



Bernie Smith, Monte Cecilia Housing Trust

Welcome Minister Adams to Monte Cecilia Housing Trust, on behalf of Auckland Emergency Housing Providers Network. We truly appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule, and on a Friday, to meet with us. We hope this will be the first of several meetings in the future.

As a network of providers who work together collaboratively, we meet strategically as a collective, and regularly with Housing New Zealand and Ministry of Social

Development to resolve operational issues. A small percentage of us go to Wellington to meet with the senior Managers of these Ministries - which is part operational, a small amount co-design. For those of us having been in social services a long time, we can say that the receptivity, the collaboration and the desire to problem resolve by HNZ and MSD is so refreshing and empowering. Never perfect but a 100% improvement this last year.

With Government wanting to be more collaborative now is the time to involve the sector, before policy is created and RFP's go out - as echoed this morning by Auckland's community housing providers who are on the ground working with us in solution focused forums and co-designing best practice service delivery.

Minister, let me briefly say that as a network of providers we are truly passionate about what we do and as organisations have been doing this for over twenty, thirty or more years. Some of us run on the smell of an oily rag, where one person answers the phone, answers the door, makes the tea, holds the crying baby, completes a criteria assessment, rings WINZ, MSD, HNZ, is the security guard and then has to report on outcomes to government

.....you get the picture. One or two of our organisations are regional and national; have many people, policies and procedures written by experts or contracting specialists and are doing many tasks.

Then there are those of us in the middle. But each service provides a one-on-one individual / family / child focused, empowering and strengthening service. Each with a story to tell of the people who came through their door who were broken, lost, with a sense of hopelessness and no worthwhile future to look forward to. But today those same people are in employment, health issues resolved, kids at school, own their own home and who now have a future and hope; who have broken their generational cycle of poverty and homelessness and are no longer sitting and waiting in WINZ offices or queuing for motel emergency accommodation.

Our organisations don't just offer a roof over people's heads for a few nights. We also provide or collaborate with other agencies' to support our people with financial literacy, cooking, sewing, counselling, home care and craft skills, support into employment, parenting, various Maori and Pacifica cultural support and services in their own language and within their cultural frameworks, offering development and understanding, empathy and love so the individual or family can stand tall in their culture, their gender, their faith, as a parent, as a husband or a wife and proudly put down roots in their community and assist their community to grow strong and healthy as they have.

While doing all that and because what we do we do well; we don't need referrals from the Ministry of Social Development. We get calls from lawyers, counsellors, schools, employers, family, MP's and from word of mouth. Asking our staff to advocate for people who are in the community not getting their entitlements, who are often in HNZ properties struggling to pay the rent, being threatened with eviction, where English might be a second language, and we've been doing this for many many years

I think the Government today calls it sustaining tenancies.

A number of us have housing where we put people into them and then provide social work and services where people can stay for a year and up to three years, for duration of need. I think today the Government

is calling that model 'Housing First' which is supposed to resolve in itself alone all homelessness, not complaining.

But raising a need for caution that Government does not create silos of service funding and delivery. But recognition that we as non-government-organisations want to see the tax payer get value for money by not splitting the limited social service dollar even further, creating further fragmentation for the client seeking a service.

Up until July last year we agencies provided homelessness services with wrap-around-support and advocacy by having garage sales and sausage sizzles. We had the begging bowl out and spent hours and days submitting trust and grant applications with many declined because local and central Government did not fully comprehend the value of our services and the enormous savings to the Government that we made.

Some of us had several piece meal Government contracts that were valued and appreciated by us, but only kept our heads above water.

Minister, it's not all doom and gloom because July 1 last year was exciting for emergency housing providers because the Government decided to allocate 30million toward rental/lease costs, or as I called it, a contribution to bricks and mortar.

This funding is appreciated.

More new money is now available for 100% operational costs on new facilities and homes that create new emergency housing. And some of us have appreciated that opportunity to grow and further develop our services.

But this creates an issue and leaves those very small providers unable to gain from this opportunity creating a them-and-us situation. Leaving them in survival mode while new big agencies are being approached by HNZ and MSD to become emergency housing providers without approaches to the smaller providers, one on one, to ascertain their ability or their desire just to have one more bedroom added to their facility, or an extra house, or a small six unit complex or whatever.

Big is not necessarily beautiful or any more successful. One individual or family at a time supported out of crisis to a position of having their own dreams and aspirations is another individual or families generational cycle of poverty and homelessness broken.

Let's hear from a couple of providers and some stories of the people they have helped.