



ENTRY FORM

THE EFFIE AWARDS AOTEAROA IN ASSOCIATION WITH TVNZ – ENTRY FORM

ENTRY ID	603-B07
ENTRY TITLE	Wellington's Greatest Deed: Turning Donors into Owners
CLIENT	Wellington City Mission
PRODUCT	Government & Non-Profit
FIRST MEDIA APPEARANCE DATE	1 August 2023
CAMPAIGN START DATE	1 August 2023
CAMPAIGN FINISH DATE	30 November 2024
CATEGORY	B07. – Most Effective PR/Experiential Campaign
CATEGORY DESCRIPTION	<p>Campaigns that have a PR or Experiential idea at their heart. The kind of idea that sets out with the explicit purpose to get the media talking or involve consumers in a tangible experience that delivers on the brand's positioning or business objectives. Judges are looking for campaigns that begin with a PR or Experiential idea, as opposed to marketing or integrated campaigns with a PR or Experiential element. Great use of sponsorship or partnerships could be entered in this category.</p> <p>The judges will be looking for evidence of significant earned media, alongside commercial results. They'll need a clear rationale for why PR or Experiential was the right way to tackle the client's brief, and evidence of how the PR or experiential activity measurably and materially drove the commercial result.</p> <p>Strength of proof will rely on demonstrating the link between this activity and how it has shifted consumer perceptions and behaviour in a way that has tangibly driven business effect.</p>

WORD COUNT: 2,498

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY [0%]

Give the judges an understanding of the case they are about to read by providing a brief summary for each of the items below. A one-sentence summary is recommended for each line.

(Maximum: 100 words in total – not included in total word count)

The Challenge:	Turn a city fatigued by homelessness into one emotionally and financially invested in Wellington City Mission’s new solution, Whakamaru.
The Insight:	People act when their giving has tangible, visible impact and lasting meaning.
The Strategic Idea/Build:	Transform Wellingtonians from donors into owners by giving them tangible stake in Whakamaru’s success.
Bringing the Strategy & Idea to Life:	Wellington’s Greatest Deed – a living legal document and symbolic red keys that make everyday Wellingtonians proud co-owners of Whakamaru.
The Results:	Whakamaru opened mortgage-free, powered by \$452,137 raised from the public, with strong public support sustained.

Why is this entry an outstanding example for effective marketing in this Effie entry category?

(Maximum 90 words – this is not included in total word count)

Wellington’s Greatest Deed turned charitable giving into an unmissable public experience.

Designed to reframe homelessness as a solvable civic issue, our PR-led campaign transformed everyday donors into visible co-owners of Whakamaru – a new transitional housing centre.

The campaign earned 5.3 million impressions and \$263,628 in Earned Media Value, capturing national attention and rallying public support.

Its success enabled Whakamaru to open mortgage-free, directing more funds into feeding families, housing those in need, and proving the power of PR to deliver lasting social impact.

01.

Challenge, Context & Objectives [20%]

This section covers your strategic business context for your marketing activity, alongside your key business challenge and objectives.

Please provide the necessary context on your industry category, competitors, and brand so the judges, including those unfamiliar with your brand/category, can evaluate your entry. Outline the degree of ambition represented by your objectives. Including historical data may be useful here to provide judges with a clear picture of the situation the brand or organisation found itself in.

01A

Before your effort began, what was the state of the brand's/organisation's business and the overall category in which it competes? What was the strategic challenge that stemmed from this business situation? Provide context on the degree of difficulty of this challenge.

THE PROBLEM: MORE NEED. LESS SUPPORT.

Homelessness in Wellington surged 40%¹ in a single year — over 8,200 people without stable housing², that's the population of Gore living in uncertainty.

Wellington City Missioner Murray Edridge described the crisis as "the worst homelessness we've seen in living memory"³.

Demand on Wellington City Mission (WCM) services skyrocketed:

- Food assistance up 47%⁴
- Social supermarket visits up 40%⁵

But support was falling.

Charitable giving was declining due to the cost-of-living crisis⁶. Government support was being pulled from frontline community providers⁷. And WCM was competing in a crowded field with larger fundraising budgets:

- The Salvation Army invested \$26.2 million⁸ in its Red Shield Appeal
- Red Cross spent \$12.4 million⁹ on its Ukraine appeal

Unlike issues such as war and natural disasters, which generate strong public interest¹⁰, homelessness lacks the urgency and emotional appeal to drive widespread engagement.

