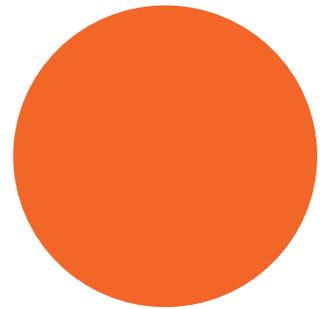
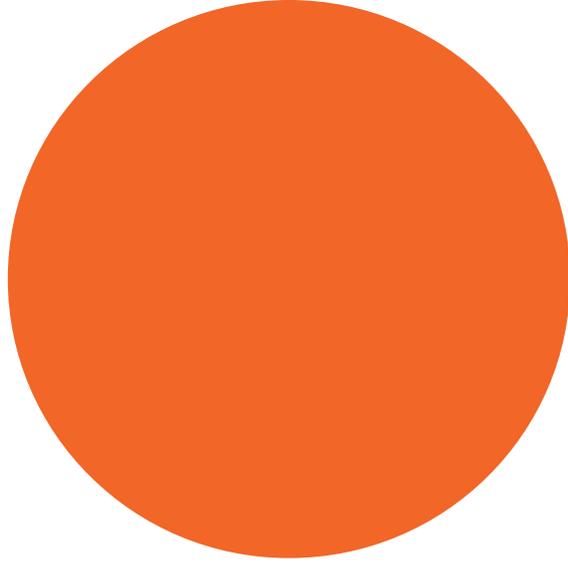


Year in Review



2019



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Making a difference

for Kiwis who are blind or have low vision

Blind & Low Vision NZ, formerly Blind Foundation, believes everyone who is blind, deafblind, or has low vision should have the freedom and access to live life how they want to. We take an active role in supporting people to live beyond vision loss with practical and emotional support at an individual level. We also collaborate with others in advocating for inclusive, accessible communities as well as within the eye health sector to support optimal eye care services for all New Zealanders.

We are proud of our history that stretches back 129 years and we

take very seriously our duty to continue building on and evolving the good work that has come before us. New Zealand faces a growing challenge of an aging population and, with it, a growing group of people with age-related sight loss. This challenge is bigger than Blind & Low Vision NZ, but we have a role in both seeking a solution and being a part of the solution.

Many people believe they need to be completely blind to receive help from us, and we hope our new name will let people with low vision know we are here for them too.

The support we provide is relevant to more New Zealanders than many today realise, and it is our job to make people aware of the ways in which we could make a difference in theirs, or their loved ones, lives.

In the pages following, you will find stories about people living with sight loss empowered to do the things they want to in life, information about how we are removing barriers in partnership with others, our progress in creating a more accessible New Zealand with government, and what we are doing to support better access to eye care services.

We are pleased to report excellent progress against our four strategic priorities: Independent Living; Access for all; Reaching more people and Building a foundation for the future. With your support, we are making these priorities a reality, and we are very proud of the dedicated team including our wonderful volunteers and supporters we have behind us at Blind & Low Vision NZ. Generous people donate nearly three quarters of our income needed to operate, and our volunteers enable us to do so much more. By giving your support, whether it be financial or with your time and skills, you enable us to achieve real impact. Thank you to all of you, for your role

in making a difference for New Zealanders who are blind or have low vision.

Me mahi tahi tātau hei whakapakari te hunga kāpō

Work together to give strength to people who are blind or have low vision.



John Mulka
Blind & Low Vision NZ
Chief Executive



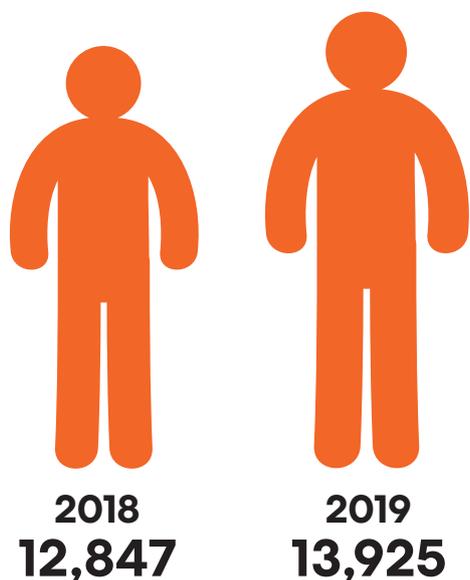
Rick Hoskin
Blind & Low Vision NZ
Board Chair

