

Blind Citizens NZ

FOCUS

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In this Issue

- Editorial by Carolyn Weston pg 2
- Blind Citizens NZ Board Vacancies pg 6
- From the President, Jonathan Godfrey pg 9
- Letters to the Editor pg 13
- Listening, Engaging, Connecting
2017 Annual General Meeting and Conference pg 14
- Forum for Guide Dog Handlers pg 16
- Blind Citizens NZ 2017 Election timelines pg 17
- Welcome to Invercargill – City in the Deep South pg 20
- An Opportunity to Recognise Someone's Contributions pg 25
- Share the benefit of your expertise and knowledge pg 27
- Membership Renewal Reminder pg 30
- Consider Blind Citizens NZ when making a Bequest pg 30
- Blind Citizens NZ Personnel pg 31
- Acknowledgement of Financial Support pg 32



Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand

Editorial from Carolyn Weston

When writing my editorial In February, I thought it was going to be my last contribution, as during Christmas, a member notified us saying they were interested in the Focus Editor position. Unfortunately, due to the individual's increased personal commitments, this fell through, and here I am again, writing another editorial. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy writing about these issues but after nine and a half years, I would love someone else to take over and stamp their style on our magazine. Being editor for so long can lead to a stale outlook on issues creeping in. I believe we should enhance our Focus magazine by articulating different ideas and viewpoints.

If you do not want to be Focus Editor but would like to make a contribution such as writing the editorial, then we would still like to hear from you. You may have a burning issue or have experienced a problem, which you have advocated on and resolved. By sharing our issues, advocacy experiences and resolutions, we encourage other members to advocate or write about issues they face. Contact details where you can send your articles or if you wish to learn more about being our new Focus Editor, will be found at the end of this editorial.

Stepping Out in Confidence

One topical issue at present is pedestrian safety for blind and vision-impaired citizens. For years, we have been concerned over this but it again comes to the fore due to possible changes in legislation and promoting the purchase and use of electric (hybrid) vehicles.

Let's discuss the proposed change to legislation first. At present, all cycle riders should ride their bikes on the road. However, I have observed cyclists riding on Invercargill's footpaths even though we have a by-law, which does not allow them to do this. No one seems to police laws about where cyclists ride.

In response to advocacy, Government is proposing that it will be legal for children under fourteen years, people over the age of sixty-five and people with disabilities to ride cycles on footpaths because this would be safer for them. Parent groups, schools and other organisations are advocating for this change. However, in our view they are not considering the safety of pedestrians, just some cyclists.

Reality is at times we are all pedestrians (walking along footpaths, in carparks or around driveways), even if we drive cars or ride cycles at other times. I would have thought pedestrian safety is paramount as we are all pedestrians, but it seems not. Media are highlighting issues around child cyclists but are ignoring pedestrian safety, especially safety of disabled, older and blind people. We are told that young children do not have the experience and skill to ride their cycles safely on the road. They can be easily distracted. Cyclists are seen as being vulnerable in road accidents, having minimal protection other than wearing a helmet. If a vehicle hits a cyclist it is probable the cyclist will come off second best, resulting in death or severe injury. Turning our attention to pedestrians, we expect footpaths to be a safe domain where we as blind or vision-impaired people can step out in confidence with the assistance of a white cane or guide dog.

However once specific groups of cyclist are permitted to ride along our footpaths, our safety as pedestrians is compromised. Cycles are very quiet when ridden and we don't know they are near us until we feel a whir flash by us.

I'm not saying that all children misbehave when riding cycles in public, but many of us can talk about experiences we have had, dealing with cheeky children or cyclists who don't care about the safety of others. I have heard of situations when schoolchildren riding cycles and sharing a footpath with a blind pedestrian, have recognised that the pedestrian cannot see them so they begin to harass the blind person. Due to our sight loss, we can't identify who they are.

An incident that comes to mind portrays a group of school-aged cyclists riding past a blind pedestrian, slowing down until the blind pedestrian reaches them. Once the blind pedestrian's white cane almost touches the cycles' wheels, the children laugh and zoom off. After a short distance, the cyclists slow down and begin the process again. This behaviour can unnerve blind and vision-impaired pedestrians. People may even lose confidence walking in their neighbourhood. If Government allows groups of cyclists to ride on our footpaths, how can blind and vision-impaired pedestrians feel safe when walking along the same path?

