



## **Results from a Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness Pre-Test**

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## Summary

### Background

- The Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness( WOF) is based on over a decade of publicly-funded housing research and was developed by the University of Otago, Wellington (UoOW) and the New Zealand Green Building Council (NZGBC) in collaboration with five councils (Auckland, Tauranga, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin)and the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC).
- The decision was taken by these parties to include, at this stage, a broad set of housing features that were considered to have an impact on health, safety and energy efficiency in order to test the feasibility, reliability and acceptability of their measurement in a WOF pre-test.
- The contents of the final WOF, which is a pass/fail test, will not be finalised until after the results of the pre-test have been discussed with key agencies.

### Pre-test method

- Each council employed assessors in their city for the project. The assessors either had previous building assessment experience or were environmental health officers.
- The building assessors were brought together in Wellington and were trained in the basis of the WOF using a specially prepared manual. The assessors conducted pre-tests and the reliability of the assessments were judged by a senior building assessor.
- Ethics B approval was obtained from the University of Otago Ethics Committee.
- The sample of the houses in each city was selected on the basis of a nation-wide study of housing characteristics and included houses of different ages, private rental housing, and social housing.
- The houses were assessed in January and February 2014. The assessment forms were sent to researchers at the UoOW, who analysed the data.
- Feedback on the rental housing WOF was gathered through telephone interviews with nine building assessors, 39 tenants and 29 landlords.
- The assessment reports and the interviews were analysed by UoOW researchers, who wrote this draft report for consideration by the larger group.

## Results from the rental housing WOF pre-test

Of the 144 houses that were assessed, eight (6%) passed the WOF. If houses in this rental housing WOF pre-test fixed low-cost items that include the correct installation of smoke alarms, security stays on the windows, and hot water at a safe temperature range, 44 additional houses would have passed the housing WOF assessment, which would have given a pass rate of 36%.

### The top five reasons for failing the rental housing WOF checklist

- 40% of houses did not pass the water temperature check.
- 38% of houses did not pass the security stays check.
- 37% of houses did not pass the check for having a fixed form of heating.
- 31% of houses did not pass the check for having handrails or balustrades that meet the Building Code Standards.
- 30% of houses did not pass the check for not having working smoke alarms.

### Assessors' views

- Most of the assessors were satisfied with the training they received and found the manual very useful.
- Most assessors felt comfortable about explaining the rationale behind the inclusion of items on the WOF.
- Two assessors felt that all items of the WOF were appropriate, but noted that there needed to be qualifications/details around each item. Assessors found the inclusion of window stays in the WOF most problematic.
- About half the assessors stated that the housing WOF included all that was needed, the other assessors made suggestions of additional items.
- Some assessors had difficulty deciding on whether items should pass or fail.
- Half of the assessors thought that the WOF assessment gave a "fair and accurate assessment" of the quality of the houses.
- Assessors for the most part were happy with the inspection form and found it easy to fill out. However, they saw many advantages in an i-Pad version.
- Estimates of costs for WOF assessments ranged from \$200 to \$300, including a re-inspection.
- Most assessors were happy to change smoke alarm batteries, a light bulb or adjust the hot water temperature.
- Most assessors gave the landlord additional information other than the WOF.
- All of the assessors said that they supported the idea of a housing WOF to assess housing quality and that it should be mandatory.

## **Tenants' views**

- Just over a third of tenants (39) whose homes had been assessed were interviewed and represented about 28% of the 144 houses assessed. Many of the other houses were untenanted, or no tenant phone number was provided by the assessor.
- About half of the interviewed tenants had noticed ways their house could be warmer, dryer or safer. The most common ways they mentioned that the house could be improved were through more insulation or heating. A minority of those tenants had talked to their landlord about the issue and were happy with the action the landlord had taken.
- Most tenants (69%) interviewed had a positive experience of the WOF assessment process. Top suggestions for improving the process for tenants were better scheduling of the assessment and receiving a copy of the results.
- When interviewed, only one tenant had discussed the results of the WOF with the landlord. For this reason, we were unable to assess how the WOF will affect the tenants' experience of the house.
- Most private tenants (75%) had no concerns about the WOF process. One tenant feared that it might lead to a rent increase.
- Most tenants (77%) supported the idea of a rental WOF. The main reasons were to improve house quality, improve health, to keep 'bad' landlords in line and to improve tenants' knowledge of the house before they moved in.

## **Landlords' views**

- Twenty-nine landlords or landlord representatives were interviewed. Many of these were responsible for multiple houses. These interviews represent 116 houses – or 81% of the total 144 houses assessed.
- Most private landlords who participated in the WOF pre-test were motivated by a desire to learn about the WOF and see how their house stacked up.
- The houses in the sample had already been substantially improved. Almost half the private landlords (49%) had noticed ways that their house could be warmer, dryer or safer. The most commonly mentioned ways they had improved their rental house/s were by installing insulation and heating.
- Most landlords (77%) had had a positive experience of arranging the WOF inspection, but made recommendations around having a clearer process, and more flexible assessment times.
- Almost half the landlords (48%) thought that the WOF assessed things that should not be assessed. The least popular items assessed were window stays, balustrades, and smoke alarms.
- Three-quarters of landlords (76%) were satisfied that the WOF provided a fair and accurate assessment of the quality of the house.
- Over half the landlords (58%) learned about ways they could make the house drier, warmer or safer; some of those did not were already knowledgeable about the issues in the house.
- Just over half of landlords would have liked to receive additional information with the WOF: ideas included information on exact requirements, recommended tradespeople, and specific fixes for failed items.
- Most of the landlords (83%), present at an assessment, thought the assessor did a good job. Suggestions for improvement were around being more knowledgeable, thorough, rigorous, and professional.

- Most landlords (83%) intended to make improvements to the house/s after the WOF assessment; however, in the case of over a third of them, the improvements were already planned prior to the WOF assessment.
- A small minority of the private landlords (12%) interviewed stated they would put up the rent as a result of improvements made.
- One-quarter of landlords interviewed would talk to the tenant about modifying their behaviour in response to their WOF report.
- Two-thirds of the landlords (66%) supported the WOF for a variety of reasons, including improving quality, protecting the vulnerable, increasing tenant knowledge, and keeping bad landlords in line. Most landlord support depended on factors such as the potential cost and frequency of a WOF, whether it was optional or mandatory, and whether some items were excluded from the WOF checklist.
- Limitations to the research included: (self-selection of motivated landlords; lack of time for any action to result from the housing WOF pre-test).



# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **Background**

Housing is one of the key material determinants of health and well-being; shelter is a fundamental human need. New Zealand housing is of a lower quality than most OECD countries and several national surveys and research studies have shown that private rental housing is in poorer condition than either social housing, or houses that are owner occupied. Living in substandard housing is seriously damaging the health of New Zealanders with children from low-income families, Māori and Pacific peoples disproportionately affected. Over 70% of all children who are in poverty live in rental accommodation (20% in Housing New Zealand housing and 50% in private rentals).

The current regulations for rental housing quality have not been amended since 1947. Today these guidelines are seen by many as inadequate including the Children's Commission's Expert Working Group on Solutions to Child Poverty; the group has recommended the introduction of a Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness (WOF), as a means to addressing the health and safety of a large proportion of children living in poor quality private rental housing.

## **Council and ACC interest**

Councils are interested in developing a WOF tool that will assist in improving the quality of the rental housing stock, which would result in improved health outcomes and a reduction in household injuries. A WOF for housing would provide a minimum standard for rental dwellings or be an information tool for tenants and landlords to understand the performance of a dwelling.

Councils identified an interest in investigating the feasibility of a WOF approach that would result in a pass or fail for houses. Councils considered they needed more information not only about the feasibility and acceptability of a WOF, but also how the WOF could be implemented.

ACC became involved because it is interested in developing a tool that would assist in mitigating hazards in the home to reduce the number of injury causing accidents. Injuries in the home are a major source of ACC claims.

## **Collaboration**

In June 2013 Auckland council facilitated a meeting of interested groups, including groups with relevant technical skills, local government and central government agencies, to investigate establishing a Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness (WOF). The June meeting was followed by a smaller, technical workshop in Wellington in July whereby Auckland, Dunedin and Wellington councils together with EECA, ACC, NZ Green Building Council (NZGBC), University of Otago, Wellington (UoOW) and BRANZ discussed what the key elements of a WOF assessment would include.

After the June workshop, the NZGBC and the UoOW decided to work jointly to develop a WOF, which includes assessment criteria, an assessment checklist and an assessment guide for using the checklist.

In October, Auckland, Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington councils met in collaboration with ACC, the NZGBC, UoOW and other interested parties. The NZGBC and the UoOW presented their work on

the WOF and received feedback from the various stakeholders. The stakeholder group, along with the inclusion of Tauranga city council agreed on doing a pre-test of the WOF tool whereby the councils would drive the pre-test on a local level and the UoOW and the NZGBC would provide a finalised version of the draft WOF criteria, checklist and accompanying guide.

Subsequently, the councils and research teams presented the idea of the WOF and the plan for the pre-test in a number of public fora, with landlords, students, to MBIE and the media.

## **Chapter 2: Methods**

### **Identification of properties**

Each participating council was responsible for identifying approximately 25 properties each (to produce at least 125 in total for the pre-test) to participate in the pre-test. Participation was voluntary and interested participants could come from the following sources:

- Property investor associations;
- Property management companies;
- Social housing providers (including council housing);
- Individual landlords;
- Networks available to councils (i.e. colleagues and friends that were landlords).

### **Identification of assessors**

Each participating council was responsible for identifying at least two different assessors to carry-out the WOF assessments. The assessors were expected have at least one year of experience with conducting house assessments or home inspections.

Most assessors attended a training day at the University of Otago in Wellington, which was run by the University and the NZGBC. This day was held in late December 2013. There was an additional training day organised, which was held in Dunedin for those assessors who could not make it to the training day in Wellington.

### **Data collection**

#### **The rental housing WOF pre-test data**

Assessors collected the rental housing WOF pre-test data on a paper form (See Appendix A). These forms were then sent electronically to myself, Julie Bennett, and I entered the data into an excel database.

Five regions took part in the rental housing WOF pre-test. Auckland building assessors inspected 34 houses, Tauranga assessors inspected 25, Wellington inspected 39, Christchurch inspected 22 and Dunedin assessed 24 houses, giving us a total sample size of 144 houses. In addition to the sample of 144 houses, assessors in Tauranga assessed 10 houses three times (by three different assessors) and Wellington assessed two houses by two different assessors. This was done in order to compare variability and reliability between the assessors.

## **The assessor interviews**

All assessors for which we had phone numbers were called to ask to take part in a short telephone survey to ascertain the practicality of the tool and get feedback from assessors (See Appendix B for a copy of the survey).

## **The tenant interviews**

Tenants' phone numbers were sourced from the assessment reports. Tenants were phoned and asked if they wished to take part in a short survey about their thoughts on the WOF and the assessment process. If tenants indicated interest, the interview went ahead then, or at a time more suited to them. Before beginning, tenants were informed that the survey was optional and that they could withdraw or decline to answer a question at any time. They were informed that their feedback was confidential and would not be attributed to them. Permission was obtained from all to record the interview in order to check any answers. Following the interviews, participants' answers were put into a spread sheet in order to allow analysis.

## **The landlord interviews**

Landlords' phone numbers were sourced from the assessment reports. Landlords were phoned and asked if they wished to take part in a short survey about their thoughts on the WOF and the assessment process. If landlords indicated interest, the interview went ahead then, or at a time more suited to them.

Before beginning, landlords were informed that the survey was optional and that they could withdraw or decline to answer a question at any time. They were informed that their feedback was confidential and would not be attributed to them. Permission was obtained from all to record the interview in order to check any answers. We established landlords had received their assessment reports prior to proceeding with the survey. Following the interviews, participants' answers were put into a spread sheet in order to allow analysis.

As the timeframe was limited the researchers were only able to obtain the tenants and landlords' phone numbers after building assessors had returned reports. A lengthier timeframe may have allowed more people to be contacted. It may also have changed some of the results. For example, some landlords had only just received the results of their WOF assessment. This might mean they were less likely to have considered the results and whether they might act on any of the assessment recommendations.

## **Ethics**

All three surveys gained ethics approval (category B) from the University of Otago's Ethics Committee (See Appendix C).

## **Data analysis**

Data (assessment forms) were cleaned and analysed using R version 3.0.3 ([www.r-project.org](http://www.r-project.org)).

