



COMCARE
HOUSING STRATEGY
2023

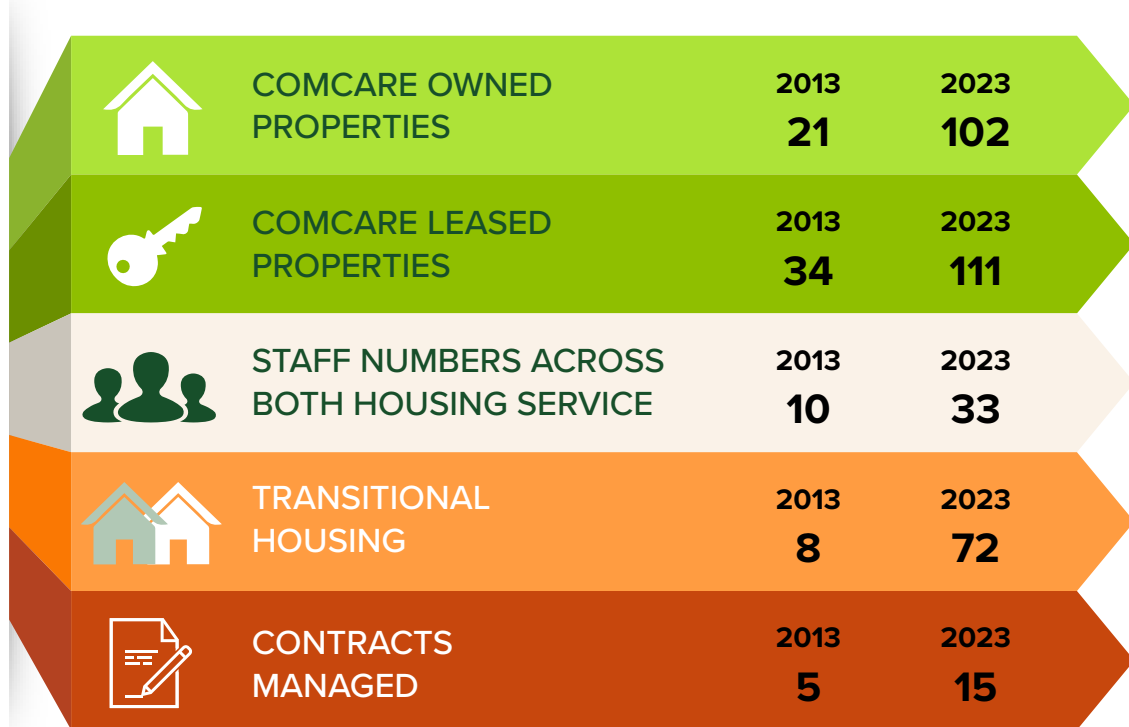
INTRODUCTION

The provision of appropriate housing for those leaving long term psychiatric care was the original reason for the foundation of Comcare Charitable Trust (Comcare) and this has remained a key focus over the years.

The scale and breadth of available housing stock and the range of Housing Support Services provided by Comcare has grown significantly over the years, with particularly rapid expansion in the last decade driven by successive Governments responses to the emerging Housing crisis.

Comcare has been at the forefront in developing Housing Support Services and is now contracted by Te Whatu Ora Waitaha, Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD) and the Ministry of Social Development Te Manutū Whakahiato Ora (MSD) to deliver services focused on supporting people experiencing Mental Health and Addiction issues find and sustain housing.

GROWTH IN THE LAST TEN YEARS:



The continuing and increasing need for housing provision and services for those in our community who are most vulnerable is evident. Government statistics clearly show the impact of scarce housing supply and increasing unaffordability – see *Public housing quarterly reports - Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga - Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (www.hud.govt.nz)*

This Strategy details how Comcare will continue to deliver housing options and the required housing support services to benefit Tangata Whai Ora. The draft work programme is attached as appendix A.

