



Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness Technical Advisory Group: final report

Purpose of report

1. The Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness Technical Advisory Group (the TAG) was established by the Minister of Housing Hon Dr Nick Smith in December 2013, to advise on the Warrant of Fitness criteria to be trialled by Housing New Zealand (HNZ) during 2014. The HNZ trial involved assessing 500 properties across New Zealand as a representative sample of the HNZ portfolio of approximately 60,000 properties¹.
2. Organisations represented on the TAG were selected by the Minister, to provide a range of technical expertise. The TAG was not intended as a means of stakeholder consultation, and was not required to provide unanimous advice.
3. The Terms of Reference for the TAG are appended (Annex 1). The role of the TAG was not to develop criteria, but to provide technical advice on the draft criteria developed by HNZ and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and agreed with the Minister of Housing. The criteria will initially be applied to HNZ properties, but have been developed with consideration of potential wider implementation in future, both as part of the Social Housing Reforms and in the private rental sector.
4. Final decisions on the criteria are the responsibility of the Government, not the TAG. As at May 2014, Government has not made any decisions to apply a Warrant of Fitness to rental properties beyond HNZ.
5. This report to the Minister of Housing documents the process followed by the TAG and summarises TAG feedback on the draft criteria. The report has been drafted by MBIE and has been approved by the TAG as an accurate record of its discussion and recommendations.

Technical Advisory Group process

6. The TAG met three times between December 2013 and April 2014 for a total of approximately 12 hours, as shown in the table below. Materials were provided by officials prior to each meeting, for discussion at the meeting.
7. Following each meeting officials provided a summary of discussion, for confirmation by the TAG and any additional comments.

Table 1: TAG meeting dates and purpose of each meeting

Meeting date	Meeting purpose
12 December 2013	Familiarisation of TAG with the context and objectives of the HNZ Warrant of Fitness trial Agreement on the high-level criteria
22 January 2014	Agreement on detailed specification on each criterion, prior to assessment of HNZ properties
30 April 2014	Discussion of assessment results Discussion of any adjustments necessary to the criteria to improve feasibility,

¹ Excluding Christchurch and leasehold properties, which will be assessed separately.

	clarity and/or consistency TAG makes final recommendations on Warrant of Fitness criteria
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Overarching principles

8. The TAG was provided with the following overarching principles for the Housing New Zealand Warrant of Fitness trial.
9. The intent of the Warrant of Fitness scheme is to:
 - a. set clear minimum standards for rental properties in terms of health and safety
 - b. improve the information available to tenants about how healthy and safe a property is.
10. The Warrant of Fitness should therefore contribute to improved health and safety outcomes for tenants, with associated improvements in economic and social outcomes. Tenant behaviour and other factors beyond property provision also affect these outcomes.
11. The Warrant of Fitness focuses on assessing health and safety aspects of rental properties (specifically the extent to which a property is dry and insulated, safe and secure, and has essential amenities). It is not designed to assess energy and environmental aspects.
12. Warrant of Fitness design and implementation will be based on a number of principles:
 - a. Practicality: the Warrant of Fitness must be suited to New Zealand conditions, and be able to be readily applied to the wide range of rental properties in New Zealand, with consistent results.
 - b. Cost effectiveness: aim to maximise total benefits (to tenants, taxpayers/wider public, landlords) for minimum total costs (to landlords, tenants, taxpayers/wider public).
 - c. Easily understood/"reasonable": the Warrant of Fitness concept and results must be able to be easily understood by tenants, landlords, property managers and the public, and set standards which are generally seen to be "reasonable".
 - d. Evidence-based: design of the Warrant of Fitness should be based on best available evidence and practice with regard to health and safety outcomes, and building standards.
 - e. Transparency: Warrant of Fitness results need to be readily available to tenants; assessment criteria must be readily available to landlords and not subject to change without adequate notice.
 - f. Housing market impact: potential adverse impacts of the Warrant of Fitness regime on the housing market in terms of cost and supply should be minimised.
13. These principles will need to be balanced, for example: evidence-based and minimising adverse housing market impacts – setting a very high minimum standard based on evidence of health benefits might result in a large number of tenants having to find alternative accommodation.
14. Elements included in the minimum standard are considered to represent the minimum acceptable level of health and safety in a rental property.