Blind Citizens NZ's official position on this issue is "no one, even young children, should be able to cycle on footpaths except where there is a designated cycle lane" (Memo 8, May 2017). I would even go further by advocating that all shared footpaths that have designated lanes for cyclists and another for pedestrians, should indicate these lanes with tactile strips so blind pedestrians know where we are safe on the path.

Our other issue also relates to walking in our cities and towns. The promotion of electric (hybrid) vehicles is building momentum.

There are benefits to our environment when using electric cars, such as reduction to the use of fuels, which cause pollution and destroys our earth's environment. Petrol and diesel fuelled vehicles are seen as noisy, smelly and dirty. Concern has been expressed over the limited stock of these fuels so electricity is now considered a more sustainable, clean method to fuel vehicles.

The major problem for blind, deafblind and vision-impaired pedestrians is electric vehicles are silent when moving. Of course, we don't expect these to drive along the footpath. However as pedestrians we have to traverse roads, driveways and in carparks.

Not being able to hear a car coming will compromise our safety and many of us will be terrified to walk alone in our neighbourhoods. Disability service providers encourage and teach us to be self-reliant and independent but we cannot achieve these goals unless we know we are safe, hearing what is happening around us. Some blind people have a guide dog to assist them when out walking but many of us rely on our ears and our white cane.

Electric vehicle manufacturers do make a device that creates a noise when travelling. However these devices are optional not a standard part of the vehicle. Motorists who decide to include this noise device have to pay extra money to have this installed. This is a disincentive for many motorists, resulting in a number of silent electric vehicles on our roads. If Government had legislation enforcing all electric vehicles to fit a noise device, which had to be used whilst travelling, we would feel safer. We would continue walking about in our neighbourhoods, without the fear of walking into a silent moving vehicle.

As a child, I did bang into a silent trolley bus. My injuries were minimal but it was a scary experience. Luckily, I was young and resilient when I had this accident but other blind people may not bounce back from such an experience and worry about their safety on the streets.

We need reassurance that blind, deafblind and vision-impaired pedestrians can recognise an electric vehicle coming towards us whilst walking in our communities. These noise devices must be compulsory and used when the electric vehicle is moving. Government must step up and ensure our safety by passing legislation protecting us from such danger as silent vehicles.

Some years ago, Blind Citizens NZ produced a Video (now a DVD) called "Who's the Footpaths For" educating people on keeping the footpaths clear of obstructions.

Blind Citizens NZ is producing a new, similar education tool that should inform politicians, officials and the public about the needs of blind pedestrians, and how best we can be safe when walking in our communities. This educational tool could be played on social media, to schools and community groups ensuring that people are exposed to the concerns of blind pedestrians. Ensuring our safety, not only protects blind pedestrians but everyone who wishes or needs to walk about their cities and towns. We will have more news of this tool in September.

Returning to our call for a new Focus Editor or if you want to send in an article please contact the Focus team by emailing focus@abcnz.org.nz, or post for the attention of the Focus team, PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6022.

**Extra Ordinary Elections to Fill Vacancies For
World Blind Union Representative and Member-at-Large
Notice from Rose Wilkinson, Returning Officer**

Blind Citizens NZ has two Board vacancies to fill. For each of the positions, the successful candidate will commence their role immediately following the conclusion of the respective extra-ordinary election. Candidates will complete the remainder of the term of office for their respective position noting each finishes at the conclusion of the 2018 Annual General Meeting and Conference. Details of the Member-at-Large and World Blind Union Representative vacancies (Board positions) for which nominations are called, follow.

The Member-at-Large vacancy is a result of Jonathan Godfrey vacating his position when elected to fill the National President vacancy.

More recently, on 20 May, the Board received with regret, Amanda Stevens' resignation as World Blind Union Representative. An extraordinary election to fill this position is commencing also.

