

**IN THE MATTER OF** the Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER OF** 7 publicly notified resource consent applications  
by Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – the Ministry of  
Housing and Urban Development (**MHUD**) to the  
Rotorua Lakes Council

---

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF TREVOR JOHN NEWBROOK**

---

**INTRODUCTION**

1. My full name is Trevor John Newbrook. I currently reside at 40 Robertson Street, Glenholme, Rotorua.
2. You will note my address is different to when I submitted to the original Resource Consent Applications, 20 Sumner Street, Glenholme, Rotorua where we also operated two B&B guest rooms. On 7 February 2024 our home was burgled and then set on fire by someone we understand was living in an emergency housing motel.
3. The top floor of our home has been demolished and the ground floor completely gutted. The rebuild started on 13 August 2024 with a completion date of the end of February 2025. We lost most of our personal and precious belongings (some with no monetary value but huge sentimental value to us).
4. I submit this brief of evidence in support of Restore Rotorua Incorporated (Restore Rotorua), to assist the independent Commissioner who will decide on the question of whether all of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development's (MHUD) resource consent applications before the Rotorua Lakes Council (RLC) to continue to use seven motels in central Rotorua for contracted emergency housing.

5. I previously gave evidence for Restore Rotorua at the original resource consent application hearing in October 2022. At that time, I was the Chair of Restore Rotorua and currently remain in that role.
6. As a member of Restore Rotorua, I am prepared if required to answer any questions concerning this brief of evidence from the Commissioner.
7. In this brief I give evidence as:
  - (a) A long-term resident of Glenholme, Rotorua, who was operating our home as a B&B; and
  - (b) The Chairman of Restore Rotorua since the formation of the society and on our advocacy with the Council.
8. I am familiar with the matters set out in this brief of evidence, and they are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

### **Family, work and life in Rotorua**

9. Our home is located approximately 300 metres, a 4-minute walk, from Fenton Street, the proverbial golden mile in Rotorua. Many of the proposed transitional and emergency housing sites are situated on or near Fenton Street.
10. I am 69 years old. My family and I moved to Rotorua in 1965, when I was ten. Apart from a period of 10 years away, I have lived in Rotorua the rest of my life.
11. Both my wife's and my families are well-known in Rotorua. My wife Rosemary was born and bred in Rotorua and grew up on Carnot Street approximately 120 metres from Fenton Street where her parents lived for over 40 years. She has always lived in Rotorua apart from the 10 years we lived away.

12. We absolutely love Rotorua and have loved living in Glenholme. It was a safe, friendly, and nice neighbourhood. We are passionate about our city and had planned to spend the rest of our retirement years here.
13. My wife Rosemary and I have three adult children. Rosemary attended Glenholme Primary School, as did our children when they were young. Some of our grandchildren are currently third generation students at Glenholme School. I was on the Glenholme School Board of Trustees and served as Chairman of the Parent Teacher Association. I was a Councillor and Deputy Mayor on the South Waikato District Council between 1995 and 2002.
14. My family's presence in the local community led to people in Rotorua approaching me to voice their feedback on, amongst other things, the emergency and transitional housing issue. I have received emails, phone calls and people have found me on social media, including my Facebook page, and messaged me directly. Some were people with whom I have never interacted. I have also been stopped on the street while I have been out by people wanting to speak to me on this issue.
15. The clear anxieties of those who approached me, and the scale of the Rotorua community's reaction to the influx of transitional and emergency housing in Rotorua, impressed on me that there was a need for more structured and organised action. I note in particular the telephone conversations I have had about establishing an incorporated society to serve as a united stakeholder group through which the local community could voice their concerns. I contemplated my suitability for the role of Chairman and spokesperson, and decided that I should take up those positions for the group.
16. Restore Rotorua was formally incorporated on 29 September 2021.

