HOMEGROUND.
THE STORY OF A BUILDING THAT CHANGES LIVES

SIMON WILSON PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK SMITH

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Auckland City Mission
Te Tāpui Atawhai
Home Ground


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HomeGround

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John 21:15–17
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15. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'

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17. The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.'

John 21:15–17
New International Version

A poignant message given from Jesus to his disciples, and one that is still relevant to us today. To me, Auckland City Mission — Te Tāpui Atawhai has always been a symbol of the love described by Jesus that he requires of those called to be in his service. If you love me, feed my sheep. What Homeground does, says, has been and is still to become is reflective of that love.

Reverend Otene Reweti (Ngāti Whātua, Ngāpuhi)
Kaumātua


Auckland City Mission
Te Tāpui Atawhai

FOREWORD

'The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members' is one of Mahatma Gandhi's best-known statements, and it bears reflecting on. We Aucklanders enjoy it when our lovely city is acclaimed as one of the world's 'most liveable' cities, but although we have much to be proud of, there is also a growing despair among our most vulnerable. If we were frank, we would surely agree that Auckland *would* be a really great city if only some of its citizens weren't living under bridges and sleeping rough every night.

In 1920 the Auckland City Mission — Te Tāpui Atawhai was founded under the motto 'Not charity but a chance'. Since then it has been the city's conscience, heart and hands, offering assistance to those most in need and at the forefront of shaping their lives for the better. Over those one hundred years it has touched hundreds of thousands of lives and it has always been there to deal with issues that no one else wants to deal with. In many ways Aucklanders have relied on the Mission to care for their fellow citizens, knowing it has the expertise and the conviction.

The Mission has never sought acclaim, rather it has been content to simply know that it has made a positive difference in people's lives. Much, if not most, of the impact it has remains unsung and largely invisible.

But now, standing tall in the heart of the city, a proud new part of our cityscape, there is a building that is the visible manifestation of the Mission's work, a building that will heal and transform lives and is a place for all. And now that the dream of HomeGround is a wonderful reality, it is time for the people of Auckland to thank three amazing Missioners — Diane Robertson, Chris Farrelly and Helen Robinson — along with the Mission board and staff, and all those who supported them and continue to support them in so many different ways.

Getting to opening day was hugely challenging, but strong leadership, holding on to a vision and the support of a broad community, at a level never seen before in this country for a social project, made it possible.

Those who helped build HomeGround — the architects, the construction company, the engineers, the contractors and the businesses that

gave goods in kind — went out of their way and put in enormous hours to make sure things got done and done well.

HomeGround was built by Aucklanders for its most vulnerable, and it is an exemplar of what can be done when we embrace the principle that *everyone* deserves our care and compassion, and that *everyone* deserves dignity. Just as the HomeGround team drew from best practice overseas to develop its unique way of delivering services that will heal and transform lives, so it is my hope that other New Zealand communities will be inspired by and learn from the HomeGround experience.

He aha te mea nui o tea o. He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

What is the most important thing in the world? It is people. It is people. It is people.

Richard Didsbury
Campaign Chair

In the laneway that runs through the ground floor of HomeGround, connecting Hobson and Federal streets.

INTRODUCTION

LOVE IS PATIENT, LOVE IS KIND

'Some of the people who will live here came to view their apartments the other day. One of them, honestly, he was dancing. When he walked. He was so excited. It was beautiful to watch.'

Joanne Reidy was a bit excited herself. She's Ngāti Tamaterā, Ngāti Hako and Ngāti Raukawa, and the first manutea (general manager) of Māori services at the Auckland City Mission — Te Tāpui Atawhai. Her colleagues were excited, too. After years of hopes and dreams and extremely hard work, the Mission's HomeGround, a world-leading facility for the chronically homeless and others on the margins of society, was about to open. For them, and for the people they work with, so much was about to change.

