



*communities where whānau are housed, connected,
valued and thriving*

**When we connect with our neighbours,
good things happen**
Ka tūhonohono te hapori, ka puta ngā hua



DCM has been taking part in Neighbours Aotearoa throughout the month of March.

Neighbours Aotearoa is all about making connections in your neighbourhood. If we can be a resilient and supportive community, we can make longer-term and more deeply ingrained changes to the social fabric of Aotearoa.

At DCM, we have often wondered how we can better take part in our neighbourhood. We work with the most marginalised people in our city. We are so focussed on ensuring our people are housed and supported to become good neighbours – but Neighbours Aotearoa made us ask, how can we as an organisation be good neighbours too?

One thing DCM does very well is sing! And so, throughout March, we have been taking our daily karakia and waiata out into the middle of Te Aro Park, inviting everyone to join in. It has been a fantastic experience and we know that much like our location on Lukes Lane, the park also occupies the historic space of Te Aro Pā. It is right and appropriate that waiata should again be heard here. Ka mihi au kit e takiwā o Te Aro Pā.



DCM's chess tournament in Te Aro Park. Cesar (top right, in wheelchair) was the winner on the day.



A highlight of the month – and year – was a chess tournament held in Te Aro Park in collaboration with Wellington City Council. We had members of Police, Community Law, BGI (Wellington Boys & Girls Institute), Hāpai Ake (Local Hosts), Te Paapori, Barkers Clothing, students from Te Auaha Barbering Academy, and members of the public who happened to be walking past, join in the fun. But it was DCM whānau who scored the most wins, with Cesar at the top of the leader board with 10 wins in total. Nice job, Cesar.

DCM kaiāwhina Fabian shares his thoughts about the day:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnZNybVfq6U>

On the road with the Noho Pai team

This month we share the story of DCM's Noho Pai (Sustaining Tenancies) team. The Noho Pai team work tirelessly to support whānau to sustain their tenancies, to be good neighbours, and to thrive in their communities. Their focus is on ensuring positive outcomes for vulnerably-housed whānau – and sometimes it is very demanding and time-consuming mahi.

The team is also there to pick up the pieces when things fall apart. When DCM says we work with marginalised people, this is what it truly looks like. The Noho Pai team have some of the most vulnerable members of our entire community on their books.

As a result, we have opted to change the names of the people featured in this story, and we will not share any photos from inside their homes.



Delena's first stop of the day is a tall concrete building owned by Kāinga Ora (formerly Housing New Zealand). A security guard lets her in the front door, where she will visit the small, ransacked flat of someone who will not be home – Marie – because she is in prison. Delena's task today is to save as much of Marie's stuff as she can, especially items that are meaningful to her. Kāinga Ora has agreed to store some of Marie's stuff, but the rest will be dumped.

Patsy is a Kāinga Ora tenancy manager and good friend of DCM's. She lets Delena into the small one-bedroom flat. The place is a shambles, with items strewn everywhere, and graffiti on the walls. The kitchen is a no-go zone. Delena explains that this isn't entirely Marie's doing – other people have made themselves at home, causing a lot of collateral damage.

Like many of the whānau DCM works with, Marie is extremely vulnerable. She has experienced severe trauma, and lives with a chronic condition that makes socialising with others a challenge. This also makes living in a small, noisy apartment, among many other vulnerable people, a problem for people like Marie.

But Marie will not be able to come back to this flat – as Kāinga Ora will not allow people to return. Like many buildings in Wellington, it needs multi-million-dollar upgrades.

When Marie finally comes out of prison, all she will be left with are the items Delena can save. Marie is very proud of her clothes, and so Delena focusses on saving the items she

can recognise. She puts post-its on other small items, and ensures Patsy knows that Marie will want to keep the peach couch.

Marie was very proud of her couch – it will mean a lot for her to see it on the other side.



Patsy from Kāinga Ora (left) with Delena.

On the top floor of the complex, a number of people are taking part in a weekly café-style lunch. This is a chance for tenants to connect with one another while enjoying coffee and home-baked kai provided by one of the local faith communities. Numerous people known to DCM have come from other complexes to join in the occasion.

Ava makes her way around the café with ease. She stops to talk with Douglas – [whose story we shared in 2021](#) – in the rooftop courtyard that overlooks the city. The café is a great opportunity to catch up with people DCM hasn't seen in a while.

