



Blind Citizens NZ

# Focus

## Publication of the Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Inc Volume 56 No 3 – September 2020

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## **Déjà Vu / We Have All Been Here Before**

### **Editorial, by Allan Jones**

In the late 1960's Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young released their second album. They named it "Déjà Vu" and there was a refrain "We have all been here before". I wrote my last editorial about 95 days ago and talked about how the 1pm broadcast from Jacinda and Ashley was a daily event not to be missed. I guess for us in Wellington, the only difference is that we are in Alert Level 2 (and hopefully will be at Alert Level 1 by the time this Focus issue reaches you). There are aspects of Alert Level 2, which are harder to deal with i.e. wearing of masks / face coverings at present is optional.

"Spacing" in cafes is not always rigidly adhered to and distancing in supermarkets and on transport for someone who is totally blind is challenging. Therefore, on venturing out from home, a small bottle of sanitizer is for me, essential equipment.

Last week, many of us received what I would describe as a sobering and succinct email posted on our "blind discuss" email list, from National President Jonathan. I republish it here as follows...

<begins> The tracing app tracks the pathway of movement, not just the visited places. It doesn't matter when someone got off a bus or exited a shop if they left the bugs they were carrying behind. Epidemiologists are wanting to track the bugs, not the people that move them around. (Yes, I do know that strictly speaking a virus isn't a bug, but imagining a trail of little bugs instead of an invisible virus seems to refocus a lot of people I talk with.)

The officials doing the tracing will be able to ask questions about exactly how you got from A to B if they know you went to both A and B. Marrying up two systems to trace movements is inefficient, but imagine if there were even more systems in use.

So while it might be totally fine for someone to say I know where I went because I can track my taxis through that account, my shop visits by my receipts, and my bus with my card, this would be quite painful for someone else to do from afar. It would slow down the process of warning others. Hours of delay means hours of extra infectiousness. What we see from overseas is that infections means deaths.

Unfortunately, there seems to be still far too many people who do not understand the risks they put on themselves and complete strangers, let alone the loved ones at home. After the July 4 celebrations in Florida, the rate of 20-40 year olds with COVID-19 went up dramatically; those people then went home to their parents and grandparents and two weeks later the rate of older folk dying went up sharply. Thankfully, Auckland is not in Florida, and neither am I, but if I was, then I'd have gone into serious siege mentality and still be wondering when it would be safe to come out.

I have friends in the US who are self-isolating for their own safety. They have denied visits from their children and grandchildren because they do not and cannot trust that society is doing anything to provide the protections they need. They acknowledge that they are living in fear.

NZ can avoid that, but only if we make sure everyone can and then does play their part. Blind Citizens NZ is working to make sure blind people can play your part; it is up to individuals to decide how to act. From what I'm reading on this list, I think we're doing better than the people I see on the news.

I've ended up refactoring a lot of my teaching material so that issues around COVID-19 are explained, monitored, etc. I've incorporated the fallibility of testing regimes, the likelihood of rare events, and whether news should be a surprise given what we do know. Offering explanations to people on this list and on the phone have helped with the way I've expressed those ideas in teaching material.

Thank you for asking and or listening. <ends>

I want to carry on from Bev Duncan's article which appeared in the June Focus.

I recently acquired a copy of the Mana Whaikaha report which outlined what is happening in the Manawatu. Firstly I was glad to see that in the 2020 budget 12 million dollars was put aside for this project. The report is over 80 pages long so what I want to do is highlight some key points. Enabling Good Lives is set up to give disabled people more options for control of their lives. Knowledge of living with a disability is essential to the organizational culture. This is a move away from clinical assessment towards engagement which is empathetic and without judgment. The words try, learn, adjust, underpins the direction of engaging good lives. Your editor is fully in support of this new approach. The "client capture" of the old system was in my view hideous. I was very pleased to see John Mulka stating unequivocally an assessment wasn't needed to be supplied with a new White Cane. In past years I have certainly had battles over this one. The key people in the Enabling Good Lives systems are the "connectors". They don't assess, they walk alongside of the service user.

There are several challenges of implementing a new system and taking on new clients at the same time. One description was that it is like flying, while still building the plane - exciting but stressful. Disabled people spoke of being seen as a person rather than a number. They spoke of being given choices and being heard. I look forward to this approach being rolled out over the entire country. I believe there will be challenges for Blind Low Vision NZ and other major agencies - I guess what I need to say is watch this space.

The second tune which has been going through my head is from an Australian band called Australian Crawl. The song came out in the late 80's and is called "Reckless", and the lyric I refer to is "we don't like that kind of behavior, throw down your guns don't be so reckless".

Over the last month or so two major topics have taken up a fair amount of space on Blind Citizens NZ's email list. They are taxis and the history of Blind Low Vision NZ.