**On-going role of Restore Rotorua**

17. Restore Rotorua has continued to work for the community to advocate for the extensive use of motels as emergency housing to stop. I believe you are well aware of the negative effects on the people of Rotorua, especially those living in Glenholme.
18. I believe there has been some improvement since the new Government took office in December 2023. However, we need to continue to work to get Rotorua and The Golden Mile back to what it was.
19. Restore Rotorua has always supported genuine people being housed in appropriate and suitable housing. Especially the elderly and those with children.
20. Restore Rotorua does not believe that motels are a suitable long-term answer for housing people. Motels were built as short-term holiday accommodation and do not have the facilities needed for permanent housing. Most do not have suitable outdoor living spaces or outside play areas for children.
21. Following the Commissioner's Decision in December 2022, the then Chief Executive of RLC invited us to meet with him and another senior staff member. We had three or four such meetings and although there was talk of RLC taking action against motels that did not comply nothing ever came of it.
22. Unfortunately, I have not been able to attend the Community Liaison Group (CLG) meetings (except the last one) but understand from Restore Rotorua secretary Jenny Peace, who has attended all, that they have not been very effective. I am sure Jenny will address this in her evidence.
23. Restore Rotorua secretary Jenny Peace raised the issue of MHUD having to provide its exit plan six months before the resource consents expired.

24. The CLG meeting I did attend on 26 September 2024 was really a bit pointless in my opinion. There was a council report presented on the monitoring of Contracted Emergency Housing (CEH) Motels. The moteliers present questioned the need for this and raised concerns about the cost. It turned out that this report has to be done to comply with the Resource Consents and therefore there is no extra cost presenting it to CLG. There was a lot of discussion amongst the moteliers about Airbnb and how it has affected accommodation providers in Rotorua and across the world. After some time I had to ask the chair to bring the meeting back to the agenda.
25. Both MHUD and the motel representatives at the CLG meeting said it would be “mayhem” if the extensions were not granted. This is MHUD’s fault for not even trying to comply with the original Resource Consents and to date nobody has been held accountable.
26. The issue of safety was raised by a community representative regarding the car park at Apollo Hotel, 7 Tyron Street. She asked why it was not fenced like other CEH properties as often vehicles drive in and out quite fast and it was dangerous as they cross the footpath. The response from the motel representatives was to say it was too expensive, a waste of money and asked how many accidents there have been.
27. Restore Rotorua had never been asked by MHUD to meet to discuss CEH until they were directed by the Minister to meet with us after the sudden announcement that they were intending to apply for a 2-year extension for the ten Resource Consents. I think we have met three times which has been very constructive and helpful.
28. Prior to the election Restore Rotorua as an advocate group had separate meetings with Christopher Luxon, Nicola Willis, Chris Bishop, Tama Potaka and Todd McClay (MP for Rotorua). The National Party campaigned during the 2023 General Election on ending the emergency housing in Rotorua by December 2025.
29. Since the MHUD announcement that they were applying for extensions for two years for ten CEH Motels, we have met a number of times with Hon Todd McClay and also

with Hon Tama Potaka (Associate Minister of Housing – Social Housing). Restore Rotorua was extremely concerned that MHUD had made no progress in reducing the number of CEH Motels and obviously had no exit plan at all. We can only assume it was always their intention to just apply for another two years and I guess when that expired another two years and so on.

30. There have been some comments about MHUD reducing the number of CEH Motels from 13 to 10 motels. However, my understanding is that these three motels withdrew from the contract early on and not that the contracts were terminated by MHUD.
31. In addition to the ten CEH Motels with resource consents, I understand MHUD have been operating another two CEH Motels without resource consent, the Tuscany Villas, Fenton St and Aywon Motel, Trigg Ave. They have advised us that they have given notice to Tuscany Villas and it will be exited by 15 December 2024. They intend to continue to use Aywon Motel, which they advise is at full capacity until at least June next year.
32. The meetings with Todd McClay and Tama Potaka have been very constructive and have resulted in MHUD changing their position to exiting three CEH Motels by 15 December 2024, in-line with the decision and exiting Tuscany Villas by the same date.
33. Restore Rotorua continues to be contacted by the media and although we do respond and raise concerns, we have tried to be careful not to add to the very negative perception that has been created for Rotorua with such an intense use of Emergency Housing Motels.
34. Although all Government departments constantly denied people were being brought to Rotorua for emergency housing, a Report by MSD eventually showed at least 30 percent of people were not locals. I understand the criteria to be classified a local is very low. You have lived here for 30 days or have some sort of association with Rotorua. My family lived in Taupo for 3 months when I was 7 years old and that would make me a local.

