



Blind Citizens NZ

FOCUS

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Breaking news – National President Election Outcome From Rose Wilkinson, Returning Officer

An extra-ordinary election to fill the National President vacancy was notified in the December 2016 Focus issue. Voting in this extra-ordinary election closed at 4pm Tuesday 21 March. Now, just as our March Focus issue heads to the printer, we have finished counting your votes. The opportunity to share news of the outcome is too good to miss. To recap – at the close of nominations on Tuesday 31 January 2017, three nominations to fill the vacancy were received. In alphabetical order by surname these being from: Jonathan Godfrey, Jonathan Mosen, and Daniel Phillips.

Congratulations are extended to Jonathan Godfrey, the successful candidate elected to fill the National President vacancy. He takes office immediately, filling the vacancy created when Clive Lansink resigned in November 2016. Jonathan Godfrey will complete Clive Lansink's term of office which concludes at the end of Blind Citizens NZ's 2017 Annual General Meeting and Conference.

Extra Ordinary Election - Member-at-Large Vacancy Notice from Rose Wilkinson, Returning Officer

Jonathan Godfrey's newly elected position of National President, means he must vacate his Member-at-Large position on the Board. The term of office for the vacated position concludes at the end of Blind Citizens NZ's 2018 Annual General Meeting and Conference.

The Board has confirmed procedures to conduct an extra-ordinary election to fill the Member-at-Large vacancy. Voting members should note that timelines for an extra-ordinary election are set by the Board. They vary to those for annual, scheduled elections. Timeframes for this extra-ordinary election are stringent.

- 1. Term of Office:** the successful candidate will commence in the position immediately following the conclusion of the election. Their term of office will conclude at the end of Blind Citizens NZ's 2018 Annual General Meeting and Conference. Guidelines that outline duties and responsibilities of Members-at-Large, and of Board Members in general, are available from the National Office upon request.
- 2. Who can participate in this extra-ordinary election?** You will be eligible, provided that at the close of nominations, you are recorded as a financial Ordinary Member on the member database held by the National Office of Blind Citizens NZ. Candidates must live in New Zealand. Associate members are not eligible to participate in Blind Citizens NZ's election processes.
- 3. The nomination process:** nominations must be endorsed by the nominee (i.e. the person standing for election), the person proposing the nomination and the seconder. Nomination forms require the signature of each of these three individuals. Email procedures similarly require each of the three individuals to actively confirm their role in the nomination process. Candidates choosing the email procedure, are required to contact the Returning Officer to notify their intent to use this option, prior to this occurring. Instructions for the email nomination procedure will be provided.
- 4. When do nominations close:** nominations must be received and in the hands of the Returning Office no later than **4pm, Thursday 20 April 2017**. Candidates are required to submit their CV with their completed nomination. You can request a nomination form from our National Office, or you can locate it on our website.

5. **Conducting the election:** after nominations close, and in the event more than one nomination is received to fill the Member-at-Large vacancy, ballot material will be provided to all eligible Ordinary (voting) Members. Ballot material will be distributed in the member's preferred format no later than **Wednesday 3 May 2017**.

6. **Options for receiving receive ballot material and voting:** Blind Citizens NZ has several options for receiving ballot material, and three options to choose from, to cast your vote. You can receive ballot material in: large print, CD (audio), electronic (email), braille, or TIS (Blind Citizens NZ National Feedback Line bulletin on the Blind Foundation's Telephone Information Service). When casting your vote, you have the choice of a paper-embossed ballot paper, braille voting cards, or TIS. If you are yet to experience TIS as an option why not try it? Voters who use TIS prefer it for so many reasons – they no longer need to watch for ballot material to arrive in the mail. They cast their vote knowing it will be recorded immediately i.e. no more worries about whether their vote will reach the returning officer in time to be counted.

Completed ballots (votes cast) must be received at the National Office no later than **4.00 pm, Friday 26 May 2017**. The counting of votes will take place the afternoon of Monday 29 May 2017.

Anyone requiring more information, a print nomination form, finding out more about the email option, checking if you are financial, using TIS, checking that we have your preferred format correctly listed, or any other aspect of the election procedure, please contact our National Office on any of the following options: Phone 0800-222-6940 or 04-389-0033; post to PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242; Fax: 04-389-0030; or email election@abcnz.org.nz

Making informed decisions on who will lead us

Editorial from Carolyn Weston

Here we are, another year 2017 and I'm still asking myself where did 2016 go. Never mind, we are now well into 2017 which will bring some changes and no doubt new challenges.

Over the past few months we have been swamped with elections. Our Local Body Elections and Blind Citizens NZ Board Elections, both held in October. We also watched in amazement the USA Presidential Elections where Donald Trump won from Hillary Clinton.

The Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind's (RNZFB) Board of Director elections also took place in late October. Then in November it was announced that Blind Citizens NZ's then National President Clive Lansink, had been successful in being elected on to the Blind Foundation's Board. Clive Lansink then resigned as our National President so he could take his seat on the RNZFB's Board. His resignation as National President of Blind Citizens NZ meant Blind Citizens NZ needed to hold another election so we can elect a new National President. In early February, Rose Wilkinson, our Returning Officer announced that three candidates were standing for National President.

One issue dominating discussions in and out of Board-rooms and amongst people involved in any organisation is Board member's accountability to their membership. This is important as people will stand for a position in governance, stating they want to achieve outcomes which will benefit the people the organisation is serving. Election information packs should contain candidate's reasons for standing and what they hope to achieve if they are elected into the position they seek.

Election candidates are usually restricted in the number of words they can write in their CV, resulting in many voters not having enough information on each candidate to cast an informative vote.

Candidates elected on to boards such as the RNZFB Board of Directors and Blind Citizens NZ's Board are accountable to all members of that organisation. Voters will want to know if successful candidates are following through with their promises or not. There is more than this to accountability, like paid employment positions, people have to account for their actions to either their boss or in a governance position of an organisation such as Blind Citizens NZ, to their members.

There are some quantitative measures we can use by examining the Minutes of meetings for example, the number of meetings each board member attends, how often each person moves or seconds a motion and sometimes, depending on the style of the Minutes, how often each board member speaks. This gives only half the picture as Minutes don't include qualitative measures, identifying the amount of work and value each board member brings to the governing function. You may be interested to know that whilst you are struggling with this aspect of accountability, so are many boards. There are some mechanisms boards can use to measure their individual Board members and the Board as a whole performance but these can be problematic due to various styles of mechanisms used and how measurements are reported. The main point is that most boards today are grappling with the issue of self or external performance appraisals. Whilst this may not address members concerns about board accountability, including individual's performance, I hope that it demonstrates that many boards' personnel are striving to address accountability through mechanisms such as Board performance appraisals.

Now back to elections. At each of the 2014 and 2016 Blind Citizens NZ's Annual General Meeting and Conference, sessions were held, where candidates standing for the RNZFB's Board of Directors were able to give further information about themselves and why they were standing for the Board. Each candidate was invited to present a two minute speech, and they participated in a question and answer session. Personally I found these sessions very informative.

Last year, all six candidates accepted the invitation to speak and answer questions at the Sunday morning session. This enabled Conference attendees and other Blind Citizens NZ members to ask questions either prior to the start of proceedings or at Conference. This session was revealing as it provided us, the voters, with more information about each candidate, their values, dreams and what they hoped to achieve if they were elected on to the Board of Directors. This session enabled us to make a more informed choice on whom to vote for.

Blind Citizens NZ hopes the RNZFB will begin providing opportunities for all their governing members to listen or participate in a similar session described as above so voters can make an informed vote in future elections.

Discovering the benefits of hearing candidates' two-minute speeches and, participating in question and answer sessions, I wonder why Blind Citizens NZ haven't provided us with opportunities to learn more about our own Board and National President candidates standing for election. Blind Citizens NZ's voters have the same rights as RNZFB's voters to learn as much as we can about each candidate prior to casting our vote.

In 2015 Blind Citizens NZ was unable to hold an RNZFB Board of Directors' candidates' session for reasons outside its control.

At present we have double standards, expecting more accountability from candidates standing for the RNZFB Board of Directors than from those standing for Blind Citizens NZ's Board. We should expect all prospective leaders within our blind community to speak up and state what their values, dreams and aims are, for standing for that particular board. This is the starting point for each board member's accountability back to the electorate. Yes, Blind Citizens NZ's Board candidates do write a CV and give reasons why they want to stand for our Board as candidates standing for the RNZFB's Board do. The question we should ask is why should one set of candidates be given the opportunity to provide further information to assist voters to make an informed choice but not provide this opportunity to our own Blind Citizens NZ Board candidates? As a voter in both elections I want to know as much as I can about all candidates before voting.

I have no idea why Blind Citizens NZ's Board have provided us with a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the RNZFB's Board candidates but have neglected to provide the same level of information sharing in their own elections. Now we have a tried mechanism in place enabling more information sharing, shouldn't Blind Citizens NZ's Board candidates also be prepared to share more information such as answering questions put to them during the election?

When I am voting in any election I want to learn more about all candidates standing for the positions. Many blind people ask about the RNZFB's Board of Directors accountability back to their community but how often do we ask questions about the accountability of Blind Citizens NZ Board members? We should be asking questions from all board or executive committee members within the blind and wider disability consumer organisations. People may argue that the RNZFB who provides services to us should be more accountable to those who receive services.

