

 **Blind +  
Low Vision NZ**

**Formerly  
Blind Foundation**

# **Outlook** **Spring 2019**



## **A New Journey:**

**Renowned author Joy Cowley on her vision loss.**

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**Taking a closer look at vision loss in NZ • Travel tips for packing your bag • We have changed our name – learn why.**

# Feedback on our services

Blind & Low Vision NZ is committed to providing high quality services.

To provide feedback on our services, please contact **Denise Kitto**, National Manager Customer Service and Advice, at **feedback@blindlowvision.org.nz**

**Or C/- Private Bag 99941,  
Newmarket, Auckland 1149.**

**Please get in touch if your vision  
needs change on 0800 24 33 33.**

Cover photo: Joy Cowley, renowned author, looks skyward and smiles.



**Facebook.com/rnzfb**

**blindlowvision.org.nz**



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# Hello to All

**Welcome to the first edition of Outlook published in our new name: Blind & Low Vision NZ (read more about our name change and new brand on page 8).**

Our name is not the only change at Blind & Low Vision NZ, and I am delighted to introduce you to our new Chief Executive John Mulka.

By the time you read this magazine, John will have only been in his role and indeed in New Zealand for a few weeks. He has eagerly joined us from Canada, where his most recent role for CNIB (Canadian National Institute for the Blind) was the Vice President Western Canada.

I will leave it with him to share more with you about his background and his aspirations in serving people who are blind, deafblind or have low vision, on behalf of Blind & Low Vision NZ (see page 4). The Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind (RNZFB) Board is thrilled to have found such capable hands for this crucial role.

## **Growing stronger**

While we might look a bit different, the heart of our organisation and our purpose to help people live their lives beyond vision loss remains and continues to grow stronger. In fact, we are experiencing an increase in demand for our services and this is something we have anticipated for a long time.

Our new person-directed service delivery model (read what it means for you on page 6) is designed to better equip us for greater demand, and our name change also reflects a bid to reach more people we know who could benefit from our services.

The feature article in this issue of Outlook (page 11) takes a look at vision loss in New Zealand, highlighting how demand for services is growing and what we

can do about it. I encourage you to read this if you are interested in understanding more about how Blind & Low Vision NZ is connected within the broader ecosystem, how we are committed to creating solutions, and what you can do too.

## **New strategic plan on the horizon**

We will soon be getting underway with planning to set our next strategic plan. Our current five-year plan is concluding, and I am looking forward to taking forward our momentum into this next stage. I am sure there will be a number of you interested in helping us to shape the new plan, and am pleased to let you know that there will be opportunities from December onwards to be involved.

## **RNZFB Annual General Meeting**

This year the RNZFB Annual General Meeting will be held in Whangarei on Saturday 9 November. If you are interested, I encourage you to attend either in person or remotely.

As this magazine is published, voting will shortly be underway for our Board Elections. If you are a voting member, make sure to complete your voting by 4 November 2019.

**That's all from me for this time.  
Ma te wa.**



**Rick Hoskin**  
Board Chair

# Meet John Mulka, Blind & Low Vision NZ Chief Executive

**We are delighted to introduce our new Chief Executive, John. Enthusiastic to get started, read on to find out about the man behind the title.**



**Tell us, what makes you the right person for the role and the role right for you?**

I am very motivated by the opportunity to join and lead an organisation with a long and storied history, which in my opinion is on solid ground to

grow, dream big in its aspirations, be creative while evolving and making significant impact on the lives of all New Zealanders.

My prior many years of experience (28+) in Canada in similar circumstances make me well positioned to lead in this regard. I have worked at CNIB (Canadian National Institute for the Blind) for the last 11 years, my most recent role being the Vice President, Western Canada. Here I was responsible for day-to-day leadership of operations that spans four provinces and two territories – serving 60,000 registered clients in a variety of urban, rural and remote circumstances, while respecting cultural diversity.

### **What's first on your list?**

Three words initially - Listen, learn and engage ... with as many folks as possible from clients, volunteers, staff, supporters and community partners. My immediate focus is to understand a lot about our current workings, with a heavy emphasis on the client experience and our service delivery.

### **What are your initial thoughts on the areas of accessibility and vision rehabilitation in New Zealand?**

Both of these are absolutely paramount to the success we will achieve in the next short while. This includes transforming our communities into hallmarks of accessibility and inclusion, where everyone can live, work and play without barriers. This means raising our collective voices relentlessly to challenge stigma and create equal opportunity. As well in collaboration with our valued partners making the vision loss rehabilitation journey more seamless, supportive and most importantly creating measurable impact for the client experience.

