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

The RNZFB Constitutional Review Committee last met on 11 August. 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 current 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, with a special meeting of members to be held in conjunction with the RNZFB’s Annual General meeting in November 2017. We will continue to consult regularly and widely as our work progresses and aim to include a short consultation period in which the entire revised Constitution will be available for final consultation before the formal amendments are proposed.

We readily acknowledge that this is an ambitious target which may need to be extended.

## **Objects**

In response to our most recent draft of the RNZFB’s objects, some people have expressed concern that our draft does not refer to those with low vision or who are Deafblind. Consistent with our aim to make the Constitution as readable as possible, the CRC intends including a definition of “blind person” in the Constitution which will make it clear that those with low vision and who are Deafblind are included when we use this term. Making this clear in the definitions section makes the document flow better for those reading the Constitution using synthetic speech or audio narration.

## **Complaints and Grievances**

The Government is continuing its work on a substantial revamp of the Incorporated Societies Act. The CRC is watching this process closely. Based on the Government’s work, and to address a deficit in the RNZFB’s present Constitution, the CRC believes that it is important that the Constitution includes a robust, independent complaints and grievance process.

This process is intended to deal with constitutional issues, although inevitably it will need to dovetail with procedures that the organisation has in place for complaints about operational matters.

Work on a draft process is on-going and we intend circulating a discussion document containing a workable process and an explanation about what is being proposed.

## **Membership of the Board**

Following your submissions on our discussion document, the CRC continued to debate issues around membership of the Board and the balance that must be struck between self-determination and ensuring that the Board has the skill-set it needs in order to make quality decisions that are in the best interests of the organisation.

Discussions relating to matters such as the Associate Member’s seat and co-option are on-going.

## **Major Proposals**

Presently, certain changes trigger the major proposals provisions of the Constitution. Such proposals require service recipients who have not opted into membership of the society to be notified, so they can become members and vote on the proposal if they wish.

The Committee is reviewing this clause with a view to seeing if its wording can be simplified, while protecting the goal of providing for wide consultation on significant issues.

The CRC is scheduled to meet next on 15 September.