



Fishhead, Wellington

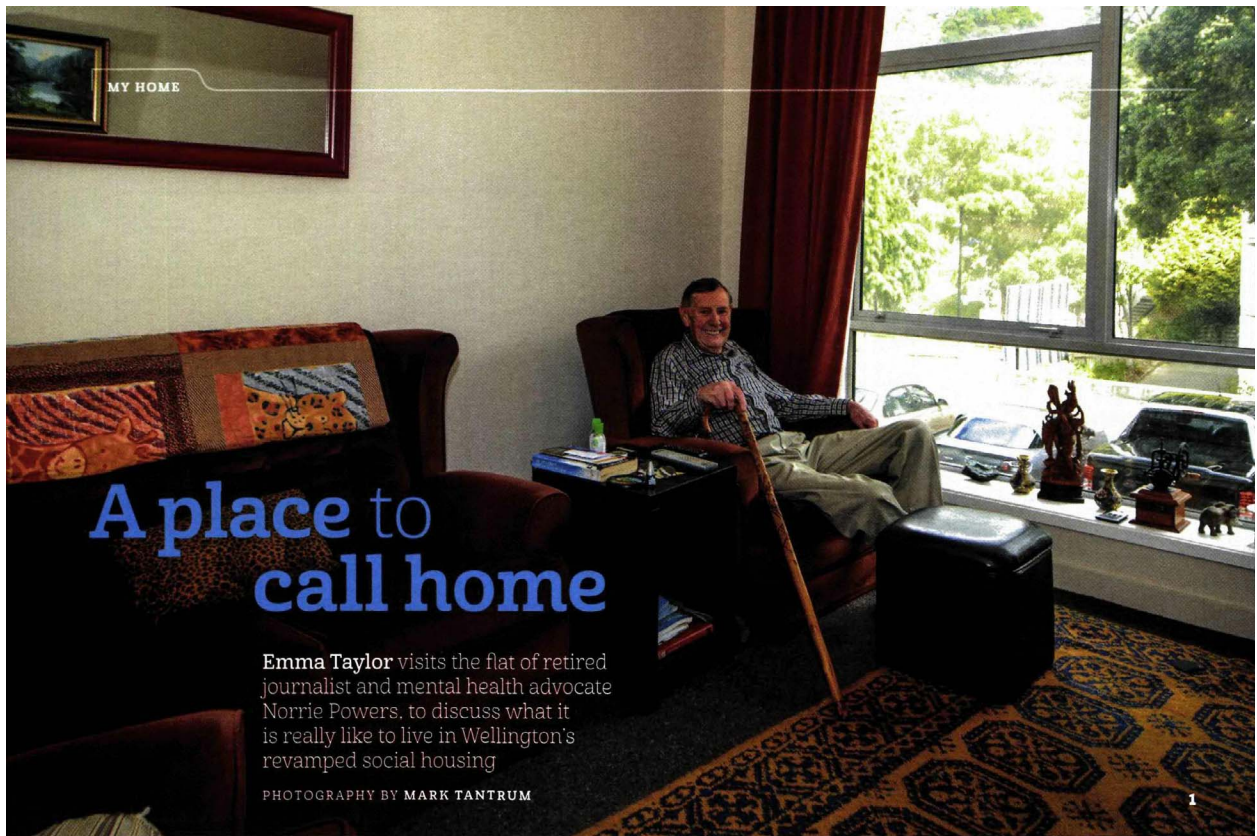
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Norrie Powers has lived in social housing for the past six years, and moved into the newly renovated Central Park Apartments in Brooklyn two years ago.

"Long story short, buying a home for the kids mixed with a few other life decisions meant I ended up here," Norrie tells us with a chuckle. He sits in his armchair and comically shares tales of his life as a journalist and about the place he calls home.

"This spot right here is my favourite," he says. "I love reading, keeping up with current affairs and watching movies right here in this seat." With his favourite chair perfectly situated in line with the television and a view of a pōhutukawa, you cannot blame him.

"When I draw the blinds and it is beautiful out there, I think, geez, I am a lucky bugger," he says.