## Aim

The rental housing WOF pre-test aimed to analyse the practicalities, utility and cost of a draft Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness assessment.<sup>1</sup>

## Objectives

This agreement is for a relatively small project focussed on a practical pre-test of the Rental Housing WOF criteria and checklist contained in Appendix A.

### *Objective 1 - Practicality of the tool and feedback from assessors*

1. To review the practical usability of the Rental Housing WOF from the assessor's perspective.
  - To survey the assessors to ascertain their views on the usability of the housing WOF and any suggestions for fine tuning the tool.
  - To establish the average length of time it takes to conduct an inspection.
2. To establish the likely costs of each inspection to enable costing on a wider scale.
3. To understand how houses are likely to fail and the reasons for failure

### *Objective 2 – Feedback from participating landlords*

4. To establish appropriate and acceptable ways of engaging with landlords.
  - To survey a sub-sample of landlords to ascertain their attitudes to having their house inspected, their feedback on the pre-test and their-post inspection intentions.

### *Objective 3 – Feedback from participating tenants*

5. To establish tenants' attitudes towards having their homes inspected and their understanding of the benefits, or otherwise, of a WOF.
  - To survey a sub-sample of tenants to ascertain their attitudes to having their house inspected.
  - To survey a sub-sample of tenants to understand their knowledge of how their behaviour might influence the performance of the home.

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<sup>1</sup> The WOF tool has been developed in partnership with NZ Green Building Council and University of Otago as leads and the councils and ACC.

## Chapter 3: Results from the Rental Housing WOF Pre-Test

### Demographics

Five regions took part in the rental housing WOF pre-test, Auckland building assessors inspected 34 houses, Tauranga assessors inspected 25, Wellington inspected 39, Christchurch inspected 22 and Dunedin assessed 24 houses, giving us a total sample size of 144 houses.

The houses ranged in ages from those built in 1880 to those built in 2013. The average year the houses were built was 1968. The sample of houses in Tauranga was significantly newer than the other regions. House sizes ranged from 30m<sup>2</sup> to 220m<sup>2</sup> with an average house size of 91m<sup>2</sup>. The average size of a house in New Zealand is 149m<sup>2</sup>(QV data).

The inspections on the houses took from 15 minutes to three and a half hours (200 minutes), with the average length of time being 51 minutes. There were no significant differences between the length of time to conduct the inspections and the different regions.

*Table 1. Demographics*

| Region       | Number of houses | House age mean (range) years | House size Mean (range)m <sup>2</sup> | Length of time to conduct assessment |
|--------------|------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Auckland     | 34               | 1973 (1950-2013)             | 77 (30- 150)                          | 41 minutes (15-95)                   |
| Christchurch | 22               | 1967 (1930-1993)             | 71 (40-200)                           | 43 minutes (15-200)                  |
| Dunedin      | 24               | 1959 (1880-2009)             | 109 (50-200)                          | 60 minutes (25-130)                  |
| Tauranga     | 25               | 1992 (1960-2013)             | 109 (35-200)                          | 59 minutes (25-160)                  |
| Wellington   | 39               | 1957 (1900-1998)             | 93 (40-220)                           | 52 minutes (15-100)                  |
| Total sample | 144              | 1968 (1880- 2013)            | 91 (30- 220)                          | 51 minutes (15-200)                  |

In each housing sample, councils aimed to include a mixture of construction ages to ensure the sample was representative of the style and age of houses within their region of New Zealand. Overall most houses in the sample were built between 1950 and 1979, or from 1980 onwards. The sample was short on houses built before 1920 and between 1920-to-1979. A representative sample of construction eras<sup>2</sup> needed to include 20 houses built before 1920, and 30 houses built between 1920 and 1949 (See Table 2).

*Table 2. Age of houses by region*

| Region       | Number of houses |           |             |             |         |
|--------------|------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|---------|
|              | Sample size      | pre-1920s | (1920-1949) | (1950-1979) | (1980+) |
| Auckland     | 34               | 0         | 0           | 28          | 6       |
| Christchurch | 18               | 0         | 4           | 9           | 5       |
| Dunedin      | 23               | 3         | 5           | 8           | 7       |
| Tauranga     | 17               | 0         | 0           | 4           | 13      |
| Wellington   | 34               | 4         | 0           | 29          | 1       |
| Total sample | 126              | 7         | 9           | 78          | 32      |

<sup>2</sup>Sample calculations prepared by Dr Lucy Telfar-Barnard, University of Otago, Wellington.

Most (78%) houses were single storied, but the sample also included two (018%) and three (2%) storied dwellings. The majority of houses (46%) were standalone dwellings (detached); 35% were duplex, 10% were terraced and 9% were apartments.

Councils were asked to try and obtain samples that included at least 15 standalone dwellings (detached) and at least 10 semi-detached houses, town-houses or apartments, in order to make the sample representative of house styles in New Zealand. Dunedin reached this target with 15 standalone houses sampled. Auckland, Tauranga and Wellington almost reached this target with 13 standalone houses. Christchurch sampled seven standalone houses.

*Table 3. Type of dwellings sampled*

| Region       | Number of houses | Detached | Duplex | Terraced | Apartment |
|--------------|------------------|----------|--------|----------|-----------|
| Auckland     | 34               | 38%      | 24%    | 35%      | 3%        |
| Christchurch | 22               | 32%      | 59%    | -        | 9%        |
| Dunedin      | 24               | 63%      | 25%    | -        | 13%       |
| Tauranga     | 24               | 54%      | 46%    | -        | -         |
| Wellington   | 29               | 45%      | 31%    | 3%       | 21%       |
| Total sample | 133              | 46%      | 35%    | 10%      | 9%        |

All councils aimed to include in their rental housing samples ten council houses and 15 private rentals. Dunedin almost made this target with recruiting nine private rentals. All other regions were able to achieve this target. The total sample achieved the sampling target with 65% of houses privately owned rentals and 45% of houses owned by the councils.

*Table 4. Private or social ownership of rental housing*

| Region       | Number of houses | Number of private rentals | Private housing | Social housing |
|--------------|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Auckland     | 34               | 26                        | 76%             | 24%            |
| Christchurch | 22               | 12                        | 55%             | 45%            |
| Dunedin      | 24               | 9                         | 38%             | 63%            |
| Tauranga     | 25               | 15                        | 60%             | 40%            |
| Wellington   | 38               | 30                        | 79%             | 21%            |
| Total sample | 143              | 93                        | 65%             | 45%            |

Most houses in the sample had one bedroom (31%). However, 27% of the sample had three-bedrooms and one-fifth (20%) had two bedrooms (See Table 5).