It is a good point and I wouldn't argue with that ideology but I believe other leaders of organisations in our blind community should be accountable because they are providing blind people advantages such as peer support, advocacy, recreation and social interaction. You could argue that these are not the same as providing guide dogs, a talking book library or rehabilitation services etc. however our blind consumer organisations enrich the lives of all blind New Zealanders by advocating for talking ATMs at banks, audio described TV and theatre, better access within our cities and towns and much more.

At the beginning of this editorial I spoke of possible changes occurring in the Focus Editor role. We have been advertising for someone to fill this position and all going well, we may have someone keen to take over this role. Time will tell, and for now, I take this opportunity to thank those people who have passed on feedback about my editorials.

Over the years I've heard blind people criticising Blind Citizens NZ for many reasons. They've forgotten the vision, determination and fighting spirit our blind forefathers and mothers gave to our blind community. If the Dominion of the Blind wasn't created in 1945 where would we be today? If we hadn't fought and won blind persons' self-determination giving us the right to nominate and elect people on to the RNZFB Board of Directors, would The Blind Foundation Board still be appointed and controlled by Government and sighted people? If we hadn't led the way would other disabled people have gain consumerism and would Governments have placed disability issues higher in their agendas, establishing and maintaining a Minister for Disability Issues and the Office for Disability Issues? If we hadn't spoken up about issues relating to accessible environments, public transport, education, career training and employment where would we be now? Our history proves that we have had to fight and win many battles but the war isn't over yet, we still have many more battles to fight and win.

Until blind and vision impaired people enjoy the same life-styles as our sighted peers, Blind Citizens NZ and other disability consumer organisations must continue leading us on the path to an accessible world for all.

What's in a Meeting?

Jonathan Godfrey, National President

Not so long ago, the older of my two daughters asked me what I do in all those meetings I go to. Her question deserved an answer that was true, but more importantly, it had to be meaningful with respect to what those meetings represented to her. It might have been a question asked by a four and a half year old girl, but I suspect it is a question the membership ought to ask of your Board and National President. For Annabelle, the meetings I attend seem numerous, long, and far away; to make things worse, she doesn't really understand what we want to talk about because so many of the issues just don't exist in her world. Her lovely naivety has caused me to think about the work your Board does on behalf of blind New Zealanders and the role your National President plays as part of that team.

A large portion of Board time and effort goes into making sure Blind Citizens NZ exists, and will continue to exist for as long as is necessary so that all blind New Zealanders can enjoy the lives we choose for ourselves. For many years now we've relied on the support of the Blind Foundation as our major funding source. As in recent years, we've negotiated an agreement with the Foundation to do the advocacy work our members have determined is important to blind people. I'm pleased to report that we've received a significant increase in the level of support from the Foundation because we've demonstrated that we are the organization in the best position to do the advocacy work required.

Blind Citizens NZ is a leading Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) which has opportunities to influence Government officials so that improvements can be made. We can see the impact we have had on the Disability Action Plan and the new New Zealand Disability Strategy, but I suspect that seeing how this work changes the world we live in is a little more difficult for our grass roots membership. I do worry that members might not see the value of the work we do as having a positive impact on their everyday lives because those changes have a long-term impact and therefore don't lead to overnight change. There are other advocacy topics to work on that could have more immediate impact though.

Let's compare two current issues receiving the Board's attention.

1. The NZ Transport Agency has recently released a proposal to allow young children under supervision of an adult to ride bicycles on the footpaths.
2. Our annual conference passed a resolution about the need for touch screens to be made accessible to blind passengers on international flights.

Both issues affect blind people, but they affect different blind people differently. Most of us use footpaths at some time; everyone using a footpath wants to be safe; and none of us wants to see young children riding bikes to be in danger. Relatively speaking, few of us will travel on international flights, but all of us that do take these flights will rely on another passenger or a member of the crew to help us drive the touch screen. The problem is that those touch screens are the way most passengers will call for a member of the crew to help them, and interrupting another passenger's sleep or enjoyment of a movie so they can help call for the crew is an imposition. I suggest that might leave some blind passengers feeling vulnerable and unsafe, just like a blind pedestrian being surprised by seemingly random cyclists on the footpath.

These issues both have merit, but the Board must decide how best to progress each of them and the very long list of other issues we have before us. We must weigh up the amount of effort needed to make progress, be ready to take advantage of opportunities that come along, and work out which allied organizations are most likely to have an interest in supporting our work. For example, it is my hope that we get a chance to make a submission on the pedestrian issue and get to back up our written work with an opportunity to speak to the Select Committee because it is important that Government hear from “blind people speaking for ourselves”. I believe we are more likely to get this opportunity sooner than we’ll get meetings with Air New Zealand and other airlines so it is important that we get on with creating our position statement and supporting documentation. Both of the issues are likely to affect New Zealanders represented by other DPOs so it makes sense to work with them to progress these issues if we possibly can; international travel also affects blind people from other countries so it makes sense to raise this concern through our World Blind Union connections too.

