# **July Update from the Constitutional Review Committee**

The RNZFB Constitutional Review Committee last met on 14 July. Here are some key points from that meeting.

## **Your Feedback**

We are grateful for the time those submitting so far have taken to give us feedback, whether that be on our work in general, or in response to discussion documents we have published. Every member of the CRC reads every submission. We now have a process in place where Committee members can document the trends and important issues they identify from submissions. Using such an open process involving all Committee members, we’re confident that we’ll not lose track of any issue submitters identify as important.

With feedback now having closed for some of our discussion documents, we have begun considering the issues you have raised. It’s our intention to signal through these bulletins our current views on specific issues as they emerge. Nothing is absolutely final until we make our final report to the Board. Therefore, if you have any concerns about any of these preliminary views, please get in touch with us and have your say.

We have set a target of April 2017 to complete our process of formulating constitutional amendments. We readily acknowledge that this is an ambitious target which may need to be extended.

## **Objects**

In response to submissions expressing concern about the brevity of our proposed revised objects, the CRC has spent time both at recent meetings and between meetings revisiting the objects. Our aim is to ensure that nothing of significance is lost, while making the objects clearer.

Here is the objects we’ve agreed on as a result of this process.

**3.0 Objects**

The objects of the Foundation are the following exclusively charitable objects as they relate to blind people in New Zealand:

3.1 To promote and provide for the independence, integration, enablement and well-being of blind people.

3.2 To provide, co-ordinate and facilitate the provision of services, programmes and activities in the fields of and in relation to the education, training, rehabilitation, recreation, equalisation of opportunities, enablement, support, assistance and well-being of blind people.

3.3 To promote and encourage:

a) Respect for and observance of the full human and civil rights of blind people by education, publicity and otherwise.

b) the creation of a New Zealand society accessible to and inclusive of blind people so that they are able to live, work, and participate in all aspects of community life as valued and equal citizens.

c) Equal opportunities for blind people, and their ability to enjoy and exercise the same fundamental rights, privileges and responsibilities as all other New Zealanders.

d) A positive attitude towards blindness and low vision, not only amongst the public but also amongst blind people.

e) Programmes that help in raising the awareness, and minimise the incidence, of preventable blindness.

3.4 To encourage and assist:

a) Blind people to achieve personal independence and to realise their full potential in, and for the benefit of, society.

b) Blind people with additional disabilities to live useful and dignified lives according to their personal choice.

3.5 To assist State and civil agencies to fulfil their obligations to blind people as full citizens.

3.6 To consult and co-operate with other persons and organisations concerned with the well-being of blind people, and the prevention, treatment, amelioration or cure of blindness or low vision.

3.7 To give particular recognition to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and their application to the governance and services of the Foundation.

3.8 To do all such other things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of any of the foregoing objects.

## **Accountability**

The CRC continues to work through the balance between holding the Board as an entity accountable for the strategic direction and performance of the organisation, while also giving members sufficient information to cast an informed vote. This includes having sufficient information about candidates who wish to become Board directors, as well as assessing the performance of individual directors seeking re-election.

We will propose updating the Constitution to provide for observers to attend virtually as well as physically.

This could involve streaming meetings over the Internet in a way that allows members to access the proceedings, although specific means of virtual observance are a matter of policy rather than a constitutional issue.

## **Significant draft of the Incorporated Societies Act**

The CRC continues to maintain a close watching brief on the Government’s plan to overhaul the Incorporated Societies Act. While we cannot put our work on hold until the redrafting of the Act is complete, we’re closely monitoring signals indicating the desire for greater transparency and accountability, particularly with respect to independent dispute resolution.

## **Next Meeting**

The Committee will next meet on 11 August.