*Table 5. Number of bedrooms in dwellings sampled*

| Region       | Number of houses | Number of bedrooms |     |     |     |     |     |
|--------------|------------------|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|              |                  | 1                  | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6+  |
| Auckland     | 34               | 41%                | 15% | 35% | 9%  | -   | -   |
| Christchurch | 21               | 43%                | 24% | 19% | 5%  | 10% | -   |
| Dunedin      | 24               | 21%                | 25% | 8%  | 13% | 17% | 17% |
| Tauranga     | 25               | 32%                | 8%  | 44% | 16% | -   | -   |
| Wellington   | 39               | 21%                | 26% | 26% | 18% | 5%  | 5%  |
| Total        | 143              | 31%                | 20% | 27% | 13% | 6%  | 4%  |

## Items that passed or failed the rental housing WOF pre-test

Of the 144 houses that were assessed in this rental housing WOF pre-test, eight (6%) passed and 136 (94%) failed. To pass the WOF a house had to meet 31 criteria. These 31 criteria were divided into 94 possible checklist items. For example the ceiling insulation criteria were assessed using five checklist items. Not all houses were required to pass all of these items, as some items were not applicable to the house. Of these 94 possible items, the average number of items failed on the list was five, with some houses passing all required items and some houses failing up to 27 items. The results below are sorted by components assessed in the kitchen, then the bathroom, living room and bedrooms. Insulation and general items assessed during the inspection follow.

### Kitchen

One of the most common reasons for a house to fail was because the house had water that was too hot or cold, 40% of houses failing the kitchen water temperature check. Of the houses that failed the WOF (136 houses) 4% did so solely because the water was too hot or too cold. The average temperature of hot water in the houses was 54°C, which was within the passable range of 55±5°C with a range from zero (those houses without power) to 70°C.

All houses passed had intact walls and ceiling linings with intact floors in the kitchen area; and all houses had a potable water supply. Almost all houses were clear of mould in the kitchen (99%), had a functioning stove and oven (96%), and had adequate food preparation and storage areas (99%). Likewise almost all houses had working lighting (99%), appropriate waste water drainage with a sound connection (99%), visibly safe power outlets and light switches (99%) and secure storage (98%). The large majority of houses had effective ventilation to the outside (92%) (See Table 6).

*Table 6. Components assessed in the kitchen*

| Component assessed                             | Number of houses (144) | Fail | Pass |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------|------|
| Wall and ceiling linings, and floor intact     | 142                    | 0%   | 100% |
| Surfaces clear of mould                        | 144                    | 1%   | 99%  |
| Functioning stove and oven                     | 140                    | 4%   | 96%  |
| Effective ventilation to the outside           | 144                    | 8%   | 92%  |
| Adequate food preparation and storage          | 144                    | 1%   | 99%  |
| Working artificial lighting                    | 139                    | 1%   | 99%  |
| Potable water supply                           | 144                    | 0%   | 100% |
| Hot water temperature at tap (55°C ±5°C)       | 135                    | 40%  | 60%  |
| Waste water drainage with sound connection     | 144                    | 1%   | 99%  |
| Visibly safe power outlets and light switches  | 144                    | 2%   | 98%  |
| Secure storage (1.2 m high or child-safe lock) | 144                    | 2%   | 98%  |



*Table 7. Water temperatures taken from the kitchen tap*

| Region            | Number of houses | Temperature hot water °C |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Auckland          | 32               | 54 (42-69)               |
| Tauranga          | 21               | 54 (43-65)               |
| Wellington        | 30               | 56 (44-65)               |
| Christchurch      | 19               | 58 (45-70)               |
| Dunedin           | 19               | 47 ( 0-63)               |
| All regions (144) | 121              | 54 ( 0-70)               |

## Bathroom

All houses had functional sewerage disposal and all houses had working lighting in the bathroom. Almost all houses had intact wall, ceiling and floors (99%) and in the bathroom had an operational toilet (99%), and a functioning bath or shower (99%). Likewise almost every house had effective waste water drainage (99%) and visibly safe power and light switches (98%). Most (92%) bathrooms had surfaces clear of mould and effective ventilation to the outside (93%) (See Table 8).

*Table 8. Components assessed in the bathroom*

| Component assessed                            | Number of houses (144) | Fail | Pass |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------|------|------|
| Wall and ceiling linings, and floor intact    | 144                    | 1%   | 99%  |
| Surfaces clear of mould                       | 144                    | 8%   | 92%  |
| Operational toilet                            | 144                    | 1%   | 99%  |
| Sewage connection functional                  | 144                    | -    | 100% |
| Functioning bath or shower                    | 144                    | 1%   | 99%  |
| Effective ventilation to the outside          | 144                    | 7%   | 93%  |
| Waste water drain connected                   | 144                    | 1%   | 99%  |
| Working artificial lighting                   | 140                    | -    | 100% |
| Visibly safe power outlets and light switches | 139                    | 2%   | 98%  |

## Living areas

In the living areas almost all houses (99%) had intact wall and ceiling linings and the floor was undamaged. Almost all houses (99%) also had living areas that were clear of mould, had visibly safe power outlets and light switches (99%), and had opening windows with secure latches (97%). All houses (100%) has working lights in the living area, while 96% of hallways had functioning lights, 84% of houses had functioning lights in stairwells. Suitable curtains or drapes were present in the living areas of almost all homes (94%). Fixed heating was present in two-thirds of the houses (63%), which meant that approximately one-third of homes (37%) did not have fixed heating. While 62% of houses had security stays, 38% of houses failed for not having security-stays where required in the living area (See Table 9).

Six percent (6%) or 8 houses out of the houses that failed the rental housing WOF pre-test (136 houses) did so because they had inadequate fixed heating. Less than 1% of houses that failed the housing WOF did so solely because of not having adequate security stays in the living room.

