



Community Housing
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1970's regulations not the answer for housing

“You wouldn't expect to get a warrant of fitness for your car with standards from the 1970's – so why should we have insulation standards from 1978 to regulate housing when more current and effective standards exist?” Julie Nelson asks.

Julie Nelson, co –chairperson of Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA), the peak body for the community housing sector, says the new regulation framework proposed by Government for rental properties is “better than the status quo but does not go far enough.

“Insulation and smoke alarms are an important step in addressing the poor standard of rental housing in New Zealand and CHA applaud the Government for taking this step. But insulation is only half of the answer- you still need to heat the house to really make sure the house is warm, safe and dry. “

Under plans to strengthen the Residential Tenancies Act, all tenanted properties will require floor and ceiling insulation by mid-2019, while social housing which receives Government subsidies, will require insulation by July this year. All rentals will also need to have long-life smoke alarms installed. “It's a long time to wait for these changes to take effect,” Julie Nelson says.

CHA believe effective and efficient heating that families can afford to operate, should have been included in the regulations. CHA also think the timeframe for introducing these new standards and how they are enforced needs to be relooked at.

“The proposed enforcement of these new standards is weak. They require vulnerable tenants to report problems rather than for landlords to show they meet minimum requirements – like we have in cars with a warrant of fitness. We don't expect New Zealanders to drive around in faulty cars that might cause accidents so

why should we accept that it's ok for landlords to rent cold and moldy houses where children get sick and end up in hospital with rheumatic fever?

“Most cases taken to the tenancy tribunal are by landlords. Tenants lack confidence or fear that there may be retribution if they report a landlord for unfit housing. The bill needs to find a better way to enforce new housing standards that don't put vulnerable tenants at risk.”

CHA says the tenancies provided by community housing providers already exceed the proposed new regulations. Local authorities such as the Wellington City Council are looking into instituting a housing warrant of fitness. “Regulation is accepted as necessary by community housing organisations for the operation of social and affordable housing markets and good tenant outcomes,” Julie Nelson comments.

Community housing organisations provide homes to more than 15,000 New Zealanders and CHA believe that housing is the **centre of the jigsaw** – “if we can fix the housing we can fix a host of other social problems.

A lot of unnecessary cost and stress could be saved if the bill included standards for heating, mold or ventilation. Then many of New Zealand's renters can also have better quality housing, like community housing tenants do,” says Julie Nelson.

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