

# SUCCESSFUL PLACE-BASED TRANSITIONAL HOUSING FOR TĀMAKI:

Cultivating whānau  
wellbeing and aspirations  
for a better future





### **Tāmaki Regeneration Company**

Tāmaki Regeneration Company (TRC) is delivering a 25-year redevelopment programme in Point England, Panmure, and Glen Innes, collectively known as Tāmaki. Jointly owned by the New Zealand Government and Auckland Council, its mandate encompasses a regenerative work programme focused on holistic outcomes – social transformation, economic development, placemaking and housing resources.



### **Island Child Charitable Trust**

Established in 2005, Island Child Charitable Trust (ICCT) operates two transitional housing villages in Tāmaki, including a transportable village leased from TRC. ICCT also provides a holistic, strengths-based, 12-week residential programme with intensive, whānau-centred support.

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### **He Mihi Aroha**

We gratefully acknowledge whānau who shared their lived experiences of homelessness and their stay at the new Tripoli Road transportable village. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.



# CONTENTS

Foreword	5
<b>Part One: Overview</b>	<b>6</b>
Introduction	7
Supporting sustainable housing pathways	8
<b>Part Two: ICCT case study</b>	<b>10</b>
A kaupapa of kindness	11
A holistic residential programme	13
An exemplary report card	14
Critical insights	16
<b>Part Three: Productive partnering to address homelessness</b>	<b>18</b>
An evolving partnership	19
Developing the Tripoli Road Village	21
The first five whānau	28
Critical insights	33
<b>Part Four: Learning for the future</b>	<b>34</b>
The difference that makes the difference	35
Policy implications	37
Partnering implications	41
Last words	44
About this evaluation	46

**HE AROHA WHAKATŌ,  
HE AROHA PUTA MAI  
IF KINDNESS IS SOWN,  
THEN KINDNESS YOU  
SHALL RECEIVE**



# Foreword

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

**E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā iwi,  
E rau rangatira mā  
Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou,  
Tēnā koutou katoa.**

Tāmaki Regeneration Company is forging a place-based approach in our regenerative work programme in Tāmaki. We seek to engage productively with mana whenua, marae and whānau as well as diverse local groups, organisations and businesses. Many of our staff live locally, have worked in Tāmaki previously, or whakapapa to the area. Our work is all about relationships.

Working with, alongside and for our community, we seek to deliver holistic outcomes for Tāmaki that progress government priorities and local aspirations. Our ‘Tāmaki commitment’ recognises and seeks to maintain existing whānau connections to the area. Equity and mana motuhake are guiding principles in our work.

In 2021, with the support of the Hon Dr Megan Woods – the Minister of Housing and key partners, TRC began developing a new transportable village project to increase transitional housing support in Tāmaki. Managed by respected local provider Island Child Charitable Trust, the first village on Tripoli Road opened its doors to whānau in February 2022. Their stories are recorded here. Two other villages are nearing completion, and another is underway.

Adopting ‘a learn as we go’ approach, we commissioned this evaluation to better understand the elements of a successful Tāmaki-specific approach to homelessness through a case study of ICCT’s relational approach and residential

programme. We also wanted to learn more about how to partner effectively to deliver successful transitional housing in Tāmaki, by reflecting on our evolving Transportable Village Project.

At the new Tripoli Road Village, whānau say the place is set up for families. The way ICCT staff care for whānau, the facilities and the programme show whānau there is always a way, and nothing is impossible.

“Running a transitional housing village is jolly hard work,” says Danielle Bergin MNZM JP, ICCT’s Chief Executive Officer, “and you must be prepared to work all hours. We’re all about aroha. If you do it properly, you will be super, super busy. So, we need key partners beside us.”

This evaluation encourages place-based organisations like ours to model that same aroha. We need to listen to local transitional housing providers to understand their aspirations and the roadblocks they encounter. We need to be responsive and flexible when they seek assistance, helping where we can to build their capability and support their sustainability. To partner effectively with local providers, we also need to engage as early as possible when embarking on new projects, communicate well all the way through, and go at a pace they can manage, while keeping an eye on the horizon.

**Mā te whititahi, ka whakatutuki  
ai ngā pūmanawa ā tāngata.  
Together weaving the realisation  
of potential together.**



# PART ONE OVERVIEW

**“The partnerships and housing in community speak to the important role of a home – not just bricks and mortar but in its broader sense as a pillar of whānau development and community wellbeing.”**

*Hon Dr Megan Woods | Minister of Housing*



# Introduction

**What does a successful Tāmaki-specific transitional housing programme look like and what makes partnership work in delivering such a programme?**

This evaluation explores successful place-based transitional housing for Tāmaki and the kind of partnering required to support its delivery. It centres the work of Island Child Charitable Trust. Established in 2005, ICCT is the only Tāmaki-based service provider whose mission is solely dedicated to transitional housing service provision. ICCT successfully rehomes individuals and families into sustainable housing every year, while also achieving exceptional levels of whānau satisfaction and increased whānau wellbeing.

This evaluation also examines the development of an innovative place-based Transportable Village Project (the Project). In 2021, working closely with key partners, Tāmaki Regeneration Company developed a plan to design and build 30 transportable units, to create four new transitional housing villages on vacant sites in Tāmaki. The Project became an opportunity for ICCT and two other local transitional housing providers – Te Pērā Mahi Oranga Charitable Trust and Te Huruhi Trust – to lease and manage these villages.

**The Transportable Village Project is of special interest because it contributes to the Government’s key priority to end homelessness. It seeks to inform policy and partnerships that support innovative, place-based, transitional housing solutions.**

Adopting a case study approach and utilising mixed methods, this evaluation outlines and assesses the approach, programme, outcomes and efficacy of ICCT’s transitional housing support. It explores ICCT’s relationship with TRC and how working together led to critical project developments. It tells us about the first five whānau staying at Tripoli Road and their lived experiences of ICCT’s approach and the village design. It also offers insights on what makes the difference in delivering successful place-based transitional housing, and it highlights broad implications for policy and partnering.

# Supporting sustainable housing pathways

**The urgent need for transitional housing spurred Tāmaki Regeneration Company to work with key partners to create a placed-based response.**

Recognising that housing is a basic human right, the Government is working hard to address the country's housing crisis. Tackling the problem requires a range of housing solutions and a systematic, coordinated approach. A key government priority is warm, dry and affordable housing for all. New measures aim to improve housing affordability, quality, and supply as well as invest in core infrastructure and urban regeneration and redevelopment. It is also investing in services that will deliver the greatest impact and respond “to the needs of Māori who are likely to remain in the system longer, regardless of the type of service they receive” (MSD, 2017, pp 15-16).

Ending homelessness is a key government priority. The demand for transitional (and social) housing has been driven by various factors, including a housing shortage, poor quality rental accommodation, costly and unsustainable rents, insecure tenure, homelessness, and overcrowding. Groups not traditionally affected by homelessness are now more at risk and in need of transitional housing support. The Government is moving away from temporary motel accommodation as a response to homelessness and overcrowding. Instead, these principles guide its approach: Te Tiriti o Waitangi; whānau-centred and strengths-based practice; a focus on stable homes and wellbeing; Kaupapa Māori approaches; supporting and enabling local approaches; and a joined-up approach across agencies and communities (MHUD, 2020). As well as investing in more warm, dry, transitional housing, the Government aims to meet whānau health and wellbeing needs through wrap around support and a pathway to more permanent housing.

In recent years TRC has supported ICCT to build its organisational capability and transitional housing capacity. The new Transportable Village Project enables TRC to provide Tāmaki with sites and units for transitional housing. The Project supports Government, TRC and local provider aspirations to serve more Tāmaki whānau experiencing a housing crisis through proven, place-based approaches to transitional housing.



## PART TWO

# ICCT CASE STUDY

**“Government alone absolutely cannot address homelessness. ... Dani, with whom I’ve had a long association, is an example of the heart of care and manaaki.”**

*Hon Marama Davidson | Associate Minister for Housing  
(Responsible for addressing homelessness)*



# A kaupapa of kindness

**ICCT is all about aroha or, in other words, a kaupapa of kindness. Across the organisation, the mantra and the practice are the same: “Aroha is what we do”. ICCT’s approach exemplifies place-based transitional housing in Tāmaki.**

Aroha tells whānau that they matter, that they’re worthy of love and respect, and that it IS possible to move towards a future they CAN define for themselves. Valuing and believing in whānau, and creating a horizon of hope, are crucial to the success of ICCT’s tried and true approach.

## What counts?

- **First and lasting impressions**
- **A village design with a personal touch**
- **Whānau-centred, strengths-based practice**
- **An holistic and culturally responsive approach**
- **Achievable goals and sustainable outcomes**

First and lasting impressions count. What matters most to whānau is how they’re treated. Whānau often arrive at ICCT feeling traumatised, exhausted, stressed, and unwell. From the first encounter and all the way through, ICCT staff show unconditional care and concern. They turn towards whānau, instead of turning away. Through gentle enquiry, staff seek to understand their lived experiences, diverse realities, and immediate needs. Staff notice and appreciate the courage, commitment and resilience of whānau reaching out for help. ICCT may or may not be able to provide accommodation, but its staff can immediately help by practising kindness, fostering hope, exploring alternatives, making referrals, or staying in touch until space becomes available in one of its villages.