*Table 9. Components assessed in the living areas*

| Component assessed                            | Number of houses (144) | Fail | Pass |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------|------|------|
| Wall and ceiling linings, and floor intact    | 144                    | <1%  | 99%  |
| Surfaces clear of mould                       | 144                    | <1%  | 99%  |
| Working artificial lighting:                  |                        |      |      |
| • Living, lounge, dining                      | 136                    | -    | 100% |
| • Hallway                                     | 104                    | 4%   | 96%  |
| • Stairs (switch at each end)                 | 32                     | 16%  | 84%  |
| • Other                                       | 15                     | -    | 100% |
| Visibly safe power outlets and light switches | 136                    | 1%   | 99%  |
| Heating, fixed, effective and safe            | 143                    | 37%  | 63%  |
| Opening window (each area) with secure latch  | 143                    | 3%   | 97%  |
| Window security stays (where required)        | 125                    | 38%  | 62%  |
| Curtains/drapes present                       | 144                    | 6%   | 94%  |

## Bedrooms

Almost all houses had bedrooms that had opening windows with latches to shut them, the walls and ceilings were intact, surfaces were clear of mould, the bedrooms had working artificial lights and safe power and light switches. Almost all bedrooms also had suitable curtains present (See Table 10).

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of homes had window stays on their bedroom windows however, 43% of houses had at least one bedroom window without a window stay on it when required. Working smoke alarms were required in approximately 30% of the bedrooms (See Table 10).

*Table 10. Components assessed in the bedrooms*

| Component assessed          | Bedroom 1 |      |      | Bedroom 2 |      |      | Bedroom 3 |      |      | Bedroom 4 |      |      |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------|------|-----------|------|------|-----------|------|------|-----------|------|------|
|                             | N         | Fail | Pass | N         | Fail | Pass | N         | Fail | Pass | N         | Fail | Pass |
| Opening window, with latch  | 141       | 2%   | 98%  | 99        | 3%   | 97%  | 70        | 0%   | 100% | 32        | 3%   | 97%  |
| Window stays (if required)  | 125       | 38%  | 62%  | 90        | 44%  | 56%  | 64        | 45%  | 55%  | 29        | 52%  | 48%  |
| Wall/ceiling linings intact | 134       | <1%  | 99%  | 103       | 1%   | 99%  | 72        | 0%   | 100% | 32        | 0%   | 100% |
| Surfaces clear of mould     | 135       | 7%   | 93%  | 102       | 4%   | 96%  | 72        | 7%   | 93%  | 32        | 0%   | 100% |
| Working artificial light    | 133       | 0%   | 100% | 100       | 0%   | 100% | 71        | 3%   | 97%  | 32        | 3%   | 97%  |
| Safe power & light switches | 135       | 0%   | 100% | 102       | 0%   | 100% | 72        | 1%   | 99%  | 32        | 0%   | 100% |
| Smoke alarm within 3m       | 135       | 27%  | 63%  | 102       | 35%  | 65%  | 70        | 26%  | 74%  | 31        | 29%  | 71%  |
| Curtains/drapes present     | 132       | 6%   | 94%  | 101       | 8%   | 92%  | 70        | 7%   | 93%  | 32        | 6%   | 94%  |

## House entrance

All houses assessed had securely locking doors. Eighty-six percent (86%) of houses had their address clearly labelled and the house was easily identifiable. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of houses had working outdoor lighting at their front doors (See Table 11).

*Table 11. Components assessed at the entrance of the houses*

| Component assessed                        | Number of houses (N=144) | Fail | Pass |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------|------|
| Address clearly labelled and identifiable | 140                      | 14%  | 86%  |
| Securely locking door(s)                  | 143                      | 0%   | 100% |
| Working light                             | 135                      | 13%  | 87%  |

## Insulation

Fourteen percent (14%) of houses failed at least one component of the ceiling insulation inspection. The most common reasons for failing the ceiling insulation requirements were not having insulation to the 120mm requirements (29%) or for having gaps, tucks or folds in the insulation (22%) (See Table 12).

*Table 12. Ceiling insulation components assessed*

| Component assessed                    | Number of houses (N=144) | Fail | Pass |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|------|------|
| Insulation to requirements (120 mm)   | 123                      | 29%  | 71%  |
| No gaps, tucks, or folds              | 113                      | 22%  | 78%  |
| No dampness in insulation             | 113                      | 2%   | 98%  |
| Clearance from lights, ducts and roof | 114                      | 10%  | 90%  |
| Thermoplastic insulated cabling       | 115                      | 4%   | 95%  |

Twenty-two percent (22%) of houses failed one or more components that were assessed during the underfloor insulation aspect of the inspection. The most common cause of failing the underfloor insulation requirements was due to a lack of a ground vapour barrier (61%) in those houses that required one (61 houses out of the 144 sample). See Table 13.

*Table 13. Underfloor insulation components assessed*

| Component assessed         | Number of houses | Fail | Pass |
|----------------------------|------------------|------|------|
| Insulation to requirements | 79               | 28%  | 72%  |
| Dry underfloor             | 74               | 7%   | 93%  |
| Ground vapour barrier      | 61               | 61%  | 39%  |
| No ponding                 | 71               | 3%   | 97%  |

## General housing requirements

The general state of repair of the sample of house was excellent with almost all houses considered to be weather-tight (99%) and structurally sound (99%). In addition almost all houses (98%) had no cracks or holes in their roofs, 95% had no cracks or holes in the external cladding, 99% had no cracks, holes or missing windows and 93% had spouting and storm-water functioning and not leaking. Ninety-four (94%) of house had two effective methods of egress and 93% of houses had visibility strips on glass doors and 99% of houses had paths, decks and surfaces that were not slippery and were free from moss. All houses that required their non-potable water to be labelled complied with this. Handrails and balustrades were required to comply with the code; however 31% of houses inspected did not have suitable handrails and balustrades.

*Table 14. General components assessed*

| Component assessed                                    | N   | Fail | Pass |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|------|
| Envelope in reasonable repair and weather tight       | 143 | 1%   | 99%  |
| No cracks, holes in roof                              | 136 | 2%   | 98%  |
| No cracks, holes in external cladding                 | 141 | 5%   | 95%  |
| No cracks, holes or missing panes in windows          | 144 | <1%  | 99%  |
| Spouting and storm-water functioning and not leaking  | 135 | 7%   | 93%  |
| Two effective methods of egress                       | 139 | 6%   | 94%  |
| Structurally sound                                    | 141 | 1%   | 99%  |
| Glass doors include visibility strips                 | 108 | 7%   | 93%  |
| Handrails and balustrades to code                     | 101 | 31%  | 69%  |
| Non-potable water labelled                            | 59  | 0%   | 100% |
| Paths, decks and surfaces non-slippery/free from moss | 141 | 1%   | 99%  |

## Summary

Of the 144 houses that were assessed, eight passed the WOF. If houses in this pre-test fixed low-cost items that include the correct installation of smoke alarms, security stays on the windows, and hot water at a safe range, 44 extra houses would have passed the housing WOF assessment, which would have given a pass rate of 36%.