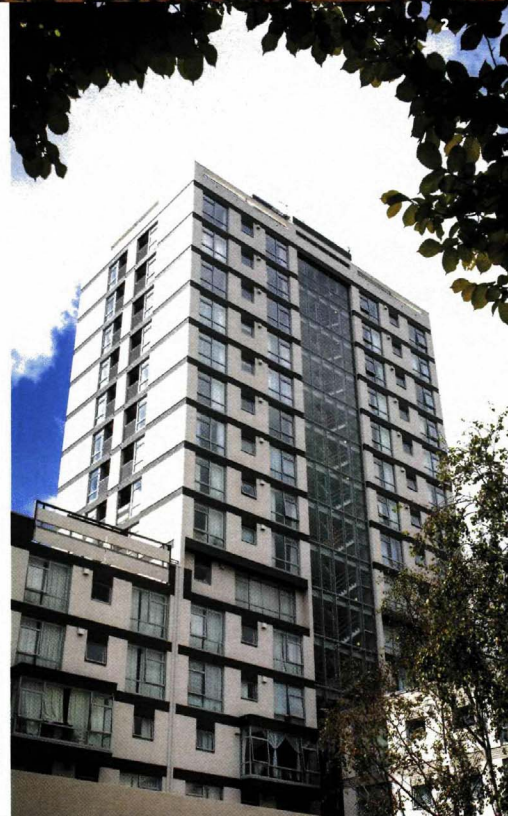
Norrie's one-bedroom apartment is adorned with all things important to him, photographs of his beloved grandchildren and an extremely large DVD and VHS collection taking centre stage.

"I live in one of the safest and healthiest places in the country since the upgrades," he says as he proudly gives us the grand tour. "We have a state-of-the-art intercom system, and the front doors are recycled from Fort Knox!" he adds with a grin.

What's more, Central Park is safe from earthquakes, Norrie tells us, and proceeds to regale us with the tale of the June 2013 earthquake, when he found himself at his mate Colin's apartment hugging a whisky bottle and hoping his home was okay. "When I returned, only a photo had fallen to the ground," he says.

"You cannot underestimate the power of a safe and healthy home, it is wonderful and has worked wonders for my well-being," Norrie tells us. "I actually look forward to coming home."

Social housing is no stranger to Mayor Celia Wade-Brown, who grew up in





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1. Norrie has Irish and Māori heritage, both of which are signified by engravings in his tokotoko (walking stick)
2. The place that Norrie calls home
3. Norrie proudly gave us the grand tour of his home, pointing out some of its finer features, such as the large amount of storage space
4. Central Park is perfectly situated just outside the CBD
5. Norrie is a man of many talents. He carved this lizard, his kaitiaki (guardian), on a stick he found on the beach
6. Norrie has quite an extensive collection of DVDs and VHS tapes
7. Norrie shows off his cheeky side, playing up for the photographer



MY HOME

a council flat in London. A warm, dry and safe home is a fundamental right, she says, adding, "I'm delighted that tenants are happier and healthier in our refurbished apartments."

Central Park Apartments may not always have had the best reputation, but this changed in 2012 after an extensive rebuild and upgrade costing \$34m — one stage in a long-term project to bring all of Wellington City Council's housing stock up to a standard the city can be proud of. The apartments have become an architectural masterpiece, and a place its residents are proud to call home.

Architects Novak + Middleton, the masterminds behind this project, became totally involved and committed. "They went the extra mile and put their heart and soul into it," Norrie says.

The efforts of the architects and the council were not only recognised by tenants, but also further afield. Central Park has won multiple awards in New Zealand and Australia, including Best Social Housing Project in the Australasian Housing Awards in 2013.

While there will always be a certain stigma attached to social housing, Norrie believes that Central Park is a step in the right direction toward changing this. "My background in the mental health community means that part of my philosophy is to destigmatise," he says.

He explains that when you have a place like Central Park the tenants appreciate it. "Nicer housing changes how people feel about themselves," he says.

A man of many words, Norrie needed only a few to explain what living at Central Park is like: "Living here is not like living in a complex. This is a community."

Norrie has no plans to leave the place he calls home, and he thanks his lucky stars that he is fortunate enough to live here. "I am so lucky!" he says, "I love it here, the only way they will get me out of here is by carrying me out in a box."



- 8. Norrie's possessions show his artistic and creative personality
- 9. The beautiful lamp that was restored by Norrie
- 10. Norrie's one-bedroom apartment is adorned with all things important to him, and photographs of his beloved grandchildren take centre stage
- 11. Norrie's most prized possessions are his tokotoko (walking sticks)