Ava also catches up with Patsy from Kāinga Ora about one of her whānau who was not at their flat today, with whom she wants to have a catch-up kōrero. Ava finds her relationship with Patsy essential to her work. When one of Ava's whānau moved to another property due to circumstances outside their control – without Ava's knowledge – it was Patsy who helped her reconnect with them at their new address.

Also at the café today is Elaine, who is 67 years old and housed at another location. Elaine's new flat sits by itself and Elaine misses the social connections she was able to make at this complex. It is good to see Elaine, as when she is unwell she will completely disconnect from services. Like a keel, the Noho Pai team know that they can use their friendship with her to help right things again.

Elaine loves jigsaw puzzles, and Ava says that she has picked up some new ones for her. The Noho Pai team will pop around to visit her in her whare tomorrow, and while there will check that she is doing well inside her still-new four walls.



Douglas with Ava.

Across town, Moses arrives at Fred's place. Fred suffers from schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and depression. Wellington City Council want to re-carpet Fred's whare, but he doesn't trust them, and tradespeople refuse to enter the property due to the state it is in. As a result, Fred doesn't like letting people into his home – but he opens the door to Moses.

Fred seems comfortable with Moses, who is here to try to get him on to the correct benefit. They travel to Fred's health centre as Fred needs a medical certificate. While there, Moses advises Fred to pick up a payment card from MSD so he can buy a phone and keep in contact with Moses and other important people in his life.

These are positive outcomes for Fred today. Moses will broach the subject of Fred's carpet soon – which will help raise his overall quality of life.

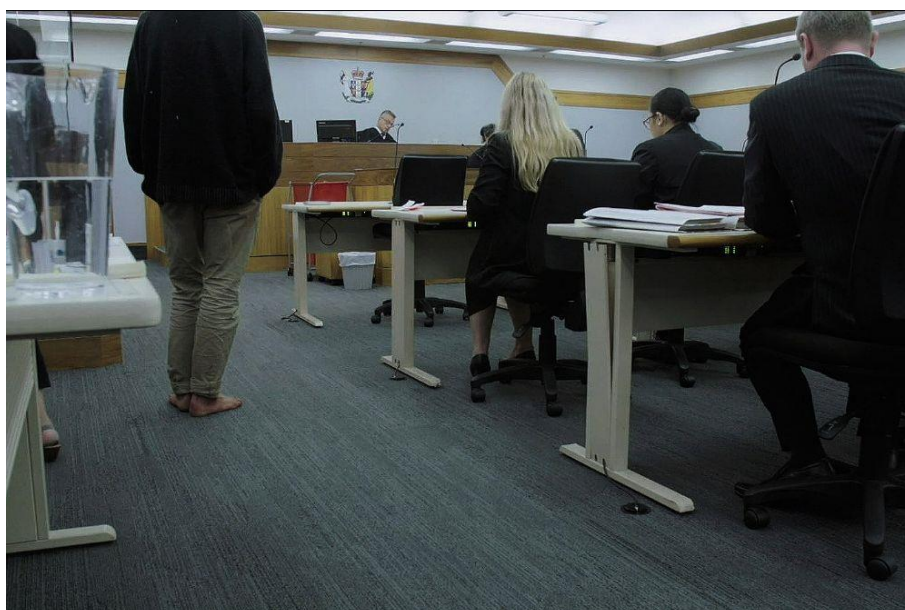


Moses.

At court, Tipene is stopped by security who ask him to put his possessions in a plastic container, which goes through a scanner. On the second floor, Tipene enters courtroom number 2, waiting for one of the 15 people on his caseload – Dean – to arrive. Dean has been having a tough time since the lockdowns, when his drinking started up after years of sobriety. He is facing charges for an incident involving some friends he has been having a hard time distancing himself from.

Dean arrives, and the mood in the room is tense, with the gallery full of others waiting for their turn to be called to the stand. Dean is called, and it is humiliating for him to have to get up in front of so many strangers.

The judge speaks first, and then the conversation moves from lawyer to lawyer, and finally to Dean. A date is set for the next stage in the case and Tipene takes Dean aside for a quick kōrero. Dean is relieved to have the support of a familiar face at these proceedings.



This is a still from a story about Wellington's Special Circumstances Court, which you can [watch on our YouTube page](#).

