



Blind Citizens NZ

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Inc

Annual General Meeting and Conference

Friday 9 October and Saturday 10 October 2026

Times are Changing Are we thriving or surviving?

Ascot Park Hotel
Invercargill

Funding, Sponsorship, and Support

The achievements of Blind Citizens NZ are made possible not only through the commitment of our members and volunteers, but also through the funding, sponsorship, in-kind support, and encouragement we receive from a wide range of organisations and individuals who share our vision of an inclusive Aotearoa New Zealand. Their contribution enables us to advocate, connect, and create positive change for the communities we serve. We are pleased to acknowledge and sincerely thank:

- Accessible Information and Communications Limited (AI Comms)
- Blind Low Vision NZ
- Intopia
- JC Computing
- Little Rocket
- Lottery Grants Foundation
- Optics Magazine
- South Canterbury Branch, Blind Citizens NZ
- Stebbings
- TBD Digital
- Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People
- Blind Citizens NZ Members and Supporters, many of whom prefer to remain anonymous

Friday 9 October and Saturday 10 October 2026

Times are Changing |

Are we thriving or surviving

Sessions

1. Friday 9 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 11:45am	Official Opening
11:45 am to 12:30pm	President Business
12:30 pm to 1:45 pm	Lunch Tina
1:45 pm to 2:30 pm	Guest Presenter
2:30 pm to 3:15 pm	Business
3:15 pm to 3:45 pm	Afternoon Tea
3:45 pm to 4:45 pm	Guest Presenter
4:45 pm to 5:30 pm	Business
5:40 pm to 6:10 pm	President's half-hour
6.15 pm to 7.40 pm	Dinner Hākari
7.45 pm to 9:00 pm	Workshop Whakakapi Adjournment

2. Saturday 10 October

9:00 am to 9:25 am	Mihi Whakatau Welcome Roll Call
9:25 am to 10:15 am	Guest Presenter
10:15 am to 10:45 am	Morning Tea
10:45 am to 11:45 am	Guest Presenter
11:45 am to 12:30 pm	Business
12:30 pm to 1:45 pm	Lunch Tina
1:45 pm to 2:30 pm	Business
2:30 pm to 3:30 pm	Guest Presenter
3:30 pm to 4:00 pm	Afternoon Tea
4:00 pm to 5:15 pm	Business
4:15 pm to 4:45 pm	Business
4:45 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. President's Address

5. Annual General Meeting

5.1 Outcome of 2026 Scheduled Election: two Board Member positions | Report from Returning Officer Rose Wilkinson.

5.2 Confirmation of Minutes of Annual General Meeting and Conference, 3-4 October 2025.

- 5.3** Confirmation of Minutes of Special Meeting of Members, 14 December 2025.
- 5.4** Matters Arising from Minutes of 2025, not otherwise addressed within the Agenda (Attachment “A”).
- 5.5** Notification of items of other business – the inclusion of items that have arisen since the close of the agenda on 7 September 2026 is at the discretion of the Chair.
- 5.6** Annual Report (Attachment “B”)
- President | Chief Executive (combined)
 - National Office, Performance Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2026 (Moore Markhams Wellington Audit)
 - Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ)
 - National Information Line (TellMe)
 - The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT)
 - World Blind Union (WBU) Delegate
 - World Blind Union (WBU) Global President
- 5.7** Consolidated Audit of National Office and Branches, Performance Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2026, Moore Markhams Wellington Audit (Attachment “C”)
- 5.8** Appointment of Auditor (recommended by the Board)
- 5.9** Remits (Attachment “D”)
- 5.10** Membership Subscription Review – Board Discussion Paper (Attachment “E”)

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

5.12 RNZFB Constitution Review (Attachment “G”)

5.13 Blind Citizens NZ Strategic Plan 2027-2030 (Attachment “H”)

5.14 Representative Appointments (Attachment “I”)

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

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

6. 2027 Annual General Meeting and Conference | (Attachment “K”)

7. Other Business as notified in Item 5.5

8. General Business (time permitting)

Friday 9 October

9:00 am to 10:30 am	Mihi Whakatau Welcome-Roll Call Pepeha: attendees to say who you are... Suggest to 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.). Additionally, who are significant people who have influenced your life journey and why, and any relationship you may have with them
10:30 am to 11:00 am	Morning Tea
11:00 am to 11:45 am	Official Opening – Mayor Tom Campbell, Invercargill City Council Cultural activity
11:45 am to 12:30 pm	President Address Business
12:30 pm to 1:45 pm	Lunch Tina
1:45 pm to 2:30 pm	Sir Peter Boshier, Patron Blind Citizens NZ Topic: The important place of Blind Citizens NZ
2:30 pm to 3:15 pm	Business
3:15 pm to 3:45 pm	Afternoon tea

3:45 pm to 5:15 pm	Dr Greg Morgan , Auckland Emergency Management Topic: Person-centred emergency preparedness, an interactive workshop
5:15 pm to 5:30pm	Housekeeping items
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 10 October

9:00 am to 9:25 am	Mihi Whakatau Welcome Roll Call
9:25 am to 10:15 am	Paula Tesoriero MNZM PLY , Chief Executive, Whaikaha Ministry of Disabled People Topic:
10:15 am to 10:45 am	Morning Tea
10:45 am to 11:45 am	Assoc. Prof. Brigit Mirfin-Veitch , Kaiuruki Matua Director Dr Robbie Francis Watene , Kairakahau Matua Whaikaha Disabled Research Lead The Donald Beasley Institute Topic: Proof and progress: What the data tells us, and where to from here
11:45 am to 12:30 pm	Business
12:30 pm to 1:45 pm	Lunch Tina
1:45 pm to 2:15 pm	Business
2:15 pm to 3:15 pm	Andrea Midgen Chief Executive Dan Shepherd General Manager Community and Inclusion, Blind Low Vision NZ Topic: BLVNZ View – Times are changing: are we surviving or thriving?
3:15 pm to 4:00 pm	Afternoon Tea

4:00pm to 4:45pm Business

4:45 pm to 5:15 pm Poroporoake | Closure, end of business sessions

7.00 pm to 9:30 pm Dinner | Hākari

Contents

Attachment A, Matters Arising – Annual General Meeting and Conference 2025, Progress Outcomes Report	p 15
Attachment B, Annual Report	p 18
▪ National President Chief Executive (combined)	p 22
▪ National Office, Performance Report for the Year Ended	
30 June 2026 (Moore Markhams Wellington Audit)	p 37
▪ Summary of Financial Information, National Office Performance Report	p 61
▪ Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ)	p 65
▪ National Information Line (TellMe)	p 78
▪ The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT)	p 81
▪ World Blind Union (WBU) – Country Delegate	p 85
▪ World Blind Union (WBU) – Global President	p 96
Attachment C, Consolidated Audit of National Office and Branches, Performance Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2026, Moore Markhams Wellington Audit	p 106
▪ Auditor's Report	p 139

- Summary of Financial Information, Consolidation Performance Report p 146

Attachment D, Remits p 151

Attachment E, Membership Subscription Review p 155

Attachment F, Proposed Inductee to the Memorial Hall of Honour Board, Blind Citizens NZ p 159

Attachment G, RNZFB :Constitution Review p 164

Attachment H, Blind Citizens NZ Strategic Plan 2027-2030o) p 175

Attachment I, Representative Appointments p 179**Attachment J, Branch and Network Representative Reports**

- Southland p 181
- Otago p 186
- South Canterbury p 190
- Wellington p 192
- Taranaki p 198
- Whanganui p 199
- Manawatū and Districts p 205
- Auckland p 209
- Guide Dog Handler Special Interest Network p 213
- Braille Special Interest Network p 215
- Blind Women's Special Interest Network p 220

Attachment K, 2027 Annual General Meeting and Conference p 226**Attachment "L", Guest Presenter Personal Profiles** p 227

Attachment “A”

Matters Arising from the 2025 Annual General Meeting and Conference

Introduction

Outcomes of the 2025 Annual General Meeting and Conference were considered by the Board during its Annual Planning Meeting in November 2025. 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 to an item needing further attention.

- 1. Getting TellMe Operational:** While there is evidence elsewhere in the agenda that our National Information Line is back up and running, the comments here relate specifically to the opportunity to produce Podcasts and improve access to monthly e-bulletins.

The solution outlined at the 2025 AGM and Conference regarding 3 bulletins has been implemented. Editions are now uploaded monthly within days of their release. Work exploring the potential for Podcasts remains ongoing.

2. Equity and National Awareness for the White

Cane: while a joint campaign with Blind Low Vision NZ to raise awareness of the White Cane for 2026 has not eventuated, we have worked with BLVNZ to ensure our respective approaches are complementary.

This year, the majority of Blind Citizens NZ Branches and Geographical Networks have organised activities to promote International White Cane Awareness Day. In some instances, local media coverage is arranged. Activities will include:

- members walking in groups using White Canes around their communities promoting International White Cane Awareness Day (in some instances Guide Dog Handlers and their Guide Dogs may participate);
- information stalls set up in shopping malls and other public venues to raise awareness;
- promotion of the event through posters displayed in shops and local community facilities;
- distribution of pamphlets and 'foot pad' notes highlighting the challenges caused when there are obstructions on footpaths, overhanging trees, and other barriers;

- visits to schools to raise awareness of the White Cane and its importance for blind, deafblind, low vision, and vision-impaired people.

Attachment “B”

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Inc

Annual Report

1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026

Board

National President	Jonathan Godfrey ONZM
Vice President	Paula Waby
Board Members	Martine Abel-Williamson QSM
	Peter Allen
	Beverley (Bev) Duncan)
	Andrea Courtney
	Russell Lowry
	Maria Stevens
	Juanita Willems

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

Manawatū and Districts

Taranaki

Blind Citizens NZ Special Interest Networks

Guide Dog Handlers

Blind Women

Braille

Contents

Reports

- President | Chief Executive (combined)
- National Office, Performance Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2026 (Moore Markhams Audit Wellington)
- Summary of Financial Information – National Office
- Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ
- National Information Line (TellMe)
- The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust
- World Blind Union – Country Delegate
- World Blind Union – Global Report, WBU Immediate Past President

President Jonathan Godfrey ONZM | Chief Executive Rose Wilkinson ONZM

Report to Members 2026

Introduction

This year's theme, "Times are Changing - Are We Thriving or Surviving?", invites everyone to reflect not only on the environment in which we operate, but also on how we respond to it. Over the past 12 months, Blind Citizens NZ has continued to navigate change while doing our utmost to remain focused on organisational goals and priorities, as well as the aspirations of our members. We have continued to strengthen our advocacy, deepen engagement, and create opportunities for our members and others in the blind community to connect, contribute and influence the issues that affect our lives. While change is constant, our purpose remains clear.

Our report provides an overview of the mahi undertaken throughout the year. We also reflect on the many ways we have worked to build a resilient, responsive and forward-looking organisation. It also reminds us that thriving should not be measured solely by what we achieve, but by our collective willingness to adapt, learn and continue striving for positive outcomes for our members and the wider blind community.

Connecting with Members

Effective communication and engagement remain fundamental to Blind Citizens NZ's ability to carry out organisational advocacy, to represent and support members and progress organisational priorities. While we acknowledge there is always more that can be done, throughout the year, we continued to provide information through a range of channels. We created opportunities for members to connect, share perspectives, and contribute to issues of significance topical to the blind community. Recognising that members access information and engage in different ways, Blind Citizens NZ remains committed to both offering accessible information and delivering accessible and inclusive opportunities for participation.

Our online sessions with the President continue to provide members with opportunities to discuss blindness-related issues and share their perspectives. Meeting dates are scheduled and publicised well in advance to maximise participation. As we do across all our mahi, we recognise that not all members have access to, or confidence in using, digital technology. For this reason people can participate either online or by phone. Taking this approach assists in ensuring members remain connected regardless of their preferred method of engagement.

Our topic-specific online hui contribute significantly to informing our advocacy mahi. Two notable examples spring to mind: the Total Mobility Scheme Review and Digital Accessibility Standards. In both instances, relevant government officials joined us to discuss the issues under consideration and provide clarification.

Feedback provided during the Digital Accessibility Standards hui immediately contributed to a positive change in the standards.

Issued quarterly in Braille, audio, large print and electronically, Focus remains our key organisational publication and is distributed to all financial members.

While our monthly E-Bulletins are distributed to everyone on our database with an email address, the assistance of Accessible Information Communications enables this content to also be uploaded to our National Information Line. This approach assists in addressing the digital divide by ensuring that members who do not use technology can still benefit from and access the information being shared.

Both Focus and our E-Bulletins are also distributed to a range of stakeholders, including Members of Parliament, and government officials, helping to raise awareness of Blind Citizens NZ's work and priorities.

Finally, we continue to progress plans for an accessible online voting option for future Board elections. To support this initiative, we have invited members who use online systems but who may be less confident in doing so, to participate in a pilot programme. Their involvement will assist us to test and refine the process, helping to ensure it is accessible, user-friendly and fit for purpose for Blind Citizens NZ to utilise.

Strengthening Member Participation and Leadership

Strong Branches and Networks are essential to fostering member participation, leadership and engagement.

During the year, there have been several positive developments across our Geographic Branches, Geographic Networks, and Special Interest Networks, alongside a few challenges that continue to receive attention. We are particularly encouraged by the success of our re-established Otago Branch which continues to flourish, as does our newest Geographic Network Manawatū and Districts. Similarly, the recently established Blind Women's Special Interest Network is slowly but surely gaining momentum. Collectively, our Branches and Networks provide valuable opportunities for members to connect with one another, share experiences, and contribute to the ongoing mahi and sustainability of Blind Citizens NZ.

The Board's support for our Advocacy | Leadership Workshop is already paying dividends for those who attended, and the Branches and Networks that supported the event. One of the key lessons from previous workshops is that participants take their learnings and use them in ways that are meaningful to them. While this may not always result in direct involvement with Blind Citizens NZ, it contributes to stronger, more informed, and more confident blind people who are better equipped to advocate, lead and contribute within their communities. Ultimately, our organisational investment is in our members and their development, recognising the benefits extend well beyond Blind Citizens NZ.

Our Special Interest Networks open up opportunities for members both within and external to Blind Citizens NZ, with a common interest, to come together. Peer support and opportunities to inform our organisational mahi are key factors that motivate blind people to come together.

This was demonstrated during the year through engagement with personnel from Blind Low Vision NZ who joined our online hui to engage directly with members. This was particularly evident within our Guide Dog Handlers and Braille Special Interest Networks.

Working collaboratively with trustees of Albinism Trust New Zealand, we are on the way towards establishing an Albinism Special Interest Network. Watch this space...

Influencing Change

Influencing positive change is central to Blind Citizens NZ's mahi. Guided by the experiences of and input from our members, we continue to engage with government agencies, decision-makers, and stakeholders to make a 'blind bit of difference'. Regardless of the forum or mechanism through which our contributions are made, our focus remains on ensuring our community has a strong and credible voice in decisions that affect our lives in Aotearoa New Zealand. This influence is carried out via a range of activities, including through submissions on issues of significance, contributions to the work of the Disabled People's Organisations (DPO) Coalition and Blind Sector Forum Aotearoa, and the efforts of our appointed representatives.

While the diversity of issues and barriers faced by our community of people continues to grow, our advocacy is unwavering and remains constant. We focus our efforts on opportunities where we can achieve meaningful impact with the limited resources available to us.

Supporting this work requires a strong organisational foundation. During the year, we have reviewed Board Policy manuals and the Branch Handbook, and are finalising handbooks for Geographic Networks and Special Interest Networks. Additionally, we have been reviewing our public-facing advocacy documents, position statements and individualised policies to ensure they remain relevant, accurate and fit for purpose.

Amongst this year's submission opportunities, Blind Citizens NZ contributed feedback on a range of important issues including:

- Vehicle Safety Requirements – advocating for all quiet electric and hybrid vehicles coming into New Zealand, whether brand new or imported as used vehicles, to include Acoustic Vehicle Alerting Systems (AVAS).
- Independent Review of the RNZFB Governance Structure – providing feedback to Simpson Grierson on the Draft Report;
- NZ Transport Agency | Waka Kotahi proposals – opposing the proposed introduction of children up to age 12 being able to ride bicycles on footpaths and requiring e-scooters to use cycle lanes or the road and not be allowed to use footpaths;
- Total Mobility Review – Blind Citizens NZ supported the need for a sustainable Total Mobility Scheme grounded in human rights, and aligned with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). We specifically identify Articles 9 (Accessibility), 19 (Living independently and being included in society), and 20 (Personal mobility).

- Data and Statistics (Census) Amendment Bill – we raised concerns concluding that the Bill’s justification remained incomplete without evidence that the proposed model can maintain or improve data quality;
- Disability Support Services Bill – did not support as the approach taken in the Bill risked undermining the rights of disabled people, tāngata whaikaha, whanau hauā, their families and whanau.

Individually, and collectively with Blind Low Vision NZ, and together with the DPO Coalition, we have continued our advocacy with the Electoral Commission to ensure our community of people can cast a vote independently with confidence and dignity. This mahi is ongoing and recognises the relationship that has developed over many years, including the introduction of Telephone Dictation Voting in 2014.

The DPO Coalition offers significant opportunities for collective input from the seven DPO members, to also positively influence outcomes for disabled people in Aotearoa New Zealand. As President and Chief Executive, Blind Citizens NZ’s Board has appointed us to represent the organisation. It is important to note that the DPO Coalition is also one of the three partners to the Independent Monitoring Mechanism, which together with the Human Rights Commission and the Office of the Ombudsman, offers additional opportunities for engagement and input. Blind Citizens NZ, along with other DPOs, plays a key role in all DPO Coalition mahi.

The DPO Coalition meets approximately once every two months, for 2.5 days. Meetings are scheduled to be in-person or online. A significant component of the DPO Coalition's mahi is the Disabled People Led Monitoring research, which is contracted to the Donald Beasley Institute to carry out. The DPO Coalition is regularly offered opportunities to nominate | appoint representatives to a range of working and advisory groups such as Whaikaha's Services Advisory Group and its Accessibility Advisory Group. For all opportunities, each of the seven DPO members can put forward someone with the required knowledge, skills and expertise required for appointment. While some roles must be filled by disabled people who actively participate in DPO Coalition meetings, there are other opportunities for DPO members to nominate individuals from within their organisations who have relevant expertise. Examples of areas in which the DPO Coalition is continually involved, is engaged in feedback opportunities, and | or where it has representatives (some of whom are Blind Citizens NZ nominees) include:

- Disability Data and Evidence Advisory Group;
- Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment – established a Committee on NZS 4121 – Design for access and mobility, that involves people from across the disability sector;
- Ministries of: Justice, Transport, Health, Social Development, Whaikaha | Disabled People;
- Commissions: Health Quality Safety, Health and Disability, Human Rights, Mental Health and Wellbeing;
- Crown Response Office Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions.

Honouring Our Commitments and Relationships

Blind Citizens NZ is committed to honouring its obligations to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This mahi continues to progress under the guidance of the Te Tiriti Advisory Group Aotearoa, supported by the knowledge and expertise of Maria Stevens, John Puhara, Victor West, Peter Allen, and Russell Lowry. We also welcome the recent addition of Natt McLean and Bernie Rangi to the group. As we reported in 2025, the co-option of Peter Allen and Russell Lowry to the Board of Blind Citizens NZ in August 2025, happened at the recommendation of the Advisory Group.

The Te Tiriti Advisory Group Aotearoa's mahi involves progressing plans for a national hui to bring our kāpō tāngata whenua and haka pono ki te kaupapa community together for kōrero and shared learning. This includes taking a transparent and inclusive approach to selecting or electing kāpō tāngata whenua to the Board of Blind Citizens NZ. The Advisory Group has also developed an organisational Karakia that reflects our identity and values, which we will proudly use at this year's AGM and Conference. They are also exploring ways to strengthen the use of te reo Māori within Blind Citizens NZ, including reo that reflects the experiences of kāpō tāngata whenua - blind, deafblind, low-vision and vision-impaired Māori. The use of te reo Māori includes obtaining advice about an organisational name.

This mahi is about embedding Te Tiriti values at the heart of our organisation. It is ongoing, evolving, and essential to ensuring that kāpō tāngata whenua see their language, tikanga, and perspectives reflected in who we are and how we operate. As we look ahead, we acknowledge both the progress made and the responsibility still before us.

The Advisory Group's leadership continues to guide Blind Citizens NZ toward a future that more fully honours the spirit and intent of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

While our involvement in the DPO Coalition has been highlighted in the previous section, the value of this work extends far beyond formal meetings and activities. The trusted relationships developed with DPO members and government officials, provide an important foundation for our mahi, influence and progressing disability rights and inclusion.

Blind Citizens NZ's advisory contract with Whaikaha and our contribution to the All of Government Accessible Information process continue to be significant, especially as this provides an important opportunity to influence systemic change. This mahi helps ensure that government-produced information is available in alternate formats that meet the informational needs of blind people from the outset, rather than accessibility being considered as an afterthought. Through this work and the expertise provided by Thomas Bryan in his role as Accessible Information Advisor, Blind Citizens NZ plays an important role in ensuring blindness accessibility requirements are understood, recognised and embedded within government systems and practices. The outcomes achieved through this work and our organisational advocacy extend well beyond Blind Citizens NZ, supporting greater access to information and participation for blind people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The significance of Blind Low Vision NZ, the primary provider of blindness services in Aotearoa New Zealand, cannot be overstated.

While the relationship is important for its service-provider role, and because it is Blind Citizens NZ's primary source of funding, we suggest the strength of the relationship lies equally in the positive and productive approach that is developing between our two organisations. The relationship over the past few years has continued to mature, fostering a more constructive and collaborative environment that supports our shared commitment to improving outcomes for blind people.