Homelessness fatigue was creating tension.

¹ The Spinoff, Inside the urgent race to solve homelessness in Aotearoa, 2024

² Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Homelessness Outlook, 202

³ Stuff, 'Worst it's been in living memory', 2024

⁴ The Post, 'Everything we hoped for: City mission fully funded, thanks to Wellingtonians', 2024

⁵ Wellington City Mission, The cost of living in Te Whanganui a Tara, December 2024

⁶ RNZ, Cost of living crisis: Families opt for Kiwisaver cashouts, cut back on food, April 2024

⁷ Stuff, Social Development Minister Louise Upston defends Government's funding cut for community providers, June 2024

⁸ Salvation Army Annual Report, 2024

⁹ New Zealand Red Cross Annual Report, 2024

¹⁰ Zaki J. Catastrophe Compassion: Understanding and Extending Prosociality Under Crisis, Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 2020

Tough times in the city was giving rise to NIMBYism¹¹, homelessness had become normalised, rough sleeping had become an uncomfortable constant, often met with resignation or frustration rather than compassion, not action.

THE HOPE: A NEW SOCIAL SERVICE FACILITY CALLED WHAKAMARU

WCM had long stood as a beacon for those in crisis, offering food, housing and dignity to the region's most vulnerable.

But its old facility couldn't meet today's scale of need.

So WCM built **Whakamaru** - meaning "to shelter and protect" - a transformative new home for the homeless.

Whakamaru provides transitional housing, a medical clinic, addiction support, and a 24/7 chapel. But it's designed as something greater—a self-sustaining social enterprise where every dollar from the 'pay-what-you-can' café flows back into services. This model brings people from all walks of life into one shared space, ensuring community contribution directly sustains community care.

This model not only funds the future of the Mission but also reduces social tension by breaking down the perceived divide between 'us' and 'them'.

Whakamaru was WCM's most ambitious project to date and its success relied on two critical things:

1. Public Support.

Long-term success relied on Whakamaru feeling like Wellington's own — a café they'd happily patron, a venue they'd eagerly book for events — a critical aspect of ongoing funding, and social cohesion in the city.

2. Funding.

With construction costs up 41%¹² and only 40% of government funding secured⁴, WCM faced a significant shortfall.

WCM had exhausted every donor, every dollar, every contact – but still came up short.

¹¹ Stuff, More of Wellington to be protected from dense housing, as council backs down following heritage lobbying, June 2021

¹² The Beehive – Hon Chris Penk, Government Tacking High Construction Costs, February 2024

It was essential for Whakamaru to open mortgage-free as every dollar lost to debt is a dollar that could feed a hungry family or provide a bed to someone sleeping rough. WCM needed to raise the remaining funds fast.

These two things felt out of reach.

Whakamaru cost **\$50 million to build**. Through grants and major donors, **the vast majority** had already been secured – but **\$400,000** was still needed to open mortgage-free.

With major donors exhausted, WCM was looking to everyday Wellingtonians.

And yet, WCM had only **\$50,000** to spend to raise the final funds for a building few had heard of – solving a problem many had grown numb to.

THE TASK: MAKE WELLINGTON CARE.

Against the background drop of growing demand, a shrinking pool of funds and attention, WCM needed to get the public invested — emotionally and financially in Whakamaru.

01B	<p>What were the objectives you set to address your challenge? For each objective, include: KPI, benchmarks, previous outcomes and the rationale for why it was selected.</p> <p>Please outline one business/organisational objective and a maximum of 3 marketing and 3 advertising/comms objectives.</p>
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OBJECTIVE 1 – MAXIMISE OUR LIMITED BUDGET

Measure: Donated Media and EMV

WCM couldn't afford to outspend other major charities with greater visibility and dominating share of voice. The reality was simple: more money spent on advertising meant less money for food and wraparound support.

With only \$50,000 to reach a city, earned media was our lifeline. We needed high-impact, high-visibility moments that would generate ongoing coverage and conversation long after the media spend ran out.

OBJECTIVE 2 – GET THE PUBLIC ENGAGED WITH, AND SUPPORTIVE OF WHAKAMARU

Measure: Positive commentary, social engagement, and public use of Whakamaru’s spaces and services.

Success meant making Wellingtonians feel Whakamaru was theirs – a place to chat over coffee or host meetings, somewhere they could use, share, and be proud of.

The more the public used it, talked about it, and took pride in it, the more sustainable it became with ongoing usage directly funding the services that support the city’s most vulnerable.

