403,692	396,204
Expense	blank	blank
Fundraising-related expenses	660	662
Employee remuneration and other related costs	175,202	158,489
Volunteer-related expenses (Board)	99,875	88,845

Revenue	2025	2024
Other expenses related to service delivery (national office costs etc.)	75,286	80,174
Other expenses	183,980	168,894
Total operating expenses	535,003	497,064
Operating (deficit) surplus	(131,311)	(100,860)
Unrealised gain (loss) on fair value changes	67,633	56,953
Net surplus (deficit) for the year	(63,678)	(43,907)

End table.

Assets and liabilities at 30 June 2025

Table:

Current Assets	2025	2024
Bank accounts and cash	447,696	525,933
Debtors and prepayments	26,818	35,091
Total current assets	474,514	561,024
Non-current assets	blank	blank
Property, plant and equipment	4,583	6,053
Investments	1,149,312	1,083,744
Total non-current assets	1,153,895	1,089,797

Current Assets	2025	2024
Total assets	1,628,409	1,650,821
Liabilities	blank	blank
Current Liabilities (Creditors and accrued expenses, Employee costs payable, other current liabilities)	124,064	97,361
Total Current Liabilities	124,064	97,361
Total Liabilities	124,064	97,361
Total Assets less Total Liabilities (Net Assets)	1,504,345	1,553,460

End table.

Accumulated Funds

Table:

Accumulated Funds	2025	2024
Accumulated surpluses (or deficits)	195,194	314,378
Reserves	1,309,151	1,239,082
Total Accumulated Funds	1,504,345	1,553,460

End Table.

Blind Citizens NZ Representative Reports

Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ)

From Pauline Melham, Blind Citizens NZ Representative

Meetings of the Board

The board of Blind Low Vision Education Network New Zealand (BLENNZ) has met seven times over the past 12 months. Meetings are either held in person at the BLENNZ campus at Homai, South Auckland or over Zoom. Your Branch representative has attended all meetings and has provided the Board of Blind Citizens NZ with a report after each meeting.

The Board has been busy again over the past twelve months. The new School Principal Saul Taylor has been in post for approximately 16 months now and BLENNZ is doing well under his leadership. A few changes have been made at the senior management level, the Assistant Principal for Transition and Residential has left and her responsibilities have been divided between the two other Assistant Principals, who remain in post. A new Head of residential has been appointed and has slotted well into the role.

Membership of the BLENNZ Board

At the time of writing, school board elections are less than a month away. However, results of those elections are unlikely to be known before this report is finalised. There have been some changes to the Board this year.

Last year, your representative reported that Chris Gunn had taken a temporary leave of absence from the Board to concentrate on his new job at Manawatū Rugby. Early in the new year, Chris decided not to return to the Board and David Cullen, an Auckland-based Parent Trustee took over as Acting Chair. It was decided not to fill the casual vacancy Chris Gunn's departure left, given how close school board elections were.

Nigel Ngaiwhi resigned from the Board in June 2025, other commitments had meant he had not been able to attend board meetings the entire year. Kāpō Māori Aotearoa has been approached to appoint another representative to the Board in Nigel's place. According to the BLENNZ constitution, the tangata whenua representative should be appointed by the agreement of Whanau Homai (who still exist) and Tamaki Ngati Kāpō (which no longer exists having been replaced by Kāpō Māori Aotearoa).

Other representatives who will leave the board in September include Justine Edwards as Homai School parent trustee as Justine no longer has a child at Homai, she cannot fill this position. Tracey O'Sullivan is stepping down as staff representative as she has taken over the School Manager role from Bridget Lamphee who has retired after forty one years of service to the school. The board will no longer see Bridget at board meetings but now Tracey O'Sullivan will attend to present the financial information.

From September 2025, the BLENNZ Board could be quite different to the one in place at present.

Strategic Goal Reporting

The BLENNZ Board has is still working towards its four Strategic Goals for the 2023-2025 period. Those goals began as:

1. The Refreshed Curriculum, as designed by the Ministry of Education.

2. The Expanded core curriculum.
3. Embedding DOM and Life Skills into the expanded Core Curriculum.
4. Supporting learners with complex needs.

In November 2024 with just over one year in the Strategic Goal cycle remaining the goals were amended to:

1. The refreshed core curriculum particularly the teaching of Structured Literacy and Numeracy.
2. Biculturalism.
3. Teaching the Expanded core curriculum with a focus on Developmental Orientation and Mobility (DOM) and Everyday life skills.
4. Students with Complex needs.

Goal 1 – The Refreshed Core Curriculum

With the change in Government in 2023, the Minister of Education halted the work on the refresh of the national curriculum for a time. This work was eventually reinstated with the Ministry of Education being asked to focus on introducing a programme of structured literacy and numeracy.

There are two main structured literacy programmes and each school can choose which programme they use. This means that the BLENNZ Registered Teacher Vision (RTV) have to be proficient in both programmes because they will be supporting learners across multiple schools.

The Ministry of Education has been working with BLENNZ to ensure that BLENNZ has a copy of all the resources for the MOE's preferred literacy programme.

This means that BLENNZ can convert the resources into alternate formats. RTVs are having to make some adjustments of how they teach structured literacy for Braille learners, they are having to teach some Braille contractions earlier than they would normally, given the nature of the programme and what the rest of the class is doing.

The Ministry of Education has also provided BLENNZ with all the resources for the new structured numeracy programme, so these can be converted into alternate formats.

Throughout the last year BLENNZ has been providing ongoing Professional Learning Development to its staff to enable them to become confident teachers of structured literacy and numeracy to all BLENNZ learners.

Goal 2 – Biculturalism

The Principal of BLENNZ has a very strong commitment to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi and embedding a true sense of biculturalism throughout the school.

A practical example of this has been the relationship between the Manurewa Kura and BLENNZ. There is already a Te Kōhanga Reo that borders the BLENNZ property. A Kura Kaupapa school is set to open and a wananga has been planned for the future.

The Principal is keen to maintain good relationships with Māori stakeholders for example, Kāpō Māori Aotearoa and whānau of BLENNZ learners.

Goal 3 – The Expanded Core Curriculum

In late 2024, BLENNZ employed an educational consultant to evaluate the BLENNZ expanded core curriculum. The expanded core curriculum has been described as groundbreaking.

All learners should achieve to their fullest potential and have a voice in their learning.

The expanded core curriculum is underpinned by four principles:

1. Inclusion.
2. Te Tiriti honouring.
3. Easy to understand.
4. Clear about the learning that matters.

The expanded core curriculum covers the following learning areas:

1. Developmental Orientation and Mobility.
2. Everyday living.
3. Access technology.
4. Social skills.
5. Communication.
6. Sensory efficiency.
7. Life beyond school.

The expanded core curriculum has been aided by one of the accumulated funds projects, see below. BLENNZ is encouraging more of its Registered Teachers Vision to take some Developmental Orientation and Mobility (DOM) papers at Massey University.

Whilst this does not qualify the RTVs to be fully functioning DOM instructors, it does allow the RTVs to introduce some basic orientation and mobility skills, within the school grounds, to their learners.

Goal 4 – Students with Complex Needs

A survey of all BLENNZ staff was conducted to gather information on their experiences of teaching students with complex needs. Ongoing professional learning development has been provided to staff about this group of learners.

Community Engagement and Strategic Goals

Every three years BLENNZ is required to set new strategic goals, our current goals expire at the end of this year. In November 2024, Saul Taylor brought draft questions to the Board for their consideration. The questions were designed to be part of the Board's community engagement strategy. The main purpose of the engagement was to determine the strategic goals for BLENNZ for the three years from 2026-2028. After consultation with the Board, a survey was drawn up and sent to school staff, parents and other stakeholders early in term one 2025. The results of that Survey were brought to the June meeting of the BLENNZ Board and some key themes were identified. At the August meeting those key themes were worked into draft strategic goals. A final version of the strategic goals will be presented to the board for approval in November, before being implemented early in 2026. The broad themes of the goals are:

1. To develop emotionally and physically well learners, who believe they can achieve in the world.
2. To make the BLENNZ systems easier to understand for those who engage with them.

3. For teaching staff to be able to respond quickly and appropriately to mandates issued by the Ministry of Education so that BLENNZ learners continue to receive high quality education in line with the national curriculum.

In next year's report your representative will be able to state the agreed strategic goals for the next three years and begin to report against them.

Tactile Reading Conference

This year, BLENNZ was able to send two staff to the Tactile Reading Conference in Amsterdam, and afterwards they were able to visit two European schools for blind learners. The two most interesting things to come out of the Tactile Reading Conference were:

1. The production of fun Braille books produced on laser printers.
2. The ability to 3D print tactile learning resources.

There were examples of beautiful Braille books, produced on laser printers, where the Braille was brightly coloured. Whilst this might not help a totally blind child, it may support the learning of low-vision Braille learners. Perhaps, more importantly, the books looked fun and interesting and would appeal to other children, siblings and parents. In Germany, colourful Braille books that also contain large print and tactile graphics are very popular.

There is some excellent work being done using 3D printers to produce tactile models for blind learners. These are relatively quick and easy to produce. The models can be used to help teach science and maths.

BLENNZ child protection policy

Last year, BLENNZ undertook a review of their protection policies. The existing policies were found to be fit for purpose, but there were some improvements to be made in particular, ensuring that all staff knew their responsibilities and were clear about the procedures to follow. Staff have received professional learning development both internally and externally from Child Matters. The school senior management team have all undertaken the five-day Child Matters course.

The Accumulated Funds Projects

In 2023, the BLENNZ Board decided to use some of the schools extensive accumulated funds to finance four projects that would directly benefit BLENNZ learners throughout the country. These projects have continued in the 2024/25 year. The projects are:

1. The Counselling Service – BLENNZ has four counsellors spread across the country. The counsellors see both students and/or their families and provide invaluable support. The counsellors are often involved in visits by the National Assessment Centre team and immersion classes, where they can meet family and Whanau. The counsellors sometimes become aware of safeguarding issues for students, which can be dealt with promptly and appropriately.
2. Five staff in 2024 completed their two DOM papers at Massey University and another five RTV have been selected to undertake these papers in 2025. These papers give the RTVs the status of RTV DOM. Whilst this is useful, discussions are ongoing to determine the exact roles and responsibilities of RTV, RTV DOM and DOM.

3. Collaboration with Blindsport New Zealand – Talks have been ongoing between BLENNZ and Blindsport New Zealand, about the nature of the work Blindsport is contracted to undertake for BLENNZ. Blindsport New Zealand is committed to providing online resources that guide PE staff on how to make sport inclusive for blind students. Separate to the contract with Blindsport, BLENNZ has recently appointed a Sport and Recreation lead, who has some interesting ideas for getting BLENNZ learners around the country involved in sport.
4. Dramatic Art – BLENNZ has worked with the National Youth Theatre to develop two projects for BLENNZ learners to take part in. The first was held in July, BLENNZ learners from around the country converged on Auckland with the National Youth Theatre to put on a production of “Wendy”. Two of our learners have since been awarded scholarships to allow them to continue to work with the National Youth Theatre in the future. The second event has been specifically targeted at learners from the BLENNZ Base school. This will be a musical performance to be held in November at the Dew Drops Event Centre. The Board are very keen to run a similar Dramatic Arts programme again in 2026.

BLENNZ Learners

Below are some interesting facts about BLENNZ learners:

1. There are 1560 students enrolled at BLENNZ throughout the country.
2. 73 of those students attend BLENNZ base school at Homai.
3. Only senior students, sixteen years and above and those attending the BLENNZ transition programme are allowed to board at BLENNZ.

4. Two thirds of BLENNZ students have a vision impairment plus at least one other additional need.
5. Fifty percent of BLENNZ learners are following a conventional literacy programme, but the other fifty percent are following a more basic functional literacy programme.
6. As of March 2025, there were only 38 learners between the ages of 5 and 12 years, learning Braille, which seems incredibly low.
7. BLENNZ learners are performing better than the national average for Maths, although this is still rather low.

South Auckland Braille Club

The Board has been made aware of the South Auckland Braille club that runs at the BLENNZ base school on a Friday morning. Primary school aged learners come to BLENNZ and share Braille books and resources and help each other with Braille, but not before they've had a cup of hot milo to start the day.

Given the relatively low numbers of Braille learners across BLENNZ your representative asked whether it would be possible to establish Braille clubs in other regions throughout the country, where the number of Braille learners and the distance permitted this. Some regions have developed technology clubs for their young learners, which are also very popular.

The possibility of developing Braille clubs in other centres is being looked into by the School Principal. Your representative hopes that this might encourage other learners to learn Braille.

The Transition Programme

The BLENNZ Transition programme for learners who have left school had 12 members enrolled in 2025 and so far there are nine applications for 2026. This is a very popular programme for young blind people leaving compulsory education.

What happens to BLENNZ Learners after they leave school?

It came to the Board's attention that because BLENNZ is a national network with most of its students enrolled in mainstream schools throughout the country, that data on what students did after they left school was not collected for BLENNZ learners. Most schools would have to report on what their learners had gone on to do after school. Your Board representative raised this with the Senior Management of the School and this year a project is being undertaken to measure post-school outcomes for BLENNZ learners, six months after they have left school.

For similar reasons as above, BLENNZ cannot measure how well its learners are doing in terms of NCEA results.

School Events

Every year, several fun events are run at BLENNZ base school. Some are for the students, whilst others are for family/whanau. In the past twelve months, the following events have taken place:

- Music Schools
- End of year celebrations
- Whānau evenings

- The senior and transition students trip to the Te Whero White Water Centre in South Auckland
- Te Wiki o te Reo Māori.
- The BANZAT Braille reading challenge – this was enjoyed by many learners and is a wonderful collaboration between BLENNZ and BANZAT
- A number of immersion courses.

But perhaps the most eagerly anticipated event in the past year was the Special Schools Ball, held for Senior and transition students from Homai, Rose Hill Special School, Mt Richmond School and Sir Keith Park Special School. The ball is held every two years and this time BLENNZ played host. The ball took a great deal of preparation and several months before the ball when I visited there were bolts of brightly coloured tuille (Material that a ballerina's tutu is made out of) all over the place.

Parents were allowed to drop their young people off and then were firmly informed (by the students) that they should go home and not return until MUCH later. The School staff (those that were permitted or had to stay) report that the event was a huge success and enjoyed by everyone. The police ran a Blue Light Disco, there were wonderful spot prizes and the ice cream machines (Why did we not have these at my School Ball)? Were especially popular.

Space in the base school

As the start of 2025 approached, it was noted that there was not enough space in the BLENNZ base school for all the students whose families wanted them to enrol. BLENNZ classes contain six students each and two new junior classes were needed.

The BLENNZ Early Learning Service (BELS) very kindly gave up some of their space so that two new temporary classrooms could be constructed. By 2026, the senior BLENNZ students will be based at the new satellite Unit being constructed at James Cook High School. This satellite unit is being developed in Collaboration with Rose Hill Special School and James Cook High School (now renamed Kiwa High School).

Both Schools will have satellite Units there, although the units will be separate. With the senior students moving off-site during the day, this will provide more room for the junior students on the BLENNZ site, which means BELS can return to their usual space.

Conclusion

Your BLENNZ Board representative has once again enjoyed her time working with the BLENNZ School board. Your representative would like to thank the board of Blind Citizens New Zealand for their continued support and for inviting her to attend a portion of two of their meetings over the past year. One to discuss key issues facing the BLENNZ Board and how Blind Citizens may engage with the BLENNZ board going forward and the second time when members of the BLENNZ Board were invited to attend a Blind Citizens Board meeting to grow the relationship between the two organisations.

The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT)

From Leyna Coleman, Blind Citizens NZ Representative

Introduction

I would like to begin my report by thanking the Board of Blind Citizens for reappointing me to BANZAT. My report covers the time period from the AGM in September 2024 to the present.

Meetings

BANZAT continue to meet quarterly, although many of our meetings are on Zoom now to reduce travel costs. At our 2024 AGM, Maria Stevens was elected as Chair and Mary Schnackenberg was appointed as Secretary-Treasurer. This meeting was held at BLENNZ with observers on Zoom.

The Trans-Tasman Certificate in Proficiency in Unified English Braille

Last year 6 candidates sat the exam last year. All 6 passed and gained the certificate. One of these was a touch reader of Braille. The exam is sat in October, so I don't have the results for the current exam. I will report on them next year.

The BANZAT Braille Challenge

For the past few years BANZAT in conjunction with BLENNZ have held a "Braille Challenge" for the students. This is often organised around a theme and encourages students to develop and complete Braille-related goals and milestones. Prizes are given when milestones are reached and goals are completed. Last year's theme was "fun with Braille" and utilised the Braille Lego Bricks. Students were to make a game that incorporated Braille: alphabet mazes, word games, Braille instructions and so on. Adult mentors met with the ākonga (students) and heard what they were doing with their Braille skills. This year's theme ties into the new Maths curriculum and is "Braille Maths". The goals could be as simple as recognising numbers, to more complex Maths concepts.