A village design and layout, landscaping and planting, and a myriad of small personal touches are another vital sign of ICCT’s approach and a critical factor of success. Entering an ICCT village, whānau see individual whare around a central communal courtyard, with raised gardens, fruit trees and outdoor furniture. Child-proof gates and fences, play equipment and small animals welcome tamariki – this place is set up for them. Adults can see what’s happening all around them and can peacefully cook dinner while little ones play outside. At night, security cameras and lights create a sense of safety and well-lit paths. Communal spaces are well equipped, furnished and maintained, inviting whānau to connect with one another, share stories and make new friends. Clean, warm, and beautifully presented rooms and chalets (at the Point England Village) or self-contained units (at the new Tripoli Road Village) encourage whānau to feel a sense of ownership over their personal space. Staff can focus on supporting whānau to settle in, so adults and children can begin to relax and do the work they need to do.

A registered social worker and experienced housing workers track progress and respond to issues; they focus on the whole person/whānau – their needs and aspirations. Culture is not simply recognised and affirmed, but a source of strength and wisdom. Staff build on whānau strengths and wisdom, supporting them to open-up and address what truly matters. With guidance and advocacy whānau gain access to the right benefits, the health care they need, healthy food, educational opportunities, employment support, life skills training, volunteer opportunities, and sustainable housing. There's also time to breathe and enjoy new-found friendships with others in the same situation.

**“For us, Te Tiriti o Waitangi means partnering with whānau to identify and protect their interests and enable them to determine the direction of their lives.”**

*ICCT Chief Executive Officer*

ICCT turns personal aspirations into achievable goals and sustainable outcomes. For some, the goal is simply to survive; getting through each day is a significant achievement for them. They develop life skills, coping strategies and supportive relationships. Others come with dreams and aspirations they might not have expressed before. They identify goals and are supported to take steps towards them. New knowledge, relationships and skills enhance wellbeing. Whānau learn how to make informed decisions that leave them feeling calm, more in control and hopeful for the future.



## We work with our hearts

“How a room is laid out can make it feel warm and welcoming, or depressing. We’re about creating a home for people while they stay with us, so we’re big on beauty and cleaning. We pay attention to small details like matching duvets and cushions. We ask ourselves: Would we want to stay in this room or unit? Is it clean enough for us to stay here?”

Our job is to support whānau into sustainable housing and pass on useful knowledge and life skills, so they never become homeless again. We do it in a way of kindness. What matters is the quality of the engagement, so whānau get what they need and feel like they’re moving in a positive direction.

With COVID-19, we had to postpone group classes and quickly pivot to increased one-to-one work with whānau. Some people love the attention of a one-to-one approach. They might have several sessions with a budget adviser and then one day it all clicks, and you hear them say: “We don’t need a big, new car that will put us into debt; we just need a small, reliable run-about.” Others love our little one-hour classes, where we’ll do something like clean a room together or tidy the whole house. It becomes a group thing; someone turns on the tunes and there’s lots of laughter and learning. We share knowledge about different cleaning routines and products. Recently, one of the kids caught a tummy bug at school but no one else in the village did. “That’s because of all of the cleaning!” we said.

As a workforce, we work with our hearts. If you have a heart for the work you do, you’ll enjoy coming to work. And, if you feel that enjoyment, then everyone else will too. You can’t have a happy workforce without an organisation that cares for you. If the organisation looks after the staff, they will look after our whānau. That’s how it works at Island Child; we all care about each other.”

*ICCT Whānau Support Worker*

# A holistic residential programme

As well as providing good quality transitional housing, ICCT offers intensive support through an enriching residential programme.

## Whānau assessment, individualised planning, and social work assistance

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

## Income assistance, budgeting advice and debt reduction

Staff help whānau to access their full benefit entitlements and excellent budgeting and debt advice under a mentor.

## Health referrals and healthy eating

Staff support whānau to have their health needs assessed through an onsite nurse. They connect whānau with a general practitioner, hospital, dentist or dietitian as needed, and arrange referrals to medical specialists, eye or ear clinics and psychological services. ICCT maintains a stocked pantry for whānau, to supplement their own food sources and encourage healthy eating.

## Relationship and counselling support

ICCT offers a limited onsite professional counselling service by a trained, volunteer counsellor and can connect whānau to Citizens Advice Bureau family lawyers.

## Education and play for children

Staff help whānau to enrol their tamariki in early childhood education programmes or school. ICCT's child-friendly environment includes secure outdoor play areas and equipment, and a toy and book library.

## Education and employment for adults

Where possible, staff help whānau to identify their aspirations and advance their preferred option for education or employment. Assistance can include help with a curriculum vitae, cover letter, job application or a reference. Whānau affected by a workplace injury may also need assistance with ACC applications.

## Life skills programmes

ICCT life skills programmes build knowledge and skills to support growth, decision making and wellbeing. Topics include parenting and relationship skills; cooking, shopping, and budgeting skills; health and wellbeing; coping strategies; and how to prevent future homelessness. On completion, whānau receive a certificate and for many it's their first.

## Animal-assisted learning programme

ICCT provides safe, hands-on experiences with small and large animals. This innovative, evidence-based programme builds personal trust and esteem, while teaching whānau responsibility, teamwork, leadership, and caring skills. Working with animals helps to heal trauma and creates a fun way for whānau to spend time together.

## Personal care and recognition

To nourish self-care and self-esteem, ICCT provides a hairdressing service at a nominal fee for all whānau members, and supporters donate personal body care products and clothing. Celebrating special occasions (e.g. birthdays and Christmas) with gifts, shared meals or fun activities also fosters self-worth and friendships.

## Volunteering experiences

Whānau participate in offsite volunteer opportunities, to learn new knowledge and skills, deepen relationships, develop teamwork, and demonstrate aroha by helping others. Some individuals may also volunteer at ICCT after they leave, to build knowledge, skills and a track record that will support their journey through Family Court proceedings and reintegration with their whānau.

## Rehoming whānau into sustainable housing

Staff assist whānau into warm, safe, dry, appropriate and sustainable housing. Partnering with Woven Earth turns houses into homes (with household goods, appliances, and furniture) and helps whānau settle in.

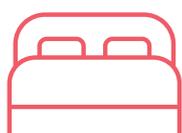
## Ongoing contact

The door is always open at ICCT. Staff offer advice and support as whānau transition to their new home and, if needed, down the track.

# An exemplary report card

ICCT tracks various data to assess, learn from and improve its performance. Whānau rate ICCT accommodation, support and programmes very highly. This data was taken from its most recent performance evaluation report for the 2021-2022 financial year.

## How 55 whānau or individuals rated ICCT after leaving



94%

were happy or very happy with ICCT accommodation



94%

were happy or very happy with their levels of whānau wellbeing



96%

rated the support of ICCT onsite staff very useful or extremely useful



97%

accessing external professional support rated it useful or extremely useful

## How whānau rated ICCT life-skills courses and one-to-one life-skills support after leaving



96%

rated budgeting classes very useful or extremely useful (of 51 taking part)



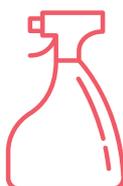
93%

rated 'finding a rental house' classes very useful or extremely useful (of 42 taking part)



97%

rated parenting classes very useful or extremely useful (of 36 taking part)



97%

rated home care/cleaning classes very useful or extremely useful (of 36 taking part)



100%

rated cooking classes  
very useful or extremely  
useful (of 30 taking part)



92.8%

rated health care, medical  
and pregnancy classes as very  
useful or extremely useful  
(of 37 taking part)



97%

rated Plunket sessions  
as very useful or extremely  
useful (of 32 taking part)

## Who benefits?

In the 2021-2022 financial year, 219 people stayed at ICCT, of whom 117 were children under 15 years. On average, 18 whānau or individuals were living at ICCT each month.

### Of 72 heads of whānau or individuals who stayed at ICCT

- 74% identified as Pasifika
- 21% identified as Māori
- 88% were female
- 63% were under 30 years old
- 46% were single parent whānau
- 42% were two-parent whānau
- 76% had families with between two & four members
- 11% were individuals

### Main referral source

- 54% were referred by whānau
- 29% were self-referrals

### Main reason for seeking help

- 36% living in a motel/homelessness
- 24% overcrowding
- 17% eviction
- 15% financial Issues or unsuitable accommodation

### Duration of stay at ICCT

- 53% stayed three months or less
- 19% stayed between four to eight months

### Destination of 52 whānau or individuals exiting ICCT

- 92% were successfully rehomed in a Housing NZ home
- 5% went to live with whānau or into a private rental

# Critical insights

## What supports success

The ICCT team are experienced, diligent, purpose-driven, and enjoy working together. They're able to build instant rapport over the phone or face-to-face, and maintain healthy relationships that respect whānau privacy and confidentiality. The staff never stop; they're always thinking and talking about different ways to help whānau get the support they need and appropriate housing.

A senior social worker works closely with whānau to ensure their housing application accurately reflects their health needs, financial hardship, debts, family members on the application and the selected areas in which they want to live. She also helps whānau to understand how to apply for affordable housing within their community supports.

ICCT has an efficient back office. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed, legal and financial obligations met, and a rigorous maintenance programme keeps the villages ship-shape and running smoothly. A fast response team acts quickly when whānau leave. Housing is usually ready for the next individual/whānau within 48 hours. A clean, healthy, safe and welcoming environment is a top priority.

Key staff meet regularly with a registered psychologist for professional supervision. When funding allows, independent advisers provide managerial support and organisational capability-building. TRC staff have also provided capability-building expertise and partnering support.

A succession plan is in place for key governance and management roles. ICCT maintains links with mana whenua and seeks guidance when required.

An evaluation framework, computerised database and survey tools enable ICCT to collect robust data, do reliable and timely reporting, and make improvements.

Strong community networks ensure appropriate referrals and the delivery of whānau goals.

