



Healthy housing

At the 2017 election, the RACP called for health equity: we said Healthy Housing, Good Work and Whānau Wellbeing must be the norm for all people. In 2019, how is Aotearoa NZ Making Health Equity the Norm?

SUMMARY

The RACP's report cards check in on how our case study whānau are doing – what have been their successes, and where have they struggled? Together with their stories, we asked our Members – physicians and paediatricians across the country – what other actions they would take in #MakingHealthyHousingTheNorm in Aotearoa NZ.

SURVEY OF NZ MEMBERS

In our survey of NZ members, members were asked to rank government initiatives from making the most difference to people's health, to making the least difference to people's health.

TOP 3 POLICIES FOR HOUSING MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE'S HEALTH:

- 1** Introduction of Healthy Homes Standards for insulation, ventilation, moisture and dampness for rental properties
- 2** Winter Energy Payment – universal payment to all beneficiaries
- 3** Changes to the Residential Tenancies Act, including the Prohibition of Letting Fees

ARE WE MAKING #HEALTHYHOUSING THE NORM IN AOTEAROA NZ?

Some progress, but a 12,000+ waitlist suggests there's room for improvement

- Progress to improve the standard of rental housing has begun – but standards will only be effective if they are enforced.
- The need for public housing is dire and evidenced by the increasing waitlist. Dedicated public housing must be built as an urgent priority.
- Early results from novel initiatives to address homelessness are showing progress, and these should be scaled up.

WHAT RACP MEMBERS SAY:

“Acknowledgement of housing's impact on health is vital.

“Houses are so poorly built and maintained. They must be warm and healthy, and more of them.



Our case study whānau

When we met our case study whānau, they were part of an extended family group living in an overcrowded house and garage. In 2019, we find that the house has been sold, and this has meant different housing outcomes for all of them: time in emergency housing, homelessness and experiencing the public housing system.



“ We had 42 days to move out. Then the house was sold. We had nowhere to go, our whānau were split up. I spent over 6 months living in a motel.

Shirley now lives alone in council-owned pensioner housing, after living in emergency housing. Although her new home is accessible for her wheelchair, she often gets lonely. Age Concern finds around 1 in 4 older people experience loneliness and social isolation.

SHIRLEY, NOW 72 YEARS OLD

“ The Housing First programme meant I wasn't sleeping in my car any more. Last time I went into detox, I was straight back out on the street. Now I see the Detox team at my place. Being in a house again, that's been huge.

Brian and his wife separated following increased family tensions. Brian's drinking escalated, and he spent time living in his car. Brian was connected to Housing First. By May 2019, Housing First had placed over 500 households into permanent housing in Auckland. Stable housing enables people to then treat addiction and other health issues.

BRIAN, NOW 50 YEARS OLD



“ I had a c-section with Mia, it was hard... I wished I could of bought her home to our own place, but we were still in the motel. I had to bring my baby to emergency housing, not her home. I feel like I don't remember a time there where Josh and her didn't have runny noses.

In June 2019, it took 190 days to house Priority A applicants (people in most severe need of housing). Of the 12,000 people on the Public Housing waitlist, over 80% have been assessed as Priority A.

TANIA, NOW 28 YEARS OLD