

ON A MISSION

BEYOND YEAR ONE:
THE JOURNEY YOU MAKE POSSIBLE

ISSUE 1 2026



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



A Future Full of Possibility

With Whakamaru behind her, Naomi is stepping into adulthood with confidence.

“My entire childhood was filled with abuse. I grew up in Auckland, moving between caregivers. I felt like I was walking on eggshells all the time. I had mental health problems because of it, but nobody took me seriously, so things only got worse. I spent nights on the streets when I had to, and life was pretty scary. I had no clue what I was going to do.

Then, just after I turned 16, I moved down to Wellington. Thankfully I have some amazing friends, and one invited me to stay with their family while I went to school. At that time I was going through so many emotions, so I was really struggling with my mental health and was actually quite unstable. But their family was so patient and kind to me, and I was really relieved to have them.

I wanted to find my own place, but I was 17 years old, and a Year 13 at school. I felt like moving out on my own was me suddenly switching into being an adult – completely alone without my own family behind me. So I went to MSD for help finding a house, and they told me about the Mission and their Supported Transitional

Housing for young people. I remember when I moved to Whakamaru, thinking, “This is really fancy for this type of place!”

As I started going through the process of becoming an adult, I didn’t handle it well. I told everyone that I was OK, but a lot of the challenges I’ve had all came out at once, and I had a really bad mental health episode at one point. So I started working with my Mission Kaitiaki, Shania, and we made lots of support plans that we would all follow to keep me safe. I started opening up personally to her too, and it’s been good to know that I always have her support. I also started working with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to get my own diagnoses and medication.

About six months in, I started feeling a lot better about everything, and getting on my feet. I began volunteering downstairs in the community cafe, too, and it’s been fun helping the guests out. Sometimes people say things after their meal, like, “Thank you so much, I hope you have a good day!” That makes you smile because you’ve had a positive impact on someone.

I’m also one of the cooks on our Community Kai programme, where once a week us residents share a meal together. I go down to the Crisis Cafe two nights a week too, where we talk with other residents, guests and staff, and do activities together. It can be a lot of fun, but also if someone’s having a hard time, the staff there can help. It doesn’t matter who you are or what’s going on, they’ll listen to you and take it seriously. It’s a really good place that’s different from other mental health services. I think the Whakamaru Supported Transitional Housing is

good for people who have never experienced living on their own, and who don't have any family they can rely on. You're not having to take the huge jump to living by yourself, and it helped me figure out all the life skills I'd never learnt.

And at the end of last year, I graduated school, and even got top of my class in tourism! My goal now is to make a career of it, have some fun, and make new friends, so I've just started my Level 4 Certificate in Tourism from the New Zealand School of Tourism. I'm starting to look at flats to live in this year too, and I'm excited for all the new opportunities coming for me.

When I look back on my life, it's really hit me how far I've come since I left Auckland. A few years ago, I was really sad. I was uncomfortable being myself, and felt very alone in the world. Now I have lots of friends who love and care about me. I'm much happier as a person, and I want to do things that make a positive impact.

It's easy to think there's no such thing as good, proper help out there but Whakamaru has shown me that there is. People who support the Mission are really doing good in the world. There are so many people struggling, and if you can just help one person they will be forever grateful like I am!



Over 100 people

were housed through our residential services in 2025

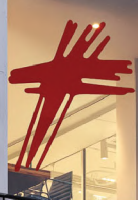
Shania, Community Support Worker

"Naomi is doing so well, and everyone loves seeing her behind the counter in the cafe! I'm really proud of her for always showing up, and getting through some very hard stuff at 17-18 years old. It's not easy having no parents around, and she missed out on learning a lot of life skills, but she's now in a really great place and we're excited to see her grow into her new life."



• Naomi working in her role at Craig & Gail's





2025

A YEAR OF IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY MADE POSSIBLE WITH YOUR SUPPORT



4,703

people and whānau
supported through our Community
Services and Financial Mentoring



6,283

received
food support through our
Social Supermarket



32,966

hot meals
served to manuhiri in Whakamaru



71,277

manuhiri
welcomed through the doors
of Whakamaru



735

people
presented at Kua
Mākona | Whakamaru,



Our free showers and laundry
services were utilised

6,475

times in 2025

Your Impact: Christmas 2025

CHRISTMAS TOY STORE

Over **2,000** children

were provided with toys and
gifts from our Toy Store

SOCIAL SUPERMARKET

634 whānau

received food support through our
Social Supermarket in December

CHRISTMAS DAY MEAL

176 people

were provided with a Christmas
Day Meal at Whakamaru

A New Year Brings a New Service: The Free Dental Clinic at Whakamaru



Oral health is a key component of overall wellbeing, yet for many people it is just out of reach. The Whakamaru Dental Service has been created to meet this need.

