



THE VOICE OF

**COMPASSION**

Te Reo o te Pūaroa



## FROM TRACK TO TRANQUILITY

"This is where I live," Chris tells us from the front of his house, where he has been living for two years. "I was in the right place at the right time," he says, explaining how he came to live in his Compassion Housing unit in Foxton.

It was a good surprise, despite never expecting to be living there.

**"I came here because the owners of the house I rented decided to sell it and they gave me three months notice. I was there for 11 years, and suddenly they didn't want a tenant anymore."**

Finding himself looking for a home after such a long time was stressful, so when he heard that a Compassion Housing opportunity was opening up he jumped on it. Chris feels very fortunate that he was offered his Compassion home, he knows how difficult it is to find affordable housing that's of a good standard.

Chris recalls how difficult it was to find a new place to live, and before that, he spent 12 months living in his car. "It wasn't that bad," he says.

Nevertheless, it was a tough blow for this former racing jockey, who throughout his life has experienced both triumphs and defeats. One of them, the early death of his wife. "She died of breast cancer when she was only 29. We were married for 8 years. Unfortunately at the time they didn't have the treatments they've got now."

In a prominent spot in his tidy and neat home, he showcases photos of her,

fondly reminiscing about the past. Beside them, he proudly shows pictures of Catherine and Chelsea, his daughters. "My eldest one lives in England (Catherine), she came to see me over Christmas. The other one is Chelsea, whom I had to raise by myself. She is a journalist now and lives in Wellington."

Memories of his life fill Chris' narrative. Since he was a child, he's been interested in horses, and he passionately recounts leaving his home in Upper Hutt at 15 years old. "I always wanted to be a jockey, so I went to Christchurch and lived there for six years and did my apprenticeship. After that I worked on several farms."

Then, life brought him back to his passion, despite having a few falls. "I had some accidents riding horses, a broken collarbone, a couple of falls, but nothing really major." His love for these animals led him not only to compete but also to breed them, sometimes rescuing horses from people who no longer wanted them.

Currently, he enjoys taking time to visit a horse he looks after a few blocks from his home. "I don't have a lot of people to be worried about. Also, everyone is busy and got their own stuff going on."

While dividing his time between working in his veggie garden, earning extra money by mowing lawns, or chatting with his neighbour, Chris is thankful for finding this place.

**"The house is good, warm and it's got everything I need. I couldn't have it better."**

## SISTER LUSIANA PULEOSI CELEBRATED HER **JUBILEE**

In an atmosphere of happiness and deep gratitude, Sister Lusiana Puleosi celebrated her Jubilee, marking 50 years since she was professed as a Sister of Compassion.

The celebration took place at the Home of Compassion, Island Bay, the very place where Lusi's life of service began. At the Jubilee, Lusi enjoyed the company of 16 sisters and around 80 family members and friends, who had travelled from Australia and different parts of Aotearoa to help her celebrate.

"Now in my Jubilee year, as I look back I've enjoyed every minute as a sister. I thank God for my vocation", she said. Lusi was grateful to be amongst those closest to her, as they gathered for Mass celebrated by Father James Lyons.

The guests continued the celebration by sharing kai together. "I'm happy about my Jubilee!" Lusi concluded.



Sr. Lusiana Puleosi at the Home of Compassion



Recalling the words of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert.

"We can never exceed in true hope, which can never be too great since it is founded on the mercy of God and on the merits of Jesus Christ."

Sister Margaret Anne Mills  
Congregational Leader

## MESSAGE FROM SISTER MARGARET ANNE

I wish you many blessings as we move into the season of winter. The cooler months highlight the need for good housing so families and people can be safe and warm. Two stories, Chris – From track to tranquility and Amannuel – Hope is our fuel, highlight the gift of a home.

Thank you for your generosity to the Mission of Compassion. Your thoughtfulness enables people to be more settled in facing day to day living. The Compassion whānau can provide safe housing, food distribution, a good meal and a quiet place to reflect and pray.

Having a place to call home is settling and special. The other day I met Tim as I was walking, via the golf course, to the Home of Compassion to join others for prayer. He was at the back of his van using an electric saw. I said, "You have an early start to your workday." He said "My landlord sold my flat, thankfully I have this van. I borrowed these tools and with an adjustment here and there I have a new home, it is good."

I have a new home and I am slowly settling in. Together with Sisters Josephine and Sue, and Francis Fanning, I have been looking for a place to live for 12 months on the No. 1 bus route. There was nothing wrong with where I was, a beautiful apartment within the Home of Compassion complex. The challenge was living under the same roof as my work. I am thankful, it still amazes me that I have a new home. When possible, I walk to prayer and work, instead of down the corridor to reach my office.