WHY A STRATEGY NOW

The Comcare Housing Review (Oct. 2020) created a structure which supports growth and innovation.

Comcare is in a strong position financially and structurally to commit to a longer-term approach to housing provision.

Government policy focus on housing and housing services is creating opportunities to attract funding support for new and existing models of housing provision and for housing and homelessness related services.

Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand, Te Aka Whai Ora Māori Health Authority, MSD and MHUD have specified support for housing and housing services as a key social determinant of health in key strategic documents. Te Pae Tata (Interim New Zealand Health Plan 2022) states *“We will grow the support services to keep people with serious mental health problems living well in the community, helping people to avoid acute hospital stays where this is appropriate. This includes partnering with housing services to make sure that people have appropriate accommodation when they are well enough to leave hospital and live in the community”*.

Other Government strategies and publications support the growth of housing related initiatives linking mental health outcomes with appropriate housing responses. Examples are:

- Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan 2020-2023
Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (www.hud.govt.nz).
- He Ara Oranga: Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction | Mental Health and Addiction Inquiry Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development (GPS HUD) Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

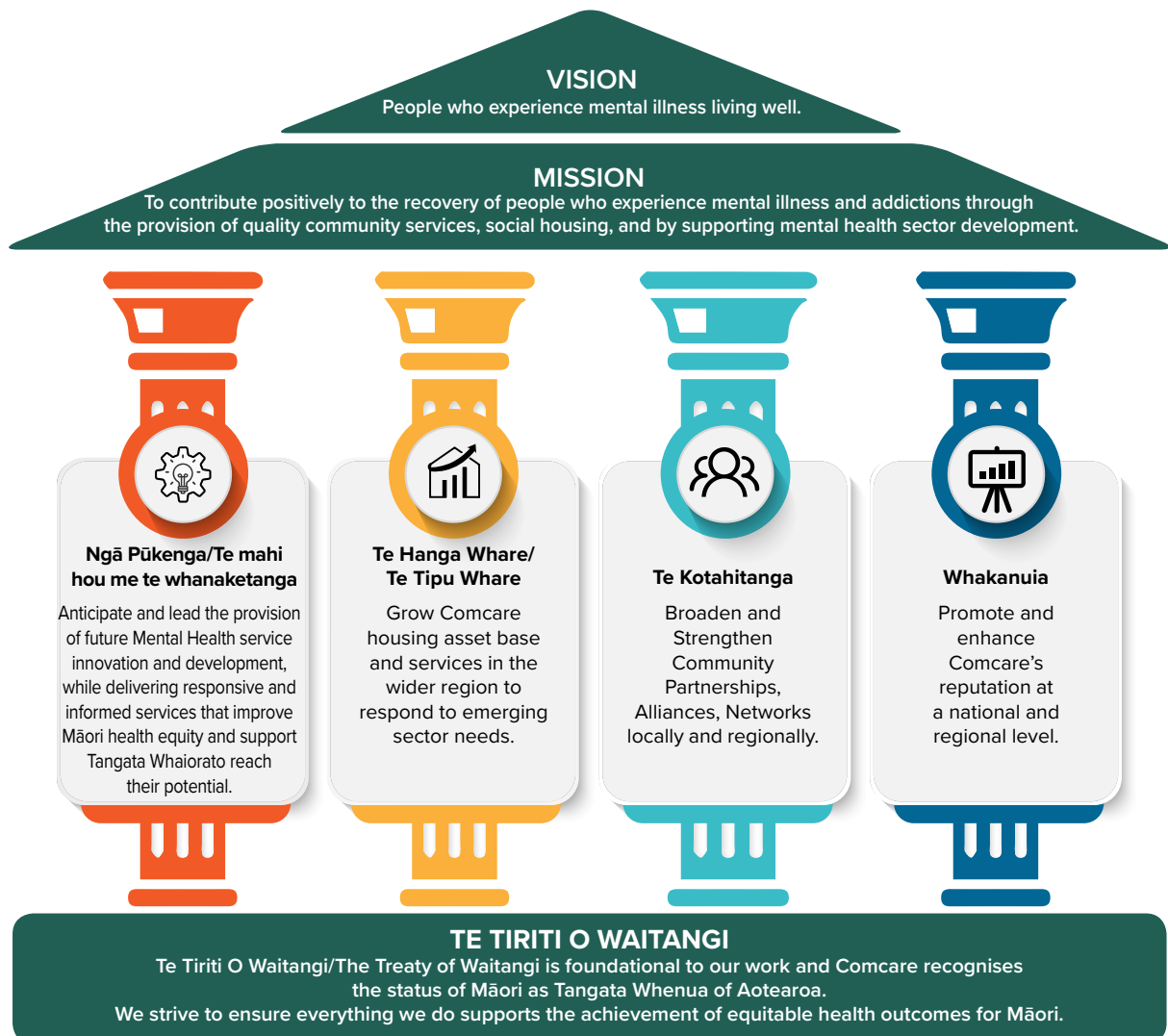
GENERAL PRINCIPLES


This Strategy is both driven and predicated by Comcare's Strategic Aims, underpinned by Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi. Comcare recognizes the status of Māori as Tangata Whenua of Aotearoa.

We strive to ensure everything we do supports the achievement of equitable health outcomes for Māori.

The Strategic Pillars further give the following direction:

- Investment and growth in the housing portfolio is affordable, addresses emerging needs (e.g. density, regulations, affordability; Māori Health Equity) and where desirable incorporates partnerships to aid the development and build of new housing options
- Integrated models of supported housing reduce the demand for acute admissions and length of hospital stay for those with high and complex needs
- Service users/tenants (taking into consideration family/whānau) are delivered the right mix of housing and support in the community.





