

## NTHT Director's Report to AGM 2020

### Overview

This has been a challenging and yet productive year for NTHT. We invested significant effort to deliver a comprehensive proposal to Nelson City Council to purchase their community housing portfolio, which was not successful. The resulting uncertainty caused by the Council divestment led to some staff turnover, but the new staff we engaged have added energy and expertise. A new charitable funder made a sizeable donation to NTHT late in the year, which enabled us to purchase land for a new development (in July). Through 2019-20, NTHT was responsible for 186 tenancies, delivering social and affordable rental housing for over 270 people in Nelson and Richmond.

### Highlights of the Year

Nelson City Council Community Housing: NCC owns 142 flats that serve 152 older tenants in need, located in 9 housing clusters in different parts of the city. NTHT was contracted by Council to manage this housing; we provide responsive Tenancy Management and Tenant Support, deliver prompt repairs and maintenance, and implement cost-effective improvements that make the units more warm, dry and healthy. This year we completed 24 vacant upgrades including repainting and some new carpets.

NCC tenant turnover of 13% this year (18 vacancies and 6 transfers) was higher than last year's rate, but well within the normal historical range. Most tenants who leave Council housing go into residential care, some move away to be closer to family, others pass away. All the new tenants we selected from the long waitlist came from very inadequate or insecure housing (e.g. living in a car, shed or leaky caravan, boarding, or overcrowding with family).

Covid-19: As an essential service, NTHT continued to operate well through Levels 4 and 3. We adjusted staff procedures for everyone to work primarily from home during the lockdown, with staff making contact with most tenants by phone every week, PPE utilised if staff had to do on-site visits, and maintenance limited to essential repairs only. The region was blessed with no community outbreaks which helped maintain tenant safety, and tenants themselves for the most part were very attentive to all the Covid protocols.

Stability of Tenancies: Within the NTHT housing portfolio, tenant turnover remains low, at 9% (4 vacancies) for 2019-20. This shows that most tenants stay with us long-term (the average tenure is over 5 years) and are able to put down roots in their community. This also underscores that we need to keep building more housing, so we can help the increasing numbers of people who apply to NTHT.

Heating Upgrades: The government's new Healthy Homes regulations set heating specifications for all rentals that significantly exceed previous industry standards. Thus, even though all NTHT homes were designed and built in the last 14 years with extra insulation, double glazing and heat pumps, implementing the new rules will require NTHT to replace 50% of the existing heaters. To this end, we replaced 8 heat pumps this year and have a plan to replace another 14 over the next two years.

Balance of Social Housing and Affordable Rents: As vacancies occur, NTHT has the flexibility to take on tenants with different levels of income and housing need, aiming for an overall community balance. As of 30 June 2020, we had 21 public housing tenants (receiving the Income Related Rent Subsidy from MSD), and 23 tenants on affordable rents (set at 70-80% of market rent). Demographically, 48% of our tenant households are Pakeha/NZ European, 18% are Maori, 4% are Pacifica and 30% are new migrants/former refugees. 60% have work (mostly part-time), and 40% rely solely on benefits or NZ Super.

## NTHT Director's Report to AGM 2020

Housing Advice: Our staff provide Housing Advice for people in need, to help them be assessed for the MSD Housing Register, access emergency housing, or find affordable rentals. We had 168 such queries this year, as well as applications for NTHT or NCC vacancies. The supply of rental housing in Nelson continues to be extremely tight. We encourage people to be persistent and we help them to think through practical options which may include staying with friends, family, or in motor camps while they continue to seek permanent housing.

Monitoring Housing Need: This project aims to deliver more comprehensive data than what MSD tracks via the public housing register. It involves regular surveys of community support agencies, Red Cross Refugee Services, motor camps, as well as local Councils and other affordable housing providers in Nelson and Richmond. Our reports from the past two years show a steady increase in affordable housing need: at 30 June 2020, we count 464 households in Nelson in need of affordable housing – this is in addition to the 212 shown on MSD's Housing Register at 30 June. We will continue to produce this data on local housing need, so that we can better inform further local and central government investment in social and affordable rentals.

Warmer Healthier Homes (WHH): NTHT has administered this programme to install retro-fit insulation into homes occupied by Community Service Card holders since 2015. WHH is jointly funded by Nelson City Council, Marlborough District Council, the Rātā Foundation, Nelson Marlborough District Health Board, Mainland Foundation, Port Nelson Trust and others. This year, 421 homes were insulated by the installer, Absolute Energy, with clear improvements observed in people's living environments and health. The total number of families assisted by WHH since 2015 is now almost 2000. The Warmer Healthier Homes Te Tau Ihu Charitable Trust was formed as an independent entity in January 2020, so its accounts will be operated separately in FY 21/22.

Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA) Council: CHA is the peak body for the community housing sector. The NTHT Chair or Director has had a seat on the CHA Council since 2004. I left the Council in late 2019 after serving four years as CHA Treasurer. The networking and relationships facilitated by CHA help NTHT to stay abreast of developments in community and social housing throughout NZ.

NTHT People: Our caring and skilled staff team do the day-to-day work of the Trust. We reluctantly farewelled Finance Manager Phill Lee, Housing Manager Mira Markovic and Office Administrator Sarah Baldwin this year, each of whom left to seek new challenges elsewhere. We welcomed back Tenancy Manager Judy Honeybone (who had worked for us previously) to work alongside Tenancy Manager Kelly Dean. They both bring years of experience and a passion for working with vulnerable and older tenants. Our new Finance Manager Jason Templer has contributed new enthusiasm and financial analyst skills to continue to improve NTHT finance processes. Building Manager Jon Stevenson brings deep asset management expertise from his career at Housing NZ. New Administrator Bernadette Power contributes clear organisation and people skills. Our multi-faceted team works diligently to serve our tenants who rely on and appreciate having stable, affordable, healthy homes.

Finally, I extend enormous thanks to our retiring Chairperson Keith Preston, who has given over 15 years of invaluable service to the Trust. Further appreciation is due to the Development Task Force members Keith, Katrina Kidson (who resigned as a trustee in Jan 2020), Paul Russell and Doug McLearie, and all of the Board members for their energy, commitment and skills in governing and advising the Nelson Tasman Housing Trust.

Carrie Mozena  
NTHT Director