



# INSIDE THE CUP

Bringing the street voice to decision makers



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Whāia te iti kahurangi ki te tūohu koe me he maunga teitei

*Seek the treasure you value most dearly: if you bow your head, let it be to a lofty mountain*

First and foremost, we would like to acknowledge those that have shared their stories with us. We acknowledge your courage, honesty, and your pain.

*“Kia kaha, kia maia, kia manawanui”*

Secondly, an acknowledgement to Auckland Council for their willingness to learn, understand, and hear the voices of this community.

*“Ngā mihi nui kia koutou”*

To those who have passed away, we acknowledge your contribution to the community.

*“Haere, haere, haere, haere atu ra”*

To the wider whanau...

*Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.*





## OUR TEAM

### SHADOW

Cook Island Māori, harmonica player, father,  
Lifewise Merge Café Volunteer, co-designer

### KAT'Z

Ngā Puhi, mother – 4 by birth and 72  
by street, ACSK/ASCL, Lifewise Merge Café Community  
team – peer support, Auckland City Mission  
committee member, co-designer

### ROB SMITH

Ngā Puhi, Housing First – peer support  
worker, co-designer

### SOPHIA BEATON

Kāi Tahu me Kāti Mamoe, Lifewise Merge Café Community  
Team Lead, co-designer

### AGGIE:

Lifewise Merge Café Community team – community  
development, co-designer

### PETER CHAUDHRY:

Auckland Council policy team,  
father, ethnographer

## SOME THINGS WE LEARNT THAT YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE WE START



The term **begging** does not sit comfortably with most people. For many the term implies the practice of actively asking for something. People do not see themselves in this way. "Do you see me asking for anything?". The report will therefore use the most common term used on the streets, **hustling**.



Not every person who **hustles is homeless**. Not every person who is homeless, hustles.



People who hustle are not just one big homogenous **group**. Think of it as a bit like school with all the different cliques. Each has their own space, way of hustling, and dynamics.



People have been hustling for decades in central Auckland. Sometimes the same people. Sometimes generations of people. **This is not a new phenomenon**.



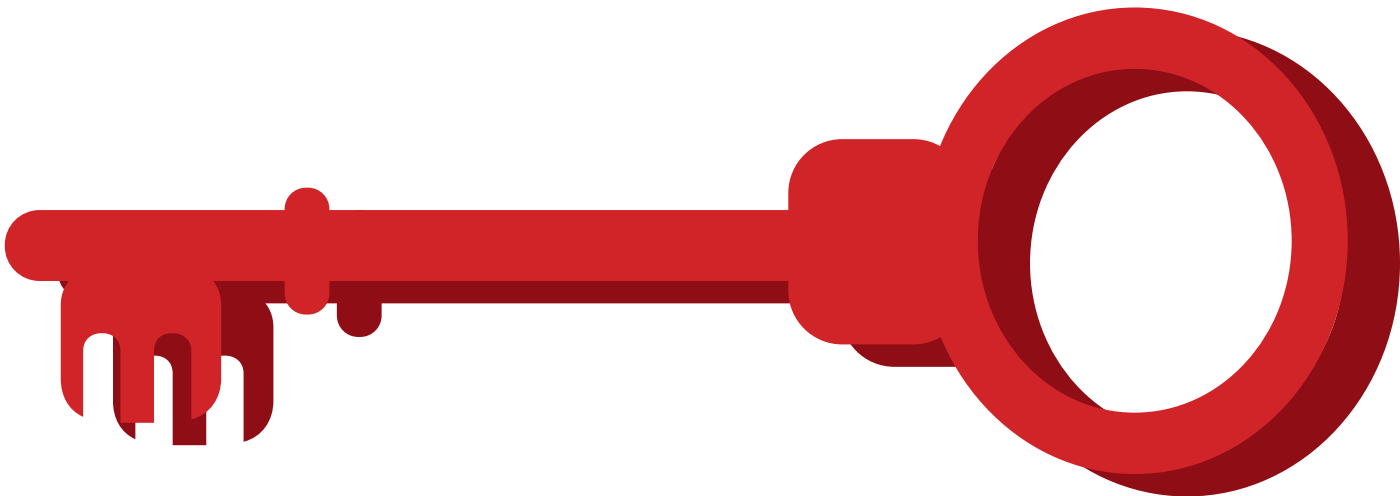
**Survival** is at the core of hustling. It is one part of a person's journey to seek safety, security and self worth.