## The top five reasons for failing the rental housing WOF checklist

- 40% of houses did not pass the water temperature check.
- 38% of houses did not pass the security stays check.
- 37% of houses did not pass the check for having a fixed form of heating.
- 31% of houses did not pass the check for having handrails or balustrades up to Building Code Standards.
- 30% of houses did not pass the check for not having working smoke alarms.

## **Chapter 4: Assessor interviews**

### **Assessor training and manual**

**Q1. Did the training day adequately prepare you for conducting a WOF? (If no) Do you have any suggestions for ways the training could prepare you better to conduct a WOF?**

Six of the eight of the assessors that attended the training day felt that the training prepared them well to conduct the housing WOF assessments. Assessors approved of the trainer, the notes, and the responses to questions. Assessors found the property visits particularly useful and would appreciate additional property visits. Six assessors were satisfied with the training; one assessor felt that the training was only reasonable, and one felt that the training was not satisfactory.

There appeared to be two distinct groups of assessors those who were environmental officers, and those who were building assessors. In general the building assessors felt that the training was sufficient while the Environmental officers relayed that they required more specific information, such as how to assess certain house spaces, and more guidance on using the WOF assessment tool. It was suggested that the training need to be tailored to particular groups, depending on their background knowledge.

The training occurred in late December. This led one assessor to comment that it occurred in a particularly busy time, and that there was a break between doing the training and actually doing the assessments.

**Q2. Did you find the assessment manual useful? Do you have any suggestions for ways the assessment manual could be better?**

Overall, the assessors found the manual very useful, with eight of nine assessors saying that the manual was simple to follow; it was easily readable and had a good layout. Most assessors felt that it contained all the answers that they required and many had used theirs so much that they were now torn to pieces.

The improvements to the manual that were suggested are presented in Appendix E.

### **Carrying out the housing WOF**

**Q3. Do you feel comfortable about explaining the rationale behind the inclusion of items on the WOF? (If no) Please tell me about those items.**

Out of nine assessors, eight felt comfortable about explaining the rationale behind the inclusion of items on the WOF. Two of those commented that this was partly because it was a test run and not the final version of the WOF.

Several commented that they did not feel entirely comfortable explaining the rationale behind some of the safety items (i.e. window stays) or those that they considered to be the tenant's responsibility (i.e. smoke alarm batteries).

**Q4 Do you have any suggestions for how the process of arranging a WOF could be made easier?**

Most assessors found the process of arranging the WOF easy, mainly because this was taken care of by their receptionist, or because they already had a process in place for booking such appointments. Some of the assessors meet with property management companies first to make the process easier. It was noted that lots of landlords were keen to attend the inspections.

Suggestions that assessors gave to improve the process of arranging a housing WOF inspection were:

- Conduct WOF assessments between tenancies. This is easier for the assessor. However, it would mean that electrics could not be assessed.
- Conduct the inspections on those people who are keen first.
- The WOF needs to be marketed better.
- However, one assessor commented it was a difficult thing to do no matter what.

**Inclusion/exclusion criteria****Q5. Does the WOF assess any things that you think should not be assessed? Please tell me about them. (If yes)Why should these things not be assessed?**

Two assessors felt all the items in the WOF were appropriate. One of these assessors noting that there needed to be qualifications/details around each item. The items that assessors think the WOF should not assess are listed below. The number of assessors that raised the issue is in brackets, followed by the reasoning given.

- Insulation (1) gaps/tucks/folds in insulation should not fail.
- Light bulbs (2) tenant responsibility.
- Smoke- alarm batteries (1).
- Water temperature (1) (lowering temperature can make the shower too slow; tenants might have used all hot water up.
- Curtains (1).
- Handrails/balustrades (1).
- Pathways (1) too extreme.
- Polythene underfloor (1) (not appropriate for all houses).
- Thermoplastic insulated wiring (1) difficult to assess; not very dangerous.
- Window stays (5) (not appropriate for all windows; not necessary; slippery slope; too extreme).
- Potable water (1) in a city all water is potable.

**Q6. Is there anything else that you think the WOF should assess? (If yes)Why should these things be included?**

The range of answers from the assessors varied greatly on this question with about half of the assessors saying that the housing WOF included all that was needed and half making suggestions of what else should be included. See Appendix E for suggestions.

**Q7. Please tell me about any times that you had trouble deciding if an item should pass or fail. (If yes) Do you have any suggestions for how to overcome this?**

There appeared to be many different issues that assessors found difficult to decide on if an item should pass or fail. However, one assessor felt there were no problems and it really came down to the level of training of the assessors. See Appendix E for detailed suggestions.

## **Fair and accurate assessment**

**Q8. Do you think the WOF gave a fair and accurate assessment of the quality of the houses? (If no) Do you have suggestions for how the WOF could be changed to give a fairer or more accurate assessment of the quality of the houses?**

Half of the assessors said that the WOF gave a fair and accurate assessment of the houses. They commented:

- Criteria are appropriate.
- The WOF is a good measure of habitability.
- The WOF measures the adequacy of a house rather than the quality.
- WOF assessments prove that maintenance matters more than age.
- WOF assessments do not assess “flashness” of the house.

Half of the assessors said that they WOF did not give a fair and accurate assessment quality of the houses. The commented:

- The WOF cannot measure how a tenant lives in a house, which has much to do with its quality (3).
- Houses that are in far better condition than others get same rating (2).
- New houses fail (5).
- Houses that are clearly habitable (like his own) fail (1).
- Grading system for some items would be superior (1).

## **The form**

**Q9 Was the form easy to fill out?**

Most of the assessors felt the inspection form was easy to fill out. Assessors appreciated one page tabular format and the rapidity with which they could fill it out.