Our international connections remain an important part of Blind Citizens NZ's work. We continue to strengthen the relationship with our sister organisation Blind Citizens Australia. It was a pleasure to welcome their President Vaughn Bennison and Chief Executive Deb Deshayes to our 80-year celebrations in 2025, and they hope to join us by Zoom this year.

Blind Citizens NZ also holds both Country Delegate positions to the World Blind Union, with Jonathan Godfrey and Thomas Bryan appointed by the Board through to March 2027. While there has been very little happening internationally, within the Asia Pacific Region, attention is increasingly turned to preparations for the 2027 Mid-Term Assembly.

We also remain proud to continue to provide financial and in-kind support for Martine Abel-Williamson, for her four-year term as WBU Immediate Past President. Blind Low Vision NZ's decision to share these expenses equally with Blind Citizens NZ is very much appreciated, and reflects the strong spirit of partnership that continues to underpin our work.

Blind Citizens NZ's membership of the Pacific Disability Forum, as reported last year, has moved from Associate to full Membership status.

The change in membership enabled the Board of Blind Citizens NZ to support the President and Chief Executive to attend the PDF Conference in Fiji, late October last year. As full members, we were most fortunate that the PDF funded all costs. Attending the week-long event provided a significant opportunity to build regional relationships, share perspectives, and to contribute to discussions in relation to disabled people across the Pacific.

Strengthening Our Organisation

When developing the new Strategic Plan, the Board's intention was to balance a commitment to business as usual with a strong focus on the organisation's long-term sustainability and success. A key priority for the Board in the immediate future is succession planning.

The Strategic Plan also introduces a new way of thinking. Rather than having multiple priorities, there is a single strategic focus that everyone across Blind Citizens NZ can contribute to, including the Board, staff, Branches, Networks, and individual members. This shared focus is intended to achieve greater alignment across the organisation while encouraging projects that capture the interest and imagination of our members and the wider blindness community.

Looking Ahead

As we reflect on the year, we feel it is clear that Blind Citizens NZ continues to operate in an environment of change.

Across our advocacy, member engagement, leadership development, and relationships, we have endeavoured to remain responsive to the evolving needs and aspirations of our community of people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our theme, **"Times are Changing - Are We Thriving or Surviving?"**, presents an important question. While there will be challenges ahead, we believe the examples highlighted throughout this report demonstrate an organisation that is doing more than just responding to change or reacting to opportunities. Through the collective efforts of our members, volunteers, Board, staff, Branches, Networks, and representatives, Blind Citizens NZ continues to strengthen its influence, build capability, and create opportunities for blind people to participate fully in their communities and in the decisions that affect their lives.

We hasten to point out that none of this happens in isolation. We acknowledge and thank our members for their ongoing support, engagement, and willingness to contribute their lived experience to our mahi. We also acknowledge the many organisations, officials, and stakeholders who work alongside us to achieve shared goals.

While there is still much to be done, we remain optimistic about the future. Guided by our new Strategic Plan, informed by the voices of our members, and grounded in our commitment to equity, accessibility, and inclusion, Blind Citizens NZ is well positioned to meet the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

In changing times, thriving is not simply measured by achievement. It is reflected in our resilience, our willingness to adapt, and our determination to continue making a blind bit of difference. Together, we remain focused on building a future in which blind people can participate, contribute, and thrive.

As we bring this report to a close, it is fitting to acknowledge and thank those whose commitment and contribution make Blind Citizens NZ's work possible.

We extend sincere thanks to the Board of Blind Citizens NZ. Board Members generously give their time, experience, and leadership, coming together for both scheduled and extraordinary Board Meetings as needed. Governance roles carry significant responsibility, requiring careful consideration of often substantial agendas and supporting material. The dedication with which all members of the governing body undertake this mahi, without financial recompense, reflects a genuine commitment to Blind Citizens NZ, its members and the wider community.

In acknowledging the contribution made by all Board Members, we take this opportunity to recognise Andrea Courtney, whose 20-plus years of service on the Board come to an end this year. Having first joined the Board in 2003, Andrea has given generously of her time, knowledge and leadership across more than two decades. Her decision not to seek re-election was not made lightly, and we thank her for the considerable contribution she has made to Blind Citizens NZ. We wish Andrea every success in the next chapter of her journey, and know she will remain in touch with many of us.

We also acknowledge and thank the team supporting the Chief Executive: Emily Tilley Administration Support, Mary Yee Financial Assistant, and Thomas Bryan, Accessible Information Advisor. While small in number, this team consistently delivers a wide range of responsibilities with professionalism, flexibility and dedication.

Collectively, the Chief Executive and her team represent the equivalent of approximately two full-time positions, a reminder of both the scale of the organisation's achievements and the commitment that makes them possible.

Finally, to everyone who contributes their time, expertise, and energy to Blind Citizens NZ, whether as a member, volunteer, leader, supporter, or staff member, thank you. The progress outlined throughout this report is the result of a collective effort, and we are grateful for the role each of you plays in advancing our mahi. Together we continue to work towards our vision of an Aotearoa New Zealand where blind, deafblind, low vision and vision-impaired people are inspired and supported to live life as we choose, and where we can participate fully.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

National Office Performance Report For the year ended 30 June 2026

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.

Contents

Page

Statement of Financial Performance	3
Statement of Financial Position	4 – 5
Statement of Cash Flows	6 - 7
Statement of Accounting Policies	8 - 12
Notes to the Performance Report	13 - 22

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 2026

	Note	2026	2025
Revenue		\$	\$
Donations, koha, bequests and other fundraising activities	1	11,364	11,473
General grants	1	260,000	216,300
Government service delivery grants/contracts	1	148,686	135,417
Membership fees and subscriptions	1	1,661	1,480
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	1	6,945	17,353
Other revenue	1	45,604	21,669
Total Revenue		474,260	403,692
Expenses			
Expenses related to fundraising	2	660	660
Employee remuneration and other related costs	2	185,362	175,202
Volunteer related expenses	2	89,696	99,875
Other expenses related to service delivery	2	111,654	75,286
Other expenses	2	179,589	183,980
Total Expenses		566,961	535,003
Operating surplus/(deficit)		(92,701)	(131,311)

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Expenses continued

	Note	2026	2025
Unrealised gain/(loss) on fair value changes		93,513	67,633
Net surplus /(deficit) for the year		811	(63,678)

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2026

		2026	2025
		\$	\$
Assets			
Current Assets			
Bank accounts and cash	3	417,297	447,696
Debtors and prepayments	3	47,766	26,818
Total Current Assets		465,063	474,514
Non-Current Assets			
		2026	2025
		\$	\$
Property, plant and equipment	4	9,512	4,583
Investments	3	1,238,005	1,149,312
Total Non-Current Assets		1,247,517	1,153,895
Total Assets		1,712,580	1,628,409
		2026	2025
		\$	\$
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Creditors and accrued expenses	3	91,391	95,010
Employee costs payable	3	22,229	21,650
Other current liabilities	3	83,869	7,404
Total Current Liabilities		197,489	124,064
Total Liabilities		197,489	124,064
Total Assets less Total Liabilities (Net Assets)		1,515,091	1,504,345

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2026

Accumulated Funds	Note	2026 \$	2025 \$
Accumulated surpluses or (deficits)	5	103,019	195,194
Reserves	5	1,412,072	1,309,151
Total Accumulated Funds		1,515,091	1,504,345



Jonathan Godfrey
President



Paula Waby
Board Member

Dated: 28 September 2026

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2026

	2026	2025
Cash Flows from Operating Activities		
Cash was received from		
Donations, koha, bequests and other fundraising activities	11,363	11,473
General grants	260,000	216,300
Government services delivery grants/contracts	132,232	141,473
Membership fees and subscriptions	1,661	1,480
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	11,765	19,418
Other revenue	47,520	21,669
Net GST	(9,601)	10,152
Cash was applied to:		
Payments related to fundraising	660	660
Employee remuneration and other related costs	184,573	172,283
Volunteer related payments	89,696	99,875
Other payments related to service delivery	111,654	75,286
Payments for Capital Expenditure	8,197	-
Other expenses	166,957	166,660
Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities	(106,797)	(92,799)

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Statement of Cash Flows

	2026	2025
	\$	\$
Cash was received from:		
Branch funds received	9,934	14,562
DPO Coalition funds held on behalf	66,464	-
Net Cash Flows from Operating and Investing Activities	76,398	14,562
Net Increase / (Decrease) in Cash	(30,399)	(78,237)
Opening Cash	447,696	525,933
Closing Cash	417,297	447,696
This is represented by:		
Bank Accounts and Petty cash	417,297	447,696

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Statement of Accounting Policies

Basis of Preparation

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated - National Office has elected to apply the XRB's Tier 3 (NFP) Standard on the basis that it does not have public accountability and has total annual expenses of equal to or less than \$5,000,000. 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 measured at fair value in accordance with the entity's election to apply the recognition and measurement requirements of PBE IPSAS 41 Financial Instruments.

Presentation Currency

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

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

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

Income Tax

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

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Statement of Accounting Policies

Bank Accounts and Cash

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

Debtors and other Receivables

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

Creditors and other Payables

Creditors and other payables are stated at cost.

Property, Plant and Equipment

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

Depreciation

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

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

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

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.

PBE IPSAS 41 Financial Instruments (Opt-up)

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated - National Office has elected to apply the recognition and measurement requirements of PBE IPSAS 41 Financial Instruments to its investment portfolio.

Investments are measured at fair value. Interest revenue is recognised using the effective interest method and dividend revenue is recognised when the right to receive payment is established.

Blind Citizens NZ has designated its equity investments at fair value through other comprehensive revenue and expense. Accordingly, changes in fair value are recognised in the Investment Revaluation Reserve and are not recognised in surplus or deficit.

Trade receivables are measured at cost less any expected credit losses.

Revenue

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

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

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

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

Changes in Accounting Policies

There have been no changes in accounting policies, which continue to be applied on a basis consistent with the previous year.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 1: Analysis of Revenue

Revenue Item	Analysis	2026 \$	2025 \$
Donations, koha, bequests and other general fundraising activities	Legacies & Bequests	5,000	1,000
	Donations	6,304	10,473
	Total	11,364	11,473

Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
General grants	Blind Low Vision NZ service contract	230,000	216,300
	Lotteries Commission	30,000	-
	Total	260,000	216,300

Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Government service delivery grants/contracts	MSD Contract	120,000	120,000
	Disabled People's Organisation Govt	28,686	15,417
	Total	148,686	135,417

Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Membership fees and subscriptions	Membership Fees	1,661	1,480
	Total	1,661	1,480

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 1: Analysis of Revenue Continued

		2026	2025
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	Interest	2,043	9,853
	Dividends	3,004	2,697
	Realised Gain/(Loss) on sale of investments	1,898	4,803
	Total	6,945	17,353

Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Other revenue	AGM and Conference	31,809	16,636
	Calendar sales	4,611	4,687
	Gain on sale of fixed assets	9,127	-
	Other	57	346
	Total	45,604	21,669

Note 2: Analysis of Expenses

		2026	2025
Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Expenses related to fundraising	Fundraising	660	660
	Total	660	660

Expense Item	Analysis		
Employee remuneration and other related costs	Staff Wages	184,741	174,449
	ACC	622	753
	Total	185,363	175,202

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 2: Analysis of Expenses Continued

Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Volunteer related expenses	Board Expenses	60,231	48,299
	Te Tiriti o Waitangi	9,515	15,253
	Advisory Group		
	World Blind Union	19,950	36,323
	Total	89,696	99,875

Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Other expenses related to service delivery	Advocacy	1,931	442
	Advocacy Leadership	10,510	247
	Workshop		
	AGM and Conference	99,213	74,597
	Total	111,654	75,286

Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Other expenses	Calendars	4,811	6,047
	Administration Expenses	65,581	71,868
	Office Expenses	109,197	106,065
	Total	179,589	183,980

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 3: Analysis of Assets and Liabilities

Asset Item	Analysis	2026	2025
		\$	\$
Bank accounts and cash	Cheque account balances	54,521	92,010
	On call account balance	362,156	355,067
	Imprest Account	500	500
	Petty Cash	120	120
	Total	417,297	447,696

Asset Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Debtors and prepayments	Accounts receivable	44,494	14,070
	Prepayments	3,272	12,748
	Total	47,766	26,818

Asset Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Financial assets at fair value	ANZ Managed Investment Portfolio	1,238,005	1,149,312
	Total	1,238,005	1,149,312

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 3: Analysis of Assets and Liabilities Continued

		2026	2025
Liability Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Creditors and accrued expenses	Trade and other payables	54,581	62,287
	Accrued expenses	38,827	28,279
	GST Payable	(2,017)	4,444
	Total	91,391	95,010

Liability Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Employee costs payable	Holiday pay accrual	12,381	15,036
	Wages accruals	9,848	6,614
	Total	22,229	21,650

Liability Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Other	Mana Pasefika Development Grant	10,000	-
	DPO Coalition Fundholder account	66,464	-
	Other	7,405	7,404
	Total	83,869	7,404

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 4: Property, Plant and Equipment

2026

Asset Class	Opening Carrying Amount	Purchases	Sales/ Disposals	Current Year Depreciation & Impairment	Closing Carrying Amount
Furniture and fixtures	954	-	-	(191)	763
Office equipment	1,475	8,197	(480)	(610)	8,582
Motor Vehicles	1,916	-	(1,916)	-	-
Computer Software	238	-	-	(71)	167
Total	4,583	8,197	(2,396)	(872)	9,512

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

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 2026

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 5: Accumulated Funds

2026

Description	Accumulated Surpluses or Deficits	Reserves	Total
Opening Balance	195,194	1,309,151	1,504,345
Surplus/(Deficit)	811	-	811
Transfer to Investment reevaluation reserve	(93,512)	93,512	-
Transfer to Reserves	(3,203)	3,203	-
Transfer from Reserves	3,729	(3,729)	-
Branch Funds Brought to Account	-	9,935	9,935
Closing Balance	103,019	1,412,072	1,515,091

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

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	(67,633)	67,633	-
Transfer to Reserves	(11,302)	11,302	-
Transfer from Reserves	23,429	(23,429)	-
Branch Funds Brought to Account	-	14,563	14,563
Closing Balance	195,194	1,309,151	1,504,345

Breakdown of Reserves	2026	2025
Name	\$	\$
General Fund	655,048	651,911
Member for Life Fund	23,648	23,583
Leadership Fund	163,121	166,850
Branch Funds Brought to Account	24,498	14,563
Investment Revaluation Reserve	497,239	403,726
Establishing/Re-establishing Branches Reserve	48,518	48,518
Total	1,412,072	1,309,151

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 6: Commitments and Contingencies

	2026	2025
	\$	\$
Commitments		
National Office lease – Current Portion	42,155	42,155
National Office lease – Non-Current Portion	31,619	70,258
Photo-copier lease – Current Portion	362	1,085
Photo-copier lease – Non-Current Portion	-	362
Total	74,136	113,860

Note 7: Related Party Transactions

		2026	2025	2026	2025
Description of Related Party Relationship	Description of the Transaction (whether in cash or amount in kind)	Value of Transactions	Value of Transactions	Amount Out-standing	Amount Out-standing
Branches	Large Format Calendar sales	1,148	1,104	-	-
Branches	Printing and postage charges	232	89	-	-

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated – National Office Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 7: Related Party Transactions continued

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.

Blind Citizens NZ contracts Thomas Bryan in the position of Accessible Information Advisor. He is the Chief Executive's partner. Blind Citizens NZ have paid Thomas Bryan \$36,365 (2025: \$37,874) for work carried out in relation to his contract.

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)

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Summarised financial information – National Office

Revenue and expenses for the year ended 30 June 2026

Table:

Revenue	2026	2025
Donations, koha, fundraising, bequests etc.	11,364	11,473
Subscriptions from members	1,661	1,480
Grants (BLVNZ, MSD) and Government service delivery grants contracts	408,686	351,717
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	6,945	17,353
Other Revenue (Conference Registrations, Large Print Calendars etc)	45,604	21,669
Total operating revenue	474,260	403,692

Expense	blank	blank
Fundraising-related expenses	660	660
Employee remuneration and other related costs	185,362	175,202
Volunteer-related expenses (Board)	89,696	99,875
Other expenses related to service delivery (national office costs etc.)	111,654	75,286
Other expenses	179,589	183,980
Total operating expenses	566,961	535,003
Operating (deficit) surplus	(92,701)	(131,311)
Unrealised gain (loss) on fair value changes	93,513	67,633
Net surplus (deficit) for the year	811	(63,678)

End table.

Assets and liabilities at 30 June 2026

Table:

Current Assets	2026	2025
Bank accounts and cash	417,297	447,696
Debtors and prepayments	47,766	26,818
Total current assets	465,063	474,514
Non-current assets	blank	blank
Property, plant and equipment	9,512	4,583
Investments	1,238,005	1,149,312
Total non-current assets	1,247,517	1,153,895
Total assets	1,712,580	1,628,409
Liabilities	blank	blank
Current Liabilities (Creditors and accrued expenses, Employee costs payable, other current liabilities)	197,489	124,064

Total Current Liabilities	197,489	124,064
Total Liabilities	197,489	124,064
Total Assets less Total Liabilities (Net Assets)	1,515,091	1,504,345

End Table

Accumulated Funds

Table:

Accumulated Funds	2026	2025	
Accumulated surpluses (or deficits)	103,019	195,194	
Reserves	1,412,072	1,309,151	
Total Accumulated Funds	1,414,091	1,504,345	

End Table.

Blind Citizens NZ Representative Reports

Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ)

From Pauline Melham, Blind Citizens NZ Appointee to BLENNZ Board

For the period September 2025 to August 2026

BLENNZ Vision

Every BLENNZ ākonga is well prepared to achieve in life.

Meetings of the Board

The Board of Blind Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ) has met six times over the past 12 months. Meetings are either held in person at the BLENNZ campus at Homai, South Auckland or over Zoom. Your Board appointee has attended all meetings and acted as Chair for the June 2026 meeting when the current Chair was granted a leave of absence from the Board to travel overseas. Last year, your appointee served on the Principal's Performance Subcommittee and the Student Disciplinary Committee (the latter of which did not need to meet). This year, your appointee has served on the Policy Committee. In addition to the preparation required for each Board meeting, your appointee provides the Board of Blind Citizens NZ with a report after each BLENNZ Board meeting.

Since the start of 2026 your appointee has attended some professional development sessions run by Govhub (formerly, the New Zealand School Boards Association) to improve her governance skills and professional practice.

The Board has been busy again over the past twelve months. The new School Principal Saul Taylor is no longer 'new' and has completed his 'Beginning Principal's' course, something all new Principals are required to do. A few major changes have occurred in school administration with the retirement of two long-term staff members. Both Bridget Lamphie – School Business Manager and Janey Cooke – Board Secretary have retired. The Board thanked both of these staff for their combined seventy years of service. The positions Bridget and Janey left have now been filled and new staff are settling in well.

In term four of this year, Elaine Gilmour, BLENNZ Deputy Principal will retire after over thirty-years' service at BLENNZ. The recruitment for a new Deputy Principal has taken place and final details are being confirmed. At the time of writing, the Board does not know who the new Deputy Principal will be, but we are told they are very experienced, including in teaching disabled learners.

BLENNZ Board Membership

- School Board elections were held in September 2025 which resulted in some changes to the Board make-up:
- David Cullen — BLENNZ resource centre parent rep & Presiding Member
- Pauline Melham — BCNZ Appointee & Deputy Presiding Member

- Saul Taylor — Principal
- Ernie Belk — Staff Representative
- Martine Abel-Williamson — BLVNZ Appointee
- Ross Meikle — BLENNZ Resource Centre Parent Representative
- Kevin Manson — BLENNZ Resource Centre Parent Representative
- Kirsten Haylock — Homai School Parent Representative
- Lisa Mulligan — BLENNZ Resource Centre Parent Representative
- Vacant — Tāngata Whenua Appointee
- Tracy Wallace — Board Secretary (has taken over from Janey Cooke).

The Tāngata Whenua appointee has remained vacant since the resignation of Nigel Ngahiwi last June. Kāpō Māori Aotearoa were not able to find a suitable Board member within their organisation. Your BLENNZ appointee suggested that Blind Citizens NZ had tāngata whenua members who could be approached. However, earlier this year the post was advertised, and several people put forward an Expression of Interest (EOI). The Board read and voted on all EOI and the top two candidates have been put before Kāpō Māori Aotearoa for them to decide who the Tāngata Whenua appointee should be. The Board awaits their answer.

Strategic Goal Reporting

Throughout the latter part of 2025, the Board worked on the development of the new Strategic Goals for the 2026-2028 period. The Board surveyed all parents and staff and asked them a series of questions about the priorities for BLENNZ moving forwards.

The survey answers were themed, and the Board and senior school staff refined the three strategic goals out of the broad themes.

The Strategic Goals came into effect in January 2026 and are:

- 1. Quality practice** - enhancing teaching capability and consistency – This goal is about providing Professional Learning Development so all staff across BLENNZ are well versed in the BLENNZ expanded core curriculum. The areas that BLENNZ learners receive support in over and above the national curriculum for example, daily living skills and social skills.
- 2. Knowing BLENNZ** - process clarity, ensuring stakeholders and staff understand BLENNZ systems and procedures. This goal is making sure that all people BLENNZ interacts with from parents, teachers in mainstream schools, stakeholder organisations and medical staff know about BLENNZ and what it does so learners can get the support they need and people know when to refer learners to BLENNZ.
- 3. Curriculum alignment** - meeting government curriculum requirements to support equitable outcomes. Over the past few years there has been a great deal of change in government requirements of schools for example in structured literacy and numeracy. This goal ensures that all BLENNZ teaching staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills to adapt to government curriculum changes.

