

*The story of  
a small grassroots  
organisation with  
a big heart*





## *Our vision*

Warm, safe, appropriate and sustainable housing for all whānau

## *Our mission*

We provide shelter, care, support and opportunities for whānau experiencing a housing crisis

## *Our values*

We strive to demonstrate aroha through:

- ✓ **Respect**
- ✓ **Trust**
- ✓ **Compassion**
- ✓ **Generosity**
- ✓ **Courage**



# Introduction

**E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā rangatira o Tāmaki  
Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou  
Mālō e lelei, talofa lava, kia orana, fakaalofa lahi atu,  
ni sa bula vinaka, namaste, ni hao, greetings  
Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa**

Established in May 2005, Island Child Charitable Trust is based in Glen Innes, Tāmaki. Our beautiful little village operates across four neighbouring properties and provides transitional housing for up to 54 people at any one time. We provide a 12-week, whānau-centred, holistic programme with intensive support. Each year, we successfully rehome individuals and families into sustainable housing. We work mainly with Māori and Pacific single parent families and adults but also two-parent families. Our referrals come from whānau, community, and government agencies.

By the time whānau arrive on our doorstep, they've exhausted all other avenues of support, are deeply worn out from transient living, and have complex needs. Overwhelmed by constant uncertainty and worry, they struggle to look after themselves and raise their children. They may have unattended health needs or may be battling addictions. Some have disrupted whānau relationships and inadequate social support. Others may be negotiating serious psychological disorders or the traumatic effects of domestic violence or sexual abuse. They may not be receiving their full benefit entitlements. Those in paid work cannot afford market rents. They're desperate to escape the stress and health risks of living in a damp garage, their car or crowded conditions. Struggling for survival robs people of their hope for the future and creates major obstacles to contributing to society. All need safe shelter, aroha and intensive support.

We turn lives around. For some, the goal is simply to survive and be alive. Getting through each day is a huge achievement for them. They develop life skills, coping strategies and supportive relationships. They gain access to the right benefits and move into sustainable housing.

Others come with dreams and aspirations they might not have expressed before. They identify goals and take action towards them. We offer personalised support and aroha, so whānau know that they matter, that they're worthy of love, that people respect them, and that it IS possible to move towards a future in which they CAN achieve their potential and contribute to society. That's what we do.

We thrive because of our team approach. Longstanding and new trustees oversee governance responsibilities. Our experienced Chief Executive Officer manages day-to-day operations, builds strategic relationships and stays alert for opportunities. Skilled staff cover administration, professional social work services, household management, maintenance and security. Volunteers do cleaning, gardening, and other essential tasks. A counsellor and hairdresser contribute to our residential programme. A small crew of reliable contractors take care of larger maintenance work. Our Fast Response Team ensures rooms/chalets are ready for the next whānau/adult within 48 hours of someone leaving.

Here we tell the story of how our Trust began and our evolving work with families experiencing a housing crisis. We explain our approach and outline our programme. We show the impact of our work through stories. We look ahead and acknowledge our supporters.

***Ko te mea nui ko te tika,  
te pono me te aroha  
Our greatest asset is a  
love that encompasses  
honesty and integrity***

# The story so far



**Our Chief Executive Officer Danielle Bergin MNZM JP founded Island Child Charitable Trust, with the support of her mum Wendy Tattersfield. Their original aim was to provide medical aid to families through-out the Pacific, hence the name. In 2008 Danielle established an organisational base in Tāmaki and quickly became aware of the need for homeless support among local Māori and Pacific whānau. She began taking homeless families into her home, one at a time, supporting them until they were successfully rehomed.**

Danielle continued this work over the next five years, becoming more skilled, networked and knowledgeable. When the need increased, the Trust leased premises in Glen Innes and created flexible accommodation in chalets for whānau and single adults.

We've always endeavoured to be accountable for our work with whānau. In 2010 the Trust received accreditation from Child, Youth and Family Services. When we encountered the internationally recognised Indigenous framework The Circle of Courage (Brendtro, et. al., 1990, 2002), we recognised synergies with our approach. This framework restores a sense of belonging to whānau, enables people to master life skills and coping strategies, creates a plan that will lead to independence, and encourages generosity through whānau helping whānau and people giving back to community.