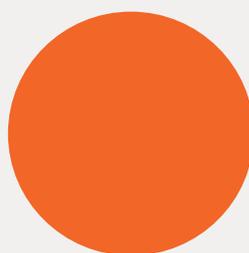
### **What should the future be like for people who are blind, deafblind or have low vision?**

A world of endless opportunities and the ability to choose the

lives they wish to aspire towards. To change the present reality of societal barriers - to one of equality and independence, propelled by innovative programs and powerful advocacy that enable New Zealanders impacted by blindness to live independently and determine the path they wish to pursue.

### **Now we've got the hard questions out of the way, what do you enjoy doing outside of work?**

I love being outside especially on a sunny day - summer is my favourite season. My passion is sports - I love most North American sports including ice hockey, baseball, basketball, football, soccer, golf and tennis. I am quickly converting and have my All Blacks jersey ready and very prepared to be humbled when New Zealand plays Canada on 2 October. I also follow current events and I am an avid reader.



# Support when it counts most

**We are adopting a person-directed service model to improve your experience of us**

A new service model is in the making that will enable us to better manage increased demand for services, reduce waiting lists, and tailor more holistic and individualised service plans.

Our new model puts the people we are here to serve in the director's seat. You tell us what the important things are for you and



together we see how we can help. Our service delivery is transitioning so we can tailor service plans to each person.

## **How does it work?**

Your main point of contact for support from us will now be with a 'Primary Service Provider'. A Primary Service Provider is someone who is broadly trained in the fundamentals of a wide range of services so that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to provide some immediate support as soon as they understand what you are after. The Primary Service Providers also have a wide range of specialist services they will call in when the requirement is outside of their areas of expertise. Using our specialist team more wisely will mean, where possible, waiting lists for specialist services will be reduced and more available for when you need them.

## **How do I get a Primary Service Provider if I don't yet have one?**

If you are an existing client and you need to get in touch with a Primary Service Provider in your area, please call 0800 24 33 33 or email [info@blindlowvision.org.nz](mailto:info@blindlowvision.org.nz) and our friendly staff in the Contact Centre will connect you with someone who can help you.

## **How do we know if we have met your needs?**

We are implementing a new way of checking whether our services have helped meet your needs. At the end of your service plan a staff member will ask if we actually helped. We are here to assist until you have achieved the outcomes you were looking for.

## **What is next in implementing the new service model?**

Firstly, we want to have more people on the ground who are able to support your broad service needs, ideally in your local area. To achieve this we are putting more Primary Service Providers in place. Finding the right people for these key roles will take time, as will building their knowledge base, but we are pleased to have begun the journey.

Secondly, to be of greater help we also want to continue to build partnerships with other organisations to enable us to connect you to services outside of Blind & Low Vision NZ that might also help meet your needs. This may be in the form of community support groups, consumer organisations, or complementary service providers.

# Our new look and feel as **Blind & Low Vision NZ**

**This issue of Outlook has a new look and feel, reflecting the change in our name to Blind & Low Vision NZ.**

As shared previously, we've change our name because we know we need to do a better job of letting Kiwis know who we are, what we do, and who we support. We have a responsibility to let anyone who may benefit from our services know support is available. We also want New Zealanders to understand the differences our services can make in supporting people who are blind or have low vision to live their lives with independence and confidence. We've talked with many people to create a look and feel that resonates with potential and existing clients, donors, volunteers, staff and referrers.

Design cues are taken from the Blind Foundation brand to retain some familiarity in the new brand. At the same time, we were committed to coming up with a

design that's more accessible and engaging. We set ourselves the goal of being inherently accessible for people who are blind or have low vision, while also being engaging for people who are sighted. We won't have everything perfect on day one, but we are committed to the journey.

## Our new logo



The new logo for Blind & Low Vision NZ is bold and uncluttered. Three orange dots of varying sizes are to the left of the text. The words 'blind' and 'low vision' are of equal size, joined together by a plus sign. For the foreseeable future 'formerly



**Blind  
Week**

18 - 19 October 2019

Blind Foundation' will always appear with our new name as we transition between names, where appropriate.

Our tagline of 'Beyond Vision Loss' remains, also written in Te Reo Māori.

## About the design

The style of our new brand, shown throughout this magazine in print form, is designed to the standard of AAA accessibility. It incorporates clean fonts, strong colour contrast, clean backgrounds – all of which we are hoping go unnoticed by you except in making it an easy and enjoyable reading experience. Orange is used as an accent colour, but not used to convey important information.

People are at the centre of what we do, and so authentic and positive images of people will often be front and centre of our design.

## The language we use

For us, language is an important way of connecting with people and conveying who we are. We are committed to writing as we speak, using plain English. We'll incorporate synthetic braille into our language tool kit, to help build awareness of the importance of braille within our community. Similarly, we'll encourage the use of Te Reo Māori within our everyday language.

