

MP 'gobsmacked' by emergency housing needs on Waiheke

Waiheke's new MP has promised to help Living Waters Church find funding to bring its emergency housing facilities up to standard.

Wiremu Te Taniwha has for years relied on donations and grants to run the Surf-dale site and hosted Auckland Central MP Chloe Swarbrick on Sunday 13 December.

But Ms Swarbrick said the organisation had clearly been let down by bureaucracy and she'd vowed to help them turn around what they had to offer the community.

"I'm utterly gobsmacked that Pastor Wiremu has been running this with the shirt off his back and whānau support for the past eight years," she told *Gulf News*, adding that Living Waters has been passed from organisation to organisation in its attempts to get support to bring its facilities up to standard.

She said the organisation's struggles demonstrated the failure of bureaucracy when there were so many people's lives hanging in the balance.

"I will effectively be held to account

publicly by them on where we get to from here. I will find funding to ensure those quarters are brought up to living standards.

"Those quarters are supposed to only hold eight people but who are they going to turn away when the police turn up with people?"

She said it shows that on one hand the state is aware of Living Waters' emergency housing facility, but on the other hand was not providing the necessary resources to help it reach required standards.

"It's on me to figure out what funding box we can get it to fit into," she said.

Her approach was to go behind the scenes and try to leverage community pressure to magnify attention on the problem in order to get adequate funding to shift things.

Emergency housing on the island is the canary in the coalmine and the harshest manifestation that Waiheke's housing in general is becoming unaffordable, Ms Swarbrick said. In the Auckland region, Waiheke ranked third per capita for homelessness, she said.

On Waiheke the housing crisis is not just emergency housing, there are also those in inadequate



Wiremu Te Taniwha work has impressed Waiheke's new MP, considering he's been "running this with the shirt off his back and whānau support".

arrangements, those getting kicked out and where the very people who service the community are unable to afford to live there, she said.

"It really feels that unless some meaningful intervention is taken that we run the risk of Waiheke becoming the next Queenstown. We need to avoid accidentally sleepwalking into that," Ms Swarbrick said. • *Erin Johnson*



Chloe Swarbrick says the future of Living Waters funding "is on me".



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