

DEMAND VERSUS SUPPLY: INCONRUENCE IN THE WCC DRAFT SOCIAL HOUSING POLICY

Caleb Anderson
Submitter 12 OSS/10P(a)

Identified need or feature of WCC housing	Council response
<p>Affordability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to affordable housing is supposedly one of the main goals of WCC social housing (p. 3,4,5,6,11,16), and is becoming more of a problem throughout Wellington (p. 4). Affordability is the number one issue in "Challenges we face" (p. 4). Bedsits are currently the main form of stock (table p. 12). Above and beyond current tenants, most of the waiting list are seeking bedsits (62.4%, cf. 40.9% of available stock; table p. 13). Bedsits are overwhelmingly favoured over one-bedroom flats (7.7% of the waiting list, cf. 30.4% of stock). This is "because they are cheaper" (p. 12, also p. 13). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little is being done to achieve greater affordability. Rent will stay at 70% of market rates while market rates will rise due to the upgrade (p. 5). Presumably council profit will rise, as on-going upgrade work must be funded by rent income (p. 5). The number of bedsits is not rising to meet demand but is being drastically cut to two-thirds its current level (p. 4, table p. 13). One-bedroom flats will increase slightly, but nowhere near enough to offset the decrease in bedsits (p. 3, table p. 13). Tenants currently renting or seeking bedsits will be shunted into more expensive one-bedroom accommodation if they are able to receive council housing at all.
<p>Scarcity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WCC is currently "not able to house all households who require social housing because the stock is limited" (p. 6, also p. 7). Projected demographic data shows there are "increasing numbers of households in housing need" (p. 4, also p. 16). This is the second issue in "Challenges we face" (p. 4). The increase in housing need will primarily consist of the elderly (Fourth "Challenge" p. 4), one-parent and one-person households (p. 4,15,16), all of whom are more likely to seek one-bedroom accommodation. Current waiting-list figures match these projections, with most people seeking bedsits (p. 12). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite millions of dollars for upgrades, the number of units WCC provides will not increase to meet demand, but decrease (p. 4). The amount of one-bedroom accommodation – bedsits and one-bedroom flats – will decrease even more sharply (see above).
<p>WCC is best suited to provide one-bedroom accommodation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WCC is "best suited to house single people and small families" (p. 8). Housing New Zealand Corporation – the other main player in Wellington social housing – provides mostly two- and three-bedroom flats (p. 4,7,12). It is acknowledged that WCC and HNZC stock "compliment [sic] each other" (p. 12) and WCC "does not wish to duplicate services" (p. 4). Despite this, and the increasingly dominant one-bedroom demand, the fact that stock is primarily one-bedroom is seen as one of the "Challenges we face" (p. 4). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As previously mentioned, one-bedroom accommodation is drastically decreasing. Rather than continuing to complement HNZC's stock, WCC is heading towards a duplicated distribution with more two- and three-bedroom flats.

MISLEADING USE OF STATISTICS IN THE WCC DRAFT SOCIAL HOUSING POLICY

The figures shown in the table “Wellington City Council’s housing type – current and post Housing Upgrade Programme (HUP)” (p. 13) report that by far the most significant change in stock numbers after the housing upgrade is a substantial decrease in bedsits to two-thirds the current level. All other housing categories rise slightly, including one-bedroom flats (table p. 13).

Yet throughout the policy document, the changes in stock ratios are reported variously as the following:

- “It is expected the number of bedsits and one bedroom units will decrease slightly” (p. 3) – This is misleading. It is not only expected, it is planned that bedsits will decrease substantially. This will be only partially offset by (more expensive, less popular) one-bedroom flats.
- “After this programme is complete there will be significantly less bedsits but many more one and two bedroom units and a few more three and four bedroom units” (p. 4) – This obscures the fact that the “many” more one-bedroom flats is nowhere near enough to offset the decrease in bedsits.
- “There will be less bedsits but many more one and two bedroom units and a few more three and four bedroom units” (p. 12) – This makes it seem like the slight increase in one- and two-bedroom flats is more significant than the large decrease in bedsits.