**Innovation
to meet clearly
established
need**

**Focus on
equity for
Tangata
Whenua**

**A continuing focus
on housing provision and
services on the needs of
people who experience
mental illness and
addiction in adherence
to our Trust Deed**

COMCARE OWNED PROPERTIES

Comcare has a long history of providing long term accommodation for people who experience mental illness and addictions. Continued growth in the number of Comcare owned properties has delivered more housing stock and created a solid asset base. This has provided Comcare with the ability to attract funding from financial institutions and available Government subsidies for an ongoing building programme.

CURRENT STATE:



Comcare
owned properties:
102 Properties

Average builds
per year
(last 10 years):
8.1 Dwellings

Lease
properties:
111 Properties

Capital Value of
owned properties at
30 June 2022:
\$33,000,000

There is proven need for single person accommodation particularly aimed at those who experience mental illness and addiction issues, as is evidenced by the increasing numbers on the public housing list. At any time, around half of those are single people and supplementary research, shows around 70% of those will have mental health or addiction issues.

It is important to note that, Government subsidies available to Community Housing Providers such as Comcare are not guaranteed, however the Wellbeing Budget 2023 has committed to delivering 3000 new Public Housing Places to include provision by Community Housing Providers. In a recent speech to Community Housing Aotearoa Conference, the Hon Dr Megan Woods – Minister for Housing, stated in relation to the growth in Government funding needed to enable public housing. *‘For our Government it is not a matter of the community sector or KO (Kāinga Ora) - it is a commitment to making funding available for both.’*

GROWTH SHOULD BE A FOCUS DUE TO:

- The need evidenced by MHUD statistics
- The need within those referred homeless for lower density builds
- Tenancy management practice which reflects an understanding of the impacts and issues arising for individuals who experience mental illness
- The advantage of housing provision where other Comcare services are provided

KEY PRINCIPLES:

- Financial sustainability
- Continuation of a specific focus on providing housing to people who experience mental illness and are not well served by other housing options
- Equity for and partnership with Tangata Whenua
- Adaptability into the future

IDEAL FUTURE STATE:

- Delivering three housing developments per year for the period 2024 to 2029. This will require full financial modelling and Board approval
- Special project housing through MHUD Income Related Rent Subsidy (IRRS) support to leased properties
- Focused attention on project management, asset and property management capability
- Ensure housing stock is fit for purpose now and in the future

ACTIONS:

-  Deliver a full business case to support the delivery of three developments a year in the period 2024 – 2029
-  Strongly politically advocate on a national stage for government support of the growth of the Community Housing Sector and, in particular, for the Comcare model in relation to those people who experience mental illness or addiction
-  Support research into the outcomes for tenants using Comcare accommodation as to the impact on their wellbeing
-  Explore additional funding opportunities (Grants, Private funding) for long term housing purchase or builds



WHERE SHOULD COMCARE BUILD?

Comcare has traditionally built within Christchurch city limits, concentrating on suburbs that combine the qualities of accessible transport links, accessibility to services (e.g., General Practices, WINZ,) and available development opportunities. There is a need nationally for single person housing with an emphasis on delivering long-term accommodation for those who experience mental illness and addiction. However, should Comcare expand provision beyond Christchurch, the organisations ability to deliver outside of its traditional boundaries would need to be fully considered. The most obvious locations for a geographical expansion of long-term housing would be North and South Canterbury, and Dunedin where Comcare Teams are established.



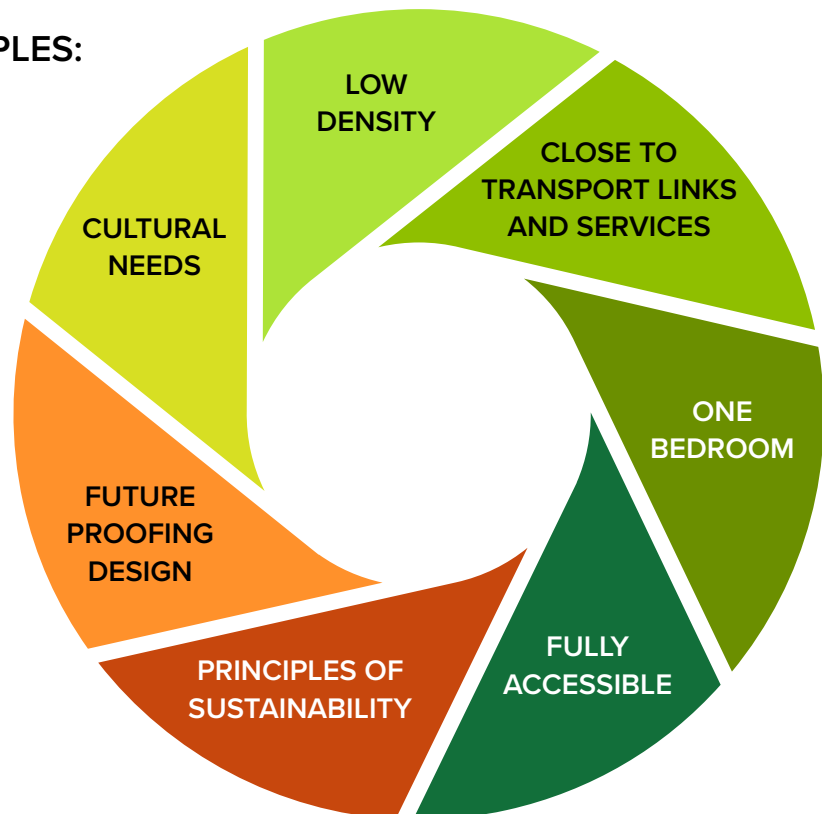
DESIGN, BUILD AND MANAGEMENT OF PROJECTS?

Comcare have used the same building company, and variations of the same house design for all new builds since around 2007. With the occasional use of consultant Project Managers, the tasks of supervising projects have fallen on the Chief Executive and Housing Managers. Increasing the scale of the building program may require dedicated Property Management resourcing.