A small pounamu tile is set into the floor just inside the entrance. Designed by Waiheke sculptor Anton Forde, it's a marker for what lies beneath: a mauri stone, selected by tā moko artist and design consultant Graham Tipene (Ngāti Whātua, Ngāti Kahu, Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Haua, Ngāti Manu). That mauri stone is a repository for the wairua, or life force, of the building. It was buried there on the Mission's centenary, 6 June 2020.

Nearby in the entrance stands another stone, this one much larger. It's a manea stone, a companion to the mauri stone, and it's there to be rubbed. Tipene describes the role of the manea stone as 'shaping hardness with gentleness'. Architect Nicholas Stevens, who designed HomeGround with his colleague Gary Lawson, thinks of that as a good metaphor for the work of the Mission.

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Shaping hardness with gentleness. HomeGround is a new beginning in compassion and service and care, and in the culture of Tāmaki Makaurau. 'It is,' says manutaki (city missioner) Helen Robinson, 'a place of belonging, for people who have so often been told they don't.'

HomeGround has been established on the principles of care known as Housing First: those in need are given somewhere to live, with medical and social services on offer to help them make the most of it.

There's a network of Housing First providers, including other social service sector groups like Lifewise. But with HomeGround, the Mission is taking the concept further than anyone has done before, here or overseas. The building is home to 80 tenants, with the services on site. Those services — medical, social, cultural, vocational, the food they serve, the rooms and facilities for community use — also offer support for thousands more. It's a 'lighthouse', the Mission likes to say. A beacon in the city. They can't do everything, but they want to discover how well it can be done and help others do the same. It's a mothership.

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HomeGround is a new beginning in architecture, too, and in respect for the environment. The values of the Mission's work are expressed in the built form, and the method of construction has the potential to change our understanding of how to build. This is the story of some people who decided to build a better world. Most of us think we don't often get the chance to do that, but the truth is we get it all the time. It's common to think that when conditions are tough, we have to set aside our dreams and focus on the day-to-day. But to do the right thing does take courage.

Former city missioner Chris Farrelly knew this, and so did Bishop Jim White, and so did Helen Robinson. Farrelly, who was knighted in 2022, was appointed city missioner in 2016, not long after White became chair of the Mission board. Robinson was at Farrelly's side as the Mission's general manager of health and social services, and succeeded him when he retired in 2021. Backed by a board brave enough to take risks, they spearheaded the creation of HomeGround.

People like them, and all the rest of the immensely dedicated Mission folk, show us how the world should work. And they give us the chance to contribute. HomeGround wasn't built by a dedicated band on the fringes of city life. It was built by the city. It took a remarkable fundraising effort. The project reached everywhere, and everyone caught up in it gave it their best. It was us, citizens, being our best selves.

The result is a building that invites the people living in it to reimagine what is possible. It offers that same hope to the people working there and to everyone using its services. It reimagines the possibilities of urban form.

And, with support from successive governments that have not agreed on much else, it demonstrates the value of a non-partisan approach to fundamental social issues. HomeGround is a beacon of humanism and hope in the twenty-first century.

Jim White died in late 2020. Not long before, he preached a sermon on the theme of the Good Samaritan: that parable of love for the person you don't have to love. Chris Farrelly believes in it. He knows we don't want to see homelessness as the norm in our country. Helen Robinson says, 'We are held only by the generosity of others.' And Saint Paul says, 'Love is patient, love is kind.'

This is a story of what generosity and courage and love can do.

The entrance to HomeGround from Federal Street.

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‘SOMETHING ENORMOUSLY BIG AND HAIRY’

‘I was in America and I got a phone call. They said, “Look, we’re recruiters for the Auckland City Mission, they’re looking for a chief executive and your name’s popped up. Would you be interested?”’

It was 2015, and Chris Farrelly was in Boston on a sabbatical at Harvard, where he was studying conflict resolution. ‘I’m convinced,’ he likes to say, ‘that as a nation we’re not good at resolving conflict.’ About a decade ago he did a degree in mediation, then he got accepted into the Harvard course. This was going to become his specialist field and he wanted to make a difference at the top, offering his skills in mediation and conflict resolution to leaders in politics, business and wider society. He loved that course: ‘It was really amazing, I was working alongside people from trouble spots all over the world, trying to break through the win/lose approach and find another way.’ But he got the call to look in another direction.