Outcome	General principles for inclusion
1 - Insulated and dry	Elements included contribute to the occupant being able to keep the house dry and warm, therefore reducing adverse health effects associated with cold, damp houses.
2 - Safe and secure	Elements included reduce the risk of occupants injuring themselves at home (particularly falls which are the most common home injury), occupants being exposed to hazards (for example fire caused by overloaded power points) and/or entry by unwanted intruders.
3 - Essential amenities	Elements included enable occupants to carry out activities which are essential as part of daily life (for example washing, cooking).

15. In addition, the following points of principle were raised during TAG discussions:
- a. the need for the TAG to focus on the Warrant of Fitness as a minimum acceptable standard; if a property breaches this standard it shouldn't be tenanted without appropriate remediation (acknowledging that immediate remediation may not be possible)
 - b. the Warrant of Fitness is not designed to be a specialised check and this needs to be very clear (for example, not using the term "weathertight"). Liability issues need to be considered.
 - c. the principle put forward by the New Zealand Property Investors Federation that the same minimum health and safety standards should apply for owner-occupiers and tenants, ie if a property is not fit for tenants to live then it should not be acceptable for owner-occupiers either. The group agreed in principle, but noted that the Warrant of Fitness scope is restricted to rental properties, and that owner-occupiers have a much greater degree of control over property quality than tenants do.
 - d. to what extent minimum standards should be the tenant's choice. The group agreed that tenants should be able to trade-off between property quality and rental cost, but not below an agreed minimum standard. The group noted the inherent power imbalance between tenant and landlord.
 - e. the influence of tenant behaviour on property quality (for example poor ventilation through tenants not opening windows, leading to mould), and the difficulty of distinguishing the extent to which physical characteristics and tenant behaviour each contribute to health and safety issues with a property
 - f. the need for property owners to have certainty in relation to Warrant of Fitness requirements, rather than a standard which is constantly changing
 - g. the need to use caution in applying today's building standards retrospectively, and whether there should be potential for some grandfathering for older properties
 - h. whether there is potential to allow mitigation for non-compliance with some criteria (for example, a handrail on both sides of very steep stairs); similarly, whether some criteria do not lead to a 'fail', but have a requirement that the tenant must be informed, to reduce risk (for example, a requirement to provide information on safe use of existing unflued gas heaters, rather than requiring their removal)
 - i. the need to recognise that rural properties may have different characteristics in some respects
 - j. the warrant of fitness is designed for the 'average tenant' and does not mean that a property is fit for purpose for tenants with particular needs, for example the elderly

- k. inspections should not require specialist equipment; criteria have been specified to allow visual inspection
- l. compliance with building regulations and earthquake prone building policies is outside the scope of the warrant of fitness, and addressed through existing processes
- m. no decisions have been made on frequency of Warrant of Fitness assessments (and therefore of the validity period). This is a policy decision for government.

Warrant of Fitness Criteria for HNZ Trial

16. The Warrant of Fitness criteria trialled with HNZ, have been grouped under three outcomes, as shown in the table below.

Outcome	General principles for inclusion
1 - Insulated and dry	Elements included contribute to the occupant being able to keep the house dry and warm, therefore reducing adverse health effects associated with cold, damp houses
2 - Safe and secure	Elements included reduce the risk of occupants injuring themselves at home, occupants being exposed to hazards (for example fire caused by overloaded power points) and/or entry by unwanted intruders.
3 - Essential amenities	Elements included enable occupants to carry out activities which are essential as part of daily life (for example washing, cooking)

17. For each outcome shown above, the following sections of this report:
- a. identify any criteria which were added or removed by the TAG (compared to the initial draft criteria developed by officials), and why
 - b. summarise issues discussed by the TAG
 - c. provide comments from TAG (as a whole or individually) in relation to the final criteria proposed by officials.
18. The detailed criteria are contained in a separate document.

