

# ON A MISSION

BUILDING HOPE TOGETHER

wellingtoncitymission   
HEI WHAKAMARU O TE KOROWAI  
O TE PANEPANE O TE IKA A MAUI

## This is What Community is All About

**Robert has come full circle, from visiting The Mission at Newtown, to volunteering at Whakamaru.**

I've had a lot of difficulty feeling settled in my life. I had a problem with alcohol and had to live in hostels. Lots of people who stay in places like that can be troubled like I was, and I always had a pretty negative outlook for my future.

But one day I had enough. I wanted to find a new focus, so I became sober. I moved into Loafer's Lodge, looking to make a new start and do more positive things for myself. Then I heard about The Mission, and I started visiting their Community Lounge for lunch. Having good food, and being around friendly, positive people was a good change for me and it was something I'd been missing for a long time. It all helped me stay away from any negative stuff going on in the hostel environment.

Then we had the Loafer's Lodge fire. When you lose five people for no reason you do get pretty upset, and I was struggling to keep my focus. After ten years sober, I went back into drinking to dull the pain and get away from it all. But the people at The Mission were a great support to me. ***Being around everyone in the Community Lounge helped me get past what happened in the fire, and gave me something to hold onto.*** I wanted to start being helpful in some way too, so I asked if I could start volunteering in the kitchen. It was a positive thing to be involved in, and it became a place where I could work hard and focus on going forward. I soon got rid of the drinking and haven't done it for a couple of years now.



• Robert works as a volunteer at Whakamaru, welcoming everyone into Craig & Gail's Café.

When we all moved to Whakamaru, I carried on my volunteering as a host. On my shift, I welcome people in, ask them what services they're looking for, and tell them about how Craig & Gail's café works. Our main job though is to make sure every guest feels comfortable, and to give them some assurance that they can get whatever they need. A lot of people already know me and the other hosts, and it's nice to be able to give them some familiarity so they know they're going to be all right.

Our manuhiri are fed well, and they can get things they need like a hot shower. For somebody who's out on the street, that's huge, because it's pretty tough out there. A lot of people sleep during the day as it's the only time it's safe, so to know that they can come to The Mission to relax and maybe have a bit of a nap lets them have a bit of dignity.

People are being nourished in all sorts of ways here, not just through the food. They leave feeling like they can get through the next day a bit better, and know they can come back and have that same experience. I've worked in suicide prevention before, so I'm aware of how difficult it can be for people who are struggling, but I also know the beauty that can happen.

***I think if you can save one person, maybe you've done something worthwhile in your life.***

I can see what The Mission wants for our community with Whakamaru, and it's having a big impact. It accommodates everyone, there's lots of space, and it's got good opening hours. It's even bringing in people who are on their laptops or having work meetings. It's nice that we can all be here having a coffee and a meal together, and that all are welcome to be cared for. That diversity lets all of us socialise with a range of people, so we change our perceptions of people who are different to ourselves and be more respectful of each other. ***I think that's what community is all about really.***

Being part of this has been great for me too. The negative stuff that affected me in the past has been washed away. I'm not troubled by any negative voices because I've found the right path, and I'm focused on what's ahead. I've got Whakamaru to come to, and I just look to get better every day. My goal is to get a full-time job, hopefully in a place like this where I can do some good.

All I can say to everyone who donates to The Mission is that your money is not wasted. Keep making it happen because you are doing something good in a difficult time. This is exactly the type of place our country needs now – and more of them!

***“People are being nourished in all sorts of ways here, not just through the food. They leave feeling like they can get through the next day a bit better.”***



• Robert outside the front of Whakamaru

# We Can Feel Your Kindness Here

The first Pasifika Councillor elected to local government anywhere in Aotearoa, Tala is a regular at Craig & Gail's Café.

This year, I turn 94 years old. I was born in Western Samoa in 1931, and came to New Zealand when I was 24. I loved Wellington, and decided to make it my home.

I worked in various jobs across the city before I met my husband and got married. I became a full-time mum, raising our five children and organising our home – I even renovated the whole house! I'm pleased to say that my son's family still lives there to this day.

When I was working, I'd noticed that Pacific people were treated very differently from the Europeans in the workforce. So when my children grew up, I wanted to show that we were good, skilled people. I opened the first Pacific Island shop in New Zealand, selling beautiful handmade items from the islands, like weavings, jewellery and wood carvings.

I later started a Pacific Island resource centre on Willis Street. That was a seven-days-a-week thing, helping people from the community who needed some support through desperate times in their lives. I was also the first President of the Pacific Island Women's Organisation.

**Then, in 1979, I became the first Pasifika Councillor for Wellington City Council – also making me the first Pasifika person elected to local government in New Zealand.** I did that until 1995, so I always kept very busy!