Getting to grips with how we present the issues as they affect our members and other blind people takes time and effort, not all of which is expended at Board meetings. Some Board members are skilled at document preparation while others are skilled in teasing out all the perspectives we need to address if we are to represent the views of the broader membership. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges we have at present is the need to formulate a new Strategic Plan for Blind Citizens NZ. Note I used “we” there, not “the Board” on purpose. The Board has already identified the need for the new plan, but also that communication and engagement with our membership is crucial. The new plan will need to resonate with the existing membership base, but also reach out to new members. Making sure the direction the Board takes our organization in coming years is something all members need to feel part of.

A proposed Strategic Plan will therefore be distributed for consultation well before our conference in October so that everyone has a chance to share their views on it. Ultimately, that plan needs to be a document that we show to everyone to tell them what it is we do and why.

Speaking of conference, you should look out for the full details given in this issue of Focus. We will be gathering for three days and there's no time like the present for planning your travel; we'd love to see more members join us as we determine what our organization is going to be in years to come. Booking ahead of time will make it easier to arrange other activities around your trip. Our Southland Branch colleagues recommend some options that you might like to visit: Bill Richardson's Transport World (a few blocks along from the Ascot Park Hotel) where there is a café with themed bathrooms; Queens Park, home of the Southland Museum which has live displays of Tuatara; last but by no means least, E Hayes and Sons, the home of Burt Monro's original World's fastest Indian Scout, the centrepiece of over 100 classic and vintage motor vehicles.

Annabelle was in the hotel during our 2016 Conference. She knows there were lots of blind people talking to each other, sharing ideas and concerns. She saw people having fun and she knows Conference is important to us. All three of my children spent the weekend in Wellington with me when the Board met in November. They know the work your Board and I do is because we want to make the world a better place for all blind people to live in. My next parental challenge is to explain the important work done by our staff at National Office; for the moment I hope you'll forgive me not making the distinction clearer. I can tell you that our work as a Board would not be as successful if we were to do it without our National Office staff, because the workload your DPO works on is beyond the capacity of a volunteer Board, all of whom have lives to lead outside Blind Citizens NZ.

2017 Annual General Meeting and Conference
Listening, Connecting, Engaging
From Rose Wilkinson, Executive Officer

In November 2016, the Board began planning for Blind Citizens NZ's 2017 three-day Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Conference. Consistent with the policy to alternate between the North and South Island, this year's event will take us a little further south than in the past. Notification of this year's three-day event includes specific information for financial members who will be first-time attendees...

This year's AGM and Conference will be held **Friday 13 to Sunday 15 October at the Ascot Park Hotel, Invercargill**, home of Blind Citizens NZ's Southland Branch. The Board recognises there will be travel logistics to balance, however it sees this as a great opportunity, and urges you all to start thinking about being part of this year's AGM and Conference in Invercargill. Start and finish times will differ to what has been the norm for many years and likely see Friday's session commence at 10am, and concluding Sunday at 11.30am.

The Board's primary focus is to ensure attendees arrive in good time, well-rested and ready to participate. Balancing these elements in particular, will require attendees from most destinations, to arrive the day prior i.e. Thursday 12 October. Of note however, is that accommodation and meal costs for members, will be on a par with those for 2016. There are a range of accommodation options that some attendees may find appealing. Further information about the venue, business sessions, and the registration form, will be available by the end of March.

This year's theme is **Listening, Connecting, and Engaging**. Focussing on Blind Citizens NZ and exploring new and different ways of communicating, and engaging with members, is key to the Board's approach towards this theme.

Input from members and branches about topics and speakers is needed. Ideas and suggestions received at our national office by 20 April will be considered by the Board at its meeting 28-30 April. The Board suggests the following question may guide your thinking i.e. **what is it that would bring you to this year's AGM and Conference?**

In addition, the Board has introduced an **incentive for financial members who will be first-time attendees i.e.** financial assistance will be available. The number of members and the level of financial support, will be determined by the Board once it knows the extent of interest. If you are a financial member of Blind Citizens NZ, are interested in coming to this year's AGM and Conference, and this will be your first time, the Board wants to hear from you. Members submitting an expression of interest are asked to include an indication of how much they will be in the position to financially contribute towards costs (accommodation and travel), if at all. Although this will have no bearing on decisions reached by the Board, it may enable the Board to support more first-time attendees.

Thursday 1 June 2017, 4pm, is the closing date/time by which expressions of interest must be received at National Office.

These can be submitted for the attention of the Executive Officer via any of the following options:

Email: prutene@abcnz.org.nz (Puti Rutene, Administrative Support)

Post: PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242;

Fax: 04-389-0033

Forum for Guide Dog Handlers

In conjunction with, and just prior to this year's AGM and Conference, Blind Citizens NZ is holding a two-day forum for Guide Dog Handlers i.e. Wednesday 11 and Thursday 12 October.