The Mission was established by the Anglican Church in 1920 to provide food, shelter, social support and other services to those most in need in Auckland. Farrelly, by some lights, was not an obvious choice to run it. A quietly spoken older Pākehā man with soft rounded features, he’s a former Catholic priest, now married with adult kids and grandchildren. Prior to that call, he says, he had not had anything to do with the Mission. Until early 2016 he was in charge of a health provider with a large rural catchment in Northland; not big-city work at all. By other lights, though, Farrelly was a very good fit.

‘I realised I was restless,’ he says. ‘I’d completed 13 years in the Northland job; it was probably a bit too long. And my whole life has been working in the margins. I’d worked overseas for a long time in that space, where people are invisibilised or abused. So I’ve got some skills in that area and I’ve certainly got a heart in that area. I thought, this is it, I’ll have one more job left in me and this will bring together a lifetime of experience and my growing understanding of Te Tiriti and its call to a more authentic partnership.’

The appointment process took six months: 'The board really wanted to get it right.' The chair of the board, Jim White, known to many as Bishop Jim, was recently appointed to the role and keen, as Farrelly saw it, to 'turn a few things upside down'.

'Jim had the courage to do something enormously big and hairy,' says Richard Didsbury, the leading Auckland businessman and friend of the Mission who became the fundraising supremo for the new home they would go on to build on Hobson Street. 'It was going to cost an enormous amount of money, he was going to take the Mission into an entirely different space, and he had the courage to do it.'

'Bishop Jim had a very humble, empowering manner,' says former board member Celia Caughey, who retired in 2022, once HomeGround was funded and operational, after ten years on the board. 'He knew how to unleash the power of the individual board members, how to let people achieve their best.' When he started in the role in late 2015, after ten years on the board, she told him she wanted to get housing back on the table, and he agreed.

Chris Farrelly says Bishop Jim White was an 'extraordinary man' who 'broke the mould of what a bishop is perceived to be.' White had cancer through most of his time chairing the Mission board, and he died in 2020 when the building was up but far from finished. But he was there to lay the mauri stone in June that year.

Farrelly remembers the first time he went into White's office. 'You'd think when you go into a bishop's office there'd be all sorts of religious pictures. Well, there were a lot of books and I just recall two pictures — one a quote from St Francis and the second a large submarine surrounded by a flotilla of protesting boats. It was the USS *Phoenix* entering the Auckland harbour in 1983. At its bow was a tiny inflatable in which there were two men. "Who's this?" I asked Bishop Jim. "Look at the guy on the right," he said. It was Jim.'

Thirty years later, White was still as committed to doing his bit to make a better world. And Farrelly, after four interviews, was offered the job. Before he accepted, though, he threw it back on them. 'I said to Jim, "Okay, I'd like to interview the board now."' He wanted to ask them about Te Tiriti: how the Mission understood and responded to the Treaty of Waitangi.

'The trustees all came in and this time I was on the other side of the table. Gosh, it was good of them. They'd already offered me the job, you see. I was interested in issues around the Treaty, because the Mission, while it's done incredible work over its lifetime, over a hundred years, hadn't really grasped the nettle of what it means to work within a Treaty framework.

Sir Chris Farrelly, Auckland city missioner from 2016 to 2021.

Dame Diane Robertson, Auckland city missioner from 1998 to 2015, pushed the vision that would become HomeGround.

I wanted to say, "Where is your response?" And the depth of understanding of what partnership is — it was not strong. But Jim understood it. I think he wanted to break through and really get into it.'

His board did, too. 'We're all on a journey with the Treaty,' says Celia Caughey. 'Some are behind us, some are well ahead of us. You acknowledge that everyone is on the journey and respect that.'

