

Some News about Housing Standards in NZ.

Landlords slow to insulate houses

The Bad news

EMILY SPINK

Slow uptake by landlords of a government insulation subsidy is causing concern, as low income tenants continue to live in private rental properties plagued by cold and mould.

In the past year, the Christchurch City Council had investigated 25 complaints and inquiries relating to mould and insulation woes.

Tenants Protection Association (TPA) general manager Di Harwood said there was a growing number of tenants seeking advice relating to insulation and mouldy and damp homes.

With winter here, some were only just now seeing the extent of their problems.

"People are taking on fixed terms around January, February, which is a popular time. Those properties look really good and are nice and warm in January, February, but it starts coming up to June, July and they're starting to realise that they're cold and mouldy."

Council regulatory compliance head Tracey Weston said compliance officers had noted that in some cases advice on cleaning walls and windows, and heating and ventilating rooms adequately, was sufficient to deal with mould issues.

Harwood encouraged tenants to

ask landlords if their properties were insulated, and if not, when they would be.

The TPA was surprised uptake of the Government's insulation subsidy for rental properties had been slow, both in Canterbury and nationwide.

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) figures show 348 landlords in Christchurch have taken up the Warm Up New Zealand: Healthy Homes extension, between July 2016 and April 2017.

EECA subsidies of up to 50 per cent of the cost of insulation are available now until June 2018.

EECA residential general manager Robert Linterman said the uptake of the subsidies for rentals had been relatively slow but changes to the Residential Tenancy Act would mean that by July 2019 all rental properties must have ceiling and underfloor insulation meeting a set standard.

"EECA urges landlords to get in quickly while grants are available. It's first in, first served."

There had been 600 retrofits in Auckland and 258 in Wellington.

The 2016 Budget allocated \$18 million over two years to insulate 20,000 rental properties occupied by low-income tenants with a community services card, and those referred by the health sector with conditions related to cold, damp housing.

Weekend Press, Christchurch
10 Jun 2017, by Emily Spink

The Good news

Tenancy Compliance and Investigations Team

10 August 2016

One of the significant changes to the Residential Tenancies Act is that the government now has greater powers to prosecute landlords whose property breaches basic housing standards. This covers issues such as dampness, sanitation, electrical safety, security, drainage and maintenance.

A new Tenancy Compliance & Investigations Team has been set up to monitor and enforce compliance with the Residential Tenancies Act. They can use a number of interventions and enforcement options to ensure that landlords comply with their obligations under the Act. The new team is also able to act on behalf of a tenant in the Tenancy Tribunal and District Court. Landlords are running a business and Tenancy Services expects landlords to meet their obligations.

How to contact the Tenancy Compliance & Investigations Team:

Call: 0800 836 262 or lodge a complaint to:

www.tenancy.govt.nz/disputes/lodge-a-complaint/