My husband passed away in 2012, and since then I have been living by myself. My home can get very lonely during the day so it makes for not a very nice place to be. Recently, my doctor told me I was unable to renew my driver's licence because of my age, which I'm really sad about because it's much harder for me to get around.

But I am so happy that I can come to a place like Whakamaru! The Mission has always given people a place to go when you are alone, and Whakamaru is just the best. Craig & Gail's is a big space where everyone feels welcome, and there are always lots of interesting things happening. The other guests, volunteers and staff are such kind people. I always look forward to coming in and seeing the new friends I've made, meeting new people, and enjoying the great food. I would be here every day if I could! For me, whenever I am feeling down, Whakamaru comes to my mind.

I'm so proud that Wellington has such a magnificent place for our people, some of whom really need this place. I'm very grateful to everyone who donates to The Mission. Your loving support provides us with a beautiful place and excellent services, and makes us want to be here. This isn't just a beautiful building, it has a beautiful feeling. **Whakamaru is my home too, and I thank you for opening your doors to people like me!**



• Tala was sworn in as a WCC Councillor in 1979 and stood through to 1995. (Images: Wellington City Council Archives, 00557-1043-11, 00001-14/46)

# Welcome to Craig & Gail's Café

The Heart of Whakamaru!

Craig & Gail's

powered by YELLOW SEAT



Jenny

Whakamaru Transition Manager

Craig & Gail's

Total number of people through Craig and Gail's

**8,596**

(November 18 - Jan 31)

"Craig & Gail's is one of many great initiatives within Whakamaru. It's a place where anyone can hang out, build their own community, and talk to someone from The Mission about what might be going on in their life. It lets us place our manuhiri at the centre of what we do by bringing our services together and giving them one point of connection. It's a focal point for the building, and the space is connected to other Whakamaru facilities like our Social Supermarket and showers. This creates opportunities for people to come in for one reason, but then start accessing other key services.

We are also now able to manage crisis situations, particularly with the opening of the 24/7 Crisis Recovery Café. Anyone can come here in their time of need, without an appointment, and staff can offer immediate support. Our Kaitiaki, volunteer hosts, and reception staff are so skilled at picking up what other issues may be going on for someone during the conversations they are always having.

If you take a step back and look at the whole Whakamaru community of manuhiri, residents, volunteers, medical centre patients, staff, and the general public, the heart is Craig & Gail's. It's creating a community of people who wouldn't normally come together, and that's created a really unique dynamic. This is all making it easier for people in our community to achieve the outcomes they are looking for. ***It's part of normalising how people can approach accessing support when they need it, to begin their growth towards independence.***"

## WHAKAMARU STATS.

November 18 - Jan 31



Number of lunches served

**5,862**



Number of hot drinks served

**4,171**



Total number of people using the showers

**549**



Total number of people through Whakamaru

**11,603**



**Kathleen**  
Strategy Advisor & Chief of Staff

“When we were planning for Craig & Gail’s, we co-designed it with our manuhiri at Newtown – specifically the physical space and the ‘Contribute What You Can’ model. We talked through designs and how we could achieve the feeling of warmth and spaciousness, right down to the type of seating. For example, we have a nook if you want to be by yourself, booths for groups, and long tables to be more social.

The ‘Contribute What You Can’ model is very new in New Zealand. **We wanted it to be as dignifying an experience as possible, reducing any barriers for someone to get good food and coffee – even if they weren’t able to pay.** It’s really important to us that our manuhiri have the option to contribute anything they can without judgment.

Whakamaru is about connecting people and creating a sense of belonging, and Craig & Gail’s is central to that vision. It’s a place where people from all walks of life can strike up unlikely conversations and friendships, and find pathways to the wider support they might need.

The model is built on generosity, and we are so thankful for everyone who supports or pays their meal forward to keep it sustainable. We will continue improving the space, and hopefully create a proof of concept for other places to follow, both in New Zealand and beyond.”



**Mas**  
Yellow Seat - Craig & Gail’s Manager

“I love the connection we have at Whakamaru between general hospitality and charity, and this merger of universes is really fantastic. Getting to see our customers, Mission staff, volunteers and Yellow Seat staff being so energised about the space is so motivating and really makes me want to come to work each morning.

Our customers are surprised that so much effort has been put into this space to make it as comfortable, open, and welcoming as possible. We’ve had a lot of amazing comments from serving people. One that’s really stuck with me was when someone, after ordering their meal and having it delivered to their table, came up and said: “This is the first time in a while that I’ve felt truly human.” That’s a pretty big thing to be part of, and we are thankful to be here!”