Insulated and dry

19. The TAG did not add or remove any criteria under this outcome.
20. Key issues discussed were:
- a. whether shower domes should be considered: the group concluded that they were not appropriate as a minimum requirement
 - b. the complexity of assessing the adequacy of subfloor ventilation; the group recommended reframing the criterion as "no subfloor dampness"
 - c. the need to include significant draughts as well as water leaks
 - d. complexity of assessing mould, including the need to acknowledge that almost all properties will have some mould, particularly in winter (which an assessment done in summer may not identify); the difficulty of attributing mould to tenant behaviour versus building characteristics and whether the requirement should only apply at the time of letting; the need to cover internal as well as external moisture sources
 - e. interactions between temperature, moisture levels, ventilation, insulation and mould
 - f. method of inspection for ceiling and underfloor insulation; the group agreed that visual inspection was adequate (including checking downlights are not covered)

- g. the extent of ceiling and underfloor insulation needed as a minimum, for health purposes, recognising that the greatest benefits come from installing some insulation in a property which has none, and after that additional benefits diminish as extra insulation is added.
- h. tension between allowing windows to open sufficiently for adequate ventilation, securing windows to allow ventilation while a property is empty during the day (passive ventilation) and preventing falls from height
- i. bathroom ventilation: the group considered whether mechanical ventilation should be a requirement but concluded that it was not an appropriate minimum requirement and was dependent upon tenant behaviour to operate
- j. the group discussed whether fixed heating should be a requirement but agreed that an older fixed heater may be dangerous and inefficient. The group concluded that there should be a minimum requirement of two power points in each habitable space to allow a heater and other appliances to run simultaneously and to reduce the fire danger from overloaded multiboxes.
- k. Fixed unflued gas heaters: Housing New Zealand has a large number of these but has tested all of them to ensure that they are operating correctly. There is no requirement on private sector landlords (or owner occupiers) to undertake regular gas safety checks. The group concluded that as fixed unflued gas heaters are legal, it would be inappropriate to require existing heaters to be removed, but that landlords should be required to provide tenants with information on safe use (noting that this is unenforceable).

Comment from TAG on the final criteria proposed by officials

21. There were two criteria where some or all TAG members wished to provide comment to the Minister: appropriate heating in properties which cannot be practically insulated, and testing for dampness/mould.

Appropriate heating

22. This criterion only applies where the ceiling insulation and/or floor insulation criteria cannot practically be met. Landlords cannot therefore choose to provide heating rather than insulation purely on cost grounds. As specified by Housing New Zealand, a fixed wired electric heater in the living area would be one means of meeting the criteria in Climate Zones 1 or 2 (with other acceptable solutions being a heat pump, an energy-efficient wood, pellet or multifuel burner, or a flued gas heater). A fixed wired electric heater would not be acceptable in Climate Zone 3.
23. TAG members considered that the appropriate heating criterion was intended to compensate the tenant where a property could not practically be insulated, by requiring the landlord to provide a heat source that is more affordable to run than a heat source the tenant could supply themselves (for example a portable electric heater).² Direct monetary compensation from the landlord towards fuel bills was suggested as an alternative, but considered to be impractical.
24. Members considered while that a fixed wired electric heater would allow sufficient output to heat the property without overloading wiring, it would be no cheaper to run than a portable electric heater. Tenants might therefore not be able to afford to use it.
25. Members recommended removing a fixed wired electric heater as an acceptable solution, and requiring a heat pump energy-efficient wood, pellet or multifuel burner, or a flued gas heater. Members, noted, however, that some low income tenants struggled to afford any form of heating.

² Members also noted that house wiring would typically not safely allow portable electric heaters to be used to the extent required to heat an uninsulated house to World Health Organisation recommended temperatures.

Testing for dampness and mould

26. Some members of the TAG recommended that as well as a visual inspection for mould (including checking for any evidence of water leaks, for example stains on carpet), assessors should use a moisture meter to measure moisture levels inside walls. This would assist with determining whether mould related to structural problems with the building, or was primarily due to occupant behaviour (for example, lack of ventilation and heating). It would also identify cases where there are high moisture levels inside walls, leading to structural deterioration, but mould is not visible (for example behind a bath).
27. Moisture meters are relatively inexpensive. However, the group agreed that the question raised some policy issues to be referred back to the Minister of Housing. These included:
 - a. whether the Warrant of Fitness should go beyond visual inspection to include an invasive, more specialist test
 - b. assessor liability (which could potentially be mitigated with a disclaimer)
28. If a moisture meter test was not used and severe mould was suspected to be related to structural problems, an alternative approach would be to issue a property with a "potential non-compliance" finding and recommend that the owner commission a more specialist investigation.
29. The group noted that Housing New Zealand has undertaken significant refurbishment of bathrooms, including installing mechanical ventilation. Also, Housing New Zealand properties tend to be older and not particularly prone to leaks. Severe mould problems are therefore likely to be more prevalent in private sector rentals than Housing New Zealand properties.