The Board has confirmed procedures for the two extra-ordinary elections. Financial Ordinary Members (voting members) should be aware the Board sets timelines for extra-ordinary elections. It makes decisions on a case-by-case basis, and extra-ordinary elections will often not provide the amount of time that occurs for scheduled elections. There are different timeframes for each of the extra-ordinary elections, the details for which follow:

1. **Member-at-Large Vacancy:** Ordinary Members, recorded as financial on the member database held by National Office of Blind Citizens NZ at the close of nominations for this extra-ordinary election, are eligible to participate. Timeline details for the extra-ordinary election to fill the Member-at-Large vacancy include that:
 - Nominations close at **4pm, Friday 23 June 2017.**
 - In the event more than one nomination for the Member-at-Large vacancy is received, ballot material to eligible Ordinary (voting) Members will be distributed by **Wednesday 12 July 2017.**
 - Voting closes 4pm, **Monday 7 August 2017.**
 - Vote counting will take place on **Tuesday 8 August 2017.**

2. **World Blind Union Representative Vacancy:** Ordinary Members, recorded as financial on the member database held by National Office of Blind Citizens NZ at the close of nominations for this extra-ordinary election, are eligible to participate.

Timeline details for the extra-ordinary election to fill the World Blind Union Representative vacancy include that:

- Nominations close at **4pm, Thursday 24 August 2017.**

- In the event more than one nomination for the World Blind Union Representative vacancy is received, ballot material to eligible Ordinary (voting) Members will be distributed by **Thursday 14 September 2017**.
- Voting closes **4pm, Monday 2 October 2017**.
- Vote counting will take place on **Tuesday 3 October 2017**.

In addition to information already provided, the following requirements apply to each of these extra-ordinary elections.

1. **Nomination process:** three individuals are involved in the nomination process. The nominee (person standing for election), the person proposing the nomination and the person who seconds the nomination. This means nomination forms require the signature of each of the three individuals. Email procedures similarly require each of the three individuals to confirm their role in the nomination process.

Candidates who choose the email procedure are required to contact the Returning Officer prior, to notify their intent to use this option. There are requirements for the email process therefore contact is required prior to this commencing. The Returning Officer will then provide instructions for the email nomination procedure. Candidates are required to submit their CV with the completed nomination.

Please note that:

- Nomination forms are available from Blind Citizens NZ's National Office, and website.
- Associate Members are not eligible to participate in Blind Citizens NZ's election processes.

2. **Options for receiving ballot material and voting:** Blind Citizens NZ has several options for receiving ballot material, and three options from which to choose from to cast your vote.

You can receive ballot material in any of the following options: 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. Blind Citizens NZ encourages voters to give TIS a go if you have not already done so. Voters who use TIS prefer this for a myriad of 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.

If you are considering standing for election to fill one of these vacancies, you are encouraged to obtain information pertinent to the position. You will gain an insight into the duties and responsibilities of Board Members, and prerequisites for either the Member-at-Large or World Blind Union Representative position.

If you require additional information, regardless of what this is, please do 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

From the President, Jonathan Godfrey

Greetings everyone. I've now been your elected National President for a little over two months and as you might expect, it's been a busy time for me and your Board. This column is going to lean heavily on my speech notes for an event held in May where I was one of six speakers celebrating Global Accessibility Awareness Day.

The intended audience was a mixture of Government officials and people from the business sector, and my working title was "We are citizens too".

My reason for sharing this with you is that was the first time I stepped out as your National President in a public forum and got to choose what it was I would talk about. The week before, I had spoken to the Government Administration Select Committee hearing submissions on the Captioning Inquiry, about our interest in extending audio described television to other broadcasters and on-demand services, but I'd done that sort of work numerous times previously.

I've never been the sort of person who writes a full speech transcript, then practices it over and over again, modifying it until it is utterly perfect. I admit that in part, this stems from an inability to read braille at speaking speed, but it also suits my work as a lecturer where the students complain if all I do is repeat what they could have read for themselves. I do have notes though which I work from, including the specific quote I started with.

Edmund Burk used the word "evil" which is perhaps too strong to use in the context of meeting our needs, so I paraphrased and toned back a little, when I said, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of wrongdoing is for good people to do nothing." I then thanked all those present for being there as it suggested they were the good people we need to be working with. I'm sure you all agree that we must work with people who make decisions to ever hope for a reduction in the problems we face in accessing information, public transport etc. etc.

I then explained what Blind Citizens NZ is and what we do. At our last meeting, your Board worked on some of the basics for a new Strategic Plan. This included a statement of purpose behind our organisation's very existence. It was a question put to the Board during the sustainability work we undertook in 2016 as well.

