



**Blind
Low Vision NZ**

Formerly Blind Foundation

Community Impact Report

2020



Creating our Future



We empower New Zealanders who are blind, deafblind or have low vision to live the life they choose.

We all want independence to make choices in our lives and do the things we choose. Although people who are blind, deafblind or have low vision face challenges, they can – and do – live fulfilling and independent lives. At Blind Low Vision NZ, we support our clients so they can do household tasks, travel safely and independently, enjoy recreational activities, and succeed in the career of their choice.

Our new strategic vision for 2020-2024 is all about empowering clients to live the life they choose.

This means clients decide what emotional and practical support they need, based on what they want to accomplish in their lives.

It also means greater collaboration with local councils

and businesses to provide equal opportunity to people who are blind, deafblind or have low vision. We want safe environments, accessible information, and removal of barriers to enable all New Zealanders to be valued, contributing members of society.

Our new strategic priorities are:

1. Supporting **independence** with core services and technology
2. **Educate and Equip**, providing clients with ongoing learning opportunities
3. Promoting **social inclusion** in New Zealand
4. Becoming a best practice **for purpose organisation**

Over the past year we've had some notable achievements, such as gaining cross party political support to introduce legislation for an accessible New Zealand. We've also

started our nationwide rollout of Alexa enabled devices, allowing our clients to use their voice to access our growing library of audio books, search the internet and manage daily tasks in their home.

As a nation, we have also experienced the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. We've been guiding clients on how to keep themselves safe while out and about, as people who are blind, deafblind or have low vision often rely on contacting surfaces to navigate. During the lockdown, our check-in phone calls and library services were particularly important, as over half of our clients were in the high-risk 70+ age group and some live alone.

This year we are celebrating Blind Low Vision NZ's 130th Anniversary. We've come a long way since 1890. We started as a school and residence that, with good intentions, sheltered clients from the outside world. Over time, we evolved into



supporting clients to develop their independence.

And now, alongside our wonderful staff, fundraisers, donors, and volunteers, we are working towards empowering our clients to live the life they choose.

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
Chief Executive



Rick Hoskin
Board Chair

Who we help and how —



Our dedicated staff and volunteers help people from

Cape Reinga to Bluff
—we have **19 offices**,
and no location is off-limits.

Upper
North Island
(excl Auckland)

2,887
clients

Auckland

3,652
clients

Lower
North Island
(excl Wellington)

2,308
clients

South Island
(excl Christchurch)

2,321
clients

Wellington

1,372
clients

Christchurch

1,349
clients



This year our contact centre staff received

37,407
calls

And we had

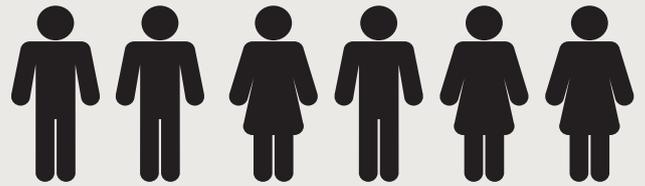
658,237
requests from our library.

We have clients of all ages, though the majority are over 65, due to the correlation of old age and vision loss.



130
years

Blind Low Vision NZ has been supporting Kiwis whose sight cannot be improved with lenses.



This year we supported

13,889 clients



We tailor our **services, events, and activities** to cater for different **age groups,** needs and interests.

A snapshot of

blindness, deafblindness and low vision in New Zealand



Some people assume that blindness, deafblindness or low vision is rare and that it could never happen to them or someone they love. But it's more common than you might think.

- **4% of Kiwis are currently living with blindness or low vision.**
- **Every 2.5 hours, someone in NZ develops blindness.**
- **1 in 5 people will experience blindness or low vision in their lifetime.**

And it will be more common in the future because of our ageing population.

- **By 2030, the number of Kiwis with blindness, deafblindness or low vision is likely to increase by over 25%.**
- **The number of Kiwis with age-related macular degeneration is projected to increase by 70%.**



There are also many people in NZ who (sometimes unknowingly) have diseases that may lead to blindness or low vision. These diseases are often treatable if diagnosed in time, which is why raising awareness is an important part of what we do at Blind Low Vision NZ.

