

Action plan for Manurewa

By William Mace and Karen Mangnall

FAST-TRACKING more preschools, building more affordable housing and a community trust running safety centres in needy areas are on a new action agenda for Manurewa.

The community board's advocacy plan was outlined at a meeting on Friday between more than 100 Manurewa community leaders, councillors, educators, government ministers, MPs and top officials.

Manurewa councillor Colleen Brown says the proposal is the result of more than six months' work with local police and won strong support at Friday's meeting, including that of Social Development Minister Ruth Dyson. "It was amazing, it was

fantastic," Ms Brown says.

Central to the board's proposal is a "high-level" trust to run community centres in Manurewa's neediest areas with outreach programmes at schools, marae, whanu centres or community houses.

The trust's job will be to identify areas of high need and to be an advocate for the community to government departments.

That means its members will need to be "really high level" government, community and council representatives who can "make decisions and bend the ear of their ministers".

Ms Brown says the community safety centres will provide a "one-door service" for government and council services and be the hub for "efficient and cost-effective

wrap-around services" out in the community.

She's warned government ministers they will "have to write a very big cheque" because offices with high visibility in a commercial centre "won't come cheap".

The community board aims to set up the trust and a first community safety centre by the end of August.

It also wants an urgent meeting with Education Minister Chris Carter to get more preschools "up and running by next year".

Getting kids on track for success at school is essential, given youth crime, truancy and "young children out on streets at night", Ms Brown says.

Manurewa is "crying out for" more preschools but it takes more than two years to set up each one during which

a "whole cohort" of kids miss out.

The board wants a template for early childhood education centres so "we can whack them out and get them on site" and a council officer dedicated to expediting building and resource consents.

Building more affordable housing to buy is also a priority given the drop in home ownership in Manurewa, Ms Brown says.

Poor planning, urban design and tenancy management of the ward's 3014 state houses all contribute to a rise in social problems.

Housing New Zealand needs better control over "who they let into Manurewa" and how they're located and managed.

Ms Brown believes that once the trust starts re-

searching it will find "overcrowding and families in crisis, possibly even worse than we think" in marginalised areas.

With 80,000 residents Manurewa is a "city within a city" but was not equipped properly to deal with its highly diverse population and "deep seated" problems.

Many residents don't feel part of their community and don't understand or use council and government services, she says.

Friday's meeting didn't discuss a 10-point plan from the government which Prime Minister Helen Clark believes can "put things right" for Manurewa.

It includes the immediate appointment of two more youth workers and three more case managers, introducing Pacific wardens pa-

trols, a base and transport support for Maori wardens, a youth drop-in centre and monitoring of vacant state houses to reduce vandalism.

"Sometimes out of something horrible that's happened can be the opportunity to put something right and that's got to be a good thing," Miss Clark says.

But Ms Brown says the community board sees the 10-point plan as "business as usual" rather than a solution.

"That's fine, terrific, well done, but it's stuff they should be doing anyway, our community deserves that."

The board's proposal is "transformational", she says, looks at how to "change people's lives in the long term".

"It's a quite different approach from saying gimme, gimme, gimme."

Companies use electric fences to keep taggers at bay

By Hannah Norton

Taggers could soon be in for a shocking experience.

More and more Manukau businesses are installing electric security fences to prevent graffiti.

Manurewa-based Electric Security Fencing has seen a big jump in demand for its fences over the last year.

Managing director Mark Harrison says the Manukau City Council and Manukau Beautification Trust do a fantastic job of clearing graffiti but "the problem is chronic and getting worse".

Graffiti vandalism is affecting many businesses.

"We are installing fences for businesses from distribution to food to electronics to car yards to retail stores to dairies," he says.

"In just one break-in at a transport company this month 17 vehicles were extensively defaced, causing around \$10,000.

"Businesses just can't afford to be hurt like that."

A spokeswoman from Clendon New World says the supermarket's back storage area has an electric fence and that area es-

capades tagging as "they can't get in".

But the store's front entrance in the mall still gets tagged.

"They even climb the roof and tag the air conditioning."

And vandals also tag the trolleys, she says.

"We've had one set of trolleys for two weeks and they've already tagged the handlebars. They'll tag anything."

Mr Harrison says 10,000 volts pulse through the electric fences every second but they won't physically harm anyone.

"If you touch the wire you'll get enough of a shock to throw you backwards and it will hurt," says Mr Harrison.

When the system detects a sudden loss of voltage it sets off alarms and alerts the security company and police.

He supports new graffiti legislation but says without education and severe penalties the trend of tagging will continue.

"Vandals need to reap what they sow," he says.

Hannah Norton is a Fairfax Media journalism intern. Michael Parks is a Unitec photography student.



Shock factor: Mark Harrison says increasing numbers of Manukau businesses are installing electric fences to combat tagging. Photo: MICHAEL PARKS

Training to help refugees

Volunteers are wanted to help refugees settle into their new lives in New Zealand.

Refugee Services starts a training course for volunteers in Manukau this week.

The NZQA accredited course is provided for people willing to do a six-month volunteer placement.

It runs on Thursday evenings and Saturday daytime from July 17 to July 30.

For information and to register contact Chandra on 621-0013 or email Chandra.yogeswaran@refugeeservices.org.nz.



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