



Community Housing
Nga Wharerau o Aotearoa

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To: All Media

From: Scott Figenshow, Director
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Subject: Community Housing Provider Regulations- a mixed bag

Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA) has reviewed the long-awaited regulations for Community Housing Providers that were published in the NZ Gazette on 10 April.

CHA welcomes Fiona Fitzgerald as the Interim Manager for the Community Housing Regulatory Authority. “She knows the sector well and has built a solid reputation as a pragmatic, forward-thinking leader,” confirmed Scott Figenshow, Director of CHA.

CHA is pleased to note that the recently formed CHRA has moved quickly to demonstrate transparency in how it will work, “to support the growth of a fair, efficient, and transparent community housing sector,” through ‘on-going engagement with CHPs, both from a monitoring perspective, and as a source of best practice and encouragement.’

It is delighted that following feedback from CHA, CHRA’s intention is “not [to be] unnecessarily prescriptive about how a CHP demonstrates compliance’ in recognition that an organisation’s ability to provide a range of information sources will ‘largely depend on the size and sophistication of the organisation and their level of risk exposure”.

There is also recognition from CHRA that the Community Housing Sector has already been conducting voluntary quality assurance through its Accreditation system, with CHRA prepared to ‘make an operational decision on a case-by-case basis to accept accreditation reports in full or in part as evidence to support of compliance with the Performance Standards.’ CHA believes that the discretionary nature of this decision belies a lack of understanding about the robustness of the Global-mark accredited system: a quality assurance process that is highly valued in both the UK and Australian community housing sector.

CHA looks forward to working with CHRA on adopting the Accreditation system as a pre-requisite for specific evidence on CHRA performance standards and on joint recognition that the system provides a performance benchmarking tool for supporting excellence.

“We are disappointed that many of our more strategic points made in submissions were not dealt with in this phase of the reforms. In particular, we find the definition of Community Housing Provider to be structurally flawed in that it does not confirm the organization operates on a not for dividend basis, essential to ensure that public investment is retained and recycled. We understood such a test was part of tax legislation, and unless the two are aligned there appears to be a ‘disconnect’, which places our members in uncertain territory. We thought officials and Ministers understood this which leaves us wondering why it hasn’t been dealt with,” Mr. Figenshow said.

A key recommendation of the social housing reforms as set out in the Housing Shareholders Advisory Group report was coordination across multiple ministries to ensure transparency and consistency of services. CHA congratulates Ministers Smith and Bennett for securing the availability of the Income Related Rent Subsidy to families who secure their home from a community housing organization as a big step forward in implementing this holistic approach.

CHA does however have concerns that in the absence of an overall strategy, the predominantly piecemeal, rushed nature of reforms will lead to confusion and contradictions in legislation and practice.

CHA notes that Ministers Smith and Bennett’s 13 April 2014 press release “Major makeover for social housing” from 13 April now states that 20% of the country’s social housing is to be provided by non-government organisations by 2017, 3 years earlier than the 2020 goal the community housing sector has been working towards. The community housing sector has the expertise and capacity to deliver. It now eagerly awaits renewed government commitment to make it happen through additional Social Housing Fund capital, an extension of IRRS to community housing tenancies and the decision to transfer HNZC stock. Without this commitment, the traction to deliver on its vision will come to a grinding halt: a devastating outcome for New Zealand communities who are struggling to find affordable housing.

CHA will continue to work collaboratively /cooperatively with officials and ministers to bring about its vision of ‘All New Zealanders well-housed’.

CHA has released a comparison summary of the regulations versus its submission at www.communityhousing.org.nz

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