I said, "Blind Citizens NZ exists to give voice to the aspirations and lived experiences of blind, deafblind, and vision impaired New Zealanders" which is pretty close to the current working draft. I felt it rolled off the tongue quite easily and I doubt anyone would argue that that is our primary reason for existing. That phrase feels timeless to me, as it speaks to me of all the men and women who have been part of Blind Citizens NZ since our founding in 1945.

Conference 2016 resolved that the Board should work on a guide for health and safety of blind people in the workplace. That guide is ready for blind employees to share with their current or prospective employers. We know that blind people have the same legal responsibility as our workmates to ensure the workplace is safe, and that we are in the best position to speak about how we can contribute to the safety of everyone who enters our workplace. I highlighted the need for blind people to be doing this with their employers at the Global Accessibility Awareness event because a portion of the audience were expected to be employers or from industry.

The next part of my speech was a touch more personal as I wanted to really show that even the leaders in our community, no matter how well educated, securely employed, and confident in ourselves still find that barriers get put in our way and limit our ability to meet our potential. For me, that was the changes made in technology used at my workplace that meant I could no longer operate the photocopier or the phone on my desk, and compromised my ability to apply for annual leave, to set up the lecture theatre I teach in, and to read my own pay slip.

The next phase of my presentation was about how I access my own personal information. Last year, I obtained a copy of my medical history from my GP; I couldn't even read the details that tell my GP that I am blind!

I then shared the experiences of some of our members who have found it difficult or impossible to use the MyMSD website we are encouraged to use for handling our Work and Income affairs.

I then moved into the area of spending my money, or trying to anyway. As access to websites was a key theme of the day, I talked about my bank's horrible website, but noted that while it was a problem for me, I did now know how to do all the things I want to do online, and feared the day they changed it. You may recall that we are calling for a thorough review of the banking system for its ability to meet the needs of all disabled customers. This is now being progressed through the Disabled People's Organisations (DPO) Coalition, which meets with senior Government officials to raise such matters.

The final set of lived experiences I wanted the audience to be aware of was the choices I make as a consumer. I pointed out that I will look online for products but that just as I will go to the shop that offers better personal service, I will go to the website that is the most user-friendly to me as a blind person. I pointed out that that I still prefer to go into the shop for many of my purchases because the personal touch serves my needs more fully than do many websites. The point here is that the business that decides to best meet our needs will be the one that gets more of our business. An economic argument put forward by another presenter at the Global Accessibility Awareness event, says getting the disabled people of New Zealand into full employment (and therefore spending as consumers) will increase the country's GDP by more than one billion dollars. The general argument is therefore that making New Zealand more accessible is good business sense.

I'm unlikely to push the need for accessibility on economic grounds because I believe that many of the problems we face ought to be removed because they currently breach our rights as citizens.

I do accept that gaining a good education improves the chances of a blind person gaining meaningful employment and the income that having a job provides. I know that having an income usually leads to a person having choices in life, and my personal view is that having choices in life is a useful measure of my independence.

I closed my speech with a challenge to those present. I asked if each person present wanted to be part of the solution, and the bite in my challenge was that failing to be part of the solution is likely to mean they are part of the problem. I reminded them that Blind Citizens NZ is here to be part of the solution and that we will work with anyone and everyone who will work with us to help make new Zealand a better place. I accepted that I was being challenging and looked forward to their questions.

I'm pleased to report that there were questions. Questions are important because that's the start of a conversation, and it's the conversations that we have with each other as blind people, and the conversations we have with the sighted world that will lead to change. We need to be having conversations with one another this year. Your Board will need to work out which issues really are the highest priority ones and focus some serious energy on those. One issue we have put energy into this year is the need to engage with the membership and to get the membership talking to one another. That is unfinished business but we are working on it and our 2017 conference theme reflects the Board's desire to make improvements in our communications and engagement. I hope to see many of you there.

Letters to the Editor

Articles for potential publication in Focus are encouraged. We have limited resources and space constraints. This imposes a limit of around 400 words, which equates to approximately one page. Details for letters to the editor will be located at the end of this Focus issue.

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

We publicised in the March Focus issue, details of this year's three-day Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Conference. To recap, consistent with Blind Citizens NZ's policy to alternate between the North and South Island, this year's event takes us all a little further south.

Combined with this year's AGM and Conference, are one-off opportunities for financial members intending to come, and for whom this will be their first time attending. You will learn more about this opportunity a little further on.