There have been modifications over the years, such as meeting Healthy Home Standards, installing sprinkler systems, solar heating, two storey developments and keypad entry. New specifications incorporating the general principles (below) are required. These also need to consider new housing density rules introduced in August 2022 and the potential impact on how and where Comcare might build.

Recently there has been representation from Te Whatu Ora Waitaha Canterbury Forensic Mental Health Services, Corrections and from MSD advocating for homes with sprinkler systems available for tenants with a fire risk history.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES:



ACTIONS:



Develop a tendering process for future projects that will identify the company most likely to produce a high-quality build adhering to all design specifications within time and to budget



Develop the specifications for a Housing Property/ Project Manager function including the supervision of new build projects, and of the acquisition of required leased properties



Review of all design principles



Review of accessibility standards



Development of sustainability assessment tools in reviewing responses to tenders for new builds



Develop policy on inclusion of pets including dogs



USE OF LEASED PROPERTIES

Comcare has used leased residential properties for various short and long term housing projects and provision. Currently all Transitional Housing is leased from the private sector and from the Supported Housing division of Kāinga Ora from whom we also lease a number of long term flats and houses.

There are advantages to leased properties in the speed and flexibility of increasing housing for particular programs such as Transitional Housing and the ability to downsize these initiatives, as well as the ability to seek out particular characteristics or locations. There are also disadvantages, primarily in needing to seek funding support beyond the market rent subsidies to have the resources for tenancy and property management as well as the issue of a lack of security of tenure.

LONG TERM IRRS SUPPORTED HOUSING

This is a new opportunity which Comcare is using for housing provision regarding the Dunedin project. It has strong advantages in being absolutely allied to our mission but has issues around long-term sustainability that all leased and sublet properties have within Transitional Housing or Comcare general properties. There has been one project strongly identified as a potential use of this program in that it is a specialist long term housing service for clients of the Forensic Service transitioning from inpatient or residential services. This project has been proposed due to the success of the Hopkins Street project in meeting the transitional housing needs of this group.

SPECIAL PROJECTS IN LEASED PROPERTY

The Hopkins Street Project has been a very successful specialist Transitional Housing Program prompted by the Multi Agency Group which has also resulted in the funding of the Complex Case Advisor role. There is potential to look at increasing this type of specialist interim housing for key groups.



ACTION:



Create a funding proposal for up to 6 flats to be supported in a Dunedin style funding arrangement between Te Whatu Ora and MHUD



Continue explorations of what could be provided as leased properties from The Supported Housing division of Kāinga Ora



Explore different models of working with private developers to long term lease under Income Related Rent Subsidy (IRRS)



TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

The funding of Transitional Housing has been one of the Government responses to the increasing issue of homelessness in Aotearoa. This Service has a purpose in ensuring people have a safe, supported place to live while searching for long-term housing alternatives. As this is a relatively interim measure, with numbers dictated by MHUD, increase of the generic Transitional Housing service would only be as offered by the funder.

Transitional Housing provides temporary accommodation for individuals and whānau who don't have anywhere to live and urgently need a place to stay. It also offers tailored support to help these individuals and whānau into longer-term housing.



ACTIONS



Explore opportunities for further specialist Transitional Housing services with Ara Poutama and Oranga Tamariki



Be open to increasing provision of Transitional Housing



HOUSING SERVICE DELIVERY

Background and current state

Alongside a long history of social housing provision, Comcare has also had a history of developing and delivering services that assist people to find, maintain and retain housing. The long-standing commitment of health funding for these services has been unique to Comcare and Canterbury, and the experience we gained has enabled us to inform the development of a range of services now offered nationally. These services, Sustaining Tenancies, Navigator, and Rapid Re-Housing, assist in preventing housing loss and assist and support homeless whanau placed in motels by MSD into permanent housing. Comcare continues to deliver a range of services under contract from Te Whatu Ora Waitaha such as, Home Rescue, Housing Facilitation, Acute Inpatient service and Complex Case Advisor. This suite of services have differing contractual specifications, contract volumes, expected inputs, outputs and, most importantly, outcomes. Comcare has shaped these services into a continuum of housing support that not only traverses the housing continuum but connects with and relates to mental health and addiction supports at community, primary and secondary levels.