Jim White's successor as board chair, Joanna Pidgeon, says they're still on the Treaty partnership journey today, led by Helen Robinson and with the appointment of Joanne Reidy as the Mission's first manutea as an important part of it. 'We want integration of Treaty principles across everything,' says Pidgeon. 'We're not there yet.'

In 1980 the Mission moved into 140 Hobson Street in central Auckland, an old building, painted green, that was formerly the Prince of Wales pub. It was just up from the neo-Gothic parish church of St Matthew-in-the-City. Twenty-five years after that purchase, the Mission bought the building next door. The green building still housed the soup kitchen and some services, while the offices, a thrift store, the detox unit and other services operated from the new building and a couple of houses at the back of the property. All the buildings were rat-infested and rotting, and everyone knew something had to be done.

When Farrelly took that call in Boston, though, there was no mention of building another home for the Mission. 'It was only during the interviews that I became aware of the plans . . . The scope of the proposed development was enormous, but details around specific services and models of care had not been decided.'

The 'enormous thing' they weren't sure about had its genesis 10 years earlier, when a different board and a different missioner had wanted to create not only a new building but also a whole other level of work. Diane Robertson (later Dame Diane), the first woman and the first non-clergy member to hold the job of city missioner, had initiated a project called A Mission in the City, which drew on an approach to helping the homeless called Common Ground.

Under the old way, 'clients' had to be 'clean': if someone wanted a home off the streets, they had to be off drugs and alcohol or whatever other problems made them homeless. Common Ground, which led to the Housing First model, turned that on its head: give someone a home, it proposed, and

wrap the health and other social services they need around them, and they'll have a far better chance of getting back on their feet.

In 2006, Robertson invited Rosanne Haggerty to Auckland. Haggerty was the founder of Common Ground in New York, which had been buying up old hotels to repurpose for use by the homeless. At the Mission, they liked what they heard. Robertson promoted Haggerty's ideas strongly, not only within the Mission but also to the movers and shakers of the city, the funding agencies and the philanthropists who might come on board. She was supported by Wilf Holt, who was then a senior manager at the Mission and is her husband.

'Wilf has always been there,' says Richard Didsbury, 'and he's still there. He is still working with the street homeless community. He helped write the first brief, way back in 2006. He always knew how to articulate the needs and the benefits of the project.'

The dream wasn't limited to helping the people sleeping in shop doorways and under bridges. A Mission in the City would also offer accommodation to single parents. It's a gender issue, because single parents are almost always women. We tend to think the chronic homeless are almost all men, but that's because women with acute housing needs are less likely to risk sleeping alone in public places. This doesn't mean there aren't many women desperate for help.

In 2007 the Mission held an architectural competition to design the centre. It was won by Stevens Lawson Architects, a small, award-winning local firm run by Nicholas Stevens and Gary Lawson, in collaboration with another local architect, Rewi Thompson (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Raukawa). 'Rewi liked to say he was our corroborator,' says Stevens. 'It was a word he preferred to "collaborator".' Plans were drawn up and approved, fundraising was underway, consent applications were lodged and granted . . . It looked to everyone involved as if it was going to happen.

Then the world collapsed. In the wake of the global financial crisis in late 2008 and 2009, the Mission's funding options disappeared, the board lineup changed, a more cautious approach was adopted, and the dream died. Or so it seemed. But the dream didn't die.

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In the years that followed, the board looked at modest options to rehouse the Mission's existing operations. Should it buy another building, or build a new home on the current site for the administration and kitchen and other

George Darvell painting in the HomeGround activity room.

The chair of the Mission board since 2020, Auckland lawyer Joanna Pidgeon.

services? Stevens Lawson worked up more plans and the Mission asked stakeholders what they thought. Joanna Pidgeon, a commercial property lawyer, had joined the board by this stage and been appointed chair of the property committee. 'We asked members of the business community,' she says, 'also people from the Anglican Church and some philanthropic people.' Robertson took them on tours of the premises to reveal the scope of the problem, and a study was commissioned.