People **earn different amounts on different days**. You never know what you're going to get - that's why it's the hustle. "Some days you might get a good drop. Other days you get fuck all".



## OUR KEY LEARNINGS



## WHAT WE DID

As part of the Public Safety and Nuisance Bylaw review, Auckland Council were eager to understand the perspective of those who beg in the city centre. As a result, Auckland Council partnered with Lifewise and people with lived experience of the street to bring the voice of the street to decision makers.

We used a co-design process to better understand the experiences of people who hustle in the city centre. Co-design is a person-centred process that acknowledges that people are the experts of their own lives.

The team spoke with ten people who hustle to deeply understand their experiences. It was important to acknowledge the different groups of people hustling, so the team sought to speak with people from across the different groups in the City Centre.

These groups included people from; old school (long term), newbies, downtown, midtown, K Road, whanau groups, individuals, homeless, and housed.



People who hustle often have painful and traumatic stories that underpin many of the reasons why they hustle.

Some people need to overcome a barrier of shame and embarrassment before they are able to hustle for the first time.

People who hustle are often seeking meaningful social connection and many find these connections through their interactions with the wider Auckland community.

People who hustle often do not have their basic needs met through the existing channels of government and social support.

The council bylaw is not widely understood by people who hustle. However, there is an unwritten code of conduct that exists on the street that provides a guide for how the community operates.

People who hustle have ordinary hopes and dreams for their future.

## REASONS PEOPLE HUSTLE - WHAT WE HEARD



## PERSONAS

THESE TWO PERSONAS PROVIDE AN INSIGHT INTO TWO DIFFERENT PEOPLE. THEY ARE NOT REAL PEOPLE, BUT THEY ARE BASED ON REAL STORIES THAT WE HEARD.

### ANGEL



This is Angel. She is a 34-year-old woman who has been hustling since she left home aged 14. She's been in and around the streets since then.

She's got her own place at the moment, but she finds it really hard to pay all the bills just with her benefit. She can't even afford to buy tampons.

Angel still goes to the City Mission sometimes for dinner, but the food that is donated is often too high in sugar and she can't eat it. She gets her clothes from there too, but they don't always have her size. She doesn't go up to Lifewise because it's just too far away.

Angel loves hustling. She loves the energy of Queen Street, and most of the time people are really kind. There's a few people that always stop and talk with her. They always notice if she hasn't been there for a while and that makes her feel really good and like people care about her.

Even though she loves talking with people, what she finds hardest is seeing mothers with their children. It reminds her of the life she should have had as a young girl. She wishes that her life had been different, but she feels really proud of her new home and would really like to get her driver's licence one day.

### GEORGE



This is George. He's a 56-year-old man who has been hustling on and off for the last thirty years. He's well known to everyone and other streeties look up to him. He also likes to keep an eye on everyone else, too.

He's currently staying under a bridge where he and his partner have been able to put a mattress down where it's fairly dry and warm. They usually get up early and are in their spot hustling by 5.30am so they can get the good early morning drops. They live day to day and usually stop hustling once they've got enough for a feed.

He thinks the hustling scene is quite different now to when he started. Back in the day, he could make 400 or 500 bucks over the whole weekend but now it's more like 20 or 30 bucks. He's also concerned about the number of young people that come out, and he likes to make sure they're alright and aren't causing any trouble. He hates it when newbies try to shake things up and are abusive.

George knows all the people in the shops near his spot, and they sometimes ask him to do odd jobs for them. He really enjoys that, because he loves to work. He knows that once he's got a stable place to live, it won't be long until he's back at work. But for now, he's got to keep doing the hustle to help pay his bills.





IF I'D HAD A NORMAL LIFE,  
I WOULDN'T HAVE ENDED UP LIKE THIS.

## HISTORY OF PAIN AND TRAUMA

PEOPLE WHO HUSTLE OFTEN HAVE PAINFUL AND TRAUMATIC STORIES THAT UNDERPIN MANY OF THE REASONS WHY PEOPLE HUSTLE.