- **50% of sight loss is preventable, 25% of sight loss is treatable.**
- **Cataract surgery has good success rates, but leads to sight loss in 5% of cases.**
- **An estimated 2% of Kiwis over 40 have glaucoma. Half of them are unaware of this.**
- **Over 70% of Kiwis aged 40-49 do not have a regular eye examination.**



With the right training, assistive technology, and mindset, most people with blindness or low vision can live the life they choose.

- **74% of Blind Low Vision NZ clients live in their own homes, either alone or with a partner and/or children.**
- **57% of working age people who are blind or have low vision are currently in work compared to 77% of the NZ working age population.**

Renzo's — story — ●



They say it takes a village to raise a child. For five-year-old Renzo, who has been blind since birth, his ‘village’ is giving him the best start in life.

His superstar mum Nicole is as positive as they get. Her attitude has helped Renzo develop resilience, confidence, and a great sense of humour. His supportive grandparents live close by, allowing Nicole to work full time. And Jo, a Blind Low Vision NZ independent life skills coach, visits every week.

Jo assists Renzo with his day-to-day skills and teaches him how to use a white cane. She also advises Nicole on how to support his needs. Nicole says, “Jo genuinely loves my child you know, it’s not just a job for her... she’s a part of our family now”.

When Nicole found out Renzo couldn’t see, her main concern was that he might struggle to make friends as he got older. She knew having a group of friends looking out for him would encourage his

independence. Nicole also worried about Renzo as a young adult: “When he’s at that age to move out of home, how will he cope without me?”

Blind Low Vision NZ helped Nicole see that gaining independence is a process, as it is for any child.

For example, Nicole thought Renzo could wait until he was a teenager to learn to use cutlery. We explained that it’s in Renzo’s best interests to learn these skills as a child and showed her how to encourage him.

Similarly, Nicole can ensure Renzo is at the same level of learning as other children his age by playing Blind Low Vision NZ audio books on Alexa. Eventually, he’ll learn to read using braille.

Renzo has also been working with Blind Low Vision NZ at his kindergarten and new school. Through mapping the area, Renzo can familiarise himself much easier and quicker using his white cane. And the best thing? The other children love Renzo and they keep inviting him to their birthday parties. Nicole

now believes, with the help of Blind Low Vision NZ, “he will be fine out in that big world on his own, because he is who he is”.



Sue's — story — ●



Until her sixties, Sue thrived as an active woman who loved helping others. She ran a busy bed and breakfast with her husband and used to look after elderly people in a rest home. Describing herself as a social butterfly, Sue engaged with a wide circle of friends. She also loved tramping up mountains, Scottish dancing, and cooking for her big family. Reading held a special place in her heart.

Over time, a combination of cataracts and a herpes virus attacking her cornea made it hard for Sue to see. Cataract surgery was unsuccessful, and Sue felt devastated. She lost her driving license and struggled

to get around while walking. Activities she had always taken for granted now seemed difficult or dangerous.

As someone who enjoyed being helpful, it wasn't easy for Sue to seek help for herself. Sue suffered for six months after her surgery with only her family for support. At that time, our name was still Blind Foundation. As Sue still had some vision, she didn't relate to the word 'blind' and wasn't even sure we could assist her. It's because of stories like Sue's that we changed our name to Blind Low Vision NZ.

Sue did, however, contact us when she reached her wit's end. Relief washed over her

when we listened to her story and arranged a home visit. She described her biggest challenges and the things she needed and wanted to be able to do. We gave her much-needed emotional support and a range of practical solutions. Together, we developed a plan for Sue to regain her independence in the areas of life that mattered to her.

Now Sue has talking weighing scales in her kitchen and an app that lets her know the temperature of the oven. She reads recipes, books, and newspapers with enlarged text on her iPad. One of our tech specialists showed her how to zoom in and out, and how to categorise apps to make them easy to find.

She is learning to use a white cane and has even tried tandem biking with her husband. Plus, our support groups help her connect with other people with low vision. In Sue's words, "it's been a confidence booster... I'm amazed at the 100% support".

It's taking Sue some time to adjust to her new way of life. She

feels reluctant to use her cane in public because she wants people to treat her the same as anyone else. But she loves the idea of having a guide dog one day. She doesn't feel the need to learn braille just yet. But she's keen to snuggle up with her grandchildren and listen to books together using Alexa.

Sue is full of gratitude towards Blind Low Vision NZ "for helping me so much to get my life back together". As she learns new skills and finds ways to keep doing the things she loves, she is reclaiming her sense of self. And she's still Scottish dancing!