The forum is for current handlers, members who aspire to be one, and those who have been a handler but for one reason or another, do not have a guide dog at present.

The Forum will provide an opportunity for handlers from around the country to contribute to, or benefit from, peer-to-peer support. While the Forum will facilitate a sharing of experiences, it will be influenced by attendees i.e. the Board is open to suggestions as to what you would like to have included during the two-days. These will be taken into consideration as the framework for the two days is shaped. Although planning is in the early stages, the Board's desire is to involve key stakeholders from the blind community.

The Board has allocated funds from Blind Citizens NZ's leadership fund towards the Forum, and will be providing some financial support. In addition, external funding sources continue to be explored. Ideally, following the conclusion of the Forum, attendees will stay for Blind Citizens NZ's AGM and Conference.

The Board is now calling for expressions of interest from interested members who want to be part of the Forum for Guide Dog Handlers. Expressions of interest should include your guide dog handler status, it should provide a statement of the benefit to you from attending the Forum, topics you would like to see covered, whether you intend to remain for Blind Citizens NZ's AGM and Conference, and if you are in a position to make a financial contribution.

Expressions of interest close **4pm, Thursday 1 June 2017. They must be received at National Office.** These should be submitted for the attention of the Executive Officer via any of the following options:
Email: prutene@abcnz.org.nz (Puti Rutene, Administrative Support);
Post: PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242;
Fax: 04-389-0033

Focus Editor – Expressions of Interest Reminder

From Rose Wilkinson, Executive Officer

In the December 2016 Focus issue, we refreshed the call for expressions of interest in the Focus Editor role. For anyone interested in considering this opportunity, a reminder of the closing date and aspects of the role are provided.

Key elements for prospective editors to bear in mind include that:

- the appointment will be for a two-year term;
- Focus is the official national publication of Blind Citizens NZ;
- Blind Citizens NZ's membership is the target audience;
- editorials are intended to raise and promote debate on issues that are current and topical to the blindness community, and stimulate reader-interest in submitting Letters to the Editor.

At its November 2016 meeting, the Board considered how Focus presents to readers who like to remain abreast of Blind Citizens NZ's work. It is mindful the presentation of Focus remains largely unchanged since early 2000 hence the opportunity for the Focus Editor to influence change.

Expressions of interest from amongst financial members of Blind Citizens NZ for this position, are called for. Should further information be required, applicants should contact National Office for full details of the position. Expressions of interest close at 4pm Monday 10 April 2017. All expressions of interest will be considered by the Board at its meeting the weekend of 28-30 April 2017.

Blind Citizens NZ – 2017 Election Timelines
National President and Four Member-at-Large Positions
Rose Wilkinson, Returning Officer

Constitutional Ruling 10 (Elections) directs Blind Citizens NZ in its election procedure. Positions that fall due for election this year are those of National President (held by Jonathan Godfrey), and four Member-at-Large positions, currently held by Martine Abel-Williamson, Geraldine Glanville, Shaun Johnson, and Paula Waby.

The March Focus issue is the first of two opportunities to call for nominations for all five positions. Please note that:

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

Details about timelines, and the procedure for all positions for election are provided. Additional information for each of these positions, is available upon request from the national office. You will also locate them on our website. If you are standing for election, you are encouraged to obtain information pertinent to the position. An insight into the duties and responsibilities of Board Members, and prerequisites for National President and Member at Large positions, will be gleaned from reading available information.

Contact details for national office and our website will be found at the conclusion of this Focus issue. Now to the timelines and procedures...

1. **How do I know if I am eligible to be nominated for one of the positions in this year's election?** Eligibility requirements are set out in Constitutional Ruling 10.1. You are eligible to be nominated for one of the positions, provided you live in New Zealand and have been a financial Ordinary Member of Blind Citizens NZ for no less than 24 full months measured cumulatively during the period of five consecutive years ending on the closing date for nominations. If you are thinking about being nominated for one of the positions and you are uncertain whether you meet the criteria, please contact national office for clarification.

2. **How do I go about getting nominated?** Nominations must be agreed to by the nominee (the person standing for election), and the people moving and seconding the nomination. Nomination forms require the signature of all three individuals. Email procedures similarly require each of the three individuals to actively confirm their role in the nomination process. Candidates choosing the email procedure are required to contact the Returning Officer prior to commencing this process. This is important for there are instructions unique to the email procedure that must be followed i.e. the email process mirrors as closely as possible, requirements for the paper-based option.

Requirements for the nomination process must be concluded (including completed nominations being received by the Returning Officer), by the close of nominations, 4pm, Thursday 24 August 2017. Contact details for the Returning Officer are:

- Postal: Blind Citizens NZ, PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242;
- Fax: 04-389-0030;
- Email: election@abcnz.org.nz

Candidates are required to submit their CV to the returning officer with their completed nomination.