Family violence, neglect and abuse in childhood feature prominently in the stories of the people we spoke with and many people started hustling when they were young.

Your home is supposed to be a safe place, but mine wasn't. I've still got a scar on my head. My Mum gave me that.

The first time I hustled, I was 13. I didn't have anywhere else to go after my mum threw me out because she couldn't pay for my medication.

For many people, the streets have provided a place of safety, warmth and whānau that their initial families were unable to provide.

Me and my partner, we grew up on the streets. He's always there for me to talk to. He even hides the knives when I'm feeling bad so I can't hurt myself.

I'm here for the younger ones, I don't want them to go through what I've been through.

I've got my street whānau to look after me. I feel safe out here.

Sometimes people's current living situations are so awful that people seek solitude and reprieve through hustling. We heard this particularly from people living in boarding houses and from people in abusive relationships.

If I'm not hustling, then I'm just at the boarding house. It smells like poo and vomit and rubbish. It's a dirty place. It's yucky. I've got to get out of there. There's so much violence in that place and the police are always there, but they don't help.

I hustle to buy me some synthetics sometimes too. I smoke them to take me away from all the pain. All the ugly.





# THE BARRIER

Most people described the need to overcome shame the first time they hustle. Once the barrier is crossed, people often find the good in hustling. Sometimes, a barrier can resurface that can stop people from hustling - this usually has to do with pressure from children and family.

When I first held the cup, I'd never done it before. What do I have to do this for? I'm embarrassing myself shaking this cup. I should be able to make my own money.

I didn't know how to hustle. It was like being on the moon.

It was embarrassing, but I knew I needed some money.



It was embarrassing, but it gets easier as you go on.

When I'm hustling, it makes me feel really good.

I love hustling. I don't ask for nothing. The public are gifting you.



My daughter doesn't like me hustling. She Says it's like scabbing.

Makes me feel guilty.

It scares me to death what my family are thinking in the back of their heads.







## SEEKING CONNECTION

PEOPLE WHO HUSTLE ARE OFTEN SEEKING CONNECTION WITH OTHERS, AND MANY FIND THESE CONNECTIONS THROUGH THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH THE WIDER AUCKLAND COMMUNITY.

Overwhelmingly, people felt valued, noticed and worthy through their interactions with the wider community when hustling:

I just love the public. I meet really nice people out here I can talk to. And they're the ones who pay the food bill!

I love meeting people from lots of different nationalities, there's always someone to talk to, and there's always something going on. It never gets boring.

I like talking to the Christians because they tell me people care about me. Sometimes they pray over me when I'm hustling. It makes me feel really good.

---

Sometimes people have more negative interactions with the public:

You get abuse sometimes. They call you a loser, but you just learn to close your ears. People who do that, they just don't understand, they come from a different lifestyle. They don't have any respect for themselves.

People can walk past and look at you like you're nothing. I don't like it when people look at me like that.

One time, someone kicked over my cup and all my coins went everywhere. He didn't even say sorry.

---

Often, people who hustle are carrying out some form of unseen public service for the community:

I know everyone who owns businesses in this area. The shop owner over there would give me some jobs to do. Look after the shop sometimes. They even taught me how to cook their food.

The guys who drive the sky bus pull over and ask me when I'm coming back to my spot. I'd tell the cars that try to park there to move. I'd also help people get their bags on the bus.

---

Recently, a local woman's post on Facebook further highlighted an unseen role of people who hustle:

*"So today on Queen St I stood chatting to a friend, a dude stole a phone from a girl working at a Souvenir shop, she came out and called for him to stop and we all stood around like chumps not knowing what to do then two homeless dudes chucked their shit on the ground and took off after him and got the phone back and gave it to the girl. The older dude of the two told me 'that felt good, I hate thieves'."*

PEOPLE ASK WHERE I'VE BEEN  
WHEN I HAVEN'T BEEN IN MY SPOT.  
IT WOULD MAKE ANYONE FEEL WANTED.





IT'S JUST NOT  
ENOUGH - I CAN'T  
GET WHAT I NEED

## BASIC NEEDS

PEOPLE WHO HUSTLE ARE OFTEN NOT ABLE TO HAVE THEIR BASIC NEEDS MET THROUGH THE EXISTING CHANNELS OF GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT.

