

## HOMELESS TIMELINE - ROTORUA

- 2014 Rotorua City Council called a community meeting to discuss the growing issue of homelessness in Rotorua CBD.
- 2015 Love Soup charitable organisation feeds homeless people at night in Kuirau Park and identifies that the homeless also hang out at Sulphur Point.
- 2015 Community agencies are reporting between 30 and 60 rough sleepers in and around the Central Business District. However, these figures may be an under-estimate.  
Research completed using the 2006 Census data had the Rotorua District with 81 people sleeping rough, 84 people living in non-private accommodation (boarding houses, motels and camping ground) 444 people living in overcrowded dwellings. A total of 609 people who are severely Housing deprived. (Amore, K, Viggers, H, Baker, M & Howden-Chapman, P (2013).  
  
For over 10 years the Rotorua Night Shelter Trust has been working towards the establishment of a night shelter with little progress due to a number of barriers.
- Sep-17 Sunrise Hikoi for the homeless a success, despite the rain. A Hikoi to raise the awareness of Rotorua's homeless and the work of Love Soup had a good turnout despite the rain.
- May-18 Emotional plea from Rotorua Hikoi for the Homeless, organised by Renee Kiriona. More than 120 people marched along with placards, flags and chants to the front doors of the Rotorua Lakes Council today during the Hikoi for the Homeless. The group stressed that a night shelter was urgently needed in Rotorua to prevent the homeless from
- Jun-18 Tiny Deane from Visions of a Helping Hand Trust sets up night shelters - 2 in Rotorua and 1 in Taupo. He investigates setting one up in Auckland.  
Tiny Deane has to close Rotorua night shelter on Eruera Street, due to Rotorua Lakes Council red tape.  
Visions of a Helping Hand's Tiny Deane lashed out at the council on Tuesday saying in his view it had been "snobbish" and "heartless" over red tape that forced him to close Rotorua's night shelter on Saturday.  
Chadwick says Housing First was the right policy to work towards. Ministry of Social Development (MSD) has given assurance that any of those people could be housed, all of them. They don't need to sleep rough, they just need to register with MSD and they will be accommodated.
- Jul-18 Neighbour's unhappy with "intimidating" behaviour outside Rotorua's drop-in centre. Spitting, urinating, aggressive behaviour, people running around high on synthetics, vulgar language by some of the users of Rotorua's drop-in centre has some neighbouring businesses feeling intimidated.  
Tiny Deane says he's put measures in place to reduce the impact and doesn't know why people are "picking on him". The shelter on the same street as a bar and Ministry of Social Development building was like "putting all the problematic people in one area".
- Aug-18 Pukuatua Street night shelter officially opens in Rotorua.

Night Shelter must move, says fed up publican. "Give us back our town, these people are taking it over".

Retailers, shoppers and tourists have endured weeks of threats, violence, intimidation and abuse from some of the people who use or are associated with users of the night shelter on Pukuatua St. Staff are being racially abused, spat at and Reg Hennessy himself was personally attacked.

Police, Rotorua Mayor, Tamati Coffey issued a joint media statement today, acknowledging the problem and detailing the action plan already worked on.

- Jul-19 Homeless shelters funded by Tiny Deane who mortgages his home, have fed and housed more than 1000 people since opening a year ago.
- Jan-20 Rotorua homeless have "nowhere to go" if moved out of parks and reserves. Emails leaked to the Rotorua Daily Post revealed a Council plan to move people (including the homeless) out of the district's parks and reserves including Motutara, the lakefront and Kuirau Park. MSD Regional Manager Mike Bryant said the Ministry of Housing & Urban Development had identified Rotorua as a "homeless hotspot".
- Feb-20 Kuirau Park has become the day-time hangout zone for the homeless for those living in emergency housing and rough sleeping. Minister of Housing & Urban Development - Megan Woods says a government announcement signified the seriousness of problems and homelessness. A \$175M fund nationwide was established. The trio of government, Rotorua Lakes Council and iwi were one accord over an urgent need for housing in what was termed "place-based assessment".
- Mar-20 COVID- 19 Level four Lockdown. The government removes homeless from the streets and cars and into motels, to stop the spread of the virus. Homeless people are removed from Kuirau Park.
- Sep-20 Tiny Deane's Charitable trust - Visions of a Helping Hands, is renting motels to house people after the COVID 19 pandemic forced him to shut his shelters for the homeless.
- Dec-20 Rotorua homeless crisis - Meal service moved on from Central Mall to Kuirau Park. The service feeds up to 200 homeless from 5pm. There were reports of people working in the mall, feeling intimidated as they walked to their cars, vandalism and rubbish left behind. Council Chief Executive Geoff Williams said the Council had discussions with the trust and agreed to allow it to use Kuirau Park. The Ministry's Auckland Regional Commissioner Mark Goldsmith said there was a housing shortage nationwide and the ministry didn't proactively move clients around the country and send them to Rotorua. Prime Minister Jacinda Adern says homeless in Rotorua is not a long term solution. But she would rather have "shetler than no shelter for all" for those in need. The long term plan is to withdraw. Providing public housing and support was a "big focus" for government to ensure that motels were open again when possible. When asked about MSD paying high rents to landlords to house homeless, Adern would dig further into whether this was an issue locally.