Of course, a brand is much more than a name, logo and design. It's the perception that people hold of our organisation and their experiences of us. Through the many initiatives underway, some of them highlighted in the pages of this magazine, we will demonstrate the commitment of Blind & Low Vision NZ to making a difference in supporting Kiwis who are blind or have low vision to do the things they need and want to do.

# October, a high profile month for Blind & Low Vision NZ

We are showcasing our new name through an awareness campaign and Blind Week fundraising activity.

## **Awareness campaign: #Alt text for all**

The campaign is kicking off on 7 October with a movement to encourage organisations and individuals to make a small change to support making the world more accessible. We are asking people to join us in using the Alt Text function (if they're not already) in social media and on websites. Alt text's purpose is to describe images for people who are unable to see them, enabling people who are blind or have low vision using screen readers to share in this information. The idea is to get more people thinking more about accessibility as part of their everyday activities.

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**Check out our Facebook page and [alttextforall.co.nz](http://alttextforall.co.nz) to see how you can get behind the campaign from 7 October.**

Client stories are also key to this year's campaign, highlighting how our services have supported people in ways relevant to each of them. We are very appreciative of the people involved for generously lending their voices and stories, in the spirit of supporting others on their sight loss journey.

A further aspect of the campaign is aimed at eye health professionals, highlighting how the services of Blind & Low Vision NZ are complementary to their expertise in treating the eye.

Combined, the aim is that more people will know that support is available for them if they need it.

## **Blind Week Street Collection: 18 and 19 October 2019**

This year's street collection will also be in our new name. Volunteers will be sporting bright orange bibs and collection buckets with the new Blind & Low Vision NZ logo, accompanied by 'formerly Blind Foundation'.

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## Take a closer look:

# Vision loss in New Zealand

It's 9am on a Tuesday and Jenny has just finished reading the paper. She does this every day, after making a coffee as she has done for 60 or more years. Soon she will get herself down to the local bowls club where she plays weekly with her friends. All rather ordinary, the difference for Jenny these days is she uses tools and techniques shared with her by Blind & Low Vision NZ to support her in getting on with her life after her eyesight deteriorated. This support is known as vision rehabilitation.

Conversely, on the other side of town, Brian's eyesight has deteriorated similarly. Without knowing what to do or who to call on for help, his world has got smaller. He can no longer drive or read the printed newspaper, and has lost touch with people he used to see regularly.

These are the types of stories people share about how our older



generation may be experiencing sight loss in New Zealand. Only some people get the support they need early enough for it to make a difference. Of course, there are also people born with significant vision loss and others

## **A brief look at the four most common eye conditions causing blindness and low vision in New Zealand.**

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### **Age-Related Macular Degeneration**

Nearly half of all clients of Blind & Low Vision NZ have some form of macular disease, making it the most common cause of sight loss on our books.

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### **Glaucoma**

At least half of the estimated 115,000 New Zealanders over the age of 40 are unaware they have glaucoma<sup>4</sup>.

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### **Diabetic Retinopathy**

Diabetic retinopathy is the leading cause of blindness and partial sight in New Zealanders under 50<sup>5</sup>.

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### **Cataracts**

Cataracts are the most common correctible eye disease causing blindness and partial sight in New Zealand<sup>6</sup>.

who may lose their sight in middle adulthood. Our circumstances are very individual.

John Mulka, Blind & Low Vision NZ Chief Executive, is new to New Zealand but feels that compared to other countries eye health here is not what it should be: "It is apparent that the health system currently does not have a high level of awareness, knowledge or appreciation for eye health or most importantly the human aspect of sight loss. These are challenges that concern us greatly and we are committed to working collaboratively to create solutions."

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### **A snapshot of vision loss in NZ**

Here at Blind and Low Vision NZ, we support nearly 14,000 people, with around six new people contacting us every day. A few years ago, only around three people per day were contacting us. Some of this increase is because we are better at letting people know how we can help, but mostly it is because of our ageing population with its accompanying increase in age related sight loss. By way of example, the number of Kiwis with age-related macular degeneration is projected to increase by 70% by 2030<sup>1</sup>.

Although we are currently supporting around 14,000 people, we know there are at least the same number of people who have always been eligible but who, to the best of our knowledge, don't access vision rehabilitation services.

Then, there are a further estimated 150,000<sup>2,3</sup> New Zealanders living with vision loss that affects how they live their life, even with the best pair of glasses, but whose needs aren't yet clearly catered to in New Zealand.

It is relevant to point out that researchers deduce these insights on the number of people impacted from data projected from other countries, because there is limited information on sight loss in New Zealand.

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## What can we take from these insights?

Indications are that New Zealand is facing a growing crisis in eye health, especially with age-related conditions. And yet, there is not a good grasp on the issue.

New Zealand has no formal data on the prevalence of vision loss while other countries like Australia have strategies, policies and frameworks that give them up-to-date, representative data on eye health conditions.