Longstanding stakeholder relationships (with other transitional housing providers, TRC and government agencies) enable free and frank discussion on barriers to service delivery and ways forward.

COVID-19 restrictions and public health guidelines affected the delivery of, and whānau participation in, ICCT life skills education, but created opportunities for tailored, one-to-one guidance and upskilling.

## What hinders success

Many whānau feel very overwhelmed when trying to understand the processes for accessing affordable private rentals and public housing. Often their social housing application does not reflect their current transient family situation and their real needs.

The lack of affordable, private rentals has significantly affected housing destination and most whānau staying at ICCT over the past year were rehomed into sustainable social housing. ICCT also struggles to rehome Tāmaki whānau in Tāmaki.

Adapting to changes in legislation, policy and COVID-19 public health guidelines can add significant demands at a whānau and an organisational level.

MHUD contracts cover a range of costs, but not all ICCT's programme expenses or operational needs. ICCT relies on philanthropic grants, generous donors, and other supporters to make ends meet.

Capability building is not a one-off exercise but an ongoing challenge. As a relatively small provider, ICCT depends on external consultants for management support, including evaluation, communications, policy, and strategy expertise. It also relies on external options for staff training and for technological solutions. Capability funding is crucial, but time-consuming applications and reporting can get in the way of management responsibilities and often requires consultancy support. When funding is not granted at the level requested, the funder may decide on key priorities, instead of negotiating the variance with ICCT.



## PART THREE

# PRODUCTIVE PARTNERING TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS

**“It’s wonderful to see central government and TRC working together, alongside our community, to make a difference in people’s lives.”**

*Hon Jenny Salesa | Member of Parliament*



## An evolving partnership

**Over the years, TRC leaders have encouraged its team to help ICCT grow its capability and capacity as a place-based transitional housing provider. An example illuminates the substance and outcomes of this commitment.**

TRC's Financial Accountant reached out to ICCT in 2018. "When I met with its CEO everything happened organically," he recalls. "I was like, 'She's bubbly!' I think her first impression of me must have been, 'Who is this skinny little Indian boy!' I was very shy until I opened up, and she opened up, and I began to see who she was, and she began to see who I was, and we began to develop a relationship."

Alongside their developing relationship, an organic approach to ICCT capability-building evolved. Working together to address immediate challenges enabled them to gradually strengthen the backbone of ICCT. This meant ensuring ICCT had the structure, systems, policies, processes, and procedures to support smooth operations, reliable reporting, and sustainable funding arrangements. TRC's Financial Accountant helped to create a budget and chart of accounts, set up a payroll system and increase staff competency to use xero, make sense of MHUD contracts and funding terminology, and seek legal advice.

"In the early days I reached out to TRC's Financial Accountant when I had a problem with our financial reporting or contracts," says ICCT's CEO. "He told me what I needed to do and walked me through the steps. Over time, we were able to build our financial capability, so I didn't need to make a mercy dash on a Thursday night or meet up with him on a Saturday morning to sort something out. We learnt the value of a structured approach and I still recall his wisdom. Now we have a chartered accountant, an auditor, and evaluation specialists we can draw on."

In 2018, with TRC support, ICCT embraced an opportunity to expand its transitional housing village. ICCT needed funding arrangements to purchase and renovate three neighbouring properties, as well as a well-mapped building programme to guide the construction of tiny houses. Again, TRC's Financial Accountant and others stepped forward to help ICCT with its financial projections, budgets, contract negotiations, key stakeholder engagements, the practicalities of site plans and consents, and so on.

Notwithstanding the challenge of managing an ambitious development alongside service delivery, everything went to plan. ICCT more than tripled its transitional housing capacity, expanded its operational base, and enhanced its programme. It secured a pathway to financial sustainability by knitting together government contracts, private donor support and philanthropic grants.

A commitment to mana motuhake was key. “For TRC, the emphasis was on recognising and leveraging off our strategic alignment to deliver tangible outcomes for whānau through ICCT’s programme,” says its Financial Accountant. “I think mana motuhake is about devolving power and building the capacity and capability of community organisations and the people in them, especially the exemplars, so they can exercise leadership in the community because they have a heart for the community.”

Relational qualities supported the developing partnership. “TRC has attracted exceptional people who clearly show their dedication to our Tāmaki community,” says ICCT’s CEO. “They are very approachable and accommodating. They show humility through their genuine, caring nature; there’s no arrogance. They will listen, be wise and thoughtful, and take immediate action to make things better or right. TRC’s current CEO has been supportive over many years and risen through the ranks. She is now in a position where she can make a difference and is a great role model for our community. I feel very lucky to work with them.”

“We’ve also been able to work with consultants, funded by TRC,” says ICCT’s CEO. “They support what’s needed and steer clear of what’s not, so you’re not spending time doing unnecessary work. Their approach is easy, flexible, and adaptable. They help

you to problem-solve and gently tell you to breathe, stay calm and trust an answer will arrive. They leave something tangible behind that’s more than ticking a box. It’s about you and your organisation going to the next level.”

Developing a strategically aligned relationship with ICCT over several years meant that when the opportunity arose in 2021 to develop the Tripoli Road Transportable Village Project, TRC had confidence in ICCT’s ability to deliver.

**“ICCT is an organisation with whom we have worked well in the past. So, knowing how ICCT works and what it can deliver, gave us a high level of confidence for the outcomes we could achieve together through the Tripoli Road development.”**

*TRC General Manager | Housing*



# Developing the Tripoli Road Transportable Village

In 2021 TRC initiated an innovative project to deliver more transitional housing in Tāmaki.

## Getting started

The Government’s commitment to ending homelessness created an opportunity for a place-based approach. Recognising an urgent need for more transitional housing in Tāmaki, TRC’s CEO began to formulate ideas in conversation with others. The Minister of Housing Hon Dr Megan Woods was open to new proposals and emphasised the need for due process.

An innovative idea quickly emerged. Thinking outside the ordinary, TRC saw a unique opportunity to optimise the temporary use of vacant Crown land in Tāmaki for transitional housing in the form of transportable villages. Land could be vacant for various reasons such as housing demolition caused by structural damage, methamphetamine contamination, or a fire. Also, some sites were not scheduled for immediate redevelopment but could be used for transportable villages with self-contained units. When a site became available for redevelopment (along with adjacent or contiguous sites), TRC could move the transportable units to another vacant site. This approach would address an immediate need while achieving the best yield for the broader housing development programme down the track.

TRC began engaging with officials at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD) and Kāinga Ora over the concept and its delivery implications. These robust and productive engagements helped TRC to shape a proposal for a viable project that met existing government criteria.

MHUD embraced the idea and was willing to consider more transitional housing delivery with wrap-around support in Tāmaki. Kāinga Ora was working on its own national transitional housing programme and supported an initiative in Tāmaki capped at 30 units. TRC had initially considered over twice that number, but a more ambitious plan would have required a much greater investment, with more administrative hurdles. A lower level of investment could focus on and respond to the needs of Tāmaki whānau.

A key consideration from a Tāmaki perspective was, ‘Who are we trying to support?’ TRC recognised a need to support single-parent and young families experiencing a housing crisis, who would benefit from wrap-around support without needing interventions that would further strain existing community resources. So, the Project focused mainly on self-contained, two-bedroom units for small families. Some one-bedroom units for couples or individuals would maximise the site yield without compromising urban design principles for transitional housing.

Transitional housing lay outside TRC's existing mandate, so ministerial approval was required. TRC prepared a comprehensive business case with two possible options for the use of transportable villages in Tāmaki – either to develop the supply of transitional housing (a new work programme for TRC) or to increase the supply of state housing (a delivery programme within its existing mandate). Either option would boost housing supply in Tāmaki. TRC recommended the use of transportable villages for transitional housing.

Mandated through TRC's Constitution, Statement of Intent and Statement of Performance Expectations, the business case was approved by TRC's Senior Leadership Team and Board. In July 2021, TRC received approval to proceed with the transitional housing option from the Minister of Housing.

The idea was to forge ahead quickly but various factors (including COVID disruptions and challenges within the construction industry) slowed the pace of implementation. Nonetheless, all four sites are expected to be operating by the end of 2022.

## The original design

In developing the original design for the villages, TRC looked to ICCT's unique model for inspiration. At ICCT's Point England site, chalets are situated around a private courtyard and separate buildings provide common areas for whānau to gather and use services.

Due diligence required a broader scoping exercise. Weaving an evidence-based approach and design expertise, TRC also took cues from international examples, the lived experiences of providers from elsewhere and reports on emergency housing. The TRC Regeneration Manager who joined the Project a few months after it began, also brought a Pasifika cultural lens.

For TRC, doing what was best from a portfolio perspective required a whole-of-life point of view. In other words, not only focusing on the buildings and the spaces, but also on how people interact with and use them. Both ICCT's model and existing research highlighted the universality of the village concept across cultures, especially when seeking to create supportive environments.

A key design question was how to reduce living stress for the people staying in the village. Creating units around the perimeter of an enclosed, communal space just for residents would create a village feel, social cohesion, a sense of community as well as cultivate feelings of safety, especially for children. Offsetting the units so they weren't directly facing each other but had a view to the communal space, would cultivate a sense of privacy and security. Emphasising visual quality would create an uplifting feeling of being welcomed into a new environment, especially after living in a car or overcrowded space, as well as cultivate a sense of ownership that encourages people to care for their surrounds. Ensuring adequate sunlight and daylight would create a sense of warmth and enhance lived experience. All these elements became important design principles for the Project.