- 3. What happens after nominations close?** In the event the maximum number of nominations for the five positions is received (National President and four Members-at-Large), then no election will be held. Candidates standing for these positions will be declared duly elected. However, in the event nominations exceed the number of positions being elected, an election will then be held.
- 4. Financial Ordinary Members have their say:** Ballot material (names of people standing for election, information they have provided about themselves and voting information), will be sent to all Ordinary Members recorded as financial on the member database at National Office as at 4pm, Thursday 24 August 2017. Ballot material will be distributed in the voting member's preferred format no later than Thursday 14 September 2017.
- 5. When does voting close:** Completed ballots (votes cast by voting members) must be received at National Office no later than **4.00 pm, Monday 2 October 2017**. Vote counting will take place on Wednesday 4 October 2017.
- 6. Receiving election information and casting your vote:** Blind Citizens NZ has several options available for members to participate in our election process. This means you choose how you receive your election material, and how to cast your vote.

Election (ballot) material that informs you about candidates standing for election is available in the following options: large print, audio (CD), braille, by email, and via our National Feedback Line on the Telephone Information Service (TIS).

If you are in any doubt about whether your preferred communication option for elections is correctly identified on our records, please contact our national office to check.

When casting your vote, there are three options to choose from, and, the way you vote, can differ from the way you choose to receive your election (ballot) material. You can vote using the large print ballot form, the braille ballot option, or TIS. If you currently receive a large print ballot form but are unable to independently cast your vote, we encourage you to use TIS as this offers a truly independent and empowering voting experience. Why? Because you can independently access information about all of the candidates standing for election, and you can also cast your vote.

If you would like to know more about using TIS, or you want to cast your vote using this option, and you are unsure if you are registered with us to do so, please contact our national office.

Onkyo 2017 World Braille Essay Contest

Tell Your Tale in Braille - Cash Prizes

Do you write in braille and enjoy writing essays when guided by a topic? If you are, then how about giving this competition a go? And if you are relatively new to braille, think of this as the perfect opportunity to put your skills into practise.

Before entering the competition, please be sure you meet all of the following requirements i.e. that you: live in New Zealand; are blind, vision-impaired or have low vision; write braille; and that you are 14 years or older. Provided you meet **all** the criteria, then you can enter the competition. You can send one entry only, and it must be all your own work.

From New Zealand, previous winners of the Onkyo Braille Essay Contest include Olivia En (2012) and Lisette Wesseling (2013).

Topics and length of essays: the contest rules state essays must be between 700 and 1,000 words. The rules also ask contestants not to give long explanations about the braille system or the negative side of being blind. The emphases are on the positive experiences of being blind and the creative uses of Braille "In MY Life". The three topics from which you may choose for this year's contest are:

1. The positive experiences and opportunities of my life from being blind.
2. The importance and creative uses of braille in my life.
3. Music brings opportunities, joy, development and change in my life.

Submitting your braille essay entry: The following details must be provided:

- full name (as written on your birth certificate);
- age (attach your birth certificate or a statement from someone in authority to confirm your age);
- your gender plus an electronic photo;
- your occupation e.g. student, receptionist, homemaker etc;
- name, address and e-mail of the organisation (blindness service provider or consumer organisation), you belong to;
- your own contact details including phone and e-mail.

Closing date / where to send your essay: entries and all other information mentioned above must be received no later than 4pm, Wednesday 31 May. Entries should be sent to:

- Post: Onkyo Braille Essay Contest, C/- Blind Citizens NZ, PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242; or
- Email: onkyo@abcnz.org.nz

Late entries will not be considered.

All countries are limited to sending a maximum of five essays. In the event more than five are received, our Selection Committee will identify the five best entries. These will be submitted to the WBU-Asia Pacific Onkyo Selection Committee.

Cash Prizes will be awarded to the seven best entries out of all participating countries. Prize categories are:

1. The Otsuki Prize - US\$1,000 and a trophy. This overall prize is given to the best entry from either of the age groups.
2. Excellent Works – US\$500 and a trophy. Two prizes will be given, one to each age group.
3. Fine Works – Four prizes will be given, two prizes of US\$200 to the 14 to 25 year age group, and two prizes of US\$300 to the 26 and above age group.

Braille-writing tools and requirements: Your entry must be written in braille using any of the following options: Perkins, Mountbatten, Braille Notetaker (e.g. Braille Lite, Braille Note, Braille Sense or Pac Mate). You must use six-key Braille entry. Do not use the Notetaker's on-board braille translation. Your essay entry can be submitted as hard-copy braille, or as a .brf file.

An electronic MS Word translation (.doc or .docx file) of your essay entry is required, and must be sent at the same time as your braille file / document. We have some handy-hints that we hope will help ensure your entry meets the required criteria.

If writing your essay on the Perkins we suggest writing several drafts until you are satisfied. Then write a final version.