Professor Steven Dakin, Head of Auckland University's School of Optometry and Vision Science, shared as part of the Eye Health Coalition, that there is a lack of basic information about the vision of New Zealanders and their access to eye healthcare.

"Our relative ignorance in this area feeds a vicious cycle where we are unable to justify to funders and policymakers the need to resource research and services relating to eye health. I believe this is why eye health has slipped down politicians' list of funding priorities and likely contributes to the current crisis district health



**Professor Steven Dakin**

boards across New Zealand face in the management of age-related eye disease.”

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## What is Blind & Low Vision NZ doing?

The good news is there are a range of ways we can make a difference to this picture in the immediate future and in the long-term. The questions that Blind & Low Vision NZ especially care about are:

1. How do we help people to access vision rehabilitation to enable them to continue to do the things they want to in life?
2. How do we support the wider ecosystem to make eye health care better in New Zealand overall?

## What we're doing in our own backyard

John says: “It is clear our organisation has been thinking about these questions for some time. Work is already underway, and it starts in our own backyard. The transformation of our service model (see page 6) along with our name change (see page 8) are both signs of how we are building our capability to provide services to more people in a smarter way.

In addition, we are beginning to actively promote our services, rather than assuming that people know that we can help and what support we offer.”

## What we're doing with others

In recognising the issues are system-wide, Blind & Low Vision



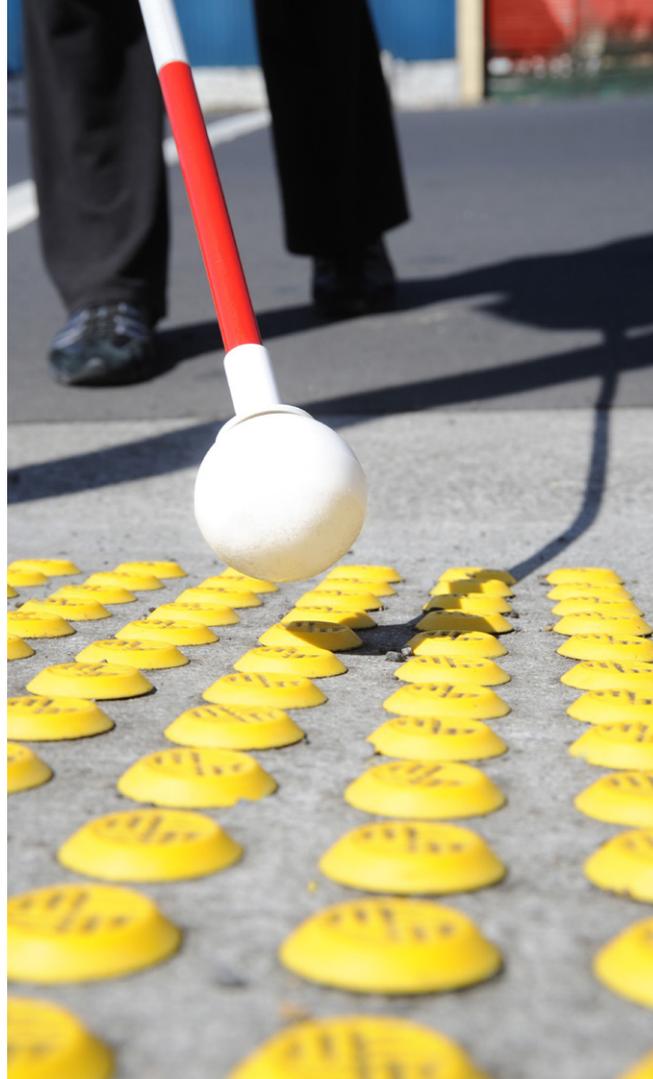
**Eye Health Coalition group.**

NZ has played an active role in establishing the Eye Health Coalition. Comprised of eye health professionals, service providers, researchers and consumer organisations, the coalition was quick to agree that New Zealand does not have an easy eye health pathway and that eye care in general has not had the priority it should.

Blind & Low Vision NZ Chief Executive John Mulka emphasises that solutions need to enable equitable access to eye checks and treatment, to avoid unnecessary sight loss. When sight loss is unavoidable, holistic support needs to cater to both the treatment of the eye and support for the whole person to ensure vision impairment is not a barrier to living an independent life.

“If we put a pathway together, based on the services available today, there are gaps. These need to be addressed to ensure that people like Brian [described at the beginning of the article] aren’t facing systemic barriers that limit their opportunities to a life full of independent choices.” This is the purpose of the collaboration of the Eye Health Coalition.

Finally, Blind & Low Vision NZ and others will soon begin actively campaigning all parliamentary



parties ahead of election 2020. The Eye Health Coalition will campaign for an increase in services and support for broader eye health services. In addition, a complementary campaign will focus on increasing support specifically for vision rehabilitation.