- Jan-21 A petition addressed to Mayor Steve Chadwick, started by Meredith Herbert, calls for urgent Council action on city safety and homelessness in Rotorua gathers more than 1000 signatures in a week.  
Rotorua Police area commander inspector Phil Taikato, said homelessness was a "complex issue" that continued to come to police attention in Rotorua. "Rough sleeping" begging or being homeless in themselves are not criminal offences, but police are called in from time to time to deal with issues around matters involving public disorder or complaints about anti-social behaviour.  
People are just not doing their jobs Rotorua advocate - Tiny Deane from Visions of a Helping Hands, takes aim at Police.  
  
Tiny Deane says he will consult with Rotorua community over Base Backpackers and Lava partnership proposal for pensioner housing and a medical centre.
- Feb-21 Businesses say no to housing homeless in CBD and do not support the idea of the Base Backpackers and Lava bar conversion.
- Mar-21 Rotorua's Lava Bar to remain open as Tiny Deane's proposal for homeless elderly falls through. The proposal was met with public backlash and an online petition was started to stop the deal, resulting in 3600 signatures.  
Rotorua has become a "dumping ground" for the country's homeless, some locals claim. Government agencies and social service providers deny they are shipping homeless people to Rotorua. But there is evidence, that many of those in emergency housing in the tourist town are from other centres. Increased crime, burglary, theft, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, gangs dealing drugs, graffiti, litter, abandoned supermarket trolleys.  
Brett Wilson - Watchdog Security, says crime has risen significantly in Glenholme and CBD in recent months.  
Inspector Phil Taikato, area commander of Police says its just a perception there's more crime happening down there (Fenton St)  
Locals nickname Fenton Street motel strip - "MSD Mile" that used to be called Motel Mile.  
Vision of a Helping Hands Trust started with 3 staff - now 49. They have 150 homeless on its books staying at two motels, managed by the Trust and 25 transitional houses. He says its simply untrue that he actively brings people to Rotorua from other centres.  
One motel manager said he estimated 80% of his emergency clients were from out of town.  
National MP Todd McClay held a public meeting at the Te Arawa Bowling Club. Hundreds attended. It was about the roughly 2000 homeless people living across 45 motels in Rotorua. The Mayor didn't attend, as she would be "on the spot" and "under pressure from the community" to answer aspects of government business.  
Councillors Fisher Wang, Peter Bentley and Dr Reynold Macpherson attended.  
A man stood up at the meeting and said he had been given a voucher from MSD for a bus to stay in an emergency motel in Rotorua. He was from Whakatane.
- Apr-21 Alcoholics, drug deals, gang affiliations, domestic violence, emergency housing labelled as dangerous. Ministers were warned about the "risks to public safety" in Rotorua a year ago and that week-by-week motel accommodation is not suitable for families, or those with high needs.

Causing further consternation is the Social Development Ministry's approach of leaving it up to moteliers to make sure there's no violence, harrassment or criminal behaviour and only responding, once an incident has occurred.

The owner of Hennessy's Irish Bar in Rotorua, Reg Hennessy say's he's seeing crime, drugs, getting openly sold on the street, gangsters, youth gangs and while he supports those in genuine need being housed, there are "some horrible, horrible things going on out there".

"When you walk past a motel and you see Mongrel Mob colours hanging up in the windows, showing off so the whole worlds can see it, it doesn't make me proud to belong to Rotorua anymore".

The Rotorua bar owner says emergency housing is killing the CBD.

Government is now spending \$1M per day on emergency and transitional housing.

More denials of origins of homeless people in Rotorua.

The government is not sending people to Rotorua - says Prime Minister Jacinda Adern.

Prime Minister Jacinda Adern, I think focusing so much on where are the people coming from and how can we stop the demand, actually we need to make sure they have houses.

Tamati Coffey - it's a convenient narrative for locals to think its others and outsiders coming into Rotorua, but actually they are ours.