This year's theme is **Listening, Connecting, and Engaging**. The focus is on Blind Citizens NZ, providing opportunities for the Board to explore new and different ways of communicating, and engaging with you all.

The **Ascot Park Hotel, Invercargill**, is this year's venue, acknowledging Invercargill is the home of Blind Citizens NZ's Southland Branch. Dates you should plan for are **Friday 13 to Sunday 15 October** inclusive. Recognising there are travel logistics to balance, the Board sees this as a great opportunity, and urges everyone to start planning to travel to Invercargill and be part of this year's AGM and Conference. Start and finish times are different for this year's three-day event. Friday's session will commence at 10am, and will conclude by 11.30am, Sunday.

Ensuring attendees arrive in good time, well rested and ready to participate, is the Board's primary focus. Balancing these elements in particular, requires attendees from most destinations, to arrive the day prior i.e. Thursday 12 October.

Of specific mention is that accommodation and meal costs for members will be on a par with those for last year. This is great when you consider attendance involves three nights' accommodation (not two), and all meals from dinner Thursday, through to Sunday's morning tea.

Registration forms have all the information you will need to complete your plans. These are available from Blind Citizens NZ's National Office, website, branches and network(s). Also available, to avoid the impact that can happen when large amounts of money need to be paid at a single time, is the opportunity to pay instalments by having a registration payment plan. Contact our national office for further details.

Also for this year's AGM and Conference, 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. So even though the closing date has passed, if you will be a first-time attendee, and you can get your expression of interest in by 15 June, please do so. The only criteria the Board has set for you to meet is ensuring you are a financial Ordinary (voting) Member of Blind Citizens NZ, that this will be your first time attending, and that you are interested in being part of this year's AGM and Conference. Can you also please provide an indication of how much you may be in a position to financially contribute (if at all), towards costs (accommodation, meals, and travel), is requested. Although this will have no bearing on decisions reached by the Board, it may enable the Board to support more first-time attendees.

Send your expression of interest to National Office 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

Guide Dog Handlers' Forum

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. This 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.

An extension to the closing date to receive expressions means if you have been thinking about coming, you still have time to send an expression of interest. The closing date/time is 4pm, Thursday 15 June 2017.

The Forum will provide an opportunity for handlers from around the country to contribute to, or benefit from, peer-to-peer support. The Board is open to suggestions about topics, speakers, and potential activities you would like to see included during the two days. All ideas will be considered and inform the framework for the Forum. Planning remains in the early stages hence the Board's desire to involve key stakeholders from the blind community.

The Board has allocated funds from Blind Citizens NZ's leadership fund towards the Forum, and courtesy of a much-appreciated bequest, additional financial support is available. Ideally, attendees will stay for Blind Citizens NZ's AGM and Conference.

If you are in the throes of making an expression of interest, please remember to include your guide dog handler status, and a brief statement of the benefit to you from attending the Forum.

You should also comment on topics you would like to see covered, whether it is your intention to remain for Blind Citizens NZ's AGM and Conference, and if you are in a position to make a financial contribution towards costs.

Remember to submit your expression of interest to Blind Citizens NZ's National Office by **4pm, Thursday 15 June 2017**. They should be marked 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

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

Positions 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. This notification is the final opportunity 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 procedures for all positions follow. Additional information for each of the 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. Reading pertinent information will provide an insight into the duties and responsibilities of Board Members, and prerequisites for National President and Member at Large positions. You will locate contact details for our National Office and website at the conclusion of this Focus issue. Now to the timelines and procedures...

1. Am I eligible for nomination for positions in this election?

Eligibility requirements are set out in Constitutional Ruling 10.1.

You are eligible for nomination for one of the positions, provided you 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 uncertain whether you meet the criteria, please contact the National Office for clarification.

- 2. How do I go about being 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 confirm their role in the nomination process. Candidates who choose 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.

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

- 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), no election will be held.

Candidates standing for these positions will be declared duly elected unopposed. However, in the event nominations exceed the number of positions being elected, an election will be held.

- 4. Financial Ordinary Members have their say:** Ballot material will be sent to all Ordinary Members recorded as financial on the member database at National Office as at 4pm, Thursday 24 August 2017. Distribution of ballot material in the voting member's preferred format will happen no later than **Thursday 14 September 2017**.