Our services

Personalised rehabilitation services

We provide 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 may include learning how to get around independently using a white cane or a guide dog or accomplishing tasks at home. We can also advise on home and kitchen modifications and household organisation.

Technology

We advise clients about relevant new devices and apps that may transform their lives. Our adaptive technology courses cover topics such as accessible computer functions, word processing, spreadsheets, email, using the internet, reading the news, social networking, shopping, travelling, and accessing books.

Community & support

We organise social, recreational, and cultural activities to enable people to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle and connect with others. Our support groups, peer mentoring programme and phone peer support service allow clients to talk to others with similar sight loss experiences.

Employment

Our Employment team helps job-seeking clients to write CVs, apply for jobs and prepare for interviews. For clients who are already working, we organise technology and health and safety assessments, adapt work areas and work together with employers to put solutions in place.

Library services & accessible formats

We make it possible for people 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. The newest way to access our library is through a 'skill' (similar to an app) on a voice-activated Alexa smart speaker. We can also convert personal printed materials into any accessible format.

Financial support

We have several funds that provide financial assistance to clients who cannot meet the costs of vision rehabilitation, equipment, or tertiary education.

Specialist services

We provide cultural support for Pacific Island clients, a specialist

team for Deafblind clients, and a Parent and Child Enrichment (PACE) programme to help families who have a child with visual impairment.

“I am very appreciative of the help and support provided. I was feeling very alone with my vision problem until I had help from Blind Low Vision NZ”

Blind Low Vision NZ Client

A small taster of

how our work made an impact this year

5 major political parties now support new legislation to create a fully accessible New Zealand. Blind Low Vision NZ is a driving member of the Access Alliance and we have worked together to achieve this huge milestone.

10 percent of our clients already have an Alexa-enabled device as part of our nationwide rollout. With Alexa, they can instantly find out the time or the weather, or what's on TV. Or figure out public transport options. Or ask Google that burning question. And while listening to their favourite book, they can pause, change the volume, or skip chapters. All by using their voice.

1,108 clients have completed 4,212 hours of mobility training this year, gaining the skills and confidence to walk around independently using a white cane. If they want to have a guide dog in the future, our clients need to be able to demonstrate competence using their white cane.

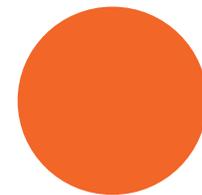
200,000 listening hours were added to our talking book collection this year. That's nearly 2,000 additional books, including biographies, educational books and all genres of fiction, for all ages.



“My client would ask, “How am I going to do my gardens, or change a light bulb or even call if a pipe bursts?” I visited him in his home on several occasions and together we found solutions for his worries and came up with strategies to manage his anxiety.”

Blind Low Vision NZ Counsellor

Getting together to support Blind Low Vision NZ



Blind Low Vision NZ couldn't exist without our family of volunteers. This diverse group of 5,776 dedicated people bring their unique skills to a variety of roles.

Some like to support clients on daytrips or help them do their shopping. Others provide technology support, library assistance, or help with admin. Creative volunteers make tactile books for children and some read and record the daily news. Puppy socialising is a popular activity. And of course, many people dedicate their time to fundraising. Whichever way people choose to get involved, it's always a lot of fun.

In March, more than 1,900 people grabbed a red bucket and collected money on the streets for our Red Puppy

Appeal. Passers-by donated \$260,000 towards Blind Low Vision NZ services.



Our cute guide dog puppies often come along to these events.

Blind Low Vision NZ is lucky to have some long-term supporters, such as the students of Ingham House at Howick College. For over 10



Students of Ingham House at Howick College

years, they've been organising fundraising events for Blind Low Vision NZ. This year they raised \$3,000 for our guide dogs at their International Food Festival.

Many of our clients also get involved with fundraising. The amazing Maryanne from Auckland took part in our annual skydive event, where participants sign up to raise \$800 and in return get to skydive for free. Maryanne raised \$1,846 from her friends, family, and workmates.



Maryanne taking part in our annual skydive event

“The jump and the free-fall were incredible, and I can't wait to do it again. For anyone thinking about ticking it off their bucket list, I say go for it!”

