PROGRESS ON THE HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN AND THE HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Proposal

1. This paper provides an update on the progress with the Aotearoa/New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan (action plan), the immediate homelessness response to the COVID-19 pandemic and proposes further steps in our homelessness response. It meets a required report back to Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee (SWC) on the action plan.

Relation to Government priorities

2. The work presented in this paper supports our priority set out in the Government’s Economic Plan of improving the wellbeing of New Zealanders and their families by ensuring that everyone has a warm dry home and ending homelessness. This work also supports the priorities of building closer partnerships with Iwi and Māori; of supporting healthier, safer and more connected communities; and supporting the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Executive Summary

3. The action plan was publicly released in February 2020. It is based on a commitment to partner with Iwi, hapū, marae and Māori organisations, local authorities, providers, and people with lived experience of homelessness to prevent and reduce homelessness. The 18 immediate actions in the plan are backed by over $300 million of funding, and our expectation was that these actions would be operational by mid-2020.

4. In response to COVID-19, several immediate actions were adapted or accelerated to meet urgent needs or expected demand. Actions to respond to Māori homelessness were significantly accelerated over this time and provided much needed support to Iwi and Māori organisations. We also took additional action to urgently accommodate people sleeping rough or living in vulnerable accommodation. Agencies have been working with housing providers, Iwi and Māori organisations to meet support needs. Over 1,000 individuals and whānau have been housed in motels across the country as a response to the COVID-19 lockdown. Progress was impressive with providers noting very limited numbers of people sleeping rough during the COVID-19 lockdown. We need to continue that momentum.

5. As a result of the COVID-19 alert-level restrictions and increased demand upon agencies and providers, the delivery of some immediate actions was understandably paused. While there are ongoing delays in implementing some actions, progress is largely on track (see
Annex 1 for status). We expect that most, if not all, immediate actions will be up and running by August 2020. It is expected that demand for services will increase due to the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 and further investment may be needed to ensure support is available to individuals and whānau.

6. As we move into COVID-19 recovery, we have committed to supporting individuals and whānau currently in motels as part of the COVID-19 response, into more sustainable permanent housing with ongoing wraparound support to end their homelessness. Kaupapa Māori approaches will be a critical part of this response in ensuring that holistic and cultural wellbeing is maintained. We recently committed $106 million to ensure people can stay housed with support while long-term housing supply is identified. Motels have been secured until April 2021 for this purpose.

7. The Government progressed several measures designed to cushion the social and economic impacts from COVID-19, including the Wage Subsidy Scheme and COVID-19 Income Relief Payment. We also put in place temporary tenancy restrictions and will increase the support available for rent arrears through temporary policy changes. These measures, along with the action plan, will help mitigate the risk of homelessness for many New Zealanders. In addition, Budget 2020 will provide much needed supply through an additional 6,000 public housing and 2,000 transitional housing places.

8. Even with these measures, the already high and increasing rates of homelessness will be further compounded by the social and economic impacts emerging from COVID-19. An increase in unemployment and income reductions are expected to further increase homelessness in both the immediate future and the longer term. There has been strong demand for Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNGs) already with an increase of 42 percent over the ten-week period from the start of Alert Level 4. The impacts of COVID-19 will likely exacerbate inequalities for groups who already experience high rates of homelessness, such as Māori, Pacific peoples and rangatahi/young people.

9. The response to COVID-19 has presented opportunities to build on existing relationships and continue the types of joined up collaborative ways of working shown during the lockdown period. Agencies have shown they can work more flexibly and at pace and in partnership with the sector to respond to homelessness. The COVID-19 response highlighted the ability of Iwi, Māori, Pacific groups and wider community groups to respond quickly to the needs of their communities. The partnerships can, and should, be further leveraged to respond to the emerging needs. These partnerships are also important in terms of Wai 2750, the Kaupapa Inquiry by the Waitangi Tribunal into housing policy and services, in which some Māori providers are also claimants and represent the voices of those they provide services to.

10. To build on the opportunities and respond to emerging needs, we are proposing to bring forward the development of longer-term actions in the action plan. While maintaining our existing priorities, we will increase our focus on preventing homelessness; responses for other at-risk groups, such as rangatahi/young people and disabled people; continue to embed kaupapa Māori approaches throughout all responses; build capacity and capability of providers; and use co-ordinated and collaborative approaches across providers and agencies to respond to need. Importantly, we will add a focus on Pacific homelessness and housing for this next stage of work.
Background

11. This Government is committed to ending homelessness. The first phase of the action plan was released in February 2020 to begin to deliver on our vision that homelessness is prevented where possible, or is rare, brief and non-recurring. The action plan was backed by over $300 million of funding to support the delivery of the immediate actions which are expected to support over 10,000 individuals, families and whānau. The plan:

11.1. set out 18 new immediate actions to be put in place in 2020 to improve wellbeing and housing outcomes for people experiencing homelessness

11.2. provided an overarching framework for communities, Iwi, providers, private sector, local authorities and government agencies to continue to work together to prevent and reduce homelessness which comprises the vision, guiding principles, and action areas across prevention, supply, support and system enablers

11.3. provided a road map for longer-term solutions over the next four years to continue to build on and support the local work already underway.

12. *Te Maihi o Te Whare Māori: Māori and Iwi Housing Innovation* (MAIHI) framework was approved by Cabinet on 18 May 2020 [CAB-20-MIN-0229.02 refers]. MAIHI aims to deliver, at pace, a system-wide response to Māori housing stress, and is guided by a set of kaupapa Māori principles. It aims to fundamentally respond to the crisis that exists for Māori, improve access to appropriate housing, and review and reset systems and processes so that the housing system provides equitable solutions for Māori.