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## What you can do

1. Encourage your friends and family to have regular eye health checks with your local optometrist. It is the best way to make sure that any changes are caught early.



2. Participate in any research opportunities that you are invited to be a part of that may support a greater understanding of eye health in New Zealand.
3. We are gearing up to campaign for improved vision rehabilitation services and support in New Zealand. If you would like to be a part of it or share your story, let us know. **Email us at [communications@blindlowvision.org.nz](mailto:communications@blindlowvision.org.nz) or phone 0800 24 33 33.**

## References:

1. Macular Degeneration New Zealand. Available at: <http://mdnz.org.nz/>
2. Thornley SJ, Gordon K, Shelton C, Marshall R. The prevalence of visual impairment: a capture-recapture study in three urban regions of New Zealand. Available at: <https://blindfoundation.org.nz/eye-info/research/>
3. New Zealand Disability Survey 2013. Available at: <file:///C:/Users/kgord/Downloads/DisabilitySurvey2013HOTP.pdf> . Numbers have been increased for increase in population 2013 to 2018.
4. Glaucoma New Zealand.
5. Koppell KJ, Mann JI, Williams SM et al. Prevalence of diagnosed and undiagnosed diabetes and prediabetes in New Zealand: findings from the 2008/2009 adult nutrition survey. NZ Medical Journal 2013;126:1370:23-42
6. The number of people with some form of cataract in New Zealand was estimated by applying the percentage of people in the United States with cataracts against the population of New Zealand. United States cataract information was obtained from the U.S. National Eye Institute. Available at: <https://nei.nih.gov/eyedata/cataract#4>



## A new journey:

# Renowned author Joy Cowley on her vision loss

**Much loved author Joy Cowley is making space for new learnings as she develops skills to live with macular degeneration. She tells us about her vision loss journey.**

Macular degeneration is on both sides of my family, so inheriting it was nuisance rather than surprise.

That was a year ago. It has been an interesting journey, full of new experience. Here are some of the discoveries.

There is treatment. A pain-free injection of Avastin every five weeks has helped stabilise the condition. In the last year, the staff at the Thorndon Eye Clinic has become “family” and I am hugely grateful that I can still write, although now in 48pt print.

This year I will learn to use a voice programme on my computer.

Another area of great support comes from Blind & Low Vision NZ, which has also become kin, offering whatever is needed: Practical advice, implements including magnifiers, giving answers to questions such as, “How do I squeeze toothpaste on my toothbrush without making a mess?”

The answer? “Cut a square of black plastic, squeeze the paste on the plastic and scoop it up with the brush.” Easy.

The king of implements is the DAISY player for talking books. I choose non-fiction titles because I’ve been writing fiction all my life and want some brain food. Sometimes, non-fiction books can be written in a rather robotic style, but talented narrators make the books come alive.



**Renowned author Joy Cowley on her vision loss.**

Failing sight means a letting-go of some activities. I cannot drive, read, see films and TV, knit or pursue my hobby of wood-turning. But the hardest thing was not being able to see people's faces until they were close. A white lapel stating I have low vision lets people know I'm not ignoring them.

**What else have I learned on this journey?**

There is a safe way to walk down stairs in poor light. I do it sideways. Holding on to a bannister with

both hands I place each foot sideways against the back of the step. It looks odd but it eliminates risk of a fall.

Generally steps are not a problem but I have to be careful with unexpected slopes because they are invisible. A change of gradient in a pavement can pitch me forward. Again, Blind & Low Vision NZ has an answer. I have what I call my "feeling stick" a short white cane that sweeps the ground in front of me when I am in unfamiliar places.

There is one area of vision that hasn't changed. Dreams! I've always been able to remember dreams, and while day vision is blurred, dreams continue to be clear and detailed. I don't know why this is so.

**So what lies ahead?** My role model is my 97 years old aunt who got wet macular degeneration at 60. She is still largely independent. Every night she pours herself a glass of red wine, measuring the amount with her finger in the glass, and sometimes the finger doesn't go in very far. I am looking forward to that.



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**If you need support living beyond vision loss, we can help. Contact us on 0800 24 33 33 or email [info@blindlowvision.org.nz](mailto:info@blindlowvision.org.nz)**

# Spotlight on:

## Telefriend, our award winning peer support team

George, Michael, Sue, Elaine, Gale and June. These names may be familiar to some readers as the group of dedicated people who run our greatly valued Telefriend service.

Telefriend is a peer support service run over the phone for people living with sight loss. June, the team's coordinator and long-serving member (she's been involved with Telefriend since 1995), explains that all of the team live with sight loss themselves. This gives them an affinity with callers that means they

can talk about similar experiences with sight loss, including the lows and the highs.