Everything was meticulously planned to ensure that whānau living stress was reduced – from the way the buildings sat on site, the path network, planting, fencing, gates, balconies, security cameras, internal power points, room size and so on. Small but meaningful deviations were considered, such as increasing a set back by 500 mm to gain extra sunlight, to improve the living quality of the site.

But the speed at which TRC had to deliver the Project meant there wasn't much opportunity for early engagement with or reciprocal feedback on the design from local transitional housing providers.

## Managing the delivery of sites

Ordinarily Kāinga Ora or another master developer would manage delivery of sites. But this Project was very localized from inception through to occupation. TRC's decision to manage the delivery of the sites presented its own learning curve and the need for stakeholder relationship-building. Watercare connections, for example, intertwined with KO processes, affecting the configuration of water pipes, water credits and so on. TRC built strong relationships with key people in various organisations (including Watercare, Auckland Transport, Chorus and others) to address the mechanics and nuances of site delivery. The units were built offsite and, when the sites were build-ready, were transported to site.

With all the focus on the units, deciding on providers to manage the new sites was somewhat overlooked. A TRC Strategy Advisor was responsible for coordinating the delivery of the units and recognised this important element was missing. “We still have all this work to do with the providers,” she said. Once the delivery of the units was underway however, she was assigned to other work. Her TRC colleagues stepped up to plug gaps and began engaging with local providers around their aspirations and needs.

### **Engaging service providers**

Deciding on providers was a key consideration. A large provider would already have contracts with MUHD, so could easily traverse the contracting process for the new sites. With existing infrastructure (such as systems, policies, processes, procedures and networks), they would be able to redirect key staff to the new site or hire to fill gaps, enabling them to hit the ground running. Importantly, their track record elsewhere would foster confidence among key partners in successful service delivery in Tāmaki.

Small local providers, on the other hand, would take time and need support to get up to speed. Government agencies do not typically invest in supporting small providers to contract with them. “We all tell stories all the time, right,” says a TRC participant, “so it would have been very easy for TRC to tell a story about this amazing new initiative that would be so good to do with the community but they’re not ready yet. So, we’ll default to the status quo model and take this opportunity somewhere else.” TRC did consult with a large provider and that possibility was on the table.

But local transitional housing providers were doing life-changing mahi with and for homeless whānau in Tāmaki. Internally, TRC was having conversations about what capability building looks like, with some staff saying “Well, hang on, these providers deliver exceptional services in terms of looking after our families. We need to help support them to contract with government because WE are hard work! Building their capability will strengthen the ability of the community to deliver services to whānau.”

**“Two of the providers in this Project will finally receive an MHUD contract for transitional housing service delivery they had been doing for years without government funding. Having access to good technical advice means they will be paid for their actual services.”**

*TRC Community Development Manager*

Prior to and since her appointment, TRC’s current CEO had forged a supportive relationship with ICCT over several years. Solid connections now existed between several TRC staff and ICCT, which brought both parties to the table. “It’s great that I’m here,” said ICCT’s CEO, “but others in the community are providing transitional housing and want to do more. They need support to jump through the hoops. We can do this, if we’re properly supported.”

From a place-based perspective, having small providers operate transitional housing villages in Tāmaki was the right thing to do because they were local. They knew the place and the community. They had relationships with key people and organisations. They were known among whānau, for whom self-referral remains a critical pathway to local service provision. As a place-based organisation with more than 50 percent of its staff personally connected to the community, there was huge benefit for TRC in working with/in teams who knew the community. Harnessing all those strategic connections would create better outcomes for whānau needing transitional housing support.

Following due diligence, TRC decided on three local providers. ICCT was already well-positioned to expand service delivery and take on a new lease for a transportable village and an MHUD contract, so led the way. TRC invested in capability building support for Te Pērā Mahi Oranga Charitable Trust and Te Huruhi Trust, enabling them to meet MSD accreditation requirements.

More broadly, TRC and the providers were aware that some local organisations had had poor experiences with government contracts due to changes in government agency staff or a lack of independent advice when contracting for services, among other reasons. So, when engaging local providers, doing things differently and right was hugely important.

The three local providers met regularly over several months in the later part of 2021 to discuss their shared vision for transitional housing in Tāmaki. The conversations were deeply enriching but getting up to speed quickly happened under considerable pressure and took a toll. While Te Pērā Mahi Oranga Charitable Trust and Te Huruhi Trust were busy fulfilling contracting requirements with the support of TRC staff and a consultant, ICCT focused on taking on the first transportable village.

### Working through challenges

A few months before the Tripoli Road site opened, a crunch point uncovered the vulnerability of not having someone within TRC assigned to act as project owner. There was no-one to connect all the dots.

“I recall meeting with Island Child and other local transitional housing providers at the Point England Reserve during COVID times towards the end of 2021,” says TRC’s General Manager – Housing. “Our Community Development Manager helped to organise the hui and around 12 or 13 people attended. We brought kai and sat outside on picnic chairs. For me it was an opportunity to listen and hear what the providers had to say. We got clear feedback about the designs for the transportable villages and recognised some things we hadn’t done well. Listening to the feedback helped us to realise the challenge we faced internally as an organisation of having smart people in key roles without anyone taking overall responsibility for the outcome.”

The Tripoli Road site was nearing completion and project oversight and coordinated action were needed to get the facility ready for whānau, to decide on the provider and lease arrangements, and to ensure MHUD contracts were in place for the provision of transitional housing and wrap-around service delivery. TRC’s General Manager – Housing became the single point of contact for the Project. Managing the Tāmaki Housing Association, which has 2500 tenancies and around 10,000 tenants, meant he was uniquely positioned to understand all the moving parts and had the authority to make quick decisions.

### Adapting lease arrangements

The lease agreement that TRC presented to ICCT required attention. “It was complex, overwhelming, and taxing for a small provider,” recalls ICCT’s CEO. “We got legal advice and shared our concerns with TRC at another face-to-face hui.”

“I remember the hui with ICCT’s CEO and her lawyers,” recalls TRC’s General Manager – Housing. Again, we sat outside, shared kai, and talked for an hour. When I saw the lease through her eyes, I realised that if I was in her shoes, I would also find it challenging and frightening. That was the last thing we wanted to have happen. We needed to make changes, so we did. We simplified the terms of the lease and worked through issues of concern such as maintenance. We work with Spencers, a highly efficient maintenance company. Understandably, ICCT’s CEO didn’t want another relationship to manage. So I explained to her that Spencers are well geared to respond to an issue at 3.00pm on a Wednesday or 3.00 am on a Sunday. I realised we needed to establish a relationship between our key contact at Spencers and ICCT’s CEO. We introduced them and now they’re great mates. Everyone has confidence that both parties will quickly respond to any maintenance issues.”

“It helped enormously that TRC’s General Manager – Housing had the authority, knowledge and experience to make changes to the lease on the spot,” says ICCT’s CEO. “As with other TRC staff with whom I work closely, I appreciated his humility, listening and decisive approach.”

This negotiation underpinned the lease arrangements with the two other providers and was another key contribution that ICCT made to the Project, but it came at a cost. “I saw the immense load ICCT’s CEO carried in helping the other local providers to become better positioned to take on a lease for a transportable village,” says TRC’s General Manager – Housing, “and every day I see the load she carries managing her own organisation.”

**“This kind of project can only happen because of the people involved and a shared commitment to delivering better outcomes for whānau. With a larger government organisation this kind of direct and nimble approach may not have been possible.”**

*TRC General Manager – Housing*

## **Design and layout changes**

During an onsite visit at Tripoli Road, ICCT’s CEO also pointed out what worked and what didn’t, and why, and what else was needed to create a feeling of welcome and comfort, a sense of wellbeing, and natural interaction among residents.

Site restrictions may not have allowed substantial changes even if more engagement with end-users had happened earlier but developing a better understanding of site use led to significant cosmetic changes, within the constraints of existing consents. For example, decks off the units had a 950 mm fall onto concrete, which is within code, but in this case created a risk for young children playing on the decks. Changes included additional safety precautions such as double gating, balustrades on decks and lighting improvements, as well as minor internal alterations to the units and the communal building (including relocation of power-points and water connections to support a communal laundry). Landscape and planting plans were designed to create a welcoming feel to the village. These changes were subsequently incorporated into the designs of the other villages.



The biggest challenge was fencing. In residential developments, typically there's 1.2–1.5-metre-high, pool-style fencing at the street front, with landscaping behind it to enable passive surveillance. A purpose-built transitional housing site is designed to welcome those who live there but discourage people walking in off the street, to protect the safety and privacy of residents and maintain a calm environment for people under stress. It wasn't possible to change existing front doors because they were prefabricated and already on site. But concrete paths were altered to create short dog legs into the site. This design cue gives whānau more control over who enters the village and discourages others from doing so.

“This is the whole Tāmaki approach, right, it's not doing stock standard stuff,” says TRC's Regeneration Manager. “The design changes were important from a portfolio and whole-of-life perspective. Sometimes it is hard to sell ideas, especially ‘the fluffy stuff’, because people think it's from a textbook. But the changes were based on ICCT's lived experience that the fluffy stuff is what makes a place a home and a community. It's not the actual height of the fencing, rather it's what the fencing does for whānau and community; how it enhances their lived experience of the village.”

## Cultural considerations

Looking through a Māori lens challenged TRC to better reflect the presence of te ao Māori (the Māori world) in the village environment. Te Aranga Māori Design Principles helped to guide design improvements aimed at respectfully traversing the relationship with mana whenua and representing aspects of the pūrākau (cultural narratives) of Tāmaki.

Health and safety provisions required decals (decorative film/stickers) on shower and sliding doors, to stop people walking into them. Here was an opportunity to enhance the look and feel of the place in a way that would create uplifting connections, particularly for Māori and Pasifika whānau.

