



## Island Child Charitable Trust

Island Child Charitable Trust is an organisation that is all about showing aroha and manaakitanga (hospitality and generosity) to some of society's most vulnerable. Originally established to support families in the Pacific Islands, the Trust now runs "a village of tiny houses" that provide transitional homes for all whānau experiencing homelessness.

Danielle Bergin, founder and manager of Island Child, has always had a passion for helping others and seeing people's lives change for the better. In fact, before she started the Trust she owned an op shop which opened its doors at night to families needing shelter. This is just the sort of manaakitanga that permeates through every part of the Trust's operation.

Based in Glen Innes, East Auckland, Island Child is seen by many to be a community anchor and a voice for people experiencing a housing crisis. Having been homeless herself in the past, Danielle is an expert through experience.

Each year, Danielle and her team rehome up to 85 families, with the lengths of stay at the shelter dependent on individual whānau needs and circumstances.

The team also runs a 12 week residential programme based on an indigenous empowerment framework (The Circle of Courage) that helps to restore whanaungatanga (belonging



*Island Child's village of tiny houses.*

and kinship) to whānau. Families are supported to learn skills and coping strategies, and to pass down their knowledge to other whānau members.

Part of this residential programme includes their much beloved animal-assisted learning programme created for tamariki (children) and rangatahi (young people). Parents are also encouraged to take part.

Six therapy ponies and 11 other animals (cats, dogs and guinea pigs) provide therapeutic experiences as well as an abundance of joy for whānau, with around 70% of residents taking part in the programme.

Activities such as learning to care for the animals and horse riding in local reserves are just as much fun for whānau as they are emotionally enriching. "Healing hearts and personal growth" is what the programme is all about.

Working on the frontline of homelessness is what drives the Trust to raise public awareness of the issues of homelessness. Danielle shares her insights wherever and whenever she can – at conferences, workshops, and into government policies. She has walked the walk and now she's made it her life's work to help others trudging a similar path.

Danielle says, "In the early days, we called the media to raise concerns but as we developed more of a public profile the media called us".

Find out more about Island Child Charitable Trust (CC39169) on their [website](#) and the [Charities Register](#).



*Danielle Bergin, founder of Island Child Charitable Trust. Photo courtesy of NZ Catholic Publication.*