



## A family's story (31<sup>st</sup> March 2017) – De Paul House

Merry is moving into her own home today.

For 10 years Merry lived in an HNZ property in Manurewa with the father of her children. Her ex-partner is now jailed for domestic violence. Merry struggled with addictions. She describes family life as havoc.

Her aunt and uncle in Australia suggested she live with them to make a change and break away from her ex. They paid for her airfare and that of her children. They supported her for nine months while Merry looked for work unsuccessfully. Merry experienced extreme guilt for putting her whanau into debt, she is grateful for their help but knows that she was, as she puts it, a burden.

During this time she dealt with her addiction issues and her AA tag states that she is nine months free. She proudly reports that her mantra is KFC – kind, firm and calm.

After nine months she returned to New Zealand, last December, and moved into her sister's two bedroom HNZ property. This put her sister's tenancy in jeopardy, she knew she had to move out. She applied for private rentals but was never successful and, in her words, states that nobody ever called her back to let her know she was unsuccessful, "**it was a waste of time**". She knows that her six children and her extensive debt were problems. She knew that she could not afford these properties.

Just after Christmas she moved into an MSD funded motel for seven days and MSD ensured that she was on the social housing register. Merry states that the motel was dirty and she worried for her children living there.

Merry moved into De Paul House (DPH) with her six children in January this year after a referral from MSD. She engaged in all aspects of life here. Her children attended school and went on school camp – subsidised by the school. Her younger children attended our early childhood centre.

Merry attended life skills classes and, with budget support and DPH's savings programme, has saved \$380. She has started a smoking cessation programme run at DPH's learning centre. She remains drug and alcohol free.

After extensive advocacy from DPH to ensure that Merry's social housing priority reflected her challenges, Merry was offered a HNZ property.

She is leaving with a full furniture lot including beds, linen, duvets, table and chairs – all the essentials necessary for her own home from DPH's furniture and linen banks.

Merry will be supported in her home by DPH's outreach social worker –she knows she has support and is very happy to keep in touch.

A last challenge for Merry was making sure that the electricity was connected to her new home. Electricity supply had been disconnected because the previous tenant had arrears. Merry had to pay for reconnection – through no fault of her own – HNZ states that this is a tenant's responsibility and she has paid \$70 for this reconnection which was the cheapest possible.

Merry is a capable woman who is thrilled to have her own home. She loves her kids and wants a different future for them. This is just the beginning.