OBJECTIVE 3 – RAISE FUNDS FOR THE FINAL PHASE OF WHAKAMARU

Measure: Total donations and growth in donor base.

Whakamaru needed to open 100% mortgage-free and fully owned by the Mission to avoid long-term loan repayments. If WCM had to carry just \$400,000 in loans, it would mean spending **\$20,865** in just one year to service the loan¹³. Money that could otherwise **feed 1,897 people** or support **372 people with groceries**.

In a crisis this urgent, the stakes were too high to let debt stand in the way of care.

WCM had already done the hard yards – decades of groundwork, community trust, and ongoing fundraising. But with just one final stretch to go, they needed help getting across the line. Our campaign wasn’t the only effort – but it would be the final push.

02.	<p>Insights & Strategy [25%]</p> <p>This section covers the key building blocks of your strategy. Explain to the judges how you arrived at your strategy and clearly articulate that strategy. Focus on the thinking or insight(s) that unlocked your solution and tied it to successfully addressing your objectives.</p>
02A.	<p>Explain the thinking that led you to your strategy. Explain how any insights discovered were directly tied to your brand, your audiences behaviours and attitudes, your research and/or business situation.</p>
<p>Three key insights helped unlock action:</p> <p>INSIGHT 1: HOMELESSNESS WAS A GRUDGE ‘PURCHASE’</p>	

¹³ Calculated on an interest rate of 5.25% per annum with a BNZ business loan

Wellington is a city built on pride, creativity and community¹⁴. But with rough sleeping on the rise, there was growing tension between how Wellingtonians wanted to see their city — and what they were seeing on the streets¹⁵.

Wellingtonians felt powerless against a complex, systemic issue like homelessness. Unlike more emotive causes, homelessness had become a 'grudge' issue — too big to fix, too familiar to stir compassion.

INSIGHT 2: OWNERSHIP INSPIRES ACTION

Sympathy isn't enough. Research shows people act when they feel *ownership*¹⁶— when their contribution feels visible and specific¹⁷.

Homelessness was visible on every street corner, but contributions felt they'd be lost down the well of seemingly endless need. We had to make Wellingtonians feel like their contributions would have a material impact by giving them something they could see, something that said: *you helped build this*.

INSIGHT 3: CHARITABLE GIVING SHOULD BE RECIPROCAL

When people contribute to charitable initiatives, they often are surprised after the fact by how much they get back emotionally. Prior to giving however, people are yet to grasp the returns they'll enjoy.

Research shows that by giving donors something in return, people are more likely to give, even when that impact is symbolic¹⁷, it transforms a donation into a lasting symbol of generosity.

Often tangible recognition, like a name on a wall, is reserved for large donors, gifting sums which are out of reach for many, and making smaller contributions feel inconsequential (and therefore, of no consequence to *not* give)

For Whakamaru's success, we needed to democratise recognition entirely as every donation, from \$50 to \$5,000, was helping build something extraordinary.

We needed to transform homelessness from a "grudge purchase" into an important act of civic ownership through tangible, reciprocal participation.

¹⁴ Remitly, Community Spirit, 2024

¹⁵ Nielsen, Quality of Life Survey, 2022

¹⁶ Jami.A, *I own, so I help out: how psychological ownership increases prosocial behaviour*, Journal of Consumer Research, February 2021

¹⁷ Cojuharenco.I, *Yes, I can: Feeling connected to others increases perceived effectiveness and socially responsible behaviour*, Journal of Environmental Psychology, December 2016

THE STRATEGIC UNLOCK:	
Transform Wellingtonians from donors into owners by giving them tangible stake in Whakamaru's success.	
02B.	What was the Core Idea or strategic build that enabled you to reach your solution? (Be succinct. A maximum of 50 words.)
Call on Wellingtonians to do a truly great deed – provide a home for the homeless.	