Māori design adaptations for the decals reflect the pūrākau (cultural narratives) of this place. They also represent the idea that the new transportable villages are both a haven for whānau and a place that develops the possibility of a future defined by them. These villages cultivate relationships that nurture a child and support the growth of the whole whānau.

This late innovation was important not only for the wellbeing of whānau but also in respect of broader relational connections. Over the years, TRC staff had heard mana whenua stories of their connections to Tāmaki and the intergenerational trauma arising from the loss of their whenua through colonisation. A place-based organisation can develop relationships that invoke such stories and call for action, a TRC participant observed, but those relationships are not so easy to create and sustain when based in a large organisation elsewhere.

## Handing over the site

Care was taken to identify culturally appropriate steps, from a Māori perspective, to enable the release and handover of the Tripoli Road site. A place-based approach required proper recognition of mana whenua and all their connections. Ceremonies conducted by mana whenua representatives from Ngai Tai and Ngāti Paoa enabled the Tripoli Road complex to be released from TRC and handed over to the ICCT team, who were warmly welcomed onto the site. The whenua was blessed. The buildings were also named and blessed. Pandemic restrictions and time pressures impacted on these cultural protocols, and required an online launch, but an inclusive and adaptable approach enabled desired outcomes to be achieved.

## How it all came together

The final setup of fixtures, fittings and equipment at Tripoli Road happened just days before the official opening. ICCT staff tackled this herculean job with the precision, verve and flair that comes with long experience.

## **Two women set up six units at Tripoli Road in four days, working from 6.00 am to 10.00 pm, and sleeping onsite**

We cleaned the units, assembled kitset furniture, made beds, arranged rooms, fitted-out kitchens, hung pictures, and added other personal touches that make a house feel like a home.

### **It was incredible teamwork!**

We followed the builders around and called out to Spencers, TRC's maintenance contractors, to finish-up small jobs. They arrived the same day or the next, indicating a high priority. The builder doing the deck railings couldn't finish the job because he got COVID-19, so someone else stepped in. We all did our best with the challenges we faced, the resources we had, and the tight timeframe. But two women felt so exhausted at the end of it, we could have slept for a month! Next time it would help to have more hands on the job.

### **We love the layout of the Tripoli Road Village**

You can look out your front door and see the whole village. From your bedroom window, you can see the entry gates. Spotlights operate on a timer system, covering the back, sides, and front of the property, and create well-lit paths. Security cameras are strategically placed. Safety-wise the design is very reassuring. We felt very comfortable staying there overnight.

### **We feel very fortunate to have these warm, dry homes for our whānau**

We wanted a safe, uplifting environment for our young single mums and hardworking young couples, and we got that. When you're on the minimum wage but can't afford Auckland rents and come from an overcrowded house, having your own kitchen and lounge is a big thing. Without our partnership with TRC, we wouldn't have the opportunity to provide this haven for our homeless families who will now be able to stay here.

*ICCT Whānau Support Worker*



### **An online launch**

More than 70 people attended the online launch for the opening of Tripoli Road Village on 25 February 2022. Participants included mana whenua and marae representatives, housing ministers and local representatives, government agency participants, Tāmaki NGO stakeholders and community supporters, local transitional housing providers, and TRC staff. Government representatives agreed this Project is a step in the right direction towards ending homelessness. Cultural perspectives and heartfelt stories of ICCT's work with whānau powerfully conveyed what the new village makes possible.

## The first five whānau

**Early outcomes look very promising. The first five whānau staying at Tripoli Road Village between 28 February 2022 and 30 June 2022 comprised nine adults and 12 children. In this group, the five heads of whānau were female. Two identified as Māori and three as Pasifika. The group had an average age of 29 years. Four were partnered and one was a single parent. They had between one and four children.**

Three whānau sought emergency housing because they were homeless and two because of overcrowded accommodation. Three were referred by another family member and two were self-referrals.

One whānau stayed at ICCT's Point England village before transferring to Tripoli Road, where they remained for another month. The other four whānau stayed at Tripoli Road between two and four months. All five whānau were rehomed into appropriate and affordable social housing.

Two heads of whānau completed an exit survey and four shared their stories during a fono conducted for this evaluation, while they were staying at Tripoli Road. These survey and fono findings mirror the whānau responses in the ICCT 2021-2022 financial year performance evaluation report presented earlier in this report as infographics. Heads of whānau expressed a high degree of satisfaction with ICCT's loving approach and levels of care, and greatly appreciated the functionality of the village design and the finishing touches. They also rated ICCT intensive support, professional advice and assistance, and life skills education very highly.





# Whānau stories

## A whānau story (1)

We couldn't afford the rent in our last place. Before coming here, we were staying with my adult kids in a two-bedroom place.

Three of my sisters have stayed at Island Child. They advised me to come here. My seven-year-old daughter and I have been at Island Child almost two months.

We've had a good experience here; it's an awesome place with beautiful people. The staff are so helpful and have good knowledge of the system. They pop in with food to share and answer any questions you have.

Our place is warm and dry, and it's safe for children to play outside. The security cameras make you feel safe at night and the laundry is very affordable. I hang out and chat with another resident who arrived here about the same time as us. It's so nice to talk to someone who is going through the same journey at this stage of life. You know you're not alone. I'm Samoan and she's Tongan, and we can relate to one another.

Being here has helped a lot to improve our financial situation. We've been able to save money on food and rent, so there's no more stress about money. You learn how to cope better on your own.

The future feels better now. We're not alone; the staff will help us to find a place I can afford. Having an affordable place to stay is the main thing for us.

What I value most about being here is that it's good for my daughter and for me. There's nothing much for us to be thinking about, so I can spend time with my daughter and teach her how to cook and be happy.

## A whānau story (2)

I work 40-hours a week in a minimum wage job but don't earn enough for a private rental. My 12-year-old daughter and I were staying with a friend and sharing the rent. We needed a better place; one I could afford.

A friend introduced us to the staff at Island Child. It's so easy talking to them; our conversations have helped me to understand what's expected of us and how they can help. I'm Samoan and the staff know how to relate to people from our Islands.

My daughter and I just arrived but we already enjoy being here. The rooms are spacious, and everything is so clean and nice. We appreciate the privacy of having our own place and we feel safe. It feels good to have people around you. It feels comfortable talking together and we all support each other. I can see I will make good friends.

Being here means I can save extra money, while we're waiting for a house. I've started feeling less stressed and a bit more relaxed. I'm not worrying as much about things the way I used to, because I know the staff will help us. Maybe next month I can even treat myself.

Whatever the future holds, I will have peace of mind. I don't know how long we'll stay here, but people I know have stayed at Island Child and found homes, so I feel more hopeful that we will get a place to meet our needs.

What I value most about being here is being able to focus on my relationship with my daughter. My daughter just started college, so I want to be able to provide for her, so she can finish high school. I want to invest in her education, so she can further her studies. That is the future I now see; it's about being able to provide for my daughter and find happiness, so she can grow up and be the person she wants to be and survive on her own. We came to Island Child seeking help, to find a way for me and my child to move on.



### A whānau story (3)

We had been staying with my brother and his wife in a house with seventeen people. My husband and I, and our baby, shared a small bedroom. I worried about our baby's health because of the overcrowding, especially that he wasn't getting enough fresh air.

My cousin had stayed at Island Child and helped us to come here. I had called all these emergency houses and their tone of voice told me they didn't want to help us. The staff at Island Child made us feel so special. 'It will be good to stay here,' I thought.

We arrived three weeks ago and feel so happy and blessed to be staying here. The staff are so soft and beautiful, like guardian angels. I also feel like I am making friends and a new family. I'm Samoan and don't have any sisters, only seven brothers. The other women here are like sisters to me. I feel so happy being around them.

The whole environment feels safe and there are no hazards. The way the place is set up, you can see what's going on around you. You know where everything is, and you can ask for help if you need it.

The biggest improvement for me and my husband is our marriage; we're able to spend good time together. We have a sense of freedom here, and there's silence and peace. When we stayed with my brother, we felt a bit under pressure. My brother doesn't like church, so when we got home from church, he'd say things that upset

me and made me feel like not going anymore. Here we have our own place and can do what we want. Every day I feel more and more hopeful for the future. It's very important staying here for me and my husband and my son. The way the staff speak to us and help us teaches my husband and I how to be together. Talking with the staff makes me feel so special; they're so nice and good to us. I hope I can be like them; the way they treat us is a big lesson for us. I feel good about myself. So, being here is very important for our future.

What I value most about being here is having a healthy environment for my son. I get anxious when things are dirty, but here I don't have to worry because everything is so clean and beautiful. When my baby goes down for a sleep, I try to rest too. 'I deserve this sit down,' I say to myself. I don't have enough words to express our gratitude for all the practical help we've received here. Everything is perfect.



## A whānau story (4)

My husband and our two pre-schoolers were staying with my husband's parents and siblings. Seven adults and three children lived in a four-bedroom house. We stayed with them for five years and had our own room, but everything was bunched up. We tried to get a private rental but had no luck. We had one income and no references, so private landlords weren't interested in us. My husband's family are lovely, but when you live in someone else's house you don't always have time to yourself or feel able to relax. You always feel you need to be cleaning or doing something to help. You don't have space to express yourself. So, stress builds up and can put a strain on your marriage.

I heard about Island Child from a friend. Before we arrived, we didn't know how things would turn out. We've now been here for almost two months and the staff have been lovely from day one. I'm Tongan and I feel very welcome here. The biggest blessing for us was finding Island Child. Being here is a breath of fresh air, a breathing space.