The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) was updated and rolled out to staff at their annual conference in January, there are seven areas that staff must be familiar with.

The ECC has been well received by staff, they spent time in term one establishing the baseline knowledge of all RTV and developing training modules for each of the seven areas.

Engagement with key organisations in the education and disability space have been conducted for example, Blind Citizens NZ, Parents of Vision Impaired, Kāpō Māori Aotearoa, BLVNZ, and Ministry of Education Staff. In addition, the Kura that operates next door to BLENNZ has also been in touch and a good relationship is developing between the two schools.

BLENNZ staff have used the National Assessment Service Homai and regional clinics to liaise with relevant medical professionals to make them aware of BLENNZ, who the school is for and what it does.

BLENNZ enrolment criteria, referral and enrolment documentation has been reviewed and updated.

In reference to goal three, structured maths and literacy professional development is being rolled out to all RTV and teaching assistants.

BLENNZ Learners

There are approximately 1,650 students enrolled throughout BLENNZ. About 1,350 of these students receive ORS funding from the Ministry of Education, which provides additional support in school.

Of the 1,350 learners receiving ORS funding 357 receive ORS funding for vision loss only, the other 1,000 receive it for vision loss plus at least one additional impairment. Over half of the school population have a dual impairment.

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 were due to run for three years, the 2027 year is the last year of the funds.

- 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 have been critical in supporting students at risk of harm. They have also been particularly helpful to the students on the Transition programme. This year, there has had to be some streamlining of the service as some students received a great deal of individual attention whilst other students were kept on the waiting list. With better oversight from the lead counsellor, this situation has been resolved. The Ministry of Education is offering some support towards the cost of the Counsellors, which the board hopes to receive next year. This will reduce the call on accumulated funds for this service.

2. Throughout 2024 and 2025 ten staff were enrolled in two of the rehabilitation papers offered by Massey University. It was hoped they would then have the skills to provide some Developmental Orientation and Mobility Services for the students they support as Registered Teacher Vision or RTV. Unfortunately, none of the staff who completed the courses have been able to put their learning into practice due to concerns expressed by fully trained Developmental Orientation and Mobility Instructors. A new DOM Team Leader has been appointed and through his work with the team and with Massey University, a set of guidelines has been drawn up to clarify the roles that the newly qualified RTV-DOM can take on. There is a great deal they can do to support the student without having to take the student outside of the school gate. With this settled, it is hoped the staff who have already completed the qualification can now incorporate DOM into the work they do with students. It is also hoped that when applications open for scholarships for this year, more staff will apply to do the course. It should be noted there are only ten DOMs employed by BLENNZ and they cannot effectively work with over 1600 students per year. If RTV can take on some of the basic skills, DOM's can focus on the more complicated skills.
3. **Collaboration with Blind Sport New Zealand** – Blind Sport has continued to deliver online resources about accessible ways of teaching blind students and sports. At the same time, it has provided some online Professional Development to BLENNZ Staff about accessible sport. The new Sport Lead at BLENNZ (who is on a fixed term contract) has an excellent relationship with Blind Sport and has been working with them on this mahi.

The new Sports Lead has also been running some sports programmes for BLENNZ students and some immersion courses, giving our learners more opportunity to engage in physical activity.

- 4. Dramatic Art** – In November last year, the students at the Homai base school put on a production at the Dew Drop Event Centre in Manukau entitled “Oh the places we will go”. This was a major production for the school and enjoyed by the students who took part. However, it took a great deal of work on the part of school staff and so a similar project was not undertaken as part of the 2026 school year. The next event will take place in 2027. In the meantime, the School of Performing Arts or SOPA has been attending BLENNZ once a month and providing workshops to students at the base school, those in Transition and the students in the surrounding area. These events have proved very popular.

The Transition Programme

The BLENNZ Transition programme for learners who have left school and are learning independent living skills has 10 members enrolled in 2026 and the taster sessions for the 2027 intake have been very popular. The students had a very busy term in term one with a lot of events and outings. Term two and three have been quieter. The Transition Programme runs between 9am and 3pm Monday to Friday. The remainder of the time students are part of the residential programme, with focuses on a lot of independent living skills and developing hobbies and interests. Students live outside of Auckland and attend James Cook High School are also part of the residential programme.

There is one student this year who falls into that category. Not all transition students are also residential students.

What happens to BLENNZ Learners after they leave school?

Of the 26 students leaving BLENNZ at the end of last year who were categorised as Vision Only ORRS funded, 19 students left with NCEA Level III, two gained NCEA Level II and One gained NCEA Level I. Three students moved straight into employment, one is training for the Paralympics, one entered the Transition Programme at BLENNZ one went into assisted living and one is at home undertaking community participation.

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:

- Transition and residential students attended a 'Have a go at surfing day' run by Disabled Surfers Association at Piha. All students seemed to have a fantastic time.
- In 2025 Homai turned 60 and BLENNZ turned twenty. These two occasions were celebrated with the planting of a Kauri tree on the BLENNZ site. A morning tea with cake was held for staff and an aerial photo of the BLENNZ site today was taken and sits beside the photo of the site taken in 1965 when the school first opened.

- A family fun night was held for students and families of BLENNZ at Homai last October, just over 200 people attended.
- Our students have been getting involved with the Achilles running group and three transition students took part in the 5km and 11km events run as part of the Auckland Marathon in November. Other students have taken part in Round the Bays in Auckland and Wellington in 2026.
- The Transition programme farewelled seven students at the end of 2025 and a graduation ceremony for them and their whanau was held on 5 December.
- In 2026, a small contingent of athletes from BLENNZ and their supporters went to the Halberg Games as a BLENNZ team. Athletes took part in a range of events from competitive athletics and swimming to 'have a go' events for example, dance classes and rock climbing. Students really enjoyed the Halberg Games, and it is hoped that BLENNZ will keep sending athletes, now that a 'tradition' has been started.
- Several BLENNZ students took part in the BANZAT Braille challenge this year. Students had to read a recipe in Braille and then prepare the food. As there was food involved, apparently this challenge was very popular.
- There have been several immersion events that have taken place at BLENNZ throughout the year.

Board Professional Development

Throughout the year, the BLENNZ School Board is provided with a number of presentations either for our own professional development or to provide Board members with a more in-depth picture of a facet of the BLENNZ services. In the last year, presentations have included:

- Media training from Mary Lambie Socious Media.
- The BLENNZ Expanded Core Curriculum ECC. This is the Curriculum the RTV and other BLENNZ staff focus on and includes Developmental Orientation and Mobility (DOM), Daily Living Skills, Communication and Technology, Braille (for those using it) and social skills development.
- The Transition and Residential Programmes at BLENNZ.
- Governance 101 for School Boards.

Space in the base school

Throughout 2025, there was a shortage of space available at the BLENNZ base school at Homai. The BLENNZ Early Learning Service had to give up some its space to make an additional classroom at BLENNZ. At the start of 2026, the new two classroom Satellite Unit opened at James Cook, now Hiwa High School. This has meant that the more senior classes have been able to transfer to the new school and this is working out well.

However, there are ten more students on the waiting list for the BLENNZ base school. The Ministry of Education has been making positive noises about funding two new classrooms at BLENNZ to accommodate more learners.

Should this happen, it is hoped these classrooms will be up and running by the start of the school year, 2027. Two new classrooms would allow for 12 students which would clear the current waiting list.

In the Budget this year, the Government announced that a two-classroom satellite Unit for BLENNZ learners would be established at Pukekohe High School. This Unit is very welcome, and early discussions are underway between the Principals of the two schools.

BLENNZ would also like to find a secondary school in West Auckland that would house a satellite unit, as the Scott Point satellite Unit is working well but these learners will need somewhere to go when they are at secondary school.

There are various shifting about of BLENNZ Resource Centres throughout the regions, but these impact on the staff more than the students, as the Resource Centres are the base for the staff and the students do not receive education in these facilities.

School facilities

Throughout 2025 there were issues with the newly built school pool at BLENNZ. After a sustained period of negotiations and sorting out of new contractors, the issues with the pool were resolved and it is now fully operational and very well used by the students.

Students in taxis

Many of you will have heard in the media about disabled incidents involving disabled students being transported to school by taxi, who were 'forgotten' about and ended up spending hours in someone's minivan instead of at school. In light of these events (which thankfully did not involve BLENNZ students) BLENNZ has conducted a review of its transport arrangements for getting students to and from its base site to ensure they are following best practice.

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 NZ and the Board of Blind Low Vision Education Network NZ for their continued support.

Your representative has now served two terms on the BLENNZ Board. The Blind Citizens Appointee position comes up for review early in 2027. Your representative would be very keen to continue to serve on the BLENNZ Board, whilst at the same time realising that others need a chance to develop and serve.

Blind Citizens NZ National Information Line

From Kathryn Stevenson, Blind Citizens NZ, Information Line Coordinator

During 2025 I expressed a willingness to keep the National Information line going. Around November, I made a more formal (email) offer which was gratefully received. Being just near Christmas, there was a holiday lull, but eventually around February, I started to learn the ropes with the knowledgeable guidance of Thomas Bryan, and Clive Lansink as tech back-up.

I completed my first few trial bulletins on 3 and 10 May. These practice bulletins included; opening/greetings, announcements, and the inclusion of practice messages left by Thomas (my favourite was about an audio-described bus tour around Wellington, and to ask your local MP for more info!).

Learning to record, how to go back and forward, to press *3 for a new segment etc proved fairly easy – I just hoped I didn't delete anyone else's work.

I have felt honoured to take over from Vaughan. I endeavour to create interesting bulletins, with a touch of humour. Which will be influenced by messages and input received from our blind and low vision and deaf-blind community.

Information used in the practice bulletins was also suitable for the 'real' bulletins, for example, introducing myself for those who never knew me, or who are new to the blind community.

I shared how, not only had I been a student at Homai, but also a Teacher's Aid, and later a professional music therapist. I have a twin brother who is vision impaired, and I had a short stint on the Auckland Branch Committee, so I have many valuable experiences from which I can draw on to speak to and understand our bulletin listeners. Thanks to a door prize, I am also a life member of Blind Citizens NZ.

The first 'real', live bulletin was presented on Sunday 17 May. Since then, topics covered over the past few months have included:

- President's hui
- Blind Citizens NZ's National AGM and Conference
- Formation of the women's group
- Funding for music learning
- Tactile chess sets
- Taxi drivers miss using MT cards
- Digitalisation of ID
- Braille programs for concerts
- Name for the line – feedback line/information line (info line won)
- Assistance at airports
- Electronic immigration – NZTD NZ Travellers declaration
- The sighted asking a blind person "who am I"
- Auckland City rail link opening
- Government response re. Total mobility scheme

As my bulletin style continues to develop, it is sure to be permeated by my own personality, and influenced by items of interest and responses from our listeners.

I thank the Board for giving me this opportunity and I look forward to producing more bulletins.

The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT)

From Leyna Coleman, Blind Citizens NZ Representative

BANZAT continues its work of upholding standards for Braille in New Zealand. This includes keeping abreast of what is happening with Braille internationally, accrediting producers of Braille in New Zealand, and making sure New Zealand standards (including Braille formatting and Te Reo Maori Braille) are upheld. In a world where print is constantly changing, and technology continues to evolve (both Braille and otherwise) it is important to know what is happening and how it affects Braille readers and learners in New Zealand.

This report covers the period from September 2025 to the present. Along with BANZAT's routine work, I will be sharing some exciting opportunities BANZAT has had, as well as reminding you (Blind Citizens NZ members) how you can get involved and keep up-to-date with what we're doing.

BANZAT continues to meet every three months. This is a combination of face-to-face meetings at BLENNZ and online meetings on Zoom. Recently we have also been utilising the new BLVNZ Parnell Community Hub in central Auckland. Braille is a "hands-on" medium, so we try to meet face-to-face at least once a year.

We are always trying to think of ways people can be more informed about BANZAT and its work.

Our website and Facebook page are our online presence, and although quiet, our email list, NZBraille, remains a good place to get information about BANZAT and Braille in New Zealand. Now that we have the BLVNZ Hub in Parnell available, we are thinking about ways to make our AGM more interactive.

For the last few years (including September 2025) our AGM has been held at BLENNZ for trustees in person, with observers attending online. We are grateful to BLENNZ for hosting us. However, with the BLVNZ Community Hub now available in Parnell, an opportunity exists to have observers in person once again at our AGM. This year our AGM will take place in November and communications will go out from BANZAT in due course concerning participation in this meeting.

One of the things I really enjoy about being part of BANZAT each year is the BANZAT Braille Challenge. This is a wonderful partnership between BANZAT and BLENNZ. Each year akonga (students) from BLENNZ complete Braille-related goals, usually centred around a theme. An online hui allows the akonga participating to meet adult mentors who are Braille users. I usually volunteer to be an adult mentor and am amazed at the creativity of these young people, from early childhood to the transition programme. This year's theme was recipes and inspired all sorts of creative ideas, from slime to yummy treats to full meals. Of course, Braille has to feature, so recipes are written or read in Braille, or the student uses Braille equipment for measuring or something else relating to the recipe. As a thank-you, all adult mentors will receive a recipe book with the students' recipes in it. I'm looking forward to mine! The book is also a prize for each student completing the challenge.

BANZAT's Code Maintenance Committee continues to meet regularly (usually just before a BANZAT meeting). All of the committee members observe on at least one Committee of the International Council on English Braille (ICEB). ICEB also had its Mid-Term Executive Meeting in August. This was held online and Maria Stevens was our country delegate.

BANZAT was represented at the Round Table Conference in Australia earlier this year.

Together with the Australian Braille Authority (ABA), we continue to administer the Trans-Tasman Certificate of Proficiency in UEB. Last year 2 candidates sat and passed the exam. BANZAT continues to encourage people to hold this qualification if they wish to do anything professional with Braille, e.g. produce, teach etc.

BANZAT has begun the process of updating the booklet Essentials of Braille Formatting (last updated 2014). A consultation workshop was held earlier in the year in Auckland to get feedback from Braille professionals. We hope to have this booklet updated by early next year (2027).

In March BANZAT trustees attended a governance training session. This was very informative and helps us ensure we are compliant with current legislation. Several internal documents are also being revised, including our Trust Deed. Manatu Orataua Statement of Collaboration (formerly the Memorandum of Understanding) is the document that outlines BANZAT's relationship with each of the five Founding Organisations: BLVNZ, BLENNZ, Kāpō Māori Aotearoa, Parents of Vision Impaired, and of course Blind Citizens NZ. Blind Citizens NZ has signed the statement.

BANZAT continues to work with Blind Low Vision NZ to provide feedback on its Braille services. This year, we have provided feedback on the Braille calendar that is being produced. BANZAT was represented on BLVNZ's Braille Project and continues to work with BLVNZ regarding this.

I would like to thank Rose and the Board of Blind Citizens NZ for their continued support for BANZAT and for me as their representative. I look forward to continuing the vital work BANZAT does to ensure Braille in New Zealand doesn't just survive, it thrives!

World Blind Union

From Thomas Bryan, Blind Citizens NZ Country Delegate

General Updates

Since our 2025 AGM and Conference, it's been another busy year both at a national level and regionally with changes to each of the leadership teams. While I reported on these verbally along with my representation at the General Assembly in September, when updating my report to last year's Annual General Meeting and Conference, I include more detail of the details here. I continue to work alongside and engage with Jonathan Godfrey, my colleague Country Delegate. We coordinate our work and the approach we towards WBU matters.

World Blind Union General Assembly and Blindness Summit

Overview and general comments

The WBU General Assembly and World Blindness Summit was held from September 1 to September 5th in Sao Paulo. Over 1,200 people registered to attend.

The hotel and conference venues were next door to each other so just a short walk away. While the hotel layout was an easy layout, getting around posed a few challenges.

Very few staff or volunteers spoke English, and so asking for directions or being guided certainly had its challenges.

Both the hotel shared spaces and the conference centre were very open spaces, mainly concrete and windows, which reflected any noise loudly. So, you can imagine the noise of 1,200 people plus music, in such spaces, which sort of resembled a sports stadium. Therefore, all sounds were amplified, making it difficult to hear or navigate without sighted assistance.

Two WhatsApp groups were officially established. The first by the organisers to alert us to any changes, updates, or alerts. The region also set up a group to assist in communication with each other, support, and help. Both were extremely helpful.

The Summit commenced with an opening function and speeches. Unfortunately, this, like many of the main presentations, was in a large auditorium like a sports stadium. While there were translations for different languages, one had to hand in your passport to get a translation headset. Some people got away with handing in their drivers license, and some with a photo ID. For the rest of us who only had our passports, we had to hand these in if we wanted a headset. No headset, no translations.

At one of these sessions, when at the end I handed in my headset to get my passport, I was given back someone else's ID (a drivers licence), and it took nearly an hour to get someone who spoke English who could assist me and find my passport.

My other observation was that I thought that the General Assembly should have been the main event, followed by the World Blindness Summit. That is having 3 days for the General Assembly and 2 days for the Summit.

It was great holding them together, but the programme outline resulted in just a couple of days for the General Assembly, which didn't in my view allow enough time to deal with the agenda.

The Summit

This commenced with a welcome event, and speeches from dignitaries including the WBU President.

The next 2 days were a mixture of sessions from keynote speakers located in the main auditorium. When there were no keynote addresses, there were a number of concurrent sessions which were held in different rooms throughout the complex. So, it was important to hand your headset in at the end of each session and then pick up a new headset in the next room you were going to.

This again had a few challenges, as rooms in the Word document were only given a room number, and in the PDF and print versions, the rooms also had names, making it difficult to find out where the next session was. Often, people either stayed in the same room for a few sessions or arrived late at the next session.

Sessions and Exhibit Hall

A few highlights of the sessions for me were:

- The soft launch of the Braille campaign by the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) and the World Blind Union their joint campaign “More Braille: More Empowerment”, highlighting the importance of Braille. Braille being the foundation of literacy, independence, and full participation in society.
- Richard Orm from Daisy.
- AI and the personal assistant and the future.
- Audio description.
- And the session, for which I was the moderator for Designing Cities for Everyone.

As well as the concurrent sessions there also was an exhibition hall. Due the numbers of people attending, it was extremely difficult to get around stands in the breaks as often there were loads of people waiting to ask questions or try out equipment. Also, in the hall there were often demonstrations of Blind people either dancing or exercising to music which again made it extremely difficult to hear what people were describing or demonstrating. None of these rooms had carpet except the smaller meeting rooms, so everywhere you went was extremely noisy.

A couple of stands that I did manage to visit were the Ray Ban Meta stand, where I waited for an hour to talk to someone. A coffee stand giving samples, but also it was about their history and employment of blind workers. Plus, the people who produce the Envoy connect.

Outcomes

As a result of a chance meeting with Joel Snyder over lunch, who also presented in one of the workshops I attended on AD, we got to talk about AD here in New Zealand and the barriers around the transporting of titles with AD. Joel and I are also part of an international AD group where this same topic was raised.

Ray-Ban Meta, again, while I did manage to try the glasses, I also met with some of the team, both on the stand and also in the AI | technology session I attended. An interesting fact they shared with me, was that not all US States can sell Meta Glasses. This was shared as part of a conversation regarding Meta Glasses not being sold in New Zealand and other countries, such as Brazil. I was keen to try and find out what the plans might be to sell here.

Since returning, I have had a few email conversations, and online meetings, and they are keen to collaborate with Blind Citizens NZ when they have a launch date for New Zealand.

WBU General Assembly

The General Assembly was held on the Thursday and Friday along with regional meetings. Unfortunately, due to a lack of planning by the organisers to rearrange the auditorium, the first session was extremely late in starting. Country delegates sit at a table and chairs with observers sitting further back in the auditorium.

Again, due to the languages spoken, one needed a headset.

So, one needed to surrender one's passport or similar ID otherwise, there was no way one would be able to follow along and understand what was being said. This was extremely important when it came to reports and questions from the floor.

Most of the two days were taken up with reports and elections. While some of us were able to vote online, many were not. Those of us who voted online had a great, accessible experience.

When it came time to vote for the President, and other positions, I received two emails, one for me and the second as I had the proxy vote for Jonathan. It was extremely easy to vote and took very little time to cast votes.

However, for those voting using paper, it was a complex process and then people had to leave the room to go to another room to cast their vote. This took quite some time for everyone to cast their votes and resulted in no further business being able to proceed for some hours.

Outcome of the election

While the outcomes are now well known, I will list there for the record:

- President: Santosh Kumar Rungta (India)
- First Vice President: Cristina Chamorro (Spain)
- Second Vice President: Yaw Ofori-Debra (Ghana)
- Secretary General: Moises Bauer Luiz (Brazil)
- Treasurer: Alejandro Antonio Paz Ambrosio (Guatemala)
- Immediate Past President: Martine Abel-Williamson (New Zealand)

Due to the time taken to complete the election process, we ran out of time to discuss the circulated proposed constitutional changes. The discussion on how best to proceed took up time as well.

However it was important for people to raise their concerns with respect to dealing with the proposed changes, ensuring that the decision was led by delegates and not by the Table Officers. The reason I say the discussion was important is that the Table Officers had decided, without any input from country delegates, not to proceed with addressing the proposed constitutional changes. This was and remains an important part of the General Assembly. The lack of time to discuss proposed constitutional changes was a result of the length of time it took to hold the election. I share that in the past, when I have attended Mid-Term and General Assemblies, that I have never been involved in an election that has taken so long, nor which has appeared to be extremely disorganised. I remain at a loss to understand why this actually took so long.

Note, due to not being able to vote or discuss the proposed constitutional changes, country delegates all received a notice on the procedures on how to vote, along with the circulation of the proposed changes. This enabled both country delegates to cast our votes. This all happened after the General Assembly had finished.

