



# Memo

**To:** Section 9(2)(a) - Privacy of Private Secretary, Social Housing

**CC:** Carl Crafar, Deputy Chief Executive, Social Housing

**From:** 9(2)(a), Senior Advisor, DCE Office, Service Delivery

**Date:** 09 June 2016

**Security level:** IN CONFIDENCE

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## **Minister Bennett – Meeting with Huri Dennis (Te Puea Marae) and Chris Farrelly (Auckland City Mission)**

### *Purpose*

The following information is provided to support Minister Bennett's meetings with Huri Dennis, Chair of Te Puea Marae, and Chris Farrelly, Chief Executive of the Auckland City Mission on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2016.

### **Background**

#### Te Puea Marae

We understand there are currently 28 homeless people at the Marae. To date, MSD's focus has been on helping people directly by ensuring they are receiving the financial and housing assistance they are entitled to. As part of our agreed process with Te Puea Marae any financial assistance will be paid directly to clients.

Currently, MSD has two staff members available to attend Te Puea Marae. On average these staff members are spending approximately 4 hours per day at the Marae, depending on demand, providing initial advice and support to individuals already screened by the Marae's social workers. Those social workers are also able to screen and refer individuals to local Work and Income offices for follow-up appointments.

Assistance for clients at Te Puea has included arranging SH assessments, advance payments for accommodation, main benefit applications, entitlement checks (partner and child inclusions), Social Housing Register priority rating checks and updates, assessing and granting Accommodation Supplement and Temporary Additional Support (when they have secured accommodation), benefit grants and maintenance, storage costs, and arrears for storage costs.

Te Puea has received a large number of offers of private accommodation from members of the public and private landlords. As of 9<sup>th</sup> June, the Marae had reportedly found accommodation for 21 families. Te Puea has previously sought MSD's assistance in matching individual and families to offers of accommodation. The region declined to take on that role on the basis that there were no safety / risk assessment processes in place to ensure that people are being placed appropriately – i.e. that both the people being housed and those extending the offers are suitably and safely matched.

Te Puea have also noted that many of the private landlords they are engaging with would require prospective tenants to under-go drug testing before being offered a property. Te Puea have asked whether MSD could consider meeting the cost of that testing. Initial legal advice suggests that landlords may breach the Human Rights Act 1993 and the Residential Tenancies Act 1986 if they require certain groups of prospective clients to undergo drug testing prior to confirming a tenancy agreement.

Given the potential legal and human rights issues involved, it has been determined that MSD should not directly meet the cost of drug testing. The region has been advised that, should an individual wish to voluntarily submit to a prospective landlord's request for a drug test, and if that person meets the cost of doing so themselves, the Ministry could consider financial assistance to address any resulting financial hardship under the existing hardship assistance programme.

There are a number of options to provide funding to Te Puea in respect of the work they are doing to support homeless people. These include:

1. MSD makes a grant to Te Puea Marae as a contribution to the extra costs they have incurred as a result of their support to the homeless. TPK provided a previous grant of \$10,000 through Te Puni Kokiri as a contribution to the Marae's start-up costs. A grant would recognise that there have been on-going costs to the Marae, and would also acknowledge the significant contribution it has made in supporting these vulnerable people.
2. TPK provides a further grant to Te Puea Marae and MSD then reimburses them for the cost. Initial discussions with TPK indicate that the sum of \$15,000 would be sufficient to meet current need.
3. Partial redirection of benefit to the Marae, reflecting accommodation costs
  - The client and the Marae would need to agree an amount the client would be charged,
  - This option presents some risk in that a redirection is paid a week in arrears. The client may stay less than a week resulting in an over-payment to the Marae. The client would need to seek reimbursement from the Marae and could be out of pocket in the interim.
4. SNG/ADV paid to the client
  - The client and the Marae would need to agree an amount the client would be charged,
  - This option presents some risk in that the client might not use the money to contribute to their stay at the Marae. It may also be difficult to determine the length of time the client is likely to stay and therefore MSD might overpay the client.

5. SNG/ADV paid to the Marae
  - The client and the Marae would need to agree an amount the client would be charged,
  - This options presents some risk in that it may be difficult to determine the length of time the client is likely to stay and therefore we might overpay the Marae.

We understand that Te Puea have indicated they intend to cease offering support to homeless people on 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2016.

#### Auckland City Mission

Auckland City Mission was established in 1920 and remains one of Auckland's most influential social service providers. The Mission's services have developed over time and the Mission now offers support to individuals presenting with a range of needs, including the elderly and isolated, rough sleepers or people living in cars and with addictions and mental health issues.

The Mission recently released its annual count of Central Auckland's rough sleeper population. The 2016 count showed that at least 228 people can be said to have been homeless in the CBD on the night of the count. This represents the first time the count has topped 200 since it began in 2004.

The Auckland Work and Income Region enjoy a constructive working relationship with the Mission with the Queen Street Service Centre Manager co-ordinating the delivery of the Work and Income services at the Mission. Work and Income's role in is to ensure that homeless people are in receipt of their full and correct entitlement to financial assistance and to reduce financial barriers to obtaining accommodation. Work and Income also provides assistance with advance payments of benefit for tenancy bonds to help with the cost of moving into accommodation and housing assessment.

Two staff from our Queen St site regularly attend the Mission's Wednesday clinic (11:00am-1:00pm) seeing people by scheduled appointment. This involves meeting with new clients and building relationships with existing clients. Some clients are hesitant about coming into a Work and Income service centre, and meeting in an informal and neutral environment where they feel comfortable facilitates the building of trust.

The Auckland City Mission provides assistance with food parcels and presents to needy families in the lead up to Christmas each year. Work and Income has been providing hardship assistance for food to clients during the pre-Christmas period onsite at the Mission since 2007. Recognising that the holidays see a higher demand for the Mission's services, the site usually has 2-5 case managers at the Mission during two weeks prior to Christmas.

The Ministry is involved alongside the City Mission in the Auckland Rough Sleepers Steering Group – the interagency approach that concentrates on a number of areas of work with the ultimate aim of moving clients into long-term permanent accommodation, with or without support. The areas of concentration include prevention, intervention, integration and independence services.

In the week of 30<sup>th</sup> May and subsequently, MSD staff have visited the Mission on a nightly basis (week nights only) to attempt to engage with their clients – the Mission typically engages with 80 people per day. As at 9<sup>th</sup> June MSD staff had:

- observed that 514 people accessed services at the City Mission (some would access their services regularly and may have been counted more than once)
- engaged with a total of 21 clients
- booked 9 clients for social housing assessments, and identified that 4 clients had already been booked for a social housing assessment (13 total).

At the suggestion of the Mission, our staff have adjusted their visiting times (to 4:30-6:00pm) so as to avoid conflicting with the evening meal and thus maximise the likelihood of engaging with the Mission's clients. The Mission have agreed that tonight's (9th June) visit will be the last nightly visit under the current initiative. The Queen St site will revert to their regular weekly visits (Wednesday Clinic) next week.

MSD does not currently have a funding relationship with the Mission. However, in 2014 Community Investments provided \$4,000 to fund a portion of the cost for a Mission staff member to gain a recognised qualification in Social Work.