**Chief Executive’s Report**

**Date: May – June 2016**

Hello everyone this is Sandra Budd, Chief Executive, with highlights from my Board Report following the May – June Board meeting.

In the final months of the first year of the new Strategic Plan a considerable amount of feasibility and investigation has come together that will position us well to progress into the second year of the plan.

The budget that aligns to the strategic initiatives to move forward into the second year of the plan was approved by the Board.

The organisation modelling review to assess our state of readiness to achieve the new plan and adapt to our changing environment has identified to be successful we need to open up the Blind Foundation, collaborate and leverage skills, gain competencies and new ideas from outside the organisation, as well as within.

A review of our approach to Quality, Continuous Improvement, and Innovation has provided a roadmap with next steps. The work strongly aligns to the outcomes of the organisational modelling review and is assisting our Business Transformation Focus.

Dr Keith’s Gordon’s in-residence visit during this period has escalated our research program and cross sector eye health collaboration and leadership. The highlights of his visit were hosting the first “Why Accessibility Matters” Research Symposium and “Eye Health Conversation to Creating an Effective Eye Health and Vision care Sector Voice” - the later hosted conjointly with Auckland University.

Work continues on quantitative and qualitative research to gain better understanding of service segmentation options.

It is now my pleasure to report to you on progress over the past 2 months of our business plan initiatives.

# Priority 1: Independent Living

I am pleased to report after 11 months of this financial year we delivered services to 4,795 individual clients. This amounts to each client receiving on average 11.9 hours of direct contact from client services year to date.

## Project with Parents of Visually Impaired Children (PVI) to establish a transition programme for school leavers.

Commencing in Wanganui in July together with PVI we will be undertaking workshops seeking parents and youth views on the best way to develop a community transition programme for school leavers. This project will run over an extended period of time around the country.

Additionally we have agreed to work on a common data base analysis to enable us to extend our reach to families who may not be aware of the benefits of the PVI relationship and Foundation services.

## Youth Engagement Strategy (YES)

Significant progress has been made in the past two months with the Working Group completing a phone survey and two focus groups to provide data to base the strategy. The youth members of the Working Group conducted the phone surveys, with the focus groups conducted by the adult members of the Group. The data has been interpreted and a draft strategy developed that is currently being reviewed by the Working Group.

## Community, Volunteer and Recreation (CVR) update

* A pilot peer support / mentoring programme was launched in Christchurch. Training for eight client/member mentors was completed, and shortly they will be matched with mentees.
* A nationwide network of telephone trees is progressing and will be expanded.
* Discussions continue with the Telefriend team to extend the programme to increase uptake without overloading the current volunteers.
* We celebrated our volunteers during National Volunteer Week (19 – 25 June) through a variety of activities acknowledging the valuable role they play. Some key activities included - volunteer thank you events held around the country, ads and articles in various local newspapers, the e-newsletter featured volunteers, and we posted our thanks to volunteers on Facebook.
* A new activity being planned is a seven day relay challenge around the country as a lead in to Blind Week. This aims to showcase how blind people can live life without limits. It will involve a small number of clients completing physically demanding outdoor activities on concurrent days, travelling through a part of the country as they do. Opportunities for volunteer and wider community involvement are currently being scoped.

## Increased counselling resource

Newly allocated counselling hours are being deployed in areas that indicate increased demand with the initial focus being Waikato, Wellington and Kapiti region. The direct benefit for clients is improved access to counsellors at the early stages of vision loss and when personal circumstances change.

## Booklink update

Downloads of talking books from the BookLink app continues to increase with over 1300 books being downloaded each month from the app. Figures show that as people become more familiar with the app they are continuing to increase the number of items they are accessing each month. The app was also added to the Apple app store in April.

A starter pack has also been developed for new users which can be provided in their preferred format. Training and information sessions were held in eight locations around the country with a total of 96 people attending. Three clients also received training via the telephone. A network of volunteers in Auckland has been set up which includes a coordinator who will manage this group and they have received training in BookLink.

Auckland Libraries have committed to delivering accessibility training on i-phone devices as part of their ongoing staff training programme. They have received focused training on sighted guiding, NVDA screen reader software, and the BookLink app. Feedback has been very positive and more training sessions are underway.

