

Barrier Free Newsletter - October 2009

Welcome to the October Newsletter for the Barrier Free NZ Trust. We have a range of topics to discuss in this issue and we encourage you to give us feedback to take the discussion further.

This month we will cover:

- **An overview of the 16th AGM for the Barrier Free NZ Trust**
- **A big congratulations to Alexia Pickering – our first Lifetime Trustee!**
- **Introducing Andrea Beattie**
- **An update from the Department of Building and Housing on the Building Amendment Act 2009**
- **Barrier Free NZ Trust Seminars**

The AGM preparation provides Barrier Free NZ Trust with an opportunity to stop for a moment and reflect on what it has achieved within the last year, and these past couple of years has seen Barrier Free NZ Trust move through some rather exciting phases. This year is no exception. Barrier Free NZ Trust continues to build on its achievements and there is a real buzz amongst the team with what next year holds.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank readers for their support and we encourage you to continue giving us feedback on our work, and what's happening in your community.

The Barrier Free NZ Trust celebrates its 16th AGM

The Barrier Free NZ Trust celebrated its Sixteenth Annual General Meeting at Parliament in September.

In his Chair's report, Jim Bowler stated:

"The Trust has been active this past year in providing high quality seminars throughout New Zealand. Our seminars provide education and training in 'access' and also an awareness of the Accessible Journey

"The Training Pathway Modules initiative has proven to be successful. Evaluations received from seminar participant's comment favourably on both the quality of content provided and the professionalism and knowledge of the presenters.

"The economic climate has meant further evaluation on the manner in which we provide our education programmes.

"Priority for the coming year is to consolidate our 2 day seminar programme, develop short tailored seminars and increase opportunities to provide our Introduction to Access presentations. Investigation into distance learning is also being undertaken.

Jim confirms that he will continue to remain Chairperson, with Ann Maddox as Past Chair.

He also thanks Ross Livingstone for his contribution as a Trustee.

"Mr Ross Livingstone relinquished his position as Trustee this year. The Trust is very appreciative of the contribution made by Ross and of the value his expertise in the disability sector made to the work of the Trust.

"Trustees continue to review their current skill and knowledge base and aim to extend available expertise with appropriately qualified and experienced Trustees. Expressions of interest are sought from prospective Trustees."

Jim outlines key focusses for Barrier Free NZ Trust, including enriching relationships with partner organisations.

"Building and maintaining relationships with the disability sector organisations and the building industry is a key priority for the Trust. A key function of the new CEO is to further develop and grow positive relationships with the various organisations and work towards cohesive and collaborative partnerships to facilitate any opportunities to improve accessibility.

"A strategic plan for the period 2009 – 2011 was ratified by the Trustees at their meeting in March 2009. Priority for the future of the Trust is growing the quality and quantity of BFA's and therefore the advice and guidance available on access issues, via the Trust.

"Marketing the work of the Trust and maximising opportunities in the current economic environment is a key feature of the plan and offers unique and interesting times as we continue to be the educator of choice on access issues.

To conclude, Jim is *"pleased to report significant growth in Trust activities, efficiency and in the professionalism and profile of the education courses provided.*

"My appreciation to both Sheena Oughton and Jula Goebel for their input and commitment, over the past year and the contribution they made to the stable position the Trust is now in. Thanks also to Ross Livingston and to all my fellow Trustee colleagues."

In my report as the new Chief Executive Officer, I reported on progress over the last six months, and what the focus is for the future.

"Priority for the past six months has been to clarify the strategic direction of the Trust and prepare ourselves for further growth. The Trustees ratified both a strategic plan and a budget, with the expectation of amendments to both as we commence implementation of the plan.

"To date we continue to work on a marketing/business development strategy for the next three years. Implementation of this will undoubtedly see further changes to the staffing in the Trust and how governance/management and operations work.

"At this time, I have a head full of ideas and pages of notes, all generated from discussion with the various people I have visited. I look forward to us putting these ideas into action over the next year and reporting to you on their success."

To read the full version of the Barrier Free NZ Trust's 2008 – 2009 AGM Report click http://www.barrierfreenz.org.nz/documents/downloads/barrierfreenztrust_annual_report_2008-09-web.pdf

Big Congratulations to Alexia Pickering – our first Lifetime Trustee!

September also saw the presentation of our first Lifetime Trustee Award to Alexia Pickering.

The award recognises and acknowledges Alexia's significant contribution to achieving a universally accessible built environment, and her role in the creation and growth of the Trust.