We've been so surprised by all the support. We never knew this kind of help was available. When we arrived, the place was fully furnished but we needed a baby gate for our one- and two-year-olds. It was ordered right away and put in the following week. The staff are always dropping-off food or shopping and have offered us counselling. Other people staying here pop in and out. We see each other in the laundry or when the kids are playing outside, but no one is in your face. Sometimes we chat in the evening. There's no judgment; people here understand what you're going through and searching for. They need and want the same thing: a warm, dry house you can make into a home for your family.

There's a nice feel here and the place is set up for families. The gates keep the children safe and there's plenty of space for cooking, and even some onsite parking. If something needs maintenance the staff get on to it straight away. When you have little kids, you do

a lot of washing, so it's convenient to have a laundry on site. Instead of spending \$30-40 at a laundromat, here it's much more affordable; we pay \$2 to wash or dry a load. If you need help you can ask someone.

The biggest change for us is having time and space for our marriage. Having our own separate space offers a new path for our marriage. You can enjoy the enjoyment of having time to yourself, time with your husband and time together as a family. Our marriage has flourished here. We still argue! But we have space to talk. Instead of sitting on whatever is upsetting us, we can let it out and let it go. We wake up every day feeling different, better, more like ourselves. When we were staying at my in-laws, I felt anxiety thinking about the future. I used to think, 'We've been here five years. Will we still be here in five years' time?' Now things are easier.

I have a sense of hope that things will get better. The rent is affordable, and we can save. I'm starting to think about what my purpose is. When our kids grow up and go to school, what could I do? I've never really thought about myself before, so it's exciting to think like that. We tried so hard, for so long, to get our own place but now I feel more positive it will happen because of the help we're getting here. It's exciting talking to my husband about what will happen next! We're a little family and just need a place of our own to call home.

What I value most about being here is the staff. If you really love your job and love making an impact in people's lives, nothing will limit you. The staff at Island Child are like that; there's always a way and nothing is impossible. They're so passionate about their jobs and you experience their passion in the environment. You see how much love they have by the way they care for whānau, the facilities and the programme. The staff are empathetic and purpose-driven; they don't hold back. They aim to get each family into a home suitable for them. You develop a connection and trust with the staff, and believe they have your best interests at heart.

# Critical insights

## What supports success

The Transportable Village Project illustrates the value of a place-based approach. TRC is often pulled in different directions but remains staunchly Tāmaki-centred. The Project reminded staff to hold strong to TRC’s holistic vision. Sometimes holding strong means questioning assumptions and challenging decisions that could compromise TRC’s vision.

Holding the line on core values may cost a little more during the development phase, but long-term social capital reaps the benefits. “A development is more than how it looks and costs, but also how it feels,” says a TRC participant. “While only physical manifestations, developments have their own aura, and are either reciprocally enhancing or potentially damaging to the people who live there.” Squeezing another unit on the Tripoli Road site may have been possible but would have sacrificed elements of social cohesion, creating difficulties at the delivery end. Maintaining functionality and the uplifting ‘look and feel’ will require ongoing maintenance.

Early engagement with government officials supported collaborative thinking, due diligence and a robust business case. It also facilitated productive, ongoing engagement between officials and TRC staff.

Retaining the character of Tāmaki in new developments (both permanent and transitional housing solutions) is key to a sustaining community spirit. A village design coupled with service provision by local providers, each with their own identity and approach, helps to retain these qualities.

TRC worked hard to match the concrete outcome of a building with the relational and capability outcomes that would give local providers confidence when they opened the doors to whānau. Contracting local providers supports local economies and creates sustainable income for service delivery.

## What hinders success

Part way through delivery, a TRC key contact for the Project was reassigned to other work and other staff had to bridge the gap. Project ownership was needed to support effective coordination and quick decision making.

Engaging with an end-user perspective earlier in the design process would have helped to better understand provider needs, address cultural considerations, and make improvements upfront, reducing costs later.

Big providers are well-positioned to secure contracts with government, while small organisations serving their own communities are more likely to be under-resourced and miss out. The challenge is to help small providers to quickly get to a stage where they can contract with government.

Matching TRC’s pace alongside the demands of service delivery was challenging for local providers. “We’re a big machine; we run efficiently and deal with high volumes,” says TRC’s General Manager – Housing. “It was unreasonable to expect [them] to swap into our big machine model and do things on our schedule, our way. We’re the ones who should accommodate their model and work in a way that is more in tune with their schedule.”

Community capability building comes with challenges. Each local provider is different. “The important thing is to be able transfer your skills to the community,” says TRC’s Financial Accountant. Local providers need someone with relevant technical expertise who can also build a relationship, so the work gets done. Coordinating staff across TRC to support capability building requires internal relationships and technical knowledge. The work itself demands a willingness to do the hard yards.

Scaling up service delivery presents challenges. Small providers take on more contracts, audits, reporting and so on, requiring more delegation. “Both sides could see the benefits of scaling up,” says a TRC participant, “but [they] had to navigate the responsibilities that came with growth.” More support for ICCT would have reduced workload pressures during a period of accelerated growth.

## PART FOUR

# LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE

**“We’ve created a great sense of whanaungatanga through this kaupapa, coming together for a common cause to make a real difference in people’s lives.”**

*Danielle Bergin MNZM JP | ICCT Chief Executive Officer*



# The difference that makes the difference

## **Aroha says it all. You can't argue with aroha.**

Whānau say the difference that makes the difference is the staff. At ICCT, the workforce drives the work with whānau, and the workforce is driven by the kaupapa of the organisation. ICCT knows what it does. "We do aroha," the staff say, and all that aroha is grounded in loads of lived experience as well as good teamwork, training, supervision, systems, policies, processes, and procedures. Whether whānau are staying at Tripoli Road or ICCT's Point England Road village, early indications show consistent outcomes. Achieving consistency across sites makes upscaling rewarding and appealing because that thing that makes the difference – aroha – is possible to retain, if the kaupapa remains the same.

## **Good design, layout and a personal touch**

Transitional housing sites can help to either ease or exacerbate the effects of stress and trauma. So good physical design and layout, and a personal touch, also make a significant difference. Urban design outcomes ordinarily found in a housing development may not be suitable for transitional housing sites because of the specific needs of residents, especially for privacy, safety and communal areas. So, listening to the lived experiences of providers and adapting sites for transitional housing use is key. Rigorous cleaning and maintenance regimes also create healthy and safe environments, build partner confidence, and fulfil contract and legal obligations.

## **Partnering that works**

Authentic relationships call partners to action. TRC staff are willing to show their faces in the community – to be seen, to be challenged, to listen, to address community concerns, to critically reflect on power relations, and to build enduring relationships. ICCT fronts up when called and asks for help when needed. TRC knows the value of the mahi ICCT does in and for the community and that any request impacts the wellbeing of Tāmaki whānau experiencing a housing crisis. That critical awareness alongside mutual respect, a willingness to give and take, enjoying one another's personalities, and a shared vision helps to maintain authentic place-based partnerships.

Enabling community partners to be part of and where possible to deliver outcomes also matters. "Whether TRC or the community drives a project, good communication and recruiting the right people, especially people from the community, is what builds regeneration. You make it 'of the community', which means 'by the community, for the community' – that approach works for everyone," says a TRC participant.

## You need the right people

A place-based approach requires good people, the right people, who care about the mahi and are devoted to delivering the best outcomes for those who live and work in that place. TRC and ICCT constantly challenge each other to look through a holistic lens and ask, ‘How do we make this better?’ The right people not only offer relational qualities and technical expertise but also recognise and attend to power relations. For TRC, that requires a humble approach – listening to, learning from, and partnering with local providers already making a significant difference in the community. For ICCT, it means being open to opportunities, voicing concerns and acting as an informed and tough negotiator. Both are challenged to maintain high expectations for whānau and community.

**“We, the people here, live in, breathe, and dream Tāmaki. That is the reason we get out of bed every morning. It’s also the reason we’re exhausted when we go to bed every night. Still, we wake up the next morning raring to go. So, I think it’s about finding good calibre people who are purpose-driven and emotionally invested in the outcome.”**

*TRC Regeneration Manager*

## Intensive support

A critical intervention or bridge, from where whānau have been to where they can head, via good quality transitional housing support, is crucial to achieving positive outcomes. “People who develop a sense purpose, who feel they can manage what happens in their life, who feel supported and part of a community, are more likely to be productive in society. This has a direct impact on tax dollars and what the government collects, as opposed to what the government must pay out through benefits. It’s a clear distinction of those two things,” says a TRC participant.

## Resourcing, capability building and evaluation

Small providers don’t have access to infrastructure that a larger organisation can lean on. To achieve financial stability, they need funding arrangements that properly resource 1) a stable, high functioning team, 2) operational, programme and evaluation costs, and 3) ongoing capability building. The Transportable Village Project also shows that small providers need lease agreements that carry an acceptable level of risk, with government partners being willing to carry the rest. Ongoing evaluation of performance (beyond contract reporting) provides a more comprehensive assessment of programme outcomes and guides programme improvements.

# Policy implications

## The role of small providers

Small, respected providers have a vital role to play in the delivery of effective, place-based transitional housing support. They offer a unique set of connections to a place and its people as well as continuity and a personalised approach. Those resources create an opportunity for productive partnering with larger place-based organisations or government agencies based elsewhere.

Shining a light on ICCT's approach and programme alerts key stakeholders to crucial elements of a highly successful transitional housing programme that delivers outcomes that matter to the Government, TRC, local providers and the people/communities of Tāmaki. The value of a well-chosen case is that it helps us to understand how something works and what is required for it to work well and produce desirable outcomes. It can therefore help to inform funding decisions on the quality of transitional housing support.