13. MAIHI, along with its six kaupapa Māori principles, are integrated into the action plan. While this approach will benefit Māori, who are disproportionately overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness, its principles-based approach will benefit all individuals and families.

14. We committed to publicly reporting on progress with the action plan every six months, with a full progress update and review of the action plan 18 months after the release. The first report is due to be publicly released in August 2020 and will work as a baseline for future reports. This first report will likely provide an overview of the current context and progress on implementing the immediate actions and will largely draw from the status update provided in Annex 1. Officials will provide this progress and baseline report to responsible Ministers (Housing, Social Development, Associate Housing (Māori Housing) and Associate Housing (Public Housing)) in early August 2020 before it is publicly released.

15. Along with providing an overview of progress to inform the above report, this Cabinet paper meets the required report back to SWC in June 2020 on implementation of the action plan and early outcomes, including further policy work being undertaken [SWC-19-MIN-0205 refers]. It also meets the report back in the Cabinet paper *Mitigating the social impacts of COVID-19*, which proposed that the responsible Ministers reports back to SWC on homelessness in June or early July [SWC-20-MIN-0076 refers].

Immediate actions are being rolled out to prevent and respond to homelessness

16. Most of the 18 new immediate actions in the action plan are now underway and, in some cases, were adapted or accelerated to meet urgent needs or expected demand (see Annex 1 for status). Actions that were paused, or impacted by COVID-19, have now started back up
and we expect that most actions will be up and running by August 2020. Key developments to note are that officials have:

16.1. significantly accelerated immediate actions to respond to Māori homelessness, including working at pace to provide financial support to Māori providers and working with Iwi and Māori partners on projects to increase housing supply. These projects aim to prevent new homelessness due to COVID-19 related financial pressures and provide housing for individuals and whānau as they move out of motels and other accommodation

16.2. developed the MAIHI fund, which to date has enabled contracts with eight Māori housing providers and will allow providers to build capability and initiate community housing projects so they can respond to emergency housing needs and end homelessness

16.3. continued to increase transitional housing to deliver 1,000 new places by the end of 2020. COVID-19 restrictions on provider capacity and on construction and purchasing of additional supply have meant at least an eight-week delay. However, delivery has started again, with nearly 400 places so far delivered, or contracted, and of those nearly 200 are ready to be, or already, tenanted

16.4. increased the number of Sustaining Tenancies places in the short term. This is our primary prevention intervention and provides practical support for people to keep their tenancies. Due to increased demand, from July 2020, 2,150 places/households will now be supported, up from 1,550 places

16.5. provided supported housing for young people leaving Oranga Tamariki care. Oranga Tamariki is working hard to keep this action on track, as far as provider capacity allows. Early evidence suggests there is an emerging cohort of young people with high and complex needs who are likely to require supported accommodation for longer periods, creating high demand for places

16.6. planned delivery of rapid rehousing services. This action supports transitionally homeless individuals and whānau to quickly exit homelessness, return to permanent housing in the community and maintain their tenancies in order to avoid a return to homelessness. Providers are expected to be delivering rapid rehousing services from 1 July 2020

16.7. expanded supports to all people in emergency housing. MSD have recruited all new roles (Intensive Case Managers, Navigators, and Housing Brokers) to support people in emergency housing and these new recruits assisted clients during the COVID-19 lockdown period.

COVID-19 meant a shift in our focus to provide immediate accommodation and support for people at-risk of homelessness

17. During COVID-19 lockdown, the urgent priority was finding accommodation for people sleeping rough or in unsuitable accommodation with shared facilities including where overcrowding caused further stress. The focus was on supporting Iwi, Māori organisations and providers to meet immediate housing and support needs. Providers noted very few people sleeping rough during the lockdown as a result of this collective effort.

18. Motel places for people sleeping rough or living in vulnerable accommodation were urgently acquired. Over 1,000 households are currently tenanted through the COVID-19 motel
places. We recently committed $106 million to ensure these people can stay housed with
support while long-term housing supply is identified. Motel places have been secured until
April 2021. Individuals and whānau who identified as Māori were more highly represented in
this group (63 percent); and around a third of those housed through the response have
multiple and complex needs, making them suitable for the Housing First programme.
Officials are working with providers to further understand the cohorts supported to ensure
that the response implemented is place-based and whānau-centred.

19. As part of the whole-of-government immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Te
Puni Kōkiri provided targeted and strategic support to hard-to-reach whānau and vulnerable
whānau, including Māori experiencing homelessness, through the Whānau Māori
Community and Marae Response Fund. This included partnering with whānau, hapū, iwi and
communities to give them the tools and resources they need to support a targeted response.

20. The immediate response included innovative approaches such as supporting providers
working with Māori and supporting Iwi requests for urgent overcrowding support. An example
of this response occurred in Te Tai Tokerau/Northland where supply was extremely limited,
and HUD provided campervans to support whānau in overcrowding situations. HUD
increased engagement with whānau, hapū and Iwi to identify any available housing stock
within their rohe, and to connect them with services to provide support to people sheltering in
place. This work has fostered closer relationships with community providers, particularly
Māori, and helped HUD acquire a deeper understanding of local situations.

21. Agencies are working closely with the sector to move from the immediate crisis response to
a planned place-based response that is responsive to local needs. The aim is to support
people into permanent housing with the wraparound support they need, including kaupapa
Māori approaches to ensure holistic and cultural wellbeing is maintained. A proportion of this
group will likely have mental health and addiction support needs and access to health
services will be critical to recovery. Working together with Iwi, hapū, marae and Māori
organisations, housing providers and health providers, we have a significant opportunity to
end homelessness for this group.