Pidgeon says pretty much all the responses were the same. 'People said, "If you want us to donate money, it's got to be for something that shows some vision."'

The board took the message. 'They knew,' says Farrelly. 'The difficulty was not just in knowing they had to build, but also in working out what the future shape of the Mission services would be. How was this building going to work? What would happen inside it?'

Bill English (later Sir Bill) helped them to answer that. As finance minister in the National-led government, he was developing an approach to welfare called 'social investment', which aimed to identify the people, especially children, who are most at risk and provide the services they need to allow them to build functional, productive lives. English told the Mission that in this context there could be money available for social housing.

'He had been very influenced by the "Family 100" piece of work,' says Celia Caughey. 'Family 100' was a research project instigated by Diane Robertson in 2013 and 2014, which did a deep dive into what it was like to live in poverty. The study interviewed people who were regular users of the Mission foodbank once a fortnight for a year: it analysed the issues that participants reported facing, recorded the many different agencies with which they were engaging and drew up a series of maps showing where those issues were most acute, to produce an 'empathy tool'.

Robertson says English used to carry the 'Family 100' report around in his pocket; Celia Caughey says he was so impressed he wanted to know why Treasury wasn't doing research like it. 'With his interest, we got serious,' she says. Five board members — Jim White, Celia Caughey, Joanna Pidgeon, Russell Hay and David Shand — went to Melbourne to look at the Common Ground operation there. 'We paid all our own costs, of course we did. The Mission's money is donors' money and we're not going to spend it on ourselves. There are no free lunches around here,' says Celia Caughey.

They visited four facilities in Melbourne, all built with government funds. 'After the GFC,' says Joanna Pidgeon, 'the Kevin Rudd government had funded a whole lot of Common Grounds. It was like a lolly scramble. You came up with something and they funded it.' Melbourne stimulated the

board but the trip also raised some questions. The Australian programme could be implemented in a range of ways. What would be best for Auckland? Should they focus on temporary or transitional accommodation? What services should be on site? They didn't have a lot of money: What was the best way to spend it?

On top of that, there was no lolly scramble for government money here: in the wake of the GFC, the Australian and New Zealand governments took a radically different approach to public projects like this. A major fundraising drive would be essential. 'We came back from Melbourne fired up and needing to hire a good new city missioner,' says Joanna Pidgeon. 'We were thinking, we need a good corporate fundraiser. But Chris just blew us out of the water.'

'We got Chris on board after the Melbourne trip,' says Celia Caughey. 'We asked him to review the Mission services and look at how to get this building moving. The main driver was to provide effective solutions. We know it's not effective just to be giving people a cup of tea and sending them back on the street. We told Chris, "We want to be doing something effective to help them through the issues that put them on the street in the first place."'

Farrelly believes he brought the Mission an understanding that it had to work with the other agencies doing similar work, often with the same 'clients'. 'There was a siloed approach right across the whole sector. The Mission did its thing, the Sallies [Salvation Army] did their thing and others did theirs. There was no interconnectedness and little coordination between the different agencies,' he says.

Caughey agrees. 'Up to then we hadn't really been involved with other people, because everyone's competing for the funding. Chris was able to say, "Look, if it works, let's all work together." So we opened up to a new spirit of collaboration.'

Farrelly thinks the old way was born of a rivalry among the churches. 'I think it came out of the old days: "My flag is bigger than yours", or "My cross could be higher in the sky", you know? A lot of the organisations working in the homeless space have a religious heritage.'

Farrelly discovered that Housing First, which was similar to Common Ground, was already being developed in New Zealand. Its instigators included the Wise Group in Hamilton, led by Julie Nelson; Lifewise in Auckland, led by Moira Lawler and linked to the Methodist Church; and Visionwest in west Auckland, led by Lisa Woolley. 'I told the Mission that if I'm going to take this job, I'm going to do it closely with others. It's the way I've always worked. It's the only way: you and I together will do far more

than you and I can do on our own. I said this would mean setting up a whole lot of relationships with people and we'd work very closely with them. This was genuinely new for the Mission. Genuinely very new.'