The latest issue in the Wellington area is that you now can't use your Snapper Card for payment of your taxi fare. I only used this method of payment once when a taxi driver took the money by accident from my Snapper Card. In Wellington the same card doubles as Total Mobility and Snapper for payment of bus fares. There are taxi companies which are going broke and regular drivers are suggesting methods of saving money to keep my custom. I am setting up a telephone banking account with one regular driver which will save me at least \$5 on a return journey. I am hoping that the Total Mobility Review, which was promised, will get underway soon. I trust that the rorting that went on in the first lockdown won't put the system at risk.

Over the past few weeks there have been a number of emails trying to establish the time sequence of when legislation was introduced giving Guide Dog users the right to take their dogs on transport, and into cafes. The other aspect of history I would like to see documented is what I would call the Kibblewhite years. Bruce Kibblewhite retired as head of Auckland Teachers College in the mid 1950's. He helped with "prep" and got involved in reading books to us. Additionally, he brailled the "Popular Mechanics" publication where we could read about the large gas guzzlers that were made in Detroit. He was elected to the Board of Trustees of the Foundation and soon after was elected as Chairman. In 1962 I got what was probably the scoop of my life - I came across "Kibbie" as we called him, sitting outside Pearson House. He had just been ousted as board chair in a surprise coup. The NZ Herald sometime later said that he had retired. Yeah right!!

The last major topic for this editorial is the donation of 3,500 Alexa's to Blind Low Vision NZ from the Ministry of Social Development.

The ink was barely dry on my June editorial where I challenged both Blind Low Vision NZ and Blind Citizens NZ to find a way of making sure our members got important information quickly. The challenge now is to get the Alexa's distributed and set up so that our members are able to use them.

I am keen to make my last musical contribution a happy, and maybe frivolous and wistful one. I have picked a song called "Wild Flowers". There are at least four versions of this song all of which are good. Tom Petty wrote the song. Chris Hillman a former member of The Byrds has a version, and so does Jimmy Buffett. Then there is a wonderful version by a girl band called The Wailin' Jennys. To my mind, it is the sort of song you would want to sing to a son or a daughter or a special friend who is venturing off in to the wild wicked world. The last line goes "you belong in a world where you can be free".

I did get to one documentary film over the film festival. The film was called "The Girl on the Bridge". To put it bluntly the film was no Sunday school picnic. Jazz Thornton is a suicide prevention advocate and campaigner. The documentary traversed her life, and her several attempts to end her life. It also focused on Jazz's friend Jessica, who did take her life. The film could well have been a radio documentary. Jazz started making the documentary as a film school project then with the assistance of Leanne Pooley developed it into a challenging and thought-provoking documentary. The documentary kept in the bounds of convention and decency in discussing this topic. I also was aware of Jazz having lived with mental illness - she was well equipped to speak about her experience with conviction and passion a trait that won't be lost on members of Blind Citizens NZ.

I also took in the New Zealand produced film "This Town". The film features two well-known New Zealand actresses. Robyn Malcolm playing the role of a police woman who can't let go of mystery, and Rima Te Wiata is a journalist who pushes Robyn to not let go.

There are two major characters - a young man and his girlfriend. Audio description would have helped but in the main the dialogue was good and could be followed without difficulty. There are elements of quirkiness, black humor, and how attitudes can be polarised in a small community. The ending doesn't leave you wondering.

Finally I need to say that I will not be applying for a further term as Focus Editor. I have enjoyed immensely this challenge but feel it is time for "new blood". I am willing to assist aspiring applicants - my intention was to talk with people at our 75<sup>th</sup> celebration, but due to COVID-19 we have instead this year, a one-day AGM.

Go well and take care.

## **What's in a Name**

### **From Jonathan Godfrey, National President**

Well, what is in a name? Names do matter; they help identify us, or sometimes misidentify us. The name on my birth certificate matches the one that appears on my Kiwi Access card that I use for ID, but it misleads people who do not know me; Jonathan is not the first name on so many documents. There are other names people use for me that show when or how we came into contact. Use of the incorrect name, or a name that is right for someone else to call me, often sounds wrong. I can sit down in a social setting with old and recent friends; the name I am addressed by differs and if the new friends use the old name, or the old friends use the "Jonathan" I am known by most, they each sound strange, almost wrong.

This is the last Focus magazine before our organisation turns 75. Seventy-five years of advocacy and activism by people who went out of their way to help make New Zealand a better place for blind people to live in. Our organisation has had its name changes, but in the end, the core reasons for our existence have changed very little.

I've had the privilege of reading the draft chapters of Greg Newbold's work updating our history with an emphasis on the last 25 years of what we now call "Blind Citizens NZ". One of the appendices lists the various names of our organisation and those used by the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind Inc. which we now refer to as Blind Low Vision NZ. It's been a good read and I'm looking forward to getting it to the publisher and into the public arena.