Our role in New Zealand

Who we help

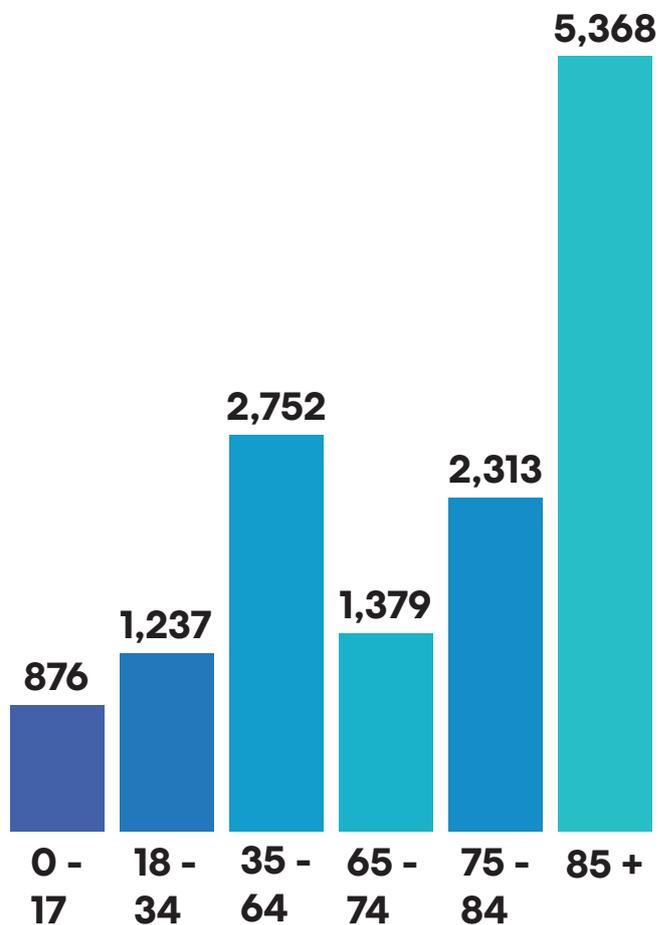
Our dedicated staff and volunteers help people from Cape Reinga to Bluff - we have 18 offices but no location is off-limits. In-home visits are common, because that's where it makes most sense for people to learn new skills for living independently with sight loss.

At the end of Financial Year 2019 (July 2018 - June 2019) the number of people who are blind or have low vision connected with us was 13,925. That's an 8% increase on the year preceding. (Total clients 2018: 12,847)



It's worth noting that 65% of the people we provide services and support to are aged 65 and older. Three quarters of the people we provide services to can be described as having low vision.

Blind & Low Vision NZ clients by age



Did you know?

The most common eye condition amongst people who are referred to us for support with sight loss is age-related macular degeneration. That is just one of the 140 different eye conditions our clients have let us know about.

Age related macular degeneration is the leading eye disease causing blindness or partial sight in NZ, and affects 35% of people referred to Blind & Low Vision NZ.

Supporting with Person Directed Service

We want to help every person we can with the practical and emotional support they need to adjust to sight loss. That's why we are evolving our service model to enable us to better manage increased demand for services, see people sooner, and tailor more holistic and individualised service plans.

What this means for the people who access our services is that they tell us how to prioritise the different ways we can support, so that we help with what matters most to the person. Our Primary Service Providers work with the individuals to identify their goals, and provide a wide range of holistic services so that they can help with basic needs straight away. This frees up our specialist teams to focus on more specialist support, and reduces the wait time.



“If it hadn’t been for the Blind Foundation I wouldn’t be in the situation I am in today. I wouldn’t be in the health I am, the vision I have and the determination I have. They have given me the tools and the mechanisms and also the wonderful contribution of people. I don’t think a lot of people are aware of the opportunities and the services they have available. I just can’t thank them enough, they’ve been absolutely incredible. They have been my rock.”

June

Our advocacy role

We take an active role in advocating and collaborating with others so together we can change what it means to live with sight loss in New Zealand.

We advocate on behalf of the estimated 30,000 New Zealanders who are blind or have low vision.

We know that supporting the interests of people with sight loss benefits many other people with disabilities, particularly when it comes to accessibility. We also know that in advocating for better resources supporting vision rehabilitation, we have a part to play in seeking improvements for eye care services for all New Zealanders. That’s why our involvement in the Access Alliance and Eye Health Coalition, as well as working alongside other like-minded groups in the community, is really important.

Read more on pages 17 and 19 about our efforts in these areas.

Every

2.5 Hrs



someone in New Zealand develops blindness.

