



## Welcome to our 2023 newsletter

Just prior to winter we had a family who had been sleeping in their car move into our accommodation. Being welcomed into a safe place clearly brought great relief. The wahine spoke of the stress and the contrast of being able to move into a warm home, even though it was temporary.

Presently, due to changes in the Residential Tenancy Act we can only house families for 3 months on a fixed term tenancy. During this time our social worker and the women are intentionally looking for something more permanent. We involve MSD, Kainga Ora, other services and explore private rentals. We are finding 3 months is not always enough time to secure a more permanent rental.

The shortage of housing puts people at the mercy of the private market where there isn't always mercy (sometimes there is). When the above family moved on they found a place, but the rent was \$700 a week. The place is adequate for her family but is not a mansion or flash. On her benefit income it will be a struggle to rent this new place long term. With the children settled back in school it would be sad if they had to move on. Where would she move anyway? There are other questions too. Is it right that there is such a long waiting list for social housing? Is it right that emergency accommodation is so limited or non-existent at times in Ōtautahi?

An aspect which is also troubling in the housing shortage is the role of family harm. Almost all the women and children using our accommodation come via this route. This raises questions about how we own and respond to the predictable outcomes of family harm including housing needs. In one of our houses, due to family harm, we have a wahine and her children. Her ability to pay rent is impacted by her NZ residential status. But where to from here? This family and many others don't qualify for the housing register or a full benefit.

Christmas is a time of celebrating generosity. We are grateful for those who have generously supported and given to Project Esther their resources, money, time, skills, and trust.

Enjoy reading our newsletter. Thanks for keeping up with us as we connect with wonderful wāhine and their tamariki. It's a joy and privilege to do so.

Happy Christmas to you and yours,

*Daphne*

# Waiora o ngā wāhine

WoW runs weekly, facilitated by Leanne & Liz. It exists to be a place of mutual care and respect, chit chat, support, and great food! This year we have welcomed a new volunteer, Andy, to WoW and we are loving her enthusiasm and caring nature.

We have been able support group members both pastorally and practically throughout the year and it has been a real pleasure being part of the relationship building within the group each week. The peaceful and supportive nature of the group this year is a real credit to the effort put in by all those who attend to be mindful of what is going on for themselves and for others.

Over the winter we served hearty soup lunches and during the warmer months, healthy morning teas. To mark spring we hired a smoothie bike from the Rowley Community Centre and combined exercise with eating. Fun and yummy!



## Snapshot of the Year

Over the past 12 months Project Esther has done the following:

- Subsidised 136 counselling sessions for women
- Assisted with 89 counselling sessions for children
- Had 643 visits to the Rawa Pods
- Two women have accessed Project Esther's education fund
- Added credit to the power bills of 18 wāhine
- Provided housing for 20 people
- Distributed 20 warm blankets
- Through our partnership with the Period Place, we have distributed 1400 packs of menstrual care items
- Packed 160 Christmas care packs for women within Corrections
- Provided more than 120 wāhine and rangatahi with personal care packs
- Provided 8 pairs of gumboots for He Kete
- Packed 450 card packs for women within Corrections

## The Housing Challenge



A constant theme throughout this year has been that the need for safe, healthy and affordable housing for wāhine far outweighs the supply of it. Project Esther has been able to temporarily house a number of women and their children this year, from a variety of backgrounds. While the nature of these women's circumstances is diverse, the need for stability and security in the form of housing is a constant theme. Each woman shared how they felt it was difficult to move on, or to begin to address other needs in their lives without the foundation of a long-term home.

This paints a rather grim and overwhelming picture of a significant issue for woman in Aotearoa. Women facing housing instability are often facing intersecting forms of discrimination - for example ethnicity, income, and mental health. Over the last year, there have been many women who we have unfortunately had to say no to accommodating due to our lack of capacity.

However, the women we work alongside inspire us in the way they demonstrate strength, generosity and perseverance. Project Esther is committed to providing kindness and compassion, and to meeting the immediate needs for wāhine in our homes, while also striving to address the systemic issues which contribute to the issues in the first place.

**Me aro koe ki te hā o Hine-ahu-one** | Pay heed to the dignity and power of women

## Te Whare Atawhai

**Te Whare Atawhai - House of Kindness is our short term accomodation. This is a story from a past resident.**

*"Project Esther Trust' for me is my light at the end of the tunnel. Family violence - never thought it would happen to me and my children. We needed a place to stay. Project Esther Trust welcomed us to their 'house of kindness' as a transition. Indeed, true to their word, right as we enter the house, I can feel their care. They provide for all the essential needs to start with. The staff are very warm and supportive. They provide a family case worker for me to talk with, express myself and make plans. As much as possible they provide to make you worry less. Me and my children feel safe and are well taken care of. We feel their kindness to the point that we started to feel good to ourselves. In times of darkness, after all that we been through, there is light, there is hope and there is 'Project Esther Trust' to reach out. Even now, when we are living on our own they still continuously support us. Their love and support is never ending."*

# Suffrage celebration: Looking Forward & Looking Back

To mark this years 130 years of suffrage in Aotearoa, we held an evening celebration. It was a chance to hear more of the *herstory* of how wāhine have fought for the right to vote. We had a fantastic line up of women from different disciplines: Marion Tizzard (Odyssey House), Marriene Langton (Te Ara-Koropiko West Spreydon School), Jo Robertson (Cross Over Trust), Whaea Mairehe Louise Tankersley (Chair of Ōtautahi Rūnaka & Director of Pounamu Kahuraki – Jade Associates), and a representative from Shakti Women's Refuge Trust.