Like Quest for Equity, Greg's summary of our history over the first 50 years, this updated version served to remind me why we're about to reach 75 years of existence. So much of the changes in the two organisations that have the greatest impact on the lives of all blind, deafblind, low-vision, partially blind, partially sighted, and vision impaired New Zealanders is seen as our organisational names were modified. I've intentionally listed some terms here that have had their time amongst those that are still current today. I haven't listed the other terms I have heard or used, some of which were or are considerably less palatable today, but I do recall well that as a kid at primary school, I quite clearly was "not blind" in the eyes of the other kids, but nor was I totally sighted. "Half-blind" was easily understood and therefore somewhat acceptable for them and me.

So seventy-five years of what? Over that proud history, there have been numerous people who have stood up and been ready to say that something isn't right or something needs to be made better, sometimes with cooperation and sometimes in the face of adversity. What is a common thread across the decades is that the leaders of our organisation have not been self-serving individuals. Their names might have been singled out, but the words coming from an individual person were, time and time again, backed by the real life experiences and aspirations of our members. At times, those leaders have been singled out for speaking out as if they stood alone, or as if they were some sort of trivial irritation.



One thing that I am very clear of, and I've shared it with people working with and for disabled people, is that no matter how good they are at their job, when they move on to the next job, I and numerous others will still be blind or disabled.

The change made in 2019 by the RNZFB Board to adopt a trading name that explicitly referred to people who were not "blind" did sound alarm bells for some people. Perhaps those same alarm bells started clanging when people saw the recent announcement by the RNZFB Board Chair that constitutional changes pertaining to the membership criteria are to be voted on in the coming weeks.

That letter outlines a host of changes to the RNZFB constitution by way of five resolutions. I believe the description of what is proposed is well written for the most part, and provides voters with sufficient information to either cast an informed vote, or to be able to ask more questions that will then create that informed vote. Mounting pressure from many members of our community led the Board of Blind Citizens NZ to seek an assurance from the RNZFB Board on the proposal about membership.

Blind Citizens NZ has an organisational position on who should be a member of the RNZFB. We also have a position on who should be a client by way of right, and therefore on who should be a client on the basis of a commercial relationship. These organisational positions featured in the written feedback we gave the RNZFB Board and, which I offered at the round table discussion with other consumer organisations held on 15 February this year. This written and oral feedback responded in part to the fear by some Blind Citizens NZ members (and many who are not our members) that the needs of blind people may be less thoroughly addressed if their recognised service provider spread itself too thinly by trying to attract new clients outside the existing membership criteria.

The rationale for reaching out to new members offered in recent years has included that:

1. there were thousands of people outside the current membership criteria that could benefit from the services that the RNZFB could offer them;
2. there were potentially thousands of people inside the membership criteria that were not receiving services.

There is no question that there is potential for a service provider to offer services to a longer list of clients. The question is though, which of those potential clients is the moral responsibility of that service provider and will it stay true to its constitutional objects, and perhaps more importantly, its current members by searching for more clients?

I doubt that any current member would deprive any person access to blindness or deafblindness services if they do meet the existing membership criteria. No one had the right to stop us from gaining access to those services as soon as we were each accepted as members. Even if (as a membership based organisation) we did have a legal right to modify the RNZFB constitution, I suggest that we do not have the moral right to do so. I would argue that we actually have a moral contract with society to ensure that any New Zealander who does meet the membership criteria, actually does get access to those blindness and deafblindness services that we have been receiving. This means that any New Zealand resident who meets the membership criteria needs to be given an opportunity to make an informed decision about becoming a member of the RNZFB Inc., and/or a client of Blind Low Vision NZ. Making it easier for those properly qualifying to get the services they need makes sense. Making sure this is not abused also makes sense.

So why would we open the doors to clients whose needs are different to ours? I am in no way saying that these people should not get the services they need, but does the RNZFB have a moral obligation to take on this additional work? I argue that it does not. Do we have any moral obligation to let these people become voting members for the governance of our service provider? I would argue we do not.

While this is my personal opinion, I know that others among our members share this view because we do talk openly about our ideas, our aspirations, our fears, our challenges, and our successes. We do that at meetings, using social media, our newsletters, our email lists, and our place on the Telephone Information Service.

The Blind Citizens NZ Board welcomed the intention to remove any impediments for someone who does meet the current criteria to become a member, and receiving the blindness or deafblindness habilitation or rehabilitation services they need.

The Board decided that the recently issued set of proposals to amend the RNZFB Incorporated constitution were not sufficiently clear on that one proposal though, because we felt that there was too much room for people to interpret the changes in a liberal way, even if there was no intention to offer membership to people who do not need blindness services. We decided to write to the RNZFB Board to ask that further consideration be given, with the possibility of introducing a mandatory policy (this is a constitutional instrument) to ensure that the changes could not be liberally interpreted.

