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It's time to shake it up

John Tamihere Policy for Homelessness and Begging

House the Homeless and Ban the Beggar – with Compassion

Homelessness in this city has come to be so prevalent, that a number of people have become numb to the inhumanity of it and have normalised the abnormal as if Auckland were a replica of Los Angeles or San Francisco.

We can fix homelessness in the city without recourse to regulation or the requirement of the Criminal Justice System by ensuring that the hundreds of millions of dollars voted to Auckland Crown Agencies, is applied efficiently and effectively on the streets of Auckland.

Homelessness is NOT a local government issue. It is a central government issue.

The millions of dollars that Auckland Council splurges on subsidising central government failure must stop.

Capitalism can be practised with compassion and that is how I will address homelessness.

I am in this mayoral race because the present mayor determined that there will be a cap on social housing on publically owned ratepayer land. Council owns some of the most strategic and important land parcels that could bring an end to homelessness in the city, but more importantly they are brown field sites close to transport and existing infrastructure.

You cannot deny citizens a fair housing deal solely because they earn under \$80k per year, are superannuitants or welfare beneficiaries. They all have rights and they all have work or can work.

Human Rights Breach

Accordingly, I have filed a Human Rights Tribunal Urgency claim requesting that the present mayor's social housing policy be deemed a breach of Human Rights that adversely effects superannuitants, welfare beneficiaries and those earning under \$80k per year.

It is one thing to chortle over housing consents, it's another thing to know where those housing units are going to be built, and if after consenting they actually will be built. Consents and new builds are two absolutely different metrics.

Accordingly, with the support of central government, far more social housing will be built in partnership with council so the rights of superannuitants, welfare beneficiaries and those earning under \$80 per year in the city will be safeguarded. They have a right and entitlement to a fair housing situation.

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Homelessness:

In the 35 years I have worked in social, health and education services and now as a major developer of housing, on the streets of West Auckland, I know exactly what I am talking about. I do not need to spend \$500k to look for the homeless. I know exactly where they are.

Rather than spending ratepayer money to fund political stunts, you have to know the street.

There are basically 3 cohorts of homeless. All three of those cohorts are impacted by mental un-wellness problems.

First:

The first cohort are the smallest cohort and they have been so abused and broken, they want to live off the grid. They never will accept being placed inside four walls. Every time that has occurred in their lives, the people that should have cared for them and loved them abused them instead. Many of this cohort are on some form of medication to help deal with their trauma. This cohort do not beg and do not create problems. They do sleep rough but they are a minority.

Second:

A second cohort is larger and often because of relapses, visits the street. This cohort consists of domestic violence refugees, drug and alcohol addictions and all with some degree of mental un-wellness from deep and difficult through to periodic fits of manic behaviours. Once again all of these folk are on some form of medication and will use any substitute for any high known to mankind if they can get their hands on it.

Third:

The third cohort merges at times with the second cohort and are predominantly younger folk who have come out of their homes in difficult circumstances between late October and Late April. This cohort creates minor crime sprees from burglary and from begging leading to demanding by way of menace.

The merged group have been taught to become professional beggars and this must stop.

Solution:

We must lift social housing stock dramatically, because while we do have a well-funded welfare state, it is poorly performing. This is where Mayor Goff has voted millions of dollars to subsidise that failure and once again Aucklanders get double taxed.

We have enough social workers in New Zealand, particularly in Auckland to deal with working one-on-one. With each person found on the streets, social workers, like a lot of other workers in the supply side of our economy must wake up to the fact that social work is a 24/7 job and there will be a requirement that they work 3 shifts.

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Homelessness is a health, welfare, housing and education responsibility of the state. It is not the responsibility of the council. It is not the responsibility of the Police.

The homeless causing any form of nuisance, by way of sleeping rough on the street, will be asked to accompany a social worker and that social worker must be fit for purpose. Social work is not about a regulator but a support person who has empathy and understanding.

A homeless person has an option to work with a social worker to find alternatives. If not, they are in breach of the Crimes Act and or the Summary Proceedings Act. It then becomes a Criminal Justice issue. Those who are gaming homelessness will jump into the van and go with the social worker to be sorted – I've seen it happen.

Those having significant unwellness episodes will require to be placed in a DHB or community based facility for support to smooth out that particular episode they are dealing with at that time. Jail is the wrong place for this type of person. The police know this and have better things to do than to act as social and mental health workers having their time taken up as highly paid caregivers for the mentally unwell.

Begging:

Under no circumstances should any Auckland citizen have a fit of conscience and believe they are doing any fellow Aucklander a favour by handing over donations to a beggar. Under my mayoralty, you will be able to ring 0800 JACINDA (5224632) and a person all loving and caring that knows everything about your wellbeing will answer the phone and they will be able to dispatch a social worker that can work with that particular beggar in that particular hood.

Giving to beggars is the worst form of charity you can apply. It entraps a fellow human into a belief that if they look homeless, if they are homeless, if they have mental health issues, their way to escape it is to beg, get money to fund another fix. You are not helping the poor and the homeless – you are entrapping them. You are embedding them in the worst form of charity known to mankind.

We do not need a bylaw against begging – No! We need a culture that provides support for those in difficulty but never entraps them in such a debarred conduct as begging in a welfare state.

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