If writing your essay using a braille note taker, we suggest opening a .brf file from the start, and saving in .brf as you go. That way, you will have a .brf file at all times, rather than having to convert later from another format. Please note that some note takers have their own proprietary braille files.

This format cannot be accepted by the judges. You can either emboss your essay or send the .brf file by email.

If writing your essay using a computer with a qwerty keyboard you must write directly into a braille translation programme with the translation bar turned off, using six-key entry. You cannot type in standard qwerty and then have the computer translate your work into braille.

The Braille Essay Contest is sponsored by the Onkyo Company Limited and The Braille Mainichi Newspapers of Japan, and is implemented by the World Blind Union-Asia Pacific (WBUAP). Rules for participation and topics for the contest, are notified to all countries who are members of the WBU Asia Pacific Region.

New Zealand is a country member of the WBU Asia Pacific region. The Blind Foundation and Blind Citizens NZ are New Zealand's National Onkyo Selection Committee – we jointly co-ordinate promotion of the essay competition. Should entries be greater than the maximum number of five, we would judge and submit the best five entries.

The World Onkyo Selection Committee will announce winners at the beginning of November 2017. Once the sponsors have publicised category winners, the NZ Onkyo Selection Committee can then do so. The sponsors own the copyright of all winning essays and reserve the right to publish them in the manner they so choose.

Call for Nominations for Blind Citizens NZ most Prestigious Awards

Annually, the Board calls for nominations for its most prestigious awards these being: Beamish Memorial Award, Extra Touch Award, and the Johnston Cup for Leadership.

Criteria for each award are provided and should guide your thinking towards making a nomination. For each of these three awards, nominations may only be made financial Ordinary (voting) Members of Blind Citizens NZ, branches, and the Board. The close of nominations is advised in conjunction with each of the awards – these should be sent to National Office, the details for which are located at the end of this Focus issue. The element of surprise is paramount thus the Board's decision for all awards remains confidential irrespective of whether or not an award is to be presented. Please do read on, and pop on you respective thinking caps...

Beamish Memorial Award: The Beamish Memorial Award is the single most prestigious award that Blind Citizens NZ has the honour and privilege of bestowing on anyone within the organisation. It can only be awarded to an Ordinary Member of Blind Citizens NZ who has made an outstanding contribution to society in their particular field of service to the community. If you know of someone who meets this criteria, and whose outstanding efforts you believe should be recognised, then please do take advantage of this opportunity. The name of the person being nominated, their contact details, along with information and reasons in support of the nomination are needed.

Nominations close at 4pm, Wednesday 30 August 2017 and must be received at our National Office no later than this date.

Extra Touch Award: This esteemed award is aimed at recognising an individual or organisation where, as part of the process of catering to the general public, an outstanding contribution is made towards improving access or services to blind and vision impaired people. Examples to start you thinking about worthy recipients of this award are given – the opportunities to recognise contributions are diverse and include access to information, society, technology, transport and pedestrian safety, everyday equipment, educational, vocational or recreational opportunities, shops and customer service, and services in general.

Information about last year's Extra Touch Award recipient might guide your thinking - Arts Access Aotearoa New Zealand was recognised for the extent of work to raise awareness about audio description of live theatre, museums, galleries, as well as training of audio describers.

Nominations must include the nominee's name, their contact details and information that mirrors with and responds to criteria for granting the Extra Touch Award. These must be received at the National Office of Blind Citizens NZ by 4pm, Friday 30 June 2017.

Johnston Cup for Leadership: First presented in 2007 by Doug and Jeanette Johnston (Doug Johnston is a past National President of Blind Citizens NZ), this award is intended to encourage and recognise leadership potential from amongst members of Blind Citizens NZ; to encourage them to accept leadership responsibilities inside and outside the blindness community; and to develop an environment where they can be recognised for leadership in their field of endeavour.

Do you know of a member of Blind Citizens NZ who you believe meets this criteria and who has contributed in some demonstrable way to the betterment of the community by way of their leadership? Provided the person you are thinking about is an Ordinary (voting) Member of Blind Citizens NZ, and you believe they are worthy of being nominated for this award, all you need to do is tell us. Information in support of the nomination is required. Nominations must be received at National Office by 4pm Wednesday 30 August 2017. Contact details for national office are located at the end of this publication.

Your expertise and knowledge can make a difference

Blind Citizens NZ holds representative positions on several national organisations. As the term of office for positions fall due, the Board determines whether to publicise these, or to reappoint. At its 2016 Annual Planning Meeting, the Board resolved that all positions as they fall due in 2017, would be advertised. Unless a representative has served the maximum term set by the organisation, the representative may submit a further expression of interest.

The Board calls for expressions of interest from financial Ordinary (voting) Members of Blind Citizens NZ to represent it on the Workbridge Council, and the Ministry of Health Disability Support Services Consumer Consortium. Details for each position follow.