IDEAL FUTURE STATE

- Contracts that reflect the whole housing journey
- Coordinated sector wide response to housing distress
- Dedicated and tailored Comcare responses to address existing and emerging housing needs for those who experience mental illness and addiction
- Availability of appropriate emergency temporary and permanent housing
- A competent, effective and accredited workforce

THEMES

- Definition of effective housing support models
- Consolidation of funding streams
- Sector coordination to address place-based need
- Reaffirming of mission
- Advocate across Government for housing provision and support products that would address need

ACTIONS

-  Develop a comprehensive description of the Housing Facilitation Model
-  Engage in research on Housing Facilitation outcomes
-  Liaise with MSD/MHUD to encourage a more generic Housing Facilitation approach to homelessness work
-  Liaise with the Canterbury housing sector to determine a local place-based approach
-  Proactive engagement with all Specialist Mental Health Services to promote Housing Facilitation and encourage referrals
-  Consolidate the role of the Inpatient Housing Worker
-  Liaise with all Specialist Mental Health Services to promote the Home Rescue Service and encourage referrals
-  Institute the new Group Living model
-  Contribute to workforce development initiatives nationally, and continue to improve in-house training.

ADDRESSING OBLIGATIONS TO TE TIRITI O WAITANGI AND ISSUES OF HOUSING EQUITY FOR MĀORI

Whāia te mātauranga hei oranga mō koutou

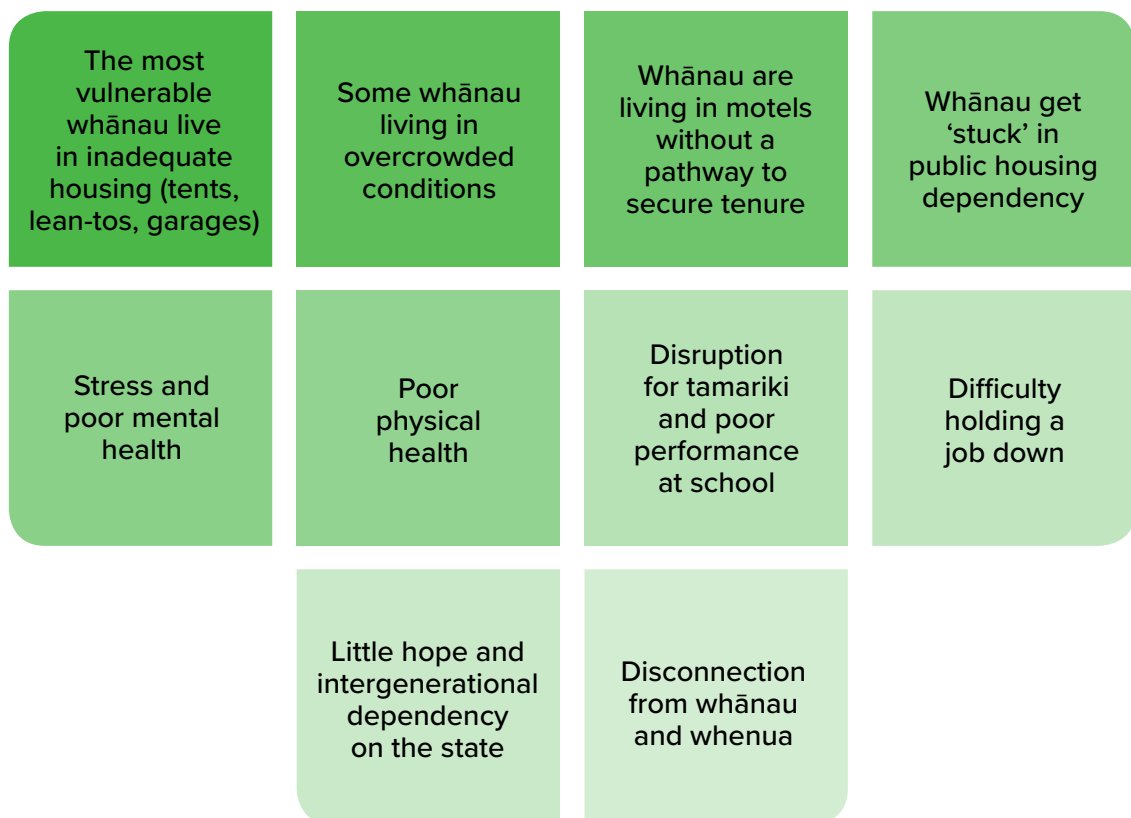
Kaua e rangiruatia te hāpai o te hoe;
e kore tō tātou waka e ū ki uta

