The Braille Authority of New Zealand

Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT)

# New Zealand Country Report to the 7th General Assembly of ICEB, October 2020

31 August 2020

## Purpose of the Trust

The purpose of BANZAT is to:

• set standards and to make rulings on braille code usage within New Zealand;

• maintain awareness and consistency with current international developments in all braille codes;

• accredit practitioners involved in braille production;

• promote braille as the prime literacy medium for blind people; and

• promote best practice in teaching, acquisition and distribution of braille.

## Setting standards and staying up to date

BANZAT works with ICEB committees to contribute to and learn from braille developments across English braille. We have implemented all ICEB UEB Rules amendments.

## Accredit practitioners involved in braille production

BANZAT collaborates with the Australian Braille Authority to set and administer the Trans-Tasman Certificate of Proficiency in Unified English Braille. The examination is held each year and, in New Zealand, holding the certificate is a prerequisite for several teaching qualifications taught through Massey University. Since the Trans-Tasman Certificate was launched in 2008, 157 candidates have passed the examination.

In 2019 and 2020 we have been working on updating processes for the Certificate. We have been asked to develop a lower level qualification and this will happen when resources are identified.

In 2015 we launched a qualification for producers using computer translation software for braille production. We identified the need to strengthen guidance around confidentiality of materials in the hands of producers and we presented a paper on this topic to the Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities at its 2019 Conference.

## Promotion of braille

Blind Citizens NZ, New Zealand's oldest consumer group (disabled people's organisation) initiated the writing of the Strategic Framework for the Provision of Braille Services. Launched in October 2018 the framework has objectives for the promotion, teaching, production and library services of and for braille. Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ, Blind Low Vision NZ and BANZAT worked with Blind Citizens NZ to draw up the framework. Our organisations are reporting against it each year.

We have been pleased to see an increasing awareness of the importance of braille particularly across New Zealand government departments. This increased awareness of accessible format materials gave rise to New Zealand acceding to the Marrakesh Treaty in January 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic has drawn attention to the need for information to be in the hands of disabled people in their preferred formats. Government paid New Zealand's primary braille producer, Blind Low Vision NZ, to provide health information in braille.

There has also been a significant rise in braille materials in te reo Māori for adults. For example, in 2019 and 2020 the Auckland Arts Festival provided braille copies of their songbooks of Waiata for their community sing-alongs.

Teachers of braille continue to come up with innovative ways to encourage young learners and adults to master literacy through braille. Blind Low Vision NZ teachers have introduced braille music to some adults who were readers of print music and they have been learning short pieces of music from braille scores to play in an instrumental ensemble.

Teachers at Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ run competitions promoting braille among their students. In 2017 BANZAT received a donation from the St Anne's Trust for the North Shore Sight Impaired to provide prizes for the competitions. The 2018 competition resulted in a jingle about braille with words and music by one of the high school graduates. See <http://www.banzat.org.nz/archives/344>

In our 2016 Country Report we let you know our Government was proposing to remove braille signs in taxis. This was a casualty of the deregulation of New Zealand's taxi industry. Unfortunately the legislation passed in 2017. However the big taxi companies are continuing to provide braille labels, although not to the same standard as was required under previous legislation.

The BANZAT website <www.banzat.org.nz> is well established, with links to braille manuals and information about BANZAT activities. Our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/banzatnz/> is reaching out to followers in several countries.

## BANZAT trustees

The 11 trustees of BANZAT are drawn from a wide range of teachers, producers and users of braille.

BANZAT warmly congratulates trustee Wendy Richards who has been awarded a PhD in Music by the University of Auckland. Her research focused specifically on braille music pedagogy and has already been incorporated within teaching practices in the school system through Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ.

## In Memoriam

We are very sad to record the passing of Lisette Wesseling in September 2016. Lisette was a very accomplished blind soprano who taught singing and braille music in New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom.

In 2017 the transcriber team in Accessible Format Services at Blind Low Vision NZ farewelled Janine Wright. She was producing textbooks for students up until a short time before she died.

In 2018 Maureen Rawiri also passed away. For more than 30 years Maureen was a proofreader in Accessible Format Services. She specialised in braille music and the Nemeth Code. She was also very knowledgeable about New Zealand's indigenous language te reo Māori.

The Library and Studios at Blind Low Vision NZ have employed a number of braille readers over the years. Mrs Lenore Jessop, who passed away in 2020, issued both braille and talking books in her thirty years in the Library. She was a great reader's adviser, having read many titles in the collection herself. Another braille user who worked in the Library and Studios for nearly 30 years was Marcel Oats, who left us in 2017. Although like Mrs Jessop he issued braille library books, he was primarily a studio producer of magazines, and very well known to borrowers and narrators. When the studios transitioned to Daisy production, he used his braille display with the recording software.

In July 2020 we learned of the passing of Bette Gilmore. Miss Gilmore became a braille music transcriber and taught music at Homai College for some twenty years from 1978.