It was a packed room – with almost 100 in attendance! We're so grateful for the amazing mahi these speakers do and their willingness to share. We have come a long way in the last 130 years, but there are still many challenges for women.



## 130 years of Suffrage

Suffrage Day is on 19 September - the date in 1893 when a new Electoral Act was signed to allow women to vote in parliamentary elections. New Zealand was the first country to do so.

Campaigners, one of the most prominent being Kate Sheppard, gathered almost 32,000 petition signatures by 1893, which was about a quarter all Pākehā woman in Aotearoa.

The vote gave women the ability to influence and advocate for change. The suffragettes fought to increase the age of consent for girls which was just 12, ban young girls working as barmaids and ban the sale of alcohol to children.

*"All that separates, whether of race, class, creed, or sex, is inhuman, and must be overcome." - Kate Sheppard*

## Letter of support

**Te Whare Hauora provides a confidential and safe space for women and their children who are victims of domestic violence. They work specifically with the needs of Māori women. They write:**

"Te Whare Hauora are grateful for the relationship that we have with Project Esther. This relationship has allowed us to work together to provide much needed services to our mutual clients.

Project Esther's open approach to working outside the box by being able to collaborate via zoom meetings meant that our wahine was able to be assessed online before committing to moving from the North Island to Christchurch. This allowed this mum to move knowing that her whānau had a warm and inviting home to come to. This really alleviated a lot of stress to our mum and her tamariki.

We continue to work collaboratively with this whānau and their ongoing needs. The whole team at Project Esther have made them feel welcomed. The temporary emergency accommodation that they provide is a much-needed service in our community. Te Whare Hauora value that we have been able to work together to support the needs of our mutual clients."

## Living Wage Accreditation

We're delighted to be an accredited Living Wage employer. Around Aotearoa and the world, women are amongst the lowest paid workers. A living wage better provides the means to participate in life. It's a powerful driver for social and political inclusion. As a trust, we want to role model what we advocate for.



## Te Whare Atawhai

**Te Whare Atawhai - House of Kindness is our short term accomodation. This is a story from a past resident.**

"I am very grateful to Project Esther for their help. I was facing hard times when my world fall apart and I was left with two kids in new country. I was being continuously being abused and controlled by ex-husband. Thanks to the lovely staff from Project Esther, I have found some peace and shelter. It was my safe space just to sit and understand where I should move next. I was always supported and looked after. I felt like I found mine and my kids personal angels. I will never stop being grateful to Project Esther. For helping me to feel safe, for love and support, for walking near me to the new chapter of my and kids lives."

## Email newsletter?

If possible, we'd love to send you this via email! It means cutting down on our paper (and the printing cost!) which is good for the planet and us.

If you want a digital copy, please let us know by emailing [gleheux@swbc.org.nz](mailto:gleheux@swbc.org.nz)

# Highlights from 2023



A visit with our local MP Megan Woods to discuss emergency and housing challenges. There's a need for more safe, affordable and supportive accommodation for women.



We had three staff from Shakti Ethnic Women's Refuge visit. We have been grateful to work alongside them and for their knowledge.



A whānau who have used our housing. Here they are packing up as they move into a new place.



Rebecca unpacking 1440 packets of sanitary pads from The Period Place. We partner with them to distribute these to schools, community groups and to those we connect with.



These baskets were full of donated hygiene products. The parents, whānau and caregivers from Te Whare Rama Early Learning Centre kindly organised this.



We're grateful for the support and mahi of the Christchurch Aunties. Here we had Rebekah dropping off a dryer for us to pass onto a family.



We hosted a stand at the Global Night Market. Along with some delicious dessert, we also took the chance to share some stats about women around the world.



Here are some of our wonderful volunteers who help with Music and Movement on a Wednesday. We are very grateful for all our volunteers!

## We are so grateful to have had the opportunity to work alongside and connect with the following organisations and groups this year:

Aviva  
 Battered Women's Trust  
 Christchurch Aunties  
 Christchurch Methodist Mission  
 Christchurch Women's Prison  
 Cross Over Trust  
 Good Bitches Baking  
 He Kete o Oranga o Te Mana Wahine  
 He Waka Tapu  
 Living Wage Movement  
 Martin Visser – Clinical Psychologist  
 My Favourite Things  
 Naomi McLean Counselling  
 Ohu Arataki  
 Odyssey House - Te Whare Waimairiri

Pathway Trust  
 Pete Majendie – Pastoral Artist  
 Rowley Community Centre  
 Shakti Ethnic Women's Refuge  
 Techmate  
 Te Ara Koropiko West Spreydon School  
 Te Kua Tuarua o Horomaka Hillmorton High School  
 Te Puawaitanga ki Ōtautahi Trust  
 Te Whare Hauora  
 Te Whare Rama Early Learning Centre  
 The Loft – Ki te Tihi  
 The Period Place  
 Visionwest Community Housing  
 West Christchurch Women's Refuge

**Thank you for taking the time to read our Christmas newsletter. We hope that this season is full of the gifts of joy, peace and love.**

From the team at

*Project Esther*

