

**Before Independent Hearings Commissioners  
Rotorua Lakes Council**

**In the matter of      13 applications for resource consent for  
contracted emergency housing by Te Tūāpapa  
Kura Kāinga Ministry of Housing and Urban  
Development**

---

**Statement of evidence by  
AKSHAT RAJVANSHI  
POHUTU MOTOR LODGE**

**12<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

---



**Counsel**  
Nick Whittington  
Hawkestone Chambers  
PO Box 12091, Thorndon,  
Wellington 6144  
+64 21 861 814  
nick.whittington@hawkestone.co.nz

# Statement of evidence by Akshat Rajvanshi

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 I, Akshat Rajvanshi, Company Director of Auckland, state:
- 1.2 I am a director and shareholder of Castle Management Rotorua Limited (CMR) and am authorised to provide this brief of evidence on behalf of CMR.
- 1.3 This brief of evidence is provided in support of the application for resource consent for contracted emergency housing by Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD).
- 1.4 CMR is the owner and operator of the Pohutu Motor Lodge, located at 3 Meade Street, Rotorua (PML).
- 1.5 CMR owns the PML business and the freehold property it operates from contained in record of title SA946/280.

## 2 Pohutu Motor Lodge

- 2.1 As stated above, the PML is located at 3 Meade Street, Rotorua which is the southernmost street that comes off Fenton Street and the furthest away from the town centre. The property backs on to the Te Puia geothermal area. The adjacent lot is bare land and across the road there is another motel.
- 2.2 In the pre-pandemic era PML's average annual occupancy rate was reasonably high with a 70-80% annually average. This was composed of a mixture of long- and short-term guests. Even prior to the pandemic it was common for PML to have some guests staying in units for many months.



### 3 Contracted Emergency Housing

- 3.1 CMR was approached around May 2021 by MHUD to ascertain as to our availability to supply rooms to be utilised for contracted emergency housing.
- 3.2 Prior to this we had been accommodating Ministry of Social Development (MSD) guests on an ad hoc basis by providing actual “*emergency housing*” with no security and wrap around support services being supplied.
- 3.3 This decision to host these guests was based on the harrowing occupancy rates we were faced with and PML’s suitability to be used for such a purpose.
- 3.4 As noted, the PML’s location and layout made it better suited to be able to provide this service than others in Rotorua. Further, the design of the units and their layout are suited to accommodate large families. We have nine units that have two bedrooms with kitchenettes. As such the units we offer are more like apartment living as opposed to the “motel style living” that can be found in other less well-appointed properties.
- 3.5 Most of the units in PML are suites with two bedrooms, two bathrooms and a separate living a lounge area which makes it perfect for families with children. Even the studios are spacious and have kitchenettes which makes them good for longer stays for smaller families.
- 3.6 We had concerns about the issues that MHUD guests might cause, this was due to the experience we had with MSD guests where no support was offered in terms of security or wraparound services.
- 3.7 As such, it was essential from our perspective that MHUD gave these guests sufficient levels of support and assistance. Security was also arranged to be on site 24/7 to ensure that if any issues arose it would be dealt with promptly and professionally.
- 3.8 The combination of these measures has meant that we have been successfully able to host MHUD’s guests with little to no change in terms of the impact PML has on nearby residents and businesses.
- 3.9 Moreover, I believe that the operations and support provided by MHUD for their guests is just not accommodation but more of a counselling for people who have genuine needs and requirements. I don’t even categorise this as



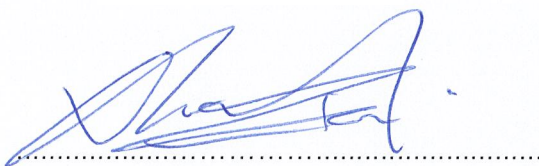
“emergency housing” which is more what MSD provides in other non-contracted establishments in Rotorua and other parts of the country.

- 3.10 MHUD provides a process to which their guests can have a better future. This also enables children to be out and about and have equal opportunities to achieve a brighter future.
- 3.11 PML has a large on-site secure courtyard which is utilised by MHUD guests as a recreational area. Further, given PML’s location on the very fringe of the town and the large lot spacious surroundings around it, this means that there is lots of outdoor space in the near vicinity.
- 3.12 The whaka geothermal trail network is only meters away. Transport is also laid on by MHUD to enable their guests to get to facilities and or amenities as is required.
- 3.13 Following the successful hosting of MHUD’s guests over the past 16 months, we have taken the decision to remove all signage that might mislead or confuse a passer-by into thinking that PML was available to book as it was prior to the agreement with MHUD commenced and will also take down the website. These measures are being implemented over the next few months.
- 3.14 In addition to owning and operating the PML, I am also an experienced hotelier with interests in numerous hospitality businesses throughout the country. The tourist sector is a long way from having recovered and a conservative estimate might put that at several years away from now before there is sufficient demand to operate a business like the PML as was the case pre pandemic.
- 3.15 Were it not for the agreement with MHUD the PML would not have been able to continue to operate and the business would have been forced to close. That would still be the case at present given the low demand for this type of accommodation from the tourist sector.
- 3.16 As such, the agreement we have with MHUD and related resource consent is essential to our business and the livelihood of the staff we employ and most importantly for the wider Rotorua society, so that people and especially children can have better future.



3.17 PML's location, design and appointments make it perfectly suited to hosting MHUD's guests. We are also in the uncommon position of being both the land and business owner which gives us full flexibility to make decisions relating to the property and operations that best cater to provide a spacious and secure environment from which MHUD can operate. In our view that makes the PML the best location in Rotorua to provide this essential service to the community.

Date: 12th October 2022



Akshat Rajvanshi

Director

Castle Management Rotorua Ltd T/A Pohutu Motor Lodge