

NTHT Director's Report to AGM 2018

Overview

This has been another big year for NTHT. We hired four new employees while ramping-up to take on the management contract for Nelson City Council's 142 community housing flats. Thus this year NTHT's responsibilities grew from 44 to a total of 186 tenancies, providing social and affordable rental housing for over 275 people.

Highlights of the Year

Nelson City Council Community Housing: NTHT assumed management of NCC's community housing for older people in need in October 2017. The 142 flats are grouped in 9 clusters in different parts of the city. Our first steps were to get out and visit all the tenants, and then to do a comprehensive Building Condition Assessment on all the properties. Our focus was threefold: provide responsive Tenancy Management and Tenant Support, provide prompt repairs and maintenance, and identify cost-effective ways to make the flats more warm/dry/healthy. We have progressed in all three areas and have confidence going forward that the properties, while 28-56 years old, are now in reasonably good condition, and the tenants are happy. NCC tenancy turnover this year was very low, just 7% (10 vacancies). Our NCC Tenant Survey also showed 100% tenant satisfaction, with main positives being: NTHT communicates well, prompt repairs and maintenance, responsive and caring staff.

In June, we began discussions with Council about purchasing their community housing. Council is also discussing a possible sale with Housing NZ. NTHT will seek to gain ownership of this housing stock in order to, over time, redevelop each site and increase the density, to provide more 1- and 2-bed flats or apartments for older people on low incomes.

Stability of Tenancies: NTHT tenant turnover remains low, at 13% (6 vacancies) for 2017-18. Low turnover means we have long-term tenants, people who are able to put down roots in their community. It also underscores the need to keep growing the supply of housing, in order to help the increasing numbers of people applying with us.

Balance of Social Housing and Affordable Rents: As vacancies occur, NTHT has the flexibility to take on tenants at different levels of housing need, aiming for an overall community balance. As of 30 June 2018, we had 21 social housing tenants (receiving the Income Related Rent Subsidy from MSD), and 23 tenants on affordable rents (set at 70-80% of market rent). Demographically, 45% of our tenant households are Pakeha/ NZ European, 18% are Maori, 7% are Pacifica and 30% are new migrants/ former refugees. 50% have work (mostly part-time), and 50% are on benefits or NZ Super.

Methamphetamine Contaminations: For the first time ever, NTHT had four cases of meth contamination (7.5-22 mcg) in 2017-18. All required decontamination/remediation, which was mostly covered by insurance. Each case was different, but all four tenancies were terminated due to a mix of arrears and persistent anti-social behaviour. Despite recommendations made in the Gluckman Report, the NZ Standard 8510 on meth levels (1.5mcg), which guides NZ meth testing and remediation, so far remains unaltered. We welcome further research to inform a new, improved NZ Standard for residential housing that will have legislative standing.

Emergency Housing (EH): On 30 June 2018, we completed our coordination of a 10-year community-based project to provide 1-2 weeks of Emergency Housing, most recently in a room at Franklyn Village. In 2017-18, we saw occupancy in that EH room drop to 25-30%, largely due to the changes in government policy with Work & Income paying for more EH stays in backpackers and motels, and

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more Transitional Housing run by Salvation Army. NTHT chose to hand over coordination of the Franklyn Village EH room to Salvation Army from 1 July 2018.

Housing Advice/Monitoring Housing Need: Our staff provides Housing Advice for people in need, to help them get on the social housing register, access emergency housing, or find affordable rentals (177 queries this year). This was in addition to those applying for NTHT or NCC vacancies. In the absence of a magic wand, we encourage people to be persistent and help them think through practical options which may include friends, family, or motor camps. In July, we also began a project to monitor housing need, in order to deliver more comprehensive data than what MSD can count via its social housing register. We know that there is a real need for more, affordable rental housing in this region; we will work through 2018-19 to produce more accurate data on that need, so we can better inform further government investment in affordable rental housing.

Warmer Healthier Homes (WHH): We administer this programme to install retro-fit insulation into homes occupied by Community Service Card holders. WHH is jointly funded by Nelson City Council, the Rata Foundation, Nelson/Marlborough District Health Board, Marlborough District Council, Mainland Foundation, Port Nelson Trust and others. This year, 388 homes were insulated by the installer, Absolute Energy, with clear improvements in people's living environments and health.

Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA) Council: CHA is the peak body for the NZ community housing sector, playing an important role as a bridge between the sector and central government. NTHT has been fortunate to have a presence on the CHA Council for many years, through previous Chairs, as well as myself as current Director, serving as CHA Treasurer since 2015. Participating in the CHA Council helps NTHT keep a finger on the pulse of developments in community and social housing in around New Zealand, which appear to be speeding up under the new government.

NTHT People: We are very fortunate to have a strong and skilled team doing the day-to-day work of the Trust. Housing Manager Mira Markovic has been with us since 2014, bringing strong people skills, clear knowledge of Work and Income/MSD systems, and a great sense of humour. Our Finance Manager Phill Lee joined us in 2017, contributing his business banking background, accountancy skills, and a calm, go-for-it nature. We also recruited three new positions in 2017: Tenancy Manager Judy Honeybone brings her extensive property management knowledge from the private sector; Building Manager Jon Stevenson brings deep asset management experience from Housing NZ; Office Administrator Sarah Baldwin contributes clear IT and people skills. Our multi-faceted team really enjoys working together, in service to our tenants who rely on and appreciate having stable, affordable, healthy homes.

Finally, we extend heartfelt thanks to Keith Preston our Chairperson, and all of the NTHT Board members for their energy, commitment and skills in governing our growing community housing trust.

Carrie Mozena
NTHT Director