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Minister Responsible for Housing New Zealand
Minister for Social Housing

Methamphetamine-related evictions

Housing New Zealand's eviction process

Housing New Zealand terminates a tenancy for a variety of reasons. These include tenancy agreement breaches such as serious antisocial behaviour (for example harassment and intimidation of neighbours or staff, assault, or deliberate property damage), significant rent arrears, or the tenant's use or production of drugs.

Housing New Zealand may issue a 90 day notice to vacate the property and apply to the Tenancy Tribunal for possession. In some cases the Tenancy Tribunal may order an earlier termination in the event of an application for a specific breach of tenancy. When the decision to terminate a tenancy is made, Housing New Zealand provides the tenant with information about alternative housing options. A 90 day notice may be extended by agreement if it will help tenants find alternative accommodation (for example, if they have secured a private rental but cannot move in prior to the expiry of the 90 day notice).

Evictions are a last resort, and usually take place when a tenant refuses to engage with Housing New Zealand after a decision has been made to terminate their tenancy. An eviction occurs where a court bailiff is authorised to obtain possession of a property after a tenancy has been ended by the Tenancy Tribunal, the landlord has an order for possession of the property, and the tenant has not vacated it.

Housing New Zealand does not evict tenants because a property is contaminated. This is a health and safety issue and they will be relocated to another home. However, if there is evidence that the tenant used the drug in one of our properties, then this is a clear breach of their tenancy agreement and their tenancy will be ended as a result.

Below is the recorded number of tenants who were evicted for the main reason being "methamphetamine" use. Tenants can be evicted for more than one reason.

Housing New Zealand evictions nationally

Financial year	Number of evictions for meth use	Total number of evictions
2014/2015	2	40
2015/2016	5	39

Eviction case studies

Glen Eden, Auckland

A tenant became a severe safety risk to neighbours, contractors, and Housing New Zealand staff. The tenant and his associates displayed drunken and disruptive behaviour,

domestic violence, presence of gang members, drug use, stolen property, and threatening a neighbour with violence. The tenant also ran an illegal car “chop shop” at the property.

Housing New Zealand made every effort to work with the tenant, including inviting him to meetings to discuss the issues, to which he did not show up.

In June 2016 the tenant showed up to a WINZ office with a gun (later understood to be a toy gun) and forced the office to lock down. The tenant was later arrested.

Housing New Zealand issued a 90-day notice for the tenant to vacate the property. Housing New Zealand attempted to test the property for methamphetamine contamination due to the tenant’s use of the drug, but was unable to do so due to the threatening behaviour of the occupants.

In September 2016 Housing New Zealand applied to the Tenancy Tribunal for immediate possession of the property, and the tenant was evicted.

Mount Albert, Auckland

A property in Mount Albert was found to be contaminated with methamphetamine. As this was a health and safety issue, the tenant was issued with a 7-day notice to vacate the property.

The tenant took responsibility for the contamination as she used methamphetamine in the house. The tenant explained that she had used methamphetamine after a series of unfortunate events, including the death of her baby from SIDS, and the death of her brother and father within a short amount of time.

The family was already known to CYFS due to concerns relating to the children. After the tenant admitted to drug use, the children were removed by CYFS. As a result, the tenant attempted to take her own life.

The tenant is now receiving mental health support, counselling, and has been drug free since May 2016. She is receiving drug and alcohol counselling, as well as parenting counselling. Housing New Zealand re-housed the tenant, and implemented a Household Action Plan, which included on-going support from several support agencies, the home to be tested for contamination every three to four months, monthly tenancy inspections, and three-monthly professionals meetings with the tenant to ensure the family is still on the right track.

Properties to come back into service

Housing New Zealand currently has 50 vacant properties that are now considered safe to live in after the release of MoH’s new methamphetamine contamination guidelines. Below is a breakdown of the locations of these properties:

Vacant properties that are below the updated guidelines (at 19 October 2016)

Location	Properties
Auckland	15
Christchurch	2
Dunedin	1
Gisborne	6
Hamilton	2
Hutt Valley	1

Lower Hutt	3
New Plymouth	1
Palmerston North	1
Papakura	1
Porirua	1
Rotorua	3
Tauranga	3
Temuka	1
Wellington	5
Whangarei	4
Grand Total	50

Housing New Zealand has prioritised bringing these properties back into the letting pool as quickly as possible. However, before these properties are tenanted, Housing New Zealand will ensure that they do not need any other maintenance or repairs (such as repairing damage). Twelve properties may need carpeting removed to make them safe to tenant.

Housing New Zealand has already begun this process and properties are anticipated to start becoming available to tenant within the next few weeks. Properties in high demand areas such as Auckland will be prioritised with the remainder of contaminated properties to be triaged and bought back into service as soon as works have taken place to ensure they are at an acceptable lettable standard.

Under the updated Ministry of Health’s guidelines:

Applying the new guidelines means that fewer properties will be taken out of service. For example, of the 437 properties that tested positive for methamphetamine contamination since 1 June 2016, 25 percent of the properties would not have required remediation under the new guidelines. A further 7 percent would only need to have carpet removed or additional cleaning undertaken before they could be let.

Housing New Zealand is looking at precisely how much could be saved, but our analysis suggested it could be several million dollars per year.

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Additional information

Housing New Zealand reports the number of vacant properties at a point in time. The below table provides you with an overview of the number of properties that were vacant due to methamphetamine contamination.

Number of vacant Housing New Zealand properties because of methamphetamine contamination

June 2013	June 2014	June 2015	June 2016	September 2016
7	20	165	525	558

Testing and decontamination costs

On average it costs a minimum to \$14,350 to test and decontaminate a property, which includes:

- Initial test: \$2,750
- Decontamination: \$10,000
- Resting: \$1,600.

Below is the total annual cost to Housing New Zealand to test and decontaminate its properties.

Annual costs of testing and decontamination

Financial year	Testing	Reinstatement	Total
2014/2015	\$0.8m	\$2.2m	\$2.97m
2015/2016	\$5.4m	\$15.7m	\$21.12m



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Housing New Zealand Corporation