03.	Bringing the Strategy & Idea to Life [20%]
03A.	Describe what you did, how it was executed, the timeline and any other considerations such as issues management, reactive media, proactive opportunities realised, pre- and post- event activity. Cite examples of PR and/or experiential used to engage with the consumer and how it addressed your strategic challenge.
<p>IDEA: WELLINGTON'S GREATEST DEED: TURNING DONORS INTO OWNERS</p> <p>We made ownership a bold, public statement: <i>Wellington's Greatest Deed</i> – a monumental, legal document where Wellingtonians inscribed their names as visible co-owners of Whakamaru. Thousands of Wellington skyline-shaped red keys became tangible symbols, transforming everyday citizens into proud custodians and advocates of the city's solution to homelessness.</p> <p>1. A MONUMENTAL SYMBOL OF SHARED OWNERSHIP</p> <p>A home isn't truly yours until your name is on the official deed.</p> <p>So, we created one. The world's largest deed.</p> <p>Wellington's Greatest Deed was a live, larger-than-life document: hanging 7m tall on one of Wellington's most prominent billboard sites for all to see, and all to add their name.</p> <p>The billboard became a literal ownership contract - signed and sealed on the side of a building.</p>	

The deed mirrored traditional ownership deeds, WCM’s logo became the wax seal, sponsors became officiating stamps, and 1,258 blank spaces were left for signatures to be filled in real time.

Donor’s signatures were added by NZ icon, Sir Ashley Bloomfield who risked life, limb and vertigo in classic Wellington wind by abseiling down a six-storey building to sign the first names on behalf of Wellingtonians.

As names were added, the deed became a public measure of progress — and a source of collective pride.

Once filled, it was signed and witnessed by Wellington’s Mayor, Tory Whanau, before taking pride of place in Whakamaru.

2. GIVING THE CITY KEYS TO WHAKAMARU

We extended the idea by reimagining another significant symbol of ownership – a house key.

Thousands of red keys, cut in shape of the Wellington skyline, became pocket-sized tokens of contribution. Donors received them instantly via PayWave and QR-code-enabled donation points around the city: bars, cafes, and bus stops. A two-metre key at Wellington Airport greeted travellers with a clear message: unlocking homelessness was now in Wellington’s hands.

The keys they became physical reminders that every donor held a real stake in the solution. Visible on lanyards, backpacks and keyrings, they turned everyday Wellingtonians into walking advocates for change, each one a reminder that the solution to homelessness wasn’t in someone else’s hands, it was in theirs.

03B.	<p>WHAT WAS THE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY?</p> <p>This section relates to the media and communications thinking and strategy that brought the creative solution to life in the most powerful and relevant way for the target audience. Include all significant touchpoints and channels in this section.</p>
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Outline the rationale behind your communications strategy. Explain how the key elements worked together to drive results:

To ignite citywide conversation, we employed a PR-led approach:

CREATE COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP

Announce with Hype and Intrigue

We launched by focusing on high-reach media—print, radio, and prominent OOH placements across Wellington’s busiest business and cultural locations—building citywide intrigue and momentum from day one.

Generated Buzz and Credibility Through Live Events

Sir Ashley Bloomfield abseiled down the First Base Accommodation building to sign the first names on the deed. This visually arresting moment secured front-page coverage in *The Post* and quickly spread to *Newshub*, *Stuff*, *Newstalk ZB*, *RNZ*, and *The Hits*. Prominent Wellingtonians and respected commentators amplified the campaign, recognising the Mission's leadership and the public's growing response.

ENABLE TANGIBLE, INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION

Tangible Activations

A custom bus shelter at Oriental Bay housed 1,000+ red keys, allowing instant donation and collection. A two-metre key installation at Wellington Airport captured travellers with clear instructions, easy giving, and take-home keys. Donation boxes appeared in venues like Pop Bar and Southern Cross, while Lowe & Co Realtors championed the campaign across property brochures—embedding the message into everyday spaces.

Whittaker's Sweetened the Deal

Whittaker's supported weekend activations, encouraging locals to claim a key for a chance to win a six-month supply of chocolate—turning donations into a joyful, shareable experience.

Experiences to Drive Engagement

At a Gazley showroom auction, locals bid on exclusive items including bespoke key pendants crafted by The Village Goldsmith.

AMPLIFY AND CONVERT THROUGH, DIGITAL AND COMMUNITY CHANNELS

Extended Reach and Urgency with Digital and Video Content

Two videos – featuring Ashley's story and a key showcase – aired concurrently with digital billboards at high-traffic sites, both counting down to deed-signing milestones and driving urgency.

Centralised Action with a Dedicated Online Hub

Activity funnelled to a central website where people could learn, donate, and claim their key—turning awareness into action.

Amplified Through Community and Regional Networks

A coordinated PR push targeted regional media, community groups, and local networks. Local businesses rallied behind the campaign—embedding it in the fabric of the city and spreading it through trusted channels.

