

Aide-mémoire



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Meeting

Date: 2 September 2021 **Security Level:** IN CONFIDENCE

For: Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and
Employment

File Reference: REP/21/09/938

Housing Update

Meeting/visit details Housing Ministers (NZ Drug foundation): Monday 6 September 2021, 3:30 – 4pm

Expected attendees

Hon Dr Megan Woods, Minister of Housing
Hon Poto Williams, Associate Minister of Housing (Public Housing)
Hon Peeni Henare, Associate Minister of Housing (Māori Housing)
Hon Marama Davidson, Associate Minister of Housing (Homelessness)
Sarah Helm, Executive Director, NZ Drug Foundation
Ben Birks Ang, Deputy Director, NZ Drug Foundation
Kali Mercier, Policy Manager, NZ Drug Foundation
Karen Hocking, General Manager, Housing, MSD
Alex McKenzie, Policy Manager, MSD

Purpose of meeting/visit The information contained in this aide-memoire is intended to support a discussion with the NZ Drug Foundation in relation to Alcohol and Drug issues in temporary housing.

It complements the briefing received from Housing and Urban Development Agency and focuses primarily on MSD experience with alcohol and drug issues in emergency housing.

Background The NZ Drug Foundation has sought a meeting with Ministers to discuss its concerns about drug harm in emergency and transitional housing, and acute drug harm among New Zealand's homeless populations.

The NZ Drug Foundation has recently completed a draft report on acute drug harm in emergency and transitional housing. The NZ Drug Foundation engaged with a number of providers in the

housing sector in late 2020 and developed an 'emerging evidence report' based on reports on what was happening in temporary housing settings.

The report was written to be circulated amongst agencies (Health, Housing and Urban Development and Social Development) to inform responses to drug harm issues at temporary accommodation sites. It has not yet been published.

The report recommends that successful initiatives should be rapidly expanded, with long-term coordination, funding, and planning. The Drug Foundation argues that reducing harm relies heavily on providing the right mix of expertise, restructuring service delivery, building up a strong workforce and a long-term commitment with adequate resourcing.

On 31 May, MSD participated on a Community Housing Aotearoa hosted sector call on responses to acute drug harm in temporary and community housing. An attendance was in excess of 100 with participants from NGO and the Government Sector.

Acute drug harm is one of those issues that impacts the whole sector.

The meeting provided an opportunity to share evidence, tools and resources that are available to support responses to acute drug harm, as well as giving light to some of the great initiatives, practice and insights that are already in place.

Key issues The acute drug harm in emergency and transitional housing

Key points from the evidence and insights summary report include:

- Excessive substance use and acute harm are common in emergency and transitional housing, especially motels.
- Numbers in temporary housing have expanded rapidly.
- Reducing harm can be extremely challenging in these settings.

MSD works with our contracted providers to support clients with a range of wellbeing and health needs

Where those services exist in communities, MSD staff or contracted providers will support people navigate access to drug and alcohol services.

MSD takes safety and security of those New Zealanders in Emergency Housing seriously.

- MSD conducts regular check-ins for clients in emergency accommodation, including whānau with children. If a client tells MSD that they are feeling unsafe in emergency accommodation, MSD staff will address this in the most appropriate way for that client and their whānau's particular circumstances.

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- This may involve regional managers following up directly with the supplier to resolve any issues around quality or service or, where issues cannot be resolved, seeking suitable alternative accommodation for the client.
 - Navigator and Support Service contracted staff can also be called in to help deal with any issues. However, in some circumstances other actions are appropriate to make sure the client is and feels safe - for example, when the client wishes to remain in their current emergency accommodation.
 - If MSD were to receive reports of clients in emergency accommodation being subjected to violence, intimidation, harassment, sexual assault or other forms of victimisation, they would be managed on a case by case basis. Any incidents of this nature should also be referred directly to NZ Police for investigation.
 - The Ministry have Family Violence Coordinators who are skilled in responding to people in these situations and connecting them with agencies who can provide support.
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Next steps

MSD is currently engaged with our partner agencies in a range of Government policy initiatives to support those in temporary housing, including:

- Aotearoa Homelessness Action Plan
 - s 9(2)(f)(iv)
 - [REDACTED]
 - Emergency Housing Rotorua model.
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