Producer Training Course

Last year I reported about the training course face-to-face and online sessions. This year the course wrapped up with a weekend session in March in Auckland. Participants made business cards, embossed tactile graphics on a swell machine, embossed labels for graphics and bound their work together with a binding machine. Tactile and Braille certificates were presented to each participant. Some of these participants have registered with the Generator to receive support in becoming sole traders and starting their own business. The course was a success, and BANZAT would like to thank all who were involved: BLVNZ for hosting and providing equipment; the Tactile and Technology Literacy Centre (TTLC) for the training materials and instruction; Sarah's Kitchen for catering; and individual trustees who worked hard to ensure things went smoothly.

Publications

BANZAT has adopted its strategic Plan 2024-27. This helps set the direction for BANZAT and keeps trustees on track and accountable. BANZAT has also published a revised and updated Policy 7 which deals with producers working in NZ. Both documents are available on the BANZAT website: www.banzat.org.nz.

Current and Future Projects

When it was set up, BANZAT had a "Memorandum of understanding" with each of the five "Founding Organisations" that set up the trust. These organisations are: BLVNZ, BLENNZ, Kāpō Māori Aotearoa, Blind Citizens NZ and Parents of Vision Impaired. Current trustees have revised this document, which is now called Manatu Oratau | Statement of Collaboration. We hope this will strengthen the relationship BANZAT has with these organisations.

One of the goals in our Strategic Plan is to update the UEB Manual (latest update 2017) and the booklet Essentials of Braille Formatting (latest update 2014). We look forward to working with the community to do this.

International Council on English Braille

BANZAT is holding its own in the English-speaking world. The ICEB Code Maintenance Committee was given a proposal from BANZAT to work on Braille emojis, a topic of great interest to everyone involved. The third edition of the UEB Rulebook was published earlier this year. Copies in various formats can be found on the ICEB website www.iceb.org.

Strategic Framework for the Provision of Braille Services

At the beginning of this year a meeting was held between Blind Citizens NZ, BLENNZ, BLVNZ and BANZAT to discuss this document. Each organisation reported on what they were doing under the various headings to promote Braille as the primary literacy medium for blind people. This included teaching, advocacy and making Braille available to members of their organisations. The next meeting is scheduled in September, and as I am writing this at the end of August, I am happy to provide a verbal update to Conference on request.

Conclusion

I hope this report has given you a good idea of what BANZAT has been up to in the last year. Please remember we have Facebook, an email list (NZBRAILLE) and more information on our website. I wish to thank each BANZAT trustee whose knowledge and passion makes BANZAT what it is. Also, thanks to Rose and the Board for their support. As always, I'm happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

World Blind Union

From Thomas Bryan, Blind Citizens NZ

Country Delegate

General Updates

Since our 2024 AGM and Conference, it's been another full-on year. During this time I have worked alongside Jonathan Godfrey, my colleague Country Delegate. We coordinate our work and the approach we take to WBU matters.

In my 2024 report I mentioned that I would be attending the World Urban Forum 12. The Forum was held in November 2024 in Cairo. This was a great opportunity to not just attend, but also participate in such an event. As I had been invited to attend etc, my costs were met by WBU.

I continue to circulate information from WBU on upcoming events, news and bulletins from WBU.

During the past 12 months, I was also asked to be part of a group providing feedback on the WBU's new logo and branding.

Following the World Urban Forum12, I attended some of the sessions of the November Table Officers meeting of WBU online. I was standing in for our Asia Pacific Regional President as he was not able to attend the meeting.

Asia Pacific Regional Meetings

The Asia Pacific Region of WBU Board and Policy Council met bi-monthly via zoom. Through the support of the Board of Blind Citizens NZ I am honoured to hold the position of Treasurer for our region. There is no cost to Blind Citizens NZ, just my time.

Our main focus has been on:

- Terms of reference for the Region's Communications Committee.
- East Wind, the Region's quarterly magazine.
- Regional elections to be held at the upcoming WBU General Assembly (the election will have been held by the time you read this report).
- Strategic Plan.
- Upcoming WBU General Assembly and World Blindness Summit in Sao Paulo, Brazil (the Summit will be held first, followed by WBU's General Assembly).
- A range of reports – to mention just some of the topics we have been working through over the last year.

WBU Global Working Group on the Built Environment

As Chair of the Working Group, I have worked on the basis of trying to meet quarterly. Again, while there is no cost to Blind Citizens NZ I am able to hold this position with the Board's support. This role involves my time. Our next meeting is scheduled prior to Christmas to review many of the WBU position Statements that relate to the built environment. The working group is a small group with members from Canada, Ireland, Spain and myself along with WBU staff. We are looking for more members from other WBU regions.

WBU General Assembly and World Blindness Summit

By the time you are reading this report I will have returned from the World Blind Union General Assembly and the World Blindness Summit. These are to be held in São Paulo Brazil in early September.

Information/programmes so far indicate it will be a great event. I again wish to thank Blind Citizens NZ Board for their support in enabling me to attend. The Blindness Summit will feature 2 days of panel discussions and presentations from topic leaders from around the world. I have been asked to be the moderator for the panel “Designing Cities for Everyone.”

The following 2 days will be the WBU General Assembly where a number of reports will be tabled, constitutional changes addressed, and of course there will be elections for the Table Officer positions.

World Urban Forum12 (WUF12)

Cairo: Cairo is a vibrant city, its very loud, both with vehicles constantly tooting, and people speaking loudly. Even up in my room on the 27th floor one had to keep the windows and doors closed due to the volume of noise.

The hotel staff were great. One just needed to step out of the lift and take a few steps forward and someone was there to assist. Guiding was most different with people wanting to take you by the hand and guide you to where you were going. A couple of times when I left the restaurant to head down to the lobby, I was guided out of the restaurant and taken down the lift and to the waiting point for the bus. It was on this last trip down that I found out that the person guiding me each time was the restaurant manager.

WUF12: This is a global platform to share ideas, forge partnerships, and inspire action toward building inclusive, resilient, and sustainable cities. It emphasized that meaningful change begins at the local level—with communities, neighbourhoods, and individuals taking the lead. It was a global summit and WBU was very much one of hundreds of different organisations in attendance.

It was a great opportunity for us (WBU) to showcase to the rest of the world what we are doing in the areas of urban design/development, disaster recovery and climate change and how inclusive design leaves no one behind.

WUF12 was held over 5 days and according to the WUF12 site, over 25,000 participants from 182 countries registered for WUF12.

Most days the bus would leave the hotel about 7:30am and we would get back to the hotel between 8:00 and 8:30pm most nights.

Most of us arrived in Cairo on Saturday 2 November. On Sunday WBU hosted a welcome event.

WUF12 Conference and venue: The conference venue was about 45 minutes' drive on a good day and twice that time if you got stuck in traffic. Each day one needed to have bags searched and a security check to ensure people had registered. Note on day 1 we needed to verify our registration, I was one of the unlucky ones. I had registered beforehand with support from WBU to complete the registration, but when I checked in for registration, they had no record of me registering. I did have a print copy of my registration, but they could not find it in the system, so I had to go through the process again. As part of the registration, we all were issued with a security pass including our photo which had to be checked and scanned each day and when entering some events.

The site was massive with a number of exhibit halls, and large halls with multiple meeting rooms for concurrent sessions. Each of the exhibit halls were massive, we have nothing like it that I am aware of in New Zealand or Australia. One hall would have been at least the size of the Parnell sight. Getting from one hall to another or to the buildings that housed the concurrent sessions, one had to walk for a few minutes to get from one building to the other.

According to the WUF12 site: there was a record-breaking attendance of over 25,000 participants from 182 countries.

While the exhibit hall where WBU and partners had their stand/booth there were tactile indicators, and slight ramps, otherwise there were little in the way of accessibility. Accessibility was limited and posed some challenges. Crossing from one side of the footpath to the other had massive kerbs to negotiate.

There were very few ramps or level places to cross, so for someone on a mobility device, it would have been almost impossible to get around without some assistance. WBU arranged for a couple of guides (local university students) to assist getting us from one hall to another. This was terrific, for without them it would have been impossible to be as involved as I was.

I managed to get three opportunities to be guided around the exhibit hall/stands and still did not get to see them all. That's how vast the exhibition was.

WBU and its partners had a stand in one of the halls. Partners included:

- Global Disability Innovation Hub
- Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

- International Disability Alliance (IDA),
- United Cities and Local Governments (CoP),
- Vision Ireland,
- Cities 4 All Network,
- CBM Global Disability Inclusion.

So, throughout the 5 days a number of drop-in sessions or presentations were on offer from WBU or one of its partners as well as talking to people just coming into the stand.

Sessions

All of the team from WBU were involved in sessions or attended sessions.

I was a panellist for one session talking about the role of WBU and its work in the built environment, and the need to plan/include and collect statistic data that included accessibility and disability related stats.

Session title Accelerating inclusion and resilience for all through climate finance and participatory actions in cities. Partnerships for disability inclusion to leave no one behind.

I also was the moderator for a panel discussion on the 40 years of WBU and the journey we have travelled, and still to travel in identifying and removing barriers to the built environment.

Title 40 Years of Global Accessibility: Progress, Challenges, and the Road to Accessibility 2030

One of the key sessions that a number of us attended was presented by Kathy Al Jubeh, CBM Global Advisor for Inclusive Development; Benjamin Dard, WBU Advisor for Inclusive and Accessible Urban

Development. The session encompassed the principles found in the report Accessibility Go.

This is a great tool and is available for anyone to read and use. The session walked us through ways to include and engage with all members of the community.

All rooms where presentations were given had very thin walls, so spaces could be configured as needed. Walls didn't go all the way up to the roof and so sound travelled from room to room.

This certainly posed some challenges in being able to hear presenters as PA systems were also not used. To ensure everyone could hear, we all had headsets so we could either hear the presenters or translations clearly.

When not attending sessions, some of us also assisted on the WBU stand, explaining the role of WBU and helping out with showcasing Braille, reading back cards that individuals produced on a slate and stylus where they wrote their own name.

A highlight for one of my sessions was talking to groups of students or recent graduates of architects and city planners. Some of the visitors to the stand had completed some work on accessibility but hadn't grasped the complexity of the topic.

Information on WUF: For anyone interested, you can see the full WUF12 programme and resources at:
<https://wuf.unhabitat.org/wuf12>

WuF 12 was a great opportunity for learning and sharing. It was great to see accessibility and WBU on the international stage along side key leading organisations in this space. It was a terrific opportunity and I really appreciated the oportunity made available to me from WBU.

World Blind Union, from Martine Abel-Williamson – WBU Global President

This report covers activities and engagements since following our Blind Citizens NZ Conference in October 2024 up to June 2025.

On 23 October, when my next international multi-stop trip started, the first destination was in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Because of the World Blindness Summit and WBU General Assembly, planned for September 2025 which meant there were issues we needed to sort out/ finalise in person. So, our CEO from Canada, our Office Assistant (who lives in Canada but is Peruvian, and I travelled to a second hotel to be inspected. When, in May this year, we had a preliminary meeting in the recommended hotel, we found the staff great, but some of the built environment aspects, as well as the number of human resource required, lacking. The Brazilians were so keen to host us all, but there needs to be certain aspects of accommodation that are not negotiable. We also, while we were there, needed to meet with the comms staff who're developing the event website, designing the merch and who'll be promoting the event and approach prospective sponsors, at government as well as corporate level.

We only stayed for 2 days in Sao Paulo and then left for Lima, Peru where I was invited to be an opening speaker at the Latin American Regional General Assembly.

There were 19 countries represented, from Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala and many more.

Let's just say, I better start relaxing about timeliness, because they'll tell you an event starts at 9 am and when you arrive to go onto the podium at 8:30, no one's there until at least one hour later.

There was a big tech and crafts exhibition, which promoted MSOffice, and other high end tech hard- and software but also some low tech or low cost options.

The agency who manufactured the Envoy Connect for Vision Australia, created different similar styles for the Latin America region and he told both me and Marc, they'll build an item with in-house prescriptions, depending on what's required. I have 2 issues with the basic Envoy Connect: you can't change the speed of the title and you can't simply stick a memory card in it to download titles, where one of there very affordable options now allow for that.

He gave me some examples of devices: the Vine C1 and E2 devices; The former is exactly like the Envoy Connect and the second is still very cheap but one can change the speed of a title and download your own stuff via memory cards, etc.

If a country tells them the specs, you can name it, etc like we can order a number of "Kiwi" Book Readers.

While in Lima, we presented a session by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Accessible Books Consortium (ABC), as there are still Latin American nations who either haven't acceded to the Marrakesh Treaty or who've got problems implementing it.

From Lima, Peru, I travelled to present at the world Urban Forum (WUF) 12, as well as to present to the International Disability Alliance (IDA) Bridge trainers (people who are learning to update fellow NGO's and government organisations about disability human rights instruments).

The IDA consists out of 14 regional and global disability orgs who work closely at UN and general advocacy and capacity building level and WBU forms a part of that.

I updated their Bridge trainers on what the WUF event is about, what they can expect, encouraged them to practice their group facilitation and public speaking skills, and so on.

Over 6000 persons registered to attend the WUF 12 event, as that world-wide event focused on all matters urban, not just access.

At the WUF we focused a great deal on promotion of our WBU developed resources, “Accessibility Go” and “Closing the Accessibility Gap”. WBU and CBM jointly designed “Accessibility Go”. These vital training and capacity building documentation can be located at:

<https://worldblindunion.org/programs/accessibility/accessibility-go-a-guide-to-action/>

Other versions and languages are available on the current website and will be moved to the new website:

<https://worldblindunion.org/programs/accessibility/>

Link to Closing the Accessibility Gap:

<https://worldblindunion.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/WBU-IAUD-Progress-and-Learning-Report-FINAL.pdf>

We may wish to use those resources when working along-side central government, local government agencies and others when advocating around all matters access. There will hopefully be opportunities at Blind Citizens NZ level for us to introduce people in more detail to these toolkits. The resources do not specify technical specs but guide people through community engagement, procurement priorities, policy inclusion and other aspects to take into account.

Intersectionality formed a great deal of conceptualization at this event, as one cannot and shouldn't not separate out factors such as age, ethnicity, disability and so much more.

WBU had our own designated proper set up space this time round, so, the public and other event participants could visit us, ask questions, and attend small group presentations. It was great to have many architecture and policy students from all over the world visiting us for advice and info sharing.

We had a Lego Braille Brick kit where we wrote people's names in Braille and that attracted many visitors to our access area to start with.

There were a number of pre-conference events. I presented at one of those, called, Quality of Life Symposium, where we all had to answer the question: what would be a quality of life for you. I liked that point of entry around inclusivity and access as it's not stated in a negative way around all of our issues.

Our social media subscribers, tweets, and all of that kind of stuff, picked up hugely, so, the overall exposure was very positive.

Our Coms staff interviewed many people during these weeks about what does it mean that WBU had its 40th-year anniversary during this time and people gave us many reflections and ideas for the future.

So, after being away from home for 18 days, on 9 November, I travelled from Kairo to my final WBU work related destination, namely to India, and more specifically, Ahmedabad.

We organised to have our WBU officers meeting there in conjunction with the International Council on Education of Visually Impaired Persons (ICEVI)' World Education Conference, held every 4 years.

This WBU meeting brought the board plus 6 regional chairs/presidents together to share info, provide committee and working group updates and workshop various matters.

During a strategic futures discussion, we agreed to focus our time and funds more on capacity building rather than advocacy. We've got many and great advocacy toolkits and resources, but people are often not utilising those, so, we'll be doing projects, with the support of funders like CBM, in specific countries to progress capacity building goals.

I chaired an informal get together of the WBU and ICEVI leadership teams where we focussed on how to collaborate more closely at regional level. It seems as if the Pacific and Africa regions link well, but not necessarily the others. Both orgs have reps on the other's regional governance structure, well, that's what I thought and hoped but this doesn't seem to be the case consistently.

The 2 orgs drafted joint position statements and some of you may wish to check them out.

Those can be located at:

<https://worldblindunion.org/about/position-statements/>

As I'm on the BLENNZ, RNZFB as well as Blind Citizens NZ boards, I shared these statements with all in case of some value for lobbying purposes.

I presented at the opening ceremony of the ICEVI World Education Conference and I also spoke at a plenary session on our 3 joint position statements that are around:

- Education in situations of civil and other emergencies,
- Digital classrooms, and
- Early intervention.

Apart from the plenary sessions, there were 24 sessions that were presented concurrently, 6 at a time, so, one needed to get yourself around the university where it was hosted quick smart.

I returned home by the 19th of November, just in time to prepare for my final international visit for 2024.

Then, having a go at robot guide dogs was a highlight for me when I attended the World Blind Union Asia Pacific (WBUAP) Regional Seminar on Information Accessibility and Assistive Technology, held from 2 till 4 December.

I was invited to be the opening speaker, and this time round I was literally 2 nights in the plane and 2 nights in the Beijing hotel, so it was indeed a flying visit, fortunately very kindly sponsored by the government of China, otherwise I might not have thought it to be worth my while.

The exhibition was one of the highlights as they had prototypes there of 3 robot guides. The one I walked with, had 6 legs, and where the dog's head would be, is a main sensor. I was intrigued to think that, if one really wishes to replicate a dog, that it would have 4 legs – you can't tell me that a company can't let 4 pins move like the 4 legs of a dog?