Regional Meetings

Each of the regions held its own regional meeting during the General Assembly. Besides the usual receiving and adoption of reports, elections were held.

Unfortunately, we didn't have the option for electronic voting, but the returning officer had prepared several different tactile shapes made out of cardboard – a different shape for each candidate, and envelopes for casting our votes. Each candidate gave a short presentation, so people got to hear who was standing and why etc. Then we voted.

This proved to be a successful election.

Election results for Asia Pacific Region

- President: Dr. Nantanoot (Apple) Suwannawut from Thailand
- Vice President: Jason HO from China Hong Kong
- Secretary General: Helen Freris from Australia
- Treasurer: Thomas Bryan from New Zealand

There are also 3 positions for regional representatives to the WBU Asia Pacific Board and Policy Council:

- Tony Takei from Japan
- Wong Yoon Loong from Malaysia
- Ms. Dinh Viet Anh from Vietnam

General Assembly conclusion

This was a great opportunity, and I wish to thank the Board for the opportunity of representing Blind Citizens NZ on the international stage. In hindsight, knowing what I know now, it would have been less stressful if I had taken a sighted guide. I didn't realise how little English would be spoken, not just at the hotel and conference venue, but shuttle drivers, airline crew, airport staff, and the like.

Simple things like finding where the bathroom is in the airport, or getting from the hotel to the conference venue, or even finding the restaurant in the hotel, had its challenges.

In saying this, it was a great opportunity to wave the flag for Blind Citizens NZ and New Zealand. It was also a great opportunity to catch up with a number of country delegates from around the world, and others working in the blindness space to remove barriers.

WBU Global Items

Since the General Assembly it is very noticeable that we have a new leadership team, who are making changes to the way things are being run. In addition, the Chief Executive Mark Workman resigned. The position of Chief Executive has been advertised and at the time of my report is still being recruited.

Alongside of the changes, the WBU leadership team also adopted a new Strategic Plan that has resulted in new committees being established.

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

Asia Pacific Regional Meetings

The Asia Pacific region of WBU Board and Policy Council (WBU APBPC) (meet bi-monthly via zoom. Since the election and attending the WBU General Assembly, our main focus has been on:

- Establishing the new board and policy council,

- Developing terms of reference for committees,
- Establishing the Communications Committee,
- Producing East Wind, the quarterly magazine for our region,
- Planning for the next Mid-term general assembly – developing both a process and documentation calling for expressions of interest.
- Membership and sub-region chairs.

These are just some of the topics we have been working through over the last year.

WBU Committees

Since the adoption of the new Strategic Plan, a number of committees have been established. I thank Blind Citizens' NZ Board for its support of my nomination for the Technology and Digital Accessibility Committee.

My nomination was successful and I then was approached to see if I would consider being the chair. While this was/is a great honour, it has proven to be quite challenging in the workload and expectations.

The intent/requirement was for the committee to meet monthly. After discussion with the rest of the committee, people thought this was too frequent and so we aim to meet every second month.

Our upcoming meeting is to look at what actions we can take to meet some of the goals in the WBU strategic plan.

Other topics discussed include:

- Updates from our various regions,
- Projects,
- The Strategic Plan.

Conclusion

As mentioned it's been a busy year circulating information to both our email lists and The Board of Blind Citizens NZ. Working through the implications of the changes, and the planning required.

I get a great deal of satisfaction working in this space, and being able to share all the good things we are doing, and what achieve in New Zealand. When visiting other countries who we may think are more advanced than us, or have legislation that implies they are more accessible than we are, I often find as a visitor, that this doesn't appear to be so.

I again thank the Board of Blind Citizens NZ for their support.

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

This report covers updates on the WBU General Assembly, held while I was still President, up to early September of this year.

On 28 August 2025 I left for Sao Paulo. Although the World Blindness Summit started on 1 September, some of us had pre-conference tasks and meetings to see to. The conference was held literally next door to our hotel, so no one had to walk very far. Everything started late, though, and not because of a lack of planning and preparation, but because that's how it's done there. Many countries, including those in Latin America, seem to ensure the work commences at some stage and that it gets done some time later. I'm so not used to matters progressing that way, but it's a cultural thing with me I should be used to by now.

On the morning of 1 September, the WBU's ExCo met, which are the table officers plus four representatives from each of the six regions plus our affiliated members such as SightSavers, CBM and the International Council on the Education of Persons with Visual Impairment (ICEVI). We finalised items such as confirming online voting capability during our WBU General Assembly and signing off award winners to be announced during the conference.

That afternoon, two forums were hosted, a youth as well as women's forum. Hopefully, countries will be receiving written outcomes and statements from both of those soon.

That evening was the formal opening of the Summit where I presented. I brought greetings from New Zealand and acknowledged the fact that we've got over 1,200 registered persons for this worldwide event, the largest we've ever had at WBU level. The other sponsors and hosts presented as well and matters were off to a good start.

Meta provided some sponsorship for our event, so, they got to promote their glasses to the audience.

On 2 September the programme started off with two plenaries: namely, the first one titled, 200 years of Braille, from slate to display. I presented during this plenary, facilitating the soft launch of the ICEVI/WBU joint new Braille Literacy Campaign. I've already provided the concept note and my speaking notes to Rose if anyone's interested in reading those. Other Braille related presentations during this plenary focussed around Braille research in Australia, involving teachers and others in the education sector, progress of Braille education in lesser developed countries and demonstrating new equipment, from high level Braille displays to a new system where colour differences in text are identified by the Braille code.

The 2nd plenary focused on humanitarian situations around the world. We heard from speakers from Ukraine, South Africa, and Asia. Natural disasters as well as current war and conflict situations were covered. The WBU is contributing to displaced persons and their supporting agencies in affected countries as well as in countries that are taking in blind and low vision refugees. It was still quite surreal to hear first-hand, in person or via recording, from persons directly affected.

That was followed by various concurrent sessions around various topics, from digital access, implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty, sport and culture programmes access, audio description initiatives, trends in blindness education, and much more. Thomas Bryan, our WBU lead for access to the built environment, moderated a related session.

On the 3rd, the summit continued with concurrent sessions and the event concluded with a plenary on the future of a global blindness movement. I facilitated that session, interviewing the founder of Be My Eyes, Hans Jørgen Wiberg, president of ICEVI, a leader with the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and the chair of the United Nations (UN) committee on the rights of women and girls.

It was interesting to discuss whether we still have a space for organised and structured blindness organisations when we've now got social media options and many other loose networks where people can immediately find answers to questions, share launches and info re new equipment instantly, etc, to name one example of what got raised.

A gala dinner followed where we ended up awarding the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) for accessible publishing and related initiatives. This had already been reported on various NZ blindness email lists. The final 2 days were taken up by the actual WBU General Assembly.

I address our achievements and challenges during my president's report and other reports were received in areas such as finance.

Voting for new table officers took place in-person as well as online.

The six regions each had time to meet and awards were handed out such as to Christopher Friend, who worked for decades in areas including education, Marrakesh Treaty, and more. He received our most prestigious award, the Louis Braille Medal.

My final international trip of 2025 was to Geneva, Switzerland and Paris, France. I was invited by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) to present at and attend the Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) Advisory Board meeting, and, because they fitted the bill, when the French organisers of the Braille event invited me to present at the Bicentenary of the Braille system, that took place immediately afterwards, I was able to fit that in.

On the first business day in Geneva, we observed at the WIPO meeting with all authorised entities (AEs) worldwide. To remind all, AE's are mostly blindness libraries and schools, but can also be tertiary institutions. In NZ both Blind Low Vision NZ and BLENNZ are AEs, which is good, as they do upload their resources/titles to the Global Book Service.

In person we met up with the creators of Dolphin Easy Reader who fielded questions and feedback around accessibility of their resource/ap.

We got told, when asked, that there are at least 17,000 Braille scores available on the Global Book Service, although some of the titles might still be available in hard copy Braille and would need transcribing into an e-Braille format.

An issue is about timing. Some AEs are so busy that they end up not uploading their titles in a timely fashion and then WIPO would have to remind them. There are now around 1 million, 100 thousand titles ready for cross boarder exchange.

On the second day our actual Advisory Board meeting took place where I promoted the newly promoted Braille Literacy Campaign between WBU and the International Council on the Education of persons with visual Impairment (ICEVI). WIPO and the board agreed to support the campaign via practical actions.

The Divine bookreader device was promoted, which is what we know as the Envoy Connect. Every country who contracts this company to acquire low cost bookreaders, can get to name them. This is currently the most affordable alone standing bookreader available, depending on the technical specs one wants.

We discussed the European Access Act that came into effect a while ago. In theory it means that buildings, books, etc, all should be accessible, but, as can be expected, most countries and orgs are running behind, so, do some simply pay the fines or what is in place to enforce compliance?

Onto the celebratory Braille event now: A special international event took place in Paris from November 13 to 15, 2025, to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Braille.

This historic gathering brought together experts, advocates, and members of the blind and partially sighted community from around the world to discuss the past, present, and future of Braille, and to celebrate its enduring role in promoting literacy, independence, and inclusion.

It was a huge honour for me to have attended this event last week, to present on the new WBU and ICEVI Braille Literacy Campaign, and to pose by the crypt of Louis Braille that got created in 1952, 100 years following his passing.

Nearly 17 years ago, 11 of us from NZ, if memory serves me right, attended the actual bicentenary event, celebrating the birth of Louis Braille, so, it was quite surreal for me, returning to commemorate the Braille invention.

The first day I was able to participate was the time to highlight research opportunities, showcase at least 20 startups, and focus on innovation. Four major blindness organisations in France combined to form an innovation and incubator hub. The idea is for technology inventors, ap designers, blind persons and other experts to be present at a communal place so that all relevant stakeholders are consulted when new programmes and technologies and other products are being proposed, developed and evaluated.

Many of their startups have to do with smartphone aps to move around safely in the environment, the latest refreshable Braille devices, etc.

I personally found Paris not as accessible as they advertise it to be: the footpaths are narrow and not well maintained, with uneven parts and holes in them. Most buildings are very old, so there are usually many stepped entrances, and often the steps vary in terms of height and width, which is quite inaccessible and off-putting.

Because of the narrow streets, taxis can't simply pick one up anywhere, so, often you'll need to find a corner or wider area for them to stop, otherwise they simply drive away or refuse to turn up where you are.

So, all said, NZ is still, in my book, more accessible in general to navigate. Mind you, if you live there, you probably get used to the rules and state of play.

In the afternoon of the research day there were five concurrent thematic workshops:

- AI for the visually impaired
- Digitization of the Valentin Haüy heritage collection
- Access to higher education
- Research on mobility and education
- Innovation & universal design

I was asked to present at the latter, where I focussed on the accessible book progress at WIPO level, details of how persons and organisations can become involved in the already mentioned Braille Literacy Campaign, and where I highlighted WBU's collaboration with AT Scale, Microsoft, Apple and other innovation and technology entities.

Directly following that workshop, we had an informal discussion around Braille and relevant technology equipment in the education space. One of the attendees was a totally blind astrophysicist, so, I found her description of tactile models, use of technology and the like very interesting. She teaches at a university in Portugal.

On the final celebratory event day we visited the Pantheon where Braille's body is interred. Since 1952. Just outside the chamber that contains the crypts, there is a sculpted bust of Louis Braille. I believe it is set on his death mask, as, during the time of his lifespan, photos were not available but often death masks were painted or sculpted.

On this occasion I didn't visit the Louis Braille Museum in Coupvray (Braille's childhood home) as it's under renovation at present, but I do hope to return to it at some stage.

On 8 January 2026 I left for New Delhi, India, to participate in our first in-person officers' meeting. Amongst us table officers and regional presidents, we had about four brand new people joining us, so, team building and picking up where we left off following our General Assembly in September last year took some time.

I felt slightly less pressure though, as, not being the president any longer, I could focus more on playing an advisory rather than facilitating and time keeping role for a change.

We met with leadership from CBM, a major funder re resource implementation and future collaboration, as geo-political changes are impacting us hugely at present, in the light of funding cuts at international level at USAID and other platforms.

On 29 January I presented at the Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ) staff conference on the newly launched Braille Literacy Campaign, as well as on my roles at WBU and ICEVI level. BLENNZ colleagues seem quite keen to contribute to the Braille Literacy Campaign.

At that conference I also linked again with colleagues from the Lego Braille Bricks Foundation around their worldwide education programmes to link blind children with Lego Braille Bricks.

Most of my involvement over the past 8 months took place remotely and online I've recently been interviewed for an episode on the WBU podcast: Global Voice, Voices on Leadership, and, some might be interested to either check out my episode specifically or to access all the episodes already recorded/uploaded.

In my interview you can hear reflections on my term as president, challenges and opportunities, the new strategic direction and my role as immediate past president. I've also been asked to reflect on current issues/topics, relevant to us in NZ.

The episode, featuring me, is available here:

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/2460681/episodes/18769694>

And the general link for the podcast is:

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/2460681>

In April, our Global CEO, Mark Workman, left the employ of WBU. His final work day was the 22nd.

At committee levels

As our Strategic Impact 5 Co-lead, I've started attending the Technology and Digital Access, and Accessible Innovation committees meetings.

Similarly, the work of our World Braille Council (WBC) has commenced and I've been asked to serve on that council.

Apart from my WBU hat, I'm not representing any other entity on the WBC, but quite a few of its members are external appointees from organisations such as the International Council on English Braille (ICEB) and WIPO to name just a couple.

Then, I've worked along-side the CEO of Solar Grove Solutions to draft an article for inclusion in the April edition of the Global Outlook, WBU's regular e-bulletin, in light of BLV NZ having started to link library users with the Envoy Connect (the Australian version of the product mentioned in the article), and because I think, having access to these devices in developing countries could shift the dial, as these items are some of the most low cost e-bookreaders currently in the market.

In conclusion I'm wishing to pass on my sincere appreciation and thanks to Blind Citizens NZ and Blind Low Vision NZ for the financial support provided to empower me to first-hand represent you at these important occasions, so I could bring back and share with you findings, experiences and recommendations from our blind family across the world.

Attachment “C”

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

Performance Report

For the year ended

30 June 2026

Contents

Non-Financial Information	Page
Entity Information	3-5
Statement of Service Performance	6-7
 Financial Information:	
Statement of Financial Performance	8
Statement of Financial Position	9-10
Statement of Cash Flows	11-12
Statement of Accounting Policies	13-16
Notes to the Performance Report	17-27
Audit Report	28

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 2026

Incorporated Society: Incorporation Number 223080

Charity: Registration Number CC41040

NZ Business Number: 9429042683667

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 exists to give voice to the aspirations and lived experiences of blind, deafblind, low vision, and vision-impaired people (hereafter referred to as blind), living in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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 elected positions (President and six Board Members), and two co-opted Board Members. Elected Board Members serve a three-year term.

Each year by rotation, two of the six Board Member 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. On the recommendation of the Te Tiriti Advisory Group Aotearoa, two Board Members were co-opted in August 2025. They each serve a two-year term, concluding July 2027 and are eligible for reappointment for a one additional two-year term.

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.

Geographic Branches and Networks, and Special Interest Networks:

We have six geographical Branches, two geographical Networks, and a Headquarters Branch for members who do not reside within the boundaries of a geographical Branch or Network. Additionally for members and others in the blind community who have a specific interest in common, we have Special Interest Networks, these being for Guide Dog Handlers, Braille users, and Blind Women. The development of Geographic and Special Interest 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 advertised to our members through an expression of interest process. The Board follows well-established procedures in its decision-making and appointments. Representatives and appointees are required to consult and seek guidance from the Board about agenda items for their consideration, to submit and speak to topics on behalf of Blind Citizens NZ, provide written reports to the Board following meetings, and submit an annual report to Blind Citizens NZ's Annual General Meeting and Conference.

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), where we hold two positions.

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 funding from the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind (Blind Low Vision NZ) through charitable donations to support our core business, advocacy.

The current three-year Information and Advice contract with Whaikaha | Ministry of Disabled People concludes on 30 September 2026. Planning is underway to ensure a replacement contract is in place before the current agreement ends. Additional income is received revenue through donations, membership subscriptions, investment interest, and occasional grants from the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board.

Main Methods Used by Entity to Raise Funds

Blind Citizens NZ's main method of funding is by way of a Funding Agreement with Blind Low Vision NZ. Additional funding may be secured by way of successful applications to the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board, and other funding organisations.

Reliance on Volunteers and Donated Services

Blind Citizens NZ relies heavily on the voluntary contributions of our Branches, Geographic and Special Interest Networks, members and supporters to progress our work. Board Members also serve on a voluntary basis and receive no financial remuneration for their time. Volunteers contribute to a wide range of activities, including 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 people living in Aotearoa New Zealand. We do this by raising awareness of our rights, and influencing the removal of barriers that impact upon 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:

- Accessible Banking
- Audio Description (television, cinemas, live events, museums)
- Education
- Braille (primary literacy and numeracy tool for blind people)
- Accessible Public Transport (includes Total Mobility Scheme)
- Access to information and the environment (includes websites, and technology)
- Employment
- Accessible (independent) voting in General and Local Body elections
- Pandemic and emergency responsiveness

Submissions

	2026	2025
Number of national submissions	8	4
Number of local submissions	3	3

Blind Citizens NZ National, Branches, Geographic and Special Interest Networks (Community) Meetings

	2026	2025
Number of meetings members have participated in	38	22
Number of attendees at meetings	492	498

Activities / Events

	2026	2025
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	67	65
Special Meeting of Members – adopt new Constitution to meet Incorporated Societies 2022 requirements	1	-
Members who attended	21	-

Information, Publications and Awareness

Number of issues of Focus national magazine produced	4	4
Number of Focus recipients per issue (distributed in Braille, audio, large print, and electronic formats)	560	703
Number of International White Cane Day resources (posters, 2 types of pamphlets, banners, feet-shaped statements)	5	5
Number of Branch Network Newsletters produced	19	19
Number of recipients of Branch Newsletters	976	1,216
E-Bulletins – number of issues via email	10	-
E-Bulletins – number of recipients (members, stakeholders, and government officials)	410	-
Online hui – President-member get-togethers, plus topic-specific opportunities	12	-

Disclosure: We have been unable to obtain information to substantiate data for the Website, Facebook, and Information Line. As a result, these items are removed.

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2026

Statement of Financial Performance

	Note	2026 \$	2025 \$
Revenue			
Donations, koha, bequests and other fundraising activities	1	21,514	12,590
General grants	1	271,956	234,040
Government service delivery grants/contracts	1	148,686	135,417
Membership fees and subscriptions	1	3,944	3,634
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	1	24,776	43,857
Other revenue	1	33,516	24,367
Total Revenue		504,392	453,905
Expenses			
Expenses related to fundraising	2	760	660
Employee remuneration and other related costs	2	191,493	176,465
Volunteer related expenses	2	92,396	101,375
Other expenses related to service delivery	2	120,327	78,762
Grants and donations made		8,571	1,503
Other expenses	2	199,944	240,186
Total Expenses		613,491	598,951
Operating surplus/(deficit)		(119,099)	(145,046)

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2026

Statement of Financial Performance continued

	Note	2026	2025
		\$	\$
Unrealised gain/(loss) on fair value changes		93,513	67,633
Net profit/(loss) for the year		15,586	(77,413)

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2026

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	2026	2025
		\$	\$
Current Assets			
Bank accounts and cash		480,214	552,040
Investments		504,497	484,655
Debtors and prepayments	3	51,052	31,257
Total Current Assets		1,035,763	1,067,952
Non-Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	4	13,492	9,588
Investments	3	1,238,004	1,149,313
Total Non-Current Assets		1,251,496	1,158,901
Total Assets		2,287,259	2,226,853

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2026

	Note	2026	2025
Liabilities		\$	\$
Current Liabilities			
Creditors and accrued expenses	3	93,899	74,371
Employee costs payable	3	22,229	21,650
Other current liabilities	3	90,284	34,399
Total Current Liabilities		206,412	130,420
Total Liabilities		206,412	130,420
Total Assets less Total Liabilities (Net Assets)		2,080,847	2,096,433
	Note	2026	2025
Accumulated Funds			
Accumulated surpluses or (deficits)	5	693,272	787,282
Reserves	5	1,387,575	1,309,151
Total Accumulated Funds		2,080,847	2,096,433



Jonathan Godfrey

President**Dated:** 28 September 2026


Paula Waby

Board Member

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2026

Statement of Cash Flows

	2026	2025
	\$	\$
Cash Flows from Operating Activities		
Cash was received from:		
Donations, koha, bequests and other fundraising activities	22,577	10,837
General grants	271,956	234,040
Government services delivery grants/contracts	111,651	164,713
Membership fees and subscriptions	3,944	3,634
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	9,844	45,051
Other revenue	118,274	24,367
Total cash received	538,246	482,642
Net GST	(9,206)	10,470
Cash was applied to:		
Payments to fundraising	(760)	(660)
Employee remuneration and other related costs	(190,702)	(173,546)
Volunteer related payments	(92,396)	(101,375)
Donations or grants made	(23,571)	(1,503)
Other payments related to service delivery	(120,327)	(78,761)
Other expenses	(164,913)	(211,990)
Total cash paid	(592,669)	(567,835)
Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities	(63,629)	(74,723)

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2026

Cash flows from Investing and Financing Activities

	2026	2025
	\$	\$
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	(8,197)	-
Payments to purchase investments	-	-
Net Cash Flows from Investing and Financing Activities	(8,197)	-
Net Increase / (Decrease) in Cash	(71,826)	(74,723)
Opening Cash	552,040	626,763
Closing Cash	480,214	552,040
	2026	2025
	\$	\$
This is represented by:		
Bank Accounts, Savings Accounts and Petty cash	480,214	552,040

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Statement of Accounting Policies for the year ended 30 June 2026

Statement of Accounting Policies

Basis of Preparation

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated's Board has elected to apply the XRB's Tier 3 (NFP) Standard on the basis that it does not have public accountability and has total annual expenses of equal to or less than \$5,000,000. 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 measured at fair value in accordance with the entity's election to apply the recognition and measurement requirements of PBE IPSAS 41 Financial Instruments.

