

Te Aro Pā papakāinga - Wellington's first urban papakāinga opened



It has been a long and protracted journey since Ngāti Ruanui and Taranaki Iwi lost their original four acre Te Aro pā site in the 1870s, to the building of their new urban papakāinga at Greta Point in Wellington.

The pre-colonial Te Aro Pā thrived on the Wellington foreshore, the gardens extending all the way to Pukeahu, near the War Memorial, and right over to Island Bay. The kāinga (traditional village) sat at what is now the intersection of Taranaki and Manners

Streets. It was valuable land that the British colonisers were anxious to secure for their growing settlement and, while small numbers of the iwi stayed in Te Aro until the late 1870s, they were pressured into shifting to land in Ohiro Valley, next to the current day Happy Valley landfill and wastewater treatment plant, in exchange for their pā site and gardens.

In the 1990's, after lengthy negotiations and after iwi expressed concern about the activities on the neighbouring land, Wellington City Council swapped the Happy Valley land for a small strip of land in Greta Point.

Te Aro Pā Trustee, Leo Buchanan, said that the Te Aro Pā Trust had considered different options for the land before settling on accommodation. *"We wanted it to be of benefit to the people connected with Te Aro Pā and also needed to produce sustainable assets for owners."* (Stuff; 2014).

As well as being an emotional homecoming for its owners and extended whanau, this new community housing initiative is Wellington's first urban papakāinga.

An urban papakāinga with a focus on whanaungatanga

Currently being tenanted, 14 homes have been built with 10 three-bedroom apartments and four single bedroom properties.

In his design of the papakāinga, Wellington architect Roger Walker drew upon the traditional Māori concept of whanaungatanga (kinship). *"I was envisaging that the descendants of Te Aro Pā who will live here have a whanau connection and so it was important to support social interaction with shared spaces."*

There are places for kids to play together and there are communal gardening spaces. At the same time it meets modern living standards in terms of insulation and warmth, durability, and privacy. *"I wanted the homes to be robust and efficient, and to look good,"* says Roger Walker. (www.TeTumuPaeroa.co.nz; retrieved 5/4/2016)

The apartments incorporate design features including pou out front and communal courtyards to reflect its papakāinga nature and its connections to Taranaki iwi.



At the pōwhiri/opening in March 2016

The Te Aro Pā Trust, which represents the collective owners of the land and descendants of the original dwellers of Te Aro Pā have a vision to create a contemporary kāinga made up of young families, kaumātua and professionals. Priority will be given to housing the descendants of the original Ngāti Ruanui and Taranaki Iwi people of Te Aro Pā. There will be a mixture of tenures with both full market and social housing rentals.

Assisting the Trustees through this process has been Te Tumu Paeroa and

Wellington community housing organisation, Dwell Housing Trust (Dwell).

A key partnership between iwi and community housing organisations

Te Tumu Paeroa are the Trustees acting on behalf of Te Aro Pā Trust. It was Te Tumu Paeroa's role to develop the papakāinga, working with property consultants and builders to achieve the Trust's vision.

Te Tumu Paeroa set out to find a registered social housing provider to act as tenancy managers and to support tenants. They were looking for a registered organisation who were more than a real estate agency and approached community housing organisation, Dwell, to undertake this role.

Dwell have a long track record in managing and developing social and affordable housing in the Wellington area. They are a CHRA registered housing provider and a good choice for the Te Aro Pā Trustees to partner with. *"We are more than a landlord - we ensure our tenants have access to the support they need to live well, do well and be well,"* says Alison Cadman, CE of Dwell.

"The partnership with Te Tumu Paeroa is an important one for us," says Alison. *"Iwi are major players in social and affordable housing and there's mutual benefits of working together. Dwell have lots of practical experience in developing community housing and in tenancy management and the Te Aro Pā Trust want to make sure their people have opportunities to have a home on their land."*

"We think partnerships like this will be more common for community housing in the future and Dwell welcomes the opportunities to be providing more affordable housing," says Alison. *"There*



Alison Cadman and Liz Kemp of Dwell Housing Trust in the new homes

are some downsides like if we don't get any say on the design or aren't part of the planning and could just be seen as a tenancy manager. We have experience and knowledge to bring to partnerships so want to be involved in the process as soon as possible."

Dwell works closely with the Trustees to establish whanaungatanga links and prioritise applicants with Dwell acting as landlord on behalf of Te Aro Pā Trustees.

"We've reviewed our own cultural competency in this process. It's challenged us to do things differently and to learn more," Alison says. "This is such a positive opportunity and we feel very privileged to be part of it. It will help us grow as an organisation."

"It would be good to see Community Housing Aotearoa provide training on cultural competency for tenancy managers working in community housing around the country."

The project received SHU (Social Housing Unit: Kāinga Whenua Infrastructure Grant now administered by Te Puni Kōkiri) a) funding from Government towards infrastructure and initial feasibility studies.

The market rent levels have been set at \$600 for a three bedroom and \$310 for one bedroom homes. *"They've had to charge market rents to service the mortgage so only tenants receiving an IRRS subsidy, making the rent 25% of income, would be considered*



affordable. It's another example of the need for some sort of capital subsidy to help develop social and affordable housing. Some applicants have dropped out of the tenancing process – for some it was because of the rents levels," says Alison Cadman.

Richard Wickens of Te Tumu Paeroa agrees. He says most Māori land trusts, like Te Aro Pā, only have land equity so they have to charge market rents in order to meet debt repayments.

"If more capital funds were available through grants we could rent the housing at more affordable levels. Those on an accommodation supplement often find market rents still unaffordable – especially in the inner city - and it may mean the housing won't go to those who whakapapa back to Te Aro Pā," says Richard.

"It would also be helpful to know when a development is being planned what proportion of units might be allocated to people eligible for the Income Rent Related Subsidy. A developer may think a certain proportion is desirable as part of the tenant mix only to discover when the development is complete that his view may not be shared by those who administer the subsidies. A developer also needs to know what rents would be acceptable. Developments of this type have tight budgets and as much certainty as can be introduced at the planning stage is vital to a development's success. The involvement of MSD in the planning stage would help lessen some of the risk."

Ultimately, the Trust's aim is to provide a mix of tenures where descendants of Te Aro Pā can find a home on their own land. It's still early days and the first tenants are only just beginning to move into their new homes. What we do know is that these homes are here for the long-term and all parties are committed to a positive future for this housing partnership. For more information on these homes go here.<http://dwell.org.nz/find-housing-2/te-aro-pa-trust-papakainga-housing>