

SUBMISSION ON PUBLICLY NOTIFIED RESOURCE CONSENTS

My name is Steven Gregory Bibby.

I **OPPOSE** the extension of consents for the use of seven motels (listed below) as contracted emergency housing through to 15 December 2025.

LU24-010186	Alpin Motel	16 Sala Street
LU24-010187	Apollo Hotel	7 Tyron Street
LU24-010188	Ascot on Fenton	247 Fenton Street and 12 Toko Street
LU24-010189	Geneva Motor Lodge	299 Fenton Street
LU24-010190	Lake Rotorua Motel	131 Lake Road
LU24-010191	Pohutu Lodge Motel	3 Meade Street
LU24-010192	Rotovegas Motel	149-251 Fenton Street/14-16 Toko Street and 8A,8B and 10B Toko Street

REASONS TO DECLINE EXTENSION FOR CONTRACTED EMERGENCY MOTELS IN ROTORUA

1. Manufactured homeless industry

The Labour government has manufactured the need for emergency housing motels in Rotorua, by the importation of homeless people from around New Zealand, during and after COVID-19 lockdown in 2020.

In July 2020 a \$55M grant was awarded to Rotorua towards infrastructure.

Two years later in June 2022 another grant of \$85M was awarded to Rotorua from the Infrastructure Acceleration Fund.

Were these two grants, aligned with Rotorua Lakes Council supporting consents for contracted emergency housing in Rotorua, therefore allowing motels to be used as long term residential housing?

Despite denials from the Ministry of Social Development and Kainga Ora that people who are homeless are not still being imported to Rotorua, Te Pokapu (The Hub) is still open for business in the main street, triaging out of town homeless into Rotorua.

A serious commitment to stopping the relocation of people would be proven with the closure of this facility.

This would result in a large reduction of homeless people in Rotorua, therefore reducing the need for motels to accommodate homeless people.

2. Narratives

At the signing of the Housing Accord on 9th December 2022, it stated a commitment by the government, Council and iwi to reduce the use of emergency housing motels in Rotorua to "near zero as soon as possible".

It has now been twenty months since the signing of that agreement.

At the Rotorua Lakes Council meeting on 13th March 2024, Kainga Ora stated from the high emergency housing usage, Rotorua has become a focus to get housing supply up.

However, if the homeless hadn't been relocated to Rotorua from around New Zealand, then there would not have been a high emergency housing usage.

According to Kainga Ora, Rotorua's population growth created the need for more housing.

However, in June 2020 the population was 77,300 and the most recent Taxpayer Union Ratepayer's report in 2023 showed a population decrease of 500 to 76,800.

According to Infometrics, since 2013, there has been an annual increase in population on average of 1.2% per annum with 2021 and 2022 both had - .1% negative population growth.

As much as there has been people moving to Rotorua to be housed in emergency housing motels and transitional housing, there has also been an even greater exodus of people, who do not want to live amongst the increased crime emanating from these motels and transitional housing.

3. Increased crime

After repeated denials from the Labour Minister of Police that the Police did not keep statistics on crime emanating from the emergency motels, a Police Crime Map in 2022 showed more than a 900% spike in crime mainly concentrated around the Fenton Street and Glenholme area.

MHUD's commissioned a 39 page report in 2023, which also admitted a spike in crime, as a result of people being housed in emergency motels.

There has been a shortage of Police, despite requests from the Mayor of Rotorua Lakes Council to the government to assign more police to the Rotorua district.

4. Begging

There has been increased incidents of problem begging in the Rotorua CBD, which has been a consequence of the increased housing of homeless people in motels.

Although the Rotorua Lakes Council has tried to introduce measures to prosecute the individuals and groups under the Land Transport Act, it has been recently highlighted in the media about "Ten Australian tourists arrived on their e-bikes at a cafe to have breakfast, it had been their first night in Rotorua ...they got physically accosted by three guys, intimidating them asking for money"

There have been repeated requests for a "begging bylaw" from CBD business owners and local residents.

