# BCA, Founded on Passion: Building with SCIL – Strategies for our future success

*Text of a presentation made to the BCA Board and National Policy Council by BCA President, John Simpson, on Saturday 11 February 2017.*

In his keynote address to the 2015 BCA 40th Anniversary Convention Bill Jolley referred to the four phases of BCA's development.

He considered:

* "1975–1988 was the establishment phase when the fledgling organisation was started, struggled for survival, relied on commercial fundraising and became incorporated."
* "1988–2000 was the development phase when the organisation first received ongoing agency grants; secured recurrent government funding; carried out information delivery or research projects; achieved peak-body status with defined service streams of individual and systemic advocacy, information dissemination, peer support and consultation; grew substantially; and partnered with other organisations to lead cross-disability policy-related projects."
* "2001–2015 was the consolidation phase with the organisation focusing on advocacy and blindness-related policy development. The period opened with BCA closely involved as a watchdog partner in the merger that created Vision Australia, and has been characterised by long and difficult policy campaigns for accessible voting and AD."
* Bill observed: "2015 and beyond is characterised as the challenge of an uncertain future with BCA having lost its Commonwealth secretariat funding and major change happening for blindness services due to the introduction of the NDIS for people under 65 and the My Aged Care service gateway for seniors."

As I commence my Presidency of Blind Citizens Australia I am committed to making this next phase of our development the **"SCIL PHASE".** **And Yes SCIL is spelt S.C.I.L as it symbolises the four pillars that will underpin my Presidency:**

### Sustainability

### Credibility

### Independence

### Legitimacy

**To my mind consolidation of these Four Pillars is essential if we are to see BCA meet the expectations of its members and address the countless challenges that lie ahead for us.**

**So what do these four essential elements comprise?**

### Sustainability requires us to achieve;

* adequate funding from a diverse range of funding sources;
* an appropriately skilled and committed staff team;
* an expanding and more diversified membership;
* skilled and committed leadership;
* a leadership training and succession planning philosophy that is integrated into all aspects of the organization.

### Credibility requires;

* a commitment to evidence based public policy development and well-articulated advocacy;
* well-developed internal communications and networking mechanisms that remain in tune with the needs and aspirations of the membership;
* well-developed sector intelligence mechanisms;
* the strategic appointment of appropriately skilled external representatives with appropriate feedback mechanisms in place.

### By Independence I mean;

* development and maintenance of collaborations and strategic partnerships across the blindness and broader disability sectors, with no organization in a position to exercise undue influence over the BCA Board or staff.

### And by Legitimacy I mean;

* BCA must re-establish its place as the authoritative national voice of blind and vision Impaired Australians.

We have incorporated these four pillars into the preamble to a revised version of our Strategic Plan which will be made available to members in the near future.

I now want to touch briefly on my expectations of how the Board and its various Committees will "do business".

I am delighted to have this opportunity to lead a Board and by extension Committees such as the NPC, that bring together such a wide range of skills and experience. However, I learned a long time ago that skill and past experience are not enough to ensure that the job gets done.

Whether we were elected at an AGM or have accepted appointment since, the commitment we have made is the same – we have pledged to our members that we will commit ourselves to the effective leadership of our organisation. This is a pledge that applies to us both individually and as a group.

I take this commitment very seriously and so-long as I am your President I will be holding each and every-one of us to it.

This means that I expect the Board and its various committees to work proactively toward the consolidation of our four pillars. We don't wait to be nagged or embarrassed at the next meeting before we get on and do the things we have committed to – we come back prepared to report on the progress we have made.

As we move forward we will be striving for efficiency in all that we do - and by that I don’t use the term to mean cut backs in resources or lessening of the opportunities we have for constructive dialogue. I have been concerned for some time that we do not make the best use of our resources, both human and material. I believe that the Board, Committees and staff should all look for ways to do things more efficiently and to better effect for our members and the community we serve.

To that end I have asked Emma Bennison, our EO, and Dan Stubbs, our Treasurer, to review all of our administrative processes in order to ensure that we are providing good service and we are not chasing our tails to pick up on half completed projects, tasks and promises.

And finally I want to set us all a challenge. I read recently a checklist of the ten characteristics of high performing community service organisations. It listed:

1. A clear compelling Mission
2. A great board of directors
3. Strategic and annual plans that are used to guide decision making and action
4. The right CEO for the right time
5. Access to adequate and diversified income streams
6. A culture that encourages everyone to be ethical, accountable and transparent
7. A marketing oriented approach to everything they do
8. Tight internal controls
9. An ability and willingness to measure outputs, outcomes and organisational culture.

10. An ability and willingness to embrace technology.

**Right now we do better in some of these areas than we do in others, so let's review this list in 12 months and see how far we've progressed.**

**I look forward to working with you all throughout this year and beyond toward the achievement of our four pillars, Sustainability, Credibility, Independence and Legitimacy.**