In April the Daily Post reported; On March 16, Councillor Fisher Wang made a written complaint that Councillor Macpherson's comment on Facebook alleging the Council was "bussing homeless people in from other centres" was "factually incorrect". I hope Macpherson retracts his statement, it is misleading and tarnishes our reputation as an organisation.

In response to Wang's complaint, Macpherson said it has been his "probably incorrect assumption" at the time of posting the Council was "at least party to bussing" and he had removed the post and replaced it with another on March 11.

May-21 Substandard motels taken off government's emergency accommodation list. Carmel Sepuloni has admitted some emergency housing is so bad, she's told the agency to stop using it. She recently visited Rotorua. There are a few that actually I said to MSD, 'stop using it'. That can be done in a place like Rotorua where there are a number of motel accommodation options. Asked how long it could be before motels are stopped being used for the homeless. Sepuloni said she hoped to make good progress before 2023.

Jun-21 The government has announced a suite of changes to emergency housing provisions in Rotorua.  
Government will directly contract motels in Rotorua to deliver emergency housing  
Wrap around social support services for those in emergency accommodation to be provided  
Grouping of cohorts like families and tamariki in particular motels separate from other groups - ending the practice of mixed use motels  
One-stop Housing Hub for access to services and support to be established  
A taskforce from central government has been working with the Rotorua Lakes Council and Te Arawa iwi to provide better support and outcomes for people living in emergency housing motels and the community.  
Rotorua Lakes Council will help ensure applications for changes to consents to permit longer term stays in motels are processed efficiently.  
It will take several weeks to assess and engage all motels.

- Jul-21      Sorting Rotorua's homelessness problems will take longer than anyone thinks - MSD Regional Commissioner Mike Bryant said. He made the admission when addressing a meeting at RLC on Thursday. Rotorua has a lot of long term underlying social issues. Gangs, drugs, crime, family violence he said. At present 700 people were looking for a social housing place in Rotorua.  
MSD had now contracted 12 motels in Rotorua. He took potshots at media for being reporting negatively and inaccurately as possible. He appeared to take aim at the wider public noting, "people complained about parks for homeless people, night shelters, now we've got people in motels, and people are complaining about that. We'll have people complaining about where the social houses are too."  
WINZ doing what it can to keep gangs away from kids in emergency housing.  
Number of children living in motel reaches record high despite government's pledge to combat child poverty.
- Aug-21      Rotorua hotel guests' cars destroyed in suspicious blaze. Car fires at the Distinction Hotel are being treated as suspicious, police have confirmed.  
Council district development deputy chief executive Jean Paul Gaston replies to a LGOIMA request. Rotorua District Plan allows, through a Resource Consent application, for motels on Fenton Street to be converted to housing. Appropriate living conditions and management plans to address security and on-site requirements, such as noise, amenity areas, hours of operation and parking.  
In regards to resource consents, the planners need to follow the statutory process set out by the Resource Management Act, not what is requested in a petition.
- Sep-21      Rotorua's homeless crisis: Rotorua Mayor Steve Chadwick calls for end to "not in my backyard" mentality. Rotorua Mayor says residents can't keep saying "not in my backyard" as the city looks to solve its housing crisis. Long term emergency or transition housing is not permitted under the District Plan in motels on main routes, as these premises are only permitted to have short term visitor accommodation.  
To make this comply, a land-use change is needed. The Council had already approved a resource consent land-use change for the Boulevard Motel on Fenton Street, to have transitional housing, a process which was not publicly notified.  
The Mayor said politicians were not, and should not be involved in the consenting process as it was regulatory, not political, but a process with decisions based on what's in the District Plan.  
"What I'm concerned and disappointed about is the growing call from residents to not allow certain types of perceived types of people in their neighbourhoods. We accept there is a need for housing, including social housing, and we can't keep saying "but not in my backyard" especially without understanding what these types of developments can actually look like and how they will be managed".  
Rotorua needs 1700 homes including transitional and public housing.  
The Council had previously said Fenton St had been approved as a future area for residential development with the view of moving tourist accommodation to the inner city as part of the 2018 Spatial Plan.  
Some Glenholme locals have been vocal in their opposition to more housing options in Fenton Street, saying it should be kept for tourists and restored as the gateway to Rotorua.  
Resident Jenny Peace, has collected more than 1900 online signatures in a petition calling for Council transparency over consenting changes for Fenton Street.

Rotorua lawyer Kevin Badcock who initially publicly raised the resource consent issue of emergency housing in motels on main routes for long periods, said the resource consents for motels to be converted into household units should be publicly notified. Council district development deputy chief executive Jean Paul Gaston said the Council had always said that using motels as emergency housing was not a long term solution and that remained the case. MHUD motels are distributed across the city rather than all in one place and Council has always said that those motels would be fully assessed against the District Plan.

