



THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

**ROTORUA  
LAKES COUNCIL**  
Te kaunihera o ngā roto o Rotorua

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Tēnā koe Minister

**Re: Continuing emergency housing challenges in Rotorua**

We are writing to share our serious concerns about how the very good progress that has been made for families in emergency housing in Rotorua, is being undermined by MSD's voucher system that enables emergency housing clients to live in motels of their choice that are not contracted to MSD.

We have no doubt that the work that has been done by MSD and the other agencies through the Rotorua Housing Taskforce to accommodate whānau in motels contracted by MSD and with wrap around services, is making a difference to the lives of those who are living there. It was always our first priority to ensure the wellbeing and safety of tamariki and families and I am very pleased with the progress that has been made for this vulnerable group.

Our council however is responsible for the wellbeing of our whole community and as Mayor and a kaumatua of Rotorua, we are very aware and concerned about the anxiety, hurt and anger that our wider community is feeling towards those in emergency housing. Increasingly we are hearing from people who are neighbours of these facilities who are experiencing significant distress. Rotorua has always prided itself in showing manaakitanga to all who come here, but the feeling now is that our generosity has been taken advantage of.

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 Ōpōtiki with bus tickets and vouchers provided by MSD.

While we are pleased to hear that your Ministry will soon be providing individualised support for clients not residing in contracted motels, we are extremely concerned that MSD continues to allow accommodation voucher holders to choose to live in motel accommodation of their choice, that does

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Rotorua Lakes Council is the operating name of Rotorua District Council

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not have the wrap around support services that are provided in the MSD contracted motels. We fear that the current system is enabling a tsunami of at best anti-social behaviour in our community.

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.

Many of the motels and backpacker's that are accepting vouchers are unsuitable for medium-term accommodation and are certainly not appropriate for MSD clients with multiple dependencies, poor health outcomes and little or no control of their circumstances.

We are also extremely concerned that this accommodation is fundamentally unsuitable in a Covid environment, particularly given that our itinerant population is also less likely to be vaccinated. As Rotorua prepares to welcome visitors here again under the traffic light system we can only see this community anxiety and anger escalating. We also fear that we may have a serious outbreak of Covid in our emergency housing motels.

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.

It is very obvious that Rotorua is suffering terribly from the impacts of Covid and we are bearing the brunt of the housing crisis.

We appreciate your support in reducing the risks to our community.

Nāku noa, nā



Hon Steve Chadwick JP  
Mayor



Monty Morrison  
Kaumatua, Ngāti Whakuae