- 5. When does voting close:** Completed ballots must be received at National Office no later than **4.00 pm, Monday 2 October 2017**. Vote counting takes 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 what your preferred communication option for elections is, please contact our national office to check soonest. You can then make any changes you need.

When casting your vote, there are three options from which to choose. The way you vote can differ from the way you receive your election (ballot) material. You can vote using the large print ballot form, the braille ballot option (braille voting cards), or TIS. If you currently receive a large print ballot form and you are unable to cast your vote independently, perhaps you might give TIS a go. Voting using TIS offers you an independent and empowering voting experience. Using TIS means you can independently access information about all of the candidates standing for election and cast your vote.

If you want to know more about using TIS, you want to cast your vote using this option, or you want to check if you registered with us for this option, please contact our National Office.

Welcome to Invercargill - City in the South

By Carolyn Weston

By now, you will have read about Blind Citizens NZ's Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Conference i.e. dates and venue. As you may not have visited New Zealand's southern city before, and if you intend to come to Conference, you may wish to save up and stay a little longer in Invercargill, or visit other nearby tourist spots. Rose Wilkinson, Blind Citizens NZ's Executive Officer is exploring tourist options for attendees.

In the meantime, here are ideas on what you can visit or do in Invercargill to whet your appetite.

Invercargill is built on a flood-plane, it is not all flat, and there are rises, dips and miniature hills in the contour of the land. Our major roads are wide. You must be aware that if you want to cross Tay St (State Highway One), a road outside the Ascot Park Hotel, it is like crossing a four-lane highway.

We have a number of intersections with roundabouts controlling traffic flow. I don't recommend crossing roads at these intersections - crossing a few metres away from the corner will be safer so you can hear the traffic without becoming confused.

The buses operate every weekday and on Saturdays. Bus Smart runs four circular bus routes spanning the city. One of these routes do run buses near the Ascot Park Hotel. If you have a Gold Card, buses are free between the hours of 9am and 3pm during weekdays, and all day Saturday. We have audio announcements on buses, which mean that as a bus is nearing a bus stop, the name of the stop is announced. Buses also announce their destination whilst waiting at Bus Smart Central in our DBD. No buses run in the evenings or on Sundays. For further information about Bus Smart Services, ask the Hotel Reception.

Invercargill now has a number of taxi companies you can choose to use. We find that EzyCab are the cheapest but they are a small operator and you do need to book well in advance. The advantage with them is you can negotiate the fare when booking. Invercargill Taxis and Blue Star Taxis also operate here. Driving Miss Daisy is another transport option and you may wish to use them if you want some assistance when sightseeing. You need to arrange this service at least the day prior to requiring their service. You can use Total Mobility (TM) vouchers for all these companies. We don't have TM

Cards yet, you can still use Yellow TM Vouchers if you have any old ones about. If you use TM Cards, and do not have vouchers, you should contact your local TM agency and they should be able to provide you with vouchers for use in Invercargill. If you have any difficulties, let Southland Branch of Blind Citizens NZ know as soon as possible so we can discuss this with our Council, to identify a solution.

All hotels, taverns and many motels and restaurants, are owned and operated by the Invercargill Licensing Trust (ILT). All profit from the sale of alcohol and the operation of hotels, motels, restaurants and bars go back into the community. Ascot Park Hotel, our Conference venue is part of the ILT's empire. We do have several liquor stores but no alcohol is sold in supermarkets or any shops within the ILT's boundary.

Invercargill has a number of parks, including two native-bush reserves. Queens Park is our major park in Queens Drive. The Blind Foundation's building is located on a corner of this park. Queens Park boasts plenty of walking paths, gardens, glass-house gardens, duck pond, caged birds and animals, sports grounds and a café. The Southland Museum is located on the southern side of this park. The Museum houses the Information Centre, the depot where InterCity Buses depart and return to, exhibitions, Art Gallery and the largest indoor-display of live Tuatara in the world. If we know some weeks prior to Conference, it may be possible to arrange a small group tour to meet the Tuatara Man and maybe even get to feel a tuatara.

A few blocks along Tay St from the Ascot Hotel is Transport World. Two private collections of transport vehicles are exhibited here. A replica of Bert Munro's Indian motorbike can be found in the foyer. If you like trucks etc. this is a must-see for you. The vehicles are displayed within a large modern building.