Libraries in Hamilton, Tauranga, New Plymouth, Palmerston North, Hutt City, Nelson, Dunedin and Christchurch are providing access to BookLink and support for clients within local communities. Tauranga and Palmerston North hosted client awareness sessions.

## Blind Foundation new website

The response to the redeveloped website has been positive. Work continues on building the content and introducing new functionality that aim to increase the site’s relevance amongst all audiences.

# Priority 2: Access for all

## Accessibility Legislation Feasibility Study

This study reports on research into the effect of legislation on disability rights and accessibility, and the feasibility of seeking changes to New Zealand's legislation. It recommends five options for legislative change from expanding the evidence base to establishing a coalition and preparing a detailed proposal of the legislative changes.

## RNZFB Revised Position Statements

The Position Statements are now published on the website and also can be found at tinyurl.com/gp4sgqx

## Advocacy Plan 2016-18

The Board received an update on this plan which is being used to inform our conversations with Disabled People’s Organisations, Disability Service providers and other potential allies on progressing the Access for All and Reach More People priorities.

## Marrakesh Treaty

20 countries have now ratified the treaty triggering activation of the Treaty which makes it even more important that New Zealand ratifies the Treaty to open the doors to more content for print disabled people. The New Zealand’s Ministry of Business Innovation & Enterprise (MBIE) has now published the submissions to its consultation document on whether to ratify the treaty. There was overwhelming support for the MBIE’s (and our) preferred option for implementation. MBIE, will now put this to Cabinet for approval. We continue to work with MBIE to progress ratification by New Zealand.

## Support to Department of Internal Affairs to implement online elections.

We completed an audit for Electoral Services and continue to engage with them on the accessibility of their web portal. While it won’t be used for these local body elections our understanding is that it will be used for a number of other elections in the community. It is also gratifying to note a number of Department of Internal Affairs projects are now in the pipeline for web accessibility checks against the NZ Government Web Accessibility Standards.

## Youth International Development Programme launched

The aim of the programme is to provide youth, aged between 17-25, who have shown that they are have the potential to be future leaders, with the tools to become true leaders of their community. Four young people have been selected for this inaugural programme which includes 7 days at the CNIB’s Camp Joe in July, preceded by a planning day and followed by a number of commitments including leading community projects and presenting to the Board.

## Transforming Braille

The Transforming Braille Group Board met in May and a new Board was elected. The American Printing House’s, Larry Skutchan, was elected as Chair which is particularly appropriate as he has led the day-to-day relationship with Orbit Technology, the device manufacturer. Neil Jarvis, the Foundation’s representative was elected as Secretary. Orbit will begin production of the device in the next few weeks, with an expected delivery time-table starting in October.

## Our work with public libraries to promote access to print disability collections

It is encouraging to report the current library and information climate is focused on inclusiveness and a national approach. This should lead to significant benefits for our clients in the near future. We participate in a LIANZA working group that is looking at the creation of a ‘One Library’ system across New Zealand. Our participation is helping create awareness of the concept of a National Print Disability collection.

## Bookshare update

A promotional campaign has been underway since the end of 2015. Current DAISY player users have had the option of returning their player in exchange for 5 years Bookshare membership. We have also offered to pay for the first year of membership for any client who wants to join Bookshare. Uptake has been slow, with around 15 clients taking advantage of this offer.

## Round Table on Information Access

This Trans-Tasman conference was very successful with a strong New Zealand representation and Neil Jarvis was re-elected as President for a further two years. Discussions included:

* How the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will be affecting print disabled people in Australia.
* Issues around copyright and electronic publishing.
* How many people in the sector are innovating when it comes to the design of or use of apps, software programmes and other equipment.
* How technology can assist, and takes into account the needs of print disabled people in marginalised communities.
* How students in higher education are missing out, and ways of making documents and websites more accessible.

## WBU AP Region Board & Policy Council (BPC) in Manilla 2-3 May.

Neil Jarvis represents the Blind Foundation and Chairs the regional Technology Committee. He presented two reports: on the work of the Asia-Pacific regional Technology Committee and on the progress of our regional campaign to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty. There were other discussions on employment, regional capacity building projects, the first six months of the region’s part-time Editor and laid down a series of next steps.

Maria Stevens, a Blind Foundation staff member and client, has also been appointed as ICEB Vice Chairperson for a further 4 year term.