Blind Citizens NZ has been calling for habilitation and rehabilitation services for blind, deafblind, and vision impaired New Zealanders to be fully funded by Government for many years. As a member of the DPO Coalition and the Independent Monitoring Mechanism that makes recommendations for the NZ Government to address, we've also made similar calls for the habilitation and rehabilitation services needed by all manner of disabled people. We have never excluded those people whose vision impairments are not yet bringing them inside the current membership criteria, although I accept that at times our position has not always been conveyed or received well. In effect, we have treated everyone outside the membership criteria in the same way; if a person needed a blindness or deafblindness service then there has been room for the Chief Executive to let them become a client and get those services.

No one needs to be a voting member to receive services. If people need a service that is not an existing Blind Low Vision NZ service, then why ask Blind Low Vision NZ for it?

People need to understand that our service provider does not have unlimited resources to assist everyone with everything they want. Lines must be drawn and priorities must be set. Only a fraction of the total budget for Blind Low Vision NZ comes from Government contracts. It will be hard enough to call on Government to fund an increasing number of clients that do meet the criteria, especially in these uncertain times; can anyone expect the range of service to expand to meet the needs of new clients?

Any increase in demand for services will be difficult for Blind Low Vision NZ to meet. Changes promised by Chief Executive John Mulka and the RNZFB Board by way of the new Strategic Plan will take time to bed in, and it will take time to prove that the existing membership is better off following these changes. We've been promised service that responds quickly and effectively to the habilitation and rehabilitation needs of blind and low-vision people. In my verbal contribution to the discussion of the new strategic direction for the RNZFB on February 15, 2020 I asked why anyone would go looking for extra work when there is already unmet need. Furthermore, I now suggest that going looking for extra work could be done by asking every existing client if their needs are being met as if each one of us was a brand new client. After all, we might ask if we are about to start competing for the limited resource that Blind Low Vision NZ has to meet the needs of all of us.

Should all of our needs as individuals not be put on an even footing so that the right prioritisation follows? Can we afford to let our service provider supply services to those people who are the best at asking for service as against those people with the greatest need?

Can the RNZFB Board assure New Zealanders that every one of its current members has received the services they need so that all blind and deafblind people are sufficiently habilitated or rehabilitated in order to enjoy dignified lives with as much independence as they choose? We must surely expect that the modern way of evaluating effectiveness of a service be used; delivering a wonderful service to those who receive it is no longer sufficient. It is no longer necessary for any advocacy organisation like Blind Citizens NZ to continually say (and prove) “here is need” because the moral contract service providers across all manner of disability support systems suggests that they must demonstrate that all need has been met. This focus on proving that there is no need to do something is recognised by the United Nations Committee overseeing the progress of countries like New Zealand that have signed up to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.

Our government must prove there is no need to do something if it chooses not to act.

So our questions are not for Blind Low Vision NZ alone. These questions or very similar ones are being asked across society, especially in relation to disability support, and should be asked whenever public money is being spent, whether that be taxpayer funding or charitable donations. In relation to blindness services, Blind Citizens NZ is the leading voice of blind people and has been for just on seventy-five years. We will continue to offer challenging questions to Government Ministers, Government agencies, and any organisations providing services to blind people. That’s how we got things changed in the past, and it is how we can help get things made even better into the future.

We will continue to claim that until such time as a service provider can prove it can do no more for its current clients, it must surely have a moral responsibility not to extend its clientele.

This is why Blind Citizens NZ is pleased that the RNZFB Board reached a decision to implement a policy within its current framework which will become a mandatory policy when that constitutional change can be accommodated. In other words, the RNZFB Board heard the concern raised by Blind Citizens NZ and found a way forward that honours what we sought to protect on behalf of our members and all Blind Low Vision NZ clients. Events over the last few weeks where the role of Blind Citizens NZ has been demonstrated are just another chapter in the long history of blind people seeking self-determination and then exercising it.

If, like me, you feel that anyone who meets the existing membership criteria should be offered membership, then like me, you'll vote "yes" to the proposal to expand the set of professionals who are empowered to certify that an individual does meet those criteria.

On the basis of the assurances made by the RNZFB Board, the Blind Citizens NZ Board can now publicly state its otherwise unconditional support for all five of the proposals all RNZFB members will soon vote on.

I hope that (like me) you'll then welcome the new members to our community, and enlighten them about the history that precedes them. A history rich with blind people who took the moral high ground, potentially even at their own expense, on issues that affect their lives as blind people. You might extoll the virtues of becoming a member of Blind Citizens NZ and invite them to obtain a copy of Quest for Equity (1995) or Greg Newbold's 2020 history (title withheld on purpose). I trust that you will also reassure these new members that Blind Citizens NZ is continuing to seek fully funded habilitation and rehabilitation services for every person who meets the membership criteria, but that we are also expecting Government to make sure that every disabled person is having their needs met, including those people whose vision loss means they are currently outside the membership criteria.

## **Vote by Telephone Dictation Voting in the 2020 General Election and Referendums**

The 2020 general election and referendums on End of Life Choice, and Cannabis will take place on Saturday 17 October.