People feel frustrated, let down and fed up with government services.

I try not to go to WINZ if I don't have to. It's got to be a real desperate situation for me to go there.

We're on the housing list. They ring occasionally. But they're only calling to say we're still on the waitlist. It's so demoralising.

I was on a 13-week stand down. There was nothing else I could do.

People regularly use either the Auckland City Mission or Lifewise. Sometimes those services are unable to meet people's needs, leaving people feeling desperate.

I went to detox, but I only lasted a week. It was good to have the break, but I still can't help drinking.

I go to Hobson Street for clothes, but they hardly ever have my size. And Lifewise is too far away.

Other streeties ask us why we go there – they don't do nothing for you.

People just do not have enough income to meet their basic needs.

I just hustle for what I need. I don't get greedy. It's normally when I'm hungry or when I need women's stuff. It would be different if what the government gave us was reasonable.

After all my rent, fines and other bills, I'm left with \$35. I owe my doctors \$100. Once a week I go up to the doctors, just up the road there, and give them \$5 straight from my cup.





EVERYONE KNOWS DOWNTOWN  
YOU GOTTA KEEP YOUR SPOT CLEAN

## THE UNWRITTEN CODE OF CONDUCT

THE COUNCIL BYLAW IS NOT WIDELY UNDERSTOOD BY PEOPLE WHO HUSTLE. HOWEVER, THERE IS AN UNWRITTEN CODE OF CONDUCT THAT EXISTS ON THE STREET THAT PROVIDES A GUIDE FOR HOW THE COMMUNITY OPERATES.

The streets are an ever-changing place with many new faces arriving regularly. Newbies can upset the balance and cause tension, and it is often the role of the older generation to ensure that they learn the rules quickly.

Council, they just lump us together like we're under the same umbrella. They should realise it's the new ones that cause all the trouble.

I've been out here 3 months and I know the deal. If someone's got a cup out, I don't pull mine out.

---

Some people self-identify as guides and Auckland Council's City Watch security guards sometimes take advantage of these roles.

Streeties look at me as a bit of a guide. City Watch, they've got my digits. They call me to sort stuff out.

If there's new ones, I'll go and have a word to make sure they're in a safe environment and if there's a female situation, City Watch will come hunt me down.

---

There isn't just one way of hustling. Different people use different techniques and have different expectations of appropriate hustling. People recognise that respect, and a good attitude are essential for a successful hustle.

I don't ask for anything, I just use my personality – have a laugh with people, I've been ribbing the Lions fans all day. If we're good to them, they'll be good to us.

I don't shake my cup, that's forcing them to give it. That's intimidatory. I don't like it when I see that, and I tell others not to.

My street dad used to say, don't be shy or you'll get nothing.

Manners goes a long way. I've seen some bad behaviour and I don't agree with it.

I don't like Maccas, but I take it anyway, I don't want to hurt the people's feelings.





PEOPLE WHO HUSTLE HAVE ORDINARY HOPES AND DREAMS FOR THEIR FUTURE

## HOPES AND DREAMS





**HUSTLING IS A COMPLEX SOCIAL ISSUE, AND WE NEED TO LOOK AT IT WITH NEW PERSPECTIVE AND A NEW WAY OF THINKING.**

HERE ARE OUR THOUGHTS ON SOME NEW QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE. FROM THIS WORK, WE HOPE THAT COUNCIL AND OTHERS WILL USE THIS KNOWLEDGE TO EXPLORE INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY. HERE ARE OUR THOUGHTS ON SOME NEW QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE...

HOW MIGHT WE

- find ways for people to supplement their income that can also provide meaningful social connection.
- ensure that boarding houses are places that people feel safe, secure, and connected.
- formally use the existing street rules and guides to moderate behaviour in the city centre.
- prevent young people from hustling by supporting whānau to be strong, nurturing and thriving.
- build on the connections and relationships people build with others in the community to increase access to meaningful and income generating activities.
- support people to realise their hopes and dreams for the future.
- value all those who live in the city centre and avoid judgemental, stigmatising behaviours and attitudes.

THINKING FROM INSIDE THE CUP





