

# **Taituarā – Local Government Professionals Aotearoa Excellence Awards**

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## **The MartinJenkins Award for Collaborative Government Action – Takai Here Tāngata**

### **Project Summary**

Not having a warm, dry, and affordable place to call home is a significant problem for too many of our people, particularly Māori whānau. Too many whānau are homeless and our tamariki should not be living in emergency housing. The narrative must be changed for future generations.

Hutt City Council (HCC) sought to address this through an innovative housing partnership utilising the skills of its property development arm Urban Plus Ltd (UPL) and working with a Māori NGO who established the vehicle to secure Crown funding.

The Takai Here Tāngata initiative led by HCC, Kahungunu Whānau Services (KWS), Te Rūnanganui o Te Āti Awa (TRoTAA), and UPL has the goal of putting more people into permanent housing. Together we have built a village called Takai Here Tāngata (the binding of people together), situated on Te Ara o Takapū in Taitā, Lower Hutt.

We are incredibly proud of our partnership and are delighted to see nineteen whānau now living in purpose-built environmentally friendly homes. These homes were designed and built by UPL and were purchased via funding from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD) through the Whai Kāinga Whai Oranga and MAIHI Programmes. The townhouses are managed as public housing by KWS

through a newly created Community Housing Provider (CHP) – Poua Ki Raro Limited (one of only two Māori CHPs in the region).

The housing of mana whenua and all our people has been identified by the partners as a key priority. Housing has a major impact on people, providing for improved quality of life, stability, and better health outcomes, and ultimately it enables our whānau to have a greater say in determining their own well-being and futures. As such, the partners see this kaupapa as something far more than the provision of housing – we are actively disrupting a system that does not serve or respond to our housing needs.

The vision for the village was provided by Te Āti Awa Rangatira, Kura Moeahu: *“He Herenga Kura, He Herenga Tāngata, He Herenga Whenua – A sacred connection that unites the people and binds us to the land.”*

Takai Here Tāngata signifies how through collaboration and partnership we can create new pathways and practices to enable healthy, thriving, secure, and affordable homes to be built across Lower Hutt.

## **Strategic Context**

A mother of two young children, living in a motel. An elderly couple in cramped, unhealthy, and unaffordable accommodation. These are the stories of people who have suffered from substandard housing for years, but now have a place to call home.

We want Te Awakairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt to be a city where everyone thrives. HCC was determined to be part of the solution and lives have been changed as a result.

Healthy, secure, affordable housing is fundamental to living and working with dignity. There is a disproportionate impact of homelessness on Māori in our community. A higher proportion of Māori in Lower Hutt are on lower incomes, they're disproportionately affected by housing stress and struggle with housing costs. Several agencies, Crown departments, and iwi organisations are working to address the huge housing need within Aotearoa.

Across the various housing policies and interventions, the needs of Māori have not been appropriately considered or provided for, despite an extensive disparity between Māori and Pākehā across the housing continuum. This includes homelessness, high rental costs compared to income, and low rates of home ownership, all resulting in intergenerational poverty.

During the COVID-19 response, it became evident to HCC, mana whenua, and social service provider partners that there is a dire need for housing, particularly for Māori whānau. When delivering COVID-19 food and care packages it was clear that many homes were significantly overcrowded and dilapidated.

TRoTAA, HCC, and KWS have long been engaged in conversations about how a collective approach may tackle housing poverty through activating partnerships that directly enable homes to be built, specifically for Māori.

Crown agencies, including MSD, MHUD, Kāinga Ora, and Te Puni Kōkiri have been working on a government framework to address housing needs for Māori. This is called Te Maihi o te Whare Māori – the Māori and Iwi Housing Innovation (MAIHI) Framework for Action.

HCC and UPL signed a partnership agreement with TRoTAA as mana whenua and KWS as a Māori CHP. This created a local delivery mechanism to develop homes through MAIHI.

The partnership was launched at the same time that Associate Minister for Housing (Māori Housing) Hon. Nanaia Mahuta announced MAIHI. The partnership was the first of its kind in the country and through government funding was able to start developing warm, safe, and affordable public housing with an eye to building the steps to home ownership through shared equity and rent to buy.

