



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

2023 – a year of challenges and opportunities



Kia ora koutou

We hope you have had a great start to your year. Here at DCM, there isn't a closing down time, as we continue to support the most marginalised and vulnerable members of our community throughout the Christmas and New Year period.

You may have seen other social services in the news talking about how they are finding that people are harder off than ever before. We're finding this too at DCM. While milestones are being met, we know that the housing crisis is not over yet, and the people we meet here at DCM continue to be among the most economically-impacted members of our community.

Fortunately, our incredible team – DCM's hard-working kaimahi – makes sure that our whānau are not left on the bottom rung of the housing ladder. While our people may face significant challenges amidst the cost of living crisis, our team ensures they have access to the supports they need to thrive.

We have two significant opportunities this year to ensure our whānau also have a voice on the national stage – the March census and October general election. We will do everything we can to make these opportunities accessible for our people, including having a polling booth right here at DCM, [just as we did in 2020 when over 100 whānau voted](#), many for the very first time.

We hope you will also ensure your voice is heard at the general election, so that [the progress that has been made to tackle homelessness in Aotearoa is maintained](#).

Behind our team are the many unsung heroes of DCM. In this update we share the story of Fahimeh, who has been collaborating with DCM to build our capability, so that we can continue doing what we do – but do it even better. Perhaps her story might spark some ideas about how you too can support DCM in 2023?

Stephen Turnock
Manahautū



DCM Manahautū Stephen (centre) leads karakia and waiata in Te Aro Park. DCM is taking part in [Neighbours Aotearoa](#) and will be leading waiata in the park every Monday and Friday at 9am for the next few months. If you're in the neighbourhood, join us!

Unsung heroes of DCM Solving problems with Fahimeh

Fahimeh McGregor loves to solve problems. And she certainly has the skills to do so – with a doctorate in the adoption of IT for performance and productivity improvement from AUT (Auckland University of Technology), she has 19 publications and 42 citations to her original family name, which is Zaeri.



Fahimeh was born in Iran in the strategic town of Bandarabbas, on the Persian Gulf. Fahimeh was the youngest of seven siblings, and describes her early family life as very difficult.

“I’m a revolution baby. The Iran Revolution happened in 1978 and was followed by a war between Iran and Iraq, which makes me part of the war generation as well. This took place during my primary schooling, and as my city is located in the south, close to the border –

a port on the Gulf – it had a huge impact.”

There was a lot of trauma for Fahimeh and her family. She describes nights without power, with all access to utilities cut for hours, while having to do her homework next to a little oil lamp.

“Years later, I realised that I never had any wishes as a child. We had family wishes, which were to make sure that in the morning all of us would get to have another day together. There was no certainty, or an understanding of what a stable life is. Here in New Zealand, people have got a very natural stability – unless, perhaps, they are experiencing hardship and homelessness.”



Fahimeh at five years old - the only photo from her childhood.

Fahimeh’s big inspiration was her father. He was highly educated for his time, leaving his farming background to do a diploma in literacy and accounting. As Bandarabbas is such a significant port city, the Iran government feared it could be lost, and though 90% of trade came through the port, profits only went to the capital, Tehran. Fahimeh’s father tried to protect the rights of his community.

“But after the revolution, he came under a lot of pressure,” Fahimeh reflects. “He had to give up everything. The only memory I have from when I was two years old was the night we had to burn his books. That picture is still in my head. I am always asking myself, ‘Why? What’s wrong with his books?’”

Fahimeh’s father died from a heart attack at a young age, but he continued to inspire her. “He loved his community. He believed in change. That’s why when I got my first job, I put my community’s rights at the top of my list.”

Fahimeh went to university in Iran, where she met many people appointed to their first position by her father. She started volunteering – always a passion of Fahimeh’s – and later got a job working for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Design, where she worked hard to introduce transparency within a corrupt system.

“I was quite hot-headed. I was young and thought I could change everything. I did my best, whatever I could, but my mum realised it wasn’t a safe environment for me. She tapped me on the shoulder one day and said, ‘You need to leave this country’.”

Realising she wouldn't be safe any longer, Fahimeh left Iran. She moved to Malaysia in 2010, where she continued studying toward her Master's Degree. This was supposed to take two years, but Fahimeh finished her Master's in 14 months. Despite not knowing anyone, Fahimeh's next destination was New Zealand, where in 2013 she picked up her studies at AUT thanks to a scholarship.