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.

Income Tax

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

Bank Accounts and Cash

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

Debtors and other Receivables

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

Creditors and other Payables

Creditors and other payables are stated at cost.

Property, Plant and Equipment

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

Depreciation

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

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

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated Statement of Accounting Policies for the year ended 30 June 2026

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.

PBE IPSAS 41 Financial Instruments (Opt-up)

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated has elected to apply the recognition and measurement requirements of PBE IPSAS 41 Financial Instruments to its investment portfolio.

Investments are measured at fair value. Interest revenue is recognised using the effective interest method and dividend revenue is recognised when the right to receive payment is established.

Blind Citizens NZ has designated its equity investments at fair value through other comprehensive revenue and expense. Accordingly, changes in fair value are recognised in the Investment Revaluation Reserve and are not recognised in surplus or deficit.

Trade receivables are measured at cost less any expected credit losses.

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.

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

Notes to the Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Notes to the Performance Report

Note 1: Analysis of Revenue

		2026	2025
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Donations, koha, bequests and general fundraising activities	Legacies and bequests	5,000	1,000
	Donations	16,513	11,590
	Total	21,513	12,590

		2026	2025
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
General grants	Blind Low Vision NZ service contract	230,000	216,300
	Lotteries Commission	30,000	-
	Other	11,956	17,740
	Total	271,956	234,040

		2026	2025
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Government service delivery grants/contracts	MSD Contract	120,000	120,000
	Disabled People's Organisation / Govt	28,686	15,417
	Total	148,686	135,417

		2026	2025
Revenue Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Membership fees and subscriptions	Life membership	2,536	2,492
	Memberships - other	1,408	1,142
	Total	3,944	3,634

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Notes to the Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 1: Analysis of Revenue Continued

Revenue Item	Analysis	2026 \$	2025 \$
Interest, dividends, and other investment revenue	Interest	19,874	36,356
	Dividends	3,004	2,697
	Realised Gain/(Loss) on Investments	1,898	4,804
	Total	24,776	43,857

Revenue Item	Analysis	2026 \$	2025 \$
Other revenue	AGM and conference	16,809	16,636
	Calendar sales	3,712	3,602
	Gain on sale of fixed assets	9,127	-
	Other	3,868	4,129
	Total	33,516	24,367

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Notes to the Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 2: Analysis of Expenses

		2026	2025
Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Expenses related to fundraising	Fundraising	760	660
	Total	760	660

		2026	2025
Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Employee remuneration and other related costs	Staff Wages	184,741	174,449
	Other	6,752	2,016
	Total	191,493	176,465

		2026	2025
Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Volunteer related expenses	Board Expenses	60,231	48,299
	Te Tiriti o Waitangi Advisory Group	9,515	15,323
	World Blind Union	19,950	36,323
	Honorarium	2,700	1,500
	Total	92,396	101,375

		2026	2025
Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Other expenses related to service delivery	Advocacy	5,431	442
	Advocacy Leadership Workshop	10,510	247
	AGM and Conference	104,386	78,073
	Total	120,327	78,762

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Notes to the Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 2: Analysis of Expenses

		2026	2025
Expense Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Other expenses	Calendars	4,857	6,142
	Constitution Review	5,460	15,977
	Employment Best Practice	-	5,449
	Administration Expenses	82,049	91,161
	Office Expenses	107,578	121,457
	Total	199,944	240,186

Note 3: Analysis of Assets and Liabilities

		2026	2025
Asset Item	Analysis	\$	\$
Bank account and cash	Cheque account balances	104,811	184,175
	Savings account balance	374,653	367,115
	Imprest Account and Petty Cash	750	750
	Total	480,214	552,040

		2026	2025
Asset Item		\$	\$
Investments	Short Term Deposits	504,497	484,655
	Total	504,497	484,655

		2026	2025
Asset Item		\$	\$
Debtors and prepayments	Accounts receivable	45,817	16,456
	Prepayments	3,312	12,788
	Interest Receivable	1,923	2,013
	GST Receivable	-	-
	Total	51,052	31,257

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Notes to the Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 3: Analysis of Assets and Liabilities

		2026	2025
Asset Item		\$	\$
Financial assets at fair value through surplus or deficit	ANZ Managed investment Portfolio	1,238,004	1,149,313
Total		1,238,004	1,149,313

		2026	2025
Liability Item		\$	\$
Creditors and accrued expenses	Trade and other payables	56,428	41,381
	Accrued expenses	38,827	28,279
	GST Payable	(1,356)	4,711
Total		93,899	74,371

		2026	2025
Liability Item		\$	\$
Employee costs payable	Holiday pay accrual	12,381	15,036
	Wages accruals	9,848	6,614
Total		22,229	21,650

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Notes to the Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 3: Analysis of Assets and Liabilities continued

		2026	2025
Liability Item		\$	\$
Other current liabilities payable	DPO Coalition Fundholder Account	66,464	-
	Mana Pasefika Development Grant	10,000	-
	DPO Coalition Grant unspent funds	2,965	21,730
	Other	10,855	-
	Total	90,284	34,399

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Notes to the Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 4: Property, Plant and Equipment

2026

Asset Class	Opening Carrying Amount	Purchases	Sales/ Disposals	Current Year Depreciation & Impairment	Closing Carrying Amount
Furniture and fixtures	954	-	-	(191)	763
Office equipment	1,935	8,198	(531)	(677)	8,925
Recording Equipment	76	-	-	(13)	63
Motor Vehicles	6,386	-	(1,916)	(894)	3,576
Computer Software	237	-	-	(72)	165
Total	9,588	8,198	(2,447)	(1,847)	13,492

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Notes to the Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

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

Notes to the Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 5: Accumulated Funds

2026

Description	Accumulated Surpluses or Deficits	Reserves	Total
Opening Balance	801,845	1,294,588	2,096,433
Surplus/(Deficit)	(15,586)	-	(15,586)
Transfer to Investment Revaluation Reserve	(93,513)	93,513	-
Transfer to Reserves	(5,506)	5,506	-
Transfer from Reserves	6,032	(6,032)	-
Closing Balance	693,272	1,387,575	2,080,847

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 Revaluation Reserve	(67,633)	67,633	-
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

Notes to the Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 5: Accumulated Funds continued

Breakdown of Reserves

	2026	2025
Name	\$	\$
General Fund	655,048	651,911
Member for Life Fund	23,648	23,583
Leadership Fund	163,122	166,850
Branch Funds Brought to Account	-	-
Investment Revaluation Reserve	497,239	403,726
Establishing/Re-establishing Branches Reserve	48,518	48,518
Total	1,387,575	1,294,588

Note 6: Commitments and Contingencies

	2026	2025
Commitments	\$	\$
National Office lease – Current Portion	42,155	42,155
National Office lease – Non-Current Portion	31,619	70,258
Photo-copier lease – Current Portion	362	1,085
Photo-copier lease – Non-Current Portion	-	362
Total	74,136	113,860

Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated

Notes to the Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2026

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 \$36,365 (2025: \$37,874) 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 on pages 3 to 28, 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 2026, the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2026, 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 2026, 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'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.



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

28 September 2026

Summarised Financial Information

Consolidation of National Office and Branches

Revenue and expense for the year ended 30 June 2026

Table:

Revenue	2026	2025
Donations, fundraising, Koha, bequests etc.	21,514	12,590
Subscriptions from members	3,944	3,634
Grants (COGS, BLVNZ, MSD) and Government Grants Contracts etc.	420,642,245	369,457
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	24,776	43,857
Other Revenue (Conference Registrations, Large Print Calendars etc.)	33,516	24,367
Total operating revenue	504,392	453,905
Expense	Blank	Blank
Fundraising-related expenses	760	660
Employee remuneration and other related expenses	191,493	176,465

Revenue	2026	2025
Volunteer-related expenses (Board, Branch honorarium etc.)	92,396	101,375
Other expenses related to service delivery (National Office, Branches and Networks)	120,327	78,762
Grants and donations made	8,571	1,503
Other expenses	199,844	240,186
Total operating expenses		598,951
Operating (deficit) surplus	(119,099)	(145,046)
Unrealised gain (loss) on fair value changes	93,513	67,633
Net profit/(loss) for the year	15,586	(77,413)

End table.

Assets and liabilities at 30 June 2026

Table:

Current Assets	2026	2025
Bank accounts and cash	480,214	552,040
Investments	504,497	484,655
Debtors and prepayments	51,052	31,257

Current Assets	2026	2025
Total current assets	1,035,763	1,067,952
Non-Current Assets	Blank	Blank
Property, plant and equipment	13,492	9,588
Investments	1,238,004	1,149,313
Total non-current assets	1,251,496	1,158,901
Total Assets	2,287,259	2,226,853

End table.

Table:

Liabilities	2026	2025
Current Liabilities	Blank	Blank
Creditors and accrued expenses	93,899	74,371
Employee costs payable	22,229	21,650
Other current liabilities	90,284	34,399
Total current liabilities	206,412	130,420
Total Assets less Total Liabilities	2,080,847	2,096,433

End Table.

Accumulated Funds

Table:

Accumulated Funds	2026	2025
Accumulated surpluses (or deficits)	693,272	787,282
Reserves	1,387,575	1,309,151
Total Accumulated Funds	2,080,847	2,096,433

End Table.

Funds held by Branches as at 30 June 2026

Auckland: 92,697.29

Otago: \$5,260.13

Southland: \$18,158.23

South Canterbury: \$237,574.92

Wellington: \$26,044.99

Whanganui: \$177,476.62

Attachment “D”

Remits to 2026 Annual General Meeting and Conference

Auckland Branch

Remit: Climate Adaptation and Emergency Planning

The AGM and Conference notes that our weather is becoming more unpredictable. We are seeing an increase in floods, heatwaves, storms and droughts.

Conference further notes that disabled people are often the most adversely affected by climate disruption, and the least able to respond to it.

Conference believes that disabled people, tāngata whaikaha and whānau hauā have strengths, creativity, adaptivity and lived experience to guide better climate adaptation and emergency responses for everyone.

Conference calls on the Board to:

- take opportunities to ensure the views and needs of blind, Deafblind, vision-impaired and other disabled people are included in climate adaptation and emergency management responses by central and local government;
- support members to engage locally and nationally with climate action initiatives;

- provide input into climate responses on behalf of members;
- seek funding to enable disabled people to be engaged in planning and implementation of climate disruption mitigation events and emergency management responses.

Explanation

All responses to climate adaptation and emergency management must take into account the views and needs of disabled people. We have too often been absent in discussions, planning and implementation of both.

Remit: Fight Disability Cuts

Conference is outraged at the Government's recent attacks on disabled people including:

- scrapping accessibility targets for Kāinga Ora Housing;
- increasing rents for tenants in social housing;
- cuts to Total Mobility subsidies;
- removing carers' legal rights;
- legislation which would allow all disability support to be means tested against family income;
- increased use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to make decisions relating to benefits;
- reducing the amount available in Temporary Additional Support;
- changes to school disability transport providers which have led to reduced safety for disabled children travelling to and from school.

These changes do not affect all disabled people equally, but in combination they have a detrimental impact on the rights of all disabled people and our ability to live independently in the community.

Conference calls on the Blind Citizens NZ Board to work with other Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs) to:

- oppose laws and policy changes that have a negative impact on disabled people;
- fight to improve services for disabled people and our whānau;
- involve our members in lobbying and protesting against cuts in disability support and services.

Explanation

We know our Board and Chief Executive (CE) along with DPOs have been fighting hard against the wave of recent attacks against and cuts in services for disabled people. This remit reaffirms the support of our members and gives the Board and CE a mandate to continue to oppose such cuts on our behalf and to involve members in action wherever possible.

Remit: PayWave Surcharges

Conference notes that the Government has paused their work on legislation to prohibit businesses charging customers for using PayWave.

Conference further notes the absolute or functional inaccessibility of many EFTPOS payment terminals, which forces blind, deafblind and

vision-impaired people to use PayWave, and recognises PayWave surcharges as a cost of disability.

Conference calls on the Board of Blind Citizens NZ to encourage the Government to ensure that members, clients of Blind Low Vision NZ (BLVNZ) and other people with similar access needs are exempt from all PayWave surcharges

Explanation

PayWave is the most convenient way for many blind, deafblind and vision-impaired people to pay for goods and services. As EFTPOS terminals become either actually or functionally inaccessible, then PayWave is often the only private and secure way of paying for goods and services. Many blind, deafblind and vision-impaired people are forced to provide their PIN to retail staff in order to purchase goods and services. Venues are increasingly becoming card-only, and almost no touch screen EFTPOS machines can be used by members despite efforts to offer accessibility features. Surcharges for using PayWave are not standardised, and blind, deafblind and vision-impaired people may not know how much they are paying for using PayWave. Removing PayWave charges for everyone would have been the simplest way to resolve this, but another option to remove this disability tax would be to remove the charge for BLVNZ members, clients and others with similar access needs.

Attachment “E”

Membership Subscription Review – Board Discussion Paper

Background and Previous Discussions

Since the 2022 Annual General Meeting and Conference, membership subscriptions have been the subject of ongoing discussion, informed korero, and member decision-making.

In 2023, in an effort to raise awareness of Blind Citizens NZ and encourage greater membership participation, the Annual General Meeting and Conference agreed to a temporary initiative for individuals who had not paid a membership subscription during the previous five financial years. This applied until 30 June 2025, and allowed those individuals to receive organisational information and to participate in most activities as though they were financial members.

Under the agreed approach, eligible individuals:

- received information such as newsletters, notices of meetings and other communications from their local Branch or Network;
- received Focus, and updates from National Office informing members of our work from National Office;
- could participate in activities including General and Annual General meetings, but they were not permitted to vote, or stand for election to the Board, a Branch Committee or a Network.

At the 2024 Annual General Meeting and Conference, members revisited the question of subscriptions. A range of options were considered including removing subscriptions altogether, retaining the existing rates, and decreasing or increasing them. At that time annual subscription rates for both Ordinary and Associate Members were \$10 for unwaged and \$20 for those in paid employment.

Following discussion, members agreed that from 1 July 2025, Blind Citizens NZ's annual base membership subscription will be \$10, or \$30 for those able to contribute that this amount. The Member-for-Life subscription remained unchanged at \$300.

In reaching this decision, it is believed members affirmed the importance of maintain a financial membership base. Financial Ordinary Members have the right to vote in Blind Citizens NZ elections, and participate fully in all other democratic processes.

Reasons for reviewing the current situation

While the Board believes the 2024 resolution was clear and has been widely promoted, experience since its implementation on 1 July 2025 has highlighted some practical challenges.

The most significant issue continues to be confusion about the subscription rate. Some members have interpreted the decision as allowing payment of any amount between \$10 and \$30, rather than choosing one of the two specified options.

Not only does this create further confusion for Branches Geographic Networks and National Office, it has also introduced administrative and accounting complexities when processing memberships and allocating payments.

The Board considers that the original intention of providing flexibility for members who wished to contribute more remains sound. However, the current wording does not appear to provide sufficient clarity.

Constitutional Reference

Rule 5 Fees, 5.8.1 of the Constitution states that membership fees are determined at the Annual General Meeting. For this reason, the Board is bringing the matter to the 2026 Annual General Meeting and Conference for discussion and a decision.

Recommendation

To address the issues experienced, the Board recommends that the Annual General Meeting amend the 2024 resolution with effect from 1 July 2027.

Under the proposed arrangement, the annual subscription would be set from \$10 to \$30 per year, allowing members to decide the amount they can contribute within that range.

Any payment over \$30 made in conjunction with a membership subscription will be treated as a donation. Unless otherwise stated for a Branch or Geographic Network, such donations would be allocated to the National Office.

The Membership-for-Life subscription remains at \$300. The annual disbursement of \$20 to Branches in respect of Members-for-Life would also remain unchanged.

Attachment “F”

Proposed Inductee to the Memorial Hall of Honour

Recommendation

That Conference endorses the Board’s recommendation to induct Vaughan Dodd into the Memorial Hall of Honour.

Vaughan Dodd

(18 January 1965 – 8 December 2024)

Vaughan Dodd was an advocate, leader, and changemaker who dedicated over 35 years of service to Blind Citizens NZ. Born in 1965, his life was defined by determination, courage, generosity, and an unwavering commitment to improving opportunities for blind, deafblind, low vision and vision-impaired people and the wider disability community.

Educated at Homai School for the Blind in Manurewa, Vaughan went on to graduate from Massey University. At the time, he was one of only a small number of blind tertiary graduates in New Zealand, reflecting the determination and leadership that would become hallmarks of his life.

Vaughan’s interest in Blind Citizens NZ happened after our 1989 Conference. He developed a lifelong interest in the wellbeing of blind people, our advocacy, and this organisation.

Once involved in Blind Citizens NZ, he quickly became absorbed into numerous activities, taking on at some point almost every leadership role available. In a personal profile, he once stated, “Blind Citizens New Zealand has formed a central part of my identity”.

In 1998, supported by the Cyril White Memorial Fund and the Blind Foundation, Vaughan visited the National Federation of the Blind in the United States. Hosted by the Louisiana Centre for the Blind, he became immersed in its residential rehabilitation programme, and then attended NFB’s National Convention in Dallas. His approach from then on was to live the NFB philosophy, believing that ‘it is respectful to be blind’.

Back in New Zealand, he was involved at both a local and national level, his roles included: National President, First Vice President, Executive Member, National Councillor, Branch Chair and Branch Representative, Appointee to the then Homai Board of Governors (now Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ), Editor of Focus magazine, and Coordinator of the Information Line.

At both local and national levels, Vaughan was respected for his thoughtful, practical and determined approach to advocacy.

One notable achievement came in 2017 when he joined an Auckland Branch delegation in mediation with Auckland Transport through the Human Rights Commission. Drawing on his own experiences of missing trains because of inaccessible platform information, the delegation successfully advocated for audible announcements on train platforms. Of four key requests, the delegation won three.

During his time as National President, Vaughan oversaw or supported others working on reform of the then Blind Foundation, early campaigning for audio description, and he was involved in the formative years of the Wellington Seminar - an advocacy mechanism to educate politicians and Ministers. A highlight of Vaughan's presidency was the process of bringing into being the structure of the National Advocate position. This was Vaughan's first online virtual recruitment process back in late 2001 and early 2002. Under Vaughan's presidency, Blind Citizens NZ was an early adopter of virtual recruitment.

In 2019, Blind Citizens NZ recognised his service by awarding him the Beamish Memorial Medal, one of the organisation's highest honours.

Vaughan's passion for the employment of disabled people, banking issues, adaptive technology, and Braille to name a few, knew no bounds.

His influence was both advocacy-driven and practically applied. Vaughan taught Braille and technology to blind people and was known for his uncompromising stance on the importance of Braille. Whether speaking with Government agencies or blindness organisations, Vaughan took no prisoners when it came to raising awareness about the need for Braille, the primary literacy tool for blind people. He left no one in any doubt about the role each played, and the commitment he demanded for all blind people.

In the 1980s, he digitally transcribed over 4,200 analogue Braille library cards using his electronic Braille display - an instrumental step in creating the computerised Homai Library Catalogue.

He was also a generous contributor to international Braille email lists, helping solve issues for Braille readers around the world.

In the early 2000s, Vaughan returned to Homai in a governance role, serving as Chair of the Board and working with others to transition the school into the State education system.

A long-serving public servant, Vaughan worked for many years as a regional disability advisor in the Auckland Ministry of Social Development (MSD) office. Then, from 2019 he worked for the Office for Disability Issues when it was located within MSD, and later when it became part of the Ministry for Disabled People – Whaikaha.

Ironically, in 2000, when Blind Citizens NZ was lobbying hard for a Ministry of Disabled People, Vaughan was right there formulating the resolution that articulated our organisational support.

Vaughan's advocacy extended into his professional life, where he worked to ensure accessibility for disabled people.

Colleagues described his approach as fostering “disagreement without disconnection,” creating respectful relationships where learning and better policy could flourish.

There is no doubt the blind community has benefitted from Vaughan's diligence and perseverance inside Government; the many contributions he made through his governmental roles continue to influence outcomes for disabled people.

In turn, his knowledge of bureaucratic systems enabled him to guide and advise people in the community. As Mary Schnackenberg said, “Vaughan somehow managed to support the system he worked in, while supporting us at the same time.”

As someone who experienced progressive hearing loss, Vaughan regarded himself as a blind person who wanted his hearing to be the best it could be. He served on the Board of Deafblind Association New Zealand and became a voice for improving access to hearing technology for blind people.

He established an email list for blind New Zealanders navigating hearing aids and co-hosted virtual conferences on hearing support. Advocating for audiologists to deliver accessible services became one of his later passions.

Vaughan Dodd's legacy is one of service, leadership, and unwavering commitment to equality. Through his advocacy, governance, public service, and mentorship, he helped remove barriers and create opportunities for blind and disabled people across New Zealand. His influence continues to be felt in the organisations he strengthened, the policies he helped shape, and the many lives he touched. For his exceptional contribution and lasting impact, Vaughan Dodd is a worthy inductee into the Blind Citizens NZ Memorial Hall of Honour.

