



Blind Citizens NZ

Focus

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A Sign of the Times

Editorial, by Allan Jones

Well half the year has gone and the weather certainly tells us that winter has arrived!!

I again want to lead off with three lines quoted from music. In this instance, they are all from the one song, and signify what has been going on for me in the preparation of this editorial.

Let's go back to September 1975. The Eagles burst in on the music scene with the song "Lying Eyes" - the first quote is "I wonder how it ever got this crazy". This segways nicely to my three main topics. Guide dogs and the wait-times for new and replacement dogs, a situation I as someone who is not a guide dog user have just become aware. The second issue is the saga surrounding electronic scooters, and the third issue is the appalling state that our mental health services have fallen in to.

Our mental health services are one of the "big tick items" of the 2019 budget. The need for this is well demonstrated by the Christchurch Mosque killings and the Christchurch earthquakes. I would say that most families are effected by one, or both of these events. The widespread use and abuse of the drug called "P", has also taken its toll. Mental health issues will take time and energy to solve, and it is heartening to know Government are giving this issue serious consideration.

Returning to guide dogs: I am not going into a huge tirade about how and why this happened. What I want to stress is that both the Foundation's Board of Trustees, the Blind Foundation's administration, and our own Blind Citizens NZ, mainly through the "Guide Dog Forum" held two years ago, have striven to support the review and outcomes for guide dog users. Unfortunately, the Foundation's Guide Dog Service and its Library Service get no Government funding, and are reliant totally on the charity dollar.

Using the criteria of “well-being” as a measure, both services do wonders for their “service user’s” quality of life. Your editor will keep a close watch on this issue and promises to keep confidentiality of all contributors of information.

Electronic Scooters leave me confused and perplexed. How anyone would allow both pedestrians and scooters to share a narrow footpath such as Grafton Bridge (in Auckland), beggars belief. I was able to visit Elliot Street’s shared space on a recent visit to Auckland. I like the feel of this environment – there is a definite part of the precinct for cars, pedestrians and electronic vehicles. Wellington’s current mayor has suggested that Lambton Quay becomes a “shared space”. I trust that in the not too distant future he will come to a Blind Foundation coffee morning or meet with the local Wellington Branch of Blind Citizens NZ and outline his project.

I am personally not in favour of banning scooters; I would rather strive for responsible use, especially in relation to pedestrians. One last issue on E-Scooters is that Councils have a responsibility to keep pedestrians safe. I am not sure if they have paid serious attention to these requirements. I commend both Blind Citizens NZ, and the Blind Foundation for publicising and promoting this issue.

The second line from “Lying Eyes” is, “my oh my you sure know how to arrange things”. Mainly there is a derogatory connotation to this statement. However, just recently I have come across two occasions where there is a positive light in this statement.

During May, a group of old school mates from the Blind Foundation attended Naomi Paterson’s 75th birthday. In the group who attended, we had one world-class musician, Eddie Low, and two well-known musicians, Shaun Johnson and Alan Witana. These three musicians are all from my school days at the Blind Foundation, and there are many other competent blind musicians out there. I believe this is something to bear in mind for Blind Citizens NZ’s 75th birthday.

Prior to May, my last trip to Huntly was ten years ago, and there are four old schoolmates who travelled to Huntly then, who are no longer with us. They are all very much remembered and I mention them by name, as I believe many of our members will know, or recall stories about them – I refer to Lynette Simon, Maureen Rawiri, Marlene Lindsay, and Barry Jones.

The positive manner in which Sandra Budd has exited the Blind Foundation is I believe, worthy of comment. Her departure is towards the end of a five-year plan, leaving planning for the next five years to the new Chief Executive. I did not have to suggest to Sandra that there is life after the Foundation. This brings me to the last line I want to leave with you. It is the interpretation or meaning of which I leave to you - city girls just seemed to find out early how to open doors with just a smile!! Perhaps there was an Alexa involved.

Aspects of the budget I wish to mention are about the fair dollop of money being put into the upgrade of railways. I trust this will mean the reinstatement of the “southerners” which ran between Christchurch and Dunedin, and upgrading the train running from Picton to Christchurch. Other points which will impinge on our members is a look at the abatement rules surrounding benefits, the easing of the definition of what constitutes a relationship, and the dropping of the punitive approach to young women not naming the fathers of their children. These three recommendations were three out of the 42 made by a special panel set up to make recommendations regarding policies of Ministry of Social Development. I am soon to receive a braille copy of the document this panel put out. I will come back to this in the next focus issue. I hope the wellbeing emanating from the budget extends to all of you.

In this editorial, I also want to mention Rocket Man, a film about Elton John. Like the film about Freddy Mercury, the film certainly had its share of sex, drugs and rock and roll.