With a doctorate added to her name, Fahimeh soon turned her attention to giving back. “I want to be utilised for the community. That’s the most important thing for me. I want to make sure that wherever there are challenges, I can help people and organisations.”

Fahimeh started her industry experience by applying her research in a large infrastructure project, Waterview Well-Connected Alliance. She was then offered an innovative leadership role by Fletcher Building, to lead a continuous improvement culture in the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC) project. Always wanting to create her own consulting business, Fahimeh later formed a company called [DELTA Informed Decisions](#), which brought her to DCM. Fahimeh met with DCM Manahautū Stephen, to collaborate on solving the challenges of DCM’s processes and systems.

“I had regular meetings with Stephen,” Fahimeh says. “I needed to hear what he is passionate about. He is a very driven person and wants to deliver quality outcomes that drive improvement.”

From there, Fahimeh met with DCM’s Kaiarataki Kāhui (leadership group), guiding them through a collaborative process to identify how DCM can best work towards its strategic goals. While Fahimeh has the knowledge and expertise, it was the leadership team that needed to ensure everything was moving in the right direction, to allow DCM to engage in a meaningful way with whānau and other stakeholders.



Fahimeh with DCM's Kaiarataki Kāhui.

Fahimeh also spent time with many other kaimahi. “First is people. I listen to the language, and pick up different lenses people have got. Everyone is like a big ocean to me. There’s so much you can discover to help shape a better practice model.”

With DCM’s new organisational model and strategic goals implemented, it was time to look at some technology solutions to help pull this 53-year-old social service into the modern world.

One of Fahimeh’s first projects was tackling DCM’s long-time Money Management Service. Fahimeh started with a diagnostic phase, analysing the efficiency of the processes to gain an understanding of where opportunities for improvement may lie.

While DCM’s kaimahi may not have known it, all of Fahimeh’s tools are science-based. “Everyone downloads their knowledge to the table,” Fahimeh says. “People around the table will often say, ‘Oh! I thought it was this way, not that way?’ And it can be frustrating in a way, because I have to ask a lot of questions!”

Another project Fahimeh has undertaken is the adoption of an entirely new database system for DCM – Exess. While it may not sound very exciting, DCM is completely reliant on data and evidence to gain insights into the whānau they are working with, and trends that are happening with homelessness in Wellington.

For example, did you know that DCM engaged with 1,085 whānau last year, of whom 647 experienced homelessness, and 230 went without shelter altogether at some point during the year? Or that 71.6% of all DCM whānau are male, and that 52.8% are Māori? Importantly, it is this kind of data that DCM needs to report back to the powers-that-be.

Exess is now in its testing phase, and DCM looks forward to the massive improvements this information management system will achieve for the organisation, especially with its whānau-centric outcomes model.

Fahimeh has enjoyed her time at DCM, which is why she has given back by donating her valuable time in-kind.

“DCM has its challenges, but this has been the most enjoyable and rewarding project I’ve done,” Fahimeh shares. “You guys have got a passion for people. I can feel your heart beating for your whānau. That’s quite fascinating to me – everything is about them. Businesses often say they are customer-centric, but it’s not as tangible as you experience at DCM.”



Fahimeh and Stephen.

Fahimeh is saddened by the current situation in Iran. She recently went to Turkey to help two of her nieces escape the country. Both are now safely in Istanbul – one registered at high school, and the other at university, continuing the family’s passion for education.

“It’s another revolutionary time in Iran. It’s really sad to see what is happening. What I always say is that I wish for peace in the world. And not just for the Iranian people – everyone deserves a peaceful life. And that is true for the whānau DCM is supporting too. Living outside, sleeping out, is so damaging for your health. I hope that the tools DCM now has will help your kaimahi achieve amazing results for them.”

Can you help?

There are many ways that you can be part of our work here at DCM. One way is – like Fahimeh – through offering your professional expertise.

We are looking forward to celebrating the 7th anniversary of DCM's emergency dental service in March 2023 – [read about our 5th anniversary here](#). But we haven't been able to do as many dental sessions as we'd like since the pandemic arrived. Are you a dentist, or do you know a dentist who may like to do a session with us? If you can help, or if you know someone who can, please get in touch.



Volunteer dentist Shennae (left) with dental assistant Ella (right) at a session at DCM in January. Oral health care is one of the most significant unmet needs of the people DCM works with.

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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