22. All regions experienced significant increases in the number of households seeking
emergency housing during the COVID-19 lockdown period and accessing the Emergency
Housing Special Needs Grant (EH SNG). When COVID-19 Alert Level 4 came into effect on
25 March 2020 there were 3,072 households staying in EH SNG accommodation. As at 29
May 2020 there were 4,363 households in EH SNG accommodation, an increase of 42
percent over the ten-week period. MSD supported the Police to meet the emergency housing
needs of 497 people who could not remain in their normal place of residence because of a
Police Safety Order. Since 29 May 2020, demand for emergency housing appears to have
stabilised, albeit at a higher base than prior to lockdown. Further increases are anticipated
as tenancy restrictions, the wage subsidy and COVID-19 Income Relief payment end.

The medium and longer-term economic and social impacts from COVID-19 on
homelessness could be severe

23. The Government progressed several initiatives designed to cushion the social and economic
impact from COVID-19, including the Wage Subsidy Scheme, COVID-19 Income Relief
Payment for people who become unemployed due to COVID-19 and Budget 2020 initiatives.
The Government also put in place a freeze on rent increases (until 26 September 2020) and
limitations on the terms under which tenancies can be terminated (until 26 June 2020).
These measures provided immediate security for stressed renters and kept people housed during the lockdown period, while we explore longer-term measures to support the rental market.

24. The Government will also increase the support available for rent arrears through temporary policy changes to the existing Rent Arrears Assistance Housing Support Product. This will help to support renters impacted by COVID-19 as they transition to lower incomes and changed circumstances. These changes will be in place until the end of 2020. Assistance with rent arrears will remain recoverable, but it will provide relief for households facing the prospect of eviction and potential homelessness.

25. Even with these measures, the social and economic impacts from COVID-19 will impact significantly upon the housing vulnerability of many New Zealanders, notably for Māori, young people and Pacific peoples. Pre-COVID-19, the major structural drivers of homelessness in New Zealand were a lack of housing supply and the high cost of housing relative to household income. The already high rates of homelessness in New Zealand will be further compounded by job loss, limited employment opportunities and income reductions. There may be people at risk of becoming homeless or living in substandard housing, including co-habiting with whānau members, who have not needed support previously that will present themselves to agencies.

26. More people looking for cheaper rental properties will further disadvantage those who struggle to compete in the rental market. Disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to live in rental accommodation and face a number of barriers to finding a home that adequately meets their needs, impacting on their rates of homelessness. This includes facing discrimination when looking for a rental property, difficulty accessing funding for modifications and difficulty finding a home in a location close to transport routes which enable them to obtain employment and income security. These experiences are likely to be exacerbated by COVID-19 and further compounded by shelters, refuges or emergency housing that are not accessible and move them away from their critical social networks.

27. The social and economic impacts of COVID-19 will almost certainly exacerbate existing inequalities for disadvantaged groups who already experience high rates of homelessness. This will have flow-on impacts on mental wellbeing and wider social outcomes. Some providers have advised that they are struggling to access mental health and addiction services for people in need. This has been a particularly acute problem for Māori providers, whose clients need culturally safe and appropriate services.

28. Groups who are already experiencing prolonged periods of socioeconomic disadvantage and high rates of homelessness include Māori, as well as Pacific peoples, young people, disabled people, single parents, women, rainbow communities, refugees and migrants and older people. There is considerable intersectionality among these groups. Young people experience high rates of homelessness, with nearly 50 percent being under 25 years of age, and high rates of Pacific peoples and Māori among this cohort. Disabled people are overrepresented in homelessness statistics and Māori and Pacific people have higher-than-average disability rates.

29. Some parts of New Zealand, including areas such as Tairāwhiti and Te Tai Tokerau/Northland with high Māori populations, already experience high rates of homelessness and these may worsen though job losses and slower recovery from the economic and social impacts of COVID-19. At the same time, increases in homelessness may be felt in areas which have previously not had high rates of homelessness, such as Southland. As economic conditions worsen, we will likely see increases in:
29.1. **Rental pressure and tenancy loss.** Prior to COVID-19 there was already significant pressure in many rental markets. The number of stressed renters will increase, with households in lower quartile rental housing particularly vulnerable to being pushed into forms of homelessness. This may increase as we reach the end of the emergency tenancy provisions (suspending rent increases and severely limiting grounds to end tenancies).

29.2. **People sleeping rough or staying in poor quality housing.** The gains made during lockdown in reducing the numbers of people sleeping rough could be lost through new people ending up without shelter due to loss of income and/or increased competition for cheaper rentals. More families may resort to staying in cars, in poor quality housing or garages, or need to access emergency housing.

29.3. **People requiring emergency housing.** The number of people needing emergency housing has increased due to the high cost of housing relative to household income, limited new public housing and transitional housing, and a lack of affordable rental options. There is also the heightened risk of gender-based violence such as family and sexual violence which disproportionately effects women and can lead to accessing emergency housing or homelessness. There could be future increases in demand in the coming months as the full economic impact of COVID-19 is felt and temporary assistance measures end. MSD has provided additional funding to family violence services and refuges to support the costs of housing for those experiencing family violence.

29.4. **Public housing demand:** The Public Housing Register is already very high and is expected to increase further. As at 1 May 2020, there were 16,785 people on the Public Housing Register. To give an indication of trends, the Housing Register increased 47 percent over the year to 31 March 2020. In order to focus on meeting the increased emergency housing demand through the COVID-19 event, public housing needs assessments were limited to those currently in or new to emergency housing. Increased rental pressure and the end of restrictions on tenancy terminations is expected to result in more people applying for public housing, once assessments resume.