We wove the empowerment principles of The Circle of Courage with the partnership, protection and participation principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to create a 12-week programme. Watching our Board Chair Nan Wendy work with whānau showed us how it worked face-to-face. Aroha permeates everything we do.

As we developed, we worked hard to become a reliable community partner, so that our funders and supporters could have confidence in our organisation. For years the Trust received no government funding and relied, instead, on considerable voluntary labour, private donations, philanthropic grants and community support. We developed relationships with mana whenua and Ruapōtaka Marae, and remain very grateful for their wisdom, guidance and support. We cultivated strong local networks with NGO's, church and community groups, schools, businesses, health professionals and others. We also forged relationships with other housing providers across Auckland and nationally.

Working on the frontline of homelessness challenged the Trust to take action to raise public awareness of the issues and influence government policy and processes. In the early days, we called the media to raise concerns but as we developed more of a public profile the media called us. Television, newspaper, radio and social media coverage helped to increase public understanding, break down barriers to engagement and generate support for our families. At times media engagement was the only way to achieve a house for a family in a housing crisis.

During the winter of 2016, phone calls from whānau increased substantially. We went from five phone calls a week to 10 calls a day from people desperate for housing. We listened with a heart of kindness, but had to turn many away. The whānau we could assist had no choice but to stay longer in our shelter. The exits were clogged due to an increasing demand for affordable housing and spiralling rents in the private sector. The then government began an emergency housing programme under urgency. Across the city, housing providers were stretched to the limit, a situation that remains today.

In 2018 we embarked on significant expansion. With the support of government partners - Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and Tāmaki Regeneration Company – and the huge generosity of private donors, The Hugh Green Foundation and The Tindall Foundation we bought and renovated three neighbouring properties. We added new chalets, landscaped the grounds, planted trees, put down paths and created a fully fenced courtyard where tamariki can play safely while remaining within sight of their parents. Led by mana whenua, our combined properties were blessed during a dawn service followed by a formal opening. Over 150 people attended this deeply moving event, including two government ministers, local politicians, senior government officials, philanthropic partners, our housing colleagues, the groups and businesses that made the property fit for purpose, a huge crowd of community supporters and whānau who have benefitted from our programme.

That expansion enabled us to more than triple our transitional housing capacity, increase our team and upgrade our systems. When COVID-19 arrived in 2020, we stepped up to the challenge of implementing public health guidelines during changing levels and lockdowns. In 2021 we began supporting other local trusts to build their capability and capacity in the transitional housing space as well as exploring options with Tāmaki Regeneration Company to extend our own housing capacity to help more whānau in Tāmaki.

Today, government contracts are our main source of income, but we still rely on Lotteries funding, philanthropic grants and private donations to support operating expenses. Church and community groups donate new items (for whānau care packages and birthday boxes) and used items (including clothing and furniture). Businesses and not-for-profit groups pass on surplus food.

***In 2021, our Chief Executive Officer Danielle Bergin was awarded a New Zealand Order of Merit for services to the community, especially homeless whānau.***

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It's very important to us that we successfully meet our contract obligations and donor expectations. We operate within approved policies and procedures, which are externally reviewed as part of our accreditation. Our accounts are prepared independently and audited annually. We do strategic planning on a three-year cycle and work to an annual business plan and budget. More recently we've been working with evaluation specialists to ensure we collect, analyse and report relevant data, which we also use to improve our programme delivery. We care for our resources and everything has its place. Our premises are cleaned daily, well-maintained and efficiently organised, with designated storage areas.

We continue to share our message wherever and whenever we can, at conferences, workshops, or in the media. We tell it like it is - to the Government, the general public and the researchers. We seek and embrace opportunities that allow us to gain valuable sector feedback from government agencies, to work more productively together, and to feed our concerns and ideas into the government policy process.