**Kiri**  
Operations Assistant for Volunteer Services

“Volunteers are crucial for this space. We have around 55 hosts now, and we’re currently adding more to run our laundry and showers. Many of our volunteer hosts have established relationships with manuhiri and are the first people you see when you walk in the door. They’re essential in keeping Whakamaru and Craig & Gail’s running smoothly. Most importantly, they bring in a bit of whakawhanaungatanga (relationship-building) by taking really good care of our manuhiri. Seeing how happy everyone is to be in the space has been awesome, and we want to say a big thank you to our volunteers for your patience and kindness throughout our move to Whakamaru!”



**Warren** – Volunteer Host

“As a host, I greet people at the door and direct them to where they want to go, whether that’s Craig & Gail’s, the Social Supermarket, or the medical centre. It’s about making sure people are getting the things that they might otherwise miss out on, like a healthy meal or a shower.”



**Katie** – Kaitiaki & General Support

“It’s really cool to be part of Whakamaru because it has a great sense of community. I think everyone feels equally welcome in our café. People come to Craig & Gail’s for food and drink, but they find that other helpful support is always available to them here.”



# Hopeful that life can be different

• Whakamaru Youth Practice Lead, Cilla

**Some of the 35 supported transitional housing apartments at Whakamaru are specifically focused on caring for the 18-24 age group.**

**The Mission offers supported transitional housing for adults through our Pā in Wellington, Petone, and Tītahi Bay. However, we've found that there's also an ever-growing need for housing support for young people, with very limited opportunities available. Here is what Youth Practice Lead, Cilla, has to say about what The Mission is doing in the space.**

Young people experiencing homelessness often have nowhere to go because they have a really difficult relationship with their family (or no relationship at all), or they are transitioning out of government care. On top of any personal struggles they may be having like trauma, mental health issues, or addictions, they aren't used to advocating for themselves, and can be more reluctant to ask for support. Youth homelessness also tends to be a bit 'invisible', because while some do sleep rough, most are couch surfing or staying in other unsafe environments.

Whatever's going on for someone, they're at a point where they're unable to move into their own place and begin to lead a healthy fulfilling life. So our vision for Whakamaru's residents is that, more than having a roof over their heads, they start to feel safety and belonging, contribute to our community, and believe that they are worthy of having a good life. Then, in a year or so, be able to transition to a positive independent living situation of their choice.

To get there, they're needing some awahi (care), professional support like counselling, or opportunities to

add a few life skills to their kete. If we can do the early intervention and help them get on their feet, it can set them up for life and help avoid potential negative pathways in future.

Critical for this to happen is that our residents buy into being a part of a community and growing together. And for people to feel that belonging, they need to have a positive relationship first. That's a brave step for a lot of our residents because many of them have been let down by important people in their lives. Here they have the support of our incredible Youth Workers every day, and wider Mission Kaitiaki 24/7.

Giving our young people such a new and bright place at Whakamaru also lets them know that they're worth it. From the moment someone moves in, they are shown that they deserve to live in a good place, and that the community around them loves and cares for them; they also feel safe. They have their own room, with a bathroom and kitchenette, which no one else can access. That means a lot to someone who's come from unsafe living circumstances, and it gives them the space to build on other areas in their life.

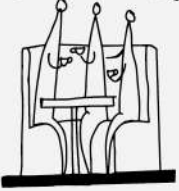
There are a whole lot of circumstances that lead a young person to be without a home, and this is a challenge our whole community needs to solve. Whakamaru is a beautiful picture of what community can look like. It's amazing that The Mission has donors and volunteers, who happily give what they can so that young people can have choices and hope. By giving someone an alternative to what's come before, there's hope that life can be different.



• A 'Bump Space' for our long-term transitional housing residents.

• A single long-term transitional housing apartment at Whakamaru.

Contribute



What you can

## Craig & Gail's 'Contribute What You Can' Model

At Craig and Gail's café you can choose from our cabinet foods, hot meals, and barista-made drinks. At the counter, you can choose discretely what (if anything) you can contribute. Then you can find a place to sit and your food will be served to you.

Regardless of what you can pay, everybody has the same mana-enhancing experience at Craig & Gail's!

Find us at 4 Oxford Terrace, Mount Cook, Wellington

Check out a map of our sites across Wellington, included with this newsletter!



Wellington City Mission

Across Greater Wellington



## Quarterly Newsletter - February 2025 Murray's Message

What a huge year 2024 was! Lots of incredible things happened in the Wellington City Mission last year, including the opening of Te Ō and Te Pā Maru in April and the opening of Whakamaru in November. In addition to these wonderful events, it was also the year that we celebrated our 120th birthday! 120 years of service to the people of the Wellington is an incredible contribution, but our ultimate wish would be that the community no longer needs us. It is clear from the things we are required to do every day, that sadly it is not our current reality and looks unlikely to be so in the months and years ahead.