Delivered by qualified Ora Toa dentists, the referral-based service provides accessible, free dental care for people who face significant barriers to accessing traditional dental services.

It provides trauma-informed dental care in a safe and familiar environment, recognising that past experiences and current circumstance can make healthcare settings difficult to access.

To find out more, head to:

wellingtoncitymission.org.nz





New Year, New Beginnings: Denis Steps Into Peer Support

Since sharing his story in our Christmas 'On a Mission' newsletter, Denis has been living in his new home for almost six months. He continues to thrive as a loving partner and father. Now, he has some more exciting news...

Christmas last year was really good, and it was filled with a lot of new feelings for me. My partner's mum and daughter came over from Australia, and it was a blessing to finally meet them in person. Getting to watch our daughters get on together brought tears to our eyes, and we really enjoyed New Years at my new house together as family. We were all so happy.

Around that time, when a Peer Support role came up at Whakamaru, Alisha, my kaiarahi from Te Pā Pori, encouraged me to apply. Straight away I thought, "No way, they don't want to employ me, no one does!" But she reassured me about all the mahi I've put in and how far I've come. I'd never written a Cover Letter or CV before, so she helped me put it all together, and I went into the interview. I was really nervous, but what

helped was knowing that I was facing the sorts of emotions I would have just run away from in the past.

The interview with Paula went really good, and she said she would get back to me. That's when the doubt came back in. I just thought that was a nice way to say I didn't get it. But then she called and offered me a job! This new role as a Peer Support Worker arose in front of me. I grabbed it with both hands, and started a couple of months ago. I work four days a week 8am-4:30pm. Every day that I wake up to come to work, it doesn't feel like I'm working. I just love it, and I know I'm in the right place even though it's all new to me.

I mostly interact with manuhiri in the community café, by mingling with everyone and just trying to bring a positive

energy. And if someone is in crisis and needs someone to talk to, that's me. I pretty much just listen and figure out what they need. Sometimes that's just a person to talk to, other times they might need more Mission support services so I'm that bridge.

Most people who come here feel alone, and they just want someone who will listen. Having lived experience is huge in this work because if someone is a bit standoffish, when they find out about my history, it makes them feel more comfortable to open up.

I say you have to have a really good heart to be part of the Mission. That's what I've felt when I was on the receiving end, and now as staff. It took me a while to register how this place is just real and genuine, but the way the Mission, its staff, volunteers, and donors give without expecting anything in return just shows people that they are valued. So when you come in here you feel nothing but love, and that's so important for people with broken backgrounds.

I always remind people this is the safest space they can ever come. They can get a feed, have someone to talk to and just relax. They know just their basic needs are always here for them and that's huge. There are a lot of people who rely on this place, and I don't even want to think about where they'd be without it. What's made this all more beautiful for me is that as much as I'm helping the manuhiri, they've been helping me too. This work has been healing me in this next part of my recovery journey and filling my heart.