Inspiring independence

with personalised support

Blind & Low Vision NZ's support is personalised because we support people, not statistics: People with sight loss might be you and me, our family and our friends. Life with sight loss impacts all domains, and our range of services promoting self-reliance reflects this. We also

do more than the 'how to' stuff. Our accessible library is one of our most popular services, and we facilitate a range of regular peer-support activities and events that give people a way to connect with others and try new things, alongside a good dose of fun.



“If it wasn't for the Blind Foundation I don't know where I would be. I would probably be one of those that hide away. For me, I am so thankful that the Blind Foundation has taught me and that I receive the services that are there for me to live a quality life, to live an independent life, and that is amazing.”

Fatima
Blind & Low Vision NZ client

Our services

and support at a glance:

Personalised rehabilitation services

Specialised training that gives children and adults who are blind or have low vision the practical skills they need to live safely and independently. This might include training on how to get around independently or learning new ways to manage at home.

Guide dogs

Blind & Low Vision NZ breeds and trains guide dogs for people with vision loss. A guide dog can give mobility, confidence and independence.

Community & Support

Opportunities for people who are dealing with vision loss to talk to people in a similar situation or specialised counsellors. Social, recreational, and cultural activities enable people to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle, and connect with others.

Technology

Accessible technology is transforming the lives of people with sight loss. Our staff and volunteers provide support and assistance to use technology to be independent, access information, and enrich lives.

Employment

We help people who are blind or have low vision with support to overcome the barriers they often face when preparing for or staying in work.

Library services

We make it possible for people with who are blind or have low vision to access books, newspapers and magazines in the format they prefer, whether that's braille, audio, large print or digital.

Did you know?

Our talking library catalogue now has over 30,000 titles. It has almost doubled in size over the last five years!

A small taster of how our work made a difference

1

One world-first 'Amazon Alexa skill' developed by our team is now in use providing instant access to our library on Alexa-enabled smart speakers.

2

Two national annual children's camps giving kids who are blind or have low vision the chance to learn new skills, grow confidence and have some fun together.

128

128 puppies born at our guide dogs breeding centre, hoping to become life-changing guide dogs.

645

645 new white cane users, given the skills and confidence to get around with the support of our Orientation and Mobility specialists.

1427

1427 total sales of magnification equipment, with guidance from our specialist adaptive daily living team in the best ways to help people read the information they want to, specific to their eye condition.

Daphne's story: using a smart speaker to access information

Recognising the potential in smart speakers for people who are blind or have low vision, Blind & Low Vision NZ jumped on the new technology early. Matching the huge demand for our library service with this technology, we designed a world-first 'skill' (similar to an app) that gives library members easy access to our full talking book library collection.

Daphne, 97, is one of the early adopters of our library 'skill'. The Auckland resident has macular degeneration and describes her vision as being like looking through a net curtain. She can't see detail anymore, so reading a physical copy of a book isn't an option. Daphne really misses reading the printed page.

She first heard about Amazon's Alexa smart speaker at a low vision support group, run by Blind & Low Vision NZ. After that, her daughter set her up with a speaker and she says it has changed her life in many ways.

"It enables me to read stories again. I am reading some religious literature at the moment, but I love novels. My favourite are crime novels."

Before getting Alexa, Daphne used a DAISY player which plays audio books via CD. Daphne prefers Alexa because it gives her instant access to our full library collection – there's no waiting around for a CD to come in the mail.

"It's easy enough to use. I don't have a mobile phone, so if I can do it, then so can anyone."

"All I have to do is ask Alexa to play me a book, and she does it."



Daphne sits next to her Alexa smart speaker.

Michele's story: getting around with a guide dog

Michele's world opened up when, at age 16, she got her first guide dog. After losing her sight from glaucoma at age 13, she says being paired with a guide dog had a huge impact, enabling her to become a lot more social and get back into things.

Now aged in her early thirties and partnered with a different guide dog, Prentice, she describes the relationship she has with him as something very special.

"He is my shadow, and I'm his shadow. When he's on harness I'm always following him, and when he's off harness he's always following me; we're pretty inseparable. He's just always around and I feel really out of place when he's not around.

"He does amazing things every day, I mean he gets me to and from work safely every weekday... I go out when I want, where I want. I catch ferries, buses and trains. I have no problem doing things when I'm with Prentice."

It takes nearly two years and more than \$50,000 to raise and train a guide dog like Prentice. Preparation starts long before puppies have even been born, requiring a sophisticated breeding programme to set puppies up on the strongest path to success from the outset.



Michele with her guide dog Prentice.

Becoming a guide dog is one of the most challenging roles for a dog, because they are charged with making what could potentially be life or death decisions on behalf of their handler.