5. Health & Safety of Emergency Housing Motels

There have been a number of fires in emergency housing motels during their operation.

02/08/21 – Multiple car fires at Distinction Motel

30/12/21 – Fire at Golden Glow Motel

19/12/21 – Fire at Four Canoes Motel

20/02/22 – Fire at Grand Treasure Hotel

18/07/22 – Fire at Rotovegas Motel

29/11/23 – Fire ignited in rubbish bin at Spa Lodge

These fires at motels used by MSD are putting the community at risk.

Five of the twelve contracted emergency motels have been identified as requiring an Earthquake Prone Building Assessment.

Rotovegas Motel at 249 Fenton Street, has already been identified as an Earthquake prone building.

In addition, there were four motels that no results were found on the Rotorua Lakes Council Geyserview, which could potentially require an Earthquake Prone Building assessment.

The infrastructure is not designed for the full-time household capacity in motels.

In heavy rain there has been reports of sewerage spewing from toilets in motels, when the floodgates at the water treatment plant are closed.

6. MSD Statistics

According to Karen Hocking – MSD Group Manager Housing, she stated on 15th April 2024, that the number of households in emergency housing motels in Rotorua has halved over the past year and the government has been clear it wanted to stop large-scale reliance on motels.

If this trend continues, then it can also be used as an indication there is no need for an extension of the contracted emergency motels.

7. Concentrate on other Bay of Plenty towns & cities

In 2023, 30.7% of Bay of Plenty's beneficiaries were living in Rotorua, creating a need for social and public housing.

Why not house homeless people in emergency motels in other Bay of Plenty locations along with building Kainga Ora houses, where 69.3% of the majority of beneficiaries are residing?

8. Kainga Ora's Building & Acquisition programme meets requirements

Kainga Ora's justification of concentrating its building and acquisition programme in Rotorua has been raising the current proportion of public housing from 2.5% to the national average of 4%.

Rotorua currently has 28,946 households, so 4% would be 1157 houses.

270 public houses have been delivered since November 2017, 500 Kainga Ora houses, combined with 350 MHUD houses at Ngongataha are planned by June 2025, which totals 1150.

(These figures don't take into consideration existing public housing stock)

These figures would also suggest that Kainga Ora has met its quota with the public housing it has in the pipeline for Rotorua and will also provide enough housing to re-house the 174 households currently in emergency housing motels as at 30th June 2024.

If Kainga Ora prioritised local Rotorua homeless people in emergency housing motels for all new Kainga Ora housing in Rotorua, instead of giving priority of the new houses to people most in need on the NZ Public Housing Register, the homeless people accommodated in the motels would reduce a lot quicker.

9. Administration of Emergency Housing Motels

There are conditions in operating within the guidelines of the ruling of the Independent Commissioner Hearing that concluded on 2nd November 2022.

██████████ has recently been featured on social media as having people repeatedly trespassed from the motel, with people climbing the back fence from a neighbouring property, in order to gain entry into the units, with police non-attending to the offence.

This lack of administration from the motel management and police does not meet the conditions specified from the hearing.

10. Change of Use

In order for motels and backpackers to let people stay long term in "transient accommodation" premises, a resource consent is required for the "Change of Use" to "sleeping residential" from "sleeping accommodation".

The Rotorua Lakes Council has been slow to enforce this legislation under the Building Act.

There was also a MBIE determination that can be used as a precedent to enforce the legislation;

<https://www.building.govt.nz/resolving-problems/resolution-options/determinations/determinations-issued/determination-2023-017>

The council have enrolled the services of Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment to check out the legitimacy of tenancy agreements and to ensure premises are up to Healthy Homes Standards, and have a current Building Warrant of Fitness, should they choose to operate as a Boarding House or Hostel.