If you are blind, deafblind, low vision, vision impaired, or have a physical disability that means you are unable to mark your voting papers without assistance you can choose to use the telephone dictation voting service to cast a secret vote.

If you want to vote using the telephone dictation service in this year's general election and referendums you will have to register, even if you have used the service at previous elections. Eligible voters can register to vote by telephone dictation from Monday 14 September by calling 0800 028 028, and selecting Option One.

You will be given a registration number and you will be asked to choose a "secret" question (and your answer), that only you will know you have provided. You can choose the name of your first primary school, the name of your first pet or the name of the street where you grew up. You must be registered for telephone dictation by 7pm, Thursday 15 October - two days before the close of voting.

You can vote by telephone dictation from Wednesday 30 September. To vote, call 0800 028 028 and select option 2 weekdays from 9am to 5pm until Friday 9 October. From Monday 12 October you can call from 9am to 7pm. Your last chance to vote is on Election Day, Saturday 17 October from 9am to 7pm.

When you phone to vote, the electoral official will ask for your registration number and the answer to your secret question. Do not give your name to the electoral official – they won't know your identity and your vote is secret.

The official will then read out a list of political parties and the names of candidates standing in your electorate.

They will mark your voting paper according to your instruction. They will then read out the referendum questions on whether the End of Life Choice Act 2019 should come into force and whether the recreational use of cannabis should become legal. The official will mark your referendum voting paper according to your instructions.

A second electoral official will confirm that the voting papers have been marked according to your instructions.

**Voting with help from a support person:** If you'd prefer, you can vote at a voting place from Saturday 3 October until 7pm on Election Day, Saturday 17 October. If you need help to read or mark your voting papers, a friend, family member or electoral official can be your support person. Your support person can:

- go behind the voting screen with you;
- read out the words and information on your voting papers;
- mark the voting papers for you if you ask them.

Your support person can't tell you who you should vote for in the general election, or how you should vote in the referendums.

For more information about enrolling and voting in the general election and referendums you can:

- visit [vote.nz](http://vote.nz);
- phone 0800 36 76 56;
- email [enquiries@elections.govt.nz](mailto:enquiries@elections.govt.nz); or
- phone Blind Low Vision NZ's Telephone Information Service.

**Note:** Blind Citizens NZ's work with the Electoral Commission and Ministry of Justice involves the provision of advice for the requirement of relevant information in braille, audio, large print and electronically, for the General Election and Referendum.



## **One Year into the Transformation of Blind Low Vision NZ From John Mulka, Chief Executive, Blind Low Vision NZ**

### **Regional Service Delivery Model**

One year ago as I commenced the role of Chief Executive, it was very evident that we required a significant refresh of the service delivery model. This new approach was to be built on the premise of positioning the client at the centre of our work. At that particular time the reality was unacceptable service wait times and untenable costs to serve those clients, along with a lack of synergies in the client journey which was negatively impacting the customer experience.

The objectives of the refresh were to achieve quantifiable and sustainable improvements in the delivery of services to our clients, in a cost efficient, effective and timely manner to meet or exceed international best practice levels.

We adopted a quadruple aim approach in which as a service organisation we simultaneously pursued four dimensions of performance:

1. Improve the experience;
2. Improve the impact via measurable outcomes;
3. Reduce the costs of service;
4. Improve not only the client but also staff satisfaction.

We determined the best way to deliver on this was through a regionalised service delivery model. Our specialist services – FLVA, ADL, O&M, ACATS, CLE, Deafblind, Counselling, Children's services and employment would be provided within defined geographic regions, and oversight would also occur via geography based Managers responsible for all aspects of the business.

The transformation to a regional model was to deliver upon the following:

1. An effective, open and transparent leadership representation for service delivery.
2. Clear reporting lines and a supportive management structure at a localised level allowing for accountability of productive outputs and client outcomes.
3. Productivity will be front and centre for service delivery operations with the utmost importance upon the quality performance.
4. The ability to fully leverage the digital transformation.

As we reflect upon the past year I am pleased to share some highlights that further supports the move to a regional model but most importantly its positive alignment to the previously mentioned principles:

- 80% of our workforce are now engaged in roles that provide direct service support of our clients on a daily basis – this is a relevant fact given we are a service organisation.  
This also corresponds to us aligning our staffing structure to reflect less management and more emphasis upon service and the client experience.
- We delivered services to over 12,000 clients recording 58,000 hours of client related service time, completing 17,500 service appointments. The service delivery teams recorded 10,000 hours of client related travel.
- We averaged 2,350 unique library users per month with average monthly website visits over 17,000. The contact centre team resolved 74% of all inbound calls on the first call.
- 1600 new clients joined us.
- One year ago 60% of our clients were waiting more than one month to receive service. Throughout the year this number declined to a low of 17% considering our established target was under 35%, which is an excellent result.