29.5. **People in overcrowded situations or in inappropriate housing for multi-family living situations:** People who lose their home and have inadequate income are likely to move in with friends, family, or whānau increasing overcrowding. Pacific peoples are overrepresented among crowded households and feedback from our close contacts with Iwi and hapū have identified that overcrowding is prevalent in Māori communities, due to inappropriate housing for intergenerational living, whānau members returning home and job loss.

The COVID-19 response highlighted opportunities to improve our approaches and utilise the action plan

30. COVID-19 highlighted the ability of providers, Iwi, Māori organisations, Pacific organisations and community groups to respond in a fast and focused way to the needs of their local communities. There are opportunities to continue to build on partnerships with providers and communities and utilise the action plan framework to improve local homelessness systems and develop tailored responses. There is an opportunity to accelerate a deliberate place-based approach, working with councils, Iwi and others to develop joined up, local solutions and coordinate and implement effective homelessness systems.
31. The increase in people seeking housing and support since the lockdown period means that there is now a more accurate understanding of the support needs and demand for services that agencies and providers can build on. Providers who used an assessment tool (the Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT)) to assess acuity of need have found a high proportion of clients with complex needs. This tool enabled providers to assess level of need among clients and helped determine the appropriate housing and support responses. There is an opportunity to support providers to assess needs, create a coordinated access approach and use a shared process to allocate support.

32. There is more to do to build on existing responses

33. The action plan identified key areas for further work to be undertaken in 2020-23, to build on and improve existing responses and support local work already underway around New Zealand. Several of these actions are already underway, such as the Budget 2020 investment of $570 million to deliver 8,000 new public and transitional housing places. This investment is in addition to the 6,400 public housing to be delivered by June 2022, and the 1,000 transitional homes as part of the action plan. HUD will release details of the additional housing places in an updated Public Housing Plan later in 2020. Further information on government spending on housing and homelessness is provided as Annex 2.

34. Additional prevention measures to address housing needs early could prevent homelessness. Planning is underway for the $40 million appropriated for MAIHI through Budget 2020, which will be used for Māori housing supply. While this is not directly part of the action plan, increasing housing for low-income Māori whānau will help prevent homelessness, at the same time as increasing the connection of whānau Māori on Māori land.

35. The implementation of the Government’s response to He Ara Oranga includes a focus on expanding access and choice of mental health and addiction support. Budget 2019 included targeted investment in primary mental health and addiction support for Māori, Pacific peoples and young people. The ongoing roll out of this initiative presents an opportunity to strengthen the integration of mental health and addiction and housing support. Establishing clear connections between housing support and mental health and addiction services will be critical in allowing housing providers to focus on housing needs, and helping people access the support they need to recover.

36. More responses will be needed to prevent homelessness and to act quickly so that any time spent homeless is as short as possible. We also need to continue to embed and drive the action plan framework and principles across our homelessness work. This is particularly in relation to further embedding kaupapa Māori approaches, supporting Māori responses in communities with a high Māori population, and joining up approaches across the system.
We propose further areas of work to build on our homelessness response

37. We propose that the development of the following longer-term actions set out in the action plan are brought forward to respond to emerging needs and continue to build on current homelessness responses and action plan framework:

37.1. Further early intervention and prevention responses to help stop people from becoming homeless, recognising that there will be more people at risk of homelessness due to the social and economic impacts of COVID-19. There is more we need to do to prevent homelessness among rangatahi/young people in particular.

37.2. Further responses for at-risk groups. COVID-19 has highlighted the need for tailored responses for groups who experience high rates of homelessness, and who will be at further risk of homelessness. This includes a deliberate focus on improving outcomes for Māori, Pacific people and rangatahi/young people and children, disabled people, older people, women, rainbow communities, and refugees and migrants. This work will review and understand the current situation for at-risk groups and develop responses where needed. $ \text{§ 9(2)(f)(iv)}$

37.3. Enhancing assessment processes and referral and information processes building on the opportunity to create a joined up coordinated access approach for providers and $\text{§ 9(2)(f)(iv)}$

37.4. Supporting the capability and capacity of providers to help providers to respond to increased demand from the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 and to respond to gaps in services for Pacific peoples. $\text{§ 9(2)(f)(iv)}$

37.5. Ensure that kaupapa Māori approaches are applied to all existing homelessness responses. It is important that agencies work to improve the design and delivery of actions to place MAIHI and the kaupapa Māori principles at the centre, support more Māori and iwi providers to deliver the actions, and drive better outcomes for Māori overall. There needs to be a strong focus on identifying inequalities, using principles-based approaches to reduce them, and evaluating change.

37.6. Enhancing the way that agencies have worked with providers during the COVID-19 initial response. $\text{§ 9(2)(f)(iv)}$

38. We direct officials to report back to us as this work progresses and by October/November 2020 with detailed advice and proposals, including funding needs or additional resourcing where appropriate.

We propose to add a focus on Pacific homelessness and housing for this next stage of work

39. Pacific peoples across the housing continuum are characterised as having declining homeownership rates, with a high percentage living in rental accommodation and high users of public housing. Pacific peoples are overrepresented in the broader homelessness
definition, particularly in terms of inadequate and poor housing conditions and overcrowding. Health issues are compounded by close and crowded living conditions, caused by inappropriate and poor-quality housing conditions (for example damp, mouldy houses) for Pacific families. The social and economic impacts of COVID-19 is likely to negatively exacerbate these housing issues for Pacific families and communities.

