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

The RNZFB’s Constitutional Review Committee last met on 20 April. We continue to discuss the feedback we’ve received, and in some cases, make modifications to our original recommendations as a result. This bulletin contains several items of significance.

## **Your Feedback**

The Committee remains grateful to everyone who is engaged with the process. Every submission you send to us via any medium is considered by the full Committee, so you can be assured that the effort you make to participate makes a difference.

As promised, we published an interim report for consultation with a deadline for submissions on this report set for 31 March. You have another opportunity this year to have your say on what we’re proposing and help influence our thinking before we conclude our work.

If you wish to review a draft of the new Constitution, that is now also available.

The CRC will consider all your feedback and may make further changes based on it. We’ll circulate our latest version of the Constitution towards the end of July. Once again, we’ll receive your feedback and may make changes before the final version, on which there will be a binding vote.

We welcome the views of anyone who takes the time to study the draft sections, and we are committed to making further refinements based on your feedback. We also propose holding a telephone conference call at a point where you can still influence our thinking. Participation will be open to anyone who would like to have dialogue with the Committee directly.

We recognise that it can be helpful for members to exchange points of view on a matter like this. To that end, we’re pleased to advise that Blind Citizens New Zealand has agreed to encourage discussion on the Blind Discuss email list it operates. To join, send a blank email to [abcnz-blinddiscuss-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:abcnz-blinddiscuss-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

We’ve also established a forum for open discussion on the Blind Foundation’s Telephone Information Service. You can leave messages at option **3, 1, 5, 3**. These will be played for others to hear on menu option **3, 1, 5, 4**.

## **Proxy Voting**

Following receipt of written and in-person submissions, the CRC once again considered the matter of proxy votes, and what, if any, place they should have in the RNZFB’s Constitution. Related to this question is how members can put forward their own proposals for change, and how any proposals are tested and discussed ahead of a binding vote.

The CRC is committed to promoting processes in the Constitution that are democratic and inclusive. It’s important that everyone who wants a say can have one.

To that end, we have reached the following position on proxy voting and related matters:

* The use of proxies will be removed entirely;
* A group of 30 Members will constitute a quorum at a Meeting of Members;
* The Board must respond to members re a member resolution with details around its acceptance or rejection;
* A change to Rule 3 of the Constitution (which contains the Objects) is to be regarded as a major proposal;
* The number of Directors (excluding co-opted Directors) shall remain at nine;
* A maximum of two co-opted directors will be maintained;
* Constitutional changes will be subject to a postal ballot and approved at a special meeting of members and will be passed by a two-thirds majority;
* The Board may alter the Constitution without the approval of a resolution of Members if the alteration is made to correct a manifest error or is necessary to align the Constitution with any changes to applicable governing legislation. English Courts have interpreted “manifest error” as meaning “oversights and blunders so obvious … as to admit of no difference of opinion”;
* The Committee is still carefully considering section 9 (Meeting of Members) to determine the most effective and democratic ways Members can meet and vote on issues put to them and, to this end, continues to work with its legal advisers to ensure compliance with the law.

### **Resignation**

Prior to the Committee’s meeting on 20 April, Jonathan Mosen tendered his resignation. The meeting discussed the possibility of not replacing Jonathan as it is hoped that the work of the Committee is largely done and any new appointee to the Committee would have an enormous task to get up to speed. The Committee sought permission from the RNZFB Board at its 29 April meeting to dispense with a further appointment and gained the Board’s approval to this.

### **Next Meeting**

The CRC next meets on **18 May**.