Attachment “G”

RNZFB Constitution Review

Note: The RNZFB Constitution Review is topical for members. Blind Citizens NZ held an online session on this issue. Donna McCaskill, RNZFB Board Chair, and Judy Small, Chair of the RNZFB Governance Committee, joined the session to speak to attendees and explain the RNZFB Board’s approach. Informed by both historical decisions and recent engagement, the submission made by Blind Citizens NZ maintains the position for the RNZFB Board to be elected by members. The submission follows...

Blind Citizens NZ’s Submission in response to: RNZFB Constitution Review

1. Introduction

At its August meeting, the Board of Blind Citizens NZ considered the RNZFB Board’s Constitution Review consultation document. The Board remains mindful of the initial report from Simpson Grierson, which we responded to in December 2025.

The consultation paper moves the issue forward significantly. When addressing questions, it has been extremely useful to have the RNZFB Board’s insights to key findings and know what it feels is the best option for how the Board should be formed.

As always, our organisational position is reinforced and informed by the views of our members (and others in the blind community).

2. Feedback to Questions

2.1 Do you agree that the current Board election model needs to change? Why or why not?

Blind Citizens NZ firmly believes the current Board election model is fit for purpose. History is both important and relevant. The right of blind people to elect the RNZFB's governing body was hard won through sustained advocacy, much of which involved Blind Citizens NZ. This remains important and recognises the rights of blind people to participate in the organisation's democratic process.

While voter turn-out may have declined, it must be recognised that this is not unique to the RNZFB. The situation reflects a broader challenge faced by many membership-based organisations. Rather than supporting a change to the election model itself, greater benefit will be gained by increasing engagement and participation.

In our view, the RNZFB Board has a responsibility to actively promote the value and importance of becoming a governing member to clients as they enrol. Board Directors should take a leadership role in encouraging participation and ownership of the organisation's democratic processes. It must take responsibility for this task, as it is doing on this occasion, as opposed to delegating it to management, which has occurred in the past. By taking a leadership role, the Board ensures it remains in touch with the very membership it is elected to represent.

2.2 Do you support the Board's preferred option of a Board Appointments Panel?

Blind Citizens NZ appreciates the RNZFB Board's transparency in identifying that this is its preferred option for consideration. We welcome the Board's commitment to consider feedback from this consultation exercise before making a final decision.

However, we wish to make it clear from the outset that Blind Citizens NZ does not support any option that removes or weakens the democratic right of blind people to vote for and influence the composition of the RNZFB Board. Being able to elect a governing body is a fundamental mechanism through which members exercise their voice, hold leaders to account, and participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Our position is also consistent with Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD), which recognises the right of disabled people to participate fully and effectively in public and political life, including decision-making processes that affect them. In our view, replacing a member-driven election process with a Board Appointments Panel risks reducing direct participation and weakening the Board's direct accountability to members.

Blind Citizens NZ has strong reservations about the authority a Board Appointments Panel would have, noting there is potential for it to become a gatekeeping mechanism, effectively allowing a small group of individuals to determine who may serve on the Board. Eligible candidates must have the right to stand for election, with their suitability ultimately determined by members rather than being vetoed by an external panel.

While there may be opportunities to strengthen candidate recruitment, succession planning, and governance capability, these objectives can and must be achieved in ways that actually preserve and enhance democratic participation, rather than replacing it.

Blind Citizens NZ takes this opportunity to point out that the consultation document appears to give little, if any, consideration to the existing constitutional provision for co-option.

Where genuine skills, experience, or diversity gaps are identified, co-option already provides the Board with a mechanism to supplement its capability without removing the democratic right of members to elect Board Directors. The absence of any substantive discussion about co-option leaves an important part of the current governance framework unexplored, and limits the ability of members to fully assess the merits of a Board Appointments Panel.

For these reasons, and mindful of our position that the current model remains fit for purpose, Blind Citizens NZ does not support the RNZFB Board's preferred option. In our view, the case for a Board Appointments Panel has not been sufficiently established, as the existing co-option mechanism available under the Constitution remains largely unexplored. Before more significant changes to the governance model are considered, we urge the Board to give greater attention to whether the current co-option provisions address the concerns identified while preserving members' democratic rights and the Board's accountability to them.

2.3 What criteria and process are needed to ensure the panel reflects the objectives of the organisation?

As stated above, Blind Citizens NZ does not support an Appointments Panel.

In the event the RNZFB Board disregards ours and any other feedback that mirrors Blind Citizens NZ, our position is that the Panel must be independent. This must not involve the RNZFB Board selecting | appointing individuals who would comprise the Panel.

2.4. If you do not support a Board Appointments Panel, which option would you prefer and why?

We reinforce earlier advice that Blind Citizens NZ believes the current election model is fit for purpose. However, we also believe there are ways this can be improved. For this reason, we support Option 2 – Board Assessment Panel.

Blind Citizens NZ supports Option 2 because it preserves members' democratic right to directly elect Board Directors while providing additional information to support an informed vote. An Assessment Panel can offer valuable insight into how candidates' skills, experience, and attributes align with the Board's identified needs, assisting members to make well-informed choices. In our view, this approach strengthens the election process without removing members' authority to determine who represents them. It also ensures accountability remains with the membership while enhancing transparency and understanding of candidates' capabilities.

A key strength of Option 2 is that it preserves the right of eligible candidates to stand for election. The Assessment Panel's role is to provide information to members, not to determine who may seek office. In our view, assessments should inform democratic decision-making, not replace it.

To ensure fairness, transparency, and natural justice, candidates should receive the Assessment Panel's findings before any assessment is shared with governing members. Candidates should have the opportunity to seek clarification and challenge any factual inaccuracies through a clear review process. This approach is consistent with Article 29 of the UNCRPD, which affirms the right of disabled people to participate fully and effectively in political and public life, including the right to be elected and to participate in organisations representing disabled people. In our view, a transparent review process would strengthen confidence in the integrity of the assessment process, protect candidates' rights, uphold procedural fairness, and ensure governing members receive accurate and reliable information when exercising their democratic vote.

While we acknowledge concerns about voter turnout, nominations, skills, diversity, and Board capability, we do not accept that these challenges justify moving away from a fully member-elected Board. As mentioned previously, low voter turnout is a challenge faced by many membership-based organisations. It is not in itself evidence that the democratic model is failing. Rather, it suggests a need for greater member engagement, education and awareness-raising to participate in governance processes. The solution in our view to low participation is to increase participation, not strip the rights of members who choose to exercise their vote.

Limited nominations, skills gaps and diversity concerns can be addressed through succession planning, leadership development, targeted candidate recruitment, mentoring programmes, and active promotion of governance opportunities. We know the Board currently carries out some of these activities, but more can be done for these mechanisms to address identified gaps while preserving the fundamental principle and right for members to elect the governing body of their organisation.

Replacing member elections with an Appointments Panel risks weakening accountability, and reducing the influence that blind people have over the governance of the organisation that exists primarily to deliver blindness-related services.

For the above reasons, Blind Citizens NZ considers that the identified concerns can and should be addressed by enhancing the current democratic framework, rather than replacing it. In our view, implementing Option 2 would not require amendment to the Constitution, as members would retain the right to elect Board Directors.

However, it would require the development of clear policies and procedures governing the appointment of the Assessment Panel, its role, assessment criteria, candidate review process, and reporting arrangements to ensure the process is transparent, fair and accountable.

2.5 How should the model protect lived experience of blindness, low vision and deafblindness?

Blind Citizens NZ believes the lived experience of blindness, deafblindness, low vision and vision impairment must remain central to RNZFB governance. After all, the organisation exists to serve this community of people in Aotearoa New Zealand, and its governance structures must reflect and be informed by people with those lived experiences.

Lived experience provides insights that cannot be gained through professional expertise alone. It is essential to understanding the barriers, opportunities, and priorities faced by the very community the RNZFB serves.

This approach is consistent with Article 29 of the UNCRPD.

An assessment process can assist members by providing information and assisting them to understand how candidates combine lived experience with the skills, knowledge and competencies required for effective governance. In our view, the assessment should inform rather than determine election outcomes. Members must retain the right to decide how they weigh lived experience, governance skills and other attributes when casting their vote.

This approach helps ensure lived experience remains at the heart of RNZFB governance while preserving members' democratic rights to elect those they believe are best placed to lead the organisation.

2.6 How should understanding of Te Tiriti | Treaty and te ao Māori be reflected in the model?

Blind Citizens NZ recognises the approach recommended by Simpson Grierson and which is supported by the RNZFB Board. We too support giving textual primacy and recognition to te Tiriti o Waitangi in the Constitution, and there being a standalone clause in this regard.

Understanding of Te Tiriti and te ao Māori should be recognised as a valued competency for Board Members which in turn will assist to ensure decisions are informed by meaningful engagement with Kapo Tāngata Whenua (blind Māori people) and their aspirations.

Any approach should be developed in partnership with Kāpō Māori Aotearoa and other stakeholders including blindness organisations such as Blind Citizens NZ. This should support both effective governance and democratic participation.

At the same time, Blind Citizens NZ considers that attention must also be given to the operational delivery of services and outcomes for Kāpo Tāngata Whenua. Constitutional recognition and governance capability are important, however they should in our view be complemented by meaningful action to ensure Kāpo Tāngata Whenua are equitably served and their aspirations reflected in the organisation's activities, services and engagements.

2.7 What information would help you feel confident that any new process is transparent, fair and accountable to Members?

Blind Citizens NZ would be confident in any new process, provided it can clearly demonstrate transparency, fairness, accountability, and respect for members' democratic rights.

Information should be provided about the criteria used, how decisions or assessments are made, who is responsible for the decisions, how conflicts of interest are managed, and what mechanisms exist for review or challenge. All processes must be accessible, understandable, and trusted by members, while supporting informed voting rather than diminishing their ability to influence governance outcomes.

2.8 Do you have any other comments to share about possible changes to the organisation's governance?

We have no further comments to offer, other than to reinforce that we believe the current Board election model is fit for purpose. We support Option 2 for reasons advised in that section.

3. Conclusion

Blind Citizens NZ is appreciative of the opportunity to provide feedback to this consultation document. We also extend our thanks to Donna McCaskill RNZFB Board Chair, and Judy Small, Chair RNZFB Governance Committee for their time and contribution during our online hui.

This consultation concerns matters of significant importance to blind people, particularly the ability to participate in and influence the governance of an organisation that exists to serve them.

Blind Citizens NZ remains committed to constructive engagement and is hopeful that there will be a further opportunity to engage on this significant topic before final decisions are reached.

Attachment “H”

Blind Citizens NZ Strategic Plan – 2027-2030

Introduction, from the Board

At its August meeting, the Board considered feedback to Blind Citizens NZ’s Draft Strategic Plan. The collective feedback and insights have assisted the Board, influencing amendments that have further shaped the Strategic Plan, reflecting Blind Citizens NZ’s priorities and aspirations.

The Strategic Plan 2027-2030 is now finalised. It was publicised in our September Focus issue, and is included in the AGM and Conference Agenda for information. As previously advised, there will be an opportunity for discussion if members have questions.

Purpose

Blind Citizens NZ exists to give voice to the aspirations and lived experiences of blind, deafblind, low vision and vision-impaired people (blind people) living in Aotearoa New Zealand. We aim to achieve this by heightening awareness of our rights and removing the barriers that negate our ability to live in an accessible, equitable, and inclusive society.

Vision

Aotearoa New Zealand is a nation where blind, deafblind, low vision and vision-impaired people are inspired and supported to live life as we choose, and where we can participate fully.

Note: In the context of this document, the word “blind” includes all people who are blind, deafblind, low vision, vision-impaired, or who use any other blindness term to describe themselves. Additionally, unless otherwise stated, wherever reference is made to Networks, this includes both Geographic and Special Interest Networks.

Values

We value equally the following statements:

- As an organisation, we seek to maximise the self-worth and meaningful engagement of our people - He Tangata, He Tangata, He Tangata.
- The principles of Te Tiriti O Waitangi with particular reference to Kāwanatanga (Governance), Rangatiratanga (Self Determination), Rite Tahi (Equality).
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the New Zealand Government's ratification of it.
- Respect for the different ways each of us responds to the challenges of blindness.
- The shared learning and support received from the lived experiences of others.
- Commitment to democratic processes and inclusive practices that ensure our representations have a mandate from our members.
- Commitment to sustained effort in our advocacy.
- Constructive, cooperative, and mutually supportive relationships with other disability organisations;

- Our history and the role we have played in the lives of blind people since 1945.

Our Aspirations

We aspire to:

- Advocate that blind people are treated respectfully, our dignity is upheld, and that we are treated equitably.
- Develop the capability of blind people and the Blind Citizens NZ Branches and Networks in which we are active.
- Maximise the well-being and independence of our members.
- Improve society's awareness of issues affecting blind people.
- Strengthen the representation of Blind Citizens NZ as an active member and leader throughout the disability sector, both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally.

Our Strategic Imperative

To create a stronger, interconnected Disabled People's Organisation which promotes, resources, and fosters the well-being of blind people by increasing their participation in Blind Citizens NZ activities.

We intend to achieve our aspirations and strategic imperative by addressing the following goals, which are to:

- increase and strengthen our membership year on year;
- increase the number of members who are actively participating in National, Branch, and | or Network activities;

- strengthen our Branches and Networks so they can advocate for their members;
- increase the collective capacity of our community to accept roles as leaders within Blind Citizens NZ and beyond;
- promote the voices of blind people, and their whanau, in advocating for an inclusive and fully accessible society.

Attachment “I”

Representative Appointments

Introduction

The Board has delegated authority to make appointments to national representative positions. Where practicable, these appointments are considered at the Annual Planning Meeting. However, if required, decisions may also be made at other times during the year. For informational purposes, the Board reports any appointments made to Annual General Meeting for members' information.

Appointments made in the past 12 months

The Board has made the following appointments since the 2025 Annual General Meeting. Unless otherwise stated, decisions relating to these appointments were made at the November 2025 Annual Planning Meeting.

- 1. TellMe, National Information Line Coordinator:** The Board received an expression of interest in this role from Kathryn Stevenson. The position had been vacant since Vaughan Dodd resigned due to ill health in 2024. Kathryn is appointed for two years and may be reappointed for a further two years if she wishes to continue.

- 2. Moderator, Blind Citizens NZ's Blind Discuss List:** Carl Haliburton has served in this role from December 2020 through to early September 2026 inclusive. In the past 12 months, he has been in a caretaker role. At its August 2026 meeting, the Board resolved to appoint Ms Paula Waby through to November 2027.
- 3. Moderator, Blind Citizens NZ's Member Forum List:** Carl Haliburton has served in this role from September 2022 when the list was first started, through to early September 2026 inclusive. In the past 12 months, he has been in a caretaker role. At its August 2026 meeting, the Board resolved to appoint Ms Paula Waby through to November 2027.
- 4. Branch | Network Liaison and Support Information Sessions:** Ms Maria Stevens has represented the Board in this role since November 2025. The Chief Executive supports the Board's representative, bringing an 'operational' perspective.
- 5. Disabled People's Organisations (DPO) Coalition:** the President and Chief Executive continue to represent Blind Citizens NZ on the DPO Coalition.

Attachment “J”

Branch and Network Representative Reports

Southland Branch, from Robyn Garden

The past year has been busy and varied. Committee members have been very involved in areas of their particular interest. This report outlines the Branch’s activities, achievements, advocacy and community involvement.

Meetings

Meetings are an integral part of our mahi.

Ten committee meetings were held over the past year. These were conducted efficiently under the capable leadership of the Chairperson and Secretary. Attendance by committee members is very high.

General Meetings form a very important link with our members. Three General Meetings were held throughout the past year:

- November 2025: As the Regional Representative, I reported back to the members on the 2025 AGM and Conference. This included the outcomes of the remits. Verbal and written reports were made. We also celebrated the 80th anniversary of Blind Citizens NZ.
- May 2026: At this General Meeting we had a Guest Speaker from emergency services who spoke about preparedness for emergency situations such as earthquakes, tsunamis and floods.

- August 2026: This General Meeting was held before our AGM. Remits for Conference were discussed and direction given to the Branch Representative for how to vote at Conference. The remits process is as follows:
 - March newsletter - call for remits.
 - April/May 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.

Personnel

One Committee Member resigned from the Committee during the year.

At the AGM held on 8 August 2026, elections for officers and committee members for the 2026-2027 year were held. There were no changes from the previous year. We are encouraging members to come along to a committee meeting to observe and consider joining the Committee.

Communication

The Branch continues to prioritise clear and accessible communication through many avenues.

Newsletters: During the past year, newsletters were Issued in October, March and June. Members receive these in their preferred format. Each Newsletter begins with an article from the Chair which outlines what has been happening in our Branch.

Other topics included: reminders about meeting dates, subscriptions, 'Did You Know?' snippets, Blind Spot, Total Mobility Scheme Review, Conference 2026, call for remits, Public Library information, 'Tea and Chat', what to do in a civil emergency, 'Tell Me', Branch contact details.

Other means of communicating and sharing information include meetings, social events, phone calls prior to meetings, home visits, 'Tell Me', Support Group newsletters.

Funding and Financial Assistance

The Branch gratefully acknowledges support from:

- Community Organisation Grant Scheme (COGS) which went towards general operating costs.
- Invercargill Licensing Trust (ILT). These grants subsidised catering for the 80th anniversary celebrations, as well as General Meetings and the AGM.

Advocacy and Representation

Advocacy remains central to the Branch's work. This past year has not seen the same number of local body issues or policy reviews as in the past.

The Total Mobility Scheme Review was a major advocacy issue in 2024-2025. It was good to finally have the review completed and direction given. However, it remains to be seen how this works out throughout the country.

The Branch made a submission on the proposed changes to kerbside recycling. The concern about this was that extra bins could present an added hazard for blind and vision impaired pedestrians.

Two other issues that have been ongoing for some time are:

1. Safety issues for vision impaired people regarding the installation of rain gardens and bollards in the upgraded CBD. It is hoped that we will be able to address this issue soon.
2. Audio announcements on buses. The Invercargill City Council has a new fleet of E-buses and seems reluctant to install audio announcement capabilities, despite having them installed on buses in the past.

We continue to take an active part in the Combined Disability Network, working with other disabled groups advocating for those with disabilities.

The committee met with a staff member of the new Southland Museum which is under construction. Accessibility features, applicable to visitors with a vision impairment, were discussed.

Community Engagement and Education

The Branch has undertaken several initiatives to involve and educate the public and to support members. Over the past year, these have included:

- International White Cane Day – school visits, displays, talk to Age Concern
- ‘Blind Spot’ – Our Chairperson and a member present this monthly radio show on Southland Community Radio.

- Meeting with the new Mayor, Tom Campbell, to explain about Blind Citizens NZ and what our role is in Southland. We also took the opportunity to talk about some of the issues that we face.

Peer Support

- Opportunities are available for members to participate in a range of activities to meet with others socially. These have included:
- Afternoon teas following General Meetings and lunch after the AGM.
- A 'high tea' was held on Valentine's Day in February.
- 'Tea and Chat'. This is a monthly get-together for morning tea, a chat and maybe listen to a guest speaker or even take a look at a new E-bus.
- Celebration of the 80th anniversary of Blind Citizens NZ.
- Three members regularly visit members in Rest Homes or in their own homes.

Membership

The number of members of Blind Citizens NZ, Southland Branch, has been gradually diminishing. The committee has made an effort to recruit new members. Over the last month we have had four full members and one associate member join the Branch. This will continue to be a focus for the upcoming year.

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.

Thanks also go to the Invercargill Licensing Trust for their continued financial support.

Finally, thanks must go to our Chairperson, Carolyn Weston and our Secretary/Treasurer, Darren Weston. Also, thanks to our committee and members who have all contributed so much over the past year.

Otago Branch, from Dave Allen

The Otago Branch has continued to remain active and connected with members throughout the year, with a focus on communication, advocacy, social activities, and maintaining strong links with local organisations and members.

Meetings and Communication

During the year, the Branch held four general meetings. These included meeting with the BLVNZ CE Andrea Midgen, our local Mayor Sophie Barker, Blue Bubble Dunedin Taxis, and a meeting to vote on remits.

We have continued to communicate with members through newsletters and other forms of contact. Four newsletters were produced, with formats arranged through the National Office to meet the specific accessibility requirements of individual members.

We have also maintained ongoing communication with members through word of mouth and personal contact. A recent visit to South Otago provided a valuable opportunity to connect with people in the area, resulting in quite a few new members and associate members joining the organisation.

Social Activities

The Branch has continued to provide opportunities for members to meet socially.

Our monthly coffee groups were held during the year but have now been disbanded.

Our Christmas lunch at Rope and Twine was well supported, with more than 20 people attending. It was a very enjoyable opportunity for members and friends to get together.

The midwinter lunch at Common Eatery was less well attended than hoped, due to a combination of sickness and the timing of the event.

Advocacy and Local Issues

The Branch has continued to advocate on issues affecting blind, Deafblind and vision-impaired people in the Otago region and has maintained connections with a number of local organisations and advisory groups.

We have connections with the Dunedin City Council Disability Issues Advisory Group and continue to participate in Access for All meetings. These connections provide opportunities to raise accessibility issues and ensure that the experiences and needs of blind, Deafblind and vision-impaired people are considered in local decision-making.

The branch has also provided input into the Dunedin Hospital rebuild, advocating for accessibility and ensuring that the needs of blind, Deafblind and vision-impaired people are considered as the project progresses.

We have maintained ongoing communication with Go Bus and the Otago Regional Council, raising issues and seeking improvements where necessary.

Following concerns raised about Dunedin taxis, we held a general meeting with two members of the Dunedin Taxi Board. Members were able to provide direct feedback about their experiences and raise concerns.