Maryanne from Auckland



“Blind Low Vision NZ called me and said do you want to play cricket? And I said wait, you know what? I’m from Fiji not from India! But from the first day of going blind I admitted to myself that I’m going to try anything you know? Then I got selected and ended up playing for New Zealand in Pakistan in the World Cup.” - Parveen

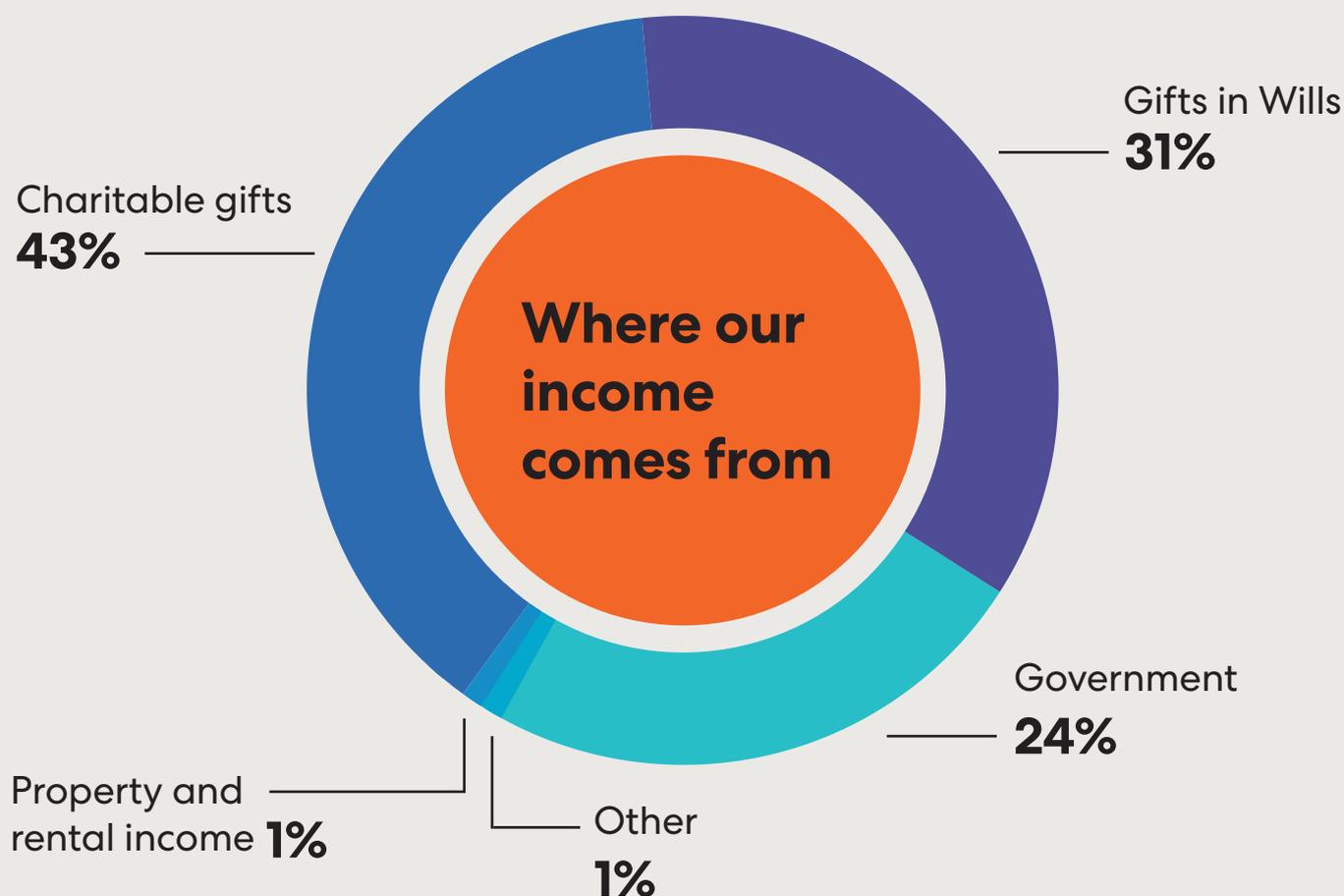
Blind Low Vision NZ

Financials

Three-quarters of the income we receive is from the generous support of New Zealanders. Without donations and gifts in Wills, we would not be able to do our important work.

