

Barrier Free Newsletter - June 2009

Welcome to the June newsletter for the Barrier Free NZ Trust. It has been an incredibly busy start to 2009 and we are excited to inform readers of what has been happening since our last newsletter.

This newsletter will update readers with the following:

- Upcoming Barrier Free Seminars
- New personnel at BFT
- Current direction
- Providing advice to the Greater Wellington Rail on the Matangi Train Project
- Update on Building Sustainable Communities
- A BFT presentation to the Wellington Construction Forum.

We welcome your feedback on this newsletter and would like to hear any updates regarding accessibility in your community. Please email Rachael at admin@barrierfreenz.org.nz to share your views.

Upcoming Barrier Free Seminars

We have four 2-day Barrier Free Seminars and one "Becoming a Barrier Free Advisor" scheduled for the remainder of 2009.

2-day Barrier Free Seminars

Hamilton: 11-12 August 2009
Auckland: 15-16 September 2009
Wellington: 14-15 October 2009
Christchurch 17-18 November 2009

1-day "Becoming a Barrier Free Advisor" Seminar

Wellington - 23 November 2009

Places are filling up quickly, so make sure you register soon to avoid disappointment!

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

If you think that your employees or community group would benefit from a tailored Barrier Free Seminar, please contact the office at admin@barrierfreenz.org.nz to discuss the

options available.

New Personnel at BFT

The Trust welcomes Lorraine Guthrie as our first full-time Chief Executive Officer. Lorraine joined the BFT in late January and worked closely with Sheena during this period familiarising herself with the BFT. Originally from Timaru, Lorraine spent the past 16 years living in Auckland and working in schools at advisory, governance and management levels. She is delighted to be working in Wellington and in the area of accessibility. We are excited at what the prospect of a full time CEO will bring to the work of the Trust.

Lorraine's appointment marks some changes in the office and we would like to say a big farewell to both Sheena and Julia. Sheena, our creative and ever patient Office Manager left the BFT to further her career path. We are particularly appreciative of her dedication, enthusiasm and commitment to the vision of the BFT. Fortunately she hasn't left us for good and is continuing to work with us on various projects.

Julia left suddenly to attend to family matters in Germany. Upon returning she commenced a new position in youth work and education in Wellington. The Training Pathways programme that Julia developed and managed over the past eighteen months has been fully implemented and is working well. We wish Julia all the best in her new adventure.

Finally, we welcome Rachael to the team. Rachael, a Massey communications student, joined us in February as a part-time administrator. Rachael has been a great asset so far to the BFT and she will most likely be your first point of contact in the office.

Current direction

The BFT have been working on various projects this year and held three successful 2-day Barrier Free Seminars nationwide. Our recently launched Module 5 – Becoming a Barrier Free Advisor has been received well in our Wellington and Auckland sessions and we look forward to holding our third session in Wellington on November 23.

The main focus for the beginning of 2009 has been to finalise the BFT's Strategic and Marketing Plans for 2009-2011. Our final product will include various ways to be proactive and overcome the challenges imposed by the current economic climate. Establishing relationships within a new government are obstacles that make this period's Strategic Plan refreshing and unique. Our new and developing team is however, up for the challenge!

Matangi Train Project Wellington

Last December the Matangi Project Team contacted the Barrier Free NZ Trust to review and report on the designs and mock-ups produced by the manufacturer for the Greater Wellington Rail Ltd.

Over the past few months BFT personnel and advisors worked closely with the Matangi Project Team, in order to complete a report that advised on the physical and sensory disabilities relating to accessibility.

Some interesting facts highlighted in the BFT report from other studies were as follows:

- 11% of adults (around 63,400) and 7% of children (around 5,500) with disability live in households without a car, compared with 4% of adults and 5% of children without a disability (Ministry of Health 2001 census).
- A total of 76% (around 604,500) of adults with a disability indicated that they could easily get to a bus stop or a railway station from where they lived. The remaining 24% (an estimated 139,300 adults) indicated they could not. Other difficulties included having to stand in a moving vehicle; identifying the right vehicle and the right stop; getting route and timetable information; transporting a wheelchair or other aids; and unhelpful staff. The most common difficulty for both adults and children were getting on and off public transport.
- Public land transport difficulties differ for individuals and groups according to the nature of their disabilities. For adults with physical disabilities, getting on and off public transport, standing in buses and finding the stops were major concerns. Blind and visually impaired people had some of the same concerns and different issues relating to audio announcements, while deaf and hearing impaired people regarded visual identification aids as a fundamental need. For people with psychiatric and psychological disabilities the issue may not be physical accessibility, but the attitudes and behaviours of drivers and fellow passengers, which can in fact affect all disabled people.
- In "Four in Ten – A profile of New Zealanders with a disability or long-term illness" published by the Ministry of Health in 1994, 26% of the NZ population were identified as being mobility impaired to the extent that they had significant difficulty using public buildings.

Further extracts from the report stated that there are a variety of legal and local authority requirements for access to and use of trains for people with disabilities.

- The Transport Management Act has five objectives: environmental sustainability; economic development; safety and personal security; access and mobility; and public health.
- The Greater Wellington Regional Council's Transport Strategy's main objective is "To deliver a modern, reliable and accessible rail system that competitively moves people and freight in an economic, environmental, integrated and socially sustainable way."
- The Human Rights Act 1993 sections 42 and 43 establish the need to make trains accessible. This requirement was clarified by the "The Accessible Journey", a report published in September 2005 by The Human Rights Commission (HRC) on the accessibility of public land transport in New Zealand. The concept of the accessible journey acknowledges the interdependence of transport systems, public spaces and buildings and the necessity to ensure all components provide continuous accessibility throughout particularly at points of transition between components.