40. Responding to Pacific homelessness should include focusing on early intervention and prevention responses through financial literacy, increasing homeownership rates, and providing warm and healthy homes that are fit for purpose and suitable for their family type. There also needs to be a focus on building the number and capability and capacity of Pacific providers to be able to respond appropriately to Pacific homelessness and wider housing issues. The Ministry for Pacific Peoples recently secured $41.3 million from Budget 2020 for this work.

41. Any response to addressing Pacific housing issues needs to be done in a culturally appropriate manner and include the support of the Pacific community, who demonstrated resilience and quick response during COVID-19 that contributed to eliminating incidences of the pandemic. We have directed HUD and the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, along with cross agency partners, to work with the sector to develop responses to address Pacific homelessness, increase homeownership and work together to improve housing outcomes for Pacific families and communities.

Wai 2750 Waitangi Tribunal Kaupapa Inquiry into Housing Policy and Services

42. A majority of claimants in the Wai 2750 Housing Kaupapa Inquiry have sought an expedited hearing into homelessness for Māori, in part because of the COVID-19 crisis. We are expecting a judicial conference to be held soon to decide on whether there will be hearings, and if there are, what the scope of these hearings will be. Most claimants would prefer a kaupapa Māori definition of ‘homelessness’ that is broader than the definition used by the Crown. There is no agreement between claimants on the definition that should be used. A definition is, however, a fundamental question for the Inquiry in determining the scope of any hearings.

43. The Crown’s responses to COVID-19 and the action plan will be closely examined in any hearings and have already been subject to an Official Information Act request by one of the claimant groups prior to the judicial conference. The cross-agency Wai 2750 group is developing a coordinated understanding of the issues so it can provide advice to Crown counsel.

Next steps and report backs

44. The following report backs to responsible Ministers (Housing, Social Development, Associate Housing (Māori Housing) and Associate Housing (Public Housing)) are planned:

44.1. HUD plans to report back to Ministers with advice on the next stage of the COVID-19 homelessness response in July 2020, there will be subsequent location-based packages of advice provided to Ministers over the following 1-2 months as firmer plans are developed in partnership with providers and other agencies.

44.2. Officials will provide the progress and baseline report on the action plan to Ministers in early August 2020 before it is publicly released.

44.3. Officials will report back to Ministers with an update on the next stage of work to respond to homelessness (outlined in paragraph 38 above) as this work progresses.
and by October/November 2020 with detailed proposals and need for funding if appropriate.

Financial Implications

45. There are no financial implications arising from this paper.

Legislative Implications

46. There are no legislative implications arising from this paper.

Impact Analysis

47. A regulatory impact statement is not required for the proposals in this paper.

Population Implications

48. The social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic is already having disproportionately negative impacts on Māori whānau, who already face multiple disadvantages and already carry a significant burden of homelessness. Historically, recessions and economic shocks have had a disproportionately negative impact on Māori; and Māori are overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness.

49. Pacific peoples are disproportionately impacted by homelessness, particularly in terms of the broader definition of homelessness, including inadequate and poor housing conditions and overcrowding, and are heavily impacted by negative health outcomes that result from overcrowding. Low household incomes, a lack of houses designed for large multi-generational households and severe housing unaffordability in the regions (largely Auckland) that Pacific peoples are concentrated in, contribute to housing stress.

50. Young people will likely experience severe economic impacts from COVID-19. Young people are overrepresented in homelessness and providers have been calling for additional responses for young people to respond to the impact of COVID-19. The Youth Employment Action Plan and the Youth Plan, alongside the Homelessness Action Plan, could collectively be used to drive change for young people and improve housing outcomes.

51. Women are more likely to be the sole or primary caregiver of children and young people. Sole parents make up a higher proportion of those in emergency accommodation and sharing accommodation temporarily. The risk of gender-based violence, such as family and sexual violence, which disproportionately effects women, rises during national emergencies and disasters. This will likely be the case with the COVID-19. For some women, experiences of domestic or family violence can lead to homelessness and women who leave an unsafe situation can struggle to access safe and affordable accommodation.

52. Gender diverse people (an umbrella term for a range of identities, including whakawahine, transgender, fa’aafafine, takatāpui, non-binary, and gender-neutral people) also have an increased risk of homelessness and a high level of vulnerability within mainstream services. It is important that services are tailored to the diverse needs of people experiencing homelessness and seek to better understand the needs and responses required.

53. Approximately one in four people (24 percent) in New Zealand are disabled and this rate increases with age. Disabled people, particularly those with accessibility needs, often experience more difficulty finding a home. Disabled people have specific risk factors that can lead to homelessness as well as specific needs when experiencing homelessness. Work to develop responses for at-risk groups will look to more comprehensively understand the
needs and experiences of disabled people, particularly disabled Māori, and develop targeted and responses and actions to prevent and reduce homelessness for them.

54. There are many older people experiencing homelessness or living in unsuitable housing (too expensive, inaccessible or unsafe). The economic impacts of COVID-19 may impact older workers who have or might become unemployed and those living in rentals facing housing stress as a result of the loss of income.

Human Rights

55. The policy proposals are consistent with the rights and freedoms contained in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

Consultation

56. This paper has been prepared by the government agencies that have collective ownership of, and responsibility for, the implementation of the action plan. These agencies include the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (lead agency), Ministry of Social Development, Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children, Ministry of Health, Ara Poutama Aotearoa – Department of Corrections, New Zealand Police, Te Puni Kōkiri, Ministry of Pacific Peoples, and Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities.

57. Officials propose to develop further responses in collaboration with sector experts, Iwi, hapū, marae and Māori organisations, local authorities, providers and people with lived experience of homelessness.

