

DRIVERS FOR MĀORI OUTCOMES: a survey of strategic landmarks in housing

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Introduction:

In housing, we find ourselves somewhere in between strategy and policy, in a dangerous grey area – it is unclear who can be held accountable for what systemic issue or anticipated outcome.

The community outside of government is active and committed in housing advocacy and delivery. Iwi, marae, and providers all contribute to an innovative sector, operating in a state of being under-resourced and over-delivering.

Both the Auckland Māori Housing Summit 2018 and the Kāinga Strategic Action Plan arose out of a collective desire to activate the promises of the Labour-led government (Oct. 2017). Eighteen months on some foundations are down and work is underway.

In 2014 the Māori Party succeeded in creating a Māori Housing Strategy – *He Whare Āhuru He Oranga Tangata*. In 2018 the Kāinga plan – targeting Māori in Tāmaki Makaurau – was developed largely outside of government, with strong but indirect links with *He Whare Āhuru*.

KiwiBuild is more than just *policy*, but the national strategy discussed at the 2018 Summit has not progressed. As we developed the Kāinga plan, *He Whare Āhuru* was rarely mentioned. We took from that an active decision had been made about its fate, but its status remains unclear.

At the same time delivery of outcomes continues in the community through innovation, and at times in contradiction to strategies, and government funding and directions.¹ Where does this leave us? Could ‘strategy’ achieve an iwi - community – sector government alignment?

The following discussion document surveys structural changes in government over the last 18 months to drive priority programmes, policies, and outcomes, and considers *He Whare Āhuru* and the Kāinga plan and places these landmarks against a backdrop of reality.

We are already thinking about Auckland Māori Housing Summit 2020 – election year. Looking back at these drivers for change, will we see the genesis of improved whānau outcomes?

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This paper is contributed by Jade Kake, an architectural designer, writer/researcher, and housing and papakāinga practitioner and advocate.

In the 2017 elections, Labour promised, if elected, to deliver a comprehensive housing plan to fix the housing crisis.

Since his appointment, Housing Minister Phil Twyford has been criticised by the opposition and in the media for focussing too heavily on KiwiBuild, which is not a strategy or a policy so much as it is a state-led building programme (as some critics have rightly noted). The Minister has since demonstrated that KiwiBuild is one component – albeit the front-facing flagship policy – within an ambitious and comprehensive housing and urban development programme, one that includes

¹ For example, Housing Provider CEO Friday 3 May 2019, personal communication: “What I tell my staff is ‘just go and do the mahi, help the whānau, and its my job to work out where the funding comes from.’”

supply and demand-side solutions, and encompasses strategy and policy, as well as direct provision of housing.

A cabinet paper setting out [Housing and Urban Development Strategic Direction, Priorities and Delivery Approach](#) was taken by Minister Phil Twyford to Cabinet in May 2018, and identified “Achieving equitable housing outcomes for Māori” as one of eight priority areas.

The Māori housing work programme includes six action areas, with a near-term focus on – “addressing barriers to building on Māori land,” “ensuring Māori benefit from KiwiBuild,” and “improving rural and substandard housing.” The paper notes that the Māori housing work programme will be delivered in two ways – by addressing Māori concerns in mainstream policies and programmes, and by developing targeted policies.

What’s interesting – in a steep departure from the messages promulgated by the previous government – is that the cabinet paper is upfront in acknowledging that there is a housing crisis, and that our current housing system is delivering poor outcomes – and that both are unacceptable to our New Zealand society. This aligns with one of the foundational elements of the [Kāinga Strategic Action Plan](#) (Kāinga plan), the recognition of housing as a fundamental part of whānau wellbeing and an inalienable human right. This is also reflected in Housing New Zealand’s new [social objectives](#) (September 2018), which reframe HNZC’s core role as a compassionate landlord, with a focus on building quality homes and communities, ensuring housing is available to those who need it, and removing the requirement that HNZC return a surplus to government.

On 1 October 2018, the Ministry for Housing and Urban Development was formed. The new Ministry brings together housing functions previously situated in other ministries. It will have the lead role in strategic oversight and responsibility for monitoring the performance of Housing New Zealand, its subsidiary HLC (Homes Land Community), and the new Housing and Urban Development Authority (once established). It also includes several new functions, including a critical role in ‘systems stewardship’, which includes coordinating and monitoring other government agencies and the sector outside of government.

The Ministry’s [Statement of Strategic Intentions 2019-23](#) (the statement) was released in February 2019, and sets out the work plan for the new Ministry. The statement engages systems thinking, is bold and aspirational, and is a keen departure from the previous government approach. The statement sets out five principles which will guide the work of the new Ministry, which include “Treaty-anchored” and “Whenua-based.” The statement centres our Treaty relationship at the core of the work of the Ministry - “if we improve outcomes for Māori, we will improve them for all other system participants,” and it centres *te mana i te whenua*, recognising “the importance of people’s deep connections to land and community, and that identity arises from place.”