The lack of anger management also featured in both films. In my view, the crowning glory in both films was the music. A plentiful supply of hankies would be a good idea. I have never heard such emotional versions of “don’t let the sun go down on me” and “goodbye yellow brick road”. I came out of the film conflicted about audio description – if this had been available, there would have been clarity about time lines, and knowing exactly who was speaking. However there could have been an over load of information. The film running for two hours may well have been a trifle repetitive and long. However, I give it a strong recommendation. I went to the first showing at my local theatre where I was the sole member of the audience. I sang along to most of the songs and yes have no fear I won’t give up the day job.

Last but by no means least. Apologies for the lateness this Focus issue arrives with readers. Finalising the proposed new Constitution for distribution has been a priority. One achieved, and because elements of that process related to next steps, these included for your information in this Focus issue. You will read a little more about voting etc., a little further on.

I have rights, you have rights, but who gets to say what is wrong?

From Jonathan Godfrey, National President

In 1955, Rosa Parkes (a black woman) refused to give up a seat for a white man on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. To some people, this event sparked a new era in the civil rights movement. The history books don't explain exactly what actually happened. We don't know if she set out from home with the specific intention to cause a scene because she was fed up with her rights being inferior to the rights of the white people living in the same city, or whether she just got on a bus and was too tired to walk down the back and then didn't want to move when another passenger got on the bus.

I guess it hardly matters now though because we look back and use today's thinking to evaluate the lack of fairness that the racist system perpetrated on black Americans at that time. It is wrong for society to determine the rights of people to live how they want based on their race, colour, or creed.

Most of us will know that decisions were made in other countries about the rights people had on the basis of their skin colour: South Africa had apartheid, Australia had its stolen generation, and here in New Zealand, our education system let teachers beat Maori children for speaking their own language. Each of these policies was established in a democratic country or at least the citizens of these countries who did have power would have said they lived in a democracy; each of these policies was promoted or sanctioned by the government of the day, not a tyrant, dictator, or feudal monarch, but a group of similarly minded people. I hope that most of us believe that we've moved on and learned from our past; that such policies and practices are unlikely to be put in place again. Having said that, I'm sure you'll agree that humankind still has a long road to travel before we can all say that humans always treat other humans decently; if you disagree, I suggest you sit down and watch the evening news for a week. After a few news stories, ask yourself whether the news item was about what was right or what is wrong.

Like many New Zealanders on the afternoon of March 15th and then days and days afterwards, I was shocked, sickened, and then angered that one man with the most evil intent, decided on a course of brutality that stole the lives of 51 people. It didn't matter to me that these people are not known to me, that they had a different lifestyle to me, or anything else that made them different to me. What matters is what they had in common with me. They were people.

People who wanted to enjoy life, people who believed they lived in a country where they would have the same rights as anyone else, people who didn't fear where their next meal was coming from;

people who have stories to tell, and some of them were people who had more time in front of them than behind them. OK, perhaps I'm being hopeful to think I'm less than halfway through life, but who knows. The point is that these people had the right to look forward to life; it is wrong for someone else to take away their right to live the life they were choosing.

I'd really like to point out that the limitations on disabled people to live a life of our choosing pales in comparison to the tragedies mentioned above. That doesn't mean treating disabled people in an inferior manner to the non-disabled people of New Zealand is in any way acceptable, and perhaps the problems we face as disabled people living in New Zealand could be described as "first world problems", but New Zealand is seen as a leader in progressive thinking with respect to disabled people. Blind Citizens NZ continues to be at the forefront of the critical discussions that will see us progress the rights of disabled people even further.

I certainly have no control over evil people doing evil things to good people, or at least I don't have any greater ability to do anything more than any other citizen who can say "that's not right" to anyone who would think to do an evil act against innocent people. I do however get a chance to say to some good people who just don't know any better, that the idea they have is actually discriminatory against disabled people. Yes, even the most virtuous person can make a mistake and do something that suggests that the rights of a disabled person are inferior to the rights of a non-disabled person. I find it quite difficult to hold it against someone who just doesn't know any better, but it's a different story once that person has been informed that their ideas or actions question the rights of disabled people to live independent lives with confidence and dignity.

I have been in a situation when a person providing a service asked me to give up my place in a queue so that they could serve the people behind me; their logic was that those people behind me shouldn't have to wait longer to complete their transactions because I needed some extra help in completing my transaction.

As it happens, I'm talking about buying lunch where all the food options were described on signs in behind the glass between me and the food. All I needed was for the server to read the five or six signs that changed each day, which would take perhaps thirty seconds. So, I ask you now, what options you think we (disabled people) have. I know some disabled people might say "OK" because they agree with the logic of the server; I know some disabled people who would say "OK" to avoid a conflict or to ensure service the next time we are a customer; I know some disabled people who would say "what?" or "Sorry, can you explain that one for me please" in order to better understand why a scene is now being created; I know a few disabled people who would say something a lot stronger and stand their ground; I know yet more disabled people who would leave and vow never to return so that they never felt so inferior again; and I know that I've done all of these things in response to different situations.