Communications

58. We have committed to public reporting every six months on the action plan and efforts to reduce and prevent homelessness. The first is due to be publicly released in August 2020 and will work as a baseline for future reports. Officials will report to responsible Ministers in early August 2020 with the draft report before it is publicly released. This update will provide:

58.1. an overview of the current context, including the driving forces and pressures leading to homelessness and what we know about the people experiencing homelessness

58.2. progress with implementing the immediate actions, including the application of kaupapa Māori approaches, and any changes made in response to COVID-19.

Proactive Release

59. This Cabinet paper will be released proactively, subject to any redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

60. It is recommended that the Committee:

1. note the Aotearoa/New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan Phase I (2020-2023) was publicly released in February 2020 and set out immediate actions and longer-term actions across prevention, supply, support and system enablers

2. note that many of the 18 immediate actions are underway, and in some cases have been adapted or accelerated to meet urgent needs, and demand will increase
3. **note** that the immediate response to COVID-19 was to accommodate people sleeping rough or living in vulnerable accommodation and to work with housing providers, Iwi and Māori organisations to meet their support needs.

4. **note** that officials and providers are working together to support this group into permanent housing with ongoing support through a place-based approach.

5. **note** that the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 are expected to increase the number of people at risk of, or experiencing, all forms of homelessness due to job loss and income reductions.

6. **note** that opportunities arising out of the COVID-19 response include working differently and in closer partnerships with Iwi, hapū, marae and Māori organisations and local authorities, providers and wider community partners.

7. **note** that officials will bring forward the development of the following areas of work to respond to emerging needs and build on the COVID-19 homelessness response:

   7.1. Further early intervention and prevention responses for homelessness.

   7.2. Further responses for cohorts at-risk of homelessness: Māori, Pacific people and rangatahi/young people and children, disabled people, older people, women, rainbow communities, and refugees and migrants.

   7.3. Enhancing assessment processes and referral and information processes.

   7.4. Supporting the capability and capacity of providers delivering services.

   7.5. Ensuring that kaupapa Māori approaches are applied to all responses.

   7.6. Enhancing the way that agencies work and partner with providers.

   7.7. A focus on responding to Pacific homelessness and housing needs.

8. **direct** officials to report back to responsible Ministers ((Housing, Social Development, Associate Housing (Māori Housing) and Associate Housing (Public Housing)) with an update on the next stage of work to respond to homelessness as this work progresses and by October/November 2020 with detailed advice and proposals, including funding needs or additional resourcing where appropriate.

9. **note** that the first six monthly progress update on the Aotearoa/New Zealand Homelessness Action (2020-23) is due to be publicly released by August 2020.

10. **note** that the Minister of Housing, Minister for Social Development and Associate Minister of Housing (Public Housing) will report to Cabinet Priorities Committee quarterly on ending the reliance on motels.

Authorised for lodgement
Hon Dr Megan Woods
Minister of Housing

Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Minister for Social Development

Hon Nanaia Mahuta
Associate Minister of Housing (Māori Housing)

Hon Kris Faafōi
Associate Minister of Housing (Public Housing)
Annex 1: Status of Homelessness Action Plan’s 18 immediate actions

This table summarises the status of the 18 immediate actions in the Homelessness Action Plan and whether actions have been accelerated, delivered, on track or delayed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Further detail on current status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support Māori Community Housing Providers and other Māori and Iwi providers to expand supply (HUD)</td>
<td>Accelerated, increased demand</td>
<td>HUD is progressing at pace to roll-out funding that can be used by Māori Housing Providers to increase supply of housing. HUD is also working with its Iwi and Māori partners to scope projects for immediate development that will lead to increased supply. This work is collaborative through the Iwi Māori partnership programme with a place-based approach to accelerate and expand housing supply as prioritised. HUD is working with providers and housing suppliers to fast-track suitable supply options that can more urgently address whānau/individual needs beyond motels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urgently increasing supply (Plan to end reliance on motels action) (HUD / MSD / KO)</td>
<td>Changed approach but on track, increased demand</td>
<td>This action was to deliver 1000 new transitional housing places by end of 2020 to reduce demand for emergency motel accommodation. These places will be focused on high demand locations and wherever possible targeted to priority groups such as families with children. There is at least an eight-week delay in delivery because of restrictions on provider capacity and on the construction and purchasing of additional supply due to COVID-19. Face to face community engagement was also unable to occur during COVID-19 lockdown. Delivery will now mostly occur between June and December 2020 with post COVID-19 delivery forecasting currently underway. Delivery is progressing, with nearly 400 places so far delivered, or contracted, and of those nearly 200 are ready to, or already tenanted. Work underway to transition those housed in motels during COVID-19 into more permanent housing with the support they need is being delivered in parallel to this initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with Māori, Iwi and Marae to prevent homelessness through whenua-based initiatives (HUD)</td>
<td>Accelerated, increased demand</td>
<td>HUD have increased engagement with whānau, hapū and Iwi providers to identify any available housing stock within their rohe and current state of quality. We are also discussing provision of urgent and/or short-term (5-10 years) housing, such as prefabricated and pod housing, to speed up housing supply including making land available. Some providers have identified the opportunity to also build trade skills, so basic housing improvements are completed as part of this work.</td>
</tr>
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Prevention