The statement also prioritises both Māori outcomes more generally and promotes partnership with iwi as the Treaty partner. It shows a genuine commitment by the Ministry to listening and working in partnership, with an upfront commitment to ensuring sufficient Māori housing and urban development expertise exists within the Ministry and that all staff are equipped to work with Māori. This is noteworthy given the lack of sustained government commitment to [He Whare Āhuru – the Māori Housing Strategy](#) (2014), including the historic failure to recruit and retain Māori staff within senior leadership roles, and lack of appropriate Māori housing expertise within the Ministry responsible for its implementation.

To progress Māori aspirations within the housing system, a specific Ministerial portfolio with responsibility for progressing Māori outcomes has been established.² Minister Nanaia Mahuta was [appointed](#) to the role of Associate Minister of Housing and Urban Development in November 2018.

² Kāinga Strategic Action Plan, action 2.

At the same time, the establishment of a new Māori Housing Unit (to be located with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development)³ was also announced. This was predated by the November 2017 [Briefing to the Incoming Ministers for Housing and Urban Development and Māori Development](#), prepared by National Māori housing advocacy body Te Matapihi. Sector priorities identified in the briefing included the appointment of an Associate Minister for Housing with responsibility for Māori housing (or a Minister for Māori Housing), and the establishment of a Māori Housing Unit within government (an initiative Labour also promoted in their pre-election Māori housing policy).

The Associate Minister's [roles](#) include the development and monitoring of a Māori Housing Strategy, ensuring Māori whānau are appropriately catered for within urban development initiatives, and supporting the interface between local government and iwi. Explicitly catering for Māori whānau within urban development initiatives finally recognises in government direction setting that Māori whānau housing outcomes are not limited to papakāinga and Māori land development matters.

Minister Mahuta also holds complementary portfolios as the Minister for Māori Development, the Minister for Local Government, and the Associate Minister for the Environment. This alignment should ensure a high level of coordination between the Māori Housing Network Te Puni Kōkiri and the new Māori Housing Unit within the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, and ensure that iwi interests within resource management are protected under future urban development authorities legislation.

The statement places a strong emphasis on homes and building thriving communities, and is not merely predicated on the outdated and damaging notion of housing as, primarily, a financial asset. Whilst encompassing a wide range of housing programmes and priorities, the statement is focussed on the provision of mixed-income, mixed-tenure development, connected to key infrastructure including public transport, education and employment, particularly (but not exclusively) centred on major urban centres such as Auckland. The deliberate choice of words used within the statement, to encompass communities rather than houses, resonates with the broad intent of the Kāinga plan and represents a fundamental change in thinking within government.

There is clearly a high – but not perfect – degree of alignment between the government's current plans and the Kāinga plan. Minister Twyford and his team provided a comprehensive response to the plan in December 2018, demonstrating a high degree of engagement and commitment to partnership. So, where does it diverge? And how could it be strengthened?

The government does not accept the Kāinga plan's proposal of co-governance of urban development authorities (Kāinga plan action 3), stating that once established, the new Housing and Urban Development Authority (HUDA) will be best-placed to partner with stakeholders, such as Māori and iwi groups, to deliver projects. This does not address the fundamental issue of equal Treaty relationships, and, as with the previous government's urban development authorities proposal, runs the risk of confining iwi to the role of development partner. In my view, the issue of sovereignty is the elephant in the room, and as has been demonstrated through the Treaty redress negotiation process, the government (as the de facto Treaty partner) is willing to hand over only so much power and responsibility to hapū and iwi Māori. The Minister's response does leave room for negotiation, however, stating that "further decisions will be made about the composition of the national HUDA board."

The proposal for the establishment of a one-stop shop for housing outcomes for Māori was also questioned (action 5), with the Minister's response stating that "the form, structure and role [of the proposed entity] in relation to central government is unclear." Additionally, the establishment of a Māori housing curriculum for housing professionals and specialist navigators (action 6) was not supported, as the Minister believes these roles are already being adequately fulfilled by the Māori

³ Kāinga Strategic Action Plan, action 4.

Housing Network Te Puni Kōkiri. More detail was requested on the establishment of Kāinga Ora service hub for emergency and transitional housing (action 7), again, under the proviso that this need is already being met by existing programmes.

Finally, government is unwilling to review the Community Housing Regulatory Authority (CHRA) requirements (action 11), and appears confident that Māori aspirations can be accommodated within the current system. Like other specific government responses to the Kāinga plan, this requires more analysis and more work. With only three Māori community housing providers in Auckland and nine nationally, the evidence suggests the regulatory system is not meeting Māori aspirations.