What I say to you as you read this column is that none of these options should be necessary. They are all rational responses to a situation that was not made by me as a disabled person but that the very act of considering which of the options is the best for a given situation means we risk overlooking the fact that the server was unnecessarily discriminating against me as a disabled person. We've somehow validated the idea that they are allowed to be discriminatory; this is not a right they ever had.

The new Disability Action Plan being worked on by Blind Citizens NZ, the other members of the DPO Coalition, and government officials (especially the Office for Disability Issues) really shows signs of delivering a new way of thinking for many government agencies.

For too long, the need to improve services for disabled people and to make sure disabled people can and do use mainstream services funded by taxpayers have been more like a special project than business as usual.

We have presented the idea that "disabled people are citizens too" so well that it looks like we will see an approach across government that will: (1) collect data that shows how well disabled people are included, (2) engages with disabled people and their representative organisations, and then (3) describes when various issues will be progressed. Broadly speaking, we're trying to alter the landscape with the needs of disabled people at the forefront of thinking instead of being an afterthought.

Talk of rights remains important, but seldom seems to automatically lead to action. We can argue from a rights perspective that something needs to be sorted out, and that we know there is a problem, but unless the decision-makers "believe" our claims, we won't see change. I've seen decision-makers (over many years) fail to grasp that addressing the needs of disabled people and our right to be treated equally, is something that is part of their job; thankfully, I'm seeing many more of late who do understand that they can be part of the solution.

Personally, I continue to argue that if there is sense in collecting gender, age, and ethnicity status data, then there is a need to understand which people are also disabled. I hope that once decision-makers do see the inequities that exist in the services they deliver, they will then be honour-bound to respond. At the most fundamental level, I believe in ensuring that the rights of disabled people are not undermined any more than is currently the case, but until such time as decision-makers can see the problem, they won't see a need to respond. Some recent conversations with officials have had an entirely different tone.

It's proving easier to say things like, "we need policies that don't make disabled people worse off" or "policy should do no harm" now than it was in the past. In addition to wanting to make sure government agencies do start to close the gaps, we also want to make sure that new gaps aren't opened up; we know though that without the help of disabled people, good people working in government who do not have sufficient knowledge, will continue to make decisions that are to our disadvantage. We, and I mean disabled people, need to be ready to meet the call for participation in the community engagement exercises government agencies will be promoting as they come to us, to understand our needs.

I was invited to speak to the Social Well-being Committee of Cabinet about the need and how to engage with disabled people by the Minister for Disability Issues in February this year. This is a great honour; this committee includes many Cabinet Ministers including the Prime Minister and her deputy. I can tell you that genuine interest was shown by ministers about how to ensure the needs of disabled people are considered by the agencies in their portfolios. Finally, the budget announcements in May suggest a real commitment to the DPO Coalition and the Disability Action Plan. I have to admit that I'm finding it all very stimulating and somewhat challenging.

I started writing this column a few days before I learned of my father's passing. The phone call came while Amy and I were building the goat house for the little farm we bought. It was definitely teamwork; we each hammered nails, we both bent and straightened nails and neither of us has any major injuries to show for our efforts. As it happens, this is the third little building project we've now completed. The donkeys needed somewhere to be tied up while they're being groomed, the "free to a good home" house that came with the chickens needed replacing after some very high winds, and unlike my father, I plan to have the goat house before the goat arrives.

My point here is not that we're doing DIY projects, but that I obviously picked up a lot while I was holding the bits of wood Dad was hammering together. I don't think I wanted to listen much at the time, but he demanded that I learn as much about home and garden maintenance as any of his other sons. Dad would start a cut on a tree that needed pruning and expect me to finish so that I'd learn how to prune a tree (N.B. he bought a chainsaw after I left home!) but he was left handed; I can now saw tree branches both left and right handed. He made me dig holes to plant trees and trenches for drains. He made me mix concrete by hand in a wheelbarrow until I pointed out that without a concrete mixer we were going to take years to get the whole job done.

He made me think about a job before using up energy doing it the wrong way, and he did so many things in his head so that at times the rest of us would wonder if his plan would ever come together. His passing has given me time to reflect that who and what I am today is (at least in part) the product of his refusal to let me say, "I can't". I'm sure he'd be pleased to learn that I let Amy use the drop saw, but that while she was out I hit in 95 four-inch nails before I had to waste one. That gave me time to recall that Dad could hit in nails with a hammer in either hand; I'm now utterly convinced he chose to start that pruning left-handed but I've more than forgiven him for it. I didn't get a chance to tell him how many different fruit trees I've bought for the new orchard, but he knew I was planning it. I am fortunate that my father helped set me up for life; if I pass on half as much to my own kids, they'll be set up too. Thank you for the numerous text and email messages as well as the phone calls I've received. My task now, is to continue to use the skills and values my father gave to me; perhaps some of you have been on the receiving end of my passing these gifts on to you.