Risks of the project were collectively managed (see project management below) with a governance body and adhering to project management best practices. COVID delayed the build and there were some price escalations and challenges in sourcing some building materials (e.g., GIB). The expertise and experience of UPL was a key factor that drove the successful completion of these homes.

## Project Management

A key success of the project was the way in which all partners worked together. At its heart was Takai Here Tāngata which provided a framework for the partnership to collaborate in a way that aligned with the tikanga of mana whenua.

All partners involved have some big goals and aspirations for the people we serve, and this housing development is the start. It provides a model for other councils on how to work together at a local level to bring about change and better housing outcomes for those with the highest needs.

With many years of experience and expertise, UPL was the ideal delivery partner for these houses. As the developer for the project, UPL attended to the site development activities such as land acquisition, design and consenting processes, procurement, and all construction activities required to deliver the completed homes.

Once the partnership was established, the project site was identified, and the partners identified several separate workstreams required to deliver the project. The respective workstreams are outlined below.

KWS began the journey to become a CHP and obtain the appropriate capital and operational funding to acquire the properties on completion, to work with and support the whānau moving in, and to manage the tenancies.

TRoTAA worked with KWS in identifying tenants and assisting them through the application process for their new homes, as well as supporting the build team with a cultural design response, gifting both a project and street name, and blessing the site.

HCC managed ongoing coordination, communications, and event management for the site blessing and opening ceremony.



The project scope was set at the outset of the partnership with the property design and consents already in place. The properties were designed and built to Homestar-6 standards.



UPL undertook a formal procurement process to identify, award, and engage separate main contractors to first deliver the infrastructure and earthworks phase, and house construction. UPL monitored and managed contractors using well established project control disciplines that focused on managing the scope, quality, budget, and programme with regular reporting to its Board of Directors.



The project partners attended coordination meetings to ensure all project elements were delivered to scope and timeframes.

COVID-19 outbreaks during construction resulted in lockdowns which also led to supply chain disruptions impacting the project's delivery timeline, however, the quality and price were unaffected.



## Relationship Management

HCC kept governors updated on progress and a number of opportunities were provided for site visits for all partners leading up to the blessing and official opening.

The partners worked to their strengths, each focusing on existing relationships of trust with their communities or other agencies. They brought that information back to the partnership to ensure outcomes that reflected the aspirations of the whānau who would receive the homes, while also managing the relationships with the companies and contractors involved in the build.

Whānau in substandard and precarious accommodation often find it uncomfortable to engage with local government or its agencies, so KWS held the personal relationships and conversations with the whānau moving into the homes. This created a high level of trust and communication.

The partners have strengthened their relationship through the successful delivery of these homes. Tikanga (protocols and practice) and Haepapa (roles and responsibilities) were formally agreed at the outset. The agreed values are:

- **Whanaungataunga** – building a strong partnership with an inter-generational view of the provision of housing;
- **Manaakitanga** – placing the care of our whānau and community at the centre;
- **Kaitikitanga** – caring for and protecting our environment;
- **Whakapono** – working together in good faith with honesty and transparency;
- **Kotahitanga** – working together with Mana Whenua and the wider community to achieve agreed outcomes.

These principles guided our work:

- **Manakohi** – ensure our collective knowledge and understandings inform our direction;
- **Raukura** – ensure the peace, prosperity, and well-being of Mana Whenua and our community is nurtured and provided for; and
- **Toka Tū** – ensure pathways to housing permanency are actively enabled.



## Project Success

The delight and pride on the faces of the new residents as they received the keys to their homes is something that will long be remembered by everyone involved in this project. We have been part of something very special, and the partners are inspired to continue in this life-changing mahi. We want to share the success with other councils and their mana whenua partners so they can also work with the government to replicate the success of this project around the motu.