Safe and secure

30. Restraint of the hot water cylinder was initially proposed as a criterion, however the group concluded that it was low risk, based on experience from the Christchurch earthquakes. The criterion was therefore removed prior to the assessments.
31. "No hazardous substances in the property structure" (for example, lead paint or asbestos) was also originally included as a criterion, but TAG agreed that specialist expertise would be required beyond the scope of the warrant of fitness scheme and would raise liability issues. The criterion was therefore removed prior to the assessments. Deteriorating asbestos ceilings or flaking paint would be captured under wall/ceiling linings. Where an assessor noticed a strong chemical smell or similar indication, they would be requested to note that.
32. A third criterion originally proposed was "no obvious gas hazards". The group agreed to remove this criterion as it would require expertise beyond the scope of the warrant of fitness and because current legislation does not require regular inspections of residential gas reticulation or connected appliances. The group noted that New Zealand is an outlier in this respect.
33. As a result of a fatality, Housing New Zealand installs anti-tipping devices on all freestanding electric and gas stoves and checks these as part of six-monthly health and safety inspections. (Newer stoves come with a proprietary device; older stoves are attached to the wall with a bracket or safety chain). Where Housing New Zealand properties failed on this criterion, it was because the anti-tip device was present, but had been (partially) disabled by tenants.
34. The TAG noted that anti-tipping devices are rarely seen in private sector rentals, and considered that this was not a high safety priority relative to other criteria. The group therefore agreed not to include this as a criterion.
35. Key issues discussed were:
 - a. Balancing ventilation and fall risk: see paragraph 20.h above.
 - b. Risk of injury from glazing: in addition to requiring a visibility strip on large areas of low level glazing, Master Builders recommended that the group also consider requiring

safety glass, and/or requiring the landlord to notify the tenant of any non-safety glass. The group noted that glaziers will not reinstall non-safety glass, but that it can be very difficult to identify whether older glass is safety glass or not. The group agreed that assessors be asked to note the extent of high risk glazing and check for safety glass, to provide TAG with further information. Assessors were unable to confirm whether glass was safety glass or not, and data provided by ACC showed that home injuries from glazing were low in relation to other injury types, and highest for 15-24 year olds rather than young children. The TAG agreed that requiring a visibility strip was sufficient.

- c. Electrical services: the group discussed whether Residual Current Devices (RCD) should be required in wet areas and concluded that this went beyond a minimum standard.
- d. Smoke alarms: the group noted HNZ reports of tenants removing batteries and in some cases cutting wires for mains alarms.

Comment from TAG on the final criteria proposed by officials

Internal/external stairs, ramps, landings and decks, balustrades and handrails:

- 36. Approximately 4,000 injuries requiring ACC cover occur each month on internal or external home stairs. The TAG agreed that requiring all older properties to be brought up to current Building Code standard would be expensive and unnecessary, in terms of mitigating health and safety risks. A minimum standard is necessary for older properties, but must be pragmatic.
- 37. The standard proposed is as follows:
 - a. Post-1992 (Building Code) properties are compliant if the internal/external stairs, ramps, landings and decks, balustrades and/or handrails met Building Code requirements at the time of construction (1000 mm balustrade height, 100 mm gaps) and are in good working condition.
 - b. For pre-Building Code properties, internal/external stairs, ramps, landings and decks, balustrades and handrails should meet a minimum standard irrespective of the local building regulations at the time of construction:
 - i. a minimum of 914mm (three feet) high (reflecting the use of imperial measurements pre-1969),
 - ii. have baluster spacings 125mm wide or less (reflecting the current Australian requirements),
 - iii. non-climbable, and;
 - iv. structurally sound.
- 38. International evidence shows causal links between tread width (which correlates with steepness) and frequency of injuries. The proposed Warrant of Fitness minimum of 210 mm acknowledges that it is not cost-effective to retrofit older stairs. However, ideally tread width should be greater, as reflected in the current Building Code requirements. ACC recommend a minimum acceptable width of 220 mm (which is equivalent to the current Code requirements for minor stairways which are infrequently used).
- 39. If the tread width on frequently used stairs³ is less than 210mm, this should be mitigated through the following measures:
 - a. installing handrails on both sides
 - b. ensuring the stairs are sufficiently lit
 - c. having switches for the light(s) at the top and bottom of the stairs for ease of use
 - d. slip-resistant nosing and/or high visibility strips on treads.