As an outcome of this meeting, the Taxi Board offered a local telephone line during business hours, allowing blind members to speak directly to a local person who can understand their individual needs and assist with issues. This arrangement has proved quite successful and is a positive outcome for local members.

We also receive regular notifications about road closures and disruptions, including those caused by roadworks and graduations. This information is useful in helping members plan their travel and remain informed about changes that may affect accessibility.

Member Involvement

It has been encouraging to see members contributing to the wider work of the branch and the organisation.

One member provides us with a monthly list of submissions, while another member represents us at Access for All meetings. Although these people are not Committee Members, their involvement is greatly appreciated and demonstrates the valuable contribution members can make to our advocacy work.

Committee

During the year, we welcomed one new committee member, while one committee member stood down. We appreciate the contribution made by both current and departing committee members.

Funding

The branch did not make any funding applications during the year.

Looking Ahead

The Otago Branch will continue to focus on keeping members informed and connected, advocating on local accessibility and transport issues, encouraging new members and associate members to become involved, and maintaining strong relationships with organisations, advisory groups, and agencies across the region.

We are pleased with the progress made during the year, particularly the successful engagement with the Dunedin Taxi Board, our involvement in local accessibility initiatives, and the growth in membership following our outreach to South Otago. We look forward to continuing this work on behalf of blind, Deafblind and vision-impaired people in Otago.

South Canterbury Branch, from Margaret Padman

With the low numbers of members attending, we have our meetings at a café in Timaru, having a cuppa along with the meeting.

We have met regularly this year and have had six meetings between July 2025 and Sept 2026. We held four meetings for the year 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 and have since held two meetings, one in July and one in September.

Conference: It was decided that Brenda Smith and Janice Mehrtens attend the Conference in Wellington.

At our November 2025 meeting, Brenda gave a very full report on the conference, as she really enjoyed meeting all the people that she met up with, including the Blind Women's Network.

Meetings: At our March 2026 meeting, a discussion took place on the upcoming reduction in the Total Mobility Subsidy and some of the members were unaware that this was happening.

Members raise issues that are relevant, and we also discuss the latest Focus magazine at the meetings.

We have been advised of some prospective new members and have had a newsletter inviting them to a meeting. There is some interest for this. We will invite them to another meeting in November.

Wellington Branch, from Patrick Boyd

Election of Committee at Wellington Branch AGM 8 August 2026

Branch Committee for 2026-2027

- 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 – no change
- Mahendra Bali: Member – no change
- Mary Fisher: Member – no change
- Jasmin Ambiong – New committee member
- Rex Harniss – New committee member

We welcome Jasmin and Rex to the committee

Wellington Branch General Meetings

Blind Citizens NZ Wellington Branch holds four General Meetings per year as well as one Annual General Meeting.

Each meeting we receive financial reports, information line, transport and Branch Representative reports.

At all Branch meetings we have a morning tea and lunch which the committee provides. We usually have a raffle, which is a good fundraiser for the Branch. The Branch has continued to fund taxis for members to get to and from meetings, with members paying a \$10.00 contribution. Whilst this is costly for the Branch, it has made it much easier for members to attend meetings.

The Branch held the following General Meetings:

6 December 2025

- Guest speaker Nureddin Abdurahman Wellington City Councillor
His Council work includes: Involvement with urban planning and projects, e.g. cycle lanes.

Branch members gave him feedback including the need to make the footpaths safer for blind/vision impaired people, especially with e-scooters.

- This was followed by a Christmas lunch, A Christmas quiz and a secret Santa.

14 March 2026

- We had a general meeting to cover off Branch business.
- There was a memorial for Shaun Johnson who passed away.
Shaun had been an active member both on the Branch Committee but also on the Board of Blind Citizens NZ.
Members were able to share their memories of Shaun over lunch.

13 June 2026

- The Branch invited Rose Wilkinson as CEO of Blind Citizens NZ and Jonathan Godfrey as President to talk about the role of Blind Citizens NZ, especially some of the practical changes Blind Citizens NZ has made to the lives of blind people over the years.
- Jonathan noted how things have changed (some outside of our control) over the last 10 years since he became National President.
- Rose talked about how Members have been contacted by National Office to confirm their preferred format, and every endeavour is made to provide documents in members' correct format.

8th August 2026

On this date, Wellington Branch held its general meeting and annual general meeting.

The Guest speaker was Hannah Drake from the Wellington police force. She came to talk to us about safety and brought mocked up guns and tasers and bullets along to show us.

- She had an audio recording of her at the police shooting range and practicing using a taser.
- Gave us some tips for safety at home, such as installing sensor lights, having photo ID nearby (Kiwi Access Card is fine if there is nothing else), torch with batteries in nearby, Keeping doors locked at night, installing security cameras.

Hannah spoke to us about a new service the Police have. Anyone who is disabled or vulnerable can have a 'profile' set up with the Police.

It can contain information about you which might help the Police support you in case of an emergency or arrest. For example, if the Police had to evacuate your street as part of an emergency, you might want the Police to know you are blind and can't follow visual directions or signs, but need verbal directions. These profiles are entirely voluntary, you get to say what you want on them and if you decide you don't want or need one anymore, you can ask for all that information to be removed from your profile. Hannah told us about a situation where a young man with autism was detained by police.

Because he had a profile, Hannah knew what some of his favourite topics to talk about were and so she started to talk to him about these things, which kept him calm and engaged.

Submissions

The Branch has made submissions to Wellington City Council on the bus second spine proposals where they want to take buses off Lambton Quay and put them into Jervois Quay and on the changes to the Bunny Street entrance to the railway station.

The Branch also works with Greater Wellington Regional Council and Metlink regarding feedback to proposed changes to public transport infrastructure. As a Branch, we get to be involved in discussions about the new trains and buses rolling out and be part of feedback sessions.

Newsletters and other forms of communication

The Wellington Branch of Blind Citizens NZ sends out four newsletters per year stating the date of the general meetings, the Wellington Branch's AGM, and providing other news and information including reminding members about the Blind Citizens NZ AGM and national conference.

Newsletters are produced in large print, email and CD. By far the most common format is email, with many members preferring large print. A few members still like to receive updates on a CD.

Other forms of communication are the telephone information line (TellMe information line) which is co-ordinated by Thomas Bryan who tells the people listening what is happening in Wellington with upcoming general meetings, theatre productions, updates from Metlink and new cafes to try out. Twice a week we have a volunteer read the death notices and this also gets put on TellMe.

The committee also uses a calling tree to remind members about general meetings and the AGM. This is a good way of attracting members to our meetings.

COGS Grant

This year Blind Citizens NZ Wellington branch received \$2,000 in COGS grants. This helps the branch to pay taxi transport to get members to and from general meetings and annual general meetings, our annual zoom licence to allow members to access meetings online if this is their chosen format.

Any spare money goes towards the Tellme information line as it keeps members informed about what's happening in the Wellington region and around the country. COGS also help pay for the newsletters being sent out.

In memorial

Blind Citizens NZ Wellington acknowledges the passing of Shaun Johnson, who passed away just before Christmas last year.

Conclusion

The Wellington Blind Citizens NZ Branch has around 60 members and we are always looking to attract potential members to our meetings. We have worked to make it easier for members and potential members to reach meetings and provide good guest speakers along to our meetings that are relevant to people who are blind/low vision.

Taranaki Network, from Christine Wiseman

There has been a changing of the guard. Thanks are given to Bev McCulloch for serving as the former regional delegate and coordinator. Her work has reactivated Blind Citizens NZ in New Plymouth and encouraged networking amongst members through lunches at her home.

The group came together for White Cane Day, which was extremely successful, as we walked en masse in the Centre City Shopping Centre, handing out pamphlets raising awareness of the importance of clear pathways.

In conjunction with Enabling Good Lives Taranaki, members attended Parliament in protest against the introduction and select-committee reading of the Disability Support Services Bill, supported deputations to New Plymouth District Council regarding accessibility issues to local beaches, and via the Age and Access Working Party, expressed our concerns about planned construction at Fitzroy Beach.

New members have said that peer support would be helpful in operating apps like BlindSquare and Delivereasy, so we are currently organising that.

We are planning, firstly, to reduce dependence on EGL and strengthen our own networks by hosting events around scheduled Zoom calls which we hope will increase advocacy while continuing other social activities as they were in the past, and secondly, to repeat the White Cane Day. We are asking puppy walkers, BLENNZ, and Age and Access Working Party representatives to join us.

All in all, it is a great start to reactivating advocacy and awareness of the work of Blind Citizens NZ in taking steps to reach members' needs in our local area. We hope to build these foundations in the coming year.

Whanganui Branch, from Russell Lowry

Acknowledgements

First of all I'd like to acknowledge the mahi of our Committee throughout the year in making possible the social events and special activities we have all enjoyed over the past year. A special thanks to Bryn Davies our Secretary/Treasurer who has kept pace with our committee's needs and the additional extra-ordinary responsibilities to National Office this year. Our thanks to Ken Fredericksen for attending to setting up of the hall every social afternoon. He has also picked up the Branch's delegate role to National Office and reported on his initial attendance in the past year. He opts to continue in this role for the coming year. This provides our Branch with a sense of continuity and representation to National Office.

We are grateful to Marion Hainsworth who continues to provide her wisdom and puts together her regular monthly newspaper column, Blind Spot, in the River City Press and on TIS, 06 348 4403. Joan Harris 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.

This year David Couling along with Craig has assisted in the maintenance of our Toyota Van, volunteering to ensure it is well serviced, maintained and remains warranted and registered, our grateful thanks.

Entertainment: a huge thanks to Glenis Couling for her ongoing coordination of the speakers and entertainers that we have enjoyed throughout this year.

She 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. Thanks too to Steve who has also supported transporting folk to and from the social activities when required.

New Members: This year we have begun receiving the names of newly enrolled folk with Blind Low Vision NZ in Whanganui and surrounding areas. This allows us to make contact with them, introduce ourselves and what our Branch has available here in Whanganui. Through this process, we have begun rebuilding our membership.

Social Afternoons: Speakers to our regular Thursday afternoon socials included Tim from Civil Defence speaking on Emergency Management preparedness. Tim provided us all with a list of what to have in our emergency management kit for the three days following an emergency management event.

Kate and Heidi introduced us all to the significant upgrade to our Blind Low Vision Centre buildings. They also took on board the feedback from the member user groups linked to alterations to the initial planning to improve the overall usability of the proposed changes.

The Christmas party was again held at the Whanganui East Charter Club in early December 2025. The Club's staff are to be commended for their attentiveness to the needs of our members. 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.

We had Willy Matthews providing entertainment with a range of Christmas carols, both old and new. This event was mostly funded through our Whanganui Branch.

External Activities

This year's external group activities have included a very well attended combined Matariki celebration luncheon with over 35 people in attendance. Blind Low Vision and the Whanganui Branch of Blind Citizens NZ joined together to host this event and from the feedback received it was very well appreciated. Features included Francie Twomey opening with a karakia and then her daughter Awhina providing a detailed overview of the meaning and purpose of Matariki. Then Willy Matthews assisting us all to learn and perform the waiata Tūtira Mai Ngā Iwi. We all sat to enjoy a wonderfully prepared luncheon provided by Honest Kitchen and Sarah Small, Allie and their team of volunteers, including Jane and others. Our grateful thanks to everyone who made this celebration of the Matariki luncheon such a success.

Our Whanganui Branch also organised for a group of our members to enjoy a River Boat trip on the famous historic paddle steamer Waimarie. It was a lovely sunny day, and those in attendance appreciated the uniqueness of this event. We also provided an opportunity for members to travel through to Woodville and embark on a steam train ride through the now-closed Manawatū Gorge to Ashhurst and return. This too was appreciated as such events are seldom available and difficult to access for low vision and blind folk.

A small group of us travelled through to Halcom to attend the unveiling of Joe Twomey's headstone. This was in support of the whanau and our acknowledgement of the service both Joe and Francie Twomey had given to Blind Citizens NZ Whanganui and nationally over the years. Rest in peace Joe.

Our Branch recently organised a membership visit to the Whanganui Library where Rachel Smith (Disability Coordinator) provided an excellent overview of the wide range of reading options for low vision and blind folk. This included free home delivery of reading materials; access to Libby, BorrowBox, large print and audio books, CD and DVD collections. The staff also assisted our members to join the Whanganui Library, download chosen reading applications onto their smartphone etc. This outing was well attended and appreciated.

Committee/General Meetings

These took place on the first Thursday of each month with the exception of December 2025 (Christmas party) January and April 2026 (holidays). Total amounting to 9.

Social afternoons

These took place each first and third Thursday of the month with the exception of December 2025 and January 2026 (holidays), 19 in total.

Personal Development Grant

We had one successful application to access funds from this initiative this year. This will allow the person concerned to access professional guidance and instruction of disabled skiing on Mount Ruapehu. At the time of writing the opportunity has yet to take place.

Our Whanganui Branch's Personal Development Grant remains 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 \$1,000 per year to draw upon.

Blind Indoor Bowlers

Our Branch continues to assist the Whanganui blind indoor bowlers by way of using the van to transport their members to the Sunday afternoon events.

Advocacy projects

We had input into the national Blind Citizens NZ submission on the proposed changes to the Total Mobility Scheme. Collectively, our Branch also had input into the proposed changes to the Blind Low Vision Building alterations at 102 Peat Street, Whanganui.

The Whanganui Blind Low Vision Centre will be closed for significant modifications from the end of September 2026 until finished. This allows us to continue our social afternoons throughout August and September. We will be meeting on the first Thursday of October and November at the Community Centre, Ridgeway Street, Whanganui.

The third Thursday in October is yet to be finalised. In November we'll use the third Thursday to visit the Whanganui Museum for a guided tour with descriptions of the displays.

White Cane Day 15 October 2026

We propose to increase awareness of blindness issues by gathering together at the bus terminal on Saint Hill Street at 11am and walking together to the Majestic Square where we can hand out pamphlets and assist in improving the public's awareness of both guide dogs, white canes and general tips about low vision and blindness. We can then have lunch at the Mint Café before heading off to Community House to engage in the social activities.

Christmas Party 2026

The Whanganui East Club has been booked to host our Christmas party on 3 December commencing at 12 noon. Willy Matthews will again provide live Christmas carols.

Community Fund Raising

This year our Branch was successful in receiving a grant from COGS, which assists us in the administration of our local activities. We are grateful for this scheme and will be applying again in the coming year. We also received a significant donation from Central House Movers for the right to take an on-site portacom, which they will be removing as a part of the upgrade to the BLV Centre. The completion of this process is ongoing.

Blind Citizens NZ Whanganui Branch Committee 2026-2027

At our AGM on the 6 August 2026 the following people were elected to our committee:

General Committee members include: Sonya Wilkie, Clisa Tait, Marion Hainsworth, Darcy Britton, David Couling and Ken Fredericksen (Branch Representative). Secretary/Treasurer: Bryn Davies. Chairman: Russell Lowry. Our local Patron Joan Harris continues in this role.

Manawatū and Districts Network, from Natt McLean

The Manawatū and Districts Network has had an active 2026, holding six meetings including our AGM. This year we made a deliberate effort to get outside Palmerston North, including visits to Feilding and Foxton, giving members opportunities to connect in different parts of our geographical area.

Meetings have combined Network business with social connection and discussions about issues that directly affect blind and low-vision people. Topics have included Personal Budgets and ways they can be used, safety on the roads, transport, employment and the Supported Living Payment, emergency preparedness and accessibility.

We also spent time looking at Blind Low Vision NZ's Shining a Light on Blindness information and what this tells us about the blind and low-vision community.

Our AGM was held on 30 August 2026. At our AGM, Natt McLean was elected Coordinator for the next 12 months. Andrew was selected as the Manawatū and Districts Network Representative for the 2026 Blind Citizens NZ AGM and Conference in Invercargill.

Involvement, information sharing and connection

An ongoing priority for Manawatū and Districts is encouraging more people to become involved. We have looked at changing meeting days, times and locations to make meetings work better for our members and hopefully attract new people.

Information has mainly been shared with members by email and direct contact. This includes meeting information, activities, conference updates and other information of interest to members.

We have also discussed ways of getting more Manawatū and Districts Network information into existing Blind Low Vision NZ communication channels so we can reach more blind and low-vision people.

We have also tried to reach people outside Palmerston North by getting out into our wider Network area. Another focus has been following up with new members and looking at connections with other groups in the blind and low-vision community.

We want Manawatū and Districts to be a Network where members can bring forward their own ideas and concerns rather than simply attending formal meetings.

Social connection has continued to be an important part of the Network.

We have provided opportunities for members to get together for a snack, drink and social chat, rather than every gathering being focused entirely on formal business. Food and social time have also been included around some of our meetings.

Our trip to Foxton in May was another opportunity to get members together outside Palmerston North. It gave people time to socialize while also having useful conversations about Personal Budgets and road safety.

These informal opportunities are important for keeping members connected and building relationships within the Network.

Advocacy

Advocacy has been an important focus for Manawatū and Districts this year. We have met twice with Tangi Utikere, Labour MP for Palmerston North, giving members the opportunity to raise issues directly with their local MP.

Issues raised and discussed through our advocacy work have included accessible housing, safeguards for disabled people, Total Mobility, public transport, road and pedestrian safety, the Supported Living Payment and employment, Personal Budgets and emergency preparedness.

We have also used Shining a Light on Blindness to help identify issues affecting blind and low-vision people and support our advocacy conversations.

Having opportunities to raise these issues directly and collectively is an important part of what the Network offers its members.

Conclusion

One of our biggest highlights this year is having five Manawatū and Districts Network members attending the 2026 Blind Citizens NZ Conference in Invercargill. This is a great level of representation for our Network.

We are also preparing for White Cane Day on 15 October, with ideas for an activity involving the wider community and raising awareness of blindness and low vision.

Overall, it has been a good year for Manawatū and Districts Network. We have maintained our meetings, travelled outside Palmerston North, created opportunities for members to socialise, advocated on issues that matter to us and have a strong group attending conference.

There is still work to do around growing our membership and getting more people involved, and this will continue to be an important focus for the Network going forward.

Auckland Branch, from Carolyn Peat,

This last year has been another busy one for our Branch. In November we held our first Committee meeting in the new Community Hub at Blind Low vision NZ in Parnell. It is a lovely warm facility and we are glad to be back in our own space. In December we held our annual Christmas party and this year it was in the community Hub. We were supplied with wonderful food from Stan and his team at the Foundation on George. We also had a special birthday cake made by Sarah's Kitchen to celebrate the 80th Birthday of Blind Citizens NZ. Many of our members were very disappointed at the low level of celebration at Conference. It hurt because during lockdowns we had to miss the 75th celebrations as Auckland was in lockdown and the rest of the country could celebrate. Hence, we were really looking forward to the 2025 Conference and AGM hoping for a good party that never happened.

Our first General Meeting of 2026 happened around the same time that submissions were being asked for on the Total Mobility Scheme changes. The Committee recognised that there were a number of people in our membership who would not make a submission without help. Hence our General Meeting was one with a difference. Committee Members, Branch Members and Volunteers offered to assist those in our community to make a submission. How this worked was those who were assisting brought along their laptops, Braille Devices and Smart Phones. We then asked each person that was being assisted how they wanted to make their submission. Did they just want to answer the survey questions or did they want to create an email to be sent.

Once the individual made their decision, we assisted them with the wording, filled out the information for them and sent it through. As a result, a number of our members took up the opportunity to accept the help, and they made submissions. It is important to note that many of our members who did this would not have necessarily made a submission without this help from fellow Branch members and volunteers. Our next General Meeting in June was to ask the membership if they had any remits for Conference, and once again Auckland came up with three Remits. We also had a presentation from Chantelle Griffiths and Matthew Horspool about their business, the Tactile and Technology Literacy Centre (TTLC). They talked about providing Braille and technology instruction, and showed us some tactile puzzles as examples of learning resource materials they had designed and made. In July we had our annual High Tea. This is a welcome mid-winter event and a chance for members to socialise. Once again, the catering was done by Stan and his wonderful team at The Foundation on George.

On 1st August, we held a workshop conducted by Samantha Dalwood and Rachel Noble from Te Whatu Ora, Health New Zealand. The presentation was about a disability and access profile that is being proposed. This will be an optional addition to your NHI Number, and information such as formats and access needs can be added to this profile. They were keen to engage with the blind, vision-impaired, and deafblind community to find out how useful this would be in accessing health services. We then had a break for lunch, which was Pizza and other goodies. After lunch, we had our Annual General Meeting.

Before I give you the details of that meeting, I need to acknowledge the contribution of 3 Committee members who left the Committee during the 2025-2026 year. Suzie Bailey, Maria Stevens and Rebekah Gray our Secretary.

The Annual General Meeting is a chance for the Branch to reflect on the work we have done on behalf of our members during the year and to elect a new Committee. Sue Harris who was our Chair and Karen Plimmer who managed our Facebook page indicated they would not be standing for the new Committee. We sincerely thank them for their contribution.

The new Committee is as follows:

- Paul Brown, Chair
- Latoa Halatau-Talagi, Secretary
- Tewai Halatau, Treasurer
- Carolyn Peat, Branch Representative

Other Committee Members are:

- Leyna Coleman
- Andrew Niven
- Martine Abel-Williamson
- Gary Williamson

We also had a presentation from Donna McCaskill, the Chair of the RNZFB Board. Sadly, we had no applications for the Helen Mutimer Memorial Fund this time around, hence, we encourage our members to consider making an application for the next year.

We continue to make a valuable contribution to public transport and facilities such as bus stops and train stations in our city. With the opening of the City Rail Link on 13th September 2026, it is important to note that the disability community in Auckland made a huge contribution towards the accessibility of the new stations, that included Maunga Whau, Karanga-a-hape and Te Waihorotiu. We also contributed to the opening of the new Drury and Paerata Stations on the Southern Line. Sue Harris and myself along with Guide Dog Zeb, also took part in one of the Evacuation Procedures that happened back in May.