Having aspirations for ourselves and others is right. Having our rights realised is also right. It's wrong to accept discrimination, and it's wrong to think we can't make a difference.

I hope like my father that I'm still fighting for what is right and making a difference in people's lives well into my nineties. Rest in peace
Peter Godfrey, 1925-2019.

Success and Priorities

Blind Citizens NZ congratulates Jonathan Mosen on being named a member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the 2019 Queen's Birthday Honours. A past National President of Blind Citizens NZ (October 1997-October 2001) and a past Chair of the Blind Foundation (2002-2003), the award recognises Jonathan's contributions to the blind community. His contributions and influence are as diverse as the many areas in which he has been involved. Perhaps a little closer to home for Blind Citizens NZ, he influenced our organisational name change from "New Zealand Association of the Blind and Partially Blind", to our current name. Also, Blind Citizens NZ's relocation from Auckland to Wellington in 1998.

Next we have a combination of success and priorities... Elected as a Member-at-Large in October 2014, Murray Peat is into his third term on the Board. You may recall Murray and Karen welcomed in December last year, their much-awaited addition to the family - their beautiful daughter Emily. Maintaining a life balance that involves family, work, and interests, involves priority setting. Family is first, and foremost, and balancing precious time away from home and a new addition, is a huge consideration. It is for this reason, that Murray has tendered his resignation. At this time in his life, family is quite rightly Murray's priority. The Board received notice of his resignation at its June meeting. While Murray's resignation is not effective until the conclusion of the Board's August/September meeting, Murray is keen to let members know of his decision, and to share in this Focus issue.

Proposed New Constitution – Voting Preparation

Circulation of the proposed new Constitution to financial Ordinary Members of Blind Citizens NZ, started late the week of 24 June. This included an introduction, which explained what has happened since February 2019, when circulation of the first draft happened. The introduction also talked about the next step in the process, which involves financial Ordinary Members voting on the proposed new Constitution.

Voting commences Tuesday 2 October 2019. This is three-months' after financial Ordinary Members (those who can vote), began receiving the proposed new Constitution. To be eligible to vote, Ordinary Members must be financial as at 4pm, Thursday 15 August, and recorded as such, on the member database at National Office.

The process for distribution of ballot material and voting is the same as for Blind Citizens NZ's elections. You may receive ballot material in one format, for example large print, and vote using another such as our National Feedback Line voting option on the Blind Foundation's Telephone Information Service (TIS). Members are encouraged to consider using TIS to vote. TIS is the most reliable option to cast your vote because you are in control – you will know your vote is both received and recorded within the timeframes for voting. When it comes to postal votes, Blind Citizens NZ has no control whatsoever. When mailed two-three days before the closing date, there is no way you will know if your postal vote has arrived in time.

When voting happens, the proposed new Constitution will not be recirculated. So please do make the most of the three-month timeframe to review it, and decide how you will vote.

In preparation for voting, Ordinary (voting) Members may wish to ensure you are financial. Also, that your preferred "voting" option is correctly recorded. Please feel free to check in with National Office either by phone (0800 222 694), or email admin@abcnz.org.nz

Blind Citizens NZ 2019 Scheduled Election

Rose Wilkinson, Returning Officer

The current Constitution, Rule 10 Elections, directs Blind Citizens NZ in its process for this scheduled election. Positions for election this year include National President (held by Jonathan Godfrey), and four Member-at-Large positions, one of which is currently a vacancy. Martine Abel-Williamson, Geraldine Glanville and Shaun Johnson, are the three Members-at-Large whose positions are due for election.

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 four positions happens 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.

Here are details about timelines and the procedure for the election of all positions. Additional information is available upon request from National Office. You will also locate information on Blind Citizens NZ's website. Anyone standing for election is encouraged to take the time to ask for, and become familiar with the duties and responsibilities of Board Members. Additionally, the skills, experience and knowledge needed for these positions. Contact details for Blind Citizens NZ's National Office and our website are located at the end of this Focus issue.

Now to the timelines and procedures...

To be eligible for nomination for any position, you must:

- a) live in New Zealand; and
- b) have been a financial Ordinary Member of Blind Citizens NZ for at least 24 months of the past five years, up to 15 August 2019. If you are uncertain whether you meet the criteria, please contact our National Office to find out.

What you need to do for your nomination: you need two people to support you. One will move and the other will second your nomination. You can complete and submit your nomination by paper, or email. If using the paper form, signatures of each of all three members involved in the nomination are required. Email procedures similarly require the same people to confirm their respective role in the nomination process. If you choose the email procedure, you must contact the Returning Officer prior to commencing this process. This is important, as there are instructions unique to the email procedure that must be followed.

Nominations close at 4pm Thursday 15 August 2019. They must be received and in the hands of the Returning Officer by this date/time. Candidates are required to provide their CV at the same time as their nomination is sent to the Returning Officer. The Returning Officer will receive nominations via one of the following options:

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

Once nominations close: If the maximum number of nominations for the five positions is received, there will be no need for an election. Candidates will be declared elected unopposed. However, if nominations exceed the number of elected positions, there will be an election.