We would particularly like to acknowledge the thoughtful

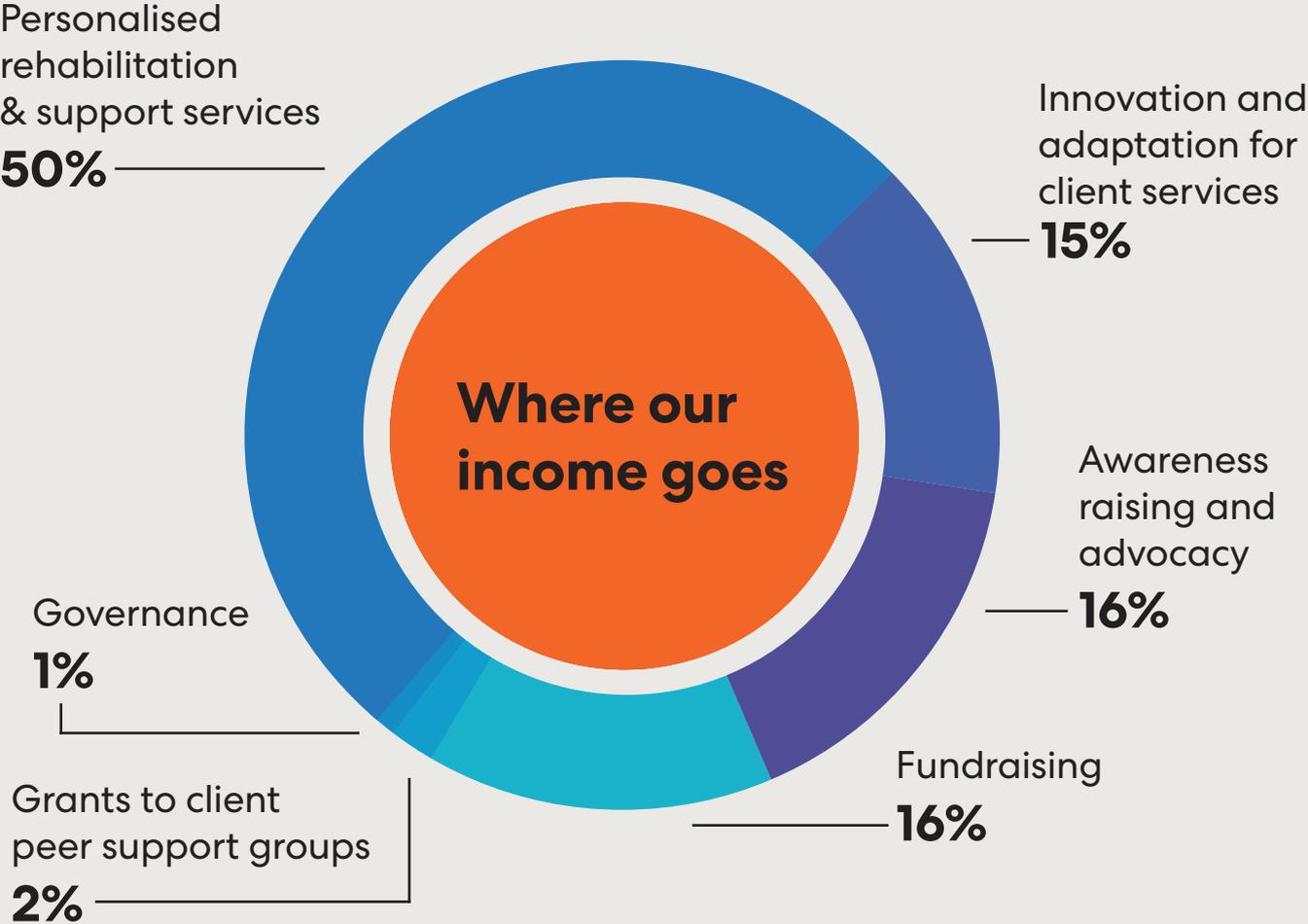
people who have left money to us in their will. We are always touched when we receive these gifts. We take care to honour the memory of our benefactors by using their gifts in ways that create the most impact and build a sustainable future.



To support our clients to live the life they choose, we align our spending to our four strategic priorities – supporting independence, educate and equip providing ongoing learning opportunities, promoting social inclusion, and becoming a best practice for purpose organisation.

As we consulted with our clients to develop these priorities, we can be sure our income is spent in ways that genuinely benefit them and the things they care about.