For Lifewise and the Mission this was especially important because they both operated in the central city. Visionwest was based in west Auckland, while the Wise Group operated through LinkPeople in the south of the city. 'It was Moira at Lifewise who educated me about Housing First,' says Farrelly. 'I knew nothing about it. But boy, did I listen. I have tremendous respect for her. In my mind, Moira, Julie and Lisa are the pioneers of Housing First in New Zealand.'

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The formative moment came in October 2016, when they all attended a Housing First conference in Canada. 'We did a lot of talking and listening,' Farrelly says, 'sharing meals, a glass of wine, and we formed an incredible relationship. Those key people and their success as CEOs have remained at the heart of all this. On our return, we formed the Housing First Auckland Collective, which has led Housing First development in Auckland ever since.' In Hamilton, the Wise Group was early out of the blocks with a Housing First initiative called the People's Project.

Among the Australian Common Ground projects, the exemplar was generally thought to be in Brisbane. The University of Queensland had just finished a five-year review of the Brisbane Common Ground, including a comparative analysis which found that the cost of leaving a person on the street for a year — including police time, court appearances, time spent in the emergency department and in hospital — was, on average, A$13,000 more expensive than housing that person for a year.

Farrelly says the Queensland study was compelling. 'In terms of change of life, keeping people out of prison, health, hospital emergencies, forming new relationships, getting jobs, Common Ground just ticked all these boxes. All because you're giving somebody a permanent home.' He and White went to have a look. They were, says Farrelly, 'very moved by what we saw there'. Finally, they knew what they were going to do. And Jim White's drive remained pivotal.

'He'd spent time in the States, with the church, and typically in the States they'll embark on big hairy projects, they'll build an enormous church, so he wasn't frightened to think like that,' says Richard Didsbury. 'Churches have always built big, but he said to the Anglicans, "We don't

Cookie — a Mission, and now HomeGround, regular — plays the piano in Haeata, the HomeGround dining room.

A filmmaking class in the tenants' lounge with tutor Dieneke Jansen and HomeGround tenants and clients Sherokee Paikea, Nequitah Oaariki and Sean O'Dwyer.

need more cathedrals." He was challenging some of the more traditional views: he really wanted to move money and resources into the poor, through the Mission.'

Nicholas Stevens also credits the enthusiasm of Chris Farrelly. 'I went to his welcome at the Mission in the middle of 2016 and I came back and told Gary I'd just met this amazing man.'

'Nick said this guy wanted to do the building,' says Gary Lawson. 'And I was like, "Whatever."'

'But it was true,' says Stevens. 'The board had decided they were going to build and he was going to make it happen.'

Stevens Lawson was given a revised brief to provide the Mission with fit-for-purpose spaces for accommodation, health and other services and administration. Robertson's dream of building a second tower to house single parents was set aside, considered too big for a charity with no guaranteed income. The fresh focus would now be on giving permanent homes to the chronic homeless, a concept adopted from A Mission in the City.

The architects adapted their plans from 10 years earlier and a different concept emerged: the new, reoriented building would be 10 storeys, with accommodation for 80 tenants, a medical centre, a managed withdrawal or social detox unit, a central place where people could engage with the Mission and use its services, including showers and toilets, a commercial kitchen and café, function rooms, a chapel-like quiet place, and a rooftop vegetable garden for the exclusive use of those who lived there. The budget was $76 million. As the architects got down to the detailed work, the board began to wrap the engineering and other professional services they would need around them.

In December 2016, Farrelly invited the architects for Christmas drinks at a bar in Parnell. The quantity surveyor, Konrad Trankels from White Associates, was there, along with the project manager, Andrew McDonald from TSA Management. Farrelly told them all, 'We're going to build this, guys. Next year, it's all go.'

Lawson says, 'We believed it. We never doubted. It was like, "Wow."'