Financial Ordinary Members have a say: Ballot material is sent to all Ordinary Members recorded as financial on the member database at National Office as at **4pm, Thursday 15 August 2019**. No later than **Thursday 5 September 2019**, ballot material will be distributed in the voting member's preferred format.

When does voting close: Completed ballots (votes cast by voting members) must be received at National Office no later than **4.00 pm, Tuesday 24 September 2019**. Vote counting will take place Thursday 26 September 2019.

Candidate information: Blind Citizens NZ has several options members can participate in the election process. Election (ballot) material about candidates standing for election is available in 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 Blind Citizens NZ elections is correct on our records, please contact our National Office to check.

Choose your preferred voting option: When casting your vote, you choose one of three options. Please note that the way you vote, can be different from the way you choose to receive your election (ballot) material. You can cast your vote using the large print form, the braille-card option, or TIS. We encourage you to try TIS as this offers a truly independent and empowering voting experience. It means you can independently do all the things you need to do in an election – you hear about the candidates standing for election, and you cast your vote. Most importantly, you can be certain your vote counts because it is received on time. There is less certainty with postal votes arriving by the close of voting. If you would like to know more about using TIS for the election process, please contact our National Office.

Johnston Cup for Leadership – Nominations Required

The Johnston Cup for Leadership was first presented in 2007 by Doug and Jeanette Johnston. This award encourages and recognises members of Blind Citizens NZ who attend leadership training initiatives conducted by us and to:

- encourage them to accept leadership responsibilities inside and outside the blindness community; and
- develop an environment where they can be recognised for leadership in their field of endeavour.

Do you know of someone who has demonstrated active involvement within Blind Citizens NZ at a local or national level, has attended one of our development initiatives, or has contributed in some demonstrable way to the betterment of the community by way of leadership, then let us know. If the person you are thinking of is a financial Ordinary Member (Associate Members are not eligible for this award), and you believe they should be nominated for the Johnston Cup for Leadership, then we'd like you to tell us. You will need to provide information in support of the nomination.

The Board is calling for nominations for this award – financial Ordinary Members can make nominations, as can Branch Committees, and the Board itself. Nominations (with supporting information), close at National Office, 4pm Wednesday 21 August 2019. Contact details are located at the end of this Focus issue.

Beamish Memorial Award

The Beamish Memorial Award is the single most prestigious award that Blind Citizens NZ has the honour 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 someone, who meets the criteria and whose outstanding efforts should be recognised then here is an opportunity to do so.

Branches, financial Ordinary Members and the Board can make nominations for the Beamish Memorial Award. The Board considers all nominations. It needs the person's name, their contact details and information and reasons in support of the nomination. The closing date/time for receipt of these at National Office is 4pm, Friday 30 August 2019. Contact details are located at the end of this Focus issue.

Criteria for Benefit Payments

From Anne Hawker, Principal Advisor Disability, Ministry of Social Development

Same Case Manager

A number of people have asked, "I have established a good relationship with my case manager, can I have the same case manager." The answer is **yes**. Remember to mention this when you call to make an appointment. Sometimes however, you may need to wait longer than if you agree to see anyone else.

Signalling your Communication Needs

Work and Income is aware that a number of people have particular communication needs such as email. If you are talking with your case manager, check with them if they have recorded on the computer why and what you need. Work and Income is unable to record this information unless it asks you, or you ask them.

Overseas Travel - Disability Forum

In some situations, you may be able to continue to receive payment of your benefit for up to 12 weeks when you are overseas to attend a disability forum.

This is over and above any other discretionary four-week absence from New Zealand, that you may be allowed in a 52-week period. The criteria for continuing payment are:

- the person must have a long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairment; and
- the absence from New Zealand must be for the purpose of attending a disability forum approved by the Chief Executive MSD (note that all applications must be referred to the Principal Disability Advisor, Anne Hawker).

The approved disability forum must be:

- a disability programme or event associated with the United Nations or an international disability organisation; or
- another type of programme or event that the beneficiary is attending to contribute a disability perspective.

Note that:

- this exemption does not extend to your partner if they are getting a benefit and are expected to look or prepare for work.
- you will need to provide registration for the disability forum, and travel itinerary as proof of your intended attendance.
- if you have any questions please contact either Anne Hawker (email: anne.hawker011@msd.govt.nz), or Rose Wilkinson (Blind Citizens NZ – contact details at the end of this Focus issue).

Supported Living Payment (SLP) - Totally Blind

To meet the criteria for the SLP Totally Blind, the person's best visual acuity (sharpness) with correcting lenses does not exceed 3/60 or 1/20, and/or the person's visual field is contracted to a maximum of five degrees on either side of the fixation point. To prove that you meet the criteria you will need to provide either:

- a current assessment from your ophthalmologist or Optometrist; or
- a Work Capacity Medical Certificate from your health practitioner.