You put on this headset and it would tell you in Mandarin that an obstacle is in the way or that you're approaching steps, etc. It's not too bad in guiding on steps either.

I'd find listening to a headset overwhelming in a noisy environment, but those items are after all still prototypes. The other 2 robot guides basically looked like those delivery robots one nowadays find in some hotels. It's just that they stuck a handle kind of piece that you hold on to on, and then the robot gives guiding a go.

Not sure why some are set on letting the robot look like a dog, maybe because of the cute factor, because, as long as the machine can guide you, the shape wouldn't matter, especially if you wish to travel with it in buses, planes and taxis – space would be a considering factor then definitely.

One of them you could even ask for instance, to: take me to the ANZ bank in Queen St and then it'll give it a go. I suppose all depends on whether one wishes to know what exactly is around you or rely to some extent on the device.

I'm not sure by when those will get released though. I think they're working on those in Japan as well.

They had multi-line Braille displays on hand and even demonstrations of where one would upload say the map of a specific country and maths and other science graphics. It was great to simply call up a particular map for instance instead of having to go and print it out somewhere.

Another interesting feature in some environments, is the presence of electrical charging stations, all lined up between the road and where one would walk on the footpath. I suppose when you encounter those, you'll know you're getting to the outer edge of the footpath, so, they can be kind of beacons, but then again, they might be connected to bikes or cars, so, one couldn't simply then decide to cross the road where you locate those.

The rest of the event consisted out of presentations around technology in education and employment settings, and AI got most of the attention where people would demonstrate its value in an array of situations.

On 4 January, World Braille Day, the WBU media release was used by many to inform similar statements.

On 15 January I left for Brisbane, Australia, to participate in Lego's Braille Bricks Ambassador programme. Four persons from NZ, namely myself and 3 BLENNZ staff, plus 8 from Australia underwent this first step of the training. Most of the Australians work for Vision Australia. BLENNZ and Vision Australia are the 2 organisations with formal relationships with Lego.

Then, our WBU officers meeting in May was the first time since my presidency commenced, that we had all the officers in person together.

We welcomed a new regional chair from the North American-Caribbean region, Mark Riccobono, also president of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) in the US. The chair at the time, Kim Charlson, fell very ill suddenly and stood down last month in that role. I've met Mark previously, so, working with him was familiar.

ONCE, the Spanish blindness service agency, sponsored our hotel stay, as they own several of their own hotels, designed to be accessible for all with disabilities, so, if you should plan a visit to Madrid, book in at the Ilunion chain and you'll find it a great experience, with increased lighting options, ramps everywhere where there are steps, talking elevators with Braille, large print and tactile markings, etc.

Ukraine Rehabilitation Partnership

In response to the urgent needs arising from the ongoing war in Ukraine, WBU, in collaboration with the Danish Association of the Blind and the Norwegian Association of Blind People, is funding two intensive rehabilitation camps. These camps aim to provide comprehensive support to individuals who have lost their sight due to the war. Participants will receive training in assistive technology, independent living skills, orientation and mobility, and psychological support.

Originally slated for funding by USAID, the initiative faced financial challenges due to recent aid cuts. WBU has stepped in to bridge this gap by allocating resources from the Ukrainian Unity Fund to ensure the successful execution of these vital programs.

WBU interns from the Canadian Institute for the Blind (CNIB) International Youth Internship Program

This summer, WBU is set to host five interns through the CNIB International Youth Internship Program, supported by Global Affairs Canada. The program offers young Canadians aged 18–30, who identify as blind, Deafblind, or partially sighted, the opportunity to gain international work experience. Interns will engage in various projects aligned with WBU's mission, contributing to areas such as communications, research, and advocacy. This collaboration not only provides meaningful professional development for the interns but also enhances WBU's capacity to undertake additional initiatives during the internship period.

WBU Scholarships Relaunched

After a long hiatus, WBU has relaunched its scholarships program to support blind and partially sighted individuals pursuing educational opportunities. These scholarships are intended to benefit individuals connected to WBU member organizations and represent a meaningful benefit of WBU membership. Administrative support from CNIB has made it possible to get this initiative off the ground in 2025.

Organisational Excellence

Strategic Planning Process Launched

WBU has officially launched the development of its 2025–2029 Strategic Plan. The process includes one-on-one interviews (completed), focus groups (early May), and a multilingual survey (launching shortly). The goal is to produce a bold, focused plan grounded in the perspectives of our global membership.

Website Redesign and Launch

Following the successful launch of WBU's new brand identity in December 2024, we launched a fully redesigned website on **20 May 2025**. The new site offers a cleaner, more modern layout with improved navigation and accessibility features. A key addition is the **Global Resource Library**, which will serve as a central hub for advocacy tools, position statements, and technical resources, supporting the work of WBU members around the world.

We also discussed geo-political shifts as those factors influence our resource development, fundraising, etc.

Our social media report looked very positive. This term is the first we've had social media channels and engagement in those ways are really positive with many tweets, Facebook followings, podcast, Youtube subscriptions, etc.

The Marrakesh and Accessible Books Working Group has continued to advance key advocacy tools and resources aimed at supporting national-level implementation and ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty. Recent outputs include:

- A social media toolkit designed to raise awareness and mobilize public engagement around Marrakesh-related advocacy.

- Research papers analyzing the legal, policy, and practical frameworks related to Marrakesh in four priority African countries: Ghana, Cameroon, Malawi, and Kenya.
- A prioritization matrix to help identify where Marrakesh implementation or ratification efforts are likely to have the most significant impact and where WBU resources should be focused.

These materials will serve as important tools for regional members and partners working to unlock accessible format production and cross-border exchange of published works.

Marrakesh Treaty Leadership Update

The term of Blind Citizens NZ on the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) Advisory Board, is coming to an end. I've represented Blind Citizens NZ for 7 Years on that entity and would have stepped down at our WIPO ABC board's September meeting. Blind Citizens NZ is one of 2 organisations who had temporary roles at this level. The 2 permanent members/position holders are the WBU and the ICEVI.

Grace Antwi-Atsu, from Africa, who has served as our WBU rep on the WIPO ABC Board and Chair of the WBU Marrakesh and Accessible Books Working Group, has formally stepped down from her position. I have by now assumed the role of Chair.

So, for my sins, I'll now chair our WBU Marrakesh Treaty Working Group, as well as continue serving on the WIPO ABC Advisory Board. The European Blind Union (EBU) will replace the role of Blind Citizens NZ for the next term.

Then, back in NZ, on 29 May a delegation from China, to do with disabilities, invited me to enjoy lunch with them in Auckland.

They visited Wellington the previous 2 days as I linked them with Whaikaha and the Chief Executive (CE) of Blind Citizens.

The delegation was headed by Mo Binbin, Vice president of Shanghai Disabled Persons' Federation and consisted of 6 persons. The Shanghai Disabled Persons' Federation (SDPF), a local branch unit of China Disabled Persons' Federation(CDPF) makes great efforts to help people with disabilities, including blind and low vision persons. SDPF provide all kinds of service including rehabilitation, employment, education, assistive device, accessibility, etc.

The purpose of the visit was to engage with the WBU president and learn about New Zealand's policies on rehabilitation, employment and social security as well as practices and experiences of non-government organisations (NGOs) and relevant institutions in areas of promoting employment for disabled persons.

From 13 to 15 June I was fortunate to be able to attend and present at the Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) 50th anniversary in my role as WBU president, as well as representing Blind Citizens NZ.

On the afternoon of the Friday, there were informal sessions held and I was invited to participate in both of those, being the meeting of all the branch presidents, and 2nd a get together of their mentors that form part of their executive leadership mentoring programme. They have one what we in NZ would call a special interest branch, namely, their women's branch. The rest are geographically represented. They used to have an Aboriginal and Torres strait Islanders branch but it didn't exist for very long.

Their Women's branch is very proactive in various programmes and there were at least 3 new immigrant women present, mainly from Asia, who were very well ensconced in their activities. Some of their regions struggle in terms of retaining members while others are flourishing.

At the mentors related session, it was great to see people present, ranging from past CEOs and past presidents to well-known personalities in the blindness sector such as Graham Inis, a blind past Disability Rights Commissioner.

Those 2 informal sessions were followed by their formal opening reception where people enjoyed canapes and drinks. About a third of their conference attendees were first timers which is great. People could link in via Zoom, and the event was streamed as well.

Another international guest was Kua Cheng Hock from Singapore, a past president of the World Blind Union Asia-Pacific region. Together with his guide dog, there were 33 guide dogs present.

They had a number of great sponsors contributing raffle prizes and gifts to presenters. One raffle prize was a Braille display. L'occitane, the French company that includes Braille on their cosmetics, also sponsored a few packs and I was the fortunate recipient of one such pack.

Their CEO, Deb Deshayes, originally from NZ, invited me to sit at her table during the conference and gala dinner. The Acting CEO of Vision Australia, their largest blindness service provider, attended part of the event.

My presentation centred around the current WBU priorities, the upcoming WBU World Blindness Summit and General Assembly as well as passing on greetings from Blind Citizens NZ.

To celebrate and commemorate this vital occasion, every attendee got given a coaster, made of some kind of Resin with Braille and a tactile graphic on it: at the top is a tactile image of the BCA logo, followed by the words in Braille: Celebrating 50 years BCA 2025.

Our conference goodie/loot bag also included Braille bookmarks, signature guides, etc. sponsored by Vision Australia, government agencies, etc.

Topics raised at the conference included:

The Australian National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) a bit like our individualised funding model but more wide spread and covering more areas. People can for instance have an escort with them at a conference, fully government funded, all kinds of transport trips fully covered, companions to go to audio described performances, mainstream sports events such as to tennis tournaments and to rugby games. The government scheme also covers the organisational costs of training a guide dog plus all the associated costs for while you've got a guide dog. It sounds great, and for many it works out well, but there are areas of corruption, for instance, there are many disability services start ups who charge an arm and a leg to provide O+M and other services to people who do not know their choices and options. I personally think that, some of what's been made available to people, will end up making it hard for other disabled persons, as, it's not a sustainable system (government funding-wise) if people can simply take companions with them to everything, but that's a personal opinion...

There was a huge presence of volunteers, either from blindness service organisations such as Guide Dogs South Australia, and others, plus from local universities. Upon arrival, volunteers were available to provide orientation.

I also ended up meeting with Brandon Ah Tong, Director, Global Policy & Advocacy - The Fred Hollows Foundation, as he is a blind person living in Australia. We both serve on the board of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) and we wish for that agency to focus more, as in the past, on collaborative opportunities with WBU, to name an example, rather than simply getting immersed into blindness prevention matters. Many blind persons also need advice and support in order not to lose the rest of their sight, and we need to keep on building on the message that once one is blind or vision impaired, it's not the end of the world.

During the weekend, each lunch time, there was an opportunity to join either the general populous or like a special interest grouping. On the Saturday, I joined the lunch, held by United Blind Leaders (UBL). Some of you might know about this entity, just about to become a formal organization. It's a new blindness movement around promoting blind persons into leadership roles such as to become CEOs, especially of blindness organisations. The movement started when Vision Australia appointed an Acting CEO (internally), a sighted leader, when its most recent CEO resigned. This happened while many believed Vision Australia should have gone to market, as well as promoting this opportunity to blind applicants. The statement was bandied about that we don't have blind leaders as yet in our community to step up to the plate, and more.

The UBL leaders present assured us they're in discussion with other organisations such as the WBU, as some of us have concerns about the establishment of yet another international blindness organization that will require funding, sponsorship, etc.

It was great though to have these lunch break out options to choose from. The hotel was well placed and organized to accommodate the few concurrent sessions on offer.

Note, this will be my final report to you in my role as WBU president, as I would have moved onto being its Immediate Past President in September. I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to Blind Citizens NZ for the financial and moral support provided to me up to this point. I trust you found my various updates on email lists of value, and, do feel free to contact me should this report raise further questions. I look forward to my next term at WBU level in a somewhat different capacity.

World Intellectual Property Organisation Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) From Martine Abel-Williamson, Blind Citizens NZ's Representative

Before I provide the ABC update, find first a note below around representative changes at that level:

Marrakesh Treaty Leadership Update

The term of Blind Citizens NZ on the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) Advisory Board, is coming to an end. I've represented Blind Citizens NZ for 7 years on that entity and would have stepped down at our ABC board's September meeting. Blind Citizens NZ is one of 2 organisations who had temporary roles at this level. The 2 permanent members/position holders are World Blind Union (WBU) and the International Council on the Education of Persons with Visual Impairment (ICEVI).

Grace Antwi-Atsu, who has served as our WBU rep on the ABC Board and Chair of the WBU Marrakesh and Accessible Books Working Group, has formally stepped down from her position. The table officers of WBU has since appointed me to this role.

So, for my sins, I'll now chair our WBU Marrakesh Treaty Working Group, as well as continue serving on the ABC Advisory Board.

Now follows the overall ABC update.

Introduction

1. The ABC was launched at the headquarters of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in June 2014. 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 (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 to the ABC Secretariat and fosters communication with stakeholders.
2. 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 (i.e., people who are print disabled).

200 Years of Braille

3. ABC and its partners celebrated the 200th anniversary of the invention of braille this year through social media posts. Two centuries ago, Louis Braille, the French teenager who invented this innovative system of six raised dots, revolutionized reading for people who are blind. ABC recognizes the role of braille as an important driver of educational and economic success for persons who are blind and visually impaired and supports the teaching of braille and the production of embossed and electronic braille. While it is important that people who are blind or visually impaired remain up-to-date with the latest technological developments, this should not come at the expense of braille literacy.

4. ABC promotes braille in all three of its primary activities:
 - ABC Global Book Service – this global library catalogue of over one million accessible format copies of works is available for cross-border exchange under the framework of the Marrakesh VIP Treaty. The catalogue contains over 100,000 braille titles, including 11,000 braille music scores.
 - Training and Technical Assistance – ABC provides training and funding to organizations in developing and least developed countries (LDCs) for the production of books in either embossed braille or electronic braille that can be read with the use of a refreshable digital braille display.
 - Accessible Publishing – ABC encourages publishers to adopt “born accessible” practices, including the production of books in the accessible EPUB 3 format, so that their publications can be read by persons who are blind or visually impaired using assistive technology, including refreshable digital braille displays.

Activities of the Accessible Books Consortium

ABC Global Book Service

5. The ABC Global Book Service (Service) is one of the world's most diverse online catalogues of books in accessible formats. The Service provides libraries for the blind, known as Authorized Entities (AEs), with the ability to search, order and exchange accessible format copies of works across borders at no cost. This 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.

6. The Service now includes 145 AEs, with more than 50 percent of all AEs located in developing countries or LDCs. The ABC catalogue has over 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 VIP Treaty into national law.
7. ABC hit a very important milestone this year, with a cumulative total of 1.1 million accessible format copies delivered to persons with print disabilities in the period from ABC's launch in June 2014 until December 31, 2024.
8. While the main ABC application is a library-to-library service (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 VIP Treaty the ability to search for, and immediately download, accessible format copies of works contained in its catalogue.

Future ABC Global Book Service Activities

9. Through a collaboration with Dolphin Computer Access, a UK-based developer of accessibility software, the ABC beneficiary application catalogue will be included in the Dolphin EasyReader application. This integration will make accessible format copies of works available on the preferred devices of people with print disabilities. Dolphin EasyReader is user-friendly and designed to support individuals read digital books in accessible formats.

Available for free on iOS, Android, and Windows (and at a cost for Macintosh in a Premium version aimed at the educational market),

EasyReader offers a searching, downloading and reading experience from the ABC catalogue. The application supports customizable text size, fonts, and colour schemes, offers navigation and bookmarks, and is available in multiple languages. It is compatible with screen readers and refreshable braille displays.

- 10.** Access to the ABC Global Book Service that will be shown in Dolphin EasyReader will be based on the following three conditions:
 - a person wishing to search and download accessible format copies of works from the ABC catalogue in EasyReader must be recognized as a Beneficiary Person as defined under the Marrakesh VIP Treaty by an AE that has joined the ABC Global Book Service; and
 - the AE must be located in a country that has joined the Marrakesh VIP Treaty and transposed the treaty provisions into national law; and
 - the AE must have agreed to the ABC Terms and Conditions to offer the ABC beneficiary application catalogue to its Beneficiary Persons.
- 11.** The exploration of potential partnerships with other accessibility software and platform providers is currently underway.
- 12.** The ABC Secretariat will be organizing an onsite ABC Advisory Board meeting to overlap with the DAISY Consortium's Board of Directors meeting, both of which will be held at WIPO Headquarters from November 11 to13, 2025. The DAISY Consortium is a founding partner of ABC and many of ABC's participating AEs are also DAISY Consortium members.

13. A hybrid session on the topic of the ABC Global Book Service is planned with the AEs that will be present in Geneva for the meetings of the DAISY Board of Directors and the ABC Advisory Board. This session will allow the Secretariat to gather constructive feedback from a broad range of AEs actively participating in the Service.

Training and Technical Assistance

14. The ABC model for training and technical assistance (TTA) aims to equip organizations in developing countries and LDCs with the ability to produce and make available educational materials in national languages to be used by primary, secondary and university students who are print disabled. ABC also aims to build up the capacity of these organizations so that they can function efficiently and sustainably as AEs, as defined in the Marrakesh VIP Treaty.