List all supplementary communications touch points used in this campaign (the touchpoints that were not central to the campaign).

Existing monthly communications to existing donors.

What was the \$ Spend? Outline the media and production spend on the campaign within the campaign period. Use actual spend rather than ratecard. In the case of donated media please list the rate card value separately from the paid media spend.

Media Spend	\$1,038,576 Donated Media Value
Outline the media spend in relation to competition and versus last year	Matched Silent Night’s media value on a small budget.
Creative Production Spend	\$32,941

04.

WHAT WERE THE RESULTS? [20% for 4A and 15% for 4B].

Outline the results achieved by the campaign against the short and long-term objectives set, provide conclusive proof that it was the campaign that drove the results.

In this section, the judges will be looking to see a clear cause and effect between the communication activity and business performance over time. Show the compelling evidence that will convince even the most cynical finance director.

Please Note: All results must be sourced to be judged; any unsourced results will not considered by judges.

<h1>04A</h1>	<p>Overall achievement against objectives [20%].</p> <p>Clear proof that the objectives established in section one have been achieved. Judges will be seeking quantified results. Successful entries ensure that results can easily be aligned against objectives established in section one.</p> <p>Note: Please ensure all data is sourced, and is specific to the results period outlined in the Call for Entry, and geographically isolated to Aotearoa.</p>
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WELLINGTON'S GREATEST DEED SPARKED THE CITY INTO ACTION

OBJECTIVE 1: OBJECTIVE 1 – MAXIMISE OUR LIMITED BUDGET

Measure: Donated Media, EMV

Outcome: Exceeded

Wellington's Greatest Deed became a story the media couldn't ignore.

- **\$1,038,576 in donated media**
- **\$263,628 in Earned Media Value**
- **5.3 million impressions**
- **24 individual PR stories**
- Front-page in the capital's paper, *The Post*, and featured on *Newshub*, *Stuff*, *RNZ*, *Newstalk ZB* and *The Hits*.

Wellington's Greatest Deed delivered citywide presence and long-term brand goodwill, ensuring the spirit of collective ownership lives on well beyond the campaign.

OBJECTIVE 2 – GET THE PUBLIC ENGAGED WITH, AND SUPPORTIVE OF WHAKAMARU

Measure: Positive commentary, social engagement, and public use of Whakamaru's spaces and services.

Outcome: Exceeded

We turned charity into civic pride.

- **17,225 visits to the Deed webpage** – the Mission’s second most popular webpage
- Since opening, **Whakamaru has welcomed 46,852 people – both manuhiri (residents) and the public – and served 16,575 hot drinks and 21,659 lunches¹⁸**, proving community demand and helping to break stigma.
- Social feeds flooded with messages of support

Wellingtonians didn’t just give – they signed the deed, wore the key, showed up. Social media lit up with pride, reflecting a city that no longer saw “them” only “us”.

“It looks absolutely amazing! We will definitely be in for a coffee”

“Whakamaru provides a safe place for our most vulnerable whānau in Pōneke who will be treated with the dignity that they deserve. Tino ataahua”¹⁹

Even city leadership stood behind Whakamaru:

“Whakamaru provides an opportunity for the whole community to be involved as part of the solution.”
— Tory Whanau, Mayor of Wellington

“Congratulations, Murray, for getting this ambitious, one might even say revolutionary, project off the ground... We won’t be strangers and we will be part of this intentional community.”
– Dame Cindy Kiro, Governor-General of New Zealand

The momentum hasn’t stopped. In May 2025, the Mission launched a community-led catering service – a new social enterprise reinvesting every dollar back into frontline work. Proof that public support didn’t end with the campaign. It helped build what comes next.

OBJECTIVE 3 – RAISE FUNDS FOR THE FINAL PHASE OF WHAKAMARU

Measure: Total donations, donor growth

Outcome: Exceeded

¹⁸ Historical client data, Services Provided from October 30th, 2024 – July 22nd, 2025

¹⁹ Wellington City Mission Social Comments, December 2024

Whakamaru opened **COMPLETELY MORTGAGE-FREE** – securing its future and freeing up future donations to go directly to the people who need them most.

Wellington’s Greatest Deed delivered record-breaking fundraising returns.

- **\$452,137 NZD raised from turning donors into owners**
- **New donors outweighed existing donors by 172%** - activating a new crowd in a market where traditional funding had been exhausted.