³ Excluding, for example, attic stairs

Essential amenities

40. "The building structure presents no visible structural faults" was originally proposed as a criterion. The TAG considered that this required expertise beyond the scope of the warrant of fitness scheme and would raise liability issues. The criterion was therefore removed. Where assessors noticed obvious structural problems with Housing New Zealand properties, these were noted.
41. The group debated whether attenuation of external noise should be included as a criterion but concluded that this was low priority given the purpose of the warrant of fitness scheme.
42. Key issues discussed were:
 - a. Power points: see point 20.j above.
 - b. Stormwater: the group noted that not all councils provide storm water systems and that the criterion needed to reflect that.

Comment from TAG on the final criteria proposed by officials

Ceiling and floor linings

43. The draft Warrant of Fitness standard allows holes of up to 150 by 150 mm provided that they are not within 2 m of wet services or food preparation areas, and the linings are otherwise structurally sound and can be kept clean. The TAG considered that a hole of any size should be non-compliant where it causes a building performance or health and safety issue (for example allowing rodent access, exposed electrical wiring, allowing water or significant draught in).
44. The TAG also considered that a higher standard (only minor holes or dents) should be applied at the beginning of a new tenancy, acknowledging the issue of tenant damage during a tenancy. This would be consistent with Housing New Zealand policy.

Room size

45. Minimum room sizes are included in the Housing Improvement Regulations 1947. The Minister of Housing asked TAG to consider whether the Warrant of Fitness should include minimum bedroom sizes (including for single versus double) and living area sizes.
46. The group concluded that room size was more of an advertising standards/tenant choice issue and not relevant to the Warrant of Fitness, as long as bedrooms meet minimum requirements for light and ventilation. (This would prevent a landlord letting a storage cupboard as a 'bedroom').
47. Should the Minister of Housing wish to include minimum room sizes, the TAG recommends that highest priority for setting a minimum standard should be the total living area (combined kitchen/dining/living room) in relation to the number of bedrooms. The TAG did not consider what a specific minimum standard for the total living area might look like.

Recommendations outside the scope of the Warrant of Fitness criteria

48. There were two areas outside the scope of the Warrant of Fitness criteria, where TAG wished to make recommendations to Government, to improve health and safety in both owner-occupied and rental properties.

Gas safety inspections

49. The draft Warrant of Fitness criteria initially included 'no obvious gas hazards'. This criterion was removed on advice of the TAG, because it would require specialist expertise, and because there is currently no legislative requirement for landlords to ensure regular gas safety inspections. New Zealand is unusual in this respect; other developed countries typically require gas safety inspections in rental properties to be undertaken every 12-24 months. This is because it is difficult for non-specialists to detect faults such as blocked

ventilation inlets, leaking gas or carbon monoxide, which can be highly dangerous to occupants.

50. Housing New Zealand has inspected all of its properties which use gas, and found a high number of faults, despite regular maintenance. Extrapolating from this, many private sector rentals in New Zealand which use gas may also have undetected faults, which could be dangerous to occupants. Potential consequences include fire, explosion, or carbon monoxide poisoning.
51. While it is outside the scope of the Warrant of Fitness, the TAG recommends that Government consider introducing a requirement for regular gas safety inspections in residential rental properties.

