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Mayoral Taskforce for Social Housing Update for Meeting, Wednesday 2 March 2022

The Housing Taskforce's fifth meeting on Wednesday night discussed the mechanics of being a Community Housing Provider (CHP).

Taskforce member and Porirua Whanau Services chief executive Liz Kelly spoke of her experience operating the CHP – which was set up about six years ago. There are approximately 10 CHPs operating across the Greater Wellington region, providing a mix of public, affordable and housing first (supporting a reduction in homelessness) tenancies.

The Porirua Whanau CHP operates across the housing spectrum providing transitional, emergency and social housing in Wellington's northern suburbs. Its ultimate goal is home ownership and making people more self-reliant. The meeting was told that while the service owns some of its houses and is building new ones, it also manages some properties for private landlords. Tenants include the fit elderly, refugees and migrants, low-level psychiatric, low-level disadvantaged and people with physical disabilities. Most are Maori.

Ms Kelly told the meeting because of its CHP status it does not select tenants but rather receives them from the social housing register. All receive the Income Related Rents Subsidy (IRRS), which means tenants pay no more than 25% of their net income in rent, with the remainder 'topped-up' by the IRRS. Currently council tenants aren't eligible for IRRS, whereas those living in other social housing in Wellington (e.g., Kainga Ora or CHP properties) are eligible. Similarly, the taskforce heard rents are set by the Ministries of Social Development (MSD) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

She explained the robust process of becoming a CHP, which in their case took just 18 months – a remarkably short timeframe – was rigorous and time-consuming. Key to any agreement was a solid governance structure and the need to separate landlord responsibilities from social service provision.

The Taskforce will hold its next meeting on Thursday March 10th.