## Community Advocacy Programme

20 people from a range of backgrounds involved in the blindness community signed up for the inaugural Advocacy Training Workshop that was held on the 8th and 9th July at our Parnell site. Co facilitated by Anita Tang from Australia and “That Blind Woman” Julie Woods; it was a highly successful event. Simon O’Connor, MP for Tamaki and Chair of the Health Select Committee was an excellent lunchtime speaker on ‘A day in the life of an MP’. 5 participant evaluators from the RNZFB Board, Blind Citizens NZ, PVI and Be.Accessible attended and are assisting us to continue to improve this programme for the future.

## Sky TV and accessibility issues

In 2015 Sky TV rolled out a major update to its firmware used on its MySky boxes. The result was a much poorer experience for many people, including low vision users. Complaints dominated social media for a few weeks which resulted in two upgrades which solved only some of the problems.

We have attempted to work with Sky TV with no success. A set of technical guidelines which Sky and other broadcasters and equipment manufacturers could use have been produced by the Foundation, and our aim is to get them take on the recommendations in those guidelines. Meanwhile, one of our clients has taken a complaint to the Human Rights Commission. While the Foundation cannot get involved in any legal action, we have indicated we will act as expert witnesses in the event we are called.

## Youth Parliament 2016– Accessible Web Pages and Mobile Apps Mock Bill

This event is being held on the 19/20 July in Parliament. Our work behind the scenes with the Ministry of Youth Development resulted in the mock Accessible Web Pages and Apps Bill being chosen as the main subject of debate. Britnee Tapara, one of our clients and a Youth MP will make her maiden speech on the mock bill.

We have prepared a Youth Parliament plan to maximize the promotion for the Blind Foundation from the event as it is expected the Youth Parliament will increase public interest in this issue.

A client and former Youth MP, Ezekiel Robson, is liaising with the Youth MPs speaking on the mock bill and the 17 Youth Press Gallery members. He will assist them to connect with the Blind Foundation’s Youth Engagement Strategy Group who will provide insights from their experience. He has also met with the Youth Parliament project manager, to identify how he can assist them to support the Youth MP’s.

Discussions are underway to see whether it is feasible to ask Government MPs to adapt the mock bill and make it a Government Bill.

## Submissions April - June

Four submissions were provided to central government. These were:

* Public Solicitations Act proposal.
* Social Security Rewrite Bill.
* Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind Act Repeal Bill.
* Review of the New Zealand Disability Strategy.

## Low Vision Reference Group

The work of the MOH Low Vision reference group is completed and the draft strategic paper is being considered by the reference group. The BF offered feedback on this paper highlighting areas of deficit in the final document.

The prevalence data was presented to this group in May by the principle researcher; however the results are unable to be referenced until publication has been achieved.

The emerging themes indicate that there is an acceptance that there is inadequate availability of low vision services, and access is poor. Importantly there is also the recognition that the functional impact of vision loss is significant and that this should be factored into the assessment process for clients.

Occupational therapy qualifications are emerging as the preferred base qualification for delivery of low vision therapies with partnership of optometry.

The preferred venue for service provision supports a community setting but also refers to those DHB clinics that offer valuable low vision clinics.

The final report indicates we should not have any expectations that this group will have influenced policy and funding. Whilst this may not be the desired outcome, it is important that our mission to reach more people and engage with this sector continues.

# Priority 3: Reach more people

## Segmentation Project Update

To better understand the needs of current and future clients we are looking at how we might segment our services. Segmentation is the process of identifying and targeting groups of individuals who are similar to one another, but different to other groups.

**Data segmentation** of the current client base to understand any patterns and opportunities for the future has been completed to identify approaches to client segmentation. This approach will help us understand trends and emerging needs and enable us to update service offering and remain relevant to a broad range of clients.

Complementing this work is **qualitative research** to understand the wants, needs, and potential opportunities for specific groups of interest to the organisation. These groups are identified as:

* People who are currently members of the Blind Foundation
* People who meet the current criteria for membership but are not members
* People who are just outside the criteria for membership (low vision)
* Referrers

We expect to receive a presentation on the initial findings within the next 2-3 weeks.