The team of six came runners-up at the Minister of Health Volunteer Awards this year, which gives recognition to unsung heroes who support New Zealand's health and disability services.

Recognition is well-deserved, with each member dedicating one day a week voluntarily to supporting the service and making contact with an always-evolving group of

**The Telefriend team holding the Telefriend call list. Back row from left: Michael, George, Gail, June, Gary (now retired councillor and Telefriend supervisor), Helen (volunteer supporting the team). Front row from left: Sue and Elaine.**



members. They each make at least ten calls every week and Telefriend participants will often say how much they value the conversation.

But, of course, recognition is not what they're here for.

"We all get something out of it. We're helping someone and in that way we find it quite rewarding.

The people that we ring, we get good feedback and people saying they look forward to their calls. You get more out of it than you put in," explains June.

Blind & Low Vision NZ counsellors may refer people to Telefriend when they are not feeling confident in their situation, and feeling isolated.

While the common ground shared on the phone is that of sight loss, June says that depending on where someone is in adjusting with their vision they don't always realise that the Telefriend team are living with sight loss too.

"When people talk to us, it's about them and it's not about ourselves. It really is about listening, and when callers are ready it may come out in a future conversation that we share sight loss and we are able to find ways to relate."

But the conversation doesn't have to be about vision: "It can be lonely living with sight loss because you can't see what's going on out the window, and so we are here to talk about anything you like," says June.

June enjoys the contact and the talking herself: "I get told I'm a chatterbox!"

She implores, "Don't be afraid to make contact. I know people don't always like ringing strangers, but we're full of fun. And good conversation too!"

## How to contact Telefriend

Telefriend is a caring, confidential service protected by a code of practice and staffed by trained volunteers who are blind or have low vision themselves.

Phone **Telefriend** for a friendly chat on **0800 100 051** any time from **Monday to Friday between 1pm and 4pm**. Outside of these hours, callers can leave a message and the team will return your call.

**You can also get in touch about our other counselling services by calling 0800 24 33 33 or emailing [info@blindlowvision.org.nz](mailto:info@blindlowvision.org.nz)**

# Stevie Jensen raises the bar running with Achilles International New Zealand

**Stevie Jensen's ultimate goal is to complete the New York marathon in the near future, however that goal once seemed very out of reach.**

The Tauranga resident was a keen runner when he was a teenager in the 1980s, but at age 19 his vision began deteriorating.

He has been deaf from birth and has Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP), which has worsened to the point where he can't see anything when he's running.

When he lost his vision, he thought that was the end of running for him. However, Blind & Low Vision NZ put him in touch with Achilles International's Tauranga chapter and they connected him with two running guides: Nikki and Alex.

Alex does hill sprint training with Stevie, while Nikki does long distance training necessary for a marathon.

Since getting back into running in November last year, Stevie has

**Achilles International New Zealand** provides New Zealanders with disabilities the opportunity to participate alongside able-bodied athletes in local, national and international events. Visit [AchillesNewZealand.org](http://AchillesNewZealand.org) for more information.

completed 15k and 10k run events as well as half marathons. Now he's training to complete a full marathon in Rotorua next year.

Stevie says running has improved his physical and mental health.

"I drive myself to overcome obstacles, find my inner strength and it makes me realise that I am capable of so much more than I thought."

The three of them enjoy the companionship that training with others provides, and they have become great friends.

“Having supportive guides has really helped me to keep the motivation going. It’s more fun and an easy way to enjoy running, to access inner strength and enjoy the freedom.”

Nikki says running long distances together gives them many opportunities to chat.

“We were born in the same decade so lots of our chats are about the

“good old days” and growing up in the ‘70s and ‘80s.

“After we competed in the Mount Maunganui Half Marathon I think we switched from just guide/athlete to good friends. It was so hard and technical running around the Mount twice. The trust and concentration involved was huge! It had some scary steep steps. The responsibility of guiding Stevie and calling the terrain was an amazing challenge for us both.”

Stevie encourages anyone who may be considering taking up running to talk to Blind & Low Vision NZ about your fitness goals. He used to be the only vision-impaired runner at the Tauranga chapter of Achilles International New Zealand, but he has since recruited two others who are also enjoying the same sense of freedom that he is.



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**Do you have fitness or recreation goals that you would like to fulfill? Call us on 0800 24 33 33 or email [info@blindlowvision.org.nz](mailto:info@blindlowvision.org.nz) and we can help.**

**Stevie and Nikki have become great friends since training together.**

# An update from our library

For those that use our library, it will come as no surprise that it's one of our most popular services. In fact, one in five of our clients use the library to access all sorts of interesting information and content.