Note: if you meet the criteria to be considered totally blind, you have an entitlement to the Supported Living Payment irrespective of the number of hours you are able to work, and income you may receive from employment.

Income Exemption for SLP recipients: Income earned from your personal effort (that is, work completed by you), qualifies for a personal earnings exemption. The following are not included as personal earnings:

- Student Allowances;
- earnings related to Superannuation;
- earnings related to Accident Compensation that does not relate to the disability for which Supported Living Payment has been granted;
- a partner's income;
- other income not earned through personal effort, for example, interest from savings, dividends, rental income etc.

Note: that the personal earnings' exemption applies to Supported Living Payment only. Any Blind Income that has been disregarded must be included in the assessment of any Special Benefit or Temporary Additional Support.

Blind subsidy: An additional allowance of 25% of the average personal earnings can be paid to someone who is receiving the Supported Living Payment on the grounds of health condition, injury, disability or total blindness. Details are set out in the above section "Supported Living Payment (SLP) – Totally Blind. There is a maximum subsidy paid on your earnings.

The subsidy is assessed on your personal earnings only, that is, income you receive from actual work you do.

If you are self-employed (for example, run a small business), income is either the drawings or the net profit, whichever is the larger amount.

The income to be assessed for the Blind Subsidy:

- Supported Living Payment (net);
- any supplementary assistance;
- the additional subsidy (equal to 25% of average gross yearly personal earnings);
- all other income (gross).

To be able to receive a blind subsidy, your total income must not exceed the income limits. If you are married, in a civil union or de facto relationship, only your income is considered; your partner's income or benefit is disregarded.

As at 1 April 2019 these income limits are:

- if you are married, in a civil union or de facto relationship \$18,619.64 a year or \$358.07 (gross) per week;
- if you are single \$20,992.40 a year or \$403.70 (gross) per week.

Supported Living Payment: If you do not meet the criteria for blindness but are both permanently and severely restricted in your capacity for work because of your blindness and other conditions or disabilities, you can receive Supported Living Payment and be reassessed in two years.

If you are not granted the Supported Living Payment under the criteria for blindness (refer to the information provided in this article), then you are not eligible to receive the special earnings exemption, or Blind Subsidy.

Reflections from Japan - From Aine Kelly-Costello

This year from February 12-27, I was honoured to participate in the FY18 Japan Community Core Leaders Development Programme (CCLDP) as a New Zealand delegate. It was a chance to exchange information, shared challenges and resources with delegates from Finland, Germany and Japan. The programme was for those aged under 40, working in the fields of youth development, older people and people with disabilities--the field I represented.

My thanks to Blind Citizens NZ for nominating me for the opportunity. I brought with me a background in disability advocacy, as well as my lived experience as a disabled person.

I went intrigued to learn, and to reflect on the contexts and experiences from other countries, and I share some insights below.

Tokyo - Non-profit Organisations Management Forum – February

15-18: The foreign delegates combined with Japanese programme participants and discussed one of three topic areas. Mine was Communication and PR. On the first day together, we visited an organisation running the Tadaima (I'm Home) project. It's about raising community awareness of appropriate/useful ways of interacting with people with dementia, with the aim of reducing the alarmingly high numbers of people with dementia who go missing each year and in Japan and aren't found till it's too late.

This visit stood out to me because they used theatre or role-plays really effectively to get us to think about what you would do if you were, say, to come across an older woman who is searching desperately for her husband (who has in fact died several years ago) and who believes she's living in the city she grew up in. Our group discussions on the subsequent days revolved mainly around the common challenges our non-profits face, and examples of when we've used communication well, or not so well, to tackle them. The most memorable metaphor came from a group who decided that expanding the reach of an org was rather like planting seeds.

You do so strategically (in season, in optimal light conditions), but even so you can never be entirely certain which ones will really sprout (i.e. where your outreach will really catch on).

Oita-programme for the field of Persons with Disabilities - 19-23

February: Oita Prefecture, located on Kyushu Island in the southwest of Japan, has a similar population to Auckland, and you definitely know you're out of "big city" mode landing there. At the Usa City Comprehensive Support Center, we learned about Oita's efforts to deliver cohesive services to people with disabilities as they reach retirement age by integrating their existing support with the other services available specifically to older people.

We also focused heavily on employment support for disabled people. We saw some great examples of supported employment, particularly at Taiyonoie (Japan Sun Industries). The facility, located within the community, includes joint venture partnerships with brands such as Sony, Omron (electronics), Mitsubishi and Fujitsu. There's also a physically accessible and bustling supermarket that employs a mix of disabled and non-disabled people and is well-used by the community. One recommendation for Japan that came through strongly from Finland, Germany and NZ was for support planning and delivery to be centred around the goals and needs of the individual.