## Raising Awareness of the Blind Foundation

There has been a lot of activity in this area in recent months which include:

* **Our Media presence** in April and May saw more than 160 articles specifically mentioning the Blind Foundation on TV, radio, print media. This is unpaid media and the $ value of this if we paid for it would be approximately $5,695,000.
* Across Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn 253,958 impressions occurred during April and May.
* On 21 June we held an **awareness and information day in Wairoa** in conjunction with Age Concern, PVI and BLENNZ. Over 100 people attended were all very positive about the event. It was a great opportunity to raise awareness about the breadth of services we provide. Encouragingly two new referrals occurred on the day. This type of pop-up event developed with the community proved very successful and the potential for future events is being scoped
* Teresa Bradfield was interviewed in the Optics Magazine on the NZQA Diploma. This magazine reaches 600 optometrists who now know more about the Blind Foundation and the invitation to refer was clearly articulated.

## Prevalence Study

The prevalence data suggests that there could be a significant group of people experiencing moderate to severe low vision that we do not connect with. They meet our criteria for accessing registration and services and if referred would be accepted. We aim to understand more about this sector of our community and we are engaging

The outcomes of the study were presented at RANZCOs Scientific Meeting in Dunedin by Dr Simon Thornley and Dr Keith Gordon on May 26th.

## Responding to the needs of people with low vision

We continue to develop the Diploma in Sensory Vision Rehabilitation as a “Low Vision Therapy” strand. We have established support from Otago University and are delighted that we can work together on this important development. Enrolments in this diploma will commence in 2017.

We have appointed our first sole Orthoptist. This role is to providing a differently focussed service from rehabilitation that encourages sight enhancement as opposed to sight substitution. The positive aspect of this appointment is that our current client base will benefit as many are in the spectrum of low vision and require careful work on viewing techniques.

Approved 200 new extraordinary registrations by performing many more functional assessments as eye acuity is generally a poor measure when related to the impact vision loss has upon a person. By using this internationally validated functional assessment tool we have been able to reach 20 % more people in the past 10 months and every one of them will have benefited from services previously unavailable to them.

## Online Strategy

The client online engagement strategy is almost complete and the Board received a presentation on the work to date.

## Research Strategy update.

Dr Keith Gordon completed his third highly productive residency with us in May/June helping us progress key relationships with key people in the eye health and academic worlds. Key outcomes were:

* Moderated the research presentations at our first Why Accessibility Matters Research Forum including the presentation of findings from the Feasibility Study on Accessibility Legislation.
* Advised on the second stage of the Accessibility Legislation project.
* Contributed to communications and leveraging of what the Prevalence Study into Blindness and Low Vision means for New Zealand.
* Explored collaborative research projects with the University of Auckland Optometry and Ophthalmology Departments.
* Met with Professor Gordon Sanderson and Professor Barry Taylor, Dean of Medicine at Dunedin campus of University of Otago.
* Advised on an eye health education month, eye health surveillance programmes, the retinal eye camera and other devices to support people who are blind or have low vision.
* Provided advice at the University of Auckland and Blind Foundation co-hosted meeting on 14 June with a group of eye health professionals on how to progress eye health and vision care in New Zealand.

# Priority 4: Building the Foundation for the future

## Quality, Continuous Improvement, and Innovation framework

A briefing paper was provided to the Board on the outcomes of the review which incorporated a framework and future priorities in this area. Recommendations include:

* Establishing Cross Functional Performance Measures and Reporting
* Sharing where innovation and learning can thrive
* Implementing Innovation and Improvement Structures
* Updating Quality Framework and Approach
* Connecting with external innovation
* Aligning culture goals to innovation and improvement

## Growing financial sustainability

**Red Puppy Appeal 2016** exceeded the $700,000 campaign target raising $905,000 already generated. The official campaign closes mid-July due to the long tail experienced with postal donations. Campaign highlights centre on a successful street collection with record numbers of collectors taking to the streets and raising $340,000. Direct marketing acquisition has had extra-ordinary response rates as well as existing supporters getting behind the campaign.

**Red Puppy Sponsorship** is performing significantly ahead of plan. Regular giving growth is forecast to over deliver on its year-end budget by $900,000+. We have recruited 8,000+ new donors year-to-date.