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redesign and expand Sustaining Tenancies (HUD)</td>
<td>Accelerated, increased demand</td>
<td>Sustaining Tenancies is our primary prevention intervention and action on this initiative was increased over the short-term during the Government’s response to COVID-19. Due to increased demand, 2,150 places/households are now due to be supported through the Sustaining Tenancies programme between 1 July and 15 August 2020 (the original initiative was for 1,550).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand housing support for young people leaving Oranga Tamariki care (Oranga Tamariki)</td>
<td>On track, increased demand</td>
<td>Oranga Tamariki is working hard to keep this action on track, as far as provider capacity allows. Early evidence suggests there is an emerging cohort of young people with high and complex needs who are likely to require supported accommodation for longer periods, creating high demand for places. In the immediate term, Oranga Tamariki are focused on continuing to source emergency placements for tamariki and rangatahi, as well as ensuring that young people transitioning out of their care are well supported, including accessing emergency housing placements through MSD. Oranga Tamariki are expecting to deliver 34 placements by July 2020 and have so far confirmed 22. It is expected that there will be delays in supply further down the track for the 2020/21 financial year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for women who are leaving prison (Corrections)</td>
<td>On track</td>
<td>This action is to provide safe and stable accommodation with reintegration support services for 72 women/whaie leaving prison. Work has been undertaken to source some properties. COVID-19 is unlikely to have a major impact, although it may slow down the establishment of the additional houses due to difficulty in getting refurbishments completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve transitions from acute mental health and addiction inpatient units (Health)</td>
<td>Delayed slightly due to COVID-19</td>
<td>This action is delayed due to the Ministry of Health, DHBs, and NGOs not having the capacity to deliver during the COVID-19 response. This action was paused in Alert Level 4 and Level 3 and has started back up, but ongoing delays are expected as DHBs will be continuing to co-ordinate and lead the provision of psychosocial support services in response to COVID-19. The Ministry of Health will continue to re-evaluate timeframes on a monthly basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for returned overseas offenders who are homeless (Corrections)</td>
<td>Delayed slightly due to COVID-19</td>
<td>This action is to provide accommodation and support to assist reintegration into New Zealand for up to 30 people a year (90 people in total). As restrictions have eased in both New Zealand and Australia, Australia has resumed deportations to New Zealand and support for this group will be needed. The new service planned will help reduce reliance on motel accommodation and prevent returned offenders residing in inadequate or inappropriate accommodation (reducing the overall risk to public safety and supporting reintegration back into New Zealand). Planning to determine details of the new service has begun.</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pilot a rapid rehousing approach (HUD)</td>
<td>On track, increased demand</td>
<td>Due to the impacts of COVID-19, the number of people requiring Rapid Rehousing is likely to increase. The purpose of the Rapid Rehousing is to support individuals and whānau who are newly or transitionally experiencing homelessness to quickly access permanent housing and maintain their tenancies. It is likely that HUD will need to increase the places or re-profile them, so more are available this year to meet demand. Providers are expected to be delivering rapid rehousing services from 1 July 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand supports to all people in emergency housing (MSD)</td>
<td>Delivered</td>
<td>MSD has completed recruitment and contracting for the Intensive Case Managers and Navigator support services, for both tranches of funding received. Under the action plan, MSD committed to extending these services to anyone in emergency housing. At the time of initial funding for this service, there were 2,640 people in emergency housing (as at 27 Sept 2019) and as at 29 May there are now 4,383 people in emergency housing. The resource is not enough to cover all clients in emergency housing, so support is prioritised based on need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce housing broker roles to increase access to private rental housing (MSD)</td>
<td>Delivered</td>
<td>Housing Broker roles have been implemented and they are working to find properties for clients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better prepare people for private rental (ready to rent programmes) (MSD)</td>
<td>Delayed due to COVID-19</td>
<td>Ready to Rent was due to go live in June 2020. Implementation has been delayed due to COVID-19 Alert Levels 4 and 3 as the programmes requires a ‘classroom style’ course. The Programme will resume in the next financial year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible funding package for whānau with children in emergency housing (MSD)</td>
<td>Delayed due to COVID-19</td>
<td>Implementation of the flexible fund was deferred as a part of MSD’s response to COVID-19 to enable staff to focus on immediate need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System enablers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Build capacity and capability of Māori providers (HUD)</td>
<td>Accelerated, increased demand</td>
<td>HUD is undertaking fund design for contracting with Māori providers to increase and lift their capacity and capability for improved direct service delivery to those in need. Since February, HUD has developed the MAIHI fund, which to date has enabled contracts with eight different Māori housing providers. These contracts allow providers to build capability to meet emergency housing needs, provide support to end homelessness, and increase housing supply. The MAIHI fund also includes an evaluation process to enable providers and HUD to co-create a review of progress and a final report. Māori providers see this aspect of work as critical to ensuring that the Government is responsive to Māori needs and aspirations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enable and support Kaupapa Māori approaches to homelessness (HUD)</td>
<td>On track</td>
<td>HUD is continuing to work with other agencies to ensure the kaupapa Māori principles continue to be integrated into all actions. It is essential that agencies and the providers are able to provide services in ways that meet Māori needs. Pre-COVID-19 MAIHI recognised the housing crisis and impacts on many Māori whānau. This has been exacerbated by COVID-19 which has highlighted the vulnerability of Māori whānau and the ongoing need for kaupapa Māori approaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve evidence and data on homelessness (HUD)</td>
<td>On track</td>
<td>This work is continuing, with an added focus on using information and data that arises from the current context to increase our understanding of homelessness in New Zealand. HUD have focussed on longer term planning for this initiative and are beginning to collate the data that is available to monitor the state, driving forces and pressures that lead to homelessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local innovation and partnership fund (HUD)</td>
<td>On track</td>
<td>This fund was planned to be open in early April with funding available to successful applicants from the 1 July 2020. However, providers were focussed on the immediate COVID-19 homelessness response and did not have the capacity to develop applications in this time period. The fund opening was therefore paused. HUD is reassessing the application process and ways to make it easier for investment ready applications to be approved. The fund is proposed to open in July.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing involvement of people with lived experience of homelessness (HUD)</td>
<td>Delayed slightly due to COVID-19</td>
<td>This initiative is set to be delivered through the homelessness sector body services. This work will be an early initiative for the sector body once it is up and running.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 2. Approximate Government spending and allocated funding on housing responses for New Zealanders in need