## *Danielle's story*

*I walked out of Middlemore Hospital with a newborn baby in my arms and nowhere to go. I had suffered trauma and was homeless for three years, travelling up and down the country in my small car. Occasionally people I knew offered me a place to stay. Having a child enabled me to access state housing and gave me the anchor I needed to start healing and begin to imagine my future. My own experience of homelessness taught me that people become homeless for various reasons but what they most need is a genuinely loving response and individualised support to move through the crisis. I dreamed of helping other whānau experiencing homelessness. I went on to establish Island Child Charitable Trust. This shelter is my life-work and I give everything to it. I love what I do because I know it's making a difference in the lives of whānau.*



# A Nan approach

Many people have fond memories of their Nan. Our Nan, Wendy Tattersfield, is a huge inspiration to our staff, our volunteers and the whānau who stay in our shelter. Why? Because of who she is and how she relates to people. Nan Wendy has a kind heart, a wise head, the warmest eyes and a big beautiful smile. She loves to tell stories and listen to the stories that other people tell. She treats people as whānau, not as clients. She makes a connection with people that touches their inner spirit and builds trust in the relationship. “We want them to develop a sense of belonging and a sense of responsibility,” she says.



To open up pathways to change, Nan taps untapped talents by challenging people and asking critical questions. “Do something to make a positive contribution to society,” she says. “Everyone can do something; what’s the thing you can do that no-one else can?” She’s also very supportive and believes that people can achieve their potential if given options, encouragement and the right opportunities. “But sometimes,” she says, “you have to make your own opportunities.”

Nan can read people, recognise the effects of traumatic experiences, and respond in a way that goes to the heart of the matter quickly. She might be doing the dishes or sitting on the couch and she’ll say to the person next to her: “I’m going to ask you a question and if you choose to answer, please answer honestly. I can’t help you if you tell lies. Have you experienced sexual abuse?”

**“We’re all about aroha.  
Aroha is what we do.”**

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Because her manner is always caring and respectful, people answer her questions honestly. She might be the first person to whom they have shared their heart-breaking story “warts and all”. She passes on courage and notices the courage in them. “I tell them it takes guts to tell their story and to listen and learn.” “In life, she says, “we have a responsibility to do the best we can. I can’t do their healing for them. Sometimes it’s a matter of helping someone to find another path that will help them to live a better life. Happiness is so important.”

Nan embodies compassion and generosity. “We’re here to understand and help, not to judge. What whānau most need is someone to value who they are and be interested in where they’ve come from, so they can find *their* way into a future *they* decide is right for *them*.” Nan’s approach is simple but sophisticated, and it works. She doesn’t pussyfoot around; when she sees a parent behaving like a child, she says, “Children need parents.” She tells it like it is and loves people back to life. “I help them to appreciate who they are and to name their passion,” she says.

Whānau quickly learn, usually from other whānau, that we’re dedicated to our community. We’re known locally as a place where you can knock on the door and someone will listen. Our staff and volunteers have credibility because most of us live in the community and many of us have experienced homelessness. We’ve each been through a fair few knocks in life, so we know the territory. We focus on the person/whānau and don’t take anything for granted. “Here’s another way of putting it,” says Nan, “we’re all about aroha. Aroha is what we do.”

## **Our ways of working**

- Tiriti-based: Partnership, protection, participation
- Doing what works for whānau
- Advocacy that counts
- Turning personal aspirations into achievable goals
- Holistic and strengths-focussed
- Strong networks and partnerships
- Delivering sustainable outcomes
- Ongoing review and improvements

# Our residential programme

## WHĀNAU ASSESSMENT, INDIVIDUALISED PLANNING AND ONGOING SOCIAL WORK SUPPORT

Our social worker works with whānau to identify the challenges they face and to create a forward-looking, achievable plan they can begin to action while in our village. Whānau receive ongoing social work support to track progress and respond to issues that arise.

## INCOME ASSISTANCE

We help whānau access their full benefit entitlements, connect with budgeting services and reduce debt.

## HEALTH SUPPORT

We can connect whānau to a general practitioner, hospital, dentist or dietitian as well as gain referrals to medical specialists, eye/ear clinics and psychological services. We maintain a stocked pantry for whānau, to supplement their own food sources and encourage/teach healthy eating.

## RELATIONSHIP AND COUNSELLING SUPPORT

We can connect whānau to Citizens Advice Bureau family lawyers. Tāmaki has very limited counselling options. Over the past year, a volunteer enabled us to offer an onsite professional counselling service for a few hours each week but we need funding for ongoing counselling.

## EDUCATION AND PLAY FOR CHILDREN

We help whānau to enrol their tamariki in early childhood education programmes or school. We offer a toy and book library, and outdoor play equipment.

## EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT FOR ADULTS

Where possible, we help whānau to identify/progress their aspirations and options for education or employment. Assistance can include help with a curriculum vitae, cover letter, application or a reference.

## ANIMAL-ASSISTED LEARNING PROGRAMME

We offer safe, hands-on experiences with small and large animals. The programme builds trust and esteem, shows whānau how to care and work as a team, and teaches personal responsibility and leadership skills. Working with animals helps to heal trauma and creates a fun way for whānau to spend time together.

## LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMMES

We offer eight life skills programmes that build knowledge and skills to support growth, agency and wellbeing. Whānau receive a certificate on completion and for many this is their first certificate.

### *Whānau learn:*

- Parenting and relationship skills
- Cooking, shopping and budgeting skills
- Health and wellbeing including health kai, nutrition and diet, and basic first aid
- Coping strategies for dealing with problems like anxiety, isolation, addiction and co-dependency
- How to prevent future homelessness, including how to find a place to rent, maintaining a tenancy, changing behaviours, developing supportive relationships, and turning aspirations in achievable goals.

## PERSONAL CARE AND RECOGNITION

We provide a hairdressing service at a nominal fee for all whānau members, to support self-care and self-esteem. Our supporters donate personal body care products and clothing that we share with whānau when available. We pamper children (and adults) on their birthdays and at Christmas, and help them celebrate special occasions with shared meals or fun activities.

## HOUSING RELOCATION

We assist whānau into warm safe appropriate and sustainable housing. We partner with Woven Earth to turn houses into homes (with household goods, appliances and furniture) and help whānau settle in.

## ONGOING CONTACT

Our door is always open for whānau. We provide advice and support as they transition to their new home and, if needed, down the track.



# Whānau stories

***“We affirm the identities of whānau, as defined by them, and seek to exercise cultural integrity in everything we do. Our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi reminds us to partner with whānau in ways that protect their interests and enable them to participate fully, so they can determine the direction of their lives.”***

**Danielle Bergin** | Chief Executive Officer

## Casey's story

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**Someone in the community told Casey about Island Child Charitable Trust. “This lady will help you,” they said. Casey mustered up the courage to put a note in our letterbox: “Hi. My name is Casey. I am homeless and pregnant with a baby due soon. Please call me.”**

We get a lot of referrals like that. I (Danielle) called Casey and we started working together. Within a week she was in hospital having the baby and she called me to pick her up. She and baby stayed with us for six weeks, and during that time we checked her benefit entitlements, arranged food parcels, provided baby clothes and furniture, organised budgeting advice, supported her to work on some personal issues, and advocated on her behalf for a suitable house. She viewed two Housing New Zealand houses side by side and chose the one with more land, because she began to imagine her children (this baby and another she hoped for) playing safely outside.

Casey recalls our long conversations at night about how she became homeless and what she wanted for her life. I vividly remember her saying she wanted a factory job to support her and her newborn son, to show him that she could work. Working in a factory is a good way to earn a living but I thought she could do more.

***“What’s your dream?” I asked.***

***“I want to work with youth.”***

***“Then let’s work out a plan so you can achieve your dream.”***

***“Ok, let’s do that.”***

***“Anything else you want to achieve?”***

***“When I leave here,” Casey said, “I want to return and give something back. I will be your success story Danielle, and you can share my story to help empower others.”***

Casey kept in touch and I kept encouraging her to take small steps towards her dream. She did a bridging course for women at university, then enrolled in a degree at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. In 2016 Casey graduated with a degree in bicultural social work and took up a job working for a Māori organisation in South Auckland.

Seven years after her stay at Island Child, Casey had a partner, two children, and the family still lived in the same house she moved into when she left our shelter. Since then, she has had another child and her whānau has moved to Australia, where she is excelling in her chosen field of social work and taking steps towards home ownership. Publishing her story here fulfils her wish to help empower others.

