

The Shift Aotearoa conference 2021 | a project of Community Housing Aotearoa and partners

WORKSTREAM: NARRATIVE TRANSFORMATION

Issues paper #2 | February 2021

Reflections on meeting 1 | Planning for meeting 2

This process is committed to identifying issues with narrative, but also developing a pathway toward actual action to change the critical identified narratives.

Reflections on meeting 1 [26 Jan]

The minutes of this meeting can be found [here](#).

Meeting #1 in this series suggested there was a good appetite for this work.

One really great observation was the recognition of the power of something akin to narrative in Maori culture: pūrākau and spoken traditions. At another moment we discussed calling this work ‘how we talk about housing’ or something along those lines. Being more intentional about how we talk about housing is a key direction, and extending that to the media and others is the real transformation we are trying to achieve, with the goal being to clarify and simplify the conversation.

From a Te Ao Maori lens there is chance to reconnect with whenua – a chance to surface the connection with whenua and the environment that sits at the heart of kainga and transforming our narrative – that’s how I picture it thinking about the overall goal

The first issues paper focused on the ‘supply’ paradigm or narrative as a key example.

An equally important narrative to identify is that the housing market is both extremely complex – because it is presented by many sources as the entire housing system, and that the market should not be touched. Both these elements of a dominant narrative about the market completely obscure the fact that housing must truly be about people and families in the first instance.

As a narrative tool, refusing or failing to distinguish between the market and the system creates utter confusion about how the market and the system actually work, and more importantly who is responsible for them.

It is only when this confusion prevails that government can be simultaneously criticised for either intervening in the market or not intervening in the market, and at the same time for failing to ensure adequate Public and affordable housing. It’s very much a double-edged sword.

When this narrative is unpicked and we clearly define the market as distinct from the system, there is space for government even within a neo-liberal construct to limit intervention in the market, while investing adequately in the wider system to meet its social welfare and human rights obligations.

It can be argued that the subsystem [part of the system] that matters right now is the public and affordable housing system, where there is significant focus and investment right now. It’s also a double edged sword right now because we are so far behind in supply of social housing, that the public spin is always negative. Nonetheless production is going in the right direction for the first time since 1991.

To change narrative, one strategy is to introduce a new one – as discussed in the meeting. One new narrative that is literally knocking on our door is the human rights directive to develop a National Rights-Based Housing Strategy. That's the only tool we are aware of that can offer a long-term mechanism to keep social housing supply going in the right direction over a 25 year period: a long project to undo the harm caused by years of system neglect. Our own Human Rights Commission is publishing guidelines on the right to a decent home soon, and the UN Special Rapporteur's final report on her February 2020 visit is also due out in March.

An associated new narrative is this: *we can have an exemplar housing system – in which all New Zealanders are well-housed – but it will take time.*

New narrative: 'New Zealand can have a great housing system' [but it's not going to be this year...]

*It could also be: let's have an **exemplary** housing system:*

Kiwis love to lead the world and show the rest of the world how to do things: let's strive for exemplary – it can break down people fear around doing things not done before. We could aim to frame it as pioneering – not doing it like others, but better.

Meeting one also explored another familiar and related narrative problem in housing in Aotearoa. We currently have what seem to be staunchly divided opinions about whether housing is about people, money, supply, or profit.

Our discussion focused on housing being about people. The Auckland Community Housing Providers Network have produced a series of short videos commonly known as the 'We Believe' series, which celebrates both the belief of community providers in what they do, alongside the lived experiences of people they have housed. It stands in stark contrast to both the market dominant narrative in the media, and the constant controversialisation of lived-experience preferred by the media – that lived human experience is only worth covering if there is a conflict that can be surfaced or inflamed.

*Understanding that **housing is simply deeper and more important than the dominant narratives make them sound***

*That connection [with home] along with the idea of de-coupling from the dominant commercial paradigm of just going and buying everything from shops - is also fundamental to **decolonising our understanding of home***

Planning for meeting 2

We traversed a lot of space in meeting 1. This process needs to lead to actionable measures on agreed priorities, so in meeting 2 we will continue to explore the how, the what and the why.

There's a how [see minutes of meeting re the connector role] but then there is a 'what':

- *We need to agree what our narrative change is:*
 - *From a focus on ownership to a focus on access?*
- *Marginalisation narrative: access for all? Not a grand designs home for everyone...*
 - *Need versus want? Does every home need a kitchen/what can be shared?*
 - *Iwi, sharing, family: it can be ethnically and culturally informed, but it can be for everyone too.*

The proposed meeting purpose is:

Shift Aotearoa | Conference 2021

- Agree vision for what could be achieved at the conference
- Agree vision for what could be achieved through to 2023
- How? Develop ideas to get there

Pre-conference work programme | initial schedule of meetings

2021 work programme	Constitutional transformation*	Housing System Settings	Narrative Change	Development phase
Meeting agenda prepared 3 working days prior published via available channels				
Meeting minutes circulated 3 days after specifying agreed next steps/tasks published via available channels				
Meetings are open and inclusive – there is no membership or limit on attendance: feedback will consistently be sought				
This schedule offers a framework: there can and will be other meetings, ‘offline’ and otherwise				
Existing networks and sector networks will be kept up to date and consistently invited to feedback and participate				
Standard timing	-	1PM – 3PM	10AM-Midday	
January	TBC	26 Jan	26 Jan	Convene conversation with those interested in each workstream Draft forward work/discussion milestones to June 2021
February	TBC	9 Feb	9 Feb	Agree vision for what could be achieved at conference, & to 2023 How? Develop ideas to get there
March	TBC	9 March	9 March	Agree vision for what could be achieved at conference, & to 2023 How? Develop ideas to get there
April	TBC	13 April	13 April	Conference presentations planned – key points agreed Issues paper or discussion papers agreed
April / May	Evolving work stream leadership engages with sector Wide net engagement on issues and discussion papers			
May	TBC	11 May	11 May	Feedback on issues and discussion papers circulated to inform presentations
May 12 - 31	Networking and engagement Conference presentations pre-recording			
Conference date:	9 June	10 June	11 June	Conference presentations focus on decision making and advocacy opportunities
Post conference initial review	TBC	29 June	29 June	Review conference proceedings and plan future work Establish forward meeting schedule
Conference 2021 outcomes include the development of a clear agreed future work programme				