We also try out the sport of Takkyu Volley or sound table tennis. We don't have it in NZ but it somewhat resembles Swish in Australia. We played against disabled people from Taiyonoie, some of which were total masters of their game. Let's just say it doesn't usually take long for a pingpong ball to travel the length of a table so it was a real concentration test for me but great fun too! That was followed up by an excellent discussion on access to sports for disabled people and in particular, how Japan can leverage the opportunity of the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics to put accessibility and inclusion firmly on the public agenda.

The theme of wide-spread, appropriate representation of disabled athletes in the media came through strongly, as did the opportunity for volunteers to interact with the athletes.

In terms of accessibility generally, Japan has a Barrier free act, and seems to do well with physical policy measures, like the Braille in the lift. On the other hand, disabled people are still not very visible in Japanese society, nor is disability advocacy. As such, we were informed, levels of prejudice are still high, to the point where facilities for disabled people were continuing to be built in remote areas due to community backlash. I recommended that advocacy feature more prominently in this programme in future so that Japan could learn from the experiences of countries like New Zealand.

The Programme Overall: I found the trip fascinating, very enjoyable and exhausting. When I asked for information in electronic format, it was consistently provided, on time. I also got to spend a day with a wonderful, inquisitive and caring homestay family, visit a natural onsen with them, eat an apparently bottomless selection of delicious Japanese delicacies, and in general be treated like royalty for a packed two weeks.

To conclude, three notes to future blind visitors to Japan, in no special order:

1. You will encounter parallel line tactile markings everywhere. They are * sometimes* useful in wide spaces if you're looking for a turn-off.
2. Smile often and try and remember to slightly bow your head and shoulders when you say thank you. When passing business cards, or anything you are handing over to someone, do so with hands palm up; you are presenting the item on your hand for the person to accept.

3. The one word you will learn to recognise in braille is the Japanese for "flush" (old italics sign, "character" contraction, th contraction). Many toilets have an array of buttons, and happily, they usually come labelled in braille. The flush is also usually in a more square setting, which stands out a little if you know what you're looking for.

Employment – is this one of your Passions and Interests?

Blind Citizens NZ has representative positions on several national organisations. When the terms of office for these positions fall due, or there are resignations, the Board determines what its approach will be. It is the latter on this occasion, as Paula Waby for personal reasons, needs to resign as Blind Citizens NZ's representative on the Workbridge Council.

The Board is now calling for **expressions of interest from financial Ordinary (voting) Members of Blind Citizens NZ**. These must be received no later than 4pm, Thursday 15 August 2019. Members interested in this representative position should request the position description as this outlines requirements, attributes etc. An overview only, is provided in Focus. You may be suited to this role if your extensive skills and expertise include knowledge and understanding of the following:

- 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.

2019 Annual General Meeting and Conference

Getting on with it – A New Horizon

Our 2019 AGM and Conference will be upon us before we know. If this is not already in your calendar, **Friday 4 to Sunday 6 October** are the dates you need to lock in. We are at the Naumi Hotel in Mangere, Auckland.

A diversity of guest presenters are being finalised for the Open Day on Saturday 5 October. They are all complimentary to this year's theme Getting on with it – A New Horizon.

Registration forms are available from your local Branch, Network, our National Office and our website. As always, there are options to suit individual needs. Please note that all registrations come through our National Office (not the hotel). Registrations close on Monday 9 September, so there is plenty of time to register.

'First time attendees will be interested to know the Board is building on the success of opportunities offered to members over the past two years. This offer applies to financial Ordinary Members attending a Blind Citizens AGM and Conference this year, for the first time. For first time attendees there is an opportunity to seek financial assistance. There are two conditions from the past two years, which remain for applicants. The first is that you are required to make a financial contribution. The second is that you are required to attend the full three-day AGM and Conference, whether on a daily basis, or staying at the Naumi Hotel. If you are a financial Ordinary Member attending for the first time, and would like to take advantage of this opportunity, contact the Chief Executive for further information via one of the following options:

- **Email:** admin@abcnz.org.nz and put "2019 first-time attendee" in the subject line;
- **Post:** PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242; **Fax:** 04-389-0033

Applications for financial assistance for first time attendees close 4pm, Friday 16 August. The Board will make a decision about the number of members it can support following the close of expressions of interest.

Blind Citizens NZ's 75th Anniversary in 2020

At its recent meeting, the Board of Blind Citizens NZ made some early decisions about this event. We will be looking at venues in the top half of the South Island. Dates for the event will remain as per the norm – this means the preferred weekend aligns closely to 8 October i.e. 9-11 October 2020.

The Board has welcomed Clive Lansink's offer to put together a presentation of recordings of notable events relevant to Blind Citizens NZ history, going back to the 1950s.

Having made some decisions, there is still an opportunity for suggestions to come to the Board around the following items:

- Are there international guests we should invite?
- What about speakers, presenters and their topic(s): are there people you believe should be included in the programme?
- What topics should there be for speakers and presenters?
- Is there a theme the 75-year celebration should take – if so, what do you suggest?

