

## Housing New Zealand Policy on the management of methamphetamine contamination in our properties

<b>Reference number</b>	BN/17/080
<b>Date</b>	1 December 2017
<b>Priority</b>	Normal
<b>Security level</b>	In confidence

### Action sought

Recipient	Action sought	Deadline
Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon Phil Twyford)	<b>Note</b> the contents of this briefing	None
Associate Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon Jenny Salesa)	<b>Note</b> the contents of this briefing	None

### Contact for discussion (if required)

Name	Position	DDI Mobile	Email	First contact
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For Minister's Office			
<input type="checkbox"/> Noted	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Not approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<b>Comments</b>			

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BN/17/080

1 December 2017

Minister of Housing and Urban Development

## **Housing New Zealand policy on the management of methamphetamine contamination in our properties**

### **Recommendations**

I recommend that you:

- a) **note** Housing New Zealand has operational policy work underway focusing on tenancy management, sustaining tenancies and improving social outcomes.
- b) **note** that as part of this work we are reviewing the suitability of our policy regarding methamphetamine contamination in our properties
- c) **note** the revised policy will be in place within the next 3 months.



Andrew McKenzie  
**Chief Executive**

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Hon Phil Twyford  
**Minister of Housing and Urban Development**

**Date**

## **Purpose**

- 1 At a meeting on 13 November 2017, you asked for an overview of Housing New Zealand's policies on the management of methamphetamine contamination in its properties, how it is applied operationally, and how it is being reviewed.

## **Context**

- 2 Housing New Zealand has operational policy work underway to review tenancy management, sustaining tenancies and improve social outcomes. As part of this, we are reviewing the suitability of our policy regarding methamphetamine contamination in our properties in terms of these objectives.
- 3 Housing New Zealand's first priority is the health, safety and security of its tenants, staff, and contractors. We also have a stewardship obligation for the condition of our properties. We take these obligations seriously, and want to ensure all our policies reflect them.
- 4 The previous policy focused on the illegal activity and damage to properties caused by the manufacture of methamphetamine and use of the drug in our properties. The new operational policy will focus on the health risks of living in a contaminated property, supporting tenants who struggle with addiction, and balancing the effect this has on the property

## **Current policy (under review)**

### *Methamphetamine testing process*

- 5 Housing New Zealand tests its properties for methamphetamine contamination to the levels set out in the "Testing and decontamination of methamphetamine-contamination properties (NZS 8510:2017)" standard released in June 2017. This standard addresses not only properties where methamphetamine was manufactured, but also properties where the drug was used. This standard is used across the housing sector.
- 6 Housing New Zealand tests its properties when it has reason to believe that they might be contaminated. We obtain information from Police, neighbours, the tenant, and other sources. If the results show that the contamination is above the Standard, Housing New Zealand will decontaminate the property.
- 7 Housing New Zealand tests a property when it purchases a home from the market to be used as state housing. Baseline tests are not undertaken between tenancies.

### *Tenancy management of methamphetamine contaminated properties*

- 8 When contamination is present and above the Standard we seek to move the tenant as soon as possible. The tenancy will be formally ended and we will help the tenant move into another state house.
- 9 Where Housing New Zealand believed that a tenant was responsible for contaminating their property, our policy was to end their tenancy and to not offer them another state house. The tenant was usually suspended from living in a Housing New Zealand property for one year. Establishing responsibility included obtaining information such as Police reports, from neighbours, or the tenant admitting use of the drug in the property.

- 10 Housing New Zealand sometimes re-housed tenants who we believed caused the contamination, and this was decided on a case-by-case basis. These tenancies were intensively managed and a plan would be agreed with the tenant that would include on-going monitoring and testing of the property.

### **New policy**

- 11 Our overarching goal is a policy that ensures people are appropriately housed and supported across the state sector when dealing with issues. We recognise methamphetamine use is an addiction and one where tenants require support from health and local support services.
- 12 Drug addiction can be one of a number of factors in managing difficult tenancies. This can lead to other issues such as mental health, family dysfunction, violence, budgetary pressure, child welfare issues, criminal activity and other anti-social behaviour.
- 13 Our new policy will start from the perspective of supporting tenants who have a methamphetamine addiction, and being thoughtful in how we help tenants sustain their tenancies. Housing New Zealand has already begun taking this approach and has stopped terminating tenancies for methamphetamine use.
- 14 We are also looking at ways we can design and build homes that will provide more protection against methamphetamine contamination.
- 15 We are working with other agencies to address issues around managing tenancies where there is evidence the property has been used to manufacture or sell methamphetamine.

### **Steps for developing and implementing the policy**

- 16 In developing the new policy we will be:
- agreeing and confirming policy objectives
  - deciding on relevant safety criteria
  - consulting relevant stakeholders, including tenants, and drug and addiction specialist groups
  - developing new process documents and training staff
  - testing the new policy in practice and making any adjustments as required
  - finalising the new policy, processes and procedures.
- 17 The revised policy will be developed in the next 3 months. A communications plan for tenants, staff and stakeholders will also be developed and undertaken prior to the policy becoming operational.

### **Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill**

- 18 The Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill (No 2) will address certain issues related to methamphetamine contamination, including:
- a requirement that landlords must not tenant a rental property if the property is contaminated with methamphetamine
  - an outline of rights and notice periods associated with a landlord's ability to enter a property for the purposes of testing for methamphetamine

- the rights of the landlord or tenant to terminate a tenancy at a contaminated property.
- 19 Housing New Zealand will support the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment by providing advice about our operational practices and challenges as they develop methamphetamine regulations under this bill.
- 20 We understand that the Select Committee process for it is expected to commence shortly.

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