15. ABC provides training in the latest accessible book production techniques through an online platform that provides 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 available on WIPO Academy's eLearning Center, 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.

16. In addition to the above noted projects, WIPO's Copyright Law Division and the ABC Secretariat co-organised the "Right to Read" Conference in Sydney, Australia at the end of October 2024. The conference was facilitated by the NextSense Institute in its state-of-the-art facilities.

Supported by the WIPO-Australia FIT Program, this three-day event brought together representatives from blindness and disability associations and intellectual property (IP) authorities from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu. Led by expert speakers, the participants addressed challenges in improving reading for individuals who are print disabled in the Pacific Islands. The discussions highlighted the importance of collaborating locally, joining the Marrakesh VIP Treaty, and implementing treaty provisions into national law, as well as leveraging resources like the ABC Global Book Service, the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI), the DAISY Consortium, the Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities, Vision Australia, VisAbility, Blind Low Vision New Zealand and Blind Citizens New Zealand.

Accessible Publishing

- 17.** 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 EPUB 3 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.

18. 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. The winners of the 2024 ABC International Excellence Award for Accessible Publishing were announced during the International Publishers Congress, which was held in Guadalajara, Mexico in December 2024. The winners of the ABC Awards were:

- Gerbera Ediciones, Argentina, in the publisher category;
- Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities, Australia and New Zealand, in the initiative category.

19. 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. For more information about the ABC Charter for Accessible Publishing, please see the [ABC website and list of charter signatories](#).

Future Accessible Publishing Activities

20. This year’s ABC International Excellence Award for Accessible Publishing will be presented on September 3, 2025 during the World Blindness Summit co-organized by the World Blind Union, the National Organization of Blind Persons of Brazil, and the Brazilian Paralympic Committee, to be held in Sao Paolo, Brazil.

21. 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.

Attachment “C”

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

**Performance Report
For the year ended
30 June 2025**

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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 2025

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. As at 30 June, 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 and seek guidance 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 seven 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. As at 30 June 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) such as to the Lotteries Commission, 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 Significant Activities

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 Activities

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

	2025	2024
Number of national submissions	4	2
Number of local submissions	3	7

Blind Citizens NZ National and Branch (Community) Meetings

	2025	2024
Number of meetings members have participated in	22	23
Number of attendees at meetings	498	406

Activities / Events

	2025	2024f
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	65	71

Information, Publications and Awareness	2025	2024
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)	703	705
Website – number of unique visits	9,700	10,691
Number of Facebook likes and engagements	5,143	9,000
Number of calls made by members to glean and or share information on the Feedback Line (national and branches)	5,303	7,260
Number of hours in total, members have engaged on the Feedback Line (national and branches).	519	773
Number of International White Cane Day resources (posters, 2 types of pamphlet, banners, feet-shaped statements)	5	5
Number of Branch Network Newsletters produced	19	20
Number of recipients of Branch Newsletters	1,216	1,327

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2025

Statement of Financial Performance

	Note	2025	2024
		\$	\$
Revenue			
Donations, koha, bequests and other fundraising activities	1	12,590	14,446
General grants	1	234,040	218,965
Government service delivery grants/contracts	1	135,417	137,743
Membership fees and subscriptions	1	3,634	3,430
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	1	43,857	50,567
Other revenue	1	24,367	14,970
Total Revenue		453,905	440,121
Expenses			
Expenses related to fundraising	2	660	661
Employee remuneration and other related costs	2	176,465	162,665
Volunteer related expenses	2	101,375	90,545
Other expenses related to service delivery	2	78,762	83,338
Grants and donations made		1,503	3,218
Other expenses	2	240,186	201,174
Total Expenses		598,951	541,601

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated
Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2025**Statement of Financial Performance continued**

	Note	2025	2024
		\$	\$
Operating surplus/(deficit)		(145,046)	(101,480)
Unrealised gain/(loss) on fair value changes		67,633	56,953
Net profit/(loss) for the year		(77,413)	(44,527)

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated
Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2025

Statement of Financial Position

Assets	Note	2025	2024
		\$	\$
Current Assets			
Bank accounts and cash		552,040	626,763
Investments		484,655	489,202
Debtors and prepayments	3	31,257	39,373
Total Current Assets		1,067,952	1,155,338
Non-Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	4	9,588	37,896
Investments	3	1,149,313	1,083,744
Total Non-Current Assets		1,158,901	1,121,640
Total Assets		2,226,853	2,276,978

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated
Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2025

Liabilities	Note	2025	2024
		\$	\$
Current Liabilities			
Creditors and accrued expenses	3	74,371	63,732
Employee costs payable	3	21,650	18,908
Other current liabilities	3	34,399	20,492
Total Current Liabilities		130,420	103,132
Total Liabilities		130,420	103,132
Total Assets less Total Liabilities (Net Assets)		2,096,433	2,173,846
Accumulated Funds			
		2025	2024
		\$	\$
Accumulated surpluses or (deficits)	5	787,282	934,764
Reserves	5	1,309,151	1,239,082
Total Accumulated Funds		2,096,433	2,173,846



Jonathan Godfrey
National President

Dated: 22 September 2025



Christine Fern
Board Member

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated
Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2025

Statement of Cash Flows

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Cash Flows from Operating Activities		
Cash was received from:		
Donations, koha, bequests and other fundraising activities	10,837	14,043
General grants	234,040	218,965
Government services delivery grants/contracts	164,713	120,673
Membership fees and subscriptions	3,634	3,430
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	45,051	42,942
Other revenue	24,367	14,969
Total cash received	482,642	415,022
Net GST	10,470	(46,972)
Cash was applied to:		
Payments to fundraising	(660)	(661)
Employee remuneration and other related costs	(173,546)	(160,616)
Volunteer related payments	(101,375)	(90,545)
Donations or grants made	(1,503)	(3,217)
Other payments related to service delivery	(78,761)	(83,338)
Other expenses	(211,990)	(173,932)
Total cash paid	(567,835)	(512,309)
Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities	(74,723)	(144,259)

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2025

Cash flows from Investing and Financing Activities

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Cash was received from:		
Receipts from the sale of investments	-	-
Receipts from the sale of property, plant and equipment	-	-
Cash was applied to:		
Payments to acquire property, plant and equipment	-	-
Payments to purchase investments	-	-
Net Cash Flows from Investing and Financing Activities		
Net Increase / (Decrease) in Cash	(74,723)	(144,259)
Opening Cash	626,763	771,022
Closing Cash	552,040	626,763

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
This is represented by:		
Bank Accounts, Savings Accounts and Petty cash	552,040	626,763

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2025

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 2025

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 2025

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 assets are recognised when the Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated 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.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2025

Financial instruments continued

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 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.

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.

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.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2025

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 2025

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 2025

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 1: Analysis of Revenue

Revenue Item	Analysis	2025	2024
		\$	\$
Donations, koha, bequests and general fundraising activities	Legacies and bequests	1,000	5,681
	Donations	11,590	8,765
	Total	12,590	14,446

Revenue Item	Analysis	2025	2024
		\$	\$
General grants	Blind Low Vision NZ service contract	216,300	210,000
	Other	17,740	8,965
	Total	234,040	218,965

Revenue Item	Analysis	2025	2024
		\$	\$
Government service delivery grants/contracts	MSD Contract	120,000	120,000
	Disabled People's Organisation / Govt	15,417	17,744
	Total	135,417	137,744

Revenue Item	Analysis	2025	2024
		\$	\$
Membership fees and subscriptions	Life membership	2,492	1,687
	Memberships - other	1,142	1,743
	Total	3,634	3,430

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated
Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 1: Analysis of Revenue Continued

Revenue Item	Analysis	2025	2024
		\$	\$
Interest, dividends, and other investment revenue	Interest	36,356	43,890
	Dividends	2,697	2,894
	Realised Gain/(Loss) on Investments	4,804	3,783
	Total	43,857	50,567

Revenue Item	Analysis	2025	2024
		\$	\$
Other revenue	AGM and conference	16,636	6,726
	Calendar sales	3,602	2,711
	Other	4,129	5,533
	Total	24,367	14,970

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 2: Analysis of Expenses

Expense Item	Analysis	2025	2024
Expenses related to fundraising	Fundraising	660	661
	Total	660	661
Expense Item	Analysis	2025	2024
Employee remuneration and other related costs	Staff Wages	174,449	158,489
	Other	2,016	4,176
	Total	176,465	162,665
Expense Item	Analysis	2025	2024
Volunteer related expenses	Board Expenses	48,299	34,392
	Te Tiriti o Waitangi Advisory Group	15,323	13,396
	World Blind Union	36,323	41,057
	Honorarium	1,500	1,700
	Total	101,375	90,545
Expense Item	Analysis	2025	2024
Other expenses related to service delivery	Advocacy	442	4,724
	Advocacy Leadership	247	12,100
	Workshop		
	AGM and Conference	78,073	66,514
	Total	78,762	83,338

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 2: Analysis of Expenses

Expense Item	Analysis	2025	2024
Other expenses	Calendars	6,142	4,391
	Constitution Review	15,977	2,121
	Employment Best Practice	5,449	-
	Administration Expenses	91,161	100,591
	Office Expenses	121,457	94,071
	Total	240,186	201,174

Note 3: Analysis of Assets and Liabilities

Asset Item	Analysis	2025	2024
Bank account and cash	Cheque account balances	184,175	131,186
	Savings account balance	367,115	494,827
	Imprest Account and Petty Cash	750	750
	Total	552,040	626,763

Asset Item	Analysis	2025	2024
Investments	Short Term Deposits	484,655	489,202
	Total	484,655	489,202

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 3: Analysis of Assets and Liabilities continued

Asset Item		\$	\$
Debtors and prepayments	Accounts receivable	16,456	30,886
	Prepayments	12,788	3,325
	Interest Receivable	2,013	2,345
	GST Receivable	-	2,817
	Total	31,257	39,373

		2025	2024
Asset Item		\$	\$
Financial assets at fair value through surplus or deficit	ANZ Managed investment Portfolio	1,149,313	1,083,744
	Total	1,149,313	1,083,744

		2025	2024
Liability Item		\$	\$
Creditors and accrued expenses	Trade and other payables	41,381	31,488
	Accrued expenses	28,279	32,244
	GST Payable	4,711	-
	Total	74,371	63,732

		2025	2024
Liability Item		\$	\$
Employee costs payable	Holiday pay accrual	15,036	13,107
	Wages accruals	6,614	5,801
	Total	21,650	18,908

**Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated
Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2025****Note 3: Analysis of Assets and Liabilities continued**

Liability Item		2025	2024
		\$	\$
Other current liabilities	Te Pou Funding – unspent funds	-	9,317
	DPO Coalition Grant – unspent funds	21,730	-
	Other	12,669	11,175
	Total	34,399	20,492

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated
Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 4: Property, Plant and Equipment

2025

Asset Class	Opening Carrying Amount	Purchases	Sales/ Disposals	Current Year Depreciation & Impairment	Closing Carrying Amount
Furniture and fixtures	1,193	-	-	(239)	954
Office equipment	2,689	-	-	(754)	1,935
Recording Equipment	92	-	-	(16)	76
Motor Vehicles	33,583	-	(25,600)	(1,597)	6,386
Computer Software	339	-	-	(102)	237
Total	37,896	-	(25,600)	(2,708)	9,588

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated
Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 4: Property, Plant and Equipment Continued

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 2025

Note 5: Accumulated Funds

2025

Description	Accumulated Surpluses or Deficits	Reserves	Total
Opening Balance	934,764	1,239,082	2,173,846
Surplus/(Deficit)	(77,413)	-	(77,413)
Transfer to Investment	(67,633)	67,633	-
Revaluation Reserve			
Transfer to Reserves	(15,979)	15,979	-
Transfer from Reserves	28,106	(28,106)	-
Closing Balance	801,845	1,294,588	2,096,433

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated
Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 5: Accumulated Funds continued

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)
Transfer to Investment	(56,953)	56,953	-
Revaluation Reserve			
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 2025

Note 5: Accumulated Funds continued

Breakdown of Reserves

	2025	2024
Name	\$	\$
General Fund	651,911	640,608
Member for Life Fund	23,583	23,740
Leadership Fund	166,850	190,123
Branch Funds Brought to Account	-	48,518
Investment Revaluation Reserve	403,726	336,093
Establishing/Re-establishing Branches Reserve	48,518	-
Total	1,294,588	1,239,082

Note 6: Commitments and Contingencies

	2025	2024
Commitments	\$	\$
National Office lease – Current Portion	42,155	16,024
National Office lease – Non-Current Portion	70,258	-
Photo-copier lease – Current Portion	1,085	840
Photo-copier lease – Non-Current Portion	362	-
Total	113,860	16,864

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2025

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 \$37,874 (2024: \$38,400) 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

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying performance report of Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated on pages 3 to 26, 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 2025, the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2025, and the statement of accounting policies and notes to the performance report, including material accounting policy information.

In our opinion:

a) 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 in that the service performance information is appropriate and meaningful and prepared in accordance with the entity's measurement bases or evaluation methods, and
- the financial position of Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated as at 30 June 2025, and its financial performance, and cash flows for the year then ended

in accordance with the XRB's Tier 3 (NFP) Standard 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 ISAs (NZ) and New Zealand Auditing Standard (NZ AS) 1 (Revised) The Audit of Service Performance Information. 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) The preparation, and fair presentation of the performance report in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework;
- b) The selection of elements/aspects of service performance, performance measures and/or descriptions and measurement bases or evaluation methods that present service performance information that is appropriate and meaningful in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework;
- c) The preparation and fair presentation of service performance information in accordance with the entity's measurement bases or evaluation methods, in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework;
- d) The overall presentation, structure and content of the service performance information in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework; and
- e) Such internal control as the Board determine is necessary to enable the preparation of a 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 NZ AS 1 (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 NZ AS 1 (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.
- Obtain an understanding of the process applied by the entity to select its elements/aspects of service performance, performance measures and/or descriptions and the measurement bases or evaluation methods.
- Evaluate whether the selection of elements/aspects of service performance, performance measures and/or descriptions and measurement bases or evaluation methods present an appropriate and meaningful assessment of the entity's service performance in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework.
- Evaluate whether the service performance information is prepared in accordance with the entity's measurement bases or evaluation methods, in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework.
- 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 the entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our 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 report. However, future events or conditions may cause the entity 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.

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.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Moore Markhams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Moore" on the top line and "Markhams" on the bottom line.

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

22 September 2025

Summarised Financial Information

Consolidation of National Office and Branches

Revenue and expense for the year ended 30 June 2025

Table:

Revenue	2025	2024
Donations, fundraising, Koha, bequests etc.	12,590	14,446
Subscriptions from members	3,634	3,430
Grants (COGS, BLVNZ, MSD) and Government Grants Contracts etc.	369,457	356,708
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	43,857	50,567
Other Revenue (Conference Registrations, Large Print Calendars etc.)	24,367	14,970
Total operating revenue	453,905	440,121
Expense	Blank	Blank
Fundraising-related expenses	660	661
Employee remuneration and other related expenses	176,465	162,665
Volunteer-related expenses (Board, Branch honorarium etc.)	101,375	90,545

Revenue	2025	2024
Other expenses related to service delivery (National Office, Branches and Networks)	78,762	83,338
Grants and donations made	1,503	3,218
Other expenses	240,186	201,174
Total operating expenses	598,951	541,601
Operating (deficit) surplus	(145,046)	(101,480)
Unrealised gain (loss) on fair value changes	67,633	56,953
Net profit/(loss) for the year	(77,413)	(44,527)

End table.

Assets and liabilities at 30 June 2025

Table:

Current Assets	2025	2024
Bank accounts and cash	552,040	626,763
Investments	484,655	489,202
Debtors and prepayments	31,257	39,373
Total current assets	1,067,952	1,155,338
Non-Current Assets	Blank	Blank
Property, plant and equipment	9,588	37,896
Investments	1,149,313	1,083,744

Current Assets	2025	2024
Total non-current assets	1,158,901	1,121,640
Total Assets	2,226,853	2,276,978

End table.

Table:

Liabilities	2025	2024
Current Liabilities	Blank	Blank
Creditors and accrued expenses	74,371	63,732
Employee costs payable	21,650	18,908
Other current liabilities	34,399	20,492
Total current liabilities	130,420	103,132
Total Assets less Total Liabilities	2,096,433	2,173,846

End Table.

Accumulated Funds

Table:

Accumulated Funds	2025	2024
Accumulated surpluses (or deficits)	787,282	934,764
Reserves	1,309,151	1,239,082
Total Accumulated Funds	2,096,433	2,173,846

End Table.

Funds held by Branches as at 30 June 2025

Auckland: 92,697.29

Southland: \$18,158.23

South Canterbury: \$237,574.92

Wellington: \$26,044.99

Whanganui: \$177,476.62

Attachment “D”

Remit to 2025 Annual General Meeting and Conference

Wellington Branch

Remit: Equity and National Awareness for the White Cane

That Blind Citizens NZ prioritises White Cane awareness and equity by advocating for a national education and fundraising campaign about the White Cane and its role and importance as a symbol of independence and mobility for blind, deafblind, low vision and vision-impaired people in Aotearoa. It is anticipated that Blind Citizens NZ will seek to work with kindred organisations including Blind Low Vision NZ Board and Management teams, government agencies, Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs), the health sector, transport sector and community partners to raise permanent recognition, reduce stigma, and promote safety and inclusion for all White Cane users in Aotearoa, regardless of age, demographic, gender or sexuality.

