



**PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS CALL FOR
HOUSING INQUIRY
1 October 2007**

The Public Health Association (PHA) is joining the call from the Maori Party's co-leader and housing spokesperson, Tariana Turia, for an inquiry into conditions in Housing New Zealand rental homes.

However PHA Director Dr Gay Keating says the dreadful conditions Mrs Turia has found in state houses in Porirua are reflected in too many homes across the country.

"The PHA very much supports the idea of an inquiry into housing but not just state houses and not just in Porirua," Dr Keating says. "Studies by the Building Research Association of NZ show there are a significant number of New Zealand homes that do not reach the World Health Organization recommended minimum temperature of 18°C.

"We've known since the days of Charles Dickens, that cold, draughty houses with mildew mean continual sickness for their occupants. Apart from the miserable quality of life such housing provides, it also impacts on incomes with doctors' visits and time off work."

Recent research by Professor Philippa Howden-Chapman of the Wellington School of Medicine and Health Sciences, Otago University, showed newly insulated, warmer houses have a direct benefit on health: a 40 to 50 percent reduction in wheezing, colds and respiratory problems.

It also showed that for every dollar spent on insulating old cold houses, there was close to a two dollar benefit in terms of health saving from not ending up in hospital, or in less time off work or school.

In addition people in warm houses were less likely to shift houses, with positive benefits for children's education.

"A healthy population is a prosperous population," Dr Keating says. "It benefits all New Zealand to have the nation's homes warm and dry. An inquiry into why this is not the case and what should be done about it is urgently needed."

For further information:

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