11. Improving the reputation of Rotorua from Homeless Capital to NZ Top Destination

The government has invested a considerable amount - \$52.21M to be exact, on the Wai-Ariki Hot Springs and Spa, not to mention contributing \$19.9M towards the Lakefront from the Provincial Growth Fund, for redevelopment to enhance the outlook from the Spa and the proposed hotel, all supposedly to attract tourists to Rotorua.

Aiming for this top end niche tourist market, conflicts with the housing of homeless people in motels.

Less accommodation in motels is available for both international and domestic tourists in Rotorua.

With accommodation providers reverting back to tourist accommodation, more "mixed use" is becoming prevalent, as they make the transition. This is giving a bad visitor experience to tourists, as they stay amongst people with complex problems of addiction and affliction.

All the well-publicised associated problems with emergency housing, is not conducive with promoting and creating a safe environment for tourists to visit.

Rotorua needs to get its house in order, before it invests capital in promoting Rotorua to the world as being open for tourism business.

Social media is a powerful tool, and luring tourists to Rotorua under supposedly false pretences, only to receive on-line bad reviews after a bad experience, will do nothing to foster trust in tourists to return to Rotorua.

The crime, begging and occupation of emergency housing motels by known criminals (ex 501's) and gang members is causing reputational damage, that is discouraging investment in Rotorua.

Landlords and property investors have been exiting the market over the last two years, and businesses have difficulty recruiting and retaining staff, both of which are a small portion of the flow on effects from the homeless industry. Occupation of retail shops in the CBD has been declining, with a lot of businesses that have shut up shop.

Its time to end housing homeless people in motels in Rotorua.

12. National Party Social Housing/Homelessness Policy

At the National Party Housing Policy launch held in Rotorua on 9th September 2023, the following election promise was communicated;

The next National government will aim to end the use of emergency housing motels in Rotorua within two years and get the city back on its feet, says National Housing spokesperson Chris Bishop and Rotorua MP Todd McClay. "Labour has made Rotorua "ground zero" of New Zealand's housing debacle" Mr Bishop says.

13. An End Date is part of the solution

Not only have the residents and visitors to Rotorua suffered the consequences from the influx of homeless people to Rotorua being housed in its motels, the occupants of the motels have suffered in the sub-standard living conditions, as a motel room has been deemed as not being suitable accommodation long term.

There has been a Human Rights Commission inquiry and report, confirming 'serious and ongoing breaches of human rights in emergency housing.' It had grave concerns about children and teens in emergency housing.

In December 2022, a Fenton Street motel as described as being "annihilated" after hosting emergency housing clients. Dogs and pets everywhere, holes in the walls, interiors destroyed.

Te Arawa took an emergency stand and called for end of emergency housing crisis in Rotorua on 19th September 2022.

Get out of the way. That was the ministerial message on government's role to help solve the Maori Housing crisis. Empowering Maori to identify and develop their own solutions was the key message from government ministers speaking in Rotorua at the National Maori Housing Conference in March 2023.

At the conference it was identified that 75% of homeless in Rotorua were Maori.

Green Party Marama Davidson said "We've been made houseless and decolonisation and re-indigenisation will pull us through that".

In May 2023, a damning report by the Waitangi Tribunal has slammed the Crown's handling of Maori homelessness.

In November 2023, Hastings Council's strategy cuts numbers in emergency housing by 77%.

It's more than just housing, it's a kaupapa approach.

Back then MHUD was looking to achieve the same success with place-based housing strategies in a bid to move thousands of people out of motels and off the public waiting list.

Below is the link to the article, which offers solutions on reducing the amount of homeless people in emergency housing.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/hawkes-bay-today/news/hastings-council-strategy-cuts-number-in-emergency-housing-by-77-per-cent/R25VC5XHJCJAZOWXOVNVSKJU3I/>

Officials put the success down to the district's place-based housing strategy, which was introduced as a pilot in 2019.

