

Close to Home

issue 30 November 2011



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our services**
MAKING THINGS EASIER



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any time**
HERE TO HELP



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Go Brooke!
CHEERLEADING STAR

Are you ready for election day?

Don't want to let someone else make the decisions for you? Then vote!
If you don't, you're giving up your voice in New Zealand's decision-making.

This year's general election is just around the corner, but it's not too late to get the information you need to have your say on election day.

On Saturday 26 November, you get to have your say not only on who runs the country but also the system we use to choose them.

There's a Referendum taking place at the same time as the 2011 General Election. The Referendum gives you the chance to have your say on the voting system you'd like to use to elect our Parliaments in the future.



You can find out more about the Referendum, the questions and the options from www.referendum.org.nz.

But to have your say you must be enrolled to vote. Enrolment closes on 25 November – you can't enrol after that. Getting enrolled is easy. Free text your name and address to 3676 or call 0800 36 76 56 and a form will be sent to you. Visit www.elections.org.nz to enrol or update your details online, or pick up a form at your local PostShop.

Got questions?

Visit www.elections.org.nz, call 0800 36 76 56, or ask Orange Guy on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ivotenz.

**Remember you can't
enrol on election day!**
Do it now! ➔

Welcome



Yeah All Blacks!

The past months have been exciting, as the whole country got behind our unbeatable All Blacks. Whether you watched on the telly, went to your local or were lucky enough to have gone to a game you would not have been able to escape World Cup fever.

Now with the victory secure we look forward to a festive Christmas season and a long hot summer.

Editor

FESTIVE FACT

At midnight on Christmas Eve 1914 firing from the German trenches suddenly stopped. A German brass band began playing Christmas carols, soldiers came out of their trenches, approaching the allied lines, calling "Merry Christmas". At first the allied soldiers thought it was a trick, but they soon climbed out of their trenches and shook hands with the German soldiers. The truce lasted a few days, and the men exchanged presents of cigarettes and plum puddings and sang carols. They even played a game of soccer.





We're improving our services

Housing New Zealand is making some improvements to make things better for you.

The changes we're making will make us more responsive, efficient and consistent in our dealings with you.

We're making the changes gradually – but you'll start to notice some differences early next year.

One of the first things you'll notice is that when you call us, the call will always be answered by our customer services centre. We'll have more staff within our services centre and they'll have access to the details about you and your home plus new technology so they can answer your call quickly and help you on-the-spot.

No matter who answers the phone, they'll be able to manage almost any question or request about your tenancy or your state house.

Over time, our tenancy managers will also be out on the road in your neighbourhood more, visiting you, our tenant in your state house.

So in the future you will no longer need to come to us – we'll either be able to help you over the phone, or send a tenancy manager to you.

We will start making these changes in April next year but we won't be making all of the changes at once. We'll keep you informed as the changes roll out. [H](#)



No matter who answers the phone, they'll be able to manage almost any question or request about your tenancy or your state house.

CHANGES
START

April
2012

FESTIVE FACT

The biggest selling Christmas single of all time is Bing Crosby's White Christmas.





Suspension from Housing New Zealand houses

Most of our tenants want the same thing – a happy and safe environment to live in.

However, a very small percentage of tenants lie about their circumstances, repeatedly refuse to pay their rent, act in ways that intimidate or harm other people, or abuse or use our properties as a base for criminal behaviour. This isn't fair, particularly when there are people on our waiting list who need our help.

From 30 November, we'll be able to suspend these tenants from state housing for a year. Visitors to the property can also be suspended from state housing for a year if we believe they caused damage to a state house, or intimidated or harmed others.

This is not about suspending tenants for breaking a window or missing a one-off rental payment. This is about protecting our tenants, staff and properties, and

making sure needy people don't sit on the waiting list while ineligible people manipulate the system or disrupt others from enjoying their houses.

The Suspensions policy works hand in hand with the Encouraging Good Neighbour Behaviour policy which we introduced last year to make communities safer and ensure neighbours have peace and quiet enjoyment in their homes.

People who have been suspended will be able to apply for an internal review if they do not agree with the decision to suspend them.

