



DOIA20/21110497

s 9(2)(a)

Dear s 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email dated 6 November 2020 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

Question 1: In light of global warming, is there any reason why the Healthy Homes Standards exclude excessively high temperatures in homes? What is the Government willing to do about this exclusion?

Reasoning: Working conditions include the impact of heat on performance, so why is an excessively hot home allowed for tenants, and owners? This may be the result of poor design standards, or a landlord who simply refuses to provide an appropriate air conditioning system for a tenant.

Question 2: In light of high levels of humidity and condensation, with resulting rot, and mould caused by moist dryers, including condensation dryers, is there any reason why the Health Homes standards exclude laundries and laundry areas from the list of areas that are required to be ventilated? What is the Government willing to do about this exclusion?

Excessive temperature

Many rental homes in New Zealand are cold and damp, and research shows a link between cold and damp homes and negative health outcomes. The healthy homes standards (the standards) are intended to improve the quality of rental homes, so that New Zealanders who rent will experience improved health, as well as lower medical costs and lower levels of hospitalisations. The minimum heating capacity that the standards provide for will enable tenants to heat their living room to a minimum temperature of 18 degrees, which is the minimum temperature recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Evidence shows that New Zealanders tend to heat their homes to below the minimum temperature recommended by the WHO, and below the minimum temperature that heating devices must be able to achieve in order to comply with the standards. Tenants frequently report that energy costs are a barrier to heating their homes to a higher temperature.

While excessive temperature can be detrimental to health, we do not believe that there is any need to require landlords to ensure that their tenants can reduce the temperature in their living rooms by, as you suggest, requiring landlords to provide an air conditioning system. Excessive heat has not been identified as a major problem leading to poor health with respect to New Zealand rentals.

Ventilation and dryers

The contribution of laundry drying to moisture in the home was considered during the development of the options for the standards, as indoor clothes drying can release significant amounts of moisture, increasing the risk of mould and damp. Ultimately, it was decided not to include a requirement for providing ventilation for clothes dryers because that carried the risk of landlords no longer providing clothes dryers to tenants to avoid compliance costs. It was decided that the issue was better addressed through education. You can find discussion of this in the Briefing to the Minister on preferred options for the standards, which has been proactively released on Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development's (the Ministry) website: www.hud.govt.nz/assets/Residential-Housing/Healthy-Rental-Homes/Healthy-Homes-Standards/February-2019/47ab87fe98/Briefing-Preferred-options-for-the-healthy-homes-standards.pdf.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my response by the Ombudsman, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found on the Ombudsman's website at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

As part of our ongoing commitment to openness and transparency, the Ministry proactively releases information and documents that may be of interest to the public. As such, this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on our website.

Yours sincerely



Claire Leadbetter
Manager, Tenures and Housing Quality