

This article was written by Lesley-Mynett Johnson, director of Fundraising, Marketing and Communications at Airedale Property Trust and Lifewise. It was originally published in the CHA and AHI jointly produced April 2014 edition of HousingWORKS,

Mantanikolo...a place to call home

When Tevita and Lusi Tupou* moved from an overcrowded home they shared with relatives into their brand new home in Mangere, it was a double celebration. Just weeks later, they welcomed a new baby to their family and into their home.

Tevita and Lusi were the face of Auckland's housing issue. An issue which, according to data presented in the Salvation Army's latest State of the Nation Report 'appears to be getting worse as population growth continues to outstrip the supply of new housing, especially affordable housing'. Previously Tevita, Lusi and their children lived with Mrs Tupou's parents, grandparents, her brother and his wife and two children; 12 people in one crowded Mangere house.

The housing issue, put simply, is that building has not kept pace with the city's population, resulting in a cumulative housing deficit. It is estimated that this deficit has grown over the last five years to 16-17,000 dwellings in the Auckland region. Housing affordability exacerbates the problem. Rents in Auckland have risen about 10% faster than incomes. The combination of availability and affordability translates to families, like the young Tupou family, often resorting to sharing cramped, damp and poorly insulated houses, which places additional health, social, and even educational stresses on both parents and children. Pacific families are particularly vulnerable given the significant indebtedness they often face.

The Tupou family, however, are fortunate. In mid-2013 they were the first family to move into a warm, healthy three bedroomed home within Matanikolo; one of twenty-two 'stage one' three, four and five-bedroomed homes in this housing project. Now, eight months later, all twenty-two homes are occupied making this housing development, the first pacific housing project funded through the Government's Social Housing Unit (Growth Fund) to be completed.

Seeing the families settling into their new homes, as well as the growing sense of neighbourhood developing, marked the realisation of a long held dream of the Lotofale'ia Mangere Tongan Methodist Parish. A dream to turn 6.4 acres of land, strategically purchased several years ago, into healthy new homes. The significance of Matanikolo was all too obvious when church members and new residents gathered together recently to celebrate the official opening with honoured guests Princess Mele Siu'-i-Likutapu Kalanivalu Fotofili and Hon Dr Nick Smith, Minister of Housing.

The members of Lotofale'ia are, quite rightly, proud of what has been achieved. Rev Goll Manukai acknowledges that they "purchased the land with the idea that one day it will be put to good use. Now in February 2014 we have twenty-two warm, dry, safe and affordable homes for twenty-two families, thanks to the support of the Social Housing Fund. We're now looking forward to the next stage and the one after that."

While Matanikolo is a project held by the Lotofale'ia parish, it showcases what can be achieved through effective partnerships. This partnership involved three main entities. Lotofale'ia, part of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, who had the land and the vision; the Government, who provided critical funding with a grant of \$4.3 million from the Social Housing Unit, Growth Fund; and lastly Airedale Property Trust, who brought advice, connections and expertise to the project, supporting Lotofale'ia to complete Matanikolo.

Airedale Property Trust (APT) is a charitable trust providing property development, project management and property management skills to a variety of Methodist projects, both community and commercial. APT was keen to partner with Rev Goll Manukai and Lotofale'ia to help them achieve the social outcomes for local families they wanted. After supporting them to secure SHU funding, APT helped Lotofale'ia leverage ownership of the land to secure additional funding from the bank and then worked with GJ Gardner and other building specialists, enabling the Matanikolo project to proceed smoothly.

While APT brings strong project management skills to any building development it undertakes, it is not a typical 'for profit' property developer. APT is, in essence, a social enterprise turning profits generated through its property and consultancy work into social outcomes by partly funding the work of its sister trust Lifewise, an Auckland based social development agency.

As Bruce Stone, General Manager of APT notes "I think it is our strong ties to Lifewise that, in part, makes APT such an attractive and effective partner when developing social housing. Together our expertise covers identification of need, right through to delivering the housing solution and any social response required. Our relationship with the Methodist Church of New Zealand also allows church land, where and when possible, to be leveraged to support local communities."

While stage one of the Matanikolo Housing project is now complete, APT has a number of other community projects in the pipeline including a SHU funded social housing development for people with disabilities on Auckland's north shore. Continuing to partner and support Lotofale'ia on the next stage developments at Matanikolo is another key goal for APT. Matanikolo is set to become a true 'village' within Mangere. Stage two will include apartment accommodation, enabling older members of the Tongan community to enjoy the housing outcomes already achieved for young families such as the Tupou family.

* The name of the family has been changed to protect their identity

Additional information

<http://tvnz.co.nz/national-news/church-and-govt-team-up-in-housing-scheme-5831744>