CURRENT STATE

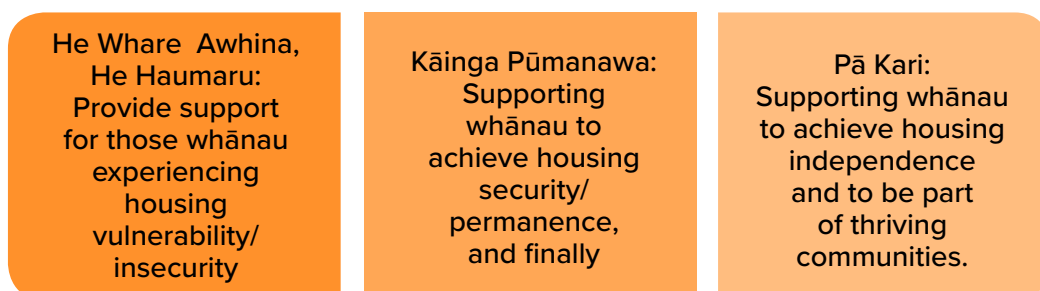
While Comcare has in recent times engaged with Ngāi Tahu in delivering very limited housing supports to mana whenua, it is fair to say that our overall efforts have been uncoordinated, unfocussed and lacking. In the last year, we have focused on developing our role as Te Tiriti o Waitangi partners and understanding how we address inequities that exist in the health and housing systems for Māori. The creation of Mahere Rautaki 2023 – 26 Te Hihi Ata, creates a pathway forward and a renewed focus on Comcare's role as Te Tiriti o Waitangi partners and the role we play in progressing equitable health outcomes with and for Māori.



FINDINGS FROM MAIHI KA ORA – THE NATIONAL MĀORI HOUSING STRATEGY





Direction of MAIHI Ka Ora






ACTIONS




PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES

-  Continue to foster the relationship with Ngāi Tahu and Ngāi Tūāhuriri
-  Encourage and respond to opportunities for further housing based partnerships with Ngāi Tahu and Ngāi Tūāhuriri to address the needs of Mana Whenua

SERVICE DELIVERY

-  Explore the use of the Meihana Model of service delivery
-  Improve staff capability in Te Reo and Tikanga Maori
-  Cultural Supervision

ENSURING RELIABLE DATA ON ETHNICITY AND IWI

-  Training for consistency in staff collection of Iwi affiliation and ethnicity data
-  Analysis of presenting issues of Māori tāne, wāhine and whānau
-  Engagement with Tangata Whai Ora to gain insights into issues and best approaches