One-bedroom flats are variously grouped with bedsits or with two-bedroom flats where it is most convenient:

- On page 3, one-bedroom flats are grouped with bedsits to allow the policy to say that bedsits and one bedroom units will only decrease slightly. This is already rather dishonest as the decrease is quite substantial; when bedsits are taken alone, it is blatantly obvious how significant their decrease is.
- On page 4, one-bedroom flats are grouped with two-bedroom flats to say that there are “many more one and two bedroom units” as an offset to the admitted “significantly less bedsits”. Here, the (slight) increase in one-bedroom flats is added to the (slight) increase in two-bedroom to say that there are “many more” – in actual fact any increase in other types of stock is dwarfed by the drastic reduction in bedsits.
- On page 12, a similar statement is made, but even more dishonestly as the word “significant” is removed from the bedsits category. The statement reads “There will be less bedsits but many more one and two bedroom units”.
- On page 13, one-bedroom flats are once again lumped in with bedsits, allowing the draft policy to point out that 70.1% of applicants are seeking one-bedroom accommodation compared to 71.3% of stock. This is scant justification for reducing one-bedroom stock to 66.4% (table, p. 13). Worse still, the most noteworthy feature of the table, the huge demand for bedsits (62.4% of waiting list compared to 40.9% of stock) is ignored. The fact that 89.0% of applicants seeking one-bedroom accommodation would prefer a bedsit “because they are cheaper” (p. 11) – and its implications for broader affordability concerns – are also ignored. Fair enough to decrease one-bedroom flats based on these figures (30.4% of current stock and only 7.7% of demand), but bedsits need to be increased. The policy is planning to do the complete opposite, and in a more extreme way for bedsits.

Bernard O'Shaughnessy
Submission 7.
OSS/10P(b)

To the Council: Oral submission 18 March 2010.

From: Bernard O'Shaughnessy:

The Chair.

The council is committed to social housing, and so it should be.

A Labour Govt committed \$200million as the need was recognised to enhance an upgrade programme of the WCC. If they hadn't seen the need and come up with the money WCC would be in a difficult situation.

A Nat Govt confirmed the continuation of the policy.

Great to both ex Govts! The money is now ring fenced. Choice!

For the future of New Zealanders everywhere, and especially here now and in the Absolutely Wonderful Wellington climate of change we need to consider two matters.

a) I am and have been involved with many people in regards the fostering and further development of the State sector social housing scheme.

This is in regards an equity scheme for university students who graduate

and

workers who pay rent
(be it via State Houses and/or Council tenancies).

(lets look at that scheme)

b) The implication for the WCC is that it should take the opportunity now to look with real vision at:

Rent to buy council units by tenants
Building more units urgently

and/or buy down CBD.

In b) Tenants could:

1) save their rent towards ownership if they enter into an agreement

(company share/ rent equity/ pro rata rent = credit towards a deposit)

2) or stay as tenants and pay rent only.

Owning your own home/unit/apartment creates the RESPONSIBILITY of care for the building, the surrounds, the children, the community close by.

Tenants could sell their units, back to Council, or to incoming tenants, so as to be able to progress on to the private house sector.

This scheme is to give some sort of equity for tenants to embrace a better vision for their place in a caring society.

When else will an opportunity present itself to the WCC than now in 2010.

(It's the Chinese Year of the Tiger)

(Its the Chinese Year of the Tiger!).

We could even show case the WCC as being so progressive next year in the Kiwi version of the beautiful game of football, alas called rugby, and have the Lord Mayors (after Kerris climate change junket to NocopperHaven) come here and be impressed by our upgrade of housing, rent to buy, drunk free, crime down, party Hubs Wellyhooded, bus free Manners Mall, Sir Bob's Lambton Quay total Mall with ice skating ring next to Sir Mike's Fowler's bar

Besides, I would rather see more WCC housing units built than the sick motorway continued to see petrol burning gas gurgling cars spoil our landscape, just so that non ratepaying out of towners can get along Sir Peter Jacksons Drive (Lets rename Cobham Drive) to the airport, pass the 30mt by 10mt Nuke Free sign I am putting up by the roundabout with the help of Sir Love and Sir Jackson's endorsement.

Proposal: New Zealand considers a new social housing policy

Name: Student Housing Equity Dreamhome (SHED)

Consider:

Sarah age 19 goes to university to gain an Engineers degree.

Paul age 18 goes to uni to gain a BA.

They fall in love, live together, but put off marriage until gaining their qualifications. They also want children.

They complete their degrees but each owe \$30,000 in students loans. They marry and go to the bank to get a house loan. They are turned down as their student loan total is \$60,000.

But Kiwibank, or a Ministry of SHED recognises that the equity they have developed by their education for the future of NZ is equal to a deposit on a house. Therefore they are lent \$300,000 to purchase a modest house, on the basis that one of them gets full time employment, and the other could raise some babies.

The loan is for 30 years, at a flat rate, or varies depending on inflation rates.

Thus, the future of New Zealand is ensured, people are more educated, and more families are developed, the society gets it money back over time.

Note: The student loan debt is now \$11 billion
It is projected to get to \$20 billion.