## Read on for an update from Geraldine Lewis, Library Manager.

It's an exciting time for us. We are now able to provide you with access to our content anytime and anywhere through a range of devices, including through Amazon's Alexa smart speaker. Over the course of this year, more than 600 clients have registered to use our Alexa 'skill', and the number is growing quickly.

## Marrakesh Treaty

The Marrakesh Treaty in New Zealand could be ratified as early as December 2019. When this happens, it will make thousands more accessible books available for us. Changes to New Zealand's copyright laws are in the process of happening which will make it possible for us to reproduce accessible books from other countries who are part of the Treaty, making content available

## Did you know?

Our library collection has almost doubled in size in the last five years. We now have more than 30,000 items in our collection.

more quickly by removing the need to repeat production from scratch.

## How we choose content

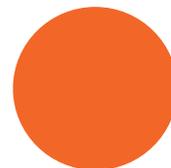
Have you ever wondered how we select our content for the library? Here's our top criteria:

- New Zealand material that is a suitably significant work of literature.
- Continuation of a series.
- Client-authored titles commercially published.
- Award-winning and best-selling titles.
- Special relevance to Blind & Low Vision NZ clients.
- Titles and writers in the top twenty reading genres.
- Your suggestions.

## Are you interested in becoming a library member?

Call us on 0800 24 33 33 or email [info@blindlowvision.org.nz](mailto:info@blindlowvision.org.nz)

# Travel tips for packing your bag



**Do you have a trip coming up? We've gathered some top tips for packing your bags if you are blind or have low vision.**

## We say:

Carina Duke, Blind & Low Vision NZ Orientation and Mobility Practice Advisor, and Miriam Stettner, Rehabilitation Instructor, give their top five tips:

1. Choose a bag you can recognise or mark it to identify it amongst others. Bright large stickers, distinctive labels or tactile elements could help you identify your belongings at baggage claim.
2. Avoid bags with highly patterned linings.
3. Organise items by type and place into separate zip lock bags.
4. If carrying similar sized bottles, such as shampoo and conditioner, label them before you leave home. Carrying elastic bands with you could help you identify items at your accommodation.
5. Carry a spare white cane in your stored luggage.

## You say:

We asked for your tips on our Facebook page. Here's a selection:

1. Use cloth bags to divide things up – you get pro at finding what you need quickly that way I reckon. – Aine Kelly-Costello.
2. Choose a suitcase that will keep your items secure rather than running around loose inside, then decide where each group of items go and ALWAYS pack them in the same place – Barbara Murphy.
3. I pick out each outfit that I will wear on vacation then take a large sized zip lock bag and place each outfit in its own bag. I then release any excess air. Not only does this make getting ready easier, it also saves a lot of space. – Scarlet Nishimoto.
4. Have a small bag for your phone, passport, credit card, air points card, headphones, and charge cable. Makes it way easier on the plane. – Shannon Cleave.

5. I got small, medium and large laundry bags in different colours and also travel pods. I divide clothes either into types and put the whole outfit in the bag for the day. – Rachael Maxwell.



**Like us on  
Facebook**

and join the conversation.

**Visit us at [Facebook.com/RNZFB](https://www.facebook.com/RNZFB)**

## Travel products available in our shop

We stock a wide range of products for people who are blind or have low vision. Here are a few you might be interested in:

### **PenFriend 2 labeller**

The PenFriend is an audio labeller. You can record, re-record and playback information in your own voice for a wide range of items, including those in your suitcase.

**Client price: \$100**

**Full price: \$200**



### **Large print with braille (down side) playing cards**

Cards are a great way to pass the time on flights or long distance journeys. These cards are embossed in braille with the denomination and suit at the top left and bottom right corners.

**Client price: \$18**

**Full price: \$35**



**To learn more about these products and to browse more items, visit [blindlowvision.org.nz/shop](https://www.blindlowvision.org.nz/shop) or call 0800 24 33 33 and speak to our equipment specialists.**

# Lofty goals for Youth Council

## **A note from the Youth Council Chair, Ryan Keen**

It's been a real privilege to be one of the co-chairs of Blind & Low Vision NZ's Youth Council. There is still a lot to do with elections for half of the current Youth Councillors coming up this year and many young people we still want to get along to events at a local level.

We started with lofty goals focusing on youth engagement, events run for young people by their peers and trying to get blind and visually impaired young people to meet and learn from each other. We also wanted to get information out there via a website, social media and other platforms. None of these goals are particularly novel, they are a constant challenge in the youth sector generally. We have made progress but there's still a lot to do.

We believe that the Youth Council has had a successful start putting in place the building blocks that will enable it to succeed long term, including lots of planning meetings and teleconferences, drafting terms of reference and reviewing Blind &

Low Vision NZ's Youth Engagement Strategy and facilitating youth events at a local level.