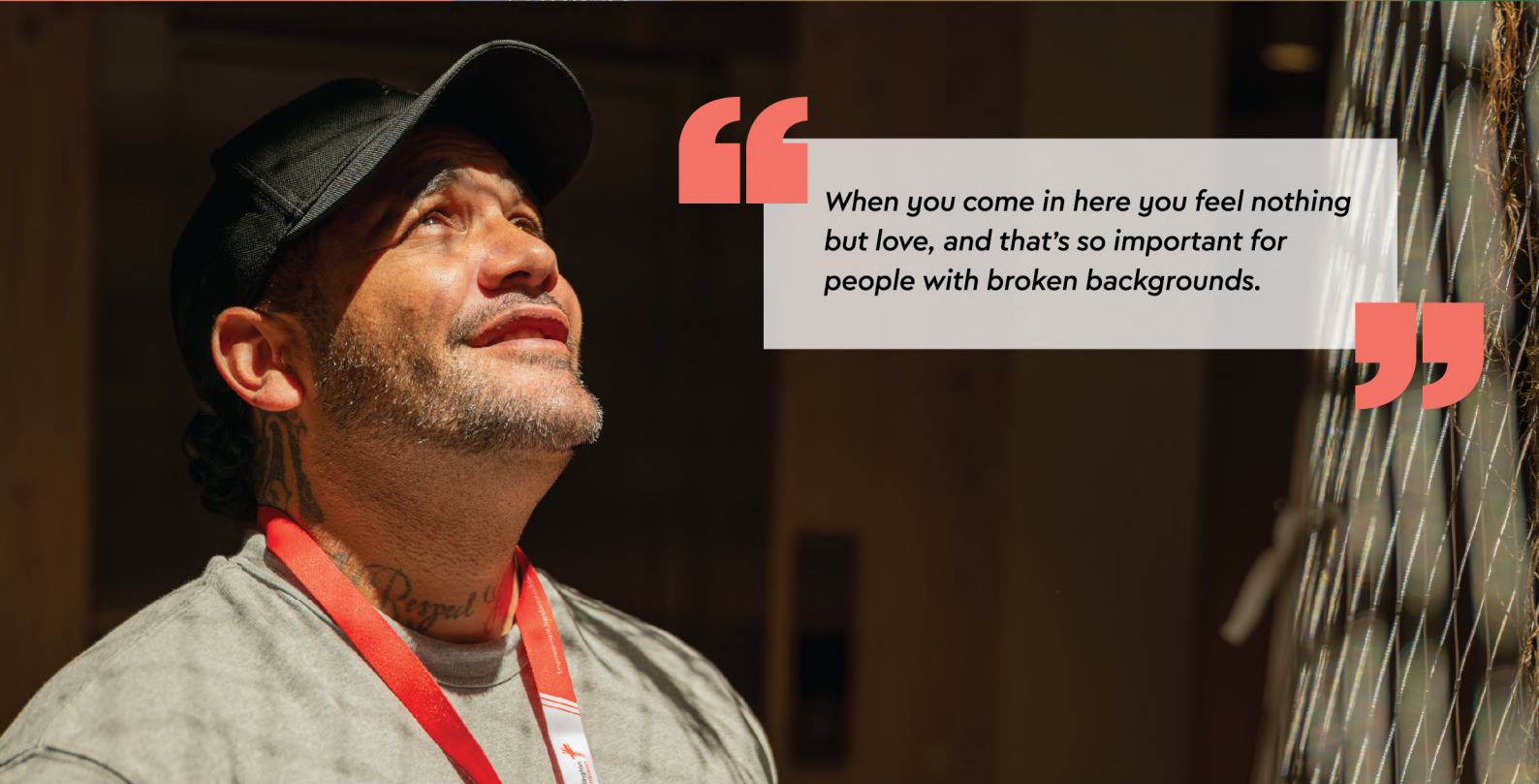
This has been the best start to a year I've ever had. My partner and I do a lot of reflecting on how far we've come, and my daughter is really happy. My lifestyle is a whole new mindset, I'm going to keep learning and upskilling, and eventually I want to do youth work.

I really think the Mission and the way it works is the future, and I'm blessed to be part of it!

Denis in his new workspace

Denis's feature in the previous edition of On A Mission

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“When you come in here you feel nothing but love, and that’s so important for people with broken backgrounds.”



• Pip speaks to us from our crisis recovery café, Kua Mākona i Whakamaru

One Year On at Kua Mākona i Whakamaru

Pip, our Director of Community Services, shares an update on our crisis recovery café.

Kua Mākona i Whakamaru, our Crisis Recovery Café, is designed for people who are experiencing any level of distress, and who need somewhere to go to get support. That could be due to a sudden change in their situation like acute homelessness or family violence, or longer-term mental health issues.

Before our service existed, people struggling with their mental health were very limited in their options. They could call a helpline, book an appointment with their GP, or go to ED, but with these options you have to wait to be seen. People in distress need an immediate response, ideally from someone who understands what it's like to go through similar experiences.

The reality is that you can wait weeks to be seen by a GP, and a 15-minute appointment is not usually enough time to fully unpack what's going on and make a good plan. And in ED, you won't be seen unless there's some

significant risk involved. This unintentionally teaches people they can't receive support until their distress is higher, so they won't be helped until they're worse off.

At Kua Mākona i Whakamaru, our Peer Support Workers are always available, so anyone can come day or night to connect with someone. We can respond in whatever way each person needs. If someone is a bit whakamā about sharing, they can join group activities like art and music, to connect with others and build trust in the people and space. Whakamaru is the perfect place for this, because we've found that people are better able to address whatever's going on once their basic needs have been met, like having a meal, a shower and clean clothes, and we can provide that here. It also feels more like an open community space - they are coming in to receive help just like lots of others are, which helps destigmatise this type of support.