- **Public and Transitional Housing**: $1.5b
  - Budget 2018 allocated $234.4 million over four years for HNZC (Kāinga Ora) and Community Housing Providers to provide more than 6,400 homes over the next four years
  - Budget 2018 allocated $101 million over four years in operating funding and $68.9 million in 2018/19 in capital funding to maintain 2,155 transitional housing places
  - Budget 2018 allocated $300 million to Tamaki Regeneration Company to provide about 700 state houses as well as another 1,400 in Tamaki for the open market
  - Budget 2019 allocated $149.2 million over four years to maintain 2,873 transitional housing places
  - Budget 2019 allocated $28.2 million over four years to deliver up to 580 additional public housing places by June 2023 to alleviate housing pressures from the increased refugee quota
  - Budget 2020 allocated $57.0 million transitional housing to deliver 8,000 new public and transitional housing places.
  - $100 million to fund the IRIS cost of 1,650 extra places that were delivered ahead of schedule

- **Accommodation Supplement**: $4.6b
  - Actual 2017/2018 annual spend on AS $1.2 billion
  - Actual 2018/2019 annual spend on AS $1.6 billion
  - Estimate 2019/2020 annual spend on AS $1.8 billion

- **Strengthened Approach to Homelessness**: $413m
  - Creation of consolidated Homelessness Contingency (funded through Budget 19) and an initial draw down of $53.9 million
  - The Action plan included over $300 million for funding 18 immediate actions to support 10,000 individuals, families and whānau over the next three years. This includes:
    - $174 million dedicated to transitional housing
    - $24 million for Māori specific actions, initiatives to increase Māori Housing Providers capability and Māori housing supply

- **Motels**: $447.5m
  - $8.5 million spent by Kāinga Ora on purchasing and leasing motels since October 2017
  - $320 million on EIT SNVs since start of 2017/2018 financial year
  - $97.0 million on TH since start of 2017/2018 financial year
  - $12.0 million spent on COVID motels to date
  - COVID response committed $106 million over two years so people can stay housed with support while long term housing is identified. Motel places have been secured until April 2021.
  - $10 million over two years to provide financial assistance to housing providers who are incurring additional operational costs as they respond to COVID19
Progress on the Homelessness Action Plan and the Homelessness Response to COVID-19

On 1 July 2020, the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee:

1. noted that the Aotearoa/New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan Phase I (2020-2023) was publicly released in February 2020 and set out immediate actions and longer-term actions across prevention, supply, support and system enablers;

2. noted that many of the 18 immediate actions are underway, and in some cases have been adapted or accelerated to meet urgent needs, and demand will increase;

3. noted that the immediate response to COVID-19 was to accommodate people sleeping rough or living in vulnerable accommodation and to work with housing providers, Iwi, and Māori organisations to meet their support needs;

4. noted that officials and providers are working together to support this group into permanent housing with ongoing support through a place-based approach;

5. noted that the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 are expected to increase the number of people at risk of, or experiencing, all forms of homelessness due to job loss and income reductions;

6. noted that opportunities arising out of the COVID-19 response include working differently and in closer partnerships with Iwi, hapū, marae and Māori organisations, local authorities, providers and wider community partners;

7. noted that officials will bring forward the development of the following areas of work to respond to emerging needs and build on the COVID-19 homelessness response:

   7.1 further early intervention and prevention responses for homelessness;

   7.2 further responses for cohorts at-risk of homelessness: Māori, Pacific people, rangatahi/young people and children, disabled people, older people, women, rainbow communities, refugees, and migrants;

   7.3 enhancing assessment processes and referral and information processes;

   7.4 supporting the capability and capacity of providers delivering services;
7.5 ensuring that kaupapa Māori approaches are applied to all responses;

7.6 enhancing the way that agencies work and partner with providers;

7.7 a focus on responding to Pacific homelessness and housing needs;

8 directed officials to report back to responsible Ministers (Housing, Social Development, Associate Housing (Māori Housing) and Associate Housing (Public Housing)) with an update on the next stage of work to respond to homelessness as this work progresses, and by October/November 2020 with detailed advice and proposals, including funding needs or additional resourcing where appropriate;

9 noted that the first six-monthly progress update on the Aotearoa/New Zealand Homelessness Action (2020-23) is due to be publicly released by August 2020;

10 noted that the Minister of Housing, Minister for Social Development, and Associate Minister of Housing (Public Housing) will the report to Cabinet Priorities Committee quarterly on ending the reliance on motels.

Jenny Vickers
Committee Secretary

Present:  
Rt Hon Winston Peters  
Hon Kelvin Davis  
Hon Grant Robertson  
Hon Chris Hipkins  
Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Chair)  
Hon Nanaia Mahuta  
Hon Stuart Nash  
Hon Jenny Salesa  
Hon Damien O’Connor  
Hon Kris Faafoi  
Hon Tracey Martin  
Hon Peeni Henare  
Hon Willie Jackson  
Hon Aupito William Sio  
Jan Logie, MP

Officials present from:  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Officials Committee for SWC  
Office of the SWC Chair