For more information, you can pick up a brochure from your local Neighbourhood Unit, or download one from our website: www.hnzc.co.nz

TENANTS CAN BE SUSPENDED FROM GETTING A STATE HOUSE FOR A YEAR IF THEY:

- lie about their circumstances to get or keep a state house or rent subsidy
- intimidate or harm other people
- sublet their state house to other people
- repeatedly refuse or fail to pay their rent
- run up large debt (such as for damages to the house)
- substantially damage a state house
- use a state house as a base for criminal activities
- exhibit other serious or persistent anti-social behaviour.



If a person is suspended, they will not be eligible to apply for a state house for a year. Meaning, they will not be able to rent a state house during their suspension period. Once their suspension is over they will be able to apply for a state house the same as anyone else. If they are eligible and receive a state house, their tenancy will be regularly reviewed by Housing New Zealand.



Our mission is to house New Zealanders in greatest need, for as long as they need our help.



Call us any time...

When you call the Housing New Zealand customer services centre you are talking to real people, based right here in New Zealand.

In fact they may well live in the same suburb as you and could be your neighbour, friend of a friend, or the guy next to you on the bus. Each one of our customer services centre staff has a wealth of experience and life skills that they use every day to help the people who phone us.

One of those people at the end of the line is Imeleta, who has been at the customer services centre in Porirua for more than four years. She has two daughters, one grandchild, and another grandchild on the way. She and her husband settled in Porirua many years ago and she also has a large extended family in the neighbourhood.

She joined the customer services centre after applying to an advertisement in the paper and was ecstatic she got an interview.

"I had been working in a small office, and sometimes I was the only one there during the day. It was lonely, and the time came when I knew I was ready for a change."

She says the most challenging thing about this job is trying to talk to people who are clearly frustrated and not knowing what is frustrating them.

"Our calls are recorded so if something doesn't work out the way it was supposed to, we can check back on the call to find out why. We're constantly improving our processes, and put a lot of effort into learning better ways of doing things.



"Our service is free, and you can call any time 24 hours a day. I know it might seem more convenient to call your Tenancy Manager, but really, once you call us your call goes straight into the system.

"There is no need to leave messages or wait for someone to call you back. You just call through to us, and we'll take your details and make sure you are who you say you are, and go through your enquiry with you."

She says if there was any advice she could give to callers it would be to write down all the things you want to talk about before you call.

"You'll be surprised at how many people call us, and then have to call back because they forgot to tell us something. Also, give yourself plenty of time because sometimes if we have high volumes of calls you may have to wait a little longer for an operator.

"And finally, if English isn't your first language we can provide a translation service for you. It's always easier when you're talking to us in your own language.

"Sometimes the job can be hard work but I love it and I really like the people I work with."

If you need to ask a question, report damage or a fault, or want to thank our customer services centre staff call 0800 801 601, any time 24 hours a day.

"Our calls are recorded so if something doesn't work out the way it was supposed to, we can check back on the call to find out why."

WHAT IS LANGUAGE LINE?

A telephone interpreting service for migrants, refugees and others for whom lack of English is a barrier to accessing appropriate Government services.

The service is provided free to HNZC customers.

The telephone number for the Language Line is 0800 000 147.

Language line is available from Monday to Friday 9am–6pm, Saturday 9am–2pm.



Hard work pays off

Eighteen years ago Clark and Kirstin Pirika, with their two small children Arama-Karaka and Eruana-Karaka, were living in Wellington.

With a young family to raise, and Clark studying full-time, Kirstin suggested that they leave Wellington to beat the rising cost of living. So in March 1994, she and the children moved to Rotorua and into a Housing NZ house. Clark stayed in Wellington, successfully completing his course before following the family to Rotorua.

Clark continued studying full-time at Waiariki Institute of Technology for another three years and eventually graduated with a National Diploma in Business Computing.

Once qualified, Clark got a job and started paying back his student loan, reducing debts and providing for his growing family. They'd always dreamed of owning a home, so once the student loan was repaid, they used the extra money to save for a deposit for a house. Now 18 years on, and a lot of hard work later, the Pirika family finally moved into their own home, just 15 minutes down the road from the state house the family grew up in.



