

**Speech: Opening of the Te Orewai Place Complex : Hon Tariana Turia**

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**Minister of Disability Issues**

**Official opening of the new Te Orewai  
Place complex, Avonside House Trust**

**Speech**

**Christchurch**

**Delivered by Nicky Wagner, List MP**

**Thursday 30 June 2011, 10am**

I want to thank Graham Martin, The Trust Board Chair; and Karin Hofmans, your Manager, for the invitation to be with you all today.

Forty years ago this week, a Carole King classic peaked at number one on the Billboard Top 100 hits. It's a song that I dare say has been symbolic of the lives you, the people of Canterbury, have lived over these last nine months.

It states, quite simply 'I feel the earth move under my feet; I feel the sky tumbling down, tumbling down'.

As I looked at the photos of Avonside House after the 22<sup>nd</sup> February earthquake this year it certainly seemed as if the sky was tumbling down in every direction.

Today we remember the trauma of that day for the eleven residents who lost their home in a sudden eruption of the land.

Avonside House suffered extensive damage; the hostel and office were damaged so extensively that demolition was planned. All 25 residents were evacuated to the North Island or to stay with family.

That was then – but this is now – and it is simply so wonderful to be a part of this new Te Orewai Place Complex – a new home for you all.

Today's event is to formally open the new seven two-bedroom units for disabled persons, and a supervisor's unit.

While initially the thinking was to provide a home for all those who had lost their home – there have been some important improvements to the design that I want to mention.

The new Te Orewai Place Complex arose from a need to provide downstairs accommodation for your residents, many of them who are approaching later middle age, or have multiple disabilities which previously may have made access an issue.

It was becoming increasingly difficult for the residents to be able to access the upstairs accommodation and so with or without the earthquake, there was always going to be a need for change.

I'm really excited by what you have done here in establishing disabled units in accordance with the Lifemark standards.

Lifemark is a guarantee that your home will provide comfort and quality for all who live in it, regardless of age or mobility.

It might be as easy as having the floors at ground level or having ramp access provided to make it easy whether you are pushing a pram or using a wheelchair.

Light switches and power sockets should ideally be one metre away from corners; all ground floor doors should be wide enough to give easy access for those reliant on mobility assistance.

In essence, Lifetime design is a seal of approval – a way of making homes more usable and inclusive to fit around people – rather than what we do often see and that's making people fit around their homes.

It's like a plan for living well – a home that fits.

In the concept of Lifetime design there are five principles which I believe Avonside House demonstrates so well:

- **Usability** – the designs are uncomplicated, safe and suited for all people
- **Adaptability** – the house can be adapted to meet changing needs over time
- **Accessibility** ; everyone can easily access the home and move around freely
- **Inclusion:** your home includes everyone regardless of age, size or ability
- **Lifetime value:** the house will remain valuable over time.

I think what you're really doing here is inspiring a revolution of thinking. It's all about being accessible – creating an accessible physical environment – but it's also about innovation and about leadership.

Fundamentally, the importance of this approach is that you are working to open up access to all those who may be temporarily permanently disabled, or in need of additional support.

Today then is not just a new beginning – it is a new model to enable the disabled to live as independently as possible in an inclusive community setting.

And of course a home is not just about a physical structure. This is where it is so good to see the priority that has been given to developing good community relations.

I'm not just talking about the vocational day services and community groups. I'm talking about neighbours, friends and most of all family who provide a circle of support wrapped around everyone here.

To be a listening ear to fears; to help clean up the liquefaction; to go for a walk; to visit the library; to go to the mall.

Finally, I congratulate you on these wonderful new units.

I know that your brochures promote the Avonside House Trust as being about “supported accommodation”. It is a great description of the goals of your organization.

I am absolutely sure that this new complex will help in the earthquake recovery as well as supporting residents to live a life of greater independence.

Avonside House will continue to help to facilitate guidance in living skills and vocational training programmes alongside of caring supervision.

But most of all with these new units, the attention to design and detail will truly support you all in ensuring every single person in Avonside House, will experience your vision of enjoying ‘towards fullness of life’.