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The Mission had the land on Hobson Street and it had a bit of money, thanks to a facilities reserve fund into which it had been putting every bequest. The grand total was $8 million. They were going to need a lot more.

In early 2017, two other key people emerged. 'One of them,' says Chris Farrelly, 'was a woman called Paula Bennett.' Bennett is a former beneficiary who served as minister of social development in the National-led government of John Key and, in late 2016, when English succeeded Key as prime minister, she became deputy PM. She and English were close and he had briefed her on his own interest in the project.

'I met with her to explain what we were thinking,' says Farrelly. 'We knew that anything that was going to come from government would have to come through her. And she got it. She knew about Housing First and it ticked a lot of boxes for her. She said if we could get things right, they would be supportive.' Soon after that meeting, the Ministry of Social Development put out a request for proposals (an RFP) for operational funding to trial Housing First in Auckland.

'They told us any organisation that wants to set up a pilot programme should apply,' says Farrelly. 'Moira Lawler and I spoke and we agreed it would be stupid if Lifewise put in one proposal and the Mission put in another, effectively in competition; so we decided to do it together. Wise Group put in one for South Auckland, Affinity Services which then became Kāhui Tū Kaha, run by Ngāti Whātua also put one in, and so did Visionwest. But although we put in separately, we were working together as part of the Auckland Housing First Collective. It's still operating today. We've all worked incredibly closely together, we've centralised data, shared information, all the things that are best done together. That's the result of the bonds we formed in Canada.'

The ministry accepted all five bids and approved the coordinated approach. 'The deal with that first tranche of funding,' says Farrelly, 'was that it would guarantee people living in a Housing First arrangement could stay there. They'd pay 25 per cent of their benefit and whatever happened to market rents, that would all be covered by the agreement. That's quite phenomenal, it really is.'

Joanna Pidgeon says that guarantee of operational funding for the tenancies gave the Mission the confidence to proceed with HomeGround. But it wasn't the only good news: the ministry also agreed to contribute $9 million over 25 years towards the cost of employing two 'concierges' — a new concept that meant there would be security and social worker support available 24/7. 'That was critical, too. To know we could provide a protected environment for the tenants and always have people there to deal with issues when they arose.'

Then, with the opex in place, the Mission went back to Paula Bennett to ask for a capital grant. 'And we got that, too,' says Farrelly. 'We were

granted $18 million for the project, although it took almost a year to get through the system.'

Meanwhile, Celia Caughey, who chaired the board's campaign planning committee, had spent the summer thinking about how they would make it happen. They knew they would need a powerful campaign group, and it would be critical to find the right chair — someone with a high profile and a reputation for integrity and for getting things done, who had good connections to the money in the city, who would bring credibility to the campaign and be willing to lead by example with a substantial donation themselves. A friend suggested she talk to Richard Didsbury.

Didsbury is a property investor and developer, a philanthropist in the arts and other fields, and a wine grower. He and Diane Robertson had been members of the Committee for Auckland, a think-tank made up largely of chief executives from the private and public sectors. He was involved with Robertson's Mission in the City project in 2006, but after that collapsed he stepped away.

Caughey invited him in for a meeting. 'Richard was fantastic,' she remembers. 'He had enormous humility. He said, "I'll do anything you ask of me."' He joined the campaign planning committee, and in May 2017, when the board converted that group into the campaign executive, they invited him to become chair.

The government's $18 million commitment wasn't finally confirmed until August 2017, but Didsbury was confident from the start. 'They'd gone to the government and the dialogue for that money was reasonably advanced. And they had $8 million in the trust fund. That meant we needed to raise another $40 million.'

Soon after that first meeting with Celia Caughey, Didsbury met with Jim White and Chris Farrelly. He was impressed by them both. He said to Farrelly, 'This time we're bloody well going to do it.'

The view from a balcony towards St Matthew-in-the-City and showing a window design by Graham Tipene.

Spyda (Ngāti Maniapoto), peer support kaimahi.