Clark and Kirstin's whare.

“We moved in four weeks ago and we are so lucky and appreciative of what we now have, our own home.”

“It happened really quickly. Once we had the deposit, we started looking for houses straight away. And five weeks later, the right house came up on Trade Me. We got in touch with a mortgage broker, and a week later it was ours! It was unbelievable – all that hard work, and then it just happened. We moved in four weeks ago and we are so lucky and appreciative of what we now have, our own home.”

Clark's mantra is “work to a budget”, be disciplined to live within your means and support each other to do this. It's not easy but it can be done. He says they could not have done it without the support of Housing New Zealand, “they enabled us to achieve our dream and now it's time for another family to receive the same support”.⁺

DRIVEWAY SAFETY

Safekids New Zealand suggests three things you can do to make driveways and other places safer for children: check, supervise and separate.

Check

- Always count the kids before you manoeuvre, and make sure they are belted safely in the car or in a safe place away from the car.
- Understand how big the blind zones are around your car.
- Keep cars locked and do not let children use them as play areas.

Supervise

- Ensure a responsible person (not a group of kids) is actively supervising children if they can get to spaces used by cars.
- Late afternoon and early evening are particularly busy times for parents and caregivers and special efforts are needed to make sure children are safe.

Separate

- Consider how to separate children from all areas used for driving, for example, installing a childproof doorway gate, half-door or using fences to keep young children safe.
- Infants and children should have safe fenced play spaces to let them explore and develop in safety.
- If you're visiting someone's house, consider parking on the road instead of the driveway, and if you're expecting visitors you could place objects on the driveway to deter cars parking there.



4
KIDS

TREEHOUSE IS THE
'KIDS ONLY' ZONE FOR
CLOSE TO HOME.

TREEHOUSE!



Q

Can you name all of
Santa's Reindeer?

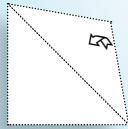
A: See Below

**It might not be snowing
outside but it can be inside!**

**Make your own Christmas decorations!
You can hang them on your tree, from
the ceiling or attach to the windows.**

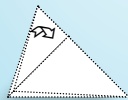
1.

Take a square piece of paper
and fold in half across the
diagonal.



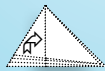
2.

Fold the new triangle shape in
half, down the middle.



3.

Fold the smaller triangle in
half down the middle again so
you are left with a small
triangular shape – that has
been folded three times.



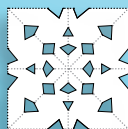
4.

Cut shapes out of the folded
triangle.



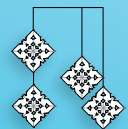
5.

Open up your shape to have
a unique snowflake.



6.

Attach string if you want to
hang from your ceiling or
window.



GO Brooke!

Learning dance routines, meeting other girls and the excitement of dancing in front of a large crowd – sometimes up to 20,000 strong – makes cheerleading fun for Brooke Niovara. Brooke lives with her family in a state house in Freemans Bay Auckland.

As a member of the Candy Lane Mini Warriors cheerleaders Brooke performed at all the home games at Mt Smart stadium this season.

Brooke loves learning the routines from Candy. "Candy Lane is a great dancer, I think she's pretty and really believes in and supports us. I like being part of her cheer group." The feeling's mutual. Candy is very impressed with Brooke and her dancing.

The group entertained on the fan trail during the Rugby World Cup in Auckland recently. But Brooke's really a Warriors fan.



**"I can't
wait for
the next
season,
Go the
Warriors."**

Advice on budgeting for Christmas

Joining your local supermarket Christmas Club is the clever way to prepare for Christmas. Think of it as a piggy bank you can use to help spread the cost of Christmas over the year. The earlier you contribute to your Christmas club, the more treats you'll have.

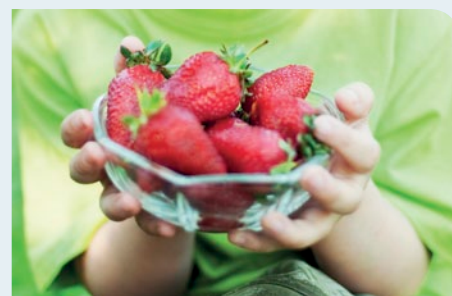


Some supermarkets offer saving incentives or discount shopping nights closer to Christmas exclusively for Christmas Club members. It's not too late to help Santa.

