



Every house a home

For a fairer society

All New Zealanders deserve to have a warm, dry and healthy home. One where they feel happy and secure and can put down roots in their community.

The Green Party will make life better for the thousands of New Zealanders who rent their homes. Our plan will bring balance to the landlord-tenant relationship, professionalise landlords, improve rental security for tenants, and make sure that all homes are warm, dry and healthy. To help make this happen, the Green Party will:

1. Upgrade insulation standards and restore Warm Up NZ insulation subsidies.
2. Implement a housing warrant of fitness for all rentals.
3. Rebalance the rental market with a licencing system for landlords.
4. Introduce landlord maintenance bonds, so tenants can be assured repairs will get done.
5. Reform the Tenancy Tribunal to be less adversarial.
6. Fund FlatMates – a nationwide tenancy advocacy coordination office.
7. Make reasons for rent increases transparent and limit increases to once a year.
8. Remove the obligation on tenants to pay letting fees.
9. Normalise secure tenancies with three-year standard terms and a right of renewal, and allow tenants to make minor modifications that can be easily undone.

Warm, dry, healthy homes

The Green Party will introduce a warrant of fitness (WOF) and star system for rental properties, based on Homestar. This will make sure all homes are up to a basic minimum standard, and reward landlords who go the extra mile. The schemes will initially be voluntary, becoming compulsory from 1 January 2019. Landlords will pay for WOF inspections every three years, which are likely to cost between \$150-250.

We will also restore funding to the Warm Up NZ insulation scheme, with a new mandate for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) to work with local government and other partners to upgrade properties to the level of compliance required to pass a rental WOF. Grants could be used to pay for insulation, double glazed windows, thicker curtains, clean heating devices, and other measures which help make homes warmer, drier, and healthier, with a maximum grant of \$2,500 per property. We will upgrade at least 200,000 homes over three years, at a cost of \$500 million.

Rebalancing the landlord-tenant relationship

Most landlords are good landlords. But the current system has no safeguards and in the broken housing market, some get away with letting atrocious properties. The government does not even keep a good record of how many landlords there are, let alone the standard of their properties or their behaviour towards tenants. The Green Party will introduce mandatory landlord registration, similar to the current system for taxi drivers.

Requirements will be set through consultation and could include that landlords not have 'demerits' from bad past behaviour and that their properties pass a WOF test. Reasonable landlords will have no trouble obtaining registration. An annual \$50 registration fee will fund the licencing process.

We will also introduce maintenance bonds for landlords. At the beginning of a tenancy, landlords will set aside the same amount of money that tenants pay in bond. The money would be accessed, when required by the Tenancy Tribunal, to fund any overdue maintenance and repairs, particularly if the property falls below WOF standard. This will restore some balance between landlords and their tenants, and help to ensure landlords are providing safe, warm, dry homes. Good landlords budget for repairs and maintenance already, so won't be unduly affected.

Renters' rights

The Green Party will create *FlatMates* – a national tenants' advocacy coordination office. It will work alongside local housing advocacy groups to provide advice to tenants and landlords and run information campaigns around rights and responsibilities.

The existing Tenancy Tribunal does a good job of addressing grievances between landlords and tenants, but it needs reforms to make it more relevant to renting in 2017. The Green Party will reform the Tenancy Tribunal, including changing it from an adversarial model to a solutions-focused one, enabling mediation services without filing a complaint, and anonymising tribunal findings for tenants.

Tenancy agreements and rent regulation

When people who rent know that their tenancies are secure, their house becomes a home. To create more secure tenancies, fixed-term leases will be set at a default of three years. Landlords and tenants will be able to choose other terms by mutual agreement. 'No-cause' evictions will be banned. Tenants will have an automatic right of renewal at the end of a fixed-term tenancy. Tenants will be allowed to make small, reversible modifications to properties that can be undone when they move out.

The formula for calculating any future rent increases will be included in tenancy agreements. Rent rises will be limited to no more than once a year. We will also put an end to the practice of charging tenants letting fees and other unnecessary surcharges.

www.greens.org.nz/every-house-a-home

The logo for the Green Party, featuring a stylized green leaf above the word "Green" in a white serif font.

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