Unflued gas heaters

52. A review of LPG cabinet heaters undertaken for the Ministry of Economic Development in 2010 concluded that while there were health costs associated with unflued gas heaters (UFGH), there were also economic and social benefits associated with safe use (particularly as secondary heating). Government subsequently decided not to ban UFGH, but to strengthen import and labelling requirements, and provide public health messages about safe use.
53. The TAG acknowledges the amenity that cabinet UFGH's provide: they are portable, enable households to manage their energy budget and arguably have a place in household emergency kits (for example in case of natural disaster or power cuts).
54. Nevertheless TAG recommends the Minister considers further pathways to control UFGH use in New Zealand homes, beyond the 2010 changes (for example, supporting community-based schemes to transition low income households to alternative heating).
55. These heaters are a source of pollution (nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, benzene, butadiene, fine particulates and formaldehyde), release water into homes (increasing the need to ventilate or use a humidifier as damp air is harder to heat) and are a fire hazard. The well documented outcomes of their use are poor health, increased heating costs and reduced building durability. Children (especially those with asthma), elderly, and the infirm are particularly vulnerable due to the amount of time they spend at home, indoors.
56. The quality of indoor environments results from the interplay among four parameters: temperature, ventilation, relative humidity and sources of pollution. While UFGH are used to increase temperatures they pollute, increase relative humidity and require additional ventilation (undermining temperature gains).

Appendix A: Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness Technical Advisory Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE

(06 November 2013)

Purpose

- 1 These Terms of Reference describe the purpose and functions of the Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness Technical Advisory Group (the TAG).

Background

- 2 In 2012, the Children's Commissioner sought advice from an Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on solutions to child poverty. One of the EAG's recommendations was the development of a Warrant of Fitness for rental housing to help ensure the health of children living in rental properties.
- 3 Following a recommendation from the Ministerial Committee on Poverty, Government announced as part of Budget 2013 that a Warrant of Fitness would be developed and initially implemented in Housing New Zealand (HNZ) properties.

Project scope and principles

- 4 The intent of the Warrant of Fitness and associated star rating scheme is to:
 - a. set clear minimum standards for rental properties in terms of health and safety
 - b. provide an incentive for landlords to exceed minimum standards
 - c. improve the information available to tenants about how healthy and safe a property is.

The Warrant of Fitness should therefore contribute to improved health and safety outcomes for tenants, with associated improvements in economic and social outcomes. Tenant behaviour and other factors beyond housing also affect these outcomes.

- 5 The Warrant of Fitness focuses on assessing health and safety aspects of rental properties (specifically the extent to which a property is dry and insulated, safe and secure, and has essential amenities). It is not designed to assess energy and environmental aspects.
- 6 Warrant of Fitness design and implementation will be based on a number of principles:
 - Practicality: the Warrant of Fitness must be suited to New Zealand conditions, and be able to be readily applied to the wide range of rental properties in New Zealand, with consistent results.
 - Cost effectiveness: aim to maximise total benefits (to tenants, taxpayers/wider public, landlords) for minimum total costs (to landlords, tenants, taxpayers/wider public).
 - Easily understood/"reasonable": the Warrant of Fitness concept and results must be able to be easily understood by tenants, landlords, property managers and the public, and set standards which are generally seen to be "reasonable".
 - Evidence-based: design of the Warrant of Fitness should be based on best available evidence and practice with regard to health and safety outcomes, and building standards.

- Transparency: Warrant of Fitness results need to be readily available to tenants; property quality beyond the minimum standard is recognised; assessment criteria must be readily available to landlords and not subject to change without adequate notice.
- Housing market impact: potential adverse impacts of the Warrant of Fitness regime on the housing market in terms of cost and supply should be minimised.

- 7 These principles will need to be balanced, for example: evidence-based and minimising adverse housing market impacts – setting a very high minimum standard based on evidence of health benefits might result in a large number of tenants having to find alternative accommodation.
- 8 The Warrant of Fitness will initially be used to assess Housing New Zealand Corporation housing. It will be designed with consideration of potential future wider implementation in approved social housing providers under the Social Housing Reforms, and the private rental sector.

Role of the Technical Advisory Group

- 9 The role of the TAG is to provide technical advice on the draft Warrant of Fitness standard and star rating scheme which has been developed by HNZ and MBIE officials and agreed with the Minister of Housing.
- 10 The role is not to develop Warrant of Fitness content, documents or business processes, or to provide advice on implementation of the Warrant of Fitness. The Technical Advisory Group will be able to make evidence-based arguments for inclusion or exclusion of particular elements in/from the draft standard, but decisions sit with officials, the Minister of Housing and other ministers.
- 11 The TAG is not intended as a means of stakeholder consultation. Any decision by Government to extend the Warrant of Fitness beyond Housing New Zealand properties would involve stakeholder consultation.
- 12 The TAG will be accountable to the WOF Steering Group which comprises HNZ and MBIE officials.