Our Branch produced 5 Newsletters, in Braille, Large Print, audio and email. We also make our Newsletters available on the Alexa Device through TellMe. Other forms of communication included our Info Line that is hosted by TellMe. This is where we promote local events, including all the audio described shows and exhibitions. Funding for our Newsletters, Info Line and Taxi Scheme comes from the Auckland and Manukau Community Organisations Grants Scheme (COGS). Once this funding ended, we were able to get support from Vision Pacific.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have assisted our Branch, including catering, guest speakers, Vision Pacific and volunteers. I would also like to thank our amazing Branch Committee for the awesome work they have done over the last year, and we look forward to another exciting and challenging year of work.

Guide Dog Handlers Special Interest Network, from Bev Duncan

During the year we have held one informal side event at last year's conference in Wellington, three online hui and the annual general meeting, which was also held online on Zoom.

At last year's conference, there were 12 handlers and guide dogs staying in the hotel, and one person and their guide dog attended daily. The most guide dogs and handlers we have had at conference for quite a few years.

November's hui was to have a guest speaker, Head of Guide Dogs, Peter Hoskin, however, that is where we learnt that he had left Blind Low Vision NZ. We had a good meeting despite this, discussing conference outcomes, etc.

In February's hui we had three guest speakers, Natasha Mackie, BLVNZ Service Manager; Erica Palmer, Guide Dog Client Service Manager, and Melinda Dawson from Guide Dog Services. This was a very informative hui with the three of them talking about their roles at Guide Dog Services.

Natasha Mackie, Erica Palmer and the new Head of Guide Dog Services, Mimi Hooper attended our June online hui to bring us up to speed with ongoing work at Guide Dog Services. We discussed several items, in particular the new ID cards that are being rolled out soon by the Department of Internal Affairs for all service dogs in NZ not just guide dogs and the fact that when a guide dog is retired the handler is automatically taken off the list for receiving Korero Kuri by Comms.

We were advised that Guide Dog Services are aware that there are a number of us who actually want to keep in touch with what is happening and want to receive these communications even though we don't have a guide dog so they are working to put us back on the distribution list. The production of the plaques in memory of guide dogs that have passed away has resumed with the names of the dogs in Braille. They are on the wall on the right as you go in to Guide Dog Services.

In August we held our AGM which included elections for the Coordinator and Representative for this conference. I was re-elected unopposed for a further year. We had two people stand for election to represent us at conference and I am pleased to advise that Owen Palamountain was elected. We thank Christine Litchfield for her willingness to stand as well. The AGM was well attended by 18 of the 50 members of the network plus Rose.

The Special Interest Network notices go out on the email list two weeks before each of the hui and more recently I have been putting the notices on the Blind Citizens NZ TellMe National Information Line as well. The email list is not a busy list on the whole however, we have had quite a few subjects covered during the year.

In conclusion we thank the Board and the National Office staff for their work and support during the year.

Braille Special Interest Network, from Chantelle Griffiths

2026 has been a very active and exciting year for the Braille Special Interest Network. While we haven't progressed as far as we would have liked with the goals we set in 2025, we've more than made up for that with a lot of collaboration and work behind the scenes, which has seen tangible results.

AGM and Hui

At our AGM in November 2025, Chantelle Griffiths was re-elected as the Braille Special Interest Network co-ordinator. Since then, we have held our regular bi-monthly hui, plus several additional hui to discuss some exciting collaborations and initiatives.

BLVNZ Braille Project

Early in 2026, James Carrick from Blind Low Vision NZ reached out to Blind Citizens. James is currently leading the Braille Project, which BLVNZ discussed with Blind Citizens NZ and others during four consultation workshops throughout 2025. Since then, James has been to several of our Network meetings to talk with members. He was very open to hearing feedback and wanted to work through some ideas he and our Network members had about how to improve the prevalence and awareness of Braille in Aotearoa. It was a great chance to share the knowledge and expertise of our members and hear more about the Braille Project.

We had many lively discussions about everything from Braille technology to how Braille is used. We discussed what we, as members, would love to see from BLVNZ and offered James the opportunity to speak with us as often as necessary. This meant holding several unscheduled hui to let members who couldn't attend have their voices heard, and to hear updates on the Project. We are very pleased the Project is off to such a strong start.

Reading Group

One tangible initiative that has come out as a result of the collaboration that James is doing with us and others is the introduction of a peer-supported Braille reading group. The group meets in-person in Auckland and members can also join online from around the country. So far the group seems to be very popular with new and experienced readers. Several Network members join in as mentors; something we all agree is a key part of practicing and learning Braille.

Braille User Survey 2026

In early September, BLVNZ released a Braille user survey to help gather data on Braille use specifically in New Zealand. James sent Blind Citizens NZ the questions in advance for people to workshop, which happened at one of our hui. We are very pleased that BLVNZ is taking this initiative and we encourage you to complete the survey. The link is:

<https://blindlowvision.org.nz/news/blind-low-vision-nz-braille-user-survey-2026/>

Global Braille Survey: ICEVI and WBU

The BLVNZ Braille User Survey is happening in parallel with an international opportunity to find out how prevalent Braille is worldwide. The survey is a joint collaboration between the International Council on Educators of People with Vision Impairment (ICEVI) and the World Blind Union (WBU).

In their words:

"This global research initiative aims to strengthen our understanding of how braille is learned, taught, accessed and used, and the factors that enable or create barriers to braille literacy."

The survey is part of the "More Braille, More Empowerment" campaign, and there are several different surveys you can take, including:

- For Braille users over the age of 18
- Braille transcribers
- Educators of learners who use Braille
- Parents of Braille users
- And more

If your Braille knowledge or lived experience falls into one or more of these categories, you can take as many surveys as apply to you.

It's very difficult to find current data on Braille usage, so this is your chance to share your experiences, even if you haven't learned Braille formally or read any in years. We highly encourage you to take the surveys as this will impact what we know about Braille worldwide.

Visit <https://icevi.org/> to find out about the campaign. To take the survey, visit tiny.cc/braillesurvey.

Guest Speaker

At our June hui, we had a guest speaker from the UK. Matthew Horspool is a Braille transcriber and lifelong Braille user. Matthew spoke to us about the differences between the UK and New Zealand in terms of services and support, the work he does and his thoughts on Braille tech and innovations now and into the future.

Māori Braille Table Update

One of our members, Clive Lansink, has recently completed an update to the New Zealand Māori Braille tables in LibLouis. LibLouis is the library of tables that screen readers and Braille devices access to show Braille characters. New Zealand has special rules for how to display Māori characters and the tables that contain those rules are out of date. The new tables are already available in some early releases of NVDA and will come to other screen readers and notetakers in the coming months. We thank Clive for his hard work.

Email List

Quite a few interesting topics have been discussed on the Braille Special Interest Network email list over the past year. These include:

- The launch of the Global Braille Survey.

- A call for expressions of interest for trustees for the Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT) Board.
- Updates to New Zealand Māori Braille tables in LibLouis.
- Information on getting Perkins Braille repaired.
- Discussing the availability of Braille paper in Aotearoa.
- Information about a Braille User Survey conducted by Blind Low Vision NZ. This has been an ongoing topic of discussion throughout 2026.
- A huge piece of advocacy led by one of our members on the importance of Braille, sent to the CEO of BLVNZ, Andrea Midgen on behalf of the Network.
- Returning Braille books to BLVNZ after they have been read.
- Articles and newsletters of interest from the international Braille community.
- And so much more.

I am very pleased that this list is gaining traction, with lots of news to share and topics to discuss.

BANZAT Individual Braille Producer Accreditation

In late August, Chantelle Griffiths became the second individual Braille producer to be accredited by the Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT). Braille producers who obtain this accreditation have proven that they can transcribe high-quality Braille for others that meets BANZAT standards.

The accreditation involves submitting a sample of work containing headings, lists, paragraphs, print page numbers, tables, Māori in an English context, description of a graphic and other examples of formatting and accurately using the Unified English Braille code in an Aotearoa context. Chantelle's name and contact details will soon be added to the BANZAT website.

I am really excited about how the Braille Network is contributing to Braille in Aotearoa. There is a lot happening in the Braille world and I'm proud of the contributions we have made this year. I believe we are making a huge difference with our advocacy and collaboration and there's so much more to do! A huge thank you to all Network members, and Blind Citizens NZ, for your continued work and support.

Blind Women's Special Interest Network, from Judy Small

This is a group of approximately 15 blind women who meet every two months online using Zoom.

Background

At the Blind Citizens NZ 2025 Conference in Wellington 11 women met and expressed an interest to begin a Blind Women's Network. Christine Litchfield and I were tasked to contact Blind Citizens Australia and find out about how their Blind Women's Branch began, their structure and activities.

Katrina Taylor (current President of the Women's Branch) was listening to Blind Citizens NZ 2025 conference online from Australia and was excited when she heard this announcement. She was most helpful in providing information to Christine and me. Katrina met with Christine, Rose and myself where we talked in depth about some likely differences between BCA's Women's Branch and the Blind Women's Network once established. The biggest difference is that BCA Women's Branch is for all of BCA members who are women and who identify as feminine, which means their membership is around 500 women, with a core group of women who participate in their activities. Christine and I were invited to the Blind Citizens Australia Women's Branch Annual General Meeting which we both found most valuable. They had a series of reports from their President and a financial report. While Katrina remains very involved with the Branch, she did not seek re-election. The new President is Debra Simon from Melbourne.

Their input was valuable and helped us present a proposal to Blind Citizens NZ's Board asking for their endorsement to establish a Blind Women's Special Interest Network that would become known as the Blind Women's Network.

Before becoming official, we met in December to work out the group purpose and eligibility for membership. It was agreed that "blind, deafblind, low vision, vision-impaired women or identifying as feminine" could join the group and come to the online hui/meetings.

12 February meeting agreed that:

- The group wish to be inclusive, supportive and have a wide brief. Topics/interests ranged from advocacy, access to health services and education, to sharing their passions, hobbies and interests with the group.
- There will be no men, and this provides women with a safe place to talk through all matters. Key focus areas were identified such as health, employment, education, technology, raising disabled children, best and innovative ways to shop, books, and recipes.

Following the Board of Blind Citizens NZ's endorsement, we agreed that meetings will be every second month, online and from 6 pm to 7 pm.

Meetings will consist of:

- a role call;
- a speaker at each meeting; and
- time for people to raise matters for further discussion, including choosing a speaker for the next meeting.

We celebrated International Women's Day with two announcements:

- Firstly the Blind Citizens NZ Board formally announced the Blind Women's Special Interest Network, which will be called the Blind Women's Network.
- Secondly, this day marked the establishment of the Blind Women's Network email list. This list can be joined by sending an email to: WomensNetwork-BlindCitizensNZ+subscribe@groups.io.

General Details

Our numbers are small, but people are joining as the word spreads. Ten to 13 women attend the bimonthly online meetings. The Blind Women's Network email list has around 15 members. While it is quiet, there has been exchanges of recipes, book recommendations and a few general inquiries. This group is promoted at every opportunity and is open to all blind, deafblind and vision-impaired women who identify as feminine, not just members of Blind Citizens NZ.

Meetings

Four meetings have been held so far.

We met in December 2025 to review the conference discussion and discuss eligibility, group purpose, meeting frequency, etc. We began to draft a proposal for the Board of Blind Citizens NZ to consider. The meeting in February was similar and included a final proposal to the Board of Blind Citizens NZ for their endorsement to establish the Blind Women's Network and a suggestion it could be formally announced on 8 March, International Day of Women. Those present also wanted to hear directly from Debra Simons and Katrina Taylor (Current and past President of Blind Citizens Australia Blind Women's Branch first-hand about their beginnings, how they determined eligibility, and the format of their meetings

In April Debra Simon, President of the Blind Women's Network, spoke to us about BCA's network its members and people's involvement in the network.

This was followed by Katrina Taylor's presentation to us in June. Katrina is now the immediate past President of BCA's Blind Women's Network. She talked in detail about what happened during her four-year term as President. How important the connections women had with each other were, especially rural women who are quite isolated. They have regular meetings online, a book group, a social group, peer support by request on the phone or by Zoom. She also talked about how she used her Ray-Ban Meta glasses in a very practical way with everyday tasks in her home and out and about.

At our most recent meeting in early September, we held our AGM when I was re-elected as Coordinator and gave a summarised version of this report to those present. We were delighted to welcome Jasmin Ambiong, a recent newcomer to New Zealand who talked about her educational experiences in the Philippines, where she had grown up.

I would like to thank Katrina Taylor and Debra Simon for the support and thoughtful comments at the beginning that helped get the Network up and running. A special thank you to Christine Litchfield for coming to meetings with our Australian friends, asking "what next" and "have you remembered", you did a great job of keeping the ball rolling. Also big thanks go to Rose for her amazing mahi, her administration and technical assistance. Lastly, a big thank you to all those wonderful women who attend the online meetings. Without your involvement, input and enthusiasm, this Network would not exist. Ngā mihi nui to you all!

At the time of writing, we plan two more meetings in October and December.

Those from the online meetings coming to the conference are looking forward to meeting up in person at the pre-conference event on Thursday.

As the Representative and Coordinator of this Network, I am looking forward to promoting the group, talking to possible new members about the group and encouraging eligible women to join the email list.

Attachment “K”

Preparation for the 2027 Annual General Meeting and Conference

Preparation for 2027

It is intended that next year's AGM and Conference will be in the upper North Island. Locations and venues that broadly fit into this geographical area will be explored. Suitable options will be provided to the Board for a decision.

Speakers and Theme for 2027

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 2026 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: The personal profiles for guest presenters are provided in alphabetical order.

Sir Peter Francis Boshier

Born in Gisborne, I graduated in law from the Victoria University of Wellington. I began my career as a litigation lawyer until being appointed at the age of 36 as a Judge of the District and Family Courts. In the early 2000s, I moved to Suva in Fiji. I had been seconded by the New Zealand Government to train judges in the Pacific, and I taught case management, the rules of justice, family law and youth justice law.

Returning to New Zealand, I was appointed the Principal Family Court Judge and then became a Law Commissioner in 2012. While at the Commission, I also taught law at Victoria University.

During the course of my judicial career, I prepared a number of reports including one on the reform of the Family Court, a case management manual for Family Court judges and a manual on child offenders for social workers and police. As a Law Commissioner, I oversaw a number of influential reports that resulted in law reform including burials and cremations and contempt of court.

At the end of 2015, Parliament appointed me to be Chief Ombudsman. I investigated complaints about government agencies and oversaw New Zealand's freedom of information law, the Official Information Act.

Under a special United Nations delegation, I monitored and reported on places of detention including prisons, mental health units and aged care facilities.

I was also involved in monitoring people rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

During my time as Chief Ombudsman, I was invited onto the Board of the world body, the International Ombudsman Institute where I was a Director, Regional President and Second International Vice-President.

To me, the forging of sustainable relationships is everything- it's establishing trust and it's establishing a knowledge of what others regard as important. In this respect the establishment of my Māori board (while Chief Ombudsman), Pūhara Mana Tangata, lead to strong relationships with Māori and in particular the Kiingitanga.

The same is so with the disability community because of the establishment of my advisory board Te Roopu Kaiarahi Hauātanga. The richness of these relationships cannot be overstated. I have found similarly, my identification with the Pacific, through many years of involvement as a judge and teacher, has brought about a mutual trust and respect. (I hold the Samoan matai title of Misa)

My areas of expertise and experience mean that I will focus on requests for:

- Investigations and requests for enquiries particularly in relation to government administration or matters of public importance.
- Public speaking, seminars and teaching in relation to aspects of public law, family law and interaction with government agencies and parliament.
- Commentary on issues of public interest if they fall within my expertise and experience.

In the 2026 King's Birthday Honours, I was appointed a Knight Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit, for services to the State and the judiciary.

Mayor Tom Campbell

I was born in Scotland but emigrated to New Zealand with my wife Jessie, as a young married couple, in 1981.

A Chartered Engineer by profession I joined Tiwai Smelter on arrival in NZ, working initially as a pot operator, but progressing to become the smelter Chief Executive in 1999.

While working for Rio Tinto for 28 years I had roles in NZ, Australia, Wales, Canada, Chile and Venezuela. My last role was in Montreal as Global Head of Technology before returning to live permanently in Invercargill in 2009.

I then became Chairman of the Institute of Geological and Nuclear Science (GNS), and Chairman of NZ's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) and served on the Boards of commercial businesses including Port Otago and the Todd Corporation.

My first work for local government was when the Mayoral Forum appointed me chair of the SoRDS group which developed Southland's Regional Development Strategy. That strategy was adopted by all four of Southland's Councils in 2016 and has been the base strategy for much of the development since then.

Elected as a Councillor in 2022, I was later appointed Deputy Mayor of Invercargill and also had extended periods as Acting Mayor when Nobby Clark took ill in 2024 and 2025. I was elected Mayor in October 2025.

I am also Chairman of the ILT Indoor Stadium Trust.

I am married to Jessie, and we have children and grandchildren living in Invercargill.

Andrea Midden, Chief Executive, Blind Low Vision NZ

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

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

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

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

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

Andrea's career began in an accounts office while she pursued her Chartered Accountant (CA) qualification from Unitec Te Pūkenga. Her career and leadership journey included leading finance teams in New Zealand's building insulation and road transport industries and England's air cargo industry. Returning to New Zealand, Andrea joined Ericsson Cellular as GM Operations during the early days of mobile phones.

Outside of work, Andrea enjoys hiking, yoga, volunteering, reading, jigsaws, and spending time with her husband, son, family, and friends.

Dr Robbie Francis Watene, Kairakahau Matua Whaikaha | Disabled Research Lead, The Donald Beasley Institute

Dr Robbie Francis Watene is a Hamilton-based scholar and disability rights defender specialising in disabled person-led research and human rights monitoring.

As Disabled Research Lead at the Donald Beasley Institute and an inaugural Global Heumann Fellow, Robbie advances disability leadership nationally and globally, focusing on the systemic implementation of the UNCRPD.

Holding a PhD from the University of Otago's National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, she is dedicated to ensuring disabled people lead the research and policy decisions that affect their lives, championing disability-led methodologies across both academic and governance spaces. Thanks, sing out if you need anything further. Robbie

Assoc. Prof. Brigit Mirfin-Veitch, Kaiuruki Matua | Director, The Donald Beasley Institute

Associate Professor Brigit Mirfin-Veitch is the Director of the Donald Beasley Institute and a Research Associate Professor at the University of Otago. A leading researcher in critical disability studies, her work spans deinstitutionalisation, physical and mental health equity, parenting, and legal rights for disabled people.

She has contributed significantly to rights-based inquiry in Aotearoa New Zealand, including involvement in the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.

Dedicated to inclusive and disability-led methodologies, Assoc Prof Mirfin-Veitch works closely with disabled communities, particularly the learning disability community, to ensure research directly informs policy, advances human rights, and drives social change.

Dr Greg Morgan, Head of Planning, Auckland Emergency Management

Dr Greg Morgan is currently Head of Planning at Auckland Emergency Management. His team focuses on supporting Auckland's diverse communities to prepare for emergencies. Community groups and networks across Tāmaki Mākaurau Auckland are working together to be ready to help their neighbourhoods during an emergency – being ready is everyone's business.

Greg's workshop will look at emergency preparedness by and for disabled people. What's happening in the emergency management sector and is it thinking about you?

Greg is an Associate Member of Blind Citizens NZ and proud of it. He previously worked at Blind and Low Vision and twice served on its Board.

Dan Shepherd, General Manager Community and Inclusion, Blind Low Vision NZ

Dan joins the Executive Leadership Team having provided authentic, lived experience leadership across the organisation since 2019. Following roles in Client Services, Awareness and Accessibility, Dan brings his experience working with Blind Low Vision NZ to lead a renewed focus on how communities can lead change and remove access barriers for people who are blind, deafblind or low vision as General Manager Community and Inclusion.

Diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa at the age of 15, Dan adds a client voice to the Executive Leadership Team at Blind Low Vision NZ, which is key to their connection to cause – their clients and members.

Driven by his passion for social inclusion and barrier-free choice for others in their communities, Dan aims to influence change and accessible participation in the community through relationships with communities and engagement with key stakeholders.

Paula Tesoriero MNZM PLY, Chief Executive, Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People

Paula Tesoriero is Chief Executive of Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People, a role she has held since soon after the Ministry was established in July 2022.

A law, Politics and Public Management graduate from Victoria University, Paula previously worked in private and public practice in law and policy. Prior to her current role, she was the Disability Rights Commissioner.

Paula has been a regular attendee at Blind Citizens NZ Annual General Meetings over many years and has valued the opportunity to work alongside Blind Citizens NZ both in her current role at Whaikaha and previously as Disability Rights Commissioner. She is a strong advocate for the rights, inclusion and full participation of disabled people in all aspects of New Zealand society.

Paula is a Paralympian who won gold and two bronze medals at the Beijing Summer Paralympics in 2008 and went on to win World Champion titles on the road and velodrome. Her services to cycling were recognised when she was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2009. She retired as an athlete in 2011 but still rides her bike as many days a week as she can, on the road and around the Wellington mountain bike tracks.

Paula has served on several boards including the Halberg Disability Sport Foundation, New Zealand Artificial Limb Service, Sport Wellington and Paralympics New Zealand, and currently serves on the Board of Wellington College. She was a member of the New Zealand Sports Tribunal for 10 years and was the Chef de Mission for the Tokyo 2020 New Zealand Paralympic Team.

Paula lives in Wellington with her husband Peter and their three children.