35. We have been advised that the practise of MSD bringing or sending people to Rotorua has stopped. We have been misled and lied to by these Government departments so many times now that I do not believe them and although the numbers may have dropped, I am concerned this practice is still happening to some extent.
36. Restore Rotorua continues to stay in touch with its members via newsletters from Jenny Peace, other information including newspaper articles, radio interviews, our Facebook page, etc.
37. On a personal note, I find myself being approached by people in the community, sometimes by phone or messages but mostly when out on the street. I have received a lot of disappointment from people that after all we as a community went through at the 2022 resource consent hearings and the huge number of people who submitted that MHUD has not abided by the resource consents.
38. Many people who submitted last time said they will not submit this time because it is simply a waste of time and effort. They see the whole process as completely broken with little if any notice taken of them. It seems that Government departments are willing to spend huge amounts of tax payer money and the “system” allows this to happen.

**General observations of the ongoing effects of transitional and emergency housing from motels in Central Rotorua**

39. As I said earlier in my evidence our home was burgled and then subject to arson on 7 February 2024. The police recovered CCTV footage of a person who they told us was living in emergency housing attempting to sell some of my wife’s jewellery in a store in Rotorua later that same day. Another home in Sumner Street was also burgled the next night, allegedly by the same persons.

40. I reported to the Panel at the 2022 Hearing that our youngest daughter, her husband and their four children had moved to Nelson as they believed with the excessive emergency housing and what goes with it that Rotorua was no longer a safe place to bring up a family.
41. I can now report that our other daughter Jenny, her husband and four children have moved to Lake Tarawera to escape the issues associated with emergency housing motels. Their previous home was about 800 metres from us and now they live 22 kilometres away.
42. You may recall our daughter spoke of our 8-year-old granddaughter asking why they hear so many sirens. Emily who has just turned 11 of her own fruition commented recently how she did not hear the sirens anymore since moving to the lake.
43. There continues to be a bad look for Rotorua, especially along Fenton Street where many of the exited MSD Voucher motels remain messy and uncared for.
44. The security fencing and security guards at CEH Motels certainly does not give a welcoming or safe feel to our city.
45. There continues to be a large number of shopping trollies abandoned around Glenholme.
46. Police cars are often at CEH Motels. There are two CEH Motels at the end of our current street on the corner of Robertson and Fenton Streets. I have noticed police there on many occasions, even at both motels at the same time.
47. A few weeks ago, my wife was driving into town to pick up our grandson and as she approached Fenton Street there was a group of children aged between maybe 8 to 13 years who rushed onto the road blocking her. They were immediately in front of the car making aggressive and abusive gestures at her. She stopped and put the car into



reverse to leave and then they all ran into the CEH Midway Motel. My wife was scared, shaken and upset by the incident.

48. Last year someone tried to break into a guest's car at our property in Sumner Street, in the early hours of the morning. The police dog managed to track the person to a emergency housing motel but they said there were so many teenagers in there that they could not identify the offender. This was not a CEH Motel but to us and the public we regard them as the same. I know there is security at CEH Motels but no one knows what the occupants are up to once they leave the property, either through the gate or over a fence.
49. I have seen on Facebook CCTV footage of a person climbing over the fence at Midway Motel to escape through the neighbour's property.
50. I have some serious concerns about the agencies that MHUD are contracting to provide these services.
51. At a recent meeting with Mayor Tania Tapsell, she advised us that RLC have put more CCTV cameras into the CBD and now they are going to put more CCTV cameras in the Glenholme area.

#### **Workability of existing resource consents**

52. As I understand it, the original Resource Consents were granted for two years to allow MHUD adequate time to relocate the people living in these properties. Instead of MHUD reducing the numbers of people and number of properties as people leave, they have just continued to place more and more people into CEH.
53. Did MHUD ever make an effort to reduce the numbers or was it always their plan to simply apply for another two years? They clearly had no exit plan at the time they were meant to submit it to RLC. And it seems no one at MHUD is being held accountable for this.

54. It is the position of Restore Rotorua that all applications for extensions should be declined.
55. On a personal note, I would respectfully request that if you decide to grant any extensions of the resource consents that there needs to be exact and compelling conditions relating to an exit plan.
56. I believe that if they say they are going to close Apollo, Alpin and Pohutu by June 2025 and you decide to grant the resource consents then they should only be granted consent for those properties until then.
57. They say other CEH Motels will be closed over the months from June 2025 leading up to 15 December 2025. I believe that dates need to be locked in to ensure this happens.
58. I am afraid that I simply do not trust the Government agencies that are involved with the homeless in Rotorua.

**CONCLUSION.**

59. Based on what I have discussed above I respectfully request that the seven CEH resource consent applications are declined.

**Trevor Newbrook**

**30 October 2024**