**RNZFB Chair’s Report June 2017**

Hello All,

Here is my Chair’s report for the months of July and August 2017.

This report provides some detail of the matters that the Board has been involved with over the last two months. It also contains information about the items discussed at the recent September Board meeting. As always, I remind people that if you want a full account of what occurred at the Board meeting, then the draft minutes of that meeting held on 2 September will be available through the telephone information service, on library CD, e-mail on request, or by contacting the Board Secretary on 09 355 6894. Please ask for a copy of these minutes and keep up-to-date with the matters that we are looking at on your behalf.

This time the headings are:

1. Engagement Road Show Meetings 2017.
2. New Constitution ready for your vote.
3. From the Full Board Meeting Agenda.
4. The work of the Governance, Policy and Audit Committees.
5. On-line voting created by Member, Daniel Holt.
6. Further update on service locations.
7. Submissions.
8. **Engagement Road Show Meetings 2017**

The engagement road show meetings will have got under way by the time you read this report. They continue throughout September and October, so give the Contact Centre a call on 0800 243333 and ask them where the one closest to you is and come along. The questions we are asking are:

**Question 1**: If the Blind Foundation were to change one thing to improve service what would you suggest this be?

**Question 2**: Do you feel Blind Foundation staff have a good understanding of all the ways you interact with the Blind Foundation?

Tell us why and whether:

A) You would prefer to have one main person to talk to at the Blind Foundation or,

B) You would prefer to liaise directly with a range of people dependent on the enquiry you have or the service you are seeking?

**Question 3**: How’s the Blind Foundation going for you?

At the end of the meeting, there is always time for people to ask questions or give feedback on any topic they choose. Please watch out for a road show event near where you live. We want you to come along and join in and give us hints about what is important to you.

1. **New Constitution ready for your vote**

After two years of consulting and discussion, the new constitution is ready to be put in front of the membership for them to consider. The new version has made it much easier for people to participate in the organisation’s affairs. With self-determination in mind, the Associate Director position has been removed. The review committee hastens to tell Associate Members that apart from having the ability to vote removed, all the other offerings of associate membership remain. Previously there was no avenue for members to bring their complaints or grievances to the Board to be resolved. Now, in line with the legislation that is being proposed for the new Incorporated Societies Act, there is. A detailed Explanatory Report has been written to explain the reasoning behind all the decisions. When consulting with such a diverse group, it can only be expected that some areas will raise contrary views. The review committee has done its best to be accommodating and has explained where it has been impossible to satisfy everyone.

1. **From the Full Board Meeting Agenda**

The Board reviewed the Report against the Business Plan for the year that ended on 30 June 2017 and with the auditor, we went through the Financial Statements for the same period and we are happy to report a very successful year.

The Board received a paper outlining our digital strategy. Currently we use about 17 software packages, have six different customer databases and hardware that is six years old. The strategy outlines how we will update this while at the same time streamlining information to improve the client’s experience.

Another paper informed us as to how we might approach government when negotiating our upcoming contracts for funding our services to our people and to those with low vision that currently have nowhere to go. We are aware that sometime in the future, there is a great possibility that funds may be put in the hands of the client to spend on services at their own discretion. This presents operational and administrative challenges to the Blind Foundation, and the Board wants to look at options as to how we might deal with it.

With all the assets of the Bledisloe Estate Trust having been divested to Foundation Properties Limited and the trust having no further use, the Board resolved to wind up the Trust. The Board has also re-appointed trustees, Ian Redshaw and Greg Thompson, to the Bledisloe Royston Trust and directors Ross Blackmore, Robert Cameron and Greg Thompson to Foundation Properties Limited.

We have approved a set of benchmark standards for our health and safety and expect to be able to do the same for fundraising at our November meeting.

1. **Work of the Governance, Policy and Audit Committees**

The Governance Committee discussed ways to assess or review its own performance. There are three pieces of work involved in this. Firstly, an internal assessment of the whole Board’s performance; secondly, the performance of individual directors and lastly, the external review of how the Board performance is regarded by the groups we are involved with. We are concentrating on the first piece of work first.

The Audit Committee received a quick update on the accounts for the first couple of months of the financial year. We are already in a healthy position and ahead of budget, but of course it is only early days. The Auditors gave us a clean bill of health.

Through the Policy Committee, the Board adopted a new Mandatory Policy on Volunteers.

1. **On-line voting created by member, Daniel Holt**

For some time, the Board has recognised that it would help members if there was an option to vote in the RNZFB elections for board directors on-line through the internet. To this end, one of our members, Daniel Holt, has spent a lot of time setting up a website that is easy for our members to use. It is not necessarily easy to sort it so that it is just right for people who have low vision while at the same time making sure that those who are using speech reading software can use it as well. Congratulations to Daniel. All we need now is for members to register to start using it and then to cast their votes.

**6**  **Further update on service locations**

We are opening our North Shore Office in Albany in October. We are just putting the finishing touches to the reception, office space and meeting rooms now. We have about 1,000 clients in this area and it will take a lot of pressure off people if they don’t have to cross the Auckland Harbour Bridge.

The lay-out in Awhina House has been reconfigured. Fundraising has been moved to a large new open space on the first floor and the services that clients need are now immediately on the right of reception when one comes in the front door. The area to the left of reception is completely revamped as well. It now includes a low vision assessment room, meeting rooms, equipment shop and an additional seating area, which can be used for small informal meetings. We will retain a technology assessment room, which will also be suitable for classroom style training.

We are in the process of looking for space in the Kapiti coast area.

**7. Submissions**

In the period June to August 2017, the Blind Foundation completed five submissions to government and local government agencies. The submissions were:

* Age-related Macular Degeneration Model of Care Assessment and Recommendations (*Ernst and Young Report to Ministry of Health*).
* The Māori Disability Action Plan Draft (*Ministry of Health*).
* New Zealand Health Survey Enquiry (*Ministry of Health*).
* Enquiry into Local Government Election 2016 (*Electoral Commission*).
* Bond St Shared Space (*Christchurch City Council*).

If you would like any further information around these submissions you can contact the Board Secretary on either email jamoore@blindfoundation.org.nz or by phone on 09 355 6894.

That concludes my report for July and August 2017.

Rick Hoskin