Key tasks and expectations

- 13 Specific issues for the TAG to advise on will include:
- a. how to specify particular elements of the Warrant of Fitness and star rating scheme;
 - b. the relative merits and weightings of elements;
 - c. ways of assessing the various elements in the field (eg mould);
 - d. the effectiveness of the draft Warrant of Fitness survey tool in gathering the required data on properties
 - e. effective information collection methodologies
 - f. advice on how to monitor the information gathering
- 14 The TAG does not need to provide unanimous advice; where there are legitimate technical differences of opinion these will need to be clearly explained and noted.
- 15 In providing advice the TAG will need to take into account trade-offs, for example between accuracy of measurement and cost.
- 16 The TAG will need to be aware of other similar proposed developments, for example the Warrant of Fitness being developed by the Green Building Council and Otago University School of Medicine. Officials propose that the TAG invite relevant groups to present to it.
- 17 Deliverables:

- a. written advice on the specific questions discussed at each meeting (format to be agreed between the TAG and officials)
 - b. An officials report on the overall feedback from the TAG on all matters.
- 18 Where a member is required to provide advice on a matter in which he or she is interested, the member must disclose the details of the interest to MBIE as soon as practicable after the member becomes aware of the interest and stand aside from discussion of that issue if so required by MBIE.

Membership

- 19 The TAG will be tightly-focused, drawing on members' knowledge and experience of assessing housing condition, the impacts of housing condition on occupants, the costs of upgrading and/or retrofitting housing and tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities.
- 20 Proposed members are:

Organisation	Expertise/perspective
Beacon Pathway	Housing quality, including retrofitting houses
BRANZ	Building performance, assessing house condition
New Zealand Property Investors Federation	Private sector landlord perspective on rental quality and property management
Local Government NZ nominee	Social housing
Master Builders	Feasibility and cost of retrofitting existing houses
HNZ Product Manager	Technical knowledge of HNZ standards and specifications
District Health Board	Health impacts of housing
ACC	Safety aspects of housing
Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority	Insulation, ventilation and moisture prevention
HNZ Researcher	Monitoring and evaluation, specific knowledge of previous HNZ research on tenants' well-being etc

- 21 The TAG will be chaired by an HNZ nominated official.

Principles

- 22 The following principles guide the operation of the TAG:
- Discussions will be full and frank with each member speaking from their expert position. Members will be expected to provide competent professional advice commensurate with their skills and experience, but will not be liable for the ultimate design or implementation of the Warrant of Fitness.
 - The TAG process will be business-like and outcome focused. MBIE/HNZ will provide documents prior to meetings to allow reasonable time for review.
 - Members acknowledge that the Warrant of Fitness and the TAG process cannot necessarily address all concerns that individual members may have.

- All information shared and discussed with the TAG belongs to MBIE/HNZ and remains confidential unless permission is explicitly given to share it more widely. Participants will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.
- No discussion or distribution of any of the Government material or matters raised is to be conducted with any person outside the TAG and there is to be no engagement with the media. Any necessary media comment will come solely from MBIE in consultation with other government departments/ministries and at their sole discretion.
- MBIE and other government departments/ministries are responsible for the provision of final advice to Government.

TAG Process

Time commitment

- 23 The TAG meetings will commence in December 2013, and will be held in central Wellington. A tentative schedule of meetings will be provided, but may vary. Dates will be confirmed with the TAG.
- 24 Tentative schedule of meetings as a guide for participants will be provided – to insert.
- 25 Meetings are expected to be typically 3-4 hours. Members will be provided with documents to review prior to each meeting, with anticipated preparation time of up to 2 hours.

Costs

- 26 TAG members will be appropriately compensated for their time (details to be determined), including preparation time. Administrative expenses and transport as required will be covered by MBIE.

Administration

- 27 Officials will provide secretariat support and meeting venues.