*Sister Margaret Anne Mills*

Sister Margaret Anne Mills  
Congregational Leader

## THE SUZANNE AUBERT NATIVE PLANT RONGOĀ GARDEN

The Suzanne Aubert Rongoā Garden was officially opened on the 25th of January, featuring traditional plants with healing properties that Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert used in the development of her medicinal products.

The ceremony was attended by Sisters Margaret Anne Mills, Sue Cosgrove, Josephine Gorman and Veronica Hurring, along with other members of the Compassion whānau, who were able to reconnect with old friends who have journeyed with this kaupapa over many years, following in the Rongoā footsteps of Meri Hōhepa.

The 'Suzanne Aubert Native Plant Garden' was established at Industrial Research Limited, Gracefield in Lower Hutt in June 2000, through a project led by Callaghan Innovation - Te Pokapū Auaha. While the facility is currently not open to the public due to security protocols, it is expected to be used as a source of cuttings for those who wish to start their own Rongoā Gardens in the future.

Rongoā refers to the traditional Māori healing system based on Te Whare Tapa Whā (the four pillars) of health: wairua (spiritual), tinana (physical), hinengaro (psychological) and whānau (family). Rongoā rākau (plant remedies) are an integral part of Rongoā Māori, with a wide variety of plants used to treat numerous conditions. Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert was a significant believer in and practitioner of Rongoā Māori in the late 1800s. Hence, the plants in this garden possess Rongoā properties.



## NEW VAN FOR COMPASSION SOUP KITCHEN



Sam Johnson trying out the new Compassion Soup Kitchen van.

Spacious and with great capacity, the new Compassion Soup Kitchen Van was purchased in December with funds granted by the TG Macarthy Trust, which has kindly supported the Sisters of Compassion for a long time.

With a mission to help build strong, inclusive, and supportive communities, the TG Macarthy Trust is continuing the legacy of Mr Thomas Macarthy and his wife Mary Ellen, both close friends of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert. Macarthy was instrumental in the building of the Home of Compassion with a starting gift of 500 pounds in 1900.

With this new van, the Compassion Soup Kitchen will be able to continue helping vulnerable people in Wellington, providing them with the support they need.

## HOPE IS OUR FUEL

"I feel like we're seeing a movie, like in a dream or something like that. With all the nature, everything is green here," says Amannuel smiling. It has been a few weeks since he arrived in Aotearoa from Ethiopia, after an 11-year wait as a refugee.

Like many others, he and his mother left their native Eritrea. Thanks to the efforts of a lawyer, they were able to arrive in Wellington, where they have begun to experience their new reality and plan to build a future.

Their first month was spent at Our Lady's Home of Compassion, where they stayed and received support while Refugee Family Reunification Trust and Red Cross arranged a permanent home for them.

**"We're feeling really happy. We're feeling safe here, we are feeling at home. All the hospitality that we are receiving, all the kindness."**

While the Eritrean community has been there to help them, the most important thing is a place to live, he says. "Without a home I don't think we'd be able to achieve our future ideas or goals. I think having a place to live is the foundation. From there, I can get a job and accomplish our dreams."

For Amannuel, a secondary school teacher, those dreams are clear. He plans to continue studying and furthering his education, although in a different field. "I like health sciences. I would like to study medicine, that's my dream. If I get the opportunity, why not?", he says with conviction.



However, he is aware that things will come slowly. He acknowledges that he must first learn the basics, from how to get around to how to find a job to support himself, as well as worrying about his mother, who must learn to communicate in English.

Amannuel remains surprised by the graciousness shown by those who helped them, which builds hope for what lies ahead.

**"We always had hope, always. That was the thing that pushed us to be here. That was our fuel, and we are here now. We still have hope."**

## REBECCA PACKER APPOINTED NEW TUMU WHAKARAE

A morning pōwhiri was held in March at Our Lady's Home of Compassion in Island Bay, to welcome Rebecca Packer, newly appointed Tumu Whakarae Co-CE, to the Sisters of Compassion Group.

The ceremony of welcome was held at the Chapel of Our Lady of Compassion, and was attended by staff, sisters and Rebecca's family. Rebecca joins us after previously working at Crown Law, specialising in public law. She is familiar with our mission, having served on the Boards of The Mother Aubert Home of Compassion Trust Board and Our Lady's Home of Compassion Board for several years.

Rebecca says, "It is a privilege to step into the role of Tumu Whakarae Co-CE of the Sisters of Compassion Group at this time."

"I look forward to partnering with Compassion whānau to build on the strong foundation of prayerful and practical service established by Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert and faithfully embodied by the Sisters of Compassion and by supporters and volunteers over many years."