The suggestions for improvements to the form were:

- The pass column should be to the left of the fail column, as is standard in forms (1).
- Need for more space, especially for comments (3).
- Some larger properties have more bedrooms than the form allows for (1).
- There needs to be a category “cannot assess”, rather than simply passing items that cannot be checked (1).
- Useful to have space to draw map of house so bedrooms could be labelled (1).
- Form does not allow for multiple living areas (1).
- Bedroom section needs more space, as is easy to tick wrong box (1).

**Q10. Did you like having a paper form to use or would you have preferred an iPad/tablet?**

While the assessors were happy to use the paper form it was unanimous that everyone would prefer a tablet or an iPad. Assessor's commented that it would be handy to include photos with the assessments and that the reporting process would be a lot quicker without having to match photos to reports. It was also noted that an iPad would be good to have to link to explanations, and help with quantifying decisions. From a data entry and analysis point of view, an electronic version would be less time consuming and less susceptible to errors.

**Implementation****Q11. If a housing WOF was implemented along the same lines as the pre-test, how much would you charge per assessment?**

Many of the assessors were not able to comment as they were not involved in the finance side of things. Those that did make suggestions on costs gave figures that varied from \$200 to include the inspection and administration costs to \$300. Councils charge \$120 to \$160 per hour to undertake property inspections. One assessor said that a flat rate charge would be the best option rather than an hourly rate, and this should include a re-inspection.

**Q12. How much would you need to charge if you had to go back for a re-inspection?**

Almost all assessors felt that the initial charge should cover having to go back to the property for a follow-up inspection. One assessor suggested it would be a time-based charge, with a minimum time of say 30 minutes.

**Q13. Would you feel comfortable fixing or replacing the following items if it meant a house would pass?****Replacing smoke alarm batteries**

Eight of the nine assessors said that they would be happy to change smoke alarm batteries, the one assessor that was not said this was because tenants remove them. He would however be happy to install a 10 year alarm from which tenants couldn't remove batteries.

**Replacing or installing or moving a smoke alarm**

Five assessors said they would be happy to replace or install a smoke alarm, some of them mentioned that they would want to have landlord approval before doing this. Three assessors said that they wouldn't be comfortable doing this because they felt installing or moving a smoke alarm was inappropriate and it could damage the ceiling.

**Replacing a light bulb**

Eight of the nine assessors said they would be happy to replace a light bulb.

**Adjusting hot water temperature**

Seven of the nine assessors said they would be happy to adjust the hot water temperature, with three of these assessors saying they would want to have training to do this. One assessor mentioned that the tenants may adjust the temperature back themselves. Two assessors said they would be unhappy doing this because they felt that it required a plumber or an electrician. They commented that it can be complicated to do, and opens up the risk of making an error and having



liability issues.

**Q14. Did you give the landlord any additional information besides the WOF?**

Seven-of-the-nine assessors gave the landlord additional information other than the WOF, this information and the delivery of it varied greatly between regions. Some of the assessors did this by going through the WOF with the landlords and explaining what things wouldn't pass. Some assessors did this verbally and some gave written reports with photos. Some assessors gave access to council help, e.g. eco-design services and let them know what funding was available. Some assessors gave the landlords their own references around things e.g. asbestos and mould removal, local firms that they could contact. One assessor provided a template of agreement for the landlord to use with the tenant – for example: tenant to open windows for ventilation, furniture to be 20mm away from walls etc.

**Q15. Do you have any suggestions about information that would be useful to give landlords?**

All of the assessors had some suggestions about what information would be useful to landlords, this varied from the type of reporting system that could be used, to specific information given to landlords on different household concerns. The comments of the assessors are listed below: the amount of assessors who suggested them is listed in brackets.

- Traffic light system, rather than pass/fail (2).
- Some of the feedback concerned the delivery of the results of the WOF.
- Feedback over phone, rather than writing (1).
- Electronic reporting (1).
- Property managers need to pass information such as WOF onto landlord (1).
- Keep on side of landlords i.e. avoid "fail" language (2).
- Some of the feedback concerned additional information that could be provided to landlords.
- Landlords should receive a copy of the WOF prior to assessment (1).
- Information on fails, reasons for fails, and specific remedies and costs of remedies (7).
- Landlords should be given a list of possible suppliers/tradespeople (3).
- Provide an action plan for landlord, including landlord and tenant responsibilities (1).
- Department of Building & Housing pamphlet on mould.
- Provide thermometers with instructions for optimal temperature and humidity in the house.
- Educate landlords on the importance of the WOF and its rationale – the impact of housing on health (1).

**Q16. Do you have suggestions about the implementation of a housing WOF across all rental houses?**

When asked about the potential for implementing a rental WOF, assessors emphasised:

- The need for the process to be straight forward, consistent and easy to follow.
- The importance of a gradual introduction on criteria.
- Concerns about potential increases in rents.
- The need for the involvement of central government.
- The difficulties of enforcement.
- The importance of landlord buy-in.
- The possibilities to combine a WOF with tenant education on how to use a house.

- The need for funding and extra human resources in order to carry out such a quantity of assessments.

## **Support for a rental housing WOF**

### **Q17. Do you support the idea of a WOF to assess housing quality? Why/ why not?**

All of the assessors said that they supported the idea of a housing WOF to assess housing quality.

Reasons for their support included:

- So potential tenants know the quality of the house.
- So landlords can better understand house and what it will take to bring it up to standard.
- To deal with property speculation: people will not buy houses they cannot afford to maintain.
- For fairness: landlords should not make money from substandard housing.

One assessor did not like the pass/fail aspect, and preferred to have a scale system or a risk matrix, that ensured particularly vulnerable tenants were housed appropriately.

### **Q18. Should a rental housing WOF be optional or mandatory?**

All of the assessors said that a housing WOF should be mandatory. Assessors pointed out that an optional system would mean that substandard properties would not be assessed. They also pointed out that tenants in substandard accommodation may not draw attention to quality issues because of fears of eviction or rent raises. One assessor felt it should be introduced as optional as he felt this was the quickest and easiest way to get the process started.