It will take you some hours to have a good look at all the exhibits. There is a café located on the ground floor near the reception desk. It is a very popular venue for lunches. There is a charge to visit this Museum so ask the Hotel Reception how much this will cost.

Another must for those of you who enjoy motorcycles etc. is to visit a large shop called "E Hayes" located in Dee St. Classic motorcycles, another replica of Bert Munro's Indian cycle and other vehicles are on display here. Men can wander about, looking at the exhibits and all the tools and hard-wear, etc. Women will enjoy lingering in the gift and chinaware area.

I know some of you are Ham Radio fans and are interested in other communication devices. Awarua Communications Museum located on the Bluff Highway displays old phones, radio and other historical communication equipment. This museum is open each Sunday between 1pm-4pm.

As Conference closes at 11.30am, if you have time to spare before returning home, here is a solution to fill your afternoon. I know some trustees of this museum, so if you are keen to hear about the history of Awarua Radio, which was located on this site, I will endeavour to organise a tour for a small group. Transport will be an issue, however if you are willing to pay for some petrol this can be overcome. If several of you wish to go, we may be able to hire a private van.

Bluff, which is within Invercargill City's boundary, is New Zealand's most southern port. There is a Maritime Museum, which displays an old ship's engine, which you can turn on and listen to the noise it makes. The largest display is the Monica an old oyster boat, you can easily climb up and clamber all over it, including traversing the narrow, steep stairway into the small cabin. You can pretend you are out in Bluff Harbour, bringing your oyster catch in from Foveaux Strait.

This museum is open most days, including Sunday 12.30pm-4.30pm, admission is \$3 for an adult. If a group travels to Bluff, you must go to the end of State Highway One. Most visitors have their photo taken standing underneath the Bluff Signpost at the end of the road. There are two cafes located at Sterling Point and several walking tracks. Bluff is the gateway to Stewart Island and you can catch a boat (an hour sail) from Bluff. You can fly to and from Stewart Island from Invercargill Airport. Contact your local Travel Agent for more information about this Island national Park.

There is plenty of shopping, activities such as horse treks and other pursuits you can occupy yourself on the days prior or after Conference.

We have many cafes and restaurants but there are two restaurants I want to mention that are owned by Alan Arnold – they are Buster Crabb in Dee Street and Ziffs in Otatara (about 15 minutes west of the city). Alan provides free transport to and from both of these bar/restaurants so transport is not a problem. Local seafood is served and being October, they should have whitebait patties on the menu. Alan ensures great southern hospitality with large helpings of food. These restaurants are open for both lunch and dinner.

Back to the Ascot Park Hotel, there is also plenty to do there. The hotel is located in parkland and you will have space for your guide dog to toilet outside. Indoors there are several bars, a swimming pool, spa pool and sauna. Bring your swimsuit, as you will be able to take a dip in the warmth of the building, even if it is cold outside. Invercargill is the gateway to Queenstown, Te Anau, The Catlins (the eastern coast route between Invercargill and Balclutha) and Dunedin. Buses are available from Invercargill to most of these centres however, they are limited with little options on what time you can travel.

Dunedin and Queenstown both have busy Airports and you may obtain cheaper flights from these airports but you need to account for bus travel from these airports to Invercargill. With increasing overseas tourism, accommodation in Queenstown may be limited or more expensive than other cities and towns. You will find shopping and tourist attractions more expensive in Queenstown than in other spots so if you wish to visit there, save up first.

I hope this provides you with some ideas on what we have to offer visitors to Invercargill and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at Conference 2017.

An Opportunity to Recognise Someone's Contributions Blind Citizens NZ's most Prestigious Awards

Annually, the Board calls for nominations for its most prestigious awards: Beamish Memorial Award, Extra Touch Award, and the Johnston Cup for Leadership. We provide criteria for each award to guide your thinking towards making a nomination. For each of these three awards, only financial Ordinary Members of Blind Citizens NZ, branches, and the Board, may make nominations. We provide details specific to each of the three awards. Please send all nominations to National Office - details 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 the Board will make an award. Please read on and pop on your 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.

Do you know of someone you believe should be recognised and who meets this criteria? If you do, then please take advantage of this opportunity. You should provide the name of the person you are nominating, their contact details, along with information and reasons in support of the nomination. **Nominations close and must be received at our National Office by 4pm, Wednesday 30 August 2017.**

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

Johnston Cup for Leadership: Donated by Doug and Jeanette Johnston (Doug is a past National President), this was first presented in 2007. This award recognises leadership potential from amongst members of Blind Citizens NZ.