Explanation

The White Cane is one of the most internationally recognised mobility tools for the blind, deafblind, low vision, and vision-impaired (referred to as blind) community. It is simple to learn, quick to access, cost-effective, and widely empowering. For many, the White Cane is the primary or only tool that enables daily independent movement.

Despite this, many White Cane users in Aotearoa face a serious lack of visibility, recognition, and protection. Unlike Braille and Guide Dogs, both of which are regularly promoted and funded through targeted campaigns, the White Cane receives little to no national awareness or education. Blind Low Vision NZ, as the main service provider for the blind community, runs annual public campaigns and fundraising appeals for Guide Dogs. Yet White Cane awareness is noticeably absent from public-facing materials, community appeals, and mainstream educational programmes. This absence perpetuates ignorance and stigma in the wider public. Many White Cane users experience fear or discomfort from others in public spaces - people physically move away, assume the White Cane is a weapon, or even interfere with the cane itself. These reactions stem not from malice but from a lack of understanding - something that only public education and visible advocacy can resolve.

The situation is particularly concerning in the health and disability services sector. In hospitals, some White Cane users report staff not knowing what a White Cane is or how to interact with a person using one. This leads to reduced access, delayed treatment, and breaches of both the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). A system designed to support disabled people must not be contributing to their exclusion.

Another significant gap exists in the eye health and optometry sector.

Providers such as Specsavers, OPSM, and Retina New Zealand offer educational resources on eye conditions and general low vision, yet there is no material focused on White Cane awareness, training, or public understanding. This omission contributes to the invisibility of White Cane users and leaves many patients and professionals uninformed about its importance as a mobility tool. White Cane users, and the public, deserve equal access to information that promotes recognition, safety, and inclusion.

Some White Cane users face an additional layer of discrimination, even within the blind community. Many national initiatives or conference priorities focus on Braille literacy or Guide Dog advocacy. Yet not everyone can use Braille, or wants to learn Braille. There is a shortage of Guide Dogs in our country, along with additional barriers and limitations that come with having a dog, including situations where Guide Dog users lose their White Cane skills and confidence. The White Cane is a vital alternative. It is accessible without extensive training, long waitlists, or the lifetime costs associated with service animals.

Therefore, the Board could consider:

- Advocating for national public education and awareness of the White Cane's purpose, function, and legal recognition, including through media, schools, health providers, public transport, and government.
- Requesting that Blind Low Vision NZ introduce regular White Cane awareness campaigns (including fundraising efforts, resource development, and public messaging) alongside their existing campaigns for Guide Dogs and Braille.

- Collaborating with hospitals, ~~DHBs~~, Health NZ (Te Whatu Ora), and health professional networks to ensure staff training includes White Cane awareness and the rights of blind patients.
- Pushing for training and outreach within public spaces and services, such as retail, hospitality, and public transport, to reduce discrimination, improve safety, and foster inclusion for White Cane users.
- Engaging with optometry providers and organisations such as Specsavers, OPSM, and Retina NZ to encourage the creation and distribution of White Cane educational materials for both patients and the public.
- Reporting annually on progress, identifying tangible improvements in public knowledge and lived experiences of White Cane users.

By giving the White Cane equal footing in our public education and disability advocacy work, we affirm the rights of all blind, deafblind, low vision, and vision-impaired people to move freely, confidently, and safely in their communities, without stigma, without judgment, and without having to constantly explain themselves.

Attachment “E”

Honorary Membership for Life Nomination

Nomination for Victor (Vic) West – Honorary Member-for-Life

Southland Branch Committee of Blind Citizens NZ is pleased to submit this nomination for Victor (Vic) West to be awarded Honorary Membership-for-Life of Blind Citizens NZ. This nomination is in recognition of the sustained service Vic has given to our organisation for more than forty years.

We don't know when Vic became a member of the Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand. We do know that Arthur Cushen approached Vic in the 1960s when Arthur wanted to set up the Southland Branch. Vic was living in Auckland at the time so he didn't join for a few years. Once he returned to Southland Vic joined as a member.

Vic has been a long-serving Branch Committee Member. Since at least 1993 through to 2013, he held the position of Branch Chair. Then from 2014 through to 2022, Vic was our National Councillor, which then became known as Branch Representative. Over the years, he has attended many meetings of National Council and AGMs and Conferences, representing Southland Branch.

Vic's advocacy is legendary in Invercargill. He has a passion for pedestrian safety, and is a strong advocate on issues including:

- audio pedestrian crossing signals;
- ensuring there are notifications for blind people about where roadworks will be conducted; and

- for accessible footpaths with no clutter of sandwich-boards, street furniture and/or merchandise such as fruit and vegetables;
- better and accessible public transport.

Vic usually walks the streets of Invercargill and will often report incidents where footpaths and crossings need repair. Annually, during the week of 15 October, Vic will be seen in the shopping mall and around the streets with Blind Citizens NZ White Cane Day promotional material.

Vic is not afraid to speak out, and he is a well-known advocate at the Invercargill City Council meetings and with staff.

Vic is deafblind, and this hasn't held him back. He recently attended the New Zealand Deafblind Conference. Vic is also an appointed member by the Board of Blind Citizens NZ to Blind Citizens NZ's Te Tiriti o Waitangi Advisory Group.

We believe that Vic has served Blind Citizens NZ for many years and made many contributions both locally and nationally. Vic continues to advocate on topics he is passionate about.

Attachment “F”

Discussion Paper | Where is the Accessible Tech in NZ? | Auckland Branch, Blind Citizens NZ

Background

At a General meeting of the Auckland Branch several members raised their frustrations around the lack of accessible tech in NZ. This includes accessible models of mainstream devices such as washing machines and televisions, not being sold in NZ; specific blindness products such as Braille displays; and the practice of launching products in some regions and not others and geo-blocking them in non-supported regions such as Meta AI glasses.

Discussion

Blind, Deafblind and vision impaired Kiwis are disadvantaged by a lack of access to accessible technology. We cannot try products before we buy them as particular brands and models are not sold here. This leads to a situation where people either “take a punt” on technology from overseas with the resultant exorbitant freight costs to get items to NZ and the lack of aftersales support and repair and maintenance, that is if the manufacturer or seller will even supply the product to NZ.

It is now impossible to get products from the Royal National Institute for the Blind in the UK sent directly to New Zealand: this is a huge issue for both technology they sell and other non-tech items.

Many of the blindness specific libraries have 'badged' Braille displays made by the leading blindness product producers to provide to their members to access library content.

Access to such devices not only allows readers to access library content, but to use the devices for other purposes.

Many of the most innovative products over the last few years have not been launched in NZ or have been geo-blocked from working in NZ. Items include Meta Ai glasses that are geo-blocked from working in NZ: meaning that people who buy them from overseas find that they have to keep finding new Virtual Personal Networks every few weeks to make them keep working and even then not all the features will work here. Another case in point is the potentially revolutionary mobility device Glide: they are launching in 2026 in other regions, but do not anticipate Launching in NZ before 2027 at the earliest.

Impact

The impact of the lack of this accessible tech in NZ means that blind, Deafblind and vision impaired Kiwis are disadvantaged in many areas of our life's when compared with members of our community in other Western countries. The devices we are talking about provide access to and participation in areas such as employment, leisure, and mobility and orientation.

Solutions

Given the number of reasons for lack of access to accessible tech in NZ there is no single solution to this problem. However, some starting points might be:

- To set up a group of blindness organisations to advocate for and practically assist companies to make their products available in NZ (we have already had examples of this including Blind citizens selling a small number of the Envoy DAISY players).
- Having discussions with freight carriers to see if costs can be waived or reduced on blindness specific products.
- Talking with some of the larger retailers to encourage them to advocate with their suppliers to ensure that models of appliances with accessibility features are sold in NZ.
- The Disabled people's Organisations Coalition could raise these issues with Government and officials to see what levers they may be able to pull to get more accessible tech into New Zealand.

Attachment “G”

Proposed Inductees to the Memorial Hall of Honour

Recommendation

That Conference endorses the Board’s recommendation to induct Charlotte (Lottie) Trevarthen and Donald Hunt into the Memorial Hall of Honour.

Introduction

With this being the 80th anniversary of Blind Citizens NZ, the Board believes it is timely to recognise achievements of those who have passed away, and the contributions they have made towards making a blind bit of difference for blind, deafblind, low vision and vision-impaired people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Donald William Hunt

(8 March 1936 – 28 September 2024)

For 20 plus years, Donald Hunt was a part of the Waimate Community Committee with the Blind Foundation | Blind Low Vision NZ. He was a founding member in August 1987 (age 37 at the time).

The Waimate Community Committee offered outings and support to blind and low vision people in the Waimate District and sometimes further afield. It is understood that before his contributions to the Waimate Group, he was also involved with the Timaru Community Committee.

Donald served on the Board of Trustees for the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind, now Blind Low Vision NZ Board. He was well known in the blind community nationally.

Donald was always happy to help those in the blind community, to operate talking book machines and later Daisy Players.

In November 1978 (aged 46 years), he was a founding member of the New Zealand Association of the Blind and Partially Blind South Canterbury Branch (now Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand). Donald's time with the South Canterbury Branch Committee spanned approximately three decades during which time he held the positions of Chair, Secretary, National Councillor and Committee Member. As National Councillor, he represented the branch at AGMs and Conferences.

In 2017, Donald Hunt was awarded the Beamish Memorial Medal at the Conference in Invercargill. This recognised the significant contributions he made to the blind community, and Blind Citizens NZ.

Donald was on the Trust Board of Lister Home Waimate and the Waimate Rotary Club, where he received the Paul Harris Fellowship Award for his service to Rotary. Donald had been very involved in the horticultural groups in Waimate and was well known for his gardening skills in the District.

For a time he was part of the Gardening Group with Blind Low Vision in Dunedin and he travelled down at times to be part of this group.

Charlotte (Lottie) Trevarthen

(4 November 1941 - 30 March 2006)

Lottie (nee Lattimer) was a renowned blind musician (jazz pianist and singer), a champion of Braille, education, and she was involved in blind politics and advocacy. She was married to one of Auckland's leading saxophonists Derek Trevarthen who passed away 31 July 1986.

Lottie's iwi was north of Auckland. She was a people person and disliked conflict of any kind. Lottie always saw the good in people and was generous and kind.

Lottie was an active member of Blind Citizens NZ from the 1950s, and in her own words said she had "...an undaunting respect and admiration for its progress - as watchdog over New Zealand's blind community, and also ensuring the Foundation (and others) act in our best interests....I firmly believe that with dialogue (rather than one voice), it's easier to perceive any gaps occurring in the many issues which affect us."

A typist for the Auckland Department of Social Welfare (akin to Work and Income these days), she considered her 15 years with the government agency as her main employment. She also worked in the then Foundation of the Blind's Transcription Department.

Lottie trained in classical music, but in later years played modern music. She worked entertaining at a wide variety of functions, and provided entertainment at many licensed premises, halls and maraes throughout the country. In Lottie's own words "...This emphasises my enjoyment and pleasure of meeting people from all walks of life. I also enjoy light debate over talkback radio."

In February 1983, Lottie was one of several people who founded Ngāti Kāpō – an organisation for blind Māori whose main purpose was to learn, experience, and re-identify themselves with their Taha Māori.

Her hobbies include reading, listening to the radio or TV (no screen), and learning new tunes at her piano. She simply adored cats and all Guide Dogs that crossed her path. She was an email warrior and was often on the other end of a phone offering advice, or just listening and being supportive...

From 1990 through to at least early 2000, Lottie was a member of the then Braille Authority of New Zealand and the Braille Management Panel. In 1997, she was involved in setting a world Unified Braille Code.

In 1995, Lottie was elected unopposed as Vice President Auckland. In the day, she was one of the few Māori to be elected to a position of status in the organisation.

Other positions Lottie held include:

- representing Blind Citizens NZ on the Foundation's Funding Development Panel;
- Co-ordinator for the Auckland Area Group of NZ VIEW;
- Convenor of a subcommittee for the National Executive (governing body Blind Citizens NZ) to further advocacy and leadership of blind people;
- Member of the HomeMakers Group;
- Committee member of Auckland Branch, organising a talent quest in 1995.
- Facilitated in 1997 with Judy Small, the Pilot Advocacy (Leadership and Communication) Seminar.

Attachment “H”

Blind Citizens NZ Constitutional Review | Overview of proposed amendments

Note: On 8 September 2025 we issued notification of an eight week engagement timeframe on the draft new Constitution for Blind Citizens NZ. Hardcopies of Braille, large print and audio have therefore been distributed to financial voting members, along with email notification where documents were provided electronically. In this agenda we include the ‘overview’ of proposed amendments. However, as we have a limited opportunity and resource to provide further additional hard copies, it will be appreciated if members reliant on their hard-copy as previously provided (Braille, large print and audio), can please bring this with you to the AGM and Conference. The electronic file ‘draft new Constitution’ document is circulated separately with the agenda and is referenced Attachment “H”, Appendix 1.

Introduction

The Board and Chief Executive began engaging with the approach to amending Blind Citizens NZ’s Constitution approximately 2.5 years ago.

For compliance under the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 (Act) and the Incorporated Societies Regulations 2023 (Regulations), Blind Citizens NZ is required to amend its Constitution. The organisation’s new Constitution must be lodged for registration no later than 5 April 2026.

The majority of proposed amendments are mandatory. At the same time as the Board addressed mandatory requirements, this process provides an opportunity to review areas of the Constitution that may benefit from attention, and which are considered operational and | or no longer fit for purpose.

The information that follows will seek to explain where changes have occurred and what this means for Blind Citizens NZ.

Unless otherwise identified, references to Rules will be the same in both the proposed draft new and current Constitutions. It is also important to recognise that anyone wanting to compare the current Constitution (last updated 2019), with the proposed revised Constitution, will be guided to Blind Citizens NZ's website or National Office. This is due to the number of mandatory amendments that introduce challenges when trying to compare sets of rules on a clause-by-clause basis.

Although some rules have remained largely intact, some clauses within rules that deal with operational matters are now considered no longer fit for purpose in a Constitution. There has also been some 'tidy-up' work carried out to assist with readability and understanding. This includes the removal of repetitive information and a general re-ordering of material to provide a more logical sequence.

Draft New Constitution and Notice of Special Meeting of Members

The Board has finalised a first draft of proposed amendments to a new Constitution. The draft new Constitution is now circulated to Ordinary financial Members for feedback over an eight-week period commencing Monday 8 September 2025, finishing on 2 November 2025.

There are planned opportunities for engagement, including discussion at this year's Annual General Meeting and Conference, and some online hui opportunities which will shortly be publicised. Following this eight-week timeframe, and pending feedback, the draft new Constitution may be amended. A final proposed new Constitution will then be distributed to Ordinary financial Members to vote on at a Special Meeting of Members on Tuesday 9 December at 6pm. The final proposed new Constitution will be distributed no later than 17 November 2025.

Rules from the current Constitution which direct and guide the Board's approach include:

- Rule 9.0 Special Meetings of Members; and
- Rule 16.0 Amending this Constitution.

Summary of proposed amendments to the current Constitution

Here now is a summary of the changes made to the current Constitution. We will cover each rule as outlined in the current Constitution and refer to its equivalent in the revised set of rules.

1. **Rule 1** 'Name' is the first rule in both Constitutions.
2. **Rule 2** Registered Office has been updated with contact details.

The Act requires the Board to appoint one to three people, maximum, to be the organisation's Contact Person(s). The person | people do not need to be named. They can be identified by position. This requirement is introduced, refer Rule 2.3.

3. **Rule 3** in the current Constitution is ‘Definitions’. This has been renamed ‘Definitions, Interpretations and Notices’. There are three new components to Rule 3 as follows:
 - a. **Rule 3.1 – Unless the context requires otherwise the terms below have the following meanings in this Constitution:** this section includes definitions from the current Constitution and new ones.

Gibson Sheat proposes the removal of the following item in its entirety as it is not necessary

<begins> “**Manifest Error**” in the context of this Constitution means an error that is so obvious and clear on its face that there is no room for argument. <ends> This has been removed in the draft new Constitution.
 - b. **Rule 3.2 Interpretations:** this is an entirely new section. It is not mandatory however it is helpful to include.
 - c. **Rule 3.3 Notices:** this is entirely new. It is not mandatory however, it is helpful to include.
4. **Rule 4** has been renamed Purposes and Powers. In the current Constitution this is referred to as Objects and Powers. Changing the word ‘Objects’ to ‘Purposes’ aligns with terminology used in the Act.
 - a. **Rule 4.1 Purposes:** The only amendment is changing the word ‘Objects’ for ‘Purposes’.
 - b. **Rule 4.2 Powers:** This Rule is amended. Of note is that bullet points in the current Constitution are removed as these are addressed in other parts of the Constitution.

