

Barrier Free Newsletter - July 2009

Welcome to the July 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 exciting opportunity to work with the BFT
- Presentation to planners from Viv Rickard
- Recent DBH Determination on accessibility for a classroom
- How bumpy is your accessible journey? A report from the HRC
- Upcoming seminars.

We hope that the winter blues haven't hit people too hard and spirits are still high for our readers. We look forward to hearing from you!

An exciting opportunity to work with the BFT

The Barrier Free NZ Trust provides seminars, workshops and gives advice and guidance in matters of access. We are a not for profit organisation extending the width and breadth of NZ.

We are currently seeking to expand our service and require presenters, advisors or contractors who are able to facilitate workshops of between 1 hour and 2 days duration to a wide variety of audiences. In order to undertake this work for BFT you will need to be an experienced facilitator/presenter with knowledge of the disability sector and/or with technical expertise in access requirements for the built environment. The type of position that you may be suitable for will be dependent on your skills and experience.

Preference will be given to presenters who are respected and known within their professional field in the area in which they reside.

Skills of facilitation and teaching are required, as is the ability to initiate and follow up on opportunities for the BFT to provide advice and education.

This is an exciting role which will be pivotal to the BFT working towards creating a universally accessible environment.

Applications remain open for the perfect applicants. Vicinity is no barrier, forward a CV, covering letter and a statement on how you might fit the requirements of a BFT facilitator/presenter to office@barrierfreenz.org.nz or Attn: CEO, Barrier Free NZ Trust, PO Box 25064, Panama Street, Wellington.

Presentation to planners

In May, the Barrier Free NZ Trust presented to the NZ Planning Institute's Annual Conference in Rotorua. The paper titled "Why planners care about Accessibility", presented

by Viv Rickard Consultant Advisor for the BFT, was received well.

“Disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their living, taking no account of the impairments other people have”. (NZ Disability Strategy, 2001).

Ensuring that the needs for universal accessibility are incorporated into local authority policy documents is vital. Neither of the recent papers concerned with urban design, promoted by the Ministry for the Environment and the Department of Internal Affairs had included consultation with disability organisations regarding the needs of people with disabilities. Ensuring that all aspects of the urban environment are accessible for all people is crucial to enabling everyone to move around and use the full range of facilities available.

The two papers were concerned with promoting national policies which will influence and shape the planning and development of urban environments. Implementation of these policies will be at local government level, through the planning processes of local authorities throughout New Zealand. These two papers are examples of how universal accessibility for all people is not an acknowledged priority in policy development.

We live in an aging population. By mid century, 25% of people will be over 65. “Since health status declines with age, it is not surprising the older people have higher rates of disability than people at younger ages” (Statistics NZ 2004). An accessible environment is a fundamental right of all people.

Our presentation focussed on the statutory environment. It discussed the principles of Universal Design, Sustainability, and Human Rights compliance and how these matters are able to be incorporated into policy development in local authorities. It drew on the experience of the BFT in promoting universal accessibility and the work the BFT has accomplished in working with building officials, architects, designers, developers and disability organisations over the past 15 years.

If you would like to hear more about tailoring a presentation for your organisation, please contact us at office@barrierfreenz.org.nz

How bumpy is your accessible journey?

The Human Rights Commission wants to find out exactly how ‘bumpy’ the accessible journey is for disabled people. Answers to an online survey will give the Commission an important snapshot of progress, as well as forming part of a review of continuing gaps.

“The only way we’re going to get disabled people using public transport is when they know they can do it as independently as possible,” says Thomas Bryan, a member of the accessible transport group.

He’s also involved at a local government level, representing the views of disabled people on the Greater Wellington Regional Council and Wellington City Council.

“The disability community in Wellington have been consulted about their new trains and that’s a big positive,” says Bryan.

Simon Atkinson, from People First, an organisation led and directed by people with a learning disability, says improvements to Christchurch buses are great pluses for disabled people. “They could be a model for other regional councils,” he says.

As a blind person, Auckland Lynette Simon says, “There are slight increases in help, such as the ability to have a pole talk to us and tell us what bus is coming along. And some drivers are excellent - they’ll tell us where there’s a seat or wait for us to sit down before taking off.”

The Commission’s Bruce Coleman managed the groundbreaking 2005 Accessible Journey report (<http://www.hrc.co.nz/home/hrc/disabledpeople/inquiryintoaccessiblepubliclandtransport/inquiryintoaccessiblepubliclandtransport.php>) and is coordinating its review. He’ll be talking to councils, the New Zealand Transport Agency, the Ministry of Transport and other people involved in the journey to accessible public

transport.

“Our commitment to achieving a fully accessible public transport service is in line with the government undertaking an implementation plan by July 2009 to respond to the Accessible Journey recommendations.”

For more information, please go to the Human Rights Commission website, <http://www.hrc.co.nz/newsletters/manahau/2009/06/how-bumpy-is-your-accessible-journey/>.

Determination: Access for people with disabilities to a relocatable classroom in a Wellington school

This determination involved the Ministry of Education with the School Board of Trustees (the applicants), and the Wellington City Council (the authority).

In summary, the Wellington City Council refused to issue a code compliance certificate for two additional classrooms (classrooms 18 and 19) at a school complex. The matter for determination was whether these classrooms were to comply with Clause D1.3.2 of the Building Code.

Clause D1.3.2 is that at least one access route shall have features to enable people with disabilities to:

- Approach the building from the street boundary or, where required to be provided, the building car park,
- Have access to the internal space served by the principal access, and
- Have access to and within those spaces where they may be expected to work or visit.

The classrooms are temporary and have a lifespan of five years and according to the Determination, the rest of the school complies with the Building Code. The Department of Building and Housing decided that Classrooms 18 and 19 did not require a ramp to provide access for people with disabilities and concluded that the benefits obtained from providing access to these classrooms would be far outweigh the high cost of providing such access.

To read the full determination, please visit

<http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Building/Determinations/2009/2009-27.pdf>

The Barrier Free NZ Trust is seriously concerned at the precedent which has been created by this Determination which allows a waiver for the proposed building work in the school. The Trust would welcome discussion with you regarding this issue.

This case is an example of how important it is to not only promote the legal requirements to provide access for people with disabilities to groups such as territorial authorities, but that a wider audience need to be aware of the benefits. This includes architects, project managers and building owners. It is important that we raise awareness to these groups through various avenues, and we would love to hear your ideas on how you promote, or would like to promote access to people with disabilities.

Upcoming Barrier Free Seminars

There are only four 2-day Barrier Free Seminars and one “Becoming a Barrier Free Advisor” scheduled for the remainder of 2009, so get in quickly!

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

2-day Barrier Free Seminars

Hamilton: 11-12 August 2009 - *fully subscribed*

Auckland: 15-16 September 2009 - *open for registration*
Wellington: 14-15 October 2009 - *open for registration*
Christchurch 17-18 November 2009 - *open for registration*

1-day Becoming a Barrier Free Advisor

23 November 2009 - *confirmed, open for registration*

New Seminar for Architects and Designers

Two half day seminars are planned for October 2009:

- Wellington 5 October
- Auckland 7 October

Participants will gain an understanding of how to design and document an accessible built environment that complies with the Building Act and the Building Code.

Time Allocated: 3 hours (9am – midday)

Seminar Cost: (morning tea and materials included) \$85

Online learning assessment: available following seminar \$50

Places fill in quickly, so make sure you register soon!

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