- 1. Workbridge Council:** Paula Waby has represented Blind Citizens NZ on the Workbridge Council since 2015. The Board is keen to hear from members interested in this role which involves attending approximately three one-day meetings per year in Wellington (all actual costs paid). The term of office may be one to two years, and is determined by the Board on a case-by-case basis. Paula Waby is eligible to submit an expression of interest. Provided your extensive skills and expertise include knowledge and understanding of the following you will be well-suited to this role:
 - the disability community in general;
 - barriers to employment and the challenges experienced by blind and vision impaired job-seekers, and those in employment;
 - vocational services and funding opportunities available for disabled job seekers and those in employment; and
 - the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

You will also be required to:

- articulate the views of Blind Citizens NZ on behalf of the blind community;
- ensure you have necessary time to read and be familiar with the full agenda of each one-day meeting including all relevant documentation;
- provide reports to the Board within two weeks of your attendance at meetings of the Workbridge Council.

2. Ministry of Health Disability Support Services Consumer Consortium: Andrea Courtney has served two consecutive terms as Blind Citizens NZ's representative i.e. the maximum that can be served consecutively. The Consortium meets twice a year – each meeting comprises three days, and all actual costs are paid for. As Blind Citizens NZ's representative you will have a sound knowledge and understanding of:

- the disability community in general;
- the service needs of the blind community, service providers, service availability, ease of access and service gaps;
- projected changes to future service funding and delivery, e.g. Enabling Good Lives, and individualised funding;
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

You will also have the skill and expertise to be able to:

- take a pan-disability approach to service funding and provision;
- become familiar with the Consortium's terms of reference;
- promote understanding between the Ministry and Blind Citizens NZ;
- represent the interests of Blind Citizens NZ rather than personal interests.

If you are interested in finding out more about either of these positions, please contact the Executive Officer Rose Wilkinson at National Office. For each of these two positions, your expression of interest should include a CV that identifies the strengths, experiences and skills you believe you bring to the position. Expressions of interest should be marked for the attention of the Executive Officer and should be received at National Office by 4pm, Tuesday 1 August 2017 (refer to contact details at the end of this publication).

Ever needed ID and nothing works

Members around the country have shared through our branches and other mechanisms, challenges experienced when needing to produce identification (ID). Either what they have is not amongst those sought at a given time, or there have been additional challenges to obtain ID.

Identification, is central to enabling people to complete legal transactions, and Blind Citizens NZ holds to the principle that all New Zealanders should have access to a number of forms of identification that are universally accepted.

If you have had an “ID” experience that you are willing to share with us, we would love to hear from you i.e. the more information we have, the more evidence we have to influence change. We are supported by other disabled people’s organisations, and collectively we are making inroads with our work. You can share your experiences by email, phone, fax, post, audio, or posting on our Facebook page. Details for options are located at the end of this Focus issue.

Membership Renewal Reminder

Membership renewals fall due on 1 July annually. If you are uncertain if you are financial, it is best to check by contacting our national office, or your local branch treasurer. Being financial is particularly important for Ordinary Members, who are eligible to vote Blind Citizens NZ elections.

World Blind Union Committee – Vacancy to Fill Call for Expressions of Interest

If you have an interest in international blindness matters then please read on for we have a vacancy to fill... Blind Citizens NZ's World Blind Union (WBU) Committee exists to support the role of the World Blind Union Representative. The committee comprises up to four financial Ordinary Members of Blind Citizens NZ, plus the WBU Representative. The term of office for all positions is two years and they conclude at the end of Blind Citizens NZ's 2018 AGM and Conference.

For personal reasons, Latifa Samy has resigned from the WBU Committee. The Board with regret, received her resignation and is now calling for expressions of interest to fill the vacancy. You can be certain that being part of the WBU Committee will quench your thirst of international blindness matters. Financial Ordinary Members of Blind Citizens NZ are invited to submit expressions of interest. Your CV should mention your involvement in and interest of Blind Citizens NZ, and blindness issues internationally. There is a 1,000 word-limit. The closing date by which expressions of interest must be received is **4pm, Thursday 1 June 2017**. These can be provided via:

- Post: PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242;
- Email: rwilkinson@abcnz.org.nz; Fax: 04-389-0030

Letters to the Editor

Articles for potential publication in Focus are encouraged. Submitters are encouraged to take into consideration that we have limited resources, coupled with space constraints. This imposes an approximate word-limit of 400 words. This equates to approximately one page. Articles can be posted to our mailing address PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242, or emailed to the editorial group at the following: focus@abcnz.org.nz

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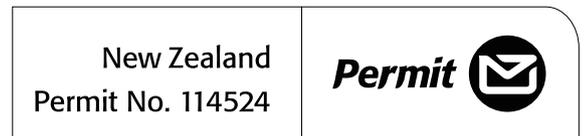
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If undelivered within 14 days please return to
Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand inc.
PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242.



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