**Individual giving programme** came in over budget at $2.1m.

**Dogs Unite**, supporting guide dogs, a new signature event ran on 17 April in the Museum Domain, Parnell. It was well attended by registered pet pooches and their owners, with corporate partner Hills Pet Nutrition generously sponsoring the event. $10,000 was raised which exceeded the budget set for this start-up event.

Legacy performance remains significantly ahead of budget year-to-date.

**Foundation Properties Ltd** has achieved strong increases in rent reviews throughout the year. This has resulted in an approximately 20% increase in the year end valuation of the site. It also will enable FPL to increase their distribution to the BF from $3m in FY16 to $3.5m in FY17.

**Financial investments** continue to outperform benefiting from a buoyant stock-market and prudent management by our investment managers.

It is encouraging to report that **additional funds were received from the MoE** towards Accessible Formats Production for the third consecutive year.

## Property Plan

Initial thinking on a long term property plan for all of Blind Foundation's current and future property needs is being developed and was presented to the Board. Based on their feedback a further report will be provided in September

## Engagement and Partnering

The first leg of the **Engagement Roadshow** is complete. Overall there was a good turnout at each event. For the first time, an event was held on the Kapiti Coast where the turnout was excellent and received very favourable feedback on the day. The total Roadshow attendees were 209 for this first leg of the roadshows

The post-event survey indicated 93% found the discussions useful and 98% indicated they had an opportunity to voice their opinion.

## Why Accessibility Matters Research Forum 2016 – June 9

Fifty-one participants from government, business, consumer groups and service providers attended the forum. These included New Zealand Statistics, the Office of Disability Issues, Auckland and Hamilton Councils and Auckland Regional Public Health attended.

We launched the results of the AUT New Zealand Work Research Institute’s study we commissioned on Disability, education and the labour market: a longitudinal portrait.

CCS Disability Action presented their work on creating more inclusive transport system through developing a new evidence base.

Be. Accessible introduced us to the concepts of the Access Citizen, the Access Economy and the Yellow Dollar. They proposed the possibility of establishing a virtual centre of excellence to increase collaboration on accessibility research across a wide range of disciplines. The key outcomes from the day were:

* Agreement on priority topics for accessibility research to fill the data and evidence gap.
* Recognition that evidence based advocacy can work alongside human rights advocacy.
* Understanding that evidence combined with people power will be important in building the case for legislative change.
* The importance of collaboration and building a collective sector voice to increase understanding of why accessibility matters.

The University of Auckland will host the first Coalition for Accessibility Research meeting in July to progress areas for future collaboration.

## Eye Health Conversation to Creating an Effective Eye Health and Vision care Sector Voice – Tuesday 14 June

We co-hosted this first Eye Health Conversation with the University of Auckland School of Optometry and Vision Science. Key leaders of the eye health professions came together to explore the common issues facing the eye health and care sector in New Zealand across the full continuum of vision health.

I was delighted with the excellent contributions from the Blind Foundation team to the conversation which covered a broad range of issues from research, teaching, policy priorities, funding, equity of access, public perceptions and understanding through to the points of intervention across the continuum and the need to help patients understand what eye health services available and what they need to know.

Three top priorities were agreed on to discuss in making a case to government for priority attention:

* The need for a national eye health campaign
* The importance of mapping the vision health pathway from the patient’s point of view
* The urgent need to set up a National Eye Health Registry to capture data consistently to provide evidence to support the case for eye health to be a national health priority.

The conversations will continue to develop a collective sector voice at a Parliamentary Forum on 21 September where we will present the national findings from the Blindness and Low Vision Prevalence study.

We continue to investigate areas of mutual collaboration **Be.Accessible** particularly in relation to Digital accessibility, Employment and Awareness and communications

## Meeting with Australasian CEO of RANZCO – Sydney May 24

This very productive meeting focused on collaboration with RANZCO on the shared vision of the continuum of eye health and building a national eye health strategy for New Zealand. We agreed there is a shared commitment to continue to work together on this agenda.

## Repeal of the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind Act 2002

Rick Hoskin, Neil Jarvis and I attended the oral hearing of the Health Select Committee hearing on the Blind Foundation’s submission to the Repeal Bill on 11 May and received a very supportive response to our submission. The committee used the opportunity to learn more about the RNZFB as there was obvious cross partisan support for the Bill. The third reading of the Repeal Bill is expected to be sometime before 2 September.

Sandra Budd,

**Chief Executive**