The proposed amendment **provides Blind Citizens NZ** both within and outside New Zealand, full capacity, rights, powers, and privileges to carry on or undertake any activity, do any act, or enter into any transaction subject to this Constitution, the Act and any other legislation and the general law.

5. **Rule 5** refers to Membership in both Constitutions. There are several amendments to this Rule in the draft new Constitution. In some instances, content has been moved. The Affiliate Membership category Rule 5.7 which is present in the current Constitution, is removed from the draft new Constitution. This category has not been used for several years (since 2014).

It is necessary to remove Special Interest Networks from the Constitution for the following reasons. Special Interest Networks allow for non-members of Blind Citizens NZ to be part of a Special Interest Network. This contradicts the Act, which requires that Members need to be identified and consent to being Members. While Members must comply with organisational requirements and obligations, anyone who is not a Member, as provided for in the current Constitution, does not have to comply.

The latter introduces a risk for Blind Citizens NZ, as there is, for example, no recourse for non-members who are part of Special Interest Networks and break the Rules or Code of Conduct.

The Board values the contributions that Special Interest Networks and Members bring to Blind Citizens NZ. While it is necessary to remove this provision from the draft new Constitution, the Board is including provisions for Special Interest Networks in its Operational Policy Manual. Special Interest Networks, therefore remain an integral part of Blind Citizens NZ.

It is just that we are unable to continue including them in the draft new Constitution as they are currently.

Amendments to Rule 5 Membership involve:

- How a person becomes a member, including a requirement that the person must consent to be a member. This requires amendment to these clauses:
 - ✓ 5.1 Joining as a Member;
 - ✓ 5.2 Ordinary Member;
 - ✓ 5.3 Membership-for-Life;
 - ✓ 5.4 Honorary Membership-for-Life;
 - ✓ 5.5 Junior Membership;
 - ✓ 5.6 Associate Membership.
- Rule 5.1.3 recognises the Board's powers to establish or disestablish membership categories | classes of membership.
- How a person ceases to be a member of Blind Citizens NZ – currently Clause 5.1.4. This is now addressed in Rule 5.12.
- Arrangements for keeping Blind Citizens NZ's register of members up to date. A new clause for the register of members is required.
- Fees are now set out in one place - Rule 5.9 of the draft new Constitution.
- Suspension of a Member is new and explained in Rule 5.11.
- Ceasing to be a Member is explained in Rule 5.12.

- Outlining how a person becomes a member (when their application is accepted, and they have paid any relevant membership fees);
- People must consent to become members of Blind Citizens NZ – this is required under Section 26(1)(c) of the Act. A new Rule 5.2 is introduced that states this process.
- The organisation's Constitution must recognise how a member can be removed. Rule 5.1.4 in the current Constitution refers to members resigning.
However, Blind Citizens NZ should have the ability to remove members if required.

6. **Rule 6** Board is the same number reference in both Constitutions.

The Act requires that a person being elected or appointed to the Board is not disqualified from being elected or appointed. This is introduced in Rule 6.

It has been suggested by Gibson Sheat that consideration be given to removing the right for the Chair of the Board to have a casting vote. From a good governance perspective, if a resolution does not achieve a simple majority of 51% (as for the AGM and Conference), then it should not pass. The Board prefers to discuss this with members before taking any action. For the time being, the ability for the Chair of the Board to have a casting vote remains. This will be a specific topic for discussion.

There has been some reorganising of content and new clauses introduced or renamed.

There is an amendment to the title of National President. This is renamed President.

The amendment is made in the Composition of the Board clause, and wherever else this appears in the draft new Constitution.

In the draft new Constitution, Rule 6, clauses 6.1 to 6.8 inclusive are re-ordered, with new mandatory clauses introduced as required.

Please note that in the list below, the renumbered or new clause is provided first, with the relevant clause in the current Constitution where applicable, provided afterwards. Amendments are made as follows:

- **6.1** recognises the Board's powers – new clause required by the Act.
- **6.2 Role of the Board** – renumbered (6.1 in the current Constitution).
- **6.3 Composition of the Board** - renumbered (6.2 in the current Constitution). In the current Constitution, the clause recognises the position of World Blind Union Representative, which is appointed by the Board.

If the person appointed to this position is not already on the Board, they are co-opted for the term of their appointment. After careful consideration, the Board recommends that this position be removed.

While the World Blind Union is an important relationship for Blind Citizens NZ, it is questionable whether this position has a higher status or relevance than any other organisational relationship where representative positions exist.

This position is also raised in Rules 6.4.9 and 6.4.10. It is removed from the draft new Constitution.

- **6.4 Co-opting Additional Board Members** renumbered (6.3 in the current Constitution).
- **6.5 Board Meetings** renumbered (6.4 in the current Constitution).
- **6.6 Duties of Officers** – new clause required by the Act. This sets out a brief description of each of the Officers' duties, while a fuller description is in the Board's Policy Manual.
- **.6.7 Conflicts of Interest** – new clause required by the Act.
- **6.8 Suspension and Removal of Board Member** – new clause required by the Act.

7. **Rule 7 Staff** is the same in both Constitutions. Currently, this Rule has nine clauses (7.1-7.9 inclusive). In the draft new Constitution, clauses 7.4-7.9 inclusive are removed as these are employment-related. Provisions in these six clauses form part of the Board-Chief Executive employment contract.

8. **Rule 8 AGM and Conference** is the same rule number in each of the current and draft new Constitutions. Clauses in the current Constitution have been reordered and | or amended with new clauses and | or content added to meet mandatory requirements of the Act.

New clauses include:

- **8.2:** The Constitution must contain the intervals between AGMs, which must be not later than six months after Blind Citizens NZ's balance date and not later than 15 months after the previous AGM (refer to the Act sections 26[1][k][i] and 84). Rule 8.2 has been amended to include this.
- **8.3:** This clause states how notice of the AGM must be given as required by the Act section 26(1)(k)(vi).
- **8.4:** This clause provides the timeframe for when members can submit notices of motion or when the agenda of the meeting is sent to members as per the Act section 26(1)(k)(vi).
- **8.6:** This Rule is amended to include all of the information that must be presented at the AGM as per the Act, sections 26(1)(k)(ii) and 86.

Note that the Rule that provides the Chair to have a casting vote is removed.

All votes should require a simple majority (i.e. 51%) rather than allowing the Chair to have the casting vote. This refers to 8.1.5 in the current Constitution.

9. **Rule 9 Special Meetings of Members** is the same rule reference in each of the two Constitutions. Of note is that the rule reference in the draft new Constitution is amended to 'Special General Meeting of Members'. Clause 9.5 is new. It recognises the requirement to give notice of a Special General Meeting to Members. Other amendments are aesthetic and have no material impact. Rule 9.5 states that:

Members must be given at least 14 days written notice of a Special General Meeting of Blind Citizens NZ. Some friendly amendments have happened (see explanation of “friendly” later).

10. Rule 10 is Elections in the current Constitution, while this is Quorum in the draft new Constitution.

Rule 10 provides for a quorum at both the AGM and Special General Meeting. The Board has needed to identify the number for a quorum. It has used as an indication of setting a quorum, the number of people who turn up to the AGM. The Board is recommending that a quorum be 20 Ordinary Members.

This Rule also provides for what happens when no quorum is reached at an adjourned AGM. It states that the Members present 15 minutes after the scheduled start time of that further meeting are deemed to constitute a valid quorum. This is because there must be a mechanism to ensure Blind Citizens NZ can hold an AGM. The quorum is different for a Special General Meeting. Normally, if a quorum is not reached for a Special General Meeting, then it is cancelled.

Timeframes are also introduced to comply with the Act.

11. Rule 11 in the current Constitution is ‘Establishing and Disestablishing Branches and Networks’. ‘Minutes’ is the new Rule 11 in the draft new Constitution. This identifies that full minutes of all AGMs are required to be kept in accordance with section 26(1)(k)(iii) of the Act.

12. Rule 12 in the current Constitution is ‘Branch and Network Responsibilities’. In the new draft new Constitution, Rule 12 is ‘Omissions and Irregularities’. This is a new Rule.

Section 85(1) of the Act allows an irregularity in calling an AGM or SGM to be waived if all members entitled to attend and vote at the meeting attend the meeting without protest as to the irregularity, or if all members agree to the waiver. Gibson Sheat believes the requirement for all members to attend without protest, or to have all members agree to a waiver, is extremely difficult to ever satisfy.

Section 85(2) records that an accidental omission to give notice or a failure to receive notice of an AGM or SGM by a member does not invalidate the meeting, but section 85(2) is subject to the Constitution.

A clause that allows for flexibility is included. This recognises any irregularities, errors, or omissions in notices, agendas, and relevant papers of general meetings, or the omission to give notice within the required time frame, or the omission to give notice to all members, and any other error in the organisation of the general meeting will not invalidate the general meeting. Nor will it prevent the general meeting from considering the business of the meeting, if:

- a. the Chair, in their discretion, determines that it is still appropriate for the AGM or SGM to proceed despite the irregularity, error, or omission; and
- b. a motion to proceed is put to the Meeting and such motion is passed by a Special Resolution.

13. **Rule 13** is 'Organisational Assets and Financial Administration' in the current Constitution. In the draft new Constitution, this is entitled 'Resolution passed in lieu of meeting'. This is a new rule. It has one clause which states: 'A resolution in writing signed or consented to by email or other electronic means by a 75% majority of Members is valid as if it had been passed at a General Meeting, provided requirements under sections 89 to 92 of the Act are complied with.

Any resolution may consist of several documents in the same form, each signed by one or more Members.'

14 **Rule 14** in the current Constitution is the Common Seal. In the draft new Constitution, it is 'Elections'.

Amendments to 'Elections' in the draft new Constitution include:

- Removal of the term 'Member-at-Large' which is amended to Board Member (current terminology is considered outdated, whereas the term Board Member is considered more suitable for modern governance).

This amendment is reflected throughout this Rule and everywhere else in the draft new Constitution.

- Rule 14.1.3 is amended to recognise those who cannot be Board Members as follows:
 - ✓ A person who is an employee of, or contractor to Blind Citizens NZ;
 - ✓ A person who has been removed as a Board Member following a process under this Constitution or any Bylaw.
 - ✓ Disqualified under any of the factors for disqualification outlined in the Charities Act 2005 or the Act, or who is found to have breached any qualifying criteria for office in this Constitution.

There are an additional two discussion points the Board is raising. Note these have not been amended in the draft new Constitution:

- a. The first discussion point is whether the following clause remains fit for purpose. This states <begins> To be eligible for nomination as a candidate for any position provided for in this Rule, the nominee must also have been an Ordinary Member of Blind Citizens NZ for no less than 24 full months measured cumulatively during the period of five consecutive years ending on the closing date for nominations. <ends>
- b. The second discussion point is whether the term of office for all Board positions should have limitations. For example, Board Members and the National President could serve a maximum of:
 - three terms; or
 - three consecutive terms, then have at least one term off the Board, and potentially start afresh.

The difference here is that for the first option of serving three terms, there could be no prospect of ever serving more than three terms. Whereas the second option allows someone to go off the Board after the maximum consecutive terms and come back later to serve more terms. An exception would be that a Board Member who then becomes the President starts afresh and can then serve a maximum of three terms as President. This is in addition to the terms they have already served as a Board Member.

Therefore, the limitation could be on the total number of terms served as a maximum, or it could simply relate to a maximum number of consecutively served terms.

15. **Rule 14** is the ‘Common Seal’ in the current Constitution. Common Seals are no longer a requirement. This rule is removed in its entirety.
16. **Rule 18** is Complaints, Disputes, and Grievance Processes in the draft new Constitution. In the current Constitution, Rule 18 is ‘Transition’, which becomes Rule 22 in the draft new Constitution.

The procedure for resolving disputes has been introduced, including providing for how a complaint may be made (section 26(1)(j)). This is based upon the rules of natural justice and covers disputes between and among members, Officers, and Blind Citizens NZ.

There are amendments to reflect the new requirements and to confirm that the process complies with the rules of natural justice. Amendments of significance occur in the following clauses:

- 18.1 Complaints (current Constitution 15.1): New content recognises allegations of complaint;
- 18.2.1 to 18.2.5: while recognised as new clauses, the content is as per the current Constitution. The difference is that each of these items has been numbered instead of leaving the content as paragraphs.
- 18.3: Circumstances in which a process may not proceed is a new clause.

17. **Rule 20** in the draft new Constitution is Bylaws. This new Rule identifies the Board’s ability to make and amend Bylaws and is related to requirements of the Act.

18. Rule 22 is Transition (Rule 18 in the current Constitution). This is amended in its entirety as it must recognise the process to transition from the current Constitution to the new Constitution once finalised.

19. ‘Friendly’ amendments: Any amendments to the following Rules are ‘friendly’ and do not have any material impact. This may involve renumbering, reordering content, and | or introducing content to ensure there is clarity of the Rule. This approach applies to these Rules:

- 15.0 Establishing and Disestablishing Geographic Branches and Geographic Networks (Rule 11 in the current Constitution).
- 16.0 Geographic Branch and Geographic Network Responsibilities (Rule 11 in the current Constitution).
- 17.0 Organisational Assets and Financial Administration. (Rule 13 in the current Constitution).
- 19.0 Amending this Constitution (Rule 16 in the current Constitution).
- 21.0 Liquidation of Blind Citizens NZ and Disposal of Surplus Assets (Rule 17 in the current Constitution).

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. Where necessary, it will also make decisions during the course of the year. 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 either during, or since the 2024 Annual General Meeting. Unless otherwise stated decisions were made during the Annual Planning Meeting.

- 1. Moderator, Blind Citizens NZ’s Blind Discuss List:** Carl Haliburton has been in this role since December 2020. The Board resolved to appoint Mr Halliburton for a further 12 months with his term concluding at the end of November 2025. Expressions of interest in this position are to be publicised in the September 2025 Focus issue. Other organisational mechanisms will also be utilised.
- 2. Moderator, Blind Citizens NZ’s Member Forum List:** Carl Haliburton was appointed to this role when the list started in September 2022. The Board resolved to appoint Mr Halliburton for a further 12 months. His term will conclude at the end of November 2025.

Expressions of interest in this position will be publicised in the September 2025 Focus issue. Other organisational mechanisms will be utilised at the same time.

3. **Branch | Network Liaison and Support:** Ms Chrissy Fern has represented the Board in this role since November 2019. The Chief Executive supports the Board's representative, bringing an 'operational' perspective. Ms Fern notified the Board she would not be standing for re-election in 2025. She was appointed as the Board's representative and continued in this role through until September 2025.
4. **The Braille Authority of Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT):** Ms Leyna Coleman was first appointed to this position in June 2018. The Board reappointed Ms Coleman for a further three-year term, concluding 2027.
5. **Disabled People's Organisations (DPO) Coalition:** the National President and Chief Executive continue to represent Blind Citizens NZ on the DPO Coalition.

Attachment “J”

Branch and Network Representative Reports

Auckland Branch, from Carolyn Peat,

Before I report on our Branch activities we wish to acknowledge the passing of Vaughan Dodd last December. He made a huge contribution to Blind Citizens NZ at both a National and Local level. He was a member of our Committee for many years and the writer of many remits that were brought to Conference. For me, he was a mentor, and as I write, I feel him on my shoulder nudging me along.

General Meetings

In September 2024, we held a General Meeting to discuss the remits to Conference 2024 and to advise our Branch Representative on how to vote. In March 2025, we held a General Meeting where we had a presentation from Greg Morgan and the Emergency Management Team from Auckland Council. The discussion centred around what we could do to be prepared in an emergency and who to contact for help. Given that we experienced major flooding in Auckland a year earlier, this topic was one that our membership was really interested in. Then, in June, we had a General Meeting where the focus was on any possible remits for Conference 2025. For the first time in a long time, we had no remits from our Branch. However, two of our members are drafting a paper on equipment access for discussion at the Conference. Finally, August was our Annual General Meeting, and we had comedian Sam Smith come and entertain us. Sam has Multiple Sclerosis, which was the cause of his sight loss. He is a script writer for the 7 Days show and also hosts a podcast for Blind Low Vision NZ.

Personnel Committee Changes

At our August AGM, the following people were elected to our Committee. Sue Harris – Chair, Rebekah Gray – Secretary, Tewai Halatau – Treasurer and Carolyn Peat – Branch Representative. other Committee Members are Leyna Coleman, Karen Plimmer, Maria Stevens, Latoa Halatau-Talagi, Suzie Bailey and Paul Brown.

Newsletters

We publish a Newsletter in advance of our General Meetings and to publicise our Christmas function. Over the last few years, various Committee members have made a contribution to the Newsletter, providing community information, public transport information and Branch news. We have also tried to encourage our wider membership to make a contribution if they wanted to. Our Newsletters are distributed in Braille, large print, email, and audio is available on our menu on TellMe. We also have a Branch Facebook Page in which we advertise Branch activities, audio-described events and share information that may be of interest to our members.

Submissions

We made two submissions, with the first being the Auckland Annual Plan 2025-2026. This submission was made in writing to Auckland Council. The second submission went to Auckland Transport. Its title was Room to Move in the City Centre Parking Plan. Auckland Transport is progressing with a plan to make it more difficult for vehicles to enter the City Centre, and this also impacts taxi pickup and drop off.