Prentice has done this for Michele. She describes the moment when he deliberately disobeyed her - as he was trained - in order to stop her walking into the path of an oncoming car:

“We were just literally strolling along and then, suddenly, he just stopped dead. And then suddenly

this car just went right in front of us and we were like, “Oh, okay.” He just knew, obviously knew that it was coming and stopped.”

In a 2018 Blind & Low Vision NZ survey, guide dog handlers unanimously agreed their guide dog had positively changed their life and helped them to move about freely and confidently.

There’s no mistaking the life-changing role a guide dog plays in the life of a person who is blind or has low vision.



Opening up the world with attitudes and access

We are agents of change in New Zealand, and we know we can achieve more when we unite with others.

Removing barriers with the Access Alliance

As a driving member of the Access Alliance seeking the introduction of accessibility legislation to create a more inclusive New Zealand, we were ecstatic when the Government signed off on a major accessibility work programme to thoroughly explore how we achieve full accessibility for disabled people and all New Zealanders.

That was in December 2018, and the Government named the Access Alliance as a major stakeholder in collaborating to explore what comes next. Since then, the Access Alliance has been working to make sure legislation is seen as the most important tool to help create a

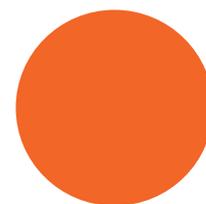
more inclusive and accessible Aotearoa New Zealand. We have brought many people on the journey to support us including MPs, business owners, and the public.

Our primary task now is to get accessibility legislation up the agenda. Every day that goes by is another that sees thousands of Kiwis excluded from work and public life, prevented from contributing their full potential to their families and communities.



The Access Alliance

Advocating in the community



We are actively involved in promoting blindness awareness and accessibility advice through a range of ways. From representation on local council advisory boards, through to education support with retirement villages and transport providers, this year we also took up the challenge to play an active role in partnering with businesses and other workplaces to support better employment outcomes for people who are blind or have low vision.

The Accessibility Tick a marker of progress

The Accessibility Tick and Access Advisors are two pan-disability initiatives we began over the course of the year to support organisations in their accessibility efforts.

Access Advisors is a consultancy service, and the Accessibility Tick is a bespoke work programme that recognises and supports organisations with their ongoing commitment to accessibility and inclusion through policy, culture and environmental changes.

The exciting news is that New Zealand businesses have risen to the challenge and have come on board with the idea at a faster rate than we had dreamed possible. Go to accessibilitytick.nz to find out who our foundation members are,

and the range of partners involved in supporting the programme from across the disability sector.



Paul McCloskey, Vector's Group Manager – HR, holding Vector's Accessibility Tick award. Vector was the first organisation to receive the Accessibility Tick.

Did you know?

18 organisations signed up to the Accessibility Tick in its first year of operation, representing nearly 80,000 employees.

Supporting safe travel with community advocacy

Supporting getting around safely and confidently is a top concern for many people who are blind or have low vision. Modes of travel and the spaces we move in are always evolving, with the introduction of e-scooter rent and leave schemes being a high profile development over the last year.

In hearing the concerns and stories from our members about e-scooters on footpaths, we launched a campaign to make our voices heard on the issue. A survey, attracting 210 responses from our community, gave weight to the message, which was widely circulated in national media and also used in local council policy development. The outcomes are still pending.



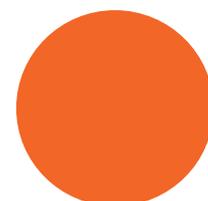
Helping New Zealand to take eye health seriously

Blind & Low Vision NZ believes that a clear eye health pathway, including rehabilitation services for people with sight loss, is vital in nurturing the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Through the growing research and evidence we are helping to gather, we know that New Zealand is facing a growing problem in eye health. As our population ages, age-related eye conditions are of particular concern.

A lack of available data in New Zealand has made the issue hard to quantify, so we have invested time into research to better understand where the need is and what can be done to fix it. In gathering answers to the big questions, this has helped to lay the groundwork for future campaigning efforts to help New Zealand properly resource eye health, and to ensure vision rehabilitation services are part of that solution.

People at our heart



Bringing people together and helping one another is at the heart of what we do at Blind & Low Vision NZ. Whether it be kind-hearted volunteers supporting people in their community or participating in fundraising events, people who are blind or have low vision coming together over regular coffee groups (or something more adventurous), or anyone with an interest in advocating for a more inclusive New Zealand – there is always plenty going on.



Methven House Rest home residents wore spotted outfits and played Twister to honour World Braille Day, 4 January 2019.



