

Media Release
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PHA applauds government re-think on insulation scheme

The Public Health Association is delighted the prime minister has signalled a rethink on insulating New Zealand houses.

The National Party said it would discontinue the Labour-led government's \$1b dollar plan to insulate homes, however, John Key has now indicated a similar scheme – to give work to the construction industry - could be part of his plans to mitigate the effects of the recession.

The PHA's national executive officer, Dr Gay Keating, says while that is reason enough to push on with insulating New Zealand houses, it will also have long-term health benefits.

"Studies by BRANZ shows there are a significant number of New Zealand homes that do not reach the World Health Organization recommended minimum of 18C, and that two-thirds of New Zealand homes are damp during winter."

"We've known since the days of Charles Dickens that cold, draughty, mildewy homes 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."

Ground-breaking research by Professor Philippa Howden-Chapman of Otago University showed that 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."

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