Community Organisation Grants Scheme, Auckland Council and Auckland Transport

- Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS):** Our branch received funding from both the Auckland Central and Manukau Grants Schemes. These funds enabled us to support members with transport to Committee Meetings, General Meetings and Branch social activities. We were able to continue to run our Information Line through TellMe and produce Newsletters. We also have an Extended Taxi Scheme where members can apply for support to attend various activities in the community that they may not have attended without that financial support. These funds also helped us to support our volunteers and pay for the insurance on the audio-described equipment our Branch manages.
- Auckland Council:** As mentioned above, we made a submission on the Auckland Council Annual Plan. I also attended two of the Disability Advisory Panel's open meetings, where I learnt about the awesome news that people will be able to use dictation voting as an option in the local body elections.
- Auckland Transport:** We are represented on both the Public Transport Accessibility Group (PTAG) and Capital Projects Accessibility Group (CPAG), and have been involved in having major input into various aspects of the City Rail Link (CRL). Advice on tactile markings, way-finding, including tactile maps with both English and Te Reo Braille, as well as large print and audio announcements, has been the most recent areas where our advice has been sought.

Progress on Facilities for Auckland Members

La Halatau-Talagi has been our representative on the Consumer Consortium, a group of Auckland Consumer Groups who have been meeting with Blind Low Vision Management to discuss options for member facilities in the Parnell area. Since the loss of Awhina House, there has been no true accessible facility for members to use. Recently, we had the opportunity to view an area of the new Blind Low Vision Building that could be used by groups for meetings and social activities. This area looks promising, and we are excited that it looks like we may have a new home soon.

With Blind Citizens NZ celebrating 80 years this year, it is worth remembering that it was in the Parnell and Newmarket areas of Auckland where we were first established as an organisation. While there have been many changes over the years, this is something that we in Auckland are very proud of.

Social Events and Other News

We had a wonderful Christmas function in 2024 and once again it was hosted by Stan and his team at the Foundation on George. We also held a High Tea in July that our members enjoyed. While we had no applications for the Helen Mutimer Memorial Fund in 2024, this year we made two presentations at our AGM. The recipients were Karen Plimmer and Rhonda Commins.

Finally, I would like to thank the 2024-2025 Committee for their support and work, and I look forward to the 2025-2026 year and working once again with this great bunch of workers for our Branch.

Taranaki Network, from Bev McCulloch

Our network is more of a social group than getting things done. It is important to emphasise that this works for our group.

We are a small group of 10 but keep trying to get more people involved.

We meet mainly at my house for shared lunches and social chats.

Most of the group belong or are involved with other disability action groups like the Council, Age Concern and Enabling Good Lives.

Some attended a meet the candidates to discuss disability issues re voting.

Whanganui Branch, from Russell Lowry | Ken Fredericksen

Acknowledgements: First of all we'd like to acknowledge the mahi of our committee throughout the year in making possible the social events and activities we have all enjoyed over the past year. A special thanks to Sonia and Jill for their assistance and support as they are not seeking to be re-elected at this time. Also significant has been Ken's support in setting up and pulling down the tables and chairs for every social afternoon. Marion also continues to provide her wisdom and puts together her regular monthly newspaper column Blind Spot in the River City Press. David has continued to manage the maintenance and management of our Toyota van, which we are all very grateful for. Bryn has demonstrated his exceptional understanding of financial reporting, management and funding requirements as well as performing in the role of secretary for the committee.

Joan keeps us all in check and focused on the needs of the membership and the running of the social afternoons with the roll call, birthdays and other matters. Our sincere grateful thanks to you all for your dedication and commitment throughout 2024-2025.

New Committee Members: Francie Twomey (Associate Member) and Darcy Britin have been elected onto the Whanganui Branch committee. A warm welcome to them both. All existing committee members (with the exception of Jill and Sonia) were re-elected and their roles remain the same e.g. Joan Harris (Patron), Russell Lowry (Chairman), Bryn Davies (Secretary/Treasurer), Ken Frederickson (Conference Representative), David Cowling, Marrion Hainsworth, Francie Twomey and Darcy Britin.

Funding: We have had financial support through the COGS grant scheme which has been very helpful in meeting some of our ongoing administrative costs. We intend to re-apply for the next round of COGS which is due soon. Our return on investments has also been significant in helping us to fund our social afternoons and other activities.

Entertainment: A huge thanks to Glenis for her ongoing coordination of the speakers and entertainers that we have enjoyed throughout the year. Glenis has also overseen our raffle table and provided a lovely warm welcome to all who attend. Del (volunteer van driver) continues to assist in the transporting of members to and from our social and other activities. A huge thanks to him for his commitment and dedication to this important role.

Social Afternoons: Speakers to our regular Thursday afternoon socials had included Ange talking about her role as the Blind Low Vision Deaf/Blind service provider across the lower North Island; Sarah and Cathy, also from Blind Low Vision, bringing us up to date with their recreational and volunteer coordination roles. We also had Chub Security come and introduce to us their range of never alone security options, Saint Johns also attended and described their range of services including the never alone push button systems.

Social afternoon musical entertainment included Jimmy McDonnel, Gay McLean, Elisabeth Sim, Willy Matthews and Jim Bob who all entertained with musical performances and/or singing. We extend our thanks to them all.

External group activities: Have included a very well attended Christmas party held for the first time at the Whanganui East Charted Club in early December 2025. The Club's staff were very attentive to the needs of our members, setting up the seating arrangements to facilitate the group for easy access; taking each person's luncheon order and offering table service to all. Approximately 30 people attended the Christmas luncheon and the feedback offered was all very positive, both for the environment and the quality of the food. This event was partly funded by our Whanganui Branch.

Mid-Winter Luncheon: The Whanganui Branch were also treated to a lovely mid-winter luncheon fully funded by the Branch and excellently catered by Jenny at the Blind Low Vision Centres hall. This too was well attended with approximately 24 sitting down to dine for lunch. Ken is to be commended for the excellent way he set up the hall for this event. Opting for 3 specific clusters of tables that sat between 8 to 10 diners each.

This allowed people to connect more meaningfully with one another whilst dining and easy access for table service by both Jenny and her daughter. The food was delicious, plentiful and tasty.

Sarjeant Art Gallery Tour: The Whanganui Branch also organised for a guided tour of our recently opened Sarjeant Art Gallery. Teresa and Sarah (Gallery staff) assisted with sighted guiding, verbal descriptions of the art on display as well as the history of the Gallery. They performed these tasks exceptionally well providing hands on with some of the pieces e.g. ceramic jugs, marble sculptures and wall hangings. We had ten members take up this outing and the Branch funded an afternoon tea for all. The feedback was very positive and we will be looking to return to the Sarjeant Art Gallery again in the near future.

Committee meetings: These took place on the first Thursday of each month with the exception of December 2024 (Christmas party) January 2025 (holidays) February 2025 (moved to 20/02/2025 due to Waitangi day) eleven in total.

Social or activity afternoons: these took place each first and third Thursday of the month with the exception of December 2024 (holidays) January 2025 (holidays) and February 2025 (Waitangi Day) eighteen in total.

Personal Development Grant: We had one successful application to access funds from this new initiative. This allowed the person concerned to access professional training and guidance when setting up a weight training programme at one of Whanganui's gyms. By all accounts it was money well spent as the person concerned is still working out regularly at the same gym.

Our Whanganui Branch's Personal Development Grant is now open to our members to apply for funding to assist in new projects or activities that improve their well-being. We have a maximum of \$1000.00 per year to draw upon.

Hospital Pyjamas for Children: The Branch also donated a range of boys and girls pyjamas to the children's ward at Whanganui Hospital to assist in meeting this need. The nursing staff were very appreciative of this, commenting that the children receiving the pyjamas will be very thankful.

Blind Bowlers: The Branch regularly assists the Whanganui blind bowlers by way of allowing them to utilise the Blind Citizens NZ Whanganui Branch van to transport their members to and from their bowling Sunday afternoons for a very modest contribution. We also assisted when the bowlers attended their National competition in Hamilton during Labour weekend October 2024. The cost of petrol to and from was donated by the Whanganui Branch of the Blind Citizens NZ.

No longer with us: Joe Twomey passed away on 31 May 2025. He had been an active member of the Whanganui Branch of Blind Citizens NZ for around 40 years and has played a huge role in maintaining the presence of Blind Citizens NZ in the Whanganui Region. Our sincere condolences were expressed to Francie and their whanau by members of the committee when attending his tangi at their Marae. Of note was the efforts of the Twomey whanau in making us feel very welcome by way of Powhiri.

Others to have passed on this year included Ross Clark who had also been a long time member. As too was John Hanna who performed in the role of our Secretary/Treasurer for many years. Our heart felt condolences to their whanau.

Manawatū and Districts Network, from Natt McLean

We have had three meetings:

- March 2025 – this was for the set-up of our Network where we agreed we would be called Manawatū and Districts.
- July 2025 – Connected and discussed White Canes and the AGM and Conference
- August – we held our AGM.

We have regular social events, afternoon tea get-togethers etc. and we enjoy lunch and / or afternoon tea with agenda items. Topics that we have discussed include: the White Cane Remit, White Cane Initiative, White Cane Day and Total Mobility.

Our personnel are:

- Coordinator – Natt McLean.
- Representative – Andrew Mulder.

We have members who are also interested in the Special Interest Networks.

We have made a funding application to the Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS).

Wellington Branch, from Pauline Melham | Carl Halliburton

General Meetings

The Wellington Branch of Blind Citizens New Zealand has held four General Meetings and one Annual General Meeting since its AGM in August 2024. The first General Meeting was held in conjunction with our annual Christmas party in December 2024. This was a fun event, held at BLVNZ Wellington, with a lovely catered lunch, a secret Santa, raffles and a Christmas Quiz.

Our next meeting took place in Upper Hutt in March 2025. The Wellington Branch is trying to host at least one meeting outside of central Wellington per year. Our guest speaker for this meeting was a Senior Manager from the National Network of Assessment Services Centres, who answered questions about access to Disability Support Services funding. The Upper Hutt Cossie Club did a great job of catering for us and we felt very welcome there.

In June, we again met at BLVNZ for something a little different. Our General Meeting was followed by a pizza lunch and an audio described movie (Paddington II). This seemed to go down very well. I certainly heard lots of laughter throughout the movie. Some members had not experienced an audio described movie before, so this was a good introduction.

Our final meeting of the year was our General Meeting and Annual General Meeting, once again held at BLVNZ in August. Our speaker this time was Sara Williams from Neighbourhood Support Trust. Sara spoke to us about the benefits of setting up a neighbourhood support group and ways of keeping ourselves safe in the community.

Neighbourhood support groups are a great way to get to know your neighbours. Their main purpose is to make sure that people are prepared in case of an emergency. After the 2011 Christchurch Earthquakes, Civil Defence found that the streets that had a Neighbourhood Support Group were coping much better with the disaster than other streets, they were better prepared and had pulled together and organised support for each other more quickly than other areas.

We followed our guest presentation by our General Meeting, lunch and an AGM.

Our meetings attract between 20-25 members each time. They provide a good opportunity to keep members up to date with Branch business, as well as providing informative guest speakers and a chance for members to socialise.

One of our recent Branch initiatives has been to fund taxis to get members to and from meetings for a small contribution. This has proved very popular for our members, especially those up the Kapiti Coast and the Hutt Valley and has encouraged more members to our meetings. Whilst this is a great scheme, it does cost the Branch a considerable amount. Moving forward we are looking at using a combination of taxis and volunteer drivers.

The general meeting in June was an opportunity for people to raise remits that they wanted brought forward to the Blind Citizens NZ National Conference. The Wellington Branch did not have any remits for the 2024 conference, but has one remit to bring to the 2025 conference about the promotion of the White Cane.

Some of the committee had hoped to visit a small group of our members over in the Wairarapa, as a way of keeping in touch with people in that region. Unfortunately, it was not possible to organise a meeting this year, but this is something on our radar moving forward.

Branch Committee

The Wellington Branch committee for the 2025/26 year is:

Carl Halliburton	Chair	No Change
Thomas Bryan	Vice Chair	No Change
Janet Palmer	Secretary	No Change
Pauline Melham	Treasurer	No Change
Patrick Boyd	Branch Representative	Change
Mahendra Bali	Committee Member	No Change
Mary Fisher	Committee Member	No Change

Patrick Boyd replaces Pauline Melham as Branch representative.

It should be noted that Pauline Melham was Branch Representative for part of the last year, but regrettably stood down from this position part-way through the year because the Branch Representative meetings clashed with other work for Blind Citizens New Zealand. Carl Halliburton was co-opted into this position for the remainder of the year.

Submissions

The Branch provided both a written submission and spoke to that submission on the long-term public transport plan for Greater Wellington Regional Council.

A small group of members met with representatives from Greater Wellington Regional Council to provide feedback to their long-term regional plan.

Metlink (Wellington's public transport provider) met with the branch at the Christmas General Meeting to share a wide range of updates with members about all things public transport in Wellington and to answer questions. This session was particularly well received by those at the meeting and members raised many questions with Metlink's representatives. Topics covered included announcements on buses, talking bus stop signs, the introduction of bendy buses on the Number 2 bus route and much more. Metlink also provides regular updates to members via our information line service.

The committee continues to work with Metlink about accessibility on buses and trains, new bus routes, bus stops and the accessibility of new audiovisual bus information signs. Finally, Metlink organised a trip with a group of members showcasing a new bus service operating in Tawa.

Newsletters and other means of communication

The Wellington Branch of Blind Citizens produces four newsletters per year. These are ably written by our secretary Janet Palmer with some input from other committee members. Newsletters are timed so they can inform members of our upcoming meetings of the Branch and therefore, they tend to be sent out in February, May, July and November each year.

In addition to the forthcoming Branch meetings, the newsletters also provide information about national conference and how members can seek funding for attendance at the conference, reminders about the feedback line, subscriptions and a list of who is on the committee.

Newsletters are produced in large print, e mail and CD and we thank the National Office for its help in this. By far the most common format is e mail, with many members preferring large print and a few still receiving their information on CD.

Our other means of communication with members include via our weekly telephone information line, produced by Thomas Bryan, a new Branch e-mail list and of course through word of mouth. The telephone information line attracts between 30-40 calls per week, although Wellingtonians seem to be shy creatures at heart and are keener on listening to the line, than leaving messages on it. We are also very lucky to have a volunteer reader, who records a Death Notices bulletin twice a week for us. The committee would like to extend its thanks to Sue our Volunteer and to Mary and Clive from AI Comms for the TellMe Service.

This year, the committee has also started a phone tree, whereby a small group of committee members call or email all members personally before each general meeting to invite them to attend. This phone tree and the taxi scheme we operate has encouraged some members to attend meetings, but the phone tree also provides a useful way for the Branch to keep in contact with its members.

COGS Grants

The Branch received COGS grants of \$4,500.00 this year. This has been a significant help to the Branch's finances. The Branch uses the money to pay for a number of activities that support member inclusion in Branch activities, including;

- Taxi transport to get members to and from general meetings and annual general meetings,
- A Zoom licence to allow members to access meetings online if this is their chosen format,

- The TellMe information line that keeps members informed about what's happening in the Wellington region.
- Conference subsidies for members attending the annual conference,
- Other small sundry expenses that support branch members.

In Memoriam

Wellington Branch of Blind Citizens NZ would like to acknowledge and remember three of our members or past members who have passed away over the past twelve months. All of these people have played significant roles in Blind Citizens NZ at both a local and national level. Firstly, we would like to remember Vaughan Dodd, who whilst an Auckland member, spent some time as a member of Wellington Branch and played a significant role for Blind Citizens NZ nationally, as both Chair of the organisation and National Information Line Co-ordinator. We also would like to remember Jane Mehaffey, long-time Wellington Branch representative, Branch secretary and committee member. Jane's son Carl is our current Branch Chair and her husband Tom spent time supporting Jane's activities. Finally, we'd like to acknowledge the sad passing of Allan Jones. Allan was honoured at last year's conference with the Beamish Memorial Medal, the highest award that Blind Citizens NZ can give its members. Allan had attended the most number of conferences of any current member of Blind Citizens NZ, so many in fact, that he couldn't quite recall the exact number. Allan also served in many positions including Focus Editor, Wellington Branch Information Line Co-ordinator and long-time committee member.

Blind Citizens NZ Wellington Branch would like to extend its condolences and thoughts to all members of Vaughan's, Jane's and Allan's families.

Conclusion

Wellington Branch of Blind Citizens NZ has 57 members. We are always seeking new ways of encouraging new members to join and attend our meetings. We have worked on making the meetings easier to attend and we continue to work on ways of making our meetings more interesting and relevant to our members.

South Canterbury Branch, from Margaret Padman

We have met three times in the year and have now made the decision to meet at a local café for afternoon tea which is working well.

We acknowledged the passing of Donald Hunt at the November meeting, and at the May meeting we nominated him for the Memorial Hall of Honour. It will be a year on 28th September since he passed.

At the May meeting the Committee agreed we would donate \$10,000 for Conference and another \$5,000 for first time attendees attending Conference.

Our next meeting is 23rd October.