- One year ago in excess of 1,200 clients were in the service queue, presently we are 60% less in that regard.
- Voice of the client seeks feedback in relation to three steps in the client journey – registration, the PSP experience and overall satisfaction with service, with the most recent calculation at 97% satisfaction.
- One of the key objectives for our operational refresh was to achieve a 30% reduction in our cost of service – this we have achieved with a 34% reduction.
- We have introduced a balanced scorecard, which provides a single measure outcome for overall organisation performance across all our KPIs, condensing the results into four perspectives – operations, clients, finance and staff. We then assign a weighting to each perspective reflecting importance to the organization and then derive the overall performance score. Against our optimal performance targets for the past year, we scored 73% - which equates to a solid B grade.

The first year assessment of the regional model considering organisational performance is very encouraging with some further work to be done.

## **Parnell Site Development – New Office for Blind Low Vision NZ**

The RNZFB is very fortunate to own land in Parnell, central Auckland. Acquired some 130 years ago, during the late 1800s the location has been synonymous with the work of the organisation over many years. Having long since moved away from institutional guardianship, sheltered workshops and hostel accommodation, the RNZFB has been successful in putting that land to better use by professionalising our property portfolio. Today, thanks to that prudent management, our Parnell property has grown to become a unique cluster of academic, medical, retail and community facilities which in turn provides on average 10 - 15 per cent of Blind Low Vision NZ annual income.

The RNZFB Board strongly believes charities must operate like businesses, with a solid plan and firm budget, including diversifying our income streams that maximise the returns from the assets we own. Given the significance of the Parnell precinct and its value, the RNZFB and Generus Living Group have formed a joint venture to build a premium living environment for seniors within the precinct in Parnell.

Through this union of commercial and charitable interests, the RNZFB will have sustainable income to fund a larger portion of the needs of current and future clients. It also gives the residents of Parnell and neighbouring suburbs access to a local premium retirement village, which is the first of its kind in New Zealand.

The most exciting part of the joint venture includes the construction of a purpose built office for Blind Low Vision NZ which means we will retain operations on the Parnell site.

The state of the art building design will include many amenities and features conducive to usage by the Blind and Low Vision community. Construction on the project is to commence in early 2021 with a forecasted completion in late 2022. As we get closer to the project completion date we will be providing pertinent updates to the building design and the positive impact for clients.

## **Blind Citizens NZ 2020 Annual General Meeting**

If you are thinking about attending our one-day AGM on Saturday 10 October 2020, then now is the time to register.

Bearing in mind the challenges we are all facing as we unite and work our way through COVID-19, attendance can happen one of two ways. In person, or virtually by Zoom. Zoom provides the option of joining using a video link, or by phone. On this occasion, the connections will be with individuals attending.

The physical venue is the Brentwood Hotel, Kilbirnie, Wellington. If you plan to attend in person, please be assured the hotel's meeting facilities ensure there is plenty of room for physical distancing to happen.

For registration details, contact our National Office, or visit our website (information at the end of this Focus issue). There are a range of options available to choose from.

An important piece of information to share relates to the launch of Blind Citizens NZ 75 Year History. After receiving advice from Greg Newbold (author), the Board has altered its approach as to when this will happen. His advice is this should be launched as originally planned. Not delayed until next October. For this reason, Blind Citizens NZ's 75 year history will be launched during the AGM on 10 October. All going well Greg Newbold will be attending in person. Updates about the availability of the publication in the full range of blindness alternate formats, cost to purchase etc., will be provided once these details are finalised.

The presentation of awards will also happen at the AGM. For example the John McDonald Trophy will be presented, along with any other awards the Board may determine.

### **Focus Editor – Call for Expressions of Interest**

The Board annually, reviews all representative appointments and from time to time, makes a decision to call for expressions of interest to open up opportunities, as a matter of course. When this happens, unless the incumbent has stated they do not wish to continue, they can reapply. Allan Jones has held the role of Focus Editor since December 2017 – he advised the Board he is happy to continue for the immediate future, encouraging the position to be publicised during 2020. This is the second of two calls for expressions of interest in the Focus Editor position.

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

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

The Board has previously considered how Focus presents to members, individuals and entities who like to remain abreast of Blind Citizens NZ's work. Mindful the presentation of Focus is largely unchanged since early 2000, the Board promotes the opportunity for the Focus Editor to influence change.

Expressions of interest from amongst financial members of Blind Citizens NZ for this position are called for. Should further information be required, applicants should contact National Office for full details of the position. Expressions of interest close at 4pm, Monday 2 November 2020. The Board will consider all expressions of interest at its meeting the weekend of 20-22 November 2020.

**Expressions of Interest – Blind Citizens NZ  
Representative to the Blind and Low Vision Education  
Network NZ Board of Trustees**

Blind Citizens NZ is calling for expressions of interest to fill the position it holds on the Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ) Board of Trustees. Ms Wendy Chiang has held this position for a full term of office (three years). Ms Chiang has advised that while she is passionate about education and making a positive difference, her personal educational commitments for the immediate future, means she will not be seeking reappointment. Here now, is information about this representative position...