Because it was such a big year, it was a tired bunch of people working and volunteering at The Mission at the end of the year. A break over the Christmas and New Year period was very welcome - offering us the opportunity to restore and renew for the year ahead.

My wife and I had the privilege to go on a long-awaited road trip around the South Island for two weeks. It was an awesome and reinvigorating time away and we were lucky to have fabulous weather throughout our travels. The standout feature for me though was the reminder, once again, of how stunning our country is. Surely the extraordinary beauty and grandeur of the mountains, fjords, lakes, rivers, and sky of the South Island are the equal of the best scenery anywhere on this planet!

Returning to work at The Mission, still in awe at the amazing things I had seen and experienced, was an interesting experience. I was encouraged to see many of the people we serve looking well and hopeful, despite some of their difficult circumstances. I am certain that this wellness comes, at least in part, in response to the dignity,

care, and compassion that the teams throughout The Mission's services show to them.

Surely, even the best of nature, our environment, and this wonderful country we live in, doesn't compare to the beauty of lives renewed and restored, and of people having real hope for the future, maybe for the first time in a very long time!

This newsletter includes the life stories of Robert, Tala and others whose lives have been changed by the efforts and belief of the extraordinary group of staff and volunteers at the Wellington City Mission.

I feel very proud to be part of a team that makes such a positive difference in the lives of others.

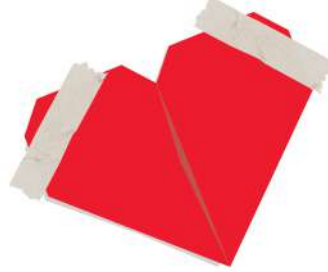
If you are reading this message, then it is likely that you too are part of this team. Thank you for whatever you do or contribute, to ensure that others have the best possible opportunity to live into fullness of life!

Ngā manaakitanga - blessings

Murray Edridge  
Wellington City Missioner  
He Manu Taupua

**When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?**

Psalm 8: 3-4



## Every Gift *Changes Lives*

At The Mission, every gift – whether it's a single donation or a regular monthly contribution – plays a vital role in changing lives. We are so appreciative of the generosity of all our supporters, whose kindness fuels the hope and transformation we see every day.

Becoming a ChangeGiver is a different way to make an impact. Monthly giving provides The Mission with reliable and consistent income that allows us to plan, sustain vital programmes, and respond quickly to the needs of our community. It ensures families can shop with dignity at our Social Supermarket, individuals have access to stable transitional housing, and those facing challenges receive ongoing, tailored support to rebuild their lives.

By choosing to give regularly, you can amplify that impact and be there every step of the way for those in need. No matter how you choose to give, your support changes lives, transforms futures, and brings hope to our community. Thank you.

**If you'd like to learn more about becoming a ChangeGiver, contact Carthi Gnanam on (04) 245 0843 or email [carthi@wcm.org.nz](mailto:carthi@wcm.org.nz)**

Kia ora Mission whānau,

My name is Carthi, and I look after our ChangeGivers Regular Giving Programme. I was born and raised right here in Wellington and can honestly say I was very much disconnected from how much help our community truly needed.

After joining The Mission, I have learnt just how valuable the support we receive from our donors truly is. The importance of creating connections to build trust and help those in need is only made possible because of the help our donors, like you, provide.

We simply could not do it without you, and I am so grateful to be on this journey with you all. Thank you for making us better than we would otherwise be.



**Carthi Gnanam**  
Database & Donor Relations Specialist



## Allison tells us why she became a *ChangeGiver*



*"There's nothing quite like being even a small part of such an organisation to make one aware that a significant number of Wellingtonians do it tough on a daily basis. I admire and appreciate the openness, the wholehearted friendliness and compassion, in the way that every person is treated. It is a privilege to support such an organisation that dedicates itself entirely to the wellbeing of others".*

## Transitional Housing – October - December 2024



**8,129**

**Meals**

provided for manuhiri living in our supported Transitional Housing accommodation



**1,430**

**Shoppers**

supported through our Social Supermarket



**227**

**Whānau and individuals**

supported by Community Support Workers



**122**

**Whānau and individuals**

supported with Financial Mentoring

## FIND US

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4-8 Oxford Terrace, Mount Cook,  
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## CONTACT US

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Postal Address: PO Box 7200, Newtown,  
Wellington 6242



Contact Carthi Gnanam, on (04) 245 0843 or [carthi@wcm.org.nz](mailto:carthi@wcm.org.nz)

If you ever want to make changes to your regular giving, just give us a call.

## SIGN UP




To sign up to our quarterly e-newsletter: Please email your details to [enquiries@wcm.org.nz](mailto:enquiries@wcm.org.nz) or call (04) 245 0843.

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