



Reading Room: [Housing](#)

Local Government and Community Involvement in Ownership and Management Of Social Housing

Executive Summary

The emphasis of the social housing report is on partnership options between one or more of central government, local government, the voluntary and community sector and Iwi/Maori. The report itself provides what project participants have described as a very valuable information tool on social housing issues. It is also clear that it will be a valuable resource for the development of new housing initiatives with very real potential to improve social housing outcomes.

MDL is currently discussing with the project sponsors practical ways of implementing the major ideas in the report. One is likely to include a consortium approach bringing together a number of local authorities who wish to make sure that the report results in positive action. MDL expects that the same type of interest will also be shown by a number of voluntary and community sector organisations and, possibly, Iwi/Maori.

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29 January 2001

1. This report reflects the changing context for housing policy under the present Government. It picks up on the renewed interest in community, and the evolving relationship between central government and local government seen, for example, in the Central Government/Local Government Forum and the commitment of the two sectors to work together on matters of mutual interest.
2. Its theme is the potential for a partnership approach between one or more of central government, local government, the voluntary and community sector and Iwi/Maori with the objective of improving social housing outcomes. The presumption is that, given the complexity and multi-causality of social housing outcomes, a mix of skills, experience, networks and resources drawn from a variety of sectors will be essential in order to get the best results.
3. The report is about partnerships which are open to any organisation.

Although it makes a number of references to Maori housing, the report is explicit that it is not dealing with the partnership relationship between Maori and the Crown under the Treaty of Waitangi.

4. The term 'social housing' recognises that housing need is about more than just affordability which has been the traditional concern of housing policy in New Zealand. Today, the home is recognised as the centre of a complex of relationships which together contribute to the stability and well-being of individual households. The emphasis is on housing which is stable in the sense that an individual household is able to utilise it long-term and thus develop enduring relationships with other social service providers such as health, education, employment and welfare services.
5. This complexity highlights the fact that no one sector or agency can be held accountable for the achievement of the mix of outcomes implicit in the term 'social housing'. Instead, what is required is the willing and committed engagement of a range of parties, from central government agencies to voluntary and community sector groups, to local government and Iwi/Maori. In practice, it is that complexity itself that makes the case for a partnership approach.
6. The report lays out the pre-conditions for effective partnering through developing, successively, (a) principles for determining the responsibility for funding social housing (Part 5 and Appendix VI) which conclude that the primary responsibility rests with the state as social housing outcomes are primarily national public or merit goods), (b) what is required of the prospective partners if a partnership approach is to work (Part 6 and Appendix V) and (c) the nature of a policy framework for partnerships in social housing (Part 7).
7. Areas with potential for a partnership approach are explored in Part 6 which considers both the current role of local authorities in housing provision and the needs of a number of different groups including low income households generally, older people, mental health consumers, people with physical disabilities, community groups, Maori and, finally, Pacific peoples.
8. A number of partnership opportunities are identified. Those which are seen to be of greatest potential or importance include putting present local authority involvement in social housing in context with current government policy, public health, creative use of the income related rent policy, implications of a social housing approach for the management of the Government's housing stock, cost reduction and self-build initiatives, and the potential for a Maori Housing Authority.
9. Some local authorities have argued that the Government should fund the impact on their housing revenue of reducing rents in line with the income related rent policy. In practice, most local authority rentals are already at or around this level. The report suggests that rather than taking this path, the Government set aside equivalent funding to enable local authorities, in partnership with voluntary and community sector groups and with Iwi/Maori, to take advantage of the suggested extension of the income related rent policy.
10. Parts of New Zealand have significant and growing public health problems as a consequence of substandard and/or overcrowded housing. This is an unacceptable departure from standards which legislation requires be enforced. That this has happened reflects a lack of "buck stops here" responsibility and of the resources needed to provide acceptable standards

of housing. The report proposes a partnership between Local Government New Zealand and a lead government agency with the objective of eliminating the problem of substandard housing by (say) December 2003.

11. Income related rentals are available only in respect of properties "let by or on behalf of the company" (Housing New Zealand Ltd). Housing New Zealand lacks the capital resources to fund a significant expansion of income related rental housing. The report proposes that the Government agree that Housing New Zealand be able to expand its pool of available housing by leasing houses from third parties, specifically voluntary sector or community groups and Iwi/Maori. The housing would be developed to meet the needs of the people on whose behalf the third party worked, finance would be guaranteed by a local authority (there is statutory power for this purpose), the houses leased long-term to Housing New Zealand and, where appropriate, management contracted back to the third party developer.
12. This is the most significant proposal in this report. The potential it provides for the development of community based solutions to housing need is very significant. It could be open to almost any type of group dealing with almost any type of housing need. It also offers the opportunity for Government to develop a network of significant community and local authority partnerships which will underpin much of the shift it is seeking to achieve in the direction of social policy.
13. The shift from a traditional affordability model to a broader social housing model has major implications for the management of the Government's housing stock. The shift is from a conventional property portfolio management approach relying on centralised systems and 'hard' skills to a decentralised approach based on community development and 'soft' skills (but still requiring good skills in property management). For Housing New Zealand the question is how best to engage with the community. The report canvases possibilities in tenant participation but concludes that the best immediate option is the establishment of stakeholder committees (drawn from community and other groups working in social housing) to work alongside Housing New Zealand at the neighbourhood unit level. The report also acknowledges the very significant progress Housing New Zealand is making in shifting towards a community development model.
14. There appears to be potential for partnerships encouraging cost reducing and self build options. These are canvassed in the report (see pages 43 and 45). Suggestions include establishing a fund to encourage innovation in self build and a design competition approach to innovation in housing design to overcome the apparent inertia seen in the lack of response to the potential of the "means of compliance" approach in the Building Act.
15. A number of suggestions are made for improving outcomes in Maori housing. One of particular interest, at least for some Maori organisations, is the concept of a Maori Housing Authority which would be capitalised so that it had the capacity to be the primary lender (or catalyst for lending) to Maori for home ownership and might be also able to play a role in the development of rental housing.
16. The report finishes with an analysis of the elements that might be involved in developing a policy framework for partnerships in social housing, based on observations and findings in the report and on a 'template' for good partnerships set out in Appendix V. It includes some cautionary notes on the potential for partnership including that it seems likely that a degree of conscious, and possibly fundamental, change in the processes for achieving

social housing objectives will be needed. It points to each of the sectors needing to contribute a culture of partnership, translated into organisation and management practice.

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