BLENNZ is a special character school, providing education services to blind and low vision learners (including those who are deafblind, or have additional special needs) from birth (or diagnosis) to age 21. Centred at its residential campus at Homai, through its Visual Resource Centres and mainstream schools attended by blind and low vision learners BLENNZ provides services throughout the country. If you are keen to commit to a three-year appointment and meet the following expectations, the Board is keen to hear from you.

You will be eligible for consideration provided you:

- have experienced the education system as a blind person at primary and/or secondary level;
- understand the implications of special education as it relates to the core curriculum;
- identify with the needs of a wide range of students who are at different points in the schooling process; and
- can demonstrate familiarity with Blind Citizens NZ's position on life-long education.

Having read the requirements of this representative position, if you believe you meet them, and above all, that you are passionate about making sure blind and low vision students get the best education they can, then please consider putting your name forward for this role. Additionally you are encouraged to request information about the duties and responsibilities required of Blind Citizens NZ's representative from National Office.

We need to receive expressions of interest by **4pm, Monday 9 November 2020**. You can submit an expression of interest via any of the following options:

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

## **Blind Citizens NZ - World Blind Union Representative Call for Applications**

The term of office for the current WBU Representative position concludes at the end of Blind Citizens NZ's 2020 Annual General Meeting. Although discussions are happening with blindness organisations with respect to country representation, Blind Citizens NZ is in the position of needing to carry out for the first time, its process to fill the WBU representative position it currently holds. Until October 2019, this was an elected position. In accordance with the Constitution, the position is appointed by the Board of Blind Citizens NZ. This is the second notice publicising this position. Once the Board makes its appointment, and if the person is not already on the Board as an elected member in their own right, the Board then co-opts them. Rule 6.3 "Co-opting Additional Board Members", is where you will find information about this constitutional provision.

Anyone interested in applying for the position as Blind Citizens NZ's WBU Representative, should request in the first instance, the position description. This sets out skills, requirements and attributes the Board believes necessary for the person in this role. Applicants should be certain to refer to these. Due to the later than planned distribution of the September Focus issue, the closing date for applications is extended.

Please note that applications close at Blind Citizens NZ's National Office close 4pm Wednesday 30 September 2020. Interviews will happen during October (date yet to be set), following Blind Citizens NZ's AGM.



## **Update - Blind Citizens NZ Member-at-Large Election**

### **Rose Wilkinson, Returning Officer**

Positions for election this year are for two Members-at-Large. When nominations closed at 4pm, Thursday 20 August, four nominations were received. An election is now underway.

Ordinary Members (those recorded as financial on the National Office database at 4pm, 20 August) are eligible to vote.

Ballot material has been distributed – this includes information about each of the four candidates, and how to cast your vote. All voting options close at 4pm, Tuesday 29 September, i.e., mail and TIS.

Members casting your vote by paper ballot or braille voting-cards are encouraged to post these as soon as possible, thereby ensuring your vote arrives before voting closes.

## **Cyril White Memorial Fund**

### **Closing Date for Applications – 1 October 2020**

The Cyril White Memorial Fund facilitates funding opportunities that encourage and cultivate leadership skills and qualities among blind, and vision impaired people. Blind Citizens NZ, together with Blind Low Vision NZ, are responsible for publicising these opportunities.

The next round for applications closes 4pm, 1 October 2020.

To provide some context about the fund, Cyril White was a pioneer in the blindness advocacy movement. His passion and legacy led to the establishment of the Cyril White Memorial Fund following his death in 1984.

Eligibility of applicants is primarily for those people who meet the requirements for full registration with Blind Low Vision NZ. In addition, projects that are likely to be of direct benefit or interest to blind and vision-impaired people are eligible for consideration.

If you have a project or activity and want to find out whether this meets the fund criteria, don't hesitate to contact us for full details. Then if you do submit your application, you can be confident you have ticked all the required boxes. Most of all, that eligibility criteria is met.

Applications to the Cyril White Memorial Fund must be received by 4pm, Thursday 1 October 2020. These should be for the attention of: Cyril White Fund, C/ Blind Citizens NZ, PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242. Alternatively, by email to [admin@abcnz.org.nz](mailto:admin@abcnz.org.nz) including in the subject line, Cyril White Fund application.

### **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 i.e. our advocacy, promotional campaigns, and communication and community education. Making Blind Citizens NZ 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, deafblind, low vision, and vision impaired people. 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](mailto:bequest-info-blindcitizensnz@groups.io)

## **COVID-19: Getting the right information matters**

Sometimes information is deliberately published to misinform or deceive people. When it has been published this way, it is sometimes known as fake news, misinformation or conspiracy theory.

