**RNZFB Chair’s Report September 2018**

Hello All

Here is my Chair’s report for September 2018.

This report provides some detail of the matters that the Board has been involved with over the last couple of months. It also contains information about the items discussed at the recent September meetings of the RNZFB Board. 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 1 September will be available through the telephone information service, on library CD, e-mail on request, or by calling the National Contact Centre on 0800 243333. Please ask for a copy of these minutes and keep up-to-date with the matters that we are looking at on your behalf.

I should remind you that if you are a member then you are fully entitled to attend the meetings in person or by telephone. Just let the Board Secretary know if you are interested.

This time the headings are

1. The Let’s Talk Meetings - Engagement with our clients and wider family
2. Highlights from the Committee meetings in August
3. From the Full Board meeting
4. Property Update
5. First meeting of the new People Committee of the Board
6. The Pearson Fund
7. Meet the Candidates
8. Submissions summary
9. **Engaging with our clients and wider family – the Let’s Talk Meetings**

In previous reports, I said that the focus of the Let’s Talk meetings, which used to be called Engagement road shows, will be different. The meetings this year provide clients, their support people and our volunteers and interested others with the opportunity to direct what is talked about and to speak, in an informal setting, with the Board Chair, members of the Board, the Chief Executive, Leadership team members and staff.

We are asking those who hope to attend what topics they would like to talk about. So far with the meetings we’ve held, this has been successful. To set the ball rolling we have already visited Christchurch, Gisborne, Rotorua, Hamilton, Whangarei, Dunedin and Alexandra. This already seems to have made the meetings more relevant to those attending. The meetings are still a chance for two-way conversations about the services that the Blind Foundation offers, the developments being undertaken, what the future holds, while at the same time, getting to hear from those attending about what is important for them. It has been good to see that there are different matters of importance to differing groups in different areas of the country. We are asking you to think of any special topics that you would like us to cover, if you are thinking of attending a meeting, then please take a moment to let us know what’s in front of mind for you.

We still have about another ten meetings to come later in the year, some in the South and North Islands, and we look forward to catching up with you.

If you are wanting more information about the Let’s Talk Meetings, please contact Noreen Parker by phone on 09 355 6920 or by email at nparker@blindfoundation.org.nz. We’d like to see you there, so please make the effort to come.

1. **Highlights from the Committee Meetings in August**

It’s not everyone’s cup of tea, but the new RNZFB Constitution includes a raft of new mandatory policies. When I’ve reported before, I’ve said that the Policy Committee of the Board is getting going on developing the drafts of these policies. Well, we are almost there. Each one that we draft is sent out to members for their consultation and input before being finalised. They include such things as policies on communication, preferred formats and service of documents; community participation; application of money and tangata whenua. You will find the full list under section 6.7.2 in the new RNZFB constitution. As we complete them, they will be made available for you to look at and comment on. Please don’t be shy in coming forward with your thoughts. We’re not able to say every idea is taken on board, but we can say that everyone’s comments are looked at. The Policy Committee is slowly working its way through the Governance Policy Manual. It is very wordy and to make it relevant and into a document that folk won’t shy away from, we are putting a lot of effort into ensuring that it is in plain English and as short as we can without losing context. Currently we are working on job descriptions for the Board Chair, the Deputy Chair and Committee Chairs.

The Governance Committee has completed an independent review of the Board’s performance using an independent surveyor. We gained a little more input from some of our other stakeholders and we now have the job of putting the results together in such a way that it will be interesting and informative to our members. I had said that this would most likely be available following the September meetings, but it looks more likely to be November before anything is published. The Board has also received a “self-evaluation survey” which it can use in a variety of ways to assess the Board’s performance, accountability and adherence to best boardroom practice.

The Audit Committee signed off the financial statements for the year ending 30 June 2018. We had another bumper year and we are in a good financial position. You can ask for a copy of the financial statements if you are interested. Just ring the Contact Centre on 0800 243333.

1. **From the Full Board Meeting**

We have been encouraging those people who are interested in listening to what we are up to to attend part or all the meeting. This can be done in person or on the phone. This meeting we had a visit from the Liaison Officer for the recently established Youth Council. The Board encourages different people to put forward their points of view or let us know what they are up to.

The Board approved a position statement on vision rehabilitation. This document will be important as the Foundation moves towards supporting a much wider proportion of those in the Low Vision sector. Position Statements point out the issues and then spell out the responsibilities that different factions of the society, such as the Foundation, the Government and Local Authorities, have in assuaging the challenges associated with the issue.

The Board received the final report on the Business Plan and congratulated Management for what they have achieved. Many of the items have enhanced what we do and, in the future, will become business as usual.

1. **Property Update**

Two major investigations have been completed on the Parnell site, one to look at the possibility of building a commercial or commercial and residential block on the corner of Parnell and Maunsell roads and the other to look at the possibility of building a retirement centre in the central pod of the site. Both projects underwent in-depth feasibility studies, using a vast array of subject experts. From this work, it has been decided that the commercial option is not viable and the best use has proved to be a retirement village. At the September meeting the Board approved a joint venture so that Foundation Properties Limited can go ahead unimpeded and finalise the documentation and thus let the consenting and permitting processes get underway. Should the proposal successfully work to plan, then the income from the Parnell site will most likely more than treble over the next eight to ten years. In my previous report in June, I had said that there may be a necessity for the Blind Foundation to move off the site temporarily. This now looks as though it will not be necessary at all. Our thanks should go to our independent directors of Foundation Properties Limited for their expertise and effort in getting the project to this point.

1. **Creating a People Committee of the Board**

The People Committee had its inaugural meeting on 20 August. The purpose of the Committee is to assist the Board in discharging its responsibilities with respect to overseeing all aspects of People and Culture, including human resources strategy and policy, employment conditions and remuneration.

The directors involved in the Committee are Judy Small, who has now been appointed Chair of the Committee, Clive Lansink, Nicola Owen, Deb Boyd and me as Board Chair being an ex officio member of the committee. The Chief Executive and General Manager for People and Culture are also members of the committee. I’m sure that the work of this committee will enable us to have a good look at the diversity and inclusion within the organisation and to help us become even better in our attempts to be a great exemplar organisation.

1. **The Pearson Fund**

The RNZFB Directors are trustees of the Sir Arthur Pearson Memorial Fund. This fund is a fund of last resort or a hardship fund. Its purpose is to support those who do not have the resources to pay for items themselves and have a need that cannot be assisted by other funding agencies such as Workbridge or Government. Each year, this fund assists several hundred of our people to receive pieces of equipment that assists them in their “everyday” life.

**7. Meet the Candidates**

This year there will be an opportunity to meet the candidates that are standing for the RNZFB Board and hear directly from them in response to questions that will be put to them by the audience. Details of where and when this will be held will be made available soon. Members will be able to attend in person or dial in to listen, or to listen to a recording of the session online at a later time. This will not occur until after the voting papers have been sent out on 4 October. If you’re interested, please keep an ear to the ground to catch the details. If you are unsure then give the Contact Centre a call, but not before 4 October.

**8. Submissions summary**

There were no submissions reported to the Board at this time. However, if you are interested in hearing about the matters or the topics we present submissions on, you can contact the Board Secretary on 09 355 6894 or jamoore@blindfoundation.org.nz or ring the Contact Centre on 0800 243333.

Rick Hoskin

4 September 2018