

THE SHIFT AOTEAROA CONFERENCE 2019



> *Scott Figenshow from Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA), and Jessica Hutchings and Ruth Berry from Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities (BBHTC), report back from the Conference frontline where a sense of urgency was strongly felt.*

The Shift Aotearoa Conference 2019 brought together over 320 housing sector delegates from 5th to 7th June 2019 in Wellington to spark collaborative action for one of Aotearoa New Zealand's most urgent problems.

The Conference was a partnership between Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA) – the representative body of the community housing sector in Aotearoa New Zealand – and the Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities (BBHTC) National Science Challenge – with one of the key aims being to bring evidence into practice in helping address Aotearoa New Zealand's housing crisis.

Supported by the latest research from Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities – *Ko Ngā wā Kāinga hei Whakamāhorahora* – National Science Challenge and international researchers, and case studies from community housing practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand, the Conference helped develop a platform for cross-sector action to fix the housing system.

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The Shift Aotearoa is the change needed to develop a functioning housing system to ensure All New Zealanders are well-housed. To make these changes will require different ways of working – with greater collaboration and genuine partnerships between government, *iwi* (Māori tribes), civil society and business all working towards a shared vision.

The Conference advanced the case for a housing system approach as the heart of advancing 'All New Zealanders well-housed', highlighting the contributions delivered by the community housing sector, supported by research evidence. Day one of the conference – the Māori Think Tank – set the tone for the rest of the three-day event by weaving *kaupapa Māori* (Māori-focussed topics) deeply throughout the programme. It all began with an inspirational *kōrero* (speech) from Dr Moana Jackson on the importance of seeing housing as 'home'.

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Moana set out the basis for deeper wellbeing based on connection with *whenua* (land) and *kāinga* (home community), and how we must build a new contract between citizens and government based on *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (The Treaty of Waitangi). This *kōrero* created a solid foundation for the rest of the Conference.

Moana spoke of home as a concept of place, belonging and being. What does it mean to be at home in this land in a contemporary Aotearoa? He said home is a concept that encapsulates *maunga* (mountains), dreams, *whenua* (earth) and *aroha* (love). Without all these elements, people are housed but not homed. For the homeless, they are both houseless and homeless.

“ What does it mean to be at home in this land in a contemporary Aotearoa? ”

This was followed by a number of insightful and thought-provoking presentations by Māori researchers and practitioners. Subjects ranged from how we can better design neighbourhoods and urban spaces to promote *whānau* (extended family) wellbeing to how living in *Papakāinga* (a housing development for Maori on ancestral land) can be transformative to *whānau Māori*. It also looked at best practice in developing *kaumātua* (Māori elders) housing and heard the views of *rangatahi* (youth).

The messages from day one flowed over into day two, which opened with a video presentation by Leilani Farha, the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Housing, on why we need to shift the housing system towards upholding housing as a human right. Leilani's message was followed by an inspiring speech from Paul Hunt, Chief Human Rights Commissioner in Aotearoa New Zealand (see p.31).

The sessions that followed looked at how research can support better housing policy, the importance of good housing to positive mental health outcomes and the importance of a functioning welfare system that can tackle entrenched inequality.

Chief Executive of the newly established Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Andrew Crisp, demonstrated how the Ministry is joining the dots by taking a systems-approach to housing. He also presented the Government's Housing Policy Statement and talked about the new delivery agency, *Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities*.



Andrew stressed the important role that the community housing sector should play in delivery, and announced that the sector's relationship with the new Ministry would be elevated to the Housing System Performance team, offering the opportunity to be involved across all aspects of the housing system.

The afternoon of day two looked at some ways for making the shift towards a well-functioning housing system. This included treating the land differently to preserve intergenerational social value (LSE's Dr Christine Whitehead), how we need to think of housing as vital social infrastructure (Professor Jago Dodson, RMIT) shifting the narrative from housing as a commodity to seeing housing as underpinning wellbeing and economic prosperity, and some of the new options to finance the development of affordable housing by tapping into new sources of 'patient capital' as has been done in Australia and the UK.

Also running through day two was evidence of the work being performed to shift the problem of chronic homelessness using a Housing First model, which is being used in a number of communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.

“ Based on the values that a house should be a 'nest not a nest-egg' ”

Day three started with an exploration of 'intelligent advocacy' from Habitat for Humanity's Claire Szabo. Julie Scott of Queenstown Lakes Community Housing Trust described the journey that the Trust has taken, and how its work is based on the values that a house should be a 'nest not a nest-egg' (see p.71).

This was followed by Hope Simonsen and David Zussman describing the community housing sector's We Believe campaign and video, which has been designed to promote the diversity of the community housing sector and its value-based contribution to addressing the housing crisis. We Believe also highlights the benefits the community sector brings in addressing housing need locally (see p.40).

Delegates also heard from The Salvation Army's Major Campbell Roberts on the KiwiBuy Campaign – a partnership between The Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, The Housing Foundation and Community Housing Aotearoa – showcasing the value of the sector's affordable homeownership programmes and calling on government to invest in the sector to provide additional homeownership solutions that enable low-income Kiwi *whānau* to buy an affordable home (see p.74).

The Associate Minister of Housing, Nanaia Mahuta, addressed the Conference with an acknowledgement that the housing system is broken but that, in fixing it, the Government is not starting at ground zero. Instead, they are building on much of the good work that has been done by iwi and the community sector.

The Minister also said the Government's focus on wellbeing in driving policy and investment is well-aligned with the *kaupapa* of the Conference. She described how she sees the role of government as an activator and enabler in partnering with others to fix the crisis. She also described the Government's role in realising Māori housing aspirations by investing in the kind of programmes that can help Māori develop their own solutions.

Nanaia admitted the Government is still not taking a whole-of-government approach, and she asked the question: "How big and how committed can we be in this space to do something really different, to get the shift that you're all wanting to happen?" She went on to say, "We are looking for partners – and the partners are iwi organisations, Māori organisations, community organisations, faith-based organisations – who are going to have to pick up the challenge with us to try and do something different."

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The Conference succeeded in bringing together the latest research on a range of housing-related issues with practitioners working together, woven together by a strong *kaupapa Māori* thread that reminded us all of why we are doing this *mahi* (work) and its importance in promoting the wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

The Shift Conference 2019 is one strand in a wider programme of work – The Shift Aotearoa – to shift the housing system so that all New Zealanders have access to a decent home that upholds their dignity and provides a platform for wellbeing and reducing poverty (see p.74).

- The Shift Conference 2019 was held from 5th to 7th June 2019, Te Papa, Wellington – www.theshiftaotearoa.org



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