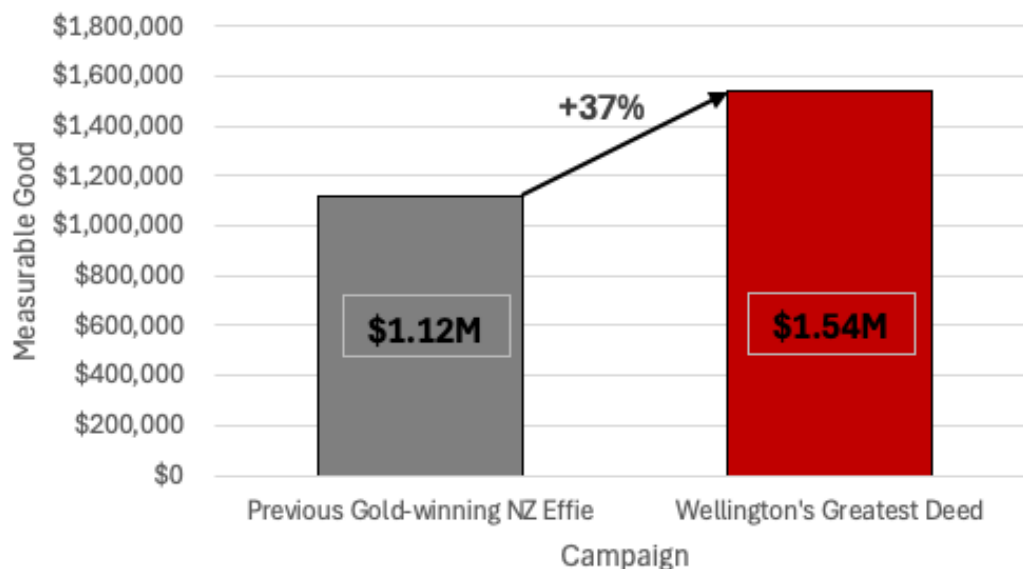
SOCIAL RETURN

According to ImpactLab, every \$1 donated delivers \$3.40 in measurable good²⁰.

Wellington’s Greatest Deed impact: \$1.54 million – that’s **37% more** than the Mission’s previous campaign.

Wellington’s Greatest Deed became the Mission’s most successful campaign ever — **outperforming the Gold-winning New Zealand EFFIE** by delivering more measurable good and setting a new benchmark for social impact.

Figure 1: Measurable Good



It also **delivered twice the return of national appeals** like the Women’s Refuge Safe-Night-a-thon²¹.

But more than that – **it proved this city sees no ‘us and them’. Only us.**

²⁰ ImpactLab – GoodMeasure Report – August 2022

<h2 style="margin: 0;">04B</h2>	<p>Convincing proof that the results were a direct result of your campaign [15%].</p> <p>Outline other external factors that could account for the results outlined in 04A and provide compelling evidence and rationale for why these did not contribute significantly to those results. There are almost always other factors that could have affected your results, such as product changes, pricing, distribution, stock levels, competitive activity, weather, etc. You need to convince the judges that these factors were not responsible for your results, or estimate their contribution and/or demonstrate how they needed the campaign to amplify their impacts.</p>
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The results clearly map to campaign activity

Donations spiked directly in response to key moments – the airport key installation, Deed launch, and Sir Ashley Bloomfield’s involvement. These peaks align with media bursts and can’t be explained by unrelated factors.

WCM had laid the groundwork – we simply helped them reach the finish line. Previous appeals, without a unifying idea or media weight, raised significantly less from the same donor base.

Media commentary

Yes, homelessness was in the news – but awareness doesn’t drive action. This campaign succeeded because it gave people something they were missing: a way in. The key and deed turned compassion into participation – bridging the psychological divide between “us” and “them” and making the problem feel solvable, together.

	<p>Guidance Notes</p> <p>Please refer to the guidance notes below, to ensure your entry conforms to eligibility criteria.</p>
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Eligibility: Data presented must be isolated to Aotearoa, and work must have run between 1 June 2023 and 30 June 2025. Results may be included up to 22 July 2025. Results data that fails to isolate or identify data specific to the eligibility period and/or Aotearoa New Zealand risks low marks and/or being ineligible.

Data Sources: All data referenced in the entry requires sources (recommended as footnotes on the page referenced or at the end of the entry).

Charts and Graphs: Entrants are encouraged to display data via charts & graphs within the limits allocated in each question. Sources required for all data including charts and graphs.

Agency names: No agencies, of any kind, are to be included in the entry.