I use to approve the Capitalisation of Family Benefit in 1970.
The Social wellbeing now for this society is just the same.
Please consider the ramifications of this for everybody in New Zealand's future. It includes a rent to own scheme and includes Local Body and State Housing house Stock.

Bernard Tamara Kora O'Shaughnessy

(Refer: No3/08 The Kiwi Nest, Research Report of the Families Commision)

8 March 2010

Bernard O'Shaughnessy
Apartment 239
320 Mansfield Street
Newtown Park Mews
Newtown
WELLINGTON

Dear Mr O'Shaughnessy

**Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987
Request**

I have received your submission to the draft policy for Wellington City Council's social housing service. There were a number of questions in your submission. Please find the answers to these questions in the following table:

	Question	Answer
1	How many people are on the waiting list?	In February 2010 there were 521 applicants on the waiting list. This figure is always changing.
2	How long are they waiting for?	In February 2010 the average time applicants waited to be housed over the previous 12 months was 88.6 days.
3	Why does the Council Officers report not show the true length of time people are waiting?	The officers' report written in November 2009 states that most applicants are housed within 6 months. This was accurate at the time this report was written and is still the case now.
4	Who and why are people being turned away for consideration of units?	Applicants are turned away if they do not meet the eligibility criteria consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • household income and asset thresholds • primary tenants must be at least 18 years of age and have permanent resident status.
5	Why is 14% of the units now not rented, when then is such a huge waiting list?	On 8 March 2010, 8.34% of properties were vacant. Properties are vacant for three reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tenants have left and properties are being prepared for their next tenancy (usually takes 10 days) • properties are 'ready to let' and being offered to applicants • the property is being held for upgrade.

Susan Gordon
Submission unnumbered.
OSS/10P(c)

Easy Access Housing

274 Taranaki Street Level 01 WN Phone 499 1064 Fax 499 1063

March 18, 2010

Oral Submission to:

Wellington City Council

Re: Council Strategy and Policy

Draft Policy for Wellington City council Social Housing Service
Report.

Good morning and thank you for hearing this oral submission.

My name is Susan Gordon I am the coordinator for Easy Access Housing. And this is Mateheke Kahaki who is a Support Worker with Easy Access Housing. With us today are two of our tenants Tobias Siataga Nelson and Harry Matehaere. Both Tobias and Harry will address you today.

Easy Access Housing Provides Temporary transitional accomodation for people with experience of mental health issues.

Our clients come to us as a result of being homeless. As soon as our residents settle in we begin the process of helping them to find permanent accomodation. This includes searching for appropriate housing in the local newspapers as well as on The Net and registering them with WCC and Housing New Zealand.

Our clients are single and for the most part are looking for a place of their own. Since the Council has started work on the upgrade it has become much more difficult to find accomodation for our clients.

The social stigma that goes along with mental illness is significant. Our clients are not the first choice for landlords. The price of private rentals is proving to be prohibitive. These two factors make the WCC and HNZ the only sustainable option for many if not most of our clients.

Stable affordable housing is the first step on the road to recovery and mental well being. The right to an adequate standard of living is an elemental human aspiration , signified by the United Nations in Article 25 (1) of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The cost of homelessness to the greater community is huge. The more chronic our clients homelessness is, the less likely they are to regain mental wellbeing. People who are homeless are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol. People who are homeless are more likely to use highly expensive resources such as hospital emergency rooms, police services and to be incarcerated. It's a problem that affects us all. On the surface it's not apparent but in fact every strata of society feels the effects of homelessness. The cost must be paid through taxes, rates and higher insurance premiums to name a few ways.

We understand that members of the WCC attended the NZ Coalition to End Homelessness Conference which was held in Christchurch last year. The one message that came through louder and clearer than all the others was that there is no healing without a home.

In light of how important housing is to mental well being and how much homelessness costs the entire community we ask that the WCC re-evaluate their decision and instead of reducing the number of single person accommodation as the draft suggests that single person accommodation be increased.

The economic downturn we're presently experiencing affords Wellington a unique opportunity to purchase property that would lend itself to appropriate single person accommodation. In the past few days I have seen property that in my opinion would serve our population well if it were turned into housing for singles. I would be happy to give this committee information on these properties should you be interested.

With regards to the WCC Homelessness Strategy of August 2004;

- On page 5 it states that: WCC will continue its role as a key housing provider.
- On page 6 under Service provider it states : Council officers are currently working in partnership with Housing New Zealand to build more social housing. (All we ask is that you keep to this plan instead of reducing the number of housing units as the draft suggests.)
- Under Housing on Page 7: It states that there are significant waiting lists for accommodation with WCC and HNZ. (This study was done in 2004 and now the waiting lists are even longer.)
- On page 8 it states that: This strategy promotes the Council's ongoing role in the provision of housing and support for services to promote independent living. (Surely reducing the number of housing units does the opposite.)