The intention is to encourage members to accept leadership responsibilities inside and outside the blindness community, and to develop an environment where leadership in their field of endeavour is recognised.

If you know of a member of Blind Citizens NZ, whom you believe meets the criteria and has contributed in some demonstrable way to the betterment of the community by way of their leadership a nomination sounds a great way to recognise them. Provided the person you are thinking about is an Ordinary (voting) Member of Blind Citizens NZ, and they meet the criteria, all you need to do is tell us. We need information in support of the nomination. Send your nomination with supporting information so that it reaches our National Office no later than 4pm Wednesday 30 August 2017. Contact details for national office are located at the end of this publication.

Share the benefits of your expertise and knowledge

Blind Citizens NZ has representative positions on several national organisations. When the term of office for positions fall due, the Board determines a course of action i.e. whether to publicise and call for expressions of interest, or to reappoint. The Board resolved at its 2016 Annual Planning Meeting that it would advertise all positions that fall due in 2017. With the exception that a representative has served the maximum term set by the organisation on which it represents Blind Citizens NZ, the individual may submit a further expression of interest.

The Board is looking 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:** 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 Board determines on a case-by-case basis what the term of office will be i.e. one to two years.

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.

Note: Paula Waby has represented Blind Citizens NZ on the Workbridge Council since 2015. She is eligible to submit an expression of interest.

- 2. Ministry of Health Disability Support Services Consumer Consortium:** The Consortium meets twice a year – each meeting comprises three days, and all actual costs are paid.

As Blind Citizens NZ's representative, you will have a sound knowledge and understanding about:

- 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:

- 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.

Note: Andrea Courtney has served the maximum consecutive term for this position. She is therefore ineligible to submit an expression of interest.

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 the 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).

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 in elections carried out by Blind Citizens NZ.

Consider Blind Citizens NZ when Making a Bequest

Through our efforts and your financial support, we are working on the removal of the barriers we face so we can make our mark in the world. We are not an organisation helping blind people. We are blind people ourselves putting our own personal time and energy into pursuing our vision of a world in which we can be fully independent and able to contribute to our full potential. Your Will can make a lasting gift and Blind Citizens NZ would be extremely grateful for any contribution. If you choose to leave a gift to Blind Citizens NZ, suggested wording for your will is:

I give and bequeath (_____) percent of my estate to the **Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Incorporated** to be applied for general purposes. A receipt taken by my trustee as being given on behalf of Blind Citizens NZ will be a complete discharge to my trustee for the legacy.

To find out how we inform those who have pledged their support to us, for questions or to make a contribution, contact:

- Rose Wilkinson 04-389-0039
- **Email:** bequests@abcnz.org.nz

Personnel - Blind Citizens NZ

Board

- **National President:** Jonathan Godfrey (Management Committee)
jonathan@tactileimpressionz.co.nz
- **Vice President:** Martine Abel-Williamson (Member-at-Large / Management Committee): martine.the1@xtra.co.nz
- Andrea Courtney (Member-at-Large): andycoute@xtra.co.nz
- Geraldine Glanville (Member-at-Large): gbglanville@xtra.co.nz
- Shaun Johnson (Member-at-Large): shaun.zdots@xtra.co.nz
- Murray Peat (Member-at-Large / Management Committee): phone 021 081 66126; murraytp@xtra.co.nz
- Paula Waby (Member-at-Large / Management Committee):
paula.waby4@gmail.com

Focus Editor

Email articles to: focus@abcnz.org.nz

Post: PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242

National Office

Postal: PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242

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

Phone: 04-389-0033; 0800-ABCNZ-INC (0800-222-694)

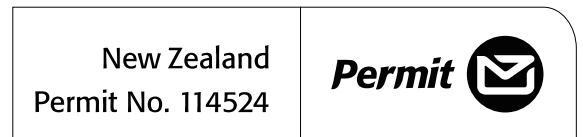
Fax: 04-389-0030; Internet: <http://www.abcnz.org.nz>

Email: enquiries@abcnz.org.nz or admin@abcnz.org.nz

Executive Officer, Rose Wilkinson: rwilkinson@abcnz.org.nz

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If undelivered within 14 days please return to
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