Welcoming Andrea Beattie to the Team

Andrea Beattie is one of the team that supports the Barrier Free Trust in promoting awareness and providing education on accessibility issues. Andrea, who is currently employed by Opus Napier, assists the Trust by assessing modules submitted by those who have attended the two-day Barrier Free seminars.

Andrea's background is 20 years experience in the property and building compliance fields with both the Hawke's Bay District Health Board (HBDHB) and Opus Napier. Her interest in accessibility initially stemmed from a need to undertake owner inspections for building warrant of fitness purposes. Then when Andrea moved into her role with HBDHB she became responsible for identifying and implementing programmes to improve accessibility for users of HBDHB buildings and facilities.

To assist Andrea in broadening her knowledge and experience she was encouraged to attend her first Barrier Free seminar in 2006. She gained her Barrier Free Auditor qualification shortly thereafter and has continued to have a keen interest since.

"Attending the Barrier Free seminar provided me with a fresh outlook on accessibility issues. Buildings which are accessible and usable for people with disabilities become more usable by all members of our communities including the elderly, mothers with prams or people moving goods. I like to remind people of that. It's about changing people's attitudes", says Andrea.

The Barrier Free NZ Trust would like to extend a warm welcome to Andrea and we look forward to working with her in the future.

Faster Building Consent Processes and Reduced Costs

The Department of Building and Housing announced that legislation to speed up the building consent process and reduce costs for builders has been passed by Parliament, which is good news for both consumers and buildings.

In its August 2009 issue of Codewords, it states that the Building Amendment Act 2009, which came into force on 1 August, is a practical first step in the Government's plan to cut red tape.

Under the new Act, people who intend to construct buildings at different locations using the same or similar plans could seek a 'national multiple-use approval' from the Department of Building and Housing. This single multiple-use approval can be used throughout the country and will minimise potential costly delays in obtaining consents.

Another provision will save applicants time and money by streamlining processes for making minor changes to buildings. This means that in most cases builders and homeowners won't have to go back to the beginning of the consent application process to amend plans. Minor variations to approved plans will be able to be made quickly and easily during construction.

Regulations needed to implement this streamlining process are expected to be in place by the end of the year.

Another provision of the new Act removes the mandatory requirement to apply for a project

information memorandum (PIM) when applying for a building consent. Where the information in the PIM is not considered relevant for a particular building project, building consent applicants can choose not to apply for a PIM. PIMs will be voluntary from 1 February 2010.

Building and Construction Minister Hon Maurice Williamson said the Act signals a move to more efficient and practical approaches to building.

'The downturn of the economy is continuing and building firms need as much help as they can get. This Act will help boost efficiency and greater productivity at a time when it is most needed. And if builders pass on the cost savings, then consumers will benefit too,' Minister Williamson said.

Work on a wider review of the Building Act 2004 is under way and Minister Williamson expects to announce further streamlining measures in due course.

A copy of the Building Amendment Act is available electronically at <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2009/0025/26.0/DLM1524710.html>

This announcement is important for our readers and for all those involved with new and existing buildings. The Barrier Free NZ Trust would like to emphasise the importance of getting the design right the first time. Although these measures save costs initially, there is a risk that should compulsory features of a building such as providing access and facilities for people with disabilities is dropped off the plan, the flow-on costs associated with attempting to correct the mistake can be costly.

Readers should encourage their networks to be educated with what is required in regards to providing access and facilities for people with disabilities, and when it is appropriate. This can range from knowing who to contact if you have a query, being familiar with the resources out there, or to attend one of the many Barrier Free Seminars we have available.

Barrier Free NZ Trust Seminars

There are just three more courses running in 2009. Places are limited so register online now!

2-day Barrier Free Seminars

Wellington: 14-15 October 2009 - *confirmed, 4 places remaining*
Christchurch: 17-18 November 2009 - *confirmed, 9 places remaining*

1-day 'Becoming a Barrier Free Advisor' Seminar

Wellington: 23 November 2009 - *confirmed, 6 places remaining*

Register online at:

<http://www.barrierfreenz.org.nz/index.php/training-and-education/registration>

Half-day Architects Seminar - Postponed

We have postponed our Architects seminar until early 2010, due to registrations being lower than hoped. Expressions of interest are still being taken (and are being received in plenty now!) via our website.

This 3-hour seminar will cover the design and documentation requirements to ensure an

accessible built environment that complies with NZ building legislation.

Content:

- People with disabilities and the barriers in the built environment
- What the legislation requires - the Act, Code, and processes
- Design solutions and resources

Online registrations of interest are welcomed and encouraged! As soon as the dates for 2010 are set we will be in contact to confirm your place at this exciting new offering.

Register your interest online at:

<http://www.barrierfreenz.org.nz/index.php/training-and-education/registration>