We know it's not too late. We hope that the WCC will re-assess their stance and instead of reducing the number of single occupant accomodation we ask that you increase them.

I have made up a pack for each one of you with one of our brochures and those of other services that are managed by Atareira. I hope you find them of interest. I have included my card if you'd like to contact me directly.

Thank you for taking the time to listen.

And now I would like to give two of our clients a chance to speak.

The first person to speak is Tobias Siataga Nelson

And he will be followed by Harry Matehaere.

Thank you

Yours faithfully,



Susan Gordon

Good Morning and thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to you.

My name is Tobias Siataga Nelson. Right now I live in Easy Access Housing.

I am a beneficiary I'm on the Invalids Benefit.

Until recently I was living at a lodge in Newtown. I became homeless and fortunately through a referral from ICP I got a place in Easy Access Housing. I was homeless this time for 24 hours. That was enough to scare me. I have had to shift many times in the past. I don't enjoy being homeless.

My ideal situation would be to have a flat of my own. Since I'm a beneficiary as you'll appreciate I have very little money. Before the Lodge I was living in a private rental with two other beneficiaries. Hard as we tried in the end we could not afford the rent. That started a series of events that ended up with me being on my own and unable to keep afloat. I understand that at the end of the upgrade there will be much fewer accommodation options for someone in my position. I would like the Council to reconsider their draft policy for social housing and make more single person housing available instead of less.

Through my recent experience people have said to me "you're not really homeless you can stay on a friends couch." This may be true but the fact of the matter is that I don't have my own home. I don't like to constantly have to rely on the kindness of a friend. So many times I have chosen not to stay with friends and instead have stayed on the street. Once again please make more housing for me and people like me instead of less.

Thank you

Kia Ora

Good morning my name is Harry Matehaere. Thank you for giving me a chance to speak before this group today.

I am a sickness beneficiary. And at present I am living in Easy Access Housing accomodation. Unfortunately Easy Access is only temporary. I became homeless and came to Easy Access after living at a lodge in Newtown.

I've been homeless for the majority of my life. I come from an unstable family. I had to learn how to survive on the streets at a young age. In the past I have lived rough. I'm getting older and the streets are not a good option for me any more. It took me this long to get this far. To live in a flat and be independent. My goal is to find an affordable place of my own. A place that I can come home to.

All my life I have lived with the homeless. I have worked with them as a community advocate as well.

I understand after the upgrade there will be less single person accomodation. I know that some on the Council think that having a 1 bedroom flat is more desirable than a bedsit. This is true. Who wouldn't want a 1 bedroom flat as opposed to a bedsit. But given a choice of having a 1 bedroom flat or no flat at all I would choose to have a bedsit. Plus I assume that the rent on a bed sit would be less.

I would like to ask that you consider making more accomodation for single people as opposed to less.

Thank you. No reira tena kotou kaotoa

George Kupa
Submission 17
OSS/10P(d)

Oral submission for and on behalf of the:

Prisoner Reintegration Network

March 18, 2010

Wellington city Council

Re: Council Strategy and Policy

Draft Policy for Wellington City council Social Housing Service

Report.

First I would like to thank this committee for giving me a chance to speak.

Finding good stable housing is extremely difficult for someone who has been released from prison. The recidivism rate is over 47% within the first three months after release. In regard to men and women that I work with not having stable accommodation has in the past been a big factor in their recidivism.

All prisoners must have a place to live before they can be released. As a requirement of release in 60% of cases for various reasons the prisoner is not allowed to live with family.

We find that when we can secure stable accommodation ex-prisoners will do their best to succeed. Their self esteem picks up when they have their own place. They experience less depression which results in less drug and alcohol abuse.

When a prisoner has a good place to live with support the recidivism rate decreases.

It costs between \$90,000 - \$108,000 per year to keep a person in prison. The cost of a flat is far less. Remembering that the cost to house an inmate for a year is ultimately paid for by all of us (the taxpayer).

Another obstacle in getting prisoners accommodation is that all accommodation must be approved by Probation Services. The landlord must be informed as well and in most cases now also the immediate neighbours. Our guys usually end up at the bottom of the heap. They are the last choice a landlord is likely to make when choosing a tenant.

Another thing to consider is the size of accommodation. Many if not most ex-prisoners can't handle large spaces very well, it takes time to adapt. After living in a cell for a long time a bedsit is ideal. And for your information 2 prisoners cannot live together due to the policy and procedures of the Corrections Department.