In September 2021, the District Plan - Area Specific Matters - Zones - Residential zones was updated. On page 14 - Conversion of Tourist Accommodation to household units, is added to the District Plan as a Restricted Discretionary activity.

- Oct-21 Restore Rotorua Inc is launched to oppose more transitional housing. Council did not inform and consult with the local community when granting resource consent for Kainga Ora to turn Boulevard Motel at 265 Fenton Street into transitional housing. Ministry of Housing & Development (MHUD) had lodged 6 applications for motels to be converted into emergency housing.
- Dec-21 Golden Glow Motel goes up in flames in Rotorua. The Golden Glow motel on Fenton Street is currently being used to house Ministry of Social Development clients and MSD Regional Manager Mike Bryant said 11 clients were staying at the motel. Fire crews were called to motel fire at Four Canoes Motel on Fenton Street, which is a MSD accommodation provider. A givealittle page is set up for Restore Rotorua to cover legal fees against Rotorua Lakes Council for resource consent applications to convert motels into household units for emergency and transition housing.
- Feb-22 Prime Minister Adern - motel housing a "stopgap measure" but no end date in sight for Rotorua. Fire and emergency crews were called to a fire inside a room on the first floor at the Grand Treasure Hotel at Pukuatua St. The Grand Treasure Hotel is the top earner from MSD for emergency housing special needs grant for 267 clients, and was paid \$3.44M by MSD.
- Mar-22 Don Paterson and others commented on Newstalk ZB about the motels being used for emergency accommodation. The topic was "Has Rotorua's reputation been damaged by government/Rotorua Lakes Council housing homeless in our motels? What kiwis have to say. People phoned into Kerre McIvor's radio show, sharing their visitor experiences of Rotorua - good and mostly bad. On Friday 18th March 2022, Reg Hennessy from Hennessy's Irish Bar, Trevor Newbrook from Restore Rotorua and Reynold Macpherson from Rotorua District Residents and Ratepayers group were all interviewed on the radio show. It highlighted the plight of the motels, given that the international borders were opening in April to Australians and then in May to the rest of the world. Where would the tourists stay? When the motels were full of homeless people. Mayor Steve Chadwick was interviewed in the afternoon on Newstalk ZB, talking about the letters she had written to the Minister of Social Development - Carmel Sepuloni.

In Mayor Steve Chadwick's and Te Arawa Kaumatua Monty Morrison's letter dated 24th November 2021, obtained by an LGOIMA request, "The perception is that Rotorua is being used as an emergency accommodation destination for anyone with any connection to our area.

While local MSD staff continue to assure us that people are not being sent here, we have had members from our emergency housing community standing up at public meetings and announcing that they have come here from places like Gisborne and Opotiki with bus tickets and vouchers provided by MSD.

We are extremely concerned that MSD continues to allow accommodation voucher holders to choose to live in motel accommodation of their choice, that does not have the wrap around support services that are provided in the MSD contracted motels.

Our community is suffering due to drug use, violent behaviour, vandalism and other anti-social behaviours that they are seeing on a daily basis, in the proximity of the motels providing emergency housing. The perception is that those living in emergency accommodation are destroying our city and its reputation.

After no response from Carmel Sepuloni's office, the Mayor Steve Chadwick wrote another letter on 15th February 2022.

We have lost any community empathy and support and Council has been forced to invest in security patrols, cameras and additional cleaning and maintenance. This is not sustainable.

People living inside and outside of our community feel that Rotorua is bearing the brunt of the housing crisis. The crime and anti-social behaviour occurring in the vicinity of emergency housing motels is clearly visible and this is adversely impacting on our community, our economy and our reputation as a visitor destination. Rotorua requests a change to the voucher system to one that provides management and appropriate wrap-around support to all clients alongside the system currently available to families in contracted motels.

Can we also ask for your assurance that people are not being actively sent here and that given the scale of our problem, MSD be directed to consider other communities for locating emergency housing clients.

The MHUD have lodged Resource Consents for another 7 motels in Rotorua to become emergency housing. That brings the total number of applications currently with Rotorua Lakes Council to 13, plus the Boulevard Motel.

Of the 37 motels on Fenton Street, 24 are emergency housing and 3 are for MIQ, or MIQ for army accommodation, leaving only 9 motels for visitors to Rotorua. 1 motel is closed for renovations.

6.3.22 Black Power member Ryan Woodford is murdered at the Adelphi Motel in Taupo  
The motel has been operating as a MSD motel since February 2020.

dying.