Clarke and Bella Tarawhiti who live in this village are pleased that finally they have a permanent place to call home. The couple has lived in Lower Hutt for almost 60 years. Their most recent home, which they lived in with their adult son and grandson who both have high health needs was cramped, unhealthy, and unaffordable, *“At our time of life we’re grateful to finally have a permanent home, to have our whānau nearby and to meet our new whānau who will be living alongside us in this beautiful village.”*



In this [article](#), Kisa Vaoga, who moved into the village, is hoping her new home will be the start of a new life for her and for her family. Having spent time in a motel after living with her mum, Vaoga is delighted to have found somewhere permanent and suitable for her children. *“It feels like home... For me, it is about being able to take my own path.”*



*Courtesy of Stuff*



There are compelling reasons for this partnership. The model of delivery of homes to communities is a success for HCC and our partners.

A higher proportion of Māori in Lower Hutt are on lower incomes, they're disproportionately affected by housing stress and struggle with housing costs with 22% of Māori – 3,400 people live in crowded accommodations with 1,290 Māori living in severely crowded housing.

In terms of housing quality, 1116 Māori in the city are living in homes that are always damp and 1434 are living in homes that are always affected by mould. The effects of living in homes that are damp and cold are well known.

In terms of the ethnicity of households receiving emergency housing grants in the city, there is a clear indication that Māori are disproportionately affected with more than 50% of Māori emergency housing grant recipients, although they are 20% of the city's population.

The task ahead of us is great. This project has provided homes for 19 whānau.

The goals of the partnership are:

1. develop a joint strategy and action plan that ensures the development of healthy, secure, affordable homes for mana whenua and all people in Te Awa Kairangi; and
2. build, develop, and implement through a collaborative approach, develop policies, practices, systems, and investments for achieving successful social housing outcomes through to home ownership.

All houses have been built to Homestar-6 standards and achieved both design and built ratings. These homes use less energy and water, are built with less waste during construction, heating costs are lowered through increased thermal performance and materials have lower environmental impacts. Other features include energy-efficient lighting, slab insulation, improved wall and ceiling insulation, and improved ventilation.



The construction and development of the site such as landscaping provided work and learning opportunities for more than a dozen apprentices during the build.

Wrap-around support is provided to the whānau by KWS including health services, parenting support, and health checks for tamariki.

For these whānau Te Ara o Takapū addresses their housing needs, a fundamental human right, and enables them to live in a connected and well-supported community.

Ongoing improvements to early consultation on layout and design elements as well as a clearer alignment of partners' expectations, contributions, constraints, and timeframes would all assist the partnership to deliver future successful projects.

This community housing initiative is now a model to progress other opportunities in our city. The partners along with others and MHUD are working to provide housing solutions for those in dire housing need. The development opportunities are predominantly being led by UPL in partnership with KWS Kahungunu Whānau Services and/or TRoTAA with HCC providing enabling support. Opportunities for the development of CHPs are being explored in Wainuiomata, Stokes Valley, and Waiwhetu.

Recently HCC approved as a part of its Annual Plan a \$20M loan facility over the next two years. This will give UPL access to capital to increase the development of homes for CHPs and market sales. UPL is now in a position to acquire land and undertake development in a market where private developments are slowing down but the demand for housing is still high.

HCC was recently awarded \$100M as a part of the Infrastructure Acceleration Fund (IAF). This fund will contribute to the construction of new wastewater and stormwater services in the city centre valued at \$200M.

This new infrastructure can provide for 3,500 new homes in the city centre and create capacity for new homes in the wider valley floor. Mana whenua are key partners to this work and will form a part of the citywide steering group providing governance to the delivery of housing and city renewal. As a part of our IAF bid, we have committed to enabling the development of CHP housing and Papakainga/Nohoanga housing. UPL, KWS, and TRoTAA (alongside Crown and the private sector) will be key partners in the governance, development design, and delivery.

From the beginning, we all agreed that success would mean delivering homes to whānau in need. We are pleased and humbled that we have been able to do this, despite a pandemic. Nineteen homes is a good start and the best start for the whānau who now have a place to call home. For HCC, KWS, TRoTAA, the Crown, and UPL our aspirations are growing, and we will build more homes so that others can finally have a place to call home.