One of the anomalies of the system results in many prisoners finding themselves in a catch 22 situation. They cannot satisfy the requirements of the parole board (and therefore be given a release date) until they have confirmed accommodation suitable to Corrections BUT most often can gain no assistance in securing accommodation until such time as they have a confirmed release date.

In light of the above we would like The Council to create more one person accomodation instead of less.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to me.

I would now like to introduce Daniel

George Kupa

Reintegration Worker

cell: 021 183 8875

orongomaitehikoitanga@xtra.co.nz

Reintegration Services

Te Hikoitanga

Orongomai Marae

9 Railway Avenue, Upper Hutt, Wellington 04 529 7419

To Whom it may concern:

In October 2007 I was a prisoner at Rimutaka Prison.

I appeared at a Parole Board hearing and was declined parole due to the lack of a suitable address.

I reappeared again at the Parole Board in March 2008 and was again denied parole for the same reasons.

At this point I began to liaise with all possible services which might assist in securing independent accommodation i.e. not with family. In all but one instance I was told that help was not available until such time as I had a definite release date. These services included Salvation Army, PARS, Housing New Zealand and Corrections Re-integration services.

Ultimately I was fortunate to contact Orongomai Marae who managed to secure emergency housing the night before I reappeared at the Parole Board in July 2008.

Whilst this housing was sufficient to gain a release date it was short term with a clear understanding that tenants must vacate within 3 months. This meant having to once again go through the entire approval process of a new address with Corrections along with the disruption to work created by this.

Had independent single living arrangements been available at the time of my release I firmly believe my journey would have been smoother and can only imagine that those who have not had the privilege of the support I have had would find it even harder.

Sincerely

Ray Mullany
Upper Hutt
021 02553409

Manu Ward (submission 9)
059/10P(a)

Social housing service – oral submission

Manu Ward, 18 March 2010.

Councillors, officers, members of the public, Good afternoon. My name is Manu Ward. I live in Newtown Park Flats with my wife and baby girl.

My submission has two main points to it, and I'd like to use this opportunity to draw your attention particularly to the first point, since the second point I think is well argued in my written submission and taken up by other submitters.

With regard to the proposed selection process for tenants, I would support the inclusion of some flexibility for housing officers to allow for those individuals or groups committed to community development to be housed in social housing, where it is deemed beneficial for the community even if they themselves do not necessarily meet the normal criteria for housing need.

My wife and I are members of Urban Vision, an order of the Anglican Church that is committed to community development in marginalised urban areas. I am also employed by St Cuthberts Anglican Church as Community Children's worker. In Newtown Park Flats, we run what has become a successful weekly kid's club at the Flats, with over twenty of the complex's children in attendance. By living in the flats we are trusted as fellow tenants, and are readily accessible for those kids or families who find themselves in strife. We support and on occasion work with Council's community action team: for instance at last week's inter-Flats athletics tournament we were able to rally together a good number of kids to attend, and made a Newtown Park uniform of stencilled t-shirts which made the kids proud. To contribute to the community in these and many other ways is a joy and privilege.

Playgroup Art group
Sewing group Music group

We are not tenants with multiple complex needs, although we currently meet the policy thresholds. Nor are we simply trying to get ahead by scamming cheap rent off the Council. There are a few others like us, and I think every community needs a small number of resident community catalysts to build connections, trust, and a healthy community spirit which results in less crime and a better outlook especially for the children in social housing. We are not paid by Council, and I think it's best that way. But we have found Council housing officers are very supportive of us but have been restricted by the current policy in allowing those like us to be housed within the complex even at market rental. I think allowing some flexibility in the policy for those committed to building healthy community will greatly assist housing officers in achieving and augmenting the outcomes of Community Action at minimal cost to Council.

The second point of my submission. It is in regard to reduction of bedsit units, which in the draft policy looks like such a gross inconsistency with the policy aims it makes me wonder if there's been a typographical error. The data and aims of the policy seem to make it clear that bedsits are in high and increasing demand, and there is little explanation for their reduction. As it stands, the draft policy is a bad look for Council. Either give better explanation in the document, with supporting research data, or do the right thing and at least maintain the current number of bedsits – more accurately termed studio apartments.

This is an opportunity for Council to find innovative solutions for high density housing in NZ that meet the challenges of affordability, increasing demand, urban sprawl and homelessness. In fact good studio apartments can be entirely consistent with “modern living standards” if they are well-designed and accompanied by good public space. I look forward to seeing how Council can meet this challenge, and set us up well for the future of social housing in Wellington.