

# Winter Energy Payment

**It's time to ensure our families have warm, healthy housing to live in, especially in winter.**

Around 1,600 Kiwis die each year due to cold housing in winter. That's four times the road toll. Thousands of Kiwis are admitted to hospital with respiratory illnesses brought on by living in houses that are too cold.

Older New Zealanders and those on low incomes are most at-risk because of the poor quality of their housing and the difficulty they have in paying for heating.

Labour has already announced significant plans to tackle this problem.

Our Healthy Homes Guarantee will require all rentals to meet standards of insulation, heating, ventilation and weather-tightness. This will ensure those homes are fit to live in.

Labour will fund 600,000 grants of up to \$2,000 per dwelling towards the cost of upgrading insulation and heating. The grants will pay for up to half the cost of insulation upgrades and double glazing that meet or exceed the current building code, or of the cost to install a clean, fixed form of heating. This will be funded by closing the \$150m a year speculators' tax loophole.

The other half of the equation is the cost of staying warm. The cost of household heating has risen by 30 per cent since 2008. Many families cannot afford to keep heaters on and are forced to live in temperatures well below international health guidelines.

► **Labour will:**

- **Introduce a Winter Energy Payment for people receiving superannuation or a main benefit.**

This will be \$450 a year for a single person and \$700 a year for a couple or a person with dependent children, paid in monthly payments from May to September.

For a retired couple or parent, this will mean they receive an extra \$140 a month on top of their superannuation or benefit payments during winter. As with general superannuation and benefit payments, the Winter Energy Payment will not be limited to a specific class of expenditure. This will give families flexibility to use it to best suit their personal circumstances, which could be keeping the heater on longer, installing new heating, or investing in draught-stopping and insulation.

Superannuitants will need to apply for the Winter Energy Payment from Work and Income. Take-up is projected to be 80 per cent, in line with take-up of the Independent Earners Tax Credit. WINZ will automatically add the payment to main benefits.

The annual cost will be \$374m.

**These payments will enable around a million people to better keep themselves warm and healthy in winter. Along with Labour's Healthy Homes Guarantee and heating and insulation grants, this initiative will keep people healthy, reduce hospital admissions, and save lives.**