## Victoria's story *(not her real name)*

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A young Pacific woman arrived at our shelter with her baby. Another child was staying with a family member until she could find a house. Victoria said she had been living with a long-term toothache. We advised her to get medical support at a hospital emergency department, where she was diagnosed with oral cancer. The shock was terrible but Victoria displayed tremendous courage. We supported her while she underwent numerous tests, scans, and other medical appointments, and then when she had major surgery. We met a roadblock when seeking a house for her whānau through the government social housing allocation system and addressed our concerns through the right channels. A Housing New Zealand worker recognised the urgent need to achieve an optimal outcome for this young mum. She was offered a house in her preferred location before she left hospital. We maintained contact during her recovery at home, to ensure her needs were met. We all grew to love Victoria because of her courage.

***“Affordable, safe and permanent housing is a human right for families and individuals. We see significant changes to whānau wellbeing from helping to empower their journey into their own homes. Families reduce their levels of stress and anxiety, and set achievable goals for themselves and their children. Working alongside homeless whānau is extremely rewarding.”***

**Kris Teikamata** | Practice Team Leader – Social Work

## Ane's story *(not her real name)*

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Ane and her husband, and their children aged three, five and seven, were staying in a very mouldy three-bedroom house with 15 other family members when we met them. The stress of overcrowding was immense and their children suffered respiratory and skin conditions. When they moved into our shelter, we gave the family immediate hope for a better future. Our social worker swung into action, helping the whole family to enrol in a local health clinic and the youngest child to enrol in a local preschool. Ane's husband was supported to continue working, while their other two children attended primary school. They also received daily assistance with food, clothing and baby gear. Ane attended our life skills, nutrition and cooking classes. She gained knowledge and skills to support household budgeting, whānau health and wellbeing, and first aid training. She also learnt how to be a good tenant and look after a house. She was delighted to receive her Graduation Certificate on completing these courses. Our social worker supported the family to apply for a house and, after a three-month stay at Island Child, they moved into an affordable, safe, warm and dry three-bedroom home, near their extended family. Ane expressed wholehearted gratitude for all the support they received from Island Child and especially the chance to start over in their own home.



# Looking ahead

**The huge support our Trust has received over the years encourages us to stay open to new opportunities. We are confident we can expand further, without sacrificing our heart as an organisation. What we do works and we want to assist more whānau and individuals with their housing needs.**

Our country continues to face a housing crisis that has produced housing shortages, declining homeownership rates, greater housing instability, housing-related poverty, increased homelessness, and major concerns over housing affordability. The government has introduced a range of new policies and tenancy legislation changes to help address these concerns. These interventions are designed to boost public and private housing supply, support home ownership, improve tenancy arrangements and housing quality, and address homelessness. We're committed to assisting central government and Tāmaki Regeneration Company to achieve positive housing solutions in our community.

*When we work productively together, our Tāmaki whānau and communities benefit. This whakataukī says it all:*

*Ko tāu rourou, ko tāku rourou, ka ora te iwi  
Your contribution and my contribution will bring  
a better outcome for our people.*

**Shelley Katae** | Chief Executive Officer – Tāmaki Regeneration Company

Where possible, we will continue to work with private donors, philanthropic organisations and government partners to increase our housing capacity and programme delivery. We will grow our excellent team and do succession planning for key roles. We will also continue working with Tāmaki NGOs wanting to deliver housing outcomes. Our Trust is a community anchor; a place where whānau can go when they encounter strife in their lives, knowing someone will listen and help. We're here for the long haul.

## **How you can help**

- A contribution towards our programme expenses
- A donation to help us buy our next property
- Surplus linen and household goods in good condition
- Businesses could offer in-kind support or a price reduction
- Chat with us about other donations or in-kind support
- Become a volunteer
- Or suggest an idea – we're open to offers!







### He mihi aroha

We thank our whānau for inspiring us every day. We are very grateful for the gift vouchers, cash donations, voluntary or in-kind assistance we receive from church and community groups, individuals, and anonymous donors. We also greatly value our contractors and our key partners:

- Ministry of Housing and Urban Development
- Ministry of Social Development
- Tāmaki Regeneration Company
- Tāmaki Kāinga Haumarū
- Private donors, Hugh Green Foundation and The Tindall Foundation
- Lotteries Communities Fund, Foundation North and other philanthropic trusts
- Huckleberry Farm in Glen Innes, Kiwi Harvest and Woven Earth.

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### References

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### About this story

Dr Frances Hancock, the author, specialises in innovative practice, relational ethics and community storytelling. Photography by Emily Raftery Photography. Design and layout by Creative Sauce Ltd.



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