That year was the breaking point, when two-thirds of the district's motel rooms were being used for emergency accommodation, Hastings District Council chief executive Nigel Bickle said.

"We didn't have all the answers, but we said 'Look we've got a problem, we've got some ideas around what perhaps is causing it, and also some ideas around what might solve it'.

"But the bottom line is no one can solve this on their own if they don't understand the local housing market, and that you bring the right partners together."

Those partners included council, government, community organisations and iwi, who were driven by the principle that every community had its own housing issues and opportunities - and a one-size-fits-all approach would not address them.

"Kids and families shouldn't be living in motels - they're not designed to be housing.

It has taken a village - and it was vital that Ngāti Kahungunu was part of it, chief executive Bayden Barber said.

Māori represent about 70 per cent of those living in emergency accommodation in Hastings.

Now, ancestral land was being used for papakāinga to house generations of whānau, Barber said.

"You've got whānau that have whenua, and iwi's role is to enable and empower those whānau to build homes for their people.

"It's a great model, because it's connection to whenua, place and whakapapa.

"And it's about whai kāinga, whai oranga, which is, if you can get housing, there's wellness in that. It's more than just housing, it's a kaupapa approach."

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development said it was looking to achieve the same success with place-based housing strategies in nine other communities from Te Tai Tōkerau to Queenstown, in a bid to move thousands of people out of motels and off the public housing waitlist.

Why not Rotorua?

All contracted emergency motels in Rotorua should be ended, including the Emergency Special Needs Grant, Transitional, Housing & Development contracted motels.

The resource consents should not be renewed, as part of the solution for housing Maori homeless people.



Steven Bibby

11-8-24

Date

Hastings council strategy cuts number in emergency housing by 77 per cent

RNZ

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Hastings Mayor Sandra Hazlehurst at a ribbon-cutting ceremony in July for a new Flaxmere housing development.

By Lauren Crimp

A Hawke's Bay city that has long been home to a chronic housing shortage has made a massive dent in the number of people forced to live in motels.

At the end of March 2022 - when the Ministry of Social Development began regularly reporting these numbers - 285 people in 117 Hastings households were living in emergency accommodation.

At the end of September 2023, that was down to 66 people in 39 households - a 77 per cent drop.

Officials put the success down to the district's place-based housing strategy, which was introduced as a pilot in 2019.

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"We didn't have all the answers, but we said 'Look we've got a problem, we've got some ideas around what perhaps is causing it, and also some ideas around what might solve it'.

“But the bottom line is no one can solve this on their own if they don’t understand the local housing market, and that you bring the right partners together.”

Those partners included council, government, community organisations and iwi, who were driven by the principle that every community had its own housing issues and opportunities - and a one-size-fits-all approach would not address them.

Hastings faced specific challenges, such as having to house 6000 seasonal workers for seven months of the year - which had a domino effect, said Bickle.

“In a place whose population is growing, and economy is going really strong, why did we have 1000 less rental houses than we had five years previously?”

“Well, in a visitor economy, when all of a sudden two-thirds of your visitor accommodation is being used to house families in emergency housing and to look after temporary workers, a lot of houses that were once rentals got converted to Airbnb.”

The cycle was perpetuating - but four years in, the puzzle had mostly been pieced together.

That included allowing for:

- seasonal worker accommodation on horticulture land
- affordable rentals built by developers on council land
- new subdivisions for private developments
- a boost of public housing through Kāinga Ora
- conversions of inner-city buildings to apartments
- community housing including papakāinga built on whenua Māori.

Five motels had been taken out of circulation for emergency housing because they were no longer needed, Bickle said.

But the mission was not over yet, he said.

“Kids and families shouldn’t be living in motels - they’re not designed to be housing.

“We had a KPI to try and get to zero within three years. We’ve made a lot of progress, but, there’s still a long way to go.”

It has taken a village - and it was vital that Ngāti Kahungunu was part of it, chief executive Bayden Barber said.

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