

## Barrier Free Newsletter - August 2009

Welcome to the August 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:

- **New!! Upcoming Half Day Seminar for Architects and Designers**
- **Accessible Housing Design Competition**
- **An update from the Human Rights Commission on Anne Hawker**
- **Upcoming seminars.**

The days appear to be getting longer, there are a few blossoming trees out there and it's not necessary to light the fire every night – spring is on its way! Hopefully this month has been a bit warmer for all our readers. We look forward to hearing from you.

### **New!! Upcoming Half Day Seminar for Architects and Designers**

The Barrier Free NZ Trust is now offering a half day seminar for architects and designers.

This seminar will give an understanding of what is required in the design and documentation process to ensure an accessible built environment that complies with NZ building legislation. It will introduce how barriers in the built environment can affect people with disabilities, what the legislation (the Building Act, Code and processes) requires, and it will provide participants with design solutions and resources.

The BFT is thrilled to offer this seminar. After many discussions with architects and designers, we understand that it can be difficult for people to take two full days out of their week to attend a seminar, especially in the current economic climate. Now however, there is an opportunity to attend a highly relevant half day seminar tailored to provide solutions and support for architects and designers.

Ron Pynenburg, Barrier Free Advisor/Presenter and Principal Architect of Pynenburg and Collins Architecture, will present this seminar.

The first seminar will be held on 5 October 2009 in Wellington and the second on 7 October 2009 in Auckland, from 9am to midday. The cost is \$85+GST, which includes morning tea and materials. Participants must have a general working knowledge of the Building Act 2004, Building Code and Compliance Documents, Building Regulations, and NZS 4121:2001. There will also be an option to undertake an online learning assessment, which

is available after the seminar.

Places will fill in quickly, so confirm a place and book now via our website, <http://www.barrierfreenz.org.nz/index.php/training-and-education/registration>. For more information, email [admin@barrierfreenz.org.nz](mailto:admin@barrierfreenz.org.nz) or call 04 915 5848.

### **Accessible Housing Design Competition**

The Barrier Free NZ Trust would like to congratulate Nelson based architect, Richard Carver for winning the Wellington City Council's (Council) Accessible Wellington Design Competition.

This competition, organised by the Council, coincided with the Accessible Wellington Forum on Housing and Accommodation held in April 2009. It required entrants to think about design that centres on the human experience of using a living space in both practical and aesthetic terms. The competition used small actual Council site and buildings constructed in 1965, with typical existing small bed-sit units, managed by City Housing and as part of the Council's Housing upgrade.

Virtually every person, at some stage in their lives, will experience the need (directly or indirectly) to modify their living environment to suit their physical or sensory needs. Whether this is due to a loss of mobility as a person ages, or one of the many allergies becoming increasingly common in children, flexible living spaces give people the best possible opportunity to live well, comfortably and healthily.

The purpose of the competition was to promote and raise awareness of accessible and adaptable living space design, and also to provide a range of design solutions to enable the building sector to explore how existing buildings can be made accessible on a limited budget.

Richard's design focused on a two-bedroom solution that amalgamated four bed-sits in an economical way. He said that his company, Redbox Architects, had actually come up with six designs for the competition, and entered two after some deliberation.

According to Richard, "it's always satisfying converting older buildings to new use. This design should appeal to a wide range of people as there is lots of space for people to manoeuvre in. It should truly maximise the potential of the site."

Bill Wrightson, one of the judges and a Barrier Free Advisor, said the entries offered an imaginative range of possibilities for incorporating accessibility and addressing the other requirements of the brief. "We thought that the winning design best addressed the whole site for the accessible route from the street to the unit and within the unit itself. The design also expressed – in a visual and practical way – how to enhance an existing building, as well as providing a good site-specific solution."

Judges included two architects, one from the Council's Housing Upgrade Project, as well as representatives from the Wellington's Disability Reference Group (DRG). Staff from the Housing Upgrade Project will take the winning ideas into consideration for the upgrade designs. Richard won first prize of \$2,000 and was also awarded second prize of \$1,000 for his other design. Andrew Sexton, from Andrew Sexton Architecture, Wellington was

awarded third prize of \$1,000.

### **An update from the Human Rights Commission on Anne Hawker**

Anne Hawker, first woman president of Rehabilitation International, is used to being at the forefront of change.

Nine months into leading Rehabilitation International (RI) ([www.riglobal.org](http://www.riglobal.org)), an organisation representing disabled people from over 80 nations, she's getting plenty of opportunity to be involved on both international and local scenes.

"The passing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the reality of the recession give RI opportunities and challenges," she says.

"One of our big challenges is helping countries interpret rehabilitation in a human rights based context. In some countries it's about access to basic equipment, such as wheelchairs. Each country and region has different philosophies and issues."

Anne Hawker's extensive background in disability work in New Zealand and overseas makes her passionate about disabled people's rights.

"There are more voices speaking out about disabled people's human rights than there used to be and that makes a difference. The legal capacity of disabled people to make decisions about their lives is now enshrined in the Convention (Article 12) and that's a fundamental shift in the power base.

She says international organisations need to be proactive in the current economic climate. "For example, the World Bank is still conducting projects. We need to ask how we can tap into those."

In her "other job" as Principal Disability Advisor for Work and Income NZ, it's also important to be pro-active. "There needs to be a change in attitude. A change in attitude doesn't cost money. I'm currently meeting with several major employers looking at how we can create a disability confident employment sector.

"For too long we've talked to ourselves. In RI we need to make the most of our extensive skill base, but we also need partners like lawyers, unions, employers, and UN agencies. We can be much more powerful if we work closely with the right allies.

"Disability organisations have been good at advocacy, but now we need financial and management skills. We need to be media savvy. And we need to provide alternatives to problems."

The Barrier Free NZ Trust supports Anne's approach. Attitude is the biggest barrier for people with disabilities, and with more organisations working on the same page, the more we can achieve. In regards to the built environment, the more that people are aware of what can create a barrier and how to avoid it, the easier it can be for everyone to navigate around.

These attitudes are also applicable in the workplace. Heightened awareness from employers to recognise how a disability could affect anyone at anytime, could prevent

awkward employment situations arising in the future. Even if a building complies with NZ legislation, it can easily be made inaccessible by erecting dividers, placing desks, and using space for storage. Readers can help prevent the workplace becoming inaccessible by promoting the benefits of universal accessibility and how this can benefit everyone. After all, no one likes to work in a cluttered and clumsy workspace!

### **Upcoming Barrier Free Seminars**

There are three 2-day Barrier Free Seminars, one "Becoming a Barrier Free Advisor" seminar, and two new half-day Architects and Designer seminars scheduled for the remainder of 2009, so get in quickly!

#### **2-day Barrier Free Seminars**

Auckland: 15-16 September 2009 - Now fully subscribed  
Wellington: 14-15 October 2009 - Open for registration  
Christchurch: 17-18 November 2009 - Open for registration

#### **1-day "Becoming a Barrier Free Advisor" Seminar**

Wellington: 23 November 2009 - Open for registration

#### **Half day seminar for Architects and Designers**

Wellington: 5 October 2009 - Open for registration  
Auckland: 7 October 2009 - Open for registration

We look forward to receiving your enrolment.

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