87%

of manuhiri felt their mental health and wellbeing improved as a result of the support received



83%

of manuhiri said the support received has helped reduce the risk of future crises for them



91%

of manuhiri said the environment felt calm and safe



96%

of manuhiri felt reassured and supported during their interactions with staff

Our manuhiri said:



“ *It's not just a café – it's a lifeline. You go in broken, and they help you feel human again.* **”**

“ *It definitely saved my life... not just from killing myself, but from making stupid decisions that would have ruined my life.* **”**

“ *They told me there was nothing more important than meeting with me – that meant everything.* **”**

Research also tells us that mental health distress escalates when people are isolated. We want a sense of community and belonging, which comes from having as much time as you need with someone who will listen, help reduce your distress, and then make a plan. Kua Mākona i Whakamaru is peer-led, so everybody has some lived experience. They support our manuhiri from a place of having walked that journey, and are an example of hope that things can get better.

We've also noticed that many who have come in crisis and received support are now coming back as a means to maintain their wellbeing. They'll join us in the evening after Craig & Gail's closes, when it's a little quieter, and they've finished their work or study for the day. We are also implementing formalised workshops to help people feel more confident about moving into independence.

In the year since starting this service, we've had people who've told us they wouldn't be here without it, people who have broken the cycle of crisis, and others who have been able to get back to more positive and productive lives. It's been inspiring to see some of our regulars now providing a level of peer support to newer manuhiri as well. This is building an environment of continual support led by community members - we're just providing the space for it.

At Kua Mākona i Whakamaru, and Whakamaru as a whole, this first year has been about understanding what our community needs and learning what works to create the outcomes we all want. Our focus for the coming year is multiplying this impact. Critically, the only way we've been able to do this, and continue to build on it, is with Mission donors' support, and we look forward to seeing more of the fruits of this mahi this year!



735 people

presented at Kua Mākona i Whakamaru in 2025.



We Have a New Website!



We're thrilled to announce that our new website is now live!

It's now much easier to find out more about what we do, how we help whānau and how Wellingtonians like you can support our mahi!

Head over to the site now to find out more about this unique new service!

wellingtoncitymission.org.nz



Quarterly Newsletter - March 2026 Murray's Message

As 2026 rapidly unfolds, I have spent a lot of time reflecting on two significant things: the disadvantage so many people in our community face, most of which comes directly from their family and circumstances, not their own decision-making; and the privilege that so many of us enjoy – often wonderfully oblivious of the inherent advantages we have in life.

When I hear those in leadership and authority in our nation talking about ensuring that everyone has equal opportunity to succeed in life, I am struck by the naivety of that proposition. Equal opportunity when we don't have the same starting point is not equal or equitable at all!

I often refer to my own start in life as having had a privileged childhood. Not because as a family we had lots of resources or material things, but being raised in a context of unconditional love, support and encouragement.

The question I frequently pose to groups I talk to is: when you see someone sleeping rough, begging, behaving badly, or struggling with life; do you wonder what they have done that means life has become so challenging? My challenge is that if you had the same starting point in life that they had, suffered the same neglect, abuse, unwellness, challenges, would you look any different than they do, would you behave any differently than they do?

I think that those of us that have the privilege of wellbeing, support, and resources need to take some responsibility for others in our community that are struggling, because

this is what real community looks like. This is the New Zealand that we have always believed in!

All of us at the Wellington City Mission are deeply grateful for those that recognise the needs in our community and respond accordingly – your generosity enables us to support those who are doing life hardest.

In this first newsletter for 2026, you will read the wonderful story of Naomi and how her life has been changed by being part of the Wellington City Mission community. You will get to meet Denis again, and receive an update on what has happened in his life since we were introduced to him in 2025. You will also get to hear of some of the other things that the Mission is doing in an effort to ensure that all people get access to the particular things they need to turn their lives around.

These stories and many others can only happen with your support. Thank you for recognising the needs of others and contributing what you can to ensure that everyone can have the chance to be ok.

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Galatians 6:9

Ngā manaakitanga – blessings

Murray Edridge -
Wellington City Missioner, He Manu Taupua

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4-8 Oxford Terrace, Mount Cook, Wellington



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