The Board plans to have further discussions at its August/September meeting. Hearing from members, branches and networks is important. Please do give this some thought, and send your suggestions for the attention of the Chief Executive. To be certain your suggestion(s) arrive in sufficient time for inclusion in meeting papers, be sure they arrive at National Office by 9am, Friday 16 August. The Board will receive all suggestions and consider these at its meeting on 31 August/1 September 2019.

Please Support Our Income Generation Efforts

Blind Citizens NZ has both Charitable and Donee status. This is important for anyone thinking about the mutually beneficial outcomes of payroll giving and making us your charity of choice. Income received through donations, bequests and payroll giving for example, go a long way towards supporting the many facets of our work including our advocacy and promotional campaigns, and communication and community education. Making us the recipient of a bequest or legacy, is another way you can support us. Here is information about each of these options.

Payroll Giving: this is an easy way for an employee to donate to a charity of their choice, such as Blind Citizens NZ. When an employee donates to a charity through their payroll, they receive a tax refund immediately. For all other types of donation, the donor must wait until the end of the tax year to receive their tax refund. One of the key benefits of donating through your wages (Payroll Giving) is that as an employee you may decide to donate your refund to the charity as well. Charitable Payroll Giving is optional and not all employers will participate. Blind Citizens NZ has Donee Status, and is eligible to receive payroll gifts. Steps to Payroll Giving donations include:

1. Ask your employer if payroll giving is an employee benefit. Advocate for Blind Citizens NZ, and outline why you are passionate about the organisation. Some employers match payroll gifts with a contribution of their own.
2. If payroll giving is available, provide your employer with the bank account details for Blind Citizens NZ.
3. Decide how much you can afford, and how frequently you will donate, considering the immediate tax benefit.
4. Notify Blind Citizens NZ that you are making a payroll gift. Your employer may transfer the money into Blind Citizens NZ's bank account without any notification.

Making a Bequest: Through our efforts and your financial support, we are working on the removal of barriers faced by blind, vision impaired and deafblind people, so we can make our mark in the world. During the past 12 months, Blind Citizens NZ has been extremely fortunate to benefit from legacies, and we take this opportunity to recognise generically, the generosity of those people and their families.

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, if you have questions or you wish to make a contribution contact:

- Rose Wilkinson 021 222 6940 / 0800 222 694
- **Email:** bequest-info-blindcitizensnz@groups.io

Membership Renewal Reminder

Membership renewals fall due on 1 July annually. Mindful of the opportunity financial Ordinary Members will have to vote on Blind Citizens NZ's proposed new Constitution, it will be important to ensure you can vote. If you are uncertain whether you are financial, please check by contacting our national office, or your local branch treasurer.

If you intend to vote on the proposed new Constitution, 4pm, Thursday 15 August is the deadline by which your records on the National Office membership database, should show you are financial. You can contact National Office to check by phoning 0800 222 694, or email to admin@abcnz.org.nz (include "membership query" in the subject line). To assist with membership renewal, a form is located on the next page.

Blind Citizens NZ - Membership Renewal Form, 30 June 2020

Return your completed membership renewal form along with your subscription to our National Office (or hand to your local Branch Treasurer). Membership renewals along with your subscription can be posted to National Office, PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242. Cheques should be made payable to Blind Citizens NZ.

Alternatively, you can renew your membership online (using internet banking). Account details are: 06-0230-0002634-00. Please include your name and the reference "MembSub". Ideally, notify National Office you have renewed your membership using online banking.

Queries by phone to 04-389-0033 / 0800-222-694; or email admin@abcnz.org.nz

Full Name: (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms): _____

Address: _____

Phone No: _____ **Date of Birth:** _____

I prefer to receive information (select preferred format): Braille / Audio / Print / Large Print / Email

Email Address: _____

Please select your membership category from the options below, and delete information that does not apply to your membership renewal.

Enclosed please find:

- \$ 10 / \$20 = one year's unwaged / waged **Ordinary Membership.**
- \$ 10 / \$20 = one year's unwaged / waged **Associate Membership (sighted friends and family, etc.)**
- **\$300.00** = my one-off payment for Membership-for-Life.
- A donation of: \$_____ is included. My donation should be utilised for (please select from **Board / National Office**, or **branch activities.**

RNZFB Member Registration Number (if known): _____

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 / Management Committee):
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- Shaun Johnson (Member-at-Large): shaun.zdots@xtra.co.nz
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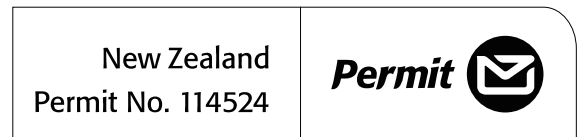
Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/BlindCitizensNZ/>

Email: admin@abcnz.org.nz

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

Blind Citizens NZ is appreciative of donations received from our members and supporters, and for funding from the Blind Foundation, and the Lotteries Grants Board

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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