A group of clients, volunteers and staff on a day trip exploring Kapiti Island.



Young blind and low vision Kiwis enjoying themselves at the 2019 Summer Kids Camp.



Client and graphic designer Daniel Holt (right) works on an image for our crew swap campaign in October where a team of our clients helped produce the news.



Team Guide Dogs runner Will at the Auckland Marathon finish line.



Young collectors during Blind Week.



A family collect donations during Red Puppy Appeal.



Students at ACG Parnell with Marvel the friendly mascot.

Blind & Low Vision NZ

Financials

The majority of our income comes from the generous support of New Zealanders.



We ensure our funds are spent wisely to deliver services to New Zealanders today and into the future.



What this involves:

Supporting independent living: providing personalised rehabilitation and support services to people who are blind or have low vision so they can live the life they choose. This includes the breeding and training of guide dogs.

Supporting access for all: making sure that everyone is able to fully participate in everyday life and opportunities. Besides providing accessible news, books, and information through our library, we advocate for a truly inclusive New Zealand.

Building a foundation for the future: enabling new and innovative ways of delivering

services, so people can receive the most effective services despite changing needs and environments.

Reaching more people: raising awareness of blindness and sight loss, to help the growing number of New Zealanders losing their sight, and increasing understanding of the importance of eye health across the country.

Grants to consumer groups and local support groups: providing grants to organisations that provide peer support, and advocacy for New Zealanders who are blind or have low vision.

In Gratitude

We are extremely grateful to all our generous supporters, who share our vision of a life without limits.

Your kindness enables people who are blind or have low vision to be self-reliant and live the life they choose.

Thank you so much for the difference you've made. We would like to say a special thank you to our key supporters in financial year 2019.

2degrees

Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at of
New Zealand

Auckland Council

Bill and Maud Ingham

Capital Rodders

Dorothy M Cutts

Dunedin City Council

Estate Arthur Henry Wall

Estate Lily Rollings Williamson

Estate of Barry Douglas Logan

Estate of Dorothy Helen Thompson

Estate of Eva Mary Burgess

Estate of Genevieve N Geraghty

Estate of Grant Ean Stewart

Estate of Joan Ellis

Estate of Kay Patricia Thomson

Estate of Peter Herbert Bell

Estate of Ronald & Dawn Sare

Estate of Ti-Hou Han

Estate of Walter Edward Jones

Fred Ruddenklau Charitable Trust

George Brown Charitable Trust

Gordon Roberts Charitable Trust

Grummitt Sisters

Hilda Bottomley Charitable Trust

Hill's Pet Nutrition (NZ) Ltd

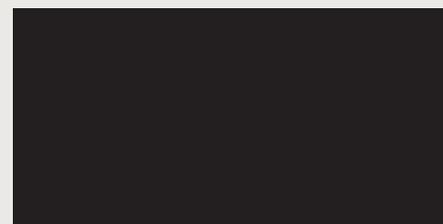
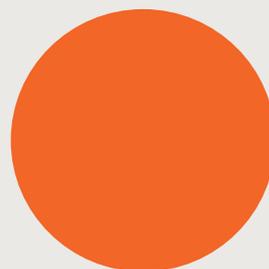
Hudson Gavin Martin

Hugh Green Foundation

Hyundai New Zealand

Ian Loughran (Hands Across the
Waters' Beatle Concert)

IHC Foundation
Ingham House, Howick College
Internet NZ
J B S Dudding Charitable Trust
Jack Jeffs Charitable Trust
Lindsay Foundation
Liz Marriott
Lois K Odering
Lottery Grants Board
Lydiard House, Rangiora High School
Mahora School
Margaret V Morris
Marilyn Hoggard
Milford Asset Management
Ministry of Youth Development
N H Taylor Charitable Trust
N R Thomson Charitable Trust
Nelson Pine Industries
New World Pioneer
New World Saint Martins
Nikau Foundation
Orbit Corporate Travel
Perpetual Guardian
Phil and Siobhan Logan
Pic's Peanut Butter
Public Trust
Quality Hotel Parnell
QuickCircuit Limited
Reed Charitable Trust
Ross Lund of Timaru Construction
Rotorua Energy Charitable Trust
Specsavers
Te Pou o Te Whakaaro Nui
Tennyson Charitable Trust
The David Ellison Charitable Trust
The Dr Marjorie Barclay Trust
The Kingdom Foundation
The Owen and John Whitfield No 1 Fund Charitable Trust
The Southern Trust
Thomas George Macarthy Trust
Westlake Girls' High School





Formerly Blind Foundation

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**This information is also available in large print,
braille, electronic-text and audio.**