ICCT's approach was developed and refined over many years. It is unique to that organisation, its people, and the place in which it operates, so in that sense it is not easily replicable. Just by being consistently loving and caring, staff encourage whānau to open-up and share their stories. But how they are with whānau, and what they say and do in a given moment, is unique to each encounter and there's no manual for that.

## The role of place-based government organisations

With many of its staff closely connected to or living in Tāmaki, and wide-ranging stakeholder relationships, TRC also has a unique set of resources and is positioned to cultivate place-based innovations. In the case of transitional housing, "Ideally, our people would design, build and operate these villages," says a TRC participant, "because we are the ones who live and work here, and access these services. It's about being able to work with our people to enable, rather than to disable, their aspirations. ...So, yes, that's our role – to explore opportunities that support and produce wider benefits to the community." A key lesson for TRC is that innovative projects need an internal project owner.

**"When you're place-based, there's real accountability. If you stuff up and you hang around, everyone's going to remember."**

*TRC System Impact Manager*

## Place-based transitional housing

Instead of relying on larger transitional housing providers working in various communities, a place-based approach starts with existing providers already serving whānau. Working with local transitional housing providers may require more work (than a larger delivery partner) but, as a TRC participant put it, "Sometimes, we need to do the hard things, even though it's harder."

Place-based developments, delivery and placements across the housing spectrum (from transitional through to social housing) allow whānau to stay in their own community. Tamariki can remain in their existing educational settings, maintain their friends, and get on with the business of growing up. Whānau can maintain vital connections to place and existing support systems such as extended family, friends, iwi/hapū/marae, church or sports group, GP, Plunket Nurse, NGO's and so on. Supporting a place-based approach is likely to create less disruption and more support for whānau in crisis.

International literature can help to bench mark best practice for transitional housing projects and identify characteristics of high-performing place-based developments. But early and meaningful engagement with local providers will quickly identify the unique challenges 'in this place' when delivering transitional housing interventions. Local providers are likely to be able to offer local knowledge, practical remedies, programme innovations and design suggestions developed over time from lived experience.

## Scaling up

Various factors must be considered when thinking about scaling up a project. Right now, investing in alternative solutions for transitional housing is a good thing because there is so much pressure in the sector. As the Government steers away from using motels, local solutions to local problems create an opportunity. TRC continues to assess competing demands for different kinds of housing, not only transitional housing but also public homes, shared ownership, rent to buy, private market rentals, and build to rent options. Sustainable housing options are needed to reduce and prevent clogged exists from transitional housing. To meet different housing needs in local neighbourhoods, Tāmaki needs an adequate supply of each housing solution. This has significant funding and tax-payer investment implications.

The option exists to invest in more transportable housing villages for transitional housing purposes and TRC is working on a design guide if the Project is scaled-up. But working at the pace of local providers was also emphasised in this evaluation. Local providers strongly support TRC's 'Tāmaki Commitment' and remain committed to meeting the needs of Tāmaki whānau and those with existing ties who want to return, especially mana whenua, Māori and Pasifika whānau. "The success of ICCT's operating model and the way they do things, the way they approach things, gives confidence that if the Project were to be scaled up, then we ought to think of them first and how to help build their capability and capacity to expand further," says a TRC participant.

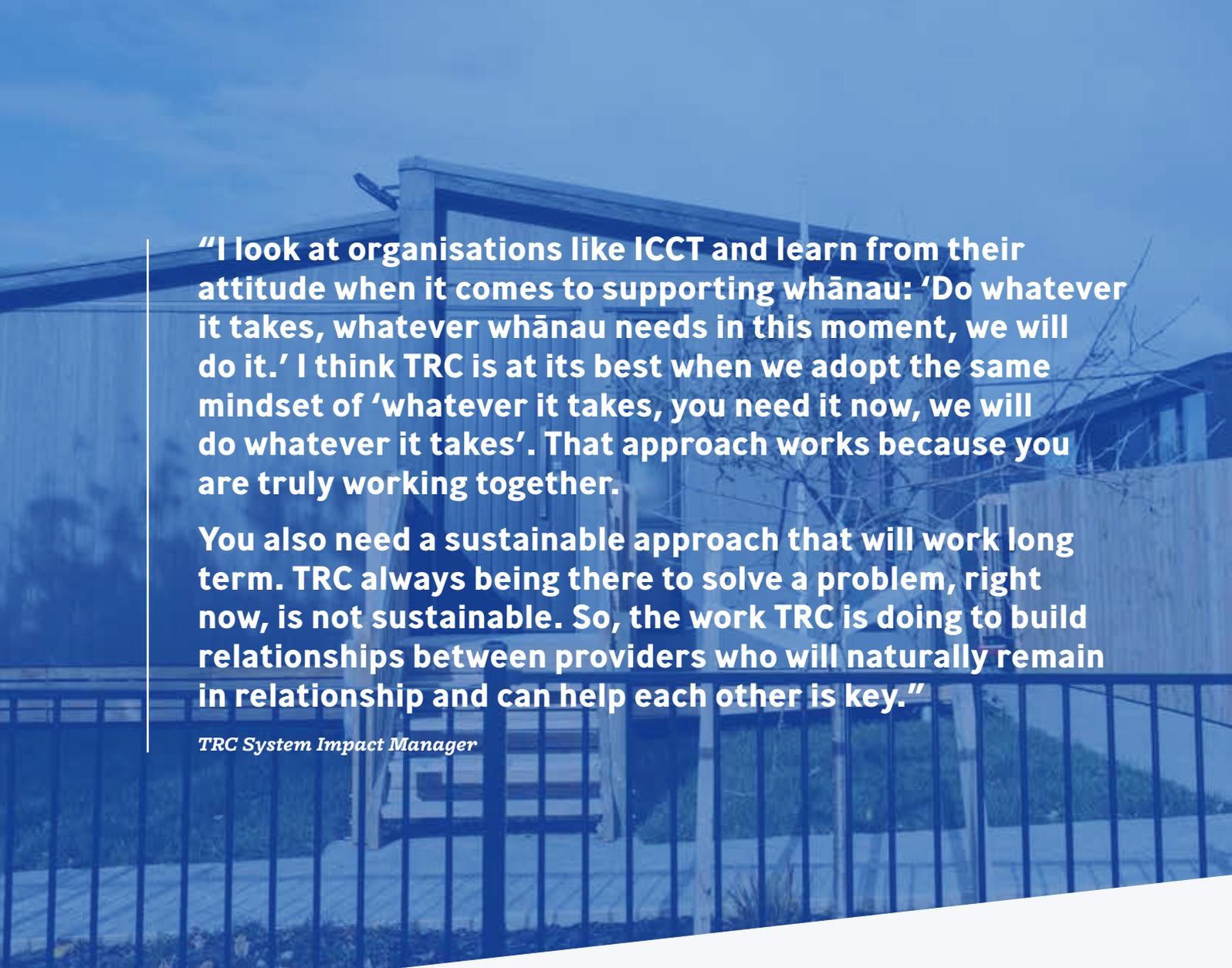
## Capability building that works

What jumps out at a macro level is the need for building blocks that can support community partners to deliver transformative transitional housing outcomes. Capability building not only benefits whānau who receive better service delivery but also strengthens community by ensuring the stability and sustainability of high performing local providers.

When strong principles and a clear approach underpin capability building, everyone is clear about 'why we're doing what we're doing and how to go about it'. Developing a structured approach with the flexibility and responsiveness of an organic process will not only ensure that key capabilities are progressively developed but also allow sudden needs or unexpected opportunities to be addressed in a timely manner. From ICCT's local provider perspective, capability building works best when flexible arrangements enable access to various kinds of support over time from trusted, high-performing advisers, either from within TRC or external consultants familiar with its challenges.

Effective capability building work requires relational qualities and technical skills. Advisers need to be able to develop relationships that allow them to transfer their knowledge to community partners. Committing more TRC staff time, on an ongoing basis, is likely to have positive flow-on effects beyond local provider capability building. Closer proximity to community partners will enrich understanding of place-based developments, build authentic engagements, create opportunities for future partnering, and enhance personal work satisfaction. Maintaining connections with a pool of experienced consultants will also help to plug gaps when needed.





**“I look at organisations like ICCT and learn from their attitude when it comes to supporting whānau: ‘Do whatever it takes, whatever whānau needs in this moment, we will do it.’ I think TRC is at its best when we adopt the same mindset of ‘whatever it takes, you need it now, we will do whatever it takes’. That approach works because you are truly working together.**

**You also need a sustainable approach that will work long term. TRC always being there to solve a problem, right now, is not sustainable. So, the work TRC is doing to build relationships between providers who will naturally remain in relationship and can help each other is key.”**

*TRC System Impact Manager*

### **Navigating the challenge of mana motuhake**

What mana motuhake means in policy and practice is open to interpretation and can quickly become a site of contestation. Mana motuhake is a strong pillar supporting TRC’s vision and strategic goals. It also underpins ICCT’s work with whānau. “Mana motuhake is the ability of the community/whānau to self-drive their own aspirations”, suggests a TRC participant. “It focuses attention on addressing mana whenua/Māori aspirations in ways that operationalise Te Tiriti o Waitangi.”

Knowing how to navigate mana motuhake and why it’s important to persevere remains a challenge, especially when partners bring different things to the table and need to bridge that gap in their relationships with one another. Mana whenua can offer wisdom, advice, and support to help navigate this challenge.