COMCARE HOUSING CHART

HOUSING CATEGORY	ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	MILESTONES	REVIEW/EVALUATION	EXPECTED OUTCOMES
COMCARE OWNED PROPERTIES	Deliver a full business case for the use of Comcare's financial resources with a focus on leveraging the strengths of the balance sheet, and the way they are and could be used, so that several developments could be planned, scheduled and approved for completion over 2 to 5 years.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A business case is developed and approved by the Comcare Board. 2. The model is used to plan ahead for new complexes. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Year one 2. Year two 	Review after the first complex planned for with the tool.	The ability to grow steadily in a forward planned way.
	Strongly politically advocate on a national stage for government support of the growth of the NGO housing sector and, in particular, for the Comcare model in relation to those people who experience mental illness or addiction.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participate in national advisory and advocacy groups and engage with relevant politician stakeholders in the area of housing and mental health. 	Ongoing with at least six meetings year one.	Review at end of year one to evaluate groups, individuals and issues to be prioritised.	Greater support and awareness of the role of Community Housing providers.
	Support research and outcomes for tenants using Comcare accommodation as to the impact on their mental well-being.	Research undertaken and completed.	1. Year one	As the research suggests.	A better understanding of the impact of housing interventions, the ability to improve service and, should the outcomes be positive, evidence for funding support.
	Actively pursue any funding opportunities for long term housing purchase or builds.	Evidence of exploration of funding opportunities.	Ongoing	After year one, re-examine priorities.	Ensuring that opportunities for funding are not missed.
NEW BUILD PROJECTS	Develop a tendering process for future projects that will identify the company most likely to produce a high quality build adhering to all design specifications within time and to budget.	A clearly articulated tendering and decision making process.	Developed by end of year one	Review post the first use.	Evidencing appropriate private sector commissioning with reference to key cost, quality and sustainability principles.
	Develop the specifications for a Housing Property/Project Manager function including the supervision of new build projects, and of the acquisition of required leased properties.	Specifications/ Job Description developed.	Year one	Dependent on decision to employ.	Focused oversight of build projects, asset management and leased property acquisition and maintenance.

HOUSING CATEGORY	ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	MILESTONES	REVIEW/EVALUATION	EXPECTED OUTCOMES
DESIGN	Review of all design principles including seeking tenant input.	A comprehensive list of design essentials and design preferences in new builds.	Year one	Review after the first new build using the design guide.	Housing that is appropriate to tenants needs, to changing tenant profile and to longer term sustainability.
	Review of accessibility standards.	Alongside design review, examine existing accessibility standards and decide on the level of accessibility to be attained.	Year one	Review after first build.	Ability for tenancies to be offered to clients with a range of physical disability and the advantages of housing that allows aging in place.
	Development of sustainability assessment tools in reviewing responses to tenders for new builds	Sustainability check list developed.	Year one	Review after first build.	All builds are delivered with sustainability emphasised.
	Develop policy on inclusion of pets including dogs.	Comprehensive and ongoing policy on pets in CCH developed.	Year one/two	Year three review.	Better accessibility to good quality appropriate affordable housing for those with a companion animal.
SPECIAL PROJECTS LEASED	Create a funding proposal for up to 6 flats to be supported in a Dunedin style funding arrangement between Te Whatu Ora and MHUD.	Funding proposal completed, and potential leased flats located.	End of year one	Review to be in place should the project go forward.	Promotion of co-commissioning of services between MHUD and Health, and specialist housing developed appropriate to the client needs.
	Continue explorations of what could be provided as leased properties from Community Group Housing division of Kāinga Ora.	An application is completed for 4 to 6 flats in both Dunedin and Christchurch.	Year one	Dependent on the outcome of the applications.	An increase of appropriate affordable long term tenure housing.
TRANSITIONAL HOUSING	Explore opportunities for further specialist Transitional Housing services with Ara Poutama and Oranga Tamariki.	Evidence of meetings or proposals regarding forwarding these matters.	Ongoing	Examine priority setting after year one.	Potential co-commissioning or diversification of finding opportunities and provision of housing to particularly vulnerable and at risk groups.
	Be open to increasing provision of Transitional housing.	Being open to Government approaches around standard and any new model of Transitional Housing provision.	Ongoing	Review prior to contract renewal.	Seen as responsive to need and adaptive to changing community needs.