Minister Twyford's plans for the new Ministry (as demonstrated through the statement) are comprehensive, show a clear expectation and understanding of the Ministry's role, and attempt to cut through siloed thinking by taking a leadership role in systems stewardship, and by demonstrating a clear understanding of the various parts of the system. This system includes central government agencies, local government, iwi and hapū, the community housing sector, and private developers. Importantly, the statement allows for the possibility of change and growth, with medium-term priorities to be shaped by working in collaboration with partners and stakeholders.

There is much to celebrate in the current government's decisive action, and the development of comprehensive and aspirational plans. Notwithstanding this, there are aspects of the Ministry's plans that could be strengthened through close collaboration with iwi entities and the Māori housing sector, and continued advocacy will – as ever – be required to hold the government to account.

We now find ourselves somewhere in between strategy and policy, in a dangerous grey area – it is unclear who can be held accountable for what systemic issue or anticipated outcome. There remains a large number of government agencies in housing. A robust national strategy would give us all something to review, analyse and ultimately, rely on.

A strategy without money is an apparition. A strategy without actions can't be implemented. And a strategy without endorsement is out in the cold. At the same time, policy without strategy is ad-hoc. Action without strategy is non-strategic. And investment without strategy is neither sustainable and scalable. Yet currently, there is no national housing strategy.

Targeted strategic directions for whānau Māori housing outcomes

Under the previous government, there was no national housing strategy. Largely due to the efforts of the previous Associate Minister for Housing (Māori), Dame Tariana Turia, the *He Whare Āhuru He Oranga Tangata – Māori Housing Strategy* was developed by government in collaboration with the sector and launched in July 2014. It was intended to run through to 2025.

He Whare Āhuru however seems to have been consigned to sit on the shelf collecting dust. Without dedicated resourcing (including appropriate staffing) or a commitment to monitoring and evaluation, the plan languished. The action areas for the first three years (as outlined in the plan) ended without fanfare in mid-2017, with no evidence that action areas for the next three years would eventuate.

The change of government in 2017 saw a renewed focus on housing, and a clear commitment to government intervention in New Zealand's broken housing market. As noted earlier in the previous section, this government signalled change by immediately acknowledging the housing crisis.

But the new government did not then, and have not since, shown significant interest in or commitment to reviving *He Whare Āhuru He Oranga Tangata*, likely due to a lack of alignment with Labour's housing plans, and a desire to distance themselves from initiatives of the previous government. Rumours of the development of a National strategy surfaced in early 2018, with a Māori housing strategy to be nested within the overall housing strategy. These rumours though have

not publicly taken shape, and from the insight we have we understand this work may have been side-lined to enable greater focus on the building of houses, at least during 2018.

In February 2019 the [*Statement of Strategic Intentions 2019-23*](#) was released by the newly formed Ministry for Housing and Urban Development, which features a dedicated Māori housing work programme and sets a foundation for the development of a comprehensive National strategy. In November 2018 Minister Nanaia Mahuta was appointed to the role of Associate Minister of Housing and Urban Development. The schedule of delegations for the new Ministerial portfolio include “leadership on issues relating to a Māori housing strategy (including the development of a Māori housing work programme spanning urban and rural housing)”.

The Kāinga strategic action plan emerged from the first Auckland Māori Housing Summit, held in April 2018. It was agreed that development of the plan would be led by the Independent Māori Statutory Board with the support of Te Matapihi. The plan was drafted and then presented for sector input at the National Māori Housing Conference in November 2018. It is necessarily Auckland-centric, acknowledging the myriad of unique issues and opportunities present within the Auckland context. It encompasses the various components of the housing system and roles for the various actors, resonating with new Ministry of Housing and Urban Development’s role of ‘system stewardship’, as articulated through the *Statement of Strategic Intentions*.

The Kāinga plan could move forward in a number of ways – it could be adopted (fully or partially) by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and operationalised by the new Māori Housing Unit. Or it could continue to exist in parallel to the government’s own (yet to be developed) Māori housing strategy (which will likely be embedded within the wider whole-of-sector housing strategy and may be broken into urban and rural segments).

A particular strength of the Kāinga plan is the emphasis on each government agency being required to develop a public sub-strategy that sits underneath a National strategy, which can then be monitored by both the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and sector advocates. It could therefore act as a focal point for both the activities of the sector outside of government, and for advocacy efforts led by the Independent Māori Statutory Board, Te Matapihi, Community Housing Aotearoa, and others.

A potential third pathway, which originates from views expressed by the sector in response to *He Whare Āhuru* (which was government-led and sector supported), is the notion that the next strategy might be sector-led and government supported (with a clear commitment to resourcing, monitoring and evaluating its implementation). This is an approach that I would continue to endorse and support.

In my view, the best thing the government could do would be to update and operationalise *He Whare Āhuru*, allowing the strategy to run its full course whilst actively supporting the development of a sector-led strategy. The Kāinga plan, and the positive engagement to date with government in relation to this plan, could form the blueprint for this.