And our focus on innovation ensures our services will continue to be relevant into the future.



In Gratitude

We are extremely grateful to all our generous supporters.

Your kindness helps empower New Zealanders who are blind, deafblind, or low vision to live the life they choose.

Thank you so much for the difference you have made. From our Street Collection volunteers and Bikkie Day bakers to our Red Puppy sponsors and wonderful supporters, we could not do it without you.

We would like to say a special thank you to some of our key supporters in financial year 2020.

2degrees	Community Trust South
A F W and J M Jones Foundation	Dorothy M Cutts
Acorn Foundation	Eastern & Central Community Trust
Air New Zealand	Elliot Estate
Air Rescue Services Ltd	Elsie Steele Trust Board
Alexander McMillan Trust	Emeric Erdei Trust
Alfonso & Enid Weaver Charitable Foundation	Emma Jane Price Charitable Trust
B T Lipanovich and R N Covich Charitable Trust	Eric and Beverly Wright
Beatrice Georgeson Trust	Frances Skeet Charitable Trust
Brian Hurle Charitable Trust	Glyn Evans Charitable Trust
Central Lakes Trust	Grassroots Trust
CERT	Grumitt Sisters Charitable Trust
Charles Edward Otley Trust	Hilda Bottomley Charitable Trust

Hudson Gavin Martin
Hugh Green Foundation
Hyundai New Zealand
ILT Foundation
In Memory of Paul Kibblewhite
Internet NZ
Ivy Mearle Shaw Trust
J A Macpherson Charitable Trust
J B W McKenzie Charitable Trust
J G McMahon Charitable Trust
Jack Jeffs Charitable Trust
John Beresford Swan
Dudding Trust
Joyce Stanley Trust
Julia Choyce Memorial
Charitable Trust
Julie Dickey
Kelliher Charitable Trust
Kingston Sedgfield (NZ)
Charitable Trust
Lake Memorial
Lindsay Foundation
Liz Marriott
Lottery Grants Board
M A Tonkinson Charitable Trust
Mac & Tui Chapman
Charitable Trust
Maureen Mayne
Maurice Paykel Charitable Trust
Michael Jull Trust
Milestone Foundation
Milford Asset Management
Nancy Caiger Charitable Trust
Nelson Pine Industries
New Plymouth District Council
New World St Martins
New Zealand Community Trust
Nikau Foundation
One Foundation
Oxford Sports
P H Vickery Charitable Trust
Pamela Maling Memorial Trust
Pelorus Trust
Percy Wheatley Trust
Perpetual Guardian
Phil and Siobhan Logan
Public Trust
Rata Foundation
Ray Watts Charitable Trust
Reed Charitable Trust

Room-Simmonds Charitable Trust
Ross Lund of Timaru Construction
Royal Canin
S M O'Connor
Schutz Estate
Sir George Elliot Charitable Trust
Taumarunui Opportunity Shop
Tennyson Charitable Trust
The Dr Marjorie Barclay Trust
The J R McKenzie Trust
The Lion Foundation
The Owen and John Whitfield Charitable Trust
The Ruth Petty Trust
The Southern Trust
The Trusts Community Foundation
Trust Waikato
Trustees Executors
W A & E M Anderson Memorial Trust
Warner Bros
William David Hicks Farm Trust
Z & R Castle Memorial Trust
Zoetis New Zealand Ltd

Gifts in Wills

Gifts in Wills support 1 in 3 services at Blind Low Vision NZ. A gift in a Will of as little as 1% makes a tremendous difference. Last year, many of our services would not have been possible without the kind support of the following people who left a gift in their Will.

Estate of A D Harvey
Estate of A E Handforth
Estate of A H Wearing
Estate of Alexander Williamson
Estate of Alfred Higgins
Estate of Alison Eleanor Prendergast
Estate of Alison Herbert Hanham
Estate of Anne Lee
Estate of Anne Rennie
Estate of Anne Ross
Estate of Annie Henwood Fenton
Estate of Arthur Henry Wall
Estate of Barbara Dawn
Estate of Barry & Joan Kibble
Estate of Barry Douglas Logan