A major recommendation of the HRC report was that within five years National Accessibility and Design Performance Standards for Public Land Transport be produced and monitored. To date there appears to have been little progress towards production of these standards.

NZ Standards have not yet been developed for accessible train transport. The Transport Agency NZ has a publication due out entitled "Requirements for Urban Busses in NZ". This was signed off by the Board in December 2008.

“The Accessible Journey” commented on the prevalence of transport difficulties amongst disabled NZers as follows: “There is no authoritative data available in NZ about how many disabled people have difficulties using public land transport services as they are currently offered, or about the nature of these difficulties. The absence of specific data in part reflects the limitations of official data sets. It is, however, a symptom of the invisibility of disabled people and their struggle for a voice in the planning and provision of public land transport, so that it better serves the public.

“Incomplete information is a major hurdle to accurate cost/benefit analysis of the social and economic costs of both the barriers to accessible public land transport, and the opportunities inherent in the removal or reduction of barriers. It also partly explains the lack of a marketing orientation to the potential customer base of accessible public land transport. This lack was evident during the Inquiry process across the spectrum of submissions.”

The BFT would like to thank Greater Wellington Rail Ltd for the opportunity to be involved to help improve access on the Matangi train. It is a positive step towards improving access on public transport in Wellington and we hope to be involved in further consultations.

Building Sustainable Urban Communities – a summary of submissions

Readers may remember that last November the Barrier Free NZ Trust put forward a submission to the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) on Building Sustainable Urban Communities.

This document sought feedback on how the public and private sectors could work together more effectively to support and stimulate large-scale urban development and redevelopment.

Specific feedback was sought on a number of issues:

- the role of government in urban development;
- streamlining planning and development control processes;
- coordinating and integrating infrastructure, planning and delivery;
- funding urban development;
- assembling land; and
- improving housing supply, choice and affordability.

Further ideas and suggestions for encouraging sustainable urban development in New Zealand and dealing with existing barriers were also welcomed. To read a copy of our submission, visit <http://www.barrierfreenz.org.nz/documents/bfts%20-%20building%20sustainable%20urban%20communities%20submission.pdf>.

According to the DIA, 103 submissions were received from the public and private sector, along with other interested parties. Hui were also held to gain a specific Māori/iwi perspective. Feedback received on the discussion document and summarised in the summary of submissions will help shape recommendations to the government on policy options to support sustainable urban development in New Zealand.

Extracts of the BFT's submission are included in this submission document which is available on the DIA's website at

[http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/SUDUSummaryofSubmissions1/\\$file/SUDUSummaryofSubmissions1.pdf](http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/SUDUSummaryofSubmissions1/$file/SUDUSummaryofSubmissions1.pdf)

The BFT recommends readers to be involved and promote accessibility where possible. We encourage you to share your experiences with us by emailing admin@barrierfreenz.org.nz. By raising awareness through the access community, we can work together to help achieve universal accessibility.

Presentation to the Wellington Construction Forum on Accessibility to Buildings

Over 60 professionals attended an 'Introduction to Access' presented by the Barrier Free NZ Trust at Victoria University's School of Architecture on Tuesday the 10th of February.



The presentation covered information on the accessible journey for all people, including people with disabilities. The presenters (photographed above) were Jula Goebel, Education Project Manager and Jim Bowler, Chairperson of the Trust.

The one hour presentation was well received, informative, and many interesting questions were raised about access requirements in NZ building legislation and approved document, design, and best practice.

It is hoped that the presentation to the Construction Forum will be repeated in Auckland, Palmerston North, and Christchurch in the near future.

The construction industry needs to create built environments that fit with the needs of society – buildings need to be user friendly, marketable, and sustainable.

The NZ Building Act states that Schedule 2 buildings need to provide access and facilities for people with disabilities. "Accessibility not only means access for people with disabilities, but it also ensures efficiency, comfort and convenience for everyone else"

(NZS4121:2001). Disability increases with age, so at some point the built environment will affect us all. In 2011, the first of the baby boomers will turn 65 – that's 17% of the world's population.

In order to build a sustainable environment we need to design buildings that all people can access and use, regardless of abilities or age, now and in the future. If access requirements are considered as part of the initial design, costly alterations can be avoided further down the track and we can also avoid waste of building material.

Physical access enables equal opportunity and inclusion in work, education, and community activities. Accessible schools and work places will positively effect New Zealand's economic growth and improve the social outcomes through equal access and opportunities for all people. This will result in more people in employment, and fewer people on benefits.

The requirements for access are implemented on the basis of the Accessible Route. The two most important elements of the Accessible Route are that it is continuous and that it enables unaided, independent access. That means that everyone, including people with disabilities, can enter and use a building without requiring assistance.

Universal Access Design involves a fundamental shift away from the practice of removing barriers for a particular group of people, like people with disabilities to a way of meeting the environmental needs of all users, regardless of age or ability. This ensures that that no one is excluded from use of the built environment by physical barriers; it improves usability of the built environment, and promotes safety and well-being for everyone. Universal Access Design is therefore also a move away from providing separate and stigmatising design solutions for people with disabilities, like the ramped entry at the back of the building.

To find out more about how you can improve accessibility for your building, please contact a Barrier Free Advisor close to you. For a list of our Barrier Free Advisors visit:
<http://www.barrierfreenz.org.nz/index.php/barrier-free-advisors/accredited-bfas>