- 1 Agree what you can afford to spend – set this figure as your overall holiday spending limit.
- 2 Break down your budget to allow for gifts, decorations, food & drink and the holiday entertainment.
- 3 **IMPORTANT** Track your spending throughout the season! Keep a running total against the budget allocated to keep you on top of things.
- 4 Tweak your budget to cover any instances of overspending – if there is a blow-out on gifts try to cut back on the decoration spending.



- What do elves learn in school?
The elf-abet.
- What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire?
Frostbite.
- Where do polar bears vote?
The North Poll.



Fruit Kebabs

What you need:

Selection of fruits – for example

- strawberries
- chopped melon
- segments of orange

Marshmallows

Skewers

How to make it:

- 1 Thread fruit pieces and marshmallows onto a skewer.
- 2 Present them stacked up on a plate in the middle of table or for handing around.

Berry fruits are great at this time of year, unfortunately as Christmas draws nearer the cost of them goes through the roof.

Tip:

Plan to enjoy them before Christmas or even buy berries a few days prior to Christmas to get them at the best price.

FESTIVE FACT

The largest functional Christmas cracker was 45.72 metres long and 3.04 metres in diameter. It was made in Australia, and was pulled in the car park of the Westfield Shopping Town in Chatswood, Sydney, on 9 November 1991.



Garden diary



Dec



Kitchen garden

- December is a month of rapid growth so pay particular attention to watering, weeding and feeding.
- It's best to water the garden deeply and infrequently (rather than little and often), so plants learn to dig deep for moisture. Collect rainwater in buckets to save water, and continue mulching to keep soil moisture levels up.
- Continue to mound up soil around spuds and you should have a good feed of new potatoes come Christmas Day.
- Succession plantings of all summer veges can take place for harvest right through to autumn.
- Feed tomatoes with fertiliser and water regularly. Remove laterals (side growths) while they grow, to encourage fruit growth. Make sure they're firmly staked.

Jan



Kitchen garden

- If summer is playing the game, it should be hot and dry this month so keep up the watering. The cool of the morning and as the sun is going down are the most effective times to water, and remember to water the roots – not the leaves.
- January is a really big growth month in the garden, as summer veges come ready for harvest. Pick sweet corn when the tassels have begun to dry, and pick cucumbers and zucchini every day to encourage more to grow in their place.
- Thin carrots and use rejects in salads. Keep planting more lettuce seedlings as you harvest to keep the summer salad supply going. The cut-and-come-again lettuce varieties are the best.
- When harvesting tomatoes, keep removing laterals and remove bottom leaves to help air circulate.
- Sow seeds like broccoli and cabbage for autumn/winter crops. Keep seeds moist and out of the hot sun while germinating, then transplant to the garden once the seedlings have grown to about 10cm.

Feb



Kitchen garden

- Water, water, water! Leafy green plants will appreciate a feed of compost tea or liquid blood and bone.
- Leave the best plants to grow and set seed. Harvest them on a dry day and store in a cool place to plant next year.
- Plant seedlings of cabbage, cauliflower, brussel sprouts, celery, silverbeet, spinach and leeks. Keep seedlings well watered and protected from the sun.

March



Kitchen garden – March is the time for planting the winter vegetable garden

- Plant seedlings of beetroot, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cauliflower, spinach and silverbeet.
- Sow seeds of carrots, parsnips, radish, lettuce, spinach, silverbeet, beetroot (mild climates only), swede and turnip directly into the garden.
- Seeds of broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and brussel sprouts are best sown in trays for planting out later.
- Plant herbs in pots or the garden. Parsley can be grown from seed and sown now. Perennial herbs such as chives, mint, thyme, rosemary, sage and marjoram can be divided and replanted.



Flower garden – it's bulb time

- Plant daffodils, tulips, irises and freesias in the garden or in containers.
- Spray your roses to help control pests and diseases.

Contact Publication enquiries should be made to closetohome@hnzc.co.nz www.hnzc.co.nz

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