Seeking to support mana motuhake is not without risk. TRC is carrying more risk than usual in the lease agreement with local providers. “But if we truly embrace mana motuhake,” says a TRC participant, “we need to be prepared to wear that level of risk and accept that some initiatives or relationships with community partners may not work out. What we learned when renegotiating the lease for the villages was that it was absolutely the right thing to do.”



# Partnering implications

## Know the place, know the people

A place-based approach has implications for partnering and for Tāmaki-specific transitional housing. First, a TRC participant said, know the place. What and who is Tāmaki? Tāmaki is often identified as three suburbs, each with their own feel, rich cultural infusion and strong community spirit. But what do mana whenua tell us about this place, its rich relational connections, and its difficult histories? Second, know the people and become embedded in the community. Develop connections across the community and get to know key leaders within mana whenua, local marae, critical NGOs, Local Board, TRC, Business Association, local transitional housing providers, churches, educational settings, sports groups and so on. Third, understand the unique operating model of local transitional housing providers. ICCT's approach exemplifies what works well in Tāmaki but other local providers will have their own way of doing things.

## Know how to navigate the system

It's also important to know the system and its players, and how they operate. Early engagement with ministry officials and other key partners helped pave the way for the successful delivery of the Transportable Village Project. Systems change may be required to uphold principles of mana motuhake and equity. ICCT advocates for whānau, so they are not treated 'just as a number on a list' and don't have to engage with multiple agencies. As a larger place-based organisation, TRC can make timely decisions to help change the system by collaborating with local providers.

## A different way of working and mindset

When you know you're going to be around to see the legacy of what's been created, there's a real need to get it right. A place-based approach requires agency staff to get out and about in the community, so as to develop positive, productive and enduring relationships. Look and see who in the community is already working in an existing delivery space and is recognised for their mahi with local families. Engage with them, where they are. In the Transportable Village Project, TRC's engagement with local providers built a collaborative commitment to making it a success, avoiding local resistance to having more transitional housing in Tāmaki.

**“It’s been said before, start with a mindset of what’s strong, not with what’s wrong – look for existing strengths and how those existing strengths can help create a solution within the community that you serve.”**

*TRC Systems Impact Manager*

### **Look for a natural alignment**

Natural alignment supports strategic partnering. A shared kaupapa connects TRC’s strategic vision with what ICCT is doing. Both organisations have different backgrounds but have developed a meaningful relationship grounded in a similar ethos, so there’s a sense of synergy when seeking to operationalise core values. Both want whānau to move from temporary housing to permanent housing and become embedded in the community and part of it, with their kids going to school and their parents in jobs.

### **Commit to good engagement**

In te ao Māori (the Māori world) a relational approach guides good engagement. How to make that happen is what TRC is seeking to demonstrate, and it will mean different things when working with and for different groups, providers and communities in Tāmaki. Evaluation participants recognised that TRC’s CEO Shelley Katae has been a good role model for leaning into the space of relational engagement. If, in turn, other staff model that behaviour, then over time officials, agency personnel and others entering that space may learn from TRC’s experience and find ways to apply lessons from Tāmaki to other contexts. Evaluations like this can also help to illuminate lessons.

### **Navigate power relations**

Just as large place-based organisations like TRC can exercise power, so, too, can communities and small local providers. Such relational dynamics can create a productive force for positive change as partners negotiate different values and interests. In this project, ICCT argued for local providers gaining contracts, instead of a large external provider. TRC accepted the challenge. “The culture at TRC was, ‘If it’s not right, then it shouldn’t happen,’” recalls a TRC participant. “Being able to push back in particular meetings meant the result was quite different; we have different providers and a particular design.” Cultivating the space for this kind of rigorous discussion keeps power relations in check.

### **Build awareness of partner constraints**

In place-based collaborative projects, partners are challenged to build their awareness of the constraints under which each is operating. Local providers need to keep in mind that it’s not all up to large place-based organisations. Other agencies have their own responsibilities and work programmes. TRC has good relationships with MHUD that can help to pave the way for a local provider contract, but community partners themselves must demonstrate they have sufficient capability and capacity to deliver contract outcomes. Those working in a transitional or public housing context can be presented with very challenging situations, so having systems and frameworks to enable staff to quickly identify risks and act is key to building partner confidence. Over time, TRC and ICCT have developed a better understanding of their unique challenges and responsibilities.



# Last words

**In Tāmaki, TRC and local providers are working together to deliver good quality, place-based, transitional housing that offers a haven for whānau and individuals living in highly stressed circumstances.**

A Tāmaki-specific approach to transitional housing emphasises a village design and layout with a personal touch, a kaupapa of kindness, enriching programmes coupled with intensive whānau-centred support, and viable pathways to warm, dry, affordable, and sustainable housing. Whānau with strong connections to Tāmaki are supported to remain or return there.

This evaluation shows that a Tāmaki-specific approach is supporting predominantly Māori and Pacific whānau in Tāmaki to build their hope for a better future. The new Tripoli Road Village was designed with whānau in mind. The staff of ICCT are like angels, whānau say. We need to better understand how to be more like angels when engaging with whānau experiencing homelessness. They need and deserve all the aroha we can give.

A place-based approach is unique in the sense that it is born out of relationships with a particular place and its peoples. Local providers, like ICCT, who know their place and their communities, and for whom aroha is everything, have a vital role to play in delivering transitional housing support and they have much to teach. To meet the pressing need across the country, large kaupapa-driven providers also have a crucial role to play but were not the focus of this evaluation.

What works in Tāmaki may or may not work elsewhere. The Transportable Village Project is an innovative response in Tāmaki by partners willing to think outside the ordinary and do what it takes to make it happen, notwithstanding design and industry challenges, COVID restrictions, consent constraints and the work involved in supporting local providers to take on leases and contracts.

The Project remains a work in progress, as TRC oversees the completion of the remaining transportable villages, as ICCT implements its proven programme at the Tripoli Road site, and as Te Pērā Mahi Oranga Charitable Trust and Te Huruhi Trust ready themselves to take on the lease and management of their new villages.

Cultivating relationships with and among local providers is ongoing and has its own challenges. But strengthening these relationships is key to creating a sustainable source of reciprocal advice and learning.

An opportunity exists to refine and formalise a place-based approach to capability building. Ongoing capability support is key to small local providers achieving optimal outcomes. Capability support includes developing good contract reporting, invoicing, and relationship management with government agencies, and ongoing independent performance evaluation.

In Tāmaki a place-based approach is all about enabling individuals, whānau and communities to survive and thrive. This evaluation shows that doing what it takes – or aroha by another name – works for Tāmaki whānau experiencing a housing crisis. It also works for local transitional housing providers needing timely, structured, and strategic capability building support to strengthen their organisational systems. It also works for TRC and the Government because, ultimately, it produces holistic wellbeing outcomes that revitalise the whole community and contribute to the economy. Those outcomes include productive partnerships (between small, reputable, local providers and large place-based government organisations) that deliver successful contracting arrangements.

**“It is hugely rewarding for everyone involved to see local community organisations succeed. We’re all human. Our team and contractors see the mahi that ICCT are doing at Tripoli Road and want to help. “Who wouldn’t? It’s important mahi that is life changing for the whānau who stay there.”**

*TRC General Manager - Housing*



## About this evaluation

In 2022 TRC commissioned an independent evaluation focussed on transitional housing in Tāmaki, using a case study approach and drawing on quantitative and qualitative data. Dr Frances Hancock and Dr Stephen McTaggart worked on different aspects of the evaluation. Both had previously worked with ICCT on capability building projects.

Qualitative data was used to understand ICCT's model, the evolving transportable village initiative, stakeholder perceptions of ICCT programme outcomes and efficacy, the TRC/ICCT partnership and policy/practice implications. TRC data sources included internal documents, website/media content and interview material. ICCT data sources included monthly reporting data and whānau survey data, strategic and business plans, story booklets, website content, other documentation and interview/fono material. Additional stakeholder perceptions were sourced from recorded statements at an online launch of the Tripoli Road Transportable Village. Dr Hancock conducted interviews with 12 key contributors via zoom, phone or face-to-face, for up to an hour, with some follow-up enquires for clarification. Dr Hancock conducted a face-to-face, 90-minute fono with four 'heads of families' staying at the Tripoli Road Village. A thematic analysis of qualitative data highlighted common themes and unique perceptions. Dr Hancock reviewed other data sources and wrote this report, which was peer-reviewed by Dr McTaggart.

Dr McTaggart produced a separate ICCT performance evaluation report for the 2021-2022 financial year (providing quantitative data for this report and a resource for ICCT). He compiled data on the first five whānau staying at Tripoli Road between 28 February and 30 June 2022. The data went through a standard data cleaning process and was assessed as being of very high quality. Quantitative data and analyses were compared to and checked against the monthly provider reports for the 2021-2022 financial year period and the Survey Monkey data reports. A proportional analysis of quantitative data was used to find trends within the data. Results of these multidimensional analyses can be found in his separate report and were graphed using SPSS and Excel software. Dr McTaggart's report includes a thematic analysis of whānau qualitative data from evaluation survey tools.

An explanatory note. The quantitative data in this report were rounded to the closest whole percentage. Some people identified with multiple ethnicities. Also, within any given month, the population size and composition can change, as some whānau/individuals leave ICCT, and others arrive. A spike in numbers in March 2022, from the monthly average of 18 to 24 whānau/individuals, coincided with ICCT taking on the management of the new Tripoli Road Village.

## Acknowledgements

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Dr Frances Hancock specialises in narrative evaluation, innovative practice, relational ethics and community storytelling. She has a PhD in Education from the University of Auckland.

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