"I am very pleased to take up this opportunity and to help ensure the transformational work of Compassion continues to flourish in Aotearoa New Zealand, for the benefit of our communities and to the glory of God."



Rebecca Packer and Danny Karatea-Goddard.

## SUZANNE AUBERT TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP

Three students have been awarded the Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert Tertiary Scholarship to assist them in completing their studies in 2024. This year, the recipients are Atawhai Lynch, Imilia Ruocco and Leona Coral.

The Sisters thank The Mother Aubert Home of Compassion Trust Board who make this possible, and congratulate the students on their successful applications.



### Atawhai Lynch

Atawhai is a Nursing student at Massey University. "I have enjoyed my time as a student and I am really looking forward to my final year. I hope to contribute to Aotearoa by being the most compassionate, kind and caring nurse I can be."

"This scholarship is an honour and I will continue to look up to Mother Suzanne Aubert, with her compassion and courage."



### Imilia Ruocco

Imilia is a student at Victoria University of Wellington. In 2024, she will be studying a Master's of Health Psychology. "I hope to work in community environments such as hospitals, mental health sectors, or within the public sector, focusing on health for women, especially Māori and Pasifika" said Imilia.



### Leona Coral

Leona Coral is a student at Whitireia Polytechnic Porirua. In 2024, she will be finishing her Bachelor of Nursing degree. "Once I complete my three-year-degree course, I hope to continue serving the community, helping and caring for those who are vulnerable, sick and dying with compassion, kindness and determination."

## AMAZING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Volunteering at the Compassion Soup Kitchen inspired staff at JLL Wellington to believe they could do even more to help. So they organised a charity golf day for their clients at the Miramar Golf Club in March, raising more than \$17,500.

Stathis Moutos, Head of Agency, Wellington, said it all started after volunteering last year. "It had quite a profound effect on most of us that were there, seeing how many meals were prepared. We were talking to other volunteers about how a lot is donated. Even while we were volunteering, there were people coming round the back and donating goods."

"This was a real eye-opener for us all. Two months later, we started thinking how can we do more?"

Stathis tells how they got down to work. "We hatched a plan of having an event, so we decided to hold a golf day and invite clients and friends of ours to enter a team, play the holes, and donate items for the auction."

The event was held in early February with around 90 players, who took part in the mini-tournament and auction. Rebecca Packer and Danny Karatea-Goddard, Sisters of Compassion's Tumu Whakarae, attended the event to thank JLL Wellington for their fantastic support.



Stathis Moutos, Head of Agency Wellington attending the golf event at Miramar Golf Club.



JLL Wellington team with Danny Karatea-Goddard and Rebecca Packer.



Teams enjoying a day of golf at Miramar Golf Club.

### DONOR PROFILE

**Committed to helping the community**

**St. Patrick's College**

A valuable donation was gratefully received from the students of St Patrick's College Wellington, who this year made an appeal to raise funds for the Compassion Soup Kitchen. In just a few days, the students managed to gather a total of \$4,000 dollars.

Additionally, they collected items such as

clothes and toiletries. These essential items were donated by the students during their visit to the Compassion Soup Kitchen before Easter.

This generosity reflects the commitment of the students of St Patrick's to the Compassion Soup Kitchen and their long-standing relationship with Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert, who once served as the school nurse.



### VOLUNTEER PROFILE

**"We were surprised by how lovely the place was"**

**Pete Heald, JLL Wellington**

Pete had a surprise when he volunteered at the Compassion Soup Kitchen. Along with his workmates from JLL Wellington, he helped prepare the dinner, cutting broccoli and pumpkin. "When we got there, we were surprised by how lovely the place was", he said.

"We saw the people coming in for clothing and other stuff, and the respect shown to these people. I like the fact that you call them whānau, because there is no difference, it is whānau", said Pete.

He thinks there should be more awareness about the work of the Compassion Soup Kitchen, after his volunteering experience. "We wanted to let other people know how great you guys are, because some people don't know what you do." About volunteering again, has no doubt: "Certainly, we will do it again."



## DONATE NOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

### WAYS TO DONATE

**Website:** [www.compassion.org.nz](http://www.compassion.org.nz)

**Phone:** (04) 383 7769

### Online Banking

Account Name: The Mother Aubert Home of Compassion – Trust Board

Account Number: BNZ 02-0500-0017474-00

## GET IN TOUCH

**Address:** 2 Rhine Street, Island Bay, Wellington 6023

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### NEWSLETTER

If you would like to receive our e-newsletter, please email your details to [donations@compassion.org.nz](mailto:donations@compassion.org.nz)