It has also been a real pleasure to see my fellow Youth Councillors grow and develop. This has provided them with an invaluable opportunity to be part of a small committee (the first such role for many). I look forward to seeing where the Youth Council heads next. A special thank you to all those lovely people who have asked how we are doing and what they can do to help.

## **An updated from the team about Youth events**

Youth events around the country are on the rise. These started in Auckland with a series of events held and most recently in Christchurch where nine youth members from around the city got together around some pizza and had a good chat. Everyone really enjoyed themselves, and it was a good opportunity to meet other youth members. We are hoping to do another event like this soon in Christchurch.

## And finally an update from the organisers of EPIC Youth camp

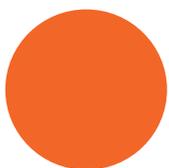
This year saw EPIC return for a third year. EPIC is a youth initiative that sees around 30 youth coming together from all around the county. It has fast become a favourite event among many youth from Blind & Low Vision NZ. This year the event was held in Rotorua for a four-day event. EPIC is designed for promote networking, development of independent living skills and create opportunities for people to try new things and set well outside some people's comfort zones.

This year we ran a series of workshops that taught people about university transitions, employment, advocacy, wellbeing and leadership. As well as these workshops people also got to challenge themselves

with a treetop adventure walk and amazing race through the city that involved the participants navigating to some key Rotorua landmarks and attractions that included a driving range, volcanic park to experience the sights and smells of the thermal activity. It concluded at the Polynesian spas for a nice soak in the pools.



**EPIC Youth camp attendees outside the treetop adventure walk in Rotorua**



### Join the EPIC Youth NZ Facebook group

All young blind and low vision New Zealanders are welcome. Join to stay in the loop about upcoming events and to connect with other blind and low vision youth from around New Zealand. This closed group provides a safe space free of judgement where people can feel free to ask questions and join in with other discussion.

**Visit: [Facebook.com/groups/epicyouthnz](https://www.facebook.com/groups/epicyouthnz) to join.**

## Photos from activities around the country

There are plenty of chances to get involved with activities happening around the country. Here's a taster of what's been going on:



### Art gallery visit

Cantabrians visited the restored Arts Centre in Christchurch. The rich history of the buildings now include their extensive restoration following the Canterbury earthquakes and sections have been opening to the public in stages. Art lovers were able to explore the space where the gothic architecture dates back to 1877.

### Meet the sculptures

Blind & Low Vision NZ clients met with the Wellington Sculpture Trust to explore the city's sculptures. They brought with them six small-scale models of the sculptures and an audio description was provided by trained volunteers.



“Being able to touch the models gave me and the other members a sense of perspective that is really difficult to ascertain from just a description or touching the lower quarter of a tall work,” said Mary Fisher, Blind & Low Vision NZ Community and Life Enrichment team member.

### Cakes and Ladders: Board game night

Aucklanders ventured out to a café dedicated to board games, Cakes and Ladders. The newly formed group are connected by their love of board games. They meet on the third Wednesday of the month.



## Special interest and peer support groups

Blind & Low Vision NZ is proud to support and partner with organisations directly representing the interests of Kiwis who are blind or have low vision.

### Contact details

#### **Albinism NZ**

(06) 367 5900

albinism@inspire.net.nz

albinism.nz

#### **Blind Citizens New Zealand**

Mail: National Office, PO Box 7144,  
Newtown, Wellington 6242

0800 ABC NZ INC (0800 222 694)

or (04) 389 0033

admin@abcnz.org.nz.

blindcitizens.org.nz

#### **Blind Sport New Zealand**

(09) 930 1579

casey@blindsport.kiwi

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#### **Deafblind Association of NZ**

##### **Charitable Trust**

0800 450 650

info@deafblindassociation.nz

Deafblindassociation.nz

#### **Kāpō Māori Aotearoa**

0800 770 990

info@kapomaori.co.nz

kapomaori.com

#### **New Zealand Vision Impaired Empowering Women (NZ VIEW)**

National President: Janet Palmer

04 476 7329

nzviewinc@gmail.com

#### **Parents of Vision Impaired New Zealand (PVINZ) Inc.**

(04) 293 8236 or 0274 402 073

david@pvi.org.nz

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#### **Retina New Zealand**

0800 569 849

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#### **Retina Youth**

0800 569 849

treasurer@retina.org.nz

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Facebook group

#### **Support and Education for our Youth, their Families and their Friends**

021 0235 4395

seyffnz@gmail.com

These details are correct at the time of printing. Please check the Blind & Low Vision NZ website for updated details and more information at [blindlowvision.org.nz](http://blindlowvision.org.nz)

# Blind Week

18 - 19 October 2019



Help support Kiwis living with  
sight loss this Blind Week.

Please donate today at  
[blindlowvision.org.nz](http://blindlowvision.org.nz)

 **Blind +  
Low Vision NZ**  
Formerly Blind Foundation