

Making life better for renters

For most people, renting used to be a short stage of their life before they bought a house and started a family. Now, it is becoming the norm. Three out of four people under 40 years old rent, compared to one in two in 1991. Among older New Zealanders, the homeownership rate has fallen from over 90 per cent in 1991, to 75 per cent today. All up, half of New Zealanders now live in rental properties.

Yet our laws around renters' rights have not kept up. They are still designed around the assumption renting is a short-term arrangement for people without children and that renters will move frequently, rather than set down roots in their community.

Many schools are reporting high roll turnover as families move from rental to rental and their children change schools, disrupting their education. Landlords and renters both tell us they want more stability, with longer tenancies and less disruption.

Third world diseases persist in our communities due to the cold, damp, mouldy rentals families have no option but to live in.

Labour is committed to reversing the decline in homeownership by building affordable starter homes for first home buyers, and cracking down on the speculators who force prices up. At the same time, Labour will modernise rental legislation to make properties warm and dry, and make renting more stable and secure.

▶ Labour will:

- **Increase 42 day notice periods for landlords to 90 days to give tenants more time to find somewhere else to live**
- **Abolish "no-cause" terminations of tenancies**
- **Retain the ability of landlords to get rid of tenants who are in breach of the tenancy agreement with 90 days' notice, or more quickly by order of the Tenancy Tribunal**
- **Limit rent increases to once per year (the law currently limits it to once every six months) and require the formula for rental increases to be specified in the rental agreement**
- **Give tenants and landlords the ability to agree tenants on a fixed term lease of 12 months or more can make minor alterations, like putting up shelves, if they pay double bond and on the basis the property is returned to the state it was in at the start of the tenancy**
- **Ban letting fees**
- **Require all rentals to be warm, dry, and healthy for families to live in by passing the Healthy Homes Bill**
- **Give landlords access to grants of up to \$2000 for upgrading insulation and heating.**

This package has been designed, based on international examples, to get the balance between tenants and landlords right.

Let's do this.



It will make renting a more secure and healthy experience. It will help families stay longer in a rental, establish roots in their community, and improve their children's education by staying at the same schools. It will stop our kids getting sick and dying of preventable diseases that have no place in a country like New Zealand.

Notice periods will be used where a landlord requires the home to live in; has sold the property; the tenant has breached the agreement such as anti-social behaviour, failure to pay rent, or causing damage to the property; or the landlord does not want to continue a fixed term tenancy past its expiry. This will mean landlords are still able to give notice to evict bad tenants. Landlords will still be able to go to the Tenancy Tribunal to ask for evictions or other remedies in the event of breaches of tenancy agreements.

Most landlords operate with integrity and seek to provide decent accommodation at a fair price. These reforms will not affect them. What they will do is stop exploitative behaviour by a minority that is blemishing the reputation of landlords as a whole.

Renting has become a life-long reality for many families. As we work towards restoring the dream of homeownership, these reforms will bring the law up to date to reflect the reality of modern renting.

Let's do this.

