

## NTHT Chairperson's Report to AGM 2018-19

Tena koutou,

The national policy framework in which we operate has not been particularly helpful to Community Housing Providers (CHPs) like ours that want to improve affordability for local low-income families. The Labour-led government's focus has been on home-ownership through its Kiwi-Build and Kiwi-Buy programmes and also on homelessness and finding alternatives to motel accommodation for homeless people. Its primary investment in increasing supply of social housing is in State housing and the community housing sector's contribution has been almost exclusively in building social housing and providing support services. Government policy in respect of rental housing has been focused on introducing measures to improve terms and conditions of people who already rent their home rather than increasing the supply of new affordable rental homes. CHA, our peak body's strategy appears to be to focus on working within the government policy framework rather than trying to influence and change national policy.

Government funding for the new supply of community housing remains unchanged and is primarily through IRRS, which restricts CHP housing supply to tenants who qualify for the Public Housing Register and increases the difficulty of providing affordable rental homes for low-income families. This is a serious issue for CHPs in regions like ours where affordability is a major concern. We have some comfort in the flexibility we have to select tenants from the Public Housing Register.

Our work throughout the year has been dominated by further progressing our efforts to procure the Nelson City Council pensioner flats. This work has never really stopped since May 2018 and, in turn, has really been a continuation of the efforts we undertook to win the council management contract in 2016. It is hard to overestimate the time and resources we have put into this project: ongoing discussions with council staff, preparing papers and presentations, gaining professional advice, preparing and submitting the proposal and of course endless meetings. Board members on our Taskforce and Carrie as Director have put in extraordinary lengths of time and effort, working on this project and I want to commend their tenacity and teamwork in seeing this through. All of us at some point have questioned why we are doing this and have thought about finding more straightforward opportunities but all of us have been focused on the outcome that will be best for the tenants and our community. At the moment, the outcome of our efforts is still not certain, though we know that we have a new Council that is receptive to our ideas and that appreciates our work.

Whilst the council stock disposal has dominated our work, we must not lose sight of our other achievements this year:

- In our day to day provision of services, Carrie has built up a great team who have delivered impressive results: 100% satisfaction rating from council tenants who responded to our survey, positive feedback from all our tenants, well managed tenancies and properties with excellent performance indicators and positive feedback from our partners and the Nelson community.
- We have completed our review and overhaul of our policies and procedures, which has involved a huge amount of input from two Trustees, Paul and Doug, working with a consultant, David Taylor. I think that all the Trustees are extremely grateful to this team for taking on this task which is so important but tends to slip down the to-do list.

Strategically we are focused on increasing the supply of community homes in Nelson, but we also continue to engage in other housing related activities including the Warmer Healthier Homes programme, which improved the energy efficiency of 368 homes this year, and emergency housing

initiatives. We continue to support and participate in that introduction of the government's Housing First programme into Nelson but we have identified the real need is for more community housing and this will continue to be our core activity.

We continue to have a sound business model with strong reserves and borrowing capacity which has put us in a good position for growth and continuing to provide excellent service. Irrespective of whether we acquire the NCC pensioner flats, we will strengthen our commercial activity and find ways of increasing the supply of affordable housing for our community.

During the year we have had changes to our board and staff personnel, but this has not diminished our strength, which derives from our team approach. It has been a year of uncertainty which has created both excitement and stress at governance and operational levels. The Board has put in extra hours to progress our proposal to acquire the Council stock and assess the risks and opportunities of this venture; we have had robust discussions to reach consensus strategically. Staff have experienced uncertainty throughout the year about the implications if our proposal is unsuccessful and the tenancies revert to the 43 homes we own.

At the last AGM Chris Armstrong retired as treasurer and from the board to focus his voluntary energies on Abbeyfield. We have been fortunate to recruit Catherine McLellan, a senior accountant from Findex, to take up that role. During the year Dave Johnston, who also served as board chair for several years, retired as the demands on his time and skills in his role as CEO of Ngati Kuia increased. We recently welcomed Ra Hippolite, Kaiwhakahaere Kaipakihi for Te Piki Oranga onto the board. Katrina Kidson will step down from the board after this AGM. Katrina has made a huge contribution to the board in the 3 years since she joined. She has served as deputy chair and has been an important member of the taskforce that has worked on the council proposal, bringing sound perspectives and judgement to our discussions. She has also provided an important role in supporting and mentoring Carrie.

Thanks as ever to our trustees who give up their time and expertise voluntarily to serve on the board and provide a well-balanced and collegiate forum for debate. I will finish by reiterating my gratitude to the five-member taskforce group we established to work on the council proposal. Throughout the time we have spent on this work they have shown commitment, humour and professionalism and have never shied away from robust debate.

Nga mihinui

Keith Preston

Chairperson, Nov 2019