Misinformation works against us at a time when we need to work together to beat the virus. It can spread fear or confusion or stop people from doing the right thing.

We can't prevent misinformation, but we can help each other recognise it. It often:

- comes from someone who is unnamed;
- claims to have information from inside government agencies but doesn't identify the source;
- claims to be sharing information that's been hidden from the public or that officials don't want you to know;
- nearly always claims the 'real story' is worse than official information.

In a time like this:

- be careful what information you pay attention to;
- check the quality of information before passing it onto others.

You can get trustworthy information from the 1pm daily briefings and government websites or social media channels.

Help understanding and identifying fake news is [available here](#) or this link <https://www.netsafe.org.nz/yournewsbulletin/>

## Some Work and Income Processes are Restarting

We stopped doing some reviews earlier this year because of COVID-19. We're re-starting Temporary Additional Support, Special Benefit reviews and Child Disability Allowance reviews.

If you get one of these payments, we'll write to you when it's time for your review.

If you get a letter from us, it's important you complete the review, so it doesn't affect your payments.

## Winter Energy Payment

People on a benefit or NZ Super get extra money from 1 May to 1 October each year. This is called the Winter Energy Payment. It stops in October. Talk with us if you're concerned about meeting your costs.

## Contact Work and Income

If you need support from Work and Income you can:

- call us on this number: **0800 559 009**
- use **MyMSD** (<https://my.msd.govt.nz/>).

There are ways to contact us if you:

- are Deaf;
- have a hearing impairment;
- find it hard to communicate over the phone.

Here are the options to contact us:

- Deaf Link free-fax: **0800 621 621**
- Text: **029 286 7170**
- Email: **MSD\_Deaf\_Services@msd.govt.nz**

## Membership Join / Renewal Form, 30 June 2021

Membership renewal falls due 1 July annually. Return your completed membership renewal form along with your subscription to our National Office (or hand to your local Branch Treasurer). You can post your membership renewal along with your subscription to National Office, PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242. Cheques should be made payable to Blind Citizens NZ.

If you prefer to renew your membership using internet banking, Blind Citizens NZ account details are: 06-0230-0002634-00. Please include your name and the reference "MembSub". Ideally, let National Office know you have renewed your membership using online banking.

Queries by phone to 04-389-0033 / 0800-222-694; or email [admin@abcnz.org.nz](mailto:admin@abcnz.org.nz)

**Full Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**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.**

## Blind Citizens NZ – Board and National Office

### Board

- **National President:** Jonathan Godfrey: [a.j.godfrey@massey.ac.nz](mailto:a.j.godfrey@massey.ac.nz)
- **Vice President:** Martine Abel-Williamson (Member-at-Large): [martine.the1@xtra.co.nz](mailto:martine.the1@xtra.co.nz)
- David (Dave) Allen: [dave.blindsight@gmail.com](mailto:dave.blindsight@gmail.com)
- Wendy Chiang: [wendy.chiang@gmail.com](mailto:wendy.chiang@gmail.com)
- Andrea Courtney (Member-at-Large): [andycoute@gmail.com](mailto:andycoute@gmail.com)
- Christine (Chrissy) Fern: [fernmeek@gmail.com](mailto:fernmeek@gmail.com)
- Carl Halliburton: [carl.j.halliburton@gmail.com](mailto:carl.j.halliburton@gmail.com)
- Shaun Johnson (Member-at-Large): [shaun.zdots@xtra.co.nz](mailto:shaun.zdots@xtra.co.nz)
- Paula Waby (World Blind Union Representative): [paula.waby4@gmail.com](mailto:paula.waby4@gmail.com)

### Focus Editor, Allan Jones

**Email** articles to: [focus@abcnz.org.nz](mailto:focus@abcnz.org.nz)

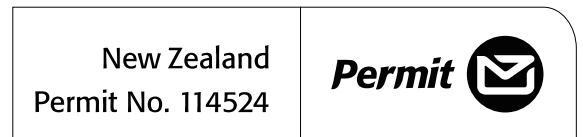
**Post:** PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242

### National Office

- **Physical:** Ground Floor, 113 Adelaide Road, Newtown, Wellington.
- **Postal:** PO Box 7144, Newtown, Wellington 6242.
- **Phone:** 04 389 0033; 0800 222 694.
- **Fax:** 04 389 0030.
- **Website:** <http://www.blindcitizensnz.org.nz>
- **Facebook Page:** <https://www.facebook.com/BlindCitizensNZ/>
- **Email:** [admin@abcnz.org.nz](mailto:admin@abcnz.org.nz)
- **Chief Executive, Rose Wilkinson:** [rwilkinson@abcnz.org.nz](mailto:rwilkinson@abcnz.org.nz)

**Blind Citizens NZ is appreciative of donations received from our members and supporters, and for funding from Blind Low Vision NZ, 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.



**Focus, Volume 56 No 3 – September 2020**