Delena visits the whare of another person on her caseload – Sarah. Sarah is housed in a Kāinga Ora property, but it's a standalone house, which Delena explains is a more appropriate fit for Sarah, who didn't do very well in a housing complex. The lawn is overgrown but Sarah doesn't have any gardening tools – something the team will get to when they can.

Today it's all about a phone – as Sarah's phone is not able to make or receive calls. The whare is in a very quiet and isolated spot, and because Sarah also has schizophrenia, it's important that she can be contactable, but also call for outside help too. Sarah freely talks about being "Under the Mental Health Act". She sees this as a positive, as when she has an episode, or when things become a bit too much, she knows that she can go into respite care for a time.

Delena explains that Sarah's level of support at the moment is about practicalities such as a working phone. Another need at the moment is a bed. Sarah says she gets \$300 a week, but Delena thinks she can access a special grant to get a bed, as sleeping on the floor isn't ideal.

Sarah says she has made a pasta meal, which Delena is delighted to hear. People have different levels of skill, and for whānau like Sarah, it's sometimes a "two-step process". In Sarah's case, that's successfully boiling the pasta, and adding some pasta sauce. There's no cheese, but then that would be one step too far – for now.



The Noho Pai team - Moses, Kesia, Ava, Penny, team leader Robert and Tipene. (Delena not pictured).

Ava makes her way to the outer suburbs of Wellington to visit Hector. Ava has been working with Hector for some time. They see each other every week, and have built up a trusting relationship. When DCM first met Hector, he was sleeping in his car. He is now housed in a Kāinga Ora complex.

Hector lives in a barren, windswept location, in dull, grey buildings that house many other vulnerable people. But inside Hector's whare it's a different story. Artworks adorn the walls and a coat that Hector is making for himself from unused curtains lies on the floor, a current work in progress. Hector has a Master of Fine Arts and his accomplished creativity is visible throughout his whare.

Ava talks with Hector like an old friend, and the conversation flows across topics ranging from religion to kebabs. Hector wants to visit a local community centre, and so Ava drives him over to a bright, vibrant building that stands in stark contrast to the Kāinga Ora complex. Ava asks Hector to give her a call later about a food parcel, and Hector goes to see what's happening at the centre today.

Tipene goes to visit one of the most challenging people on his caseload – Trevor. Trevor is no longer able to access his property due to hoarding, and so now sleeps outside. Trevor has made his own campsite from scavenged materials, painted in bright colours. In Trevor's mind, he had no choice but to build this fortress, with no other housing options available for him – just bureaucratic dead ends.



Tipene calls out a greeting, and Trevor answers. They have a kōrero about Trevor's situation. Trevor is understandably struggling at the moment and feels disenfranchised by the way others within the social sector treat him, particularly mental health services. Tipene often finds himself acting as an advocate for Trevor so that his mana is upheld, as at times he is known to walk out of meetings. Everyone wants the same outcome for Trevor – for him to be sustainably housed, connected, valued and thriving – but right now this seems far away.

There are discarded tins of food around the campsite, and Tipene asks Trevor if he needs a food parcel with easy-tear tabs. Trevor says he is OK for now, and Tipene says that he will catch up with him soon.

It is hard to leave Trevor behind on what has turned into a cold, wet afternoon.

These are just a handful of stories from DCM's Noho Pai team. How challenging it can be to stay housed after you have spent years living rough. Maybe you're dealing with unaddressed mental health issues such as hoarding. Maybe you have an addiction. Maybe you were never taught how to do housework, or to cook. Maybe your mates need somewhere to stay, but their behaviour disrupts other tenants.

When our whānau are dealing with these daily frustrations, housed among other vulnerable people while living on low incomes during a cost of living crisis, it might seem easier to go back to life on the street.

The work of the Noho Pai team is challenging. But Ava, Moses, Tipene, Delena, Kesia, Penny, and team leader Robert don't give up on anyone. They lift up the mana of our people, achieving positive outcomes for all – one step at a time.

Ngā manaakitanga, Noho Pai team!

WORDS / PHOTOS: MATTHEW MAWKES & MIRIAM HENDRY.

Later in the year we will share the stories of DCM's other amazing teams. In the meantime, thank you for your support of DCM – please do forward this Ngā Kōrero on to anyone you think may be interested in learning more about our mahi, and you'll find other ways to support us by clicking the button below.

[Support DCM](#)

Nāku te rourou, nāu te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi.

With your basket and my basket, the people will thrive.

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