Estate of Barry Robert Baker
Estate of Bernard St George
Lawrence
Estate of Betty Belcher
Estate of Beverley Maureen
Herring
Estate of C Fowler
Estate of C L Fox
Estate of Christine Margaret
Woolford
Estate of Colin Eric Dash
Estate of Daisy Greenaway
Estate of David James
Merryweather
Estate of David Lee
Estate of David William
Peter Mitchell
Estate of Diane McDonald
Estate of Dorothy Ashbolt
Estate of Douglas Archie Tooth
Estate of Douglas James Althoff
Estate of E A Bonner
Estate of E J Bimpson
Estate of E J Penfold
Estate of E T J Griggs
Estate of Edna Jessie Adie

Estate of Edward C Britton
Estate of Elizabeth Anne Brewster
Estate of Elizabeth Stevenson
Estate of Ellen Lindsay Bradley
Estate of Elva Rose Colgan
Estate of Errol Kaye Maxted
Estate of Evelyn Joyce Fawkes
Estate of Father Brian Dogherty
Estate of FJ Peters
Estate of Florence Quintin Davies
Estate of G C Rowles
Estate of G R Nickle
Estate of Genevieve N Geraghty
Estate of Gillian Campbell
McLaren
Estate of Gladys Florence Day
Estate of Glendale Station
Estate of Grant Ean Stewart
Estate of Harry Shuttleworth
Estate of Hazel Mary Inwood
Estate of Henry George Sparks
Estate of Hilda Elizabeth Reid
Estate of Isabelle Benjamin
Estate of J E Bennett
Estate of Jean Shuttleworth

Estate of Jean Una Benson
Estate of Jean-Clare Harper
Estate of Jeanette
MacFarlane Frost
Estate of Joan Robertson
Estate of John Anthony Butler
Estate of John Charles Selby
Estate of John Edward Millar
Estate of John George Hutt
Estate of John Richard Joseph
Malcolm
Estate of John Wallace Stiven
Estate of John William Stevenson
Estate of Judith Isobel Turner
Estate of Judith Margaret Todd
Estate of Juliet Myna Holdaway
Estate of Keith Oakley
Estate of Krystyna Danuta
Downey
Estate of L J Turner
Estate of Leonard Harley Stokes
Estate of Lesley Doralyn Lilley
Estate of Leslie Ivan McGreevy
Estate of Leslie John Catto
Estate of Margaret Alberta
Mc Cracken

Estate of Margaret Atholl
Knowles
Estate of Margaret Isobel
Macgregor
Estate of Margaret Lillian Waller
Estate of Margaret Sommerville
Sinclair
Estate of Mario Marjorie Dingle
Estate of Marjory Grace
Campbell
Estate of Martin Wayne Taylor
Estate of Mary Agnes Watkin
Estate of Maurice Terence Smith
Estate of Melva Norma Dixon
Estate of Mollie Nola Richmond
Estate of Mr Kenneth
Alexander Roberts
Estate of Mr Stanley V. Ratley
Estate of N D R Price
Estate of Nancy Lucy Gibbons
Estate of Nola Dorothy Strange
Estate of Olive Alison Miller
Estate of Olwyn Purvis
Estate of Patricia Jean Rhodes
Estate of Patricia Joan Duncan
Estate of Patricia Joy Edbrooke

Estate of Patricia Merlynn
Hogan

Estate of R Fowler

Estate of Raynor Elizabeth
Stevens

Estate of Rita Merle Diggs

Estate of Robert Bernard Malone

Estate of Robyn Heather
Finlayson

Estate of Rodney Maurice Foster

Estate of Romaine Horn

Estate of Ronald James Payne

Estate of Ronald Stuart Couper

Estate of Rosalind Olga Seiler

Estate of Rose Antony

Estate of Roy Desmond Lake

Estate of S M Hart

Estate of Stanley Eric Randerson

Estate of Stewart Mitchell

Estate of Sue Pratley

Estate of Theresa Hall

Estate of Una Perry

Estate of V M McGregor

Estate of Valerie Maud
Weatherburn

Estate of Valmai Helson

Estate of Vernon Roach Scull

Estate of Veronica Bernice Senior

Estate of William Ernest Cooke

Estate of William John Chambers

The gift of a life without limits



One in three of our services are funded by generous individuals who leave a gift in their Will to Blind Low Vision NZ.

A gift in your Will of as little as 1% can make a lasting difference to Kiwis living with vision loss.

Please contact Supporter Care on 0800 366 283 or blindlowvision.org.nz to receive an information pack today.



**Blind
Low Vision NZ**

Formerly Blind Foundation