Otago Branch, from Juanita Williams

Following the re-establishment of the Otago branch, five committee meetings have been held either in person or via Zoom. Progress has been made in establishing a local bank account, with most members having provided the required identification documents.

The branch has held two General Meetings, and the Annual General Meeting was held on 25 August. Juanita Willems was elected back as Chair, with Paula Waby being elected as Secretary. There are five other committee members.

There was a mid-winter lunch in June, and regular coffee afternoons have been held during most months. There have been eight of these in all.

Three newsletters have been produced. These cover local activities, share information and give reminders about events.

Advocacy has been carried out with Dunedin Taxis, Ritchies buses and Go Bus. There has also been a meeting with the local Otago Regional Council Total Mobility Coordinator.

Information is provided to members via email, telephone and Braille if requested. There is a local email group where relevant information from the Otago region is shared.

Finally, the committee met with Andrea Midgen, Chief Executive of Blind Low Vision NZ, and everyone felt this was a very productive, informative meeting. Andrea showed us a tactile diagram of the Auckland office plan.

Southland Branch, from Robyn Garden

1. Introduction

The Southland Branch of Blind Citizens NZ remains actively engaged in matters affecting blind, deafblind, and low-vision communities. This report outlines the branch's activities, achievements, advocacy work and community involvement over the past year.

2. Meetings

- **Committee Meetings:** Ten committee meetings were held, each conducted efficiently under the capable leadership of the Chairperson and Secretary.
- **General Meetings:** Three General Meetings took place in November 2024, April 2025, and August 2025, the latter being in conjunction with the AGM. The General Meetings provided opportunities for the committee to share what has been happening. This included Conference report, submissions and workshops attended. The Chairperson and the Regional Representative each presented a written and a verbal report. Members got to meet in-person with the committee and other members to discuss issues and ask questions, as well as make contributions that may give direction to the committee. Peter Taylor was a guest speaker at our April meeting. He gave an enlightening and entertaining talk about Roman history. At the August meeting, a representative from the Disabled United NZ (DUNZ) spoke to members about possible solutions to issues associated with the Invercargill CBD upgrade.

At the August General Meeting, the remit for the 2025 AGM | Conference was presented, discussed and direction given for voting by the Regional Representative.

3. Remits

The Branch's remits process is as follows:

- March newsletter - call for remits.
- April General Meeting – take any proposed remits.
- If a remit is proposed, then an additional General Meeting would be held in June. No remits were proposed from the Branch this year.

- July newsletter- publicise the remits proposed from all branches.
- August General Meeting – discuss the remits. Members give direction as to how the Regional Representative is to vote at the National AGM.
- November General Meeting – the Regional Representative reports back to members on the outcomes of the remits from the National AGM. No branch remits were proposed in 2025. Members discussed national remits at the August General Meeting and direction was provided to the Regional Representative for voting.

4. Personnel

At the AGM on 9 August 2025, elections for officers and committee members for the 2025–2026 year were held. The results saw no change from the previous year’s leadership and committee composition.

5. Communication with Members

The branch continues to prioritise clear and accessible communication:

- **Newsletters:** These were issued in October, March, and July, covering topics such as:
 - How to use “Tell Me” and what can be found there.
 - Conference updates and remit results.
 - Advocacy initiatives and submissions.
 - New initiatives, such as “Tea and Chat”.
 - Reminders about upcoming events and important dates.
- **Tell Me:** Meeting agendas, summaries, and newsletters are uploaded, although member engagement with this platform remains limited.
- **Tea and Chat:** Informal morning tea gatherings provide opportunities to share information and strengthen community connections.

6. Funding and Financial Support

The branch gratefully acknowledges support from:

- **Community Organisation Grants (COGs)**
- **Invercargill Licensing Trust (ILT):** Funding a subsidised lunch for General Meetings and the AGM.
- **Guy Anson Waddell Trust:** Supporting visits to members in rest homes, with expansion planned to include isolated members living independently.

7. Advocacy and Representation

Advocacy remains central to the branch's work. This year, efforts focused on submissions and participation in discussions with the Invercargill City Council (ICC), including:

- Draft Annual Plan
- Total Mobility Scheme Review
- Draft Exemption Parking Plan

Additionally, the branch is represented on the Combined Disability Group, meeting bi-monthly with Invercargill City Council staff to advance disability-related issues.

8. Community Engagement and Education

The branch has undertaken several initiatives to educate the wider public and support members:

- **Medical Student Visits:** Meetings with Otago University students to improve awareness of the needs of vision-impaired patients.

- **Rest Home Workshop:** A training session presented by three committee members, resulting in a staff member receiving the “Blind Bit of Difference” award.
- **White Cane Day (October 2024):** Celebrated with members and the community.
- **Blind Spot Radio Show:** The Chairperson and a member continue to present this monthly programme on Southland Community Radio.

9. Hosting and Social Activities

- **Tea and Chat:** Launched in June 2025 as a monthly social and information-sharing event. Guest speakers included:
 - An ICC Councillor and an ICC staff member discussed the Total Mobility Scheme review.
 - The Branch Chairperson spoke about the history of blindness support in NZ.
 - An “Age Concern” representative presented the Age Care Plan booklet and discussed scam prevention.
- **Social Gatherings:** Afternoon teas follow each General Meeting and a lunch is provided after the AGM to encourage member connection.

10. Acknowledgements

The Southland Branch extends sincere thanks to the Waikiwi Lions Club for their continued support in providing friendly and reliable transport for members attending General Meetings and the AGM. Thanks also go to the volunteers who have so willingly assisted us throughout the year.

11. Conclusion

The Southland Branch has continued to deliver meaningful advocacy, strong member support and community engagement over the past year. With the ongoing dedication of its committee, volunteers, and supporters, the branch looks forward to another year of progress in promoting inclusion, accessibility, and wellbeing for blind, deafblind, and low-vision communities in Southland.

Guide Dog Handler Special Interest Network, from Bev Duncan

Welcome to the annual report of the Guide Dog Handlers Special Interest Network. October 2024, we held a side event for those attending the conference with a guide dog, waiting on the waiting list or who are interested in the Guide Dog Service. There seemed to be fewer guide dogs present at the AGM and Conference than earlier conferences.

We have met via Zoom for 3 meetings, plus the Annual General Meeting. The meetings were in November 2024, March 2025 and May 2025. In March we were joined by Peter Hoskin from Guide Dog Services where he updated the network as to how things are going at the service. There have been some improvements at the Service however, he reminded those present online that it is going to take 5 to 10 years to get the Service back to its best performance for members, donors, stakeholders etc.

Peter Hoskin was to join us at our May meeting, however, he put his apology in that afternoon of the meeting. We were going to discuss with Peter the Strategic Plan for the Service. We also invited him to speak at our Annual General Meeting in August however this was at relatively short notice and as he was unavailable he put in an apology. We hope to have him come to Conference including the side event on Thursday. If Peter is unable to attend Conference we will invite him to speak at our November meeting.

The email list for the network is not as busy as the Blind Discuss list, however, when a topic is raised there is normally a flurry of messages.

The network is continuing to grow albeit slowly. The list is standing currently at 52 members. Sadly, we lost Vaughan Dodd and David Senior during the year due to them each passing away.

At the Annual General Meeting in August, I was reelected unopposed as the Coordinator of the Network. As I am on the Board, it was advised that someone else can also attend as our Representative | spokesperson at the AGM and Conference. We held an election as there were 2 people put their hands up for this role. Owen Palamountain was elected as our Representative | spokesperson.

I want to thank the note takers for each meeting during the year, Pauline Melham, Teri McElroy, Paula Waby and Rose Wilkinson etc. I appreciate them stepping up to be the note takers. I look forward to others taking the notes in the coming year. Thank you to Rose and the Board for their input as well.

Braille Special Interest Network, from Chantelle Griffiths

Since the last Blind Citizens New Zealand national conference in October 2024, the Braille Special Interest Network has held many informative and productive meetings. Here are some highlights from the past twelve months.

Braille is such a complex and nuanced area requiring some quite complex and nuanced strategy. It has taken longer than we expected to hear everyone's thoughts, narrow down many excellent and important ideas and get clarity on where to start. After much discussion and hard work, we have decided on several initiatives to work on over the next year.

As Coordinator, I was honoured to be challenged with the task of drawing out the main themes of our meetings and discussions to figure out a way forward. Initially a daunting task.

My strategy for narrowing down the scope of the planning phase was based on five main criteria:

- The first work program needed to focus on initiatives that have the largest possible impact based on the areas raised by the Network. E.g. projects that would have a flow-on effect into other areas of concern and/or provide clarity on next steps once implemented.
- Projects needed to balance quick wins with longer-term strategies to ensure continued progress.
- Projects must involve practical, tangible milestones and goals to track progress.
- Projects must work holistically together. E.g. they must all be related and/or show a clear vision and direction for the Network.
- Initial projects must utilise Blind Citizens NZ resources and/or must be within the direct control of the Network and Blind Citizens NZ to implement to create momentum.

With all that in mind, the Network is starting with three main projects that we feel meet these criteria. We are hoping for clear direction on the next steps once these initiatives are underway.

Theme: Awareness

The theme of our first work program is “Awareness”. The group determined that one of the things that prevents many Braille projects from starting and/or growing is the lack of awareness of opportunities to learn and engage with Braille and the resources available to assist with Braille learning and teaching.

Outreach can often be confined to small areas or groups, and fragmented due to location, lack of personnel and/or limited resources and opportunities to engage. Awareness is key, both within our community and externally. The projects we have chosen connect strongly with our first theme.

Central Resource for Braille-Related Information (Medium to Long-Term)

The Network would like to create a central resource on the Blind Citizens NZ website sharing any Braille-related information. This could include Braille learning and teaching resources; information about the Network; links to relevant websites e.g. the Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust and the International Council on English Braille; local organisations that support Braille e.g. BLVNZ, BLENNZ, AI Comms and TTLC; government information produced in Braille; Braille equipment suppliers; games; Braille-related activities; Braille music, and practical ways to use Braille. This is a key priority for the Network and requires further planning and refinement before commencing.

Podcast (short to Medium-term)

A podcast was proposed initially as a longer-term project. However, the group felt that this was an effective way to reach more people locally and internationally and to provide Braille awareness in a different format. We felt that sharing a New Zealand perspective would be valuable as there are few New Zealand voices on Braille-related podcasts. A podcast would also reach a different audience within New Zealand that may not engage with the network itself via email, social media, or the Network meetings.

Social Media (Short-Term)

Increasing the social media presence of the Network will assist with Braille awareness and outreach, with the potential to engage a wider audience locally and internationally. This is a short-term strategy we can implement fairly quickly using existing channels such as Facebook.

Winston Churchill Fellowship Report

I have recently returned from a three-month exploration of Braille and tactile graphics teaching, learning and usage in the UK and Europe as part of a grant from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. I am keen to share my findings with the network and all organisations interested in Braille over the coming months. As part of my Fellowship, I am writing a report for the Trust. Once it is complete and with permission from the Trust, I will share the report with the Network and Blind Citizens as a whole.

Conference Side event

We are looking forward to this year's Braille Special Interest Network side event prior to the National Conference in October. During the side event we are hearing updates from Martine and Chantelle, and doing a show and tell of any Braille-related products and equipment if possible. We will also share any updates and news.

Braille Special Interest Network Coordinator

At our AGM in September 2025, I was voted in as the Coordinator for another year. I offer my sincere thanks and gratitude to the Network for entrusting me with coordinating this work. Special thanks to Rose and Jonathan for their support and encouragement.

Attachment “K”

Preparation for the 2026 Annual General Meeting and Conference

Preparation for 2026

It is intended that next year’s AGM and Conference will be in the lower South 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 2026

Once again, this year’s AGM and Conference provides 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 2025 Annual Planning Meeting in November.

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

Attachment “L”

Guest Presenters | Personal Profiles

Note: For each of the two days, the personal profile for guest presenters are provided in the order they are scheduled to appear.

Friday 3 October 2025

Karl Le Quesne, Chief Electoral Officer | Chief Executive, Electoral Commission

Karl has held a number of public sector leadership roles, including Deputy Chief Executive at the Department of Internal Affairs and executive roles in the Ministry of Education. He has led policy, corporate, operational and delivery services across the Department of Justice, Department of Corrections, Ministry of Education and Department of Internal Affairs.

Karl’s 5-year term as Chief Electoral Officer and Chief Executive began in April 2022.

John Sneyd, General Manager Regulatory Services, Regulatory & Identity Services, Department of Internal Affairs

John is a long-time public servant with a background in law and regulation. After being a Chief Legal Advisor for over 10 years, John moved into general management at the Ministry of Building Innovation and Employment (MBIE), looking after the policy and regulatory aspects of New Zealand’s building and construction system, before moving to the

Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) as the General Manager of Regulatory Services.

Anne Shaw, Acting Chief Executive Disability Support Services

Anne leads Disability Support Services (DSS) delivery.

She joined DSS in 2024 to lead the team delivering DSS-funded services to disabled people, their whānau and carers.

She spent the last decade on executive leadership teams at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

At HUD, Anne was responsible for contracting more than \$2b funding for public and transitional housing delivery and housing support programmes, including Housing First.

Andrew Webber, Chief Economist, Social Investment Agency

In this role, Andrew is focused on advising ministers, other government agencies and colleagues working on the Social Investment Fund on how to better target and measure the impact of their investments. Prior to joining the Social Investment Agency, Andrew was the Chief Economist at the Ministry of Education, and Principal Economist at the NSW Department of Education. He is interested in joining up research and policy, how to practically embed evaluative thinking into the social sector, and economic and statistical modelling.

Saturday 4 October 2025

Steve Wiggins, Chief Executive, Payments NZ

As Chief Executive of Payments NZ and the Payments NZ API Centre®, Steve is responsible for ensuring the New Zealand payments industry remains innovative, progressive, interoperable and self-governing.

He came to the role with extensive experience in senior executive roles through a career spanning more than three decades in industries as diverse as finance, energy, and consultancy services including leading large transformation across these sectors, bringing new innovation and technology to drive change that improve an industry in the long term.

Sheldene Seth, Communications & Engagement Manager, Abel

Sheldene is Able's Communications & Engagement Manager – a broad role covering engaging stakeholders across the screen sector and disability sectors, looking after our kiritaki (consumer), and raising awareness of Able's services and how to access them.

With a background in Aotearoa's screen industry, Sheldene built her career directing, producing, and writing across television, digital, and social media. Her work has spanned children's programming, factual content, and branded campaigns – developing a sharp eye for storytelling that resonates.

Now in the media access space, Sheldene leads initiatives that champion inclusive content and connect audiences with stories in meaningful, equitable ways. Recently she played an instrumental role in Able's first web series, Sight Unseen, centring blind and low-vision rangatahi, integrating open audio description and inclusive production practices.

She's driven by a belief that accessible storytelling can challenge perceptions, foster connection, and create lasting change.

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 Tesoriero MNZM PLY | Chief Executive Ministry of Disabled People - Whaikaha

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

Paula is currently the Chief Executive of Whaikaha-Ministry of Disabled People, the first Ministry of its kind in the world working to achieve better outcomes for disabled people in New Zealand.

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 has served in various governance roles including as Deputy Chair of Peke Waihanga — 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.

Thomas Bryan, Blind Citizens NZ Delegate to the World Blind Union (WBU)

Thomas is one of two Board-appointed Country Delegates to the WBU. He is Chair of the WBU International Built Environment Working Group, Treasurer for the WBU Asia Pacific Region, Vice-Chair of Blind Citizens NZ's Wellington Branch, and a Life Member of Blind Citizens NZ.

With over 30 years in advocacy and accessibility, Thomas has dedicated his life to making information, cities, and services accessible. As host of the award-nominated "No Labels" radio show, Thomas engages with leaders from across the disability community, Government Officials, stakeholders, and influencers. His contributions have been acknowledged in many ways, including being awarded the Wellington Airport Community Safety Award. In 2019, he was awarded the Beamish Memorial Medal by Blind Citizens NZ in recognition of the extent of his advocacy and contributions that benefit blind people. This is one of the highest awards the organisation makes.

Thomas' expertise is often sought by organisations, local government, and influencers on inclusion and accessibility in the broadest context from a disability and blindness perspective. This includes accessibility of technology, public transport, information, and the built environment.

Topics of interest for Thomas include audio description, public transport, public & shared spaces, smart cities, wayfinding, accessible public services, and autonomous vehicles.

Martine Abel-Williamson QSM, World Blind Union (WBU) Immediate Past President

Martine has been the World Blind Union (WBU) president over the past 4 years up to September 2025. She is still a Table Officer as she holds the position of Immediate Past President through to the WBU 2029 General Assembly.

A Life Member of Blind Citizens NZ, Martine serves on both the Boards of Blind Citizens NZ and the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind (RNZFB). She is a life-long Braille user, and is a dedicated disability advocate and activist at local, national, and international levels.

Robert Hunt

Robert is a student (12 years old) at Scots College, Wellington. Amongst his interests is music (plays the piano), and he competes in running | athletics.

Robert was the New Zealand finalist in the Lions International Essay contest. He is the Grand International Winner of the 2024-2025 Lions International Peace Essay Grand Prize.