## **Summary**

- Nine assessors were interviewed by telephone.
- Most assessors were satisfied with the training they received others felt that more information was required. Overall the assessors found the manual very useful.
- Most assessors felt comfortable about explaining the rationale behind the inclusion of items on the WOF.
- Two assessors felt that all items of the WOF were appropriate, but noted that there needed to be qualifications/details around each item. Assessors found the inclusion of window stays in the WOF most problematic.
- About half the assessors stated that the housing WOF included all that was needed, the other assessors made suggestions of additional items.
- Some assessors had difficulty deciding on whether items should pass or fail.
- Half of the assessors thought that the WOF assessment gave a “fair and accurate assessment” of the quality of the houses.
- Assessors for the most part were happy with the inspection form and found it easy to fill out. However, they saw many advantages in an i-Pad version.
- Estimates of costs for WOF assessments ranged from \$200 to \$300, including a re-inspection.
- Most assessors were happy to change smoke alarm batteries, a light bulb or adjust the hot water temperature.
- Most assessors gave the landlord additional information other than the WOF.

- All of the assessors said that they supported the idea of a housing WOF to assess housing quality and that it should be mandatory.

## Chapter 5: Feedback from tenant participants in the Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness Pre-test

This chapter presents the feedback from tenants who participated in the Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness (WOF) pre-test. Obtaining tenant feedback was one of the objectives agreed upon in the participating organisations' Joint Agreement. Feedback was obtained from the building assessment report. A trained interviewer conducted a short telephone interview with the tenant.

A survey was developed by UoOW researchers, it investigated the tenants':

- Attitudes towards having their homes inspected;
- Understanding of the benefits, or otherwise, of a WOF;
- Knowledge of how their behaviour might influence the performance of the home.

The draft survey (Appendix B) was circulated to councils and their feedback was incorporated. The survey was divided into six sections:

- Section 1 (questions 1 – 4) aimed to shed light on who the tenant participants were, and how our sample compares with what we know about tenants as a whole in New Zealand.
- Section 2 (questions 5-7) aimed to establish what tenants think about the condition of their homes, and how they respond to issues of quality.
- Section 3 (questions 8-10) aimed to get feedback on the experience for a tenant of having a WOF assessment conducted on her home.
- Section 4 (questions 11-14) assessed how tenants might be affected by the results of the WOF assessment.
- Section 5 (questions 15-16) asked after tenant concerns about the WOF assessment.
- Section 6 (questions 17-19) investigated tenant support for the WOF.
- The answers to the final question (question 20), which asked for any additional feedback on the WOF tool or assessment process, were incorporated into the sections to which they were relevant.

### Results

Though 144 houses<sup>3</sup> were assessed in the trial, interviews were conducted with 39 tenants:

- Two tenants were unaware that a WOF assessment had been conducted on their house.
- Six tenants declined to be interviewed.
- We were unable to get hold of a further 11 tenants for whom we had phone numbers. Tenants were labelled "no response" after they had been phoned, at different times of the day, at least four times. Where those tenants had answerphones or cell-phone numbers, voicemails and text messages were also sent.
- The remaining 86 houses were untenanted, or we did not have a correct contact phone number.

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<sup>3</sup> In this report, "house" is also a proxy for "unit" or "apartment".

The breakdown of the samples was as follows:

*Table 1: Tenant participant sample*

| Region       | Number of council houses | Number of council tenant interviews completed | Number of private houses assessed | Number of private tenant interviews completed | Total number of houses assessed | Total number of interviews completed |
|--------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Auckland     | 8                        | 5                                             | 26                                | 12                                            | 34                              | 17                                   |
| Christchurch | 10                       | 0                                             | 12                                | 0                                             | 22                              | 0                                    |
| Dunedin      | 15                       | 2                                             | 9                                 | 0                                             | 24                              | 2                                    |
| Tauranga     | 10                       | 8                                             | 15                                | 7                                             | 25                              | 15                                   |
| Wellington   | 9                        | 0                                             | 30                                | 5                                             | 39                              | 5                                    |
| TOTAL        | 51                       | 15                                            | 93                                | 24                                            | 144                             | 39                                   |

## Section 1: What we know about the tenants

### 1. How long have you lived in this house?

Tenants had lived an average of just over two years (28 months) in their home.

- The range of tenancy duration for private tenants went from just one month to six years. Ten tenants had been there a year or less. On average, participants had lived in their homes for 23 months.
- The range of tenancy duration for council tenants went from just two months to 16 years. Ten had been in their homes a year or less. On average, they had been in their homes 34 months.

*Table 2: Tenancy duration of tenant participants*

| Time              | Private tenants | Council tenants | All tenants |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Less than a year  | 10              | 10              | 20          |
| 1-2 years         | 7               | 1               | 8           |
| 2-3 years         | 3               | 1               | 4           |
| 3-4 years         | 1               | 0               | 1           |
| More than 4 years | 3               | 3               | 6           |

Participants interviewed had lived an average of 28 months in their home – higher than the average tenancy of 15 months.

### 2. How long do you intend to live in this house?

Of the 15 council tenants interviewed, 11 said they intended to live in their home “until I die” or “as long as I can”. One participant was going to relocate in another month, and three participants did not know how long they would be there for.

Of the 24 private tenant participants, only ten predicted how long they would be in the house: the average length of expected future tenure was 22 months. The remainder did not know, or wanted to stay as long as possible.

*Table 3: Predicted amount of time to remain in house*

| Time                           | Private tenants | Council tenants | All tenants |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Less than a year               | 5               | 1               | 6           |
| 1-2 years                      | 4               | 0               | 4           |
| 2-3 years                      | 0               | 0               | 0           |
| 3-4 years                      | 0               | 0               | 0           |
| More than 4 years              | 1               | 0               | 1           |
| As long as I can / until I die | 4               | 11              | 15          |
| I don't know                   | 10              | 3               | 13          |

### 3. Why did you leave your last house?

Private tenants moved to their current home due to a variety of factors. Many people had multiple reasons; each reason is included in the tally.

The most commonly cited reasons for leaving their last home were due to relationship changes or due to moving to the city. Interestingly, only one person mentioned the end of a tenancy – the previous rental house was sold. Relevant to this study, 6 people, or 15%, mentioned housing conditions as a reason for leaving their last house.

*Table 4: Reason tenants moved to current home*

| Reason                                                                             | Private tenants | Council tenants | All tenants |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Relationships, either moving in with or out of a partner or family member's house. | 4               | 3               | 7           |
| Relocating to that city                                                            | 10              | 2               | 12          |
| Selling house and moving into rental housing                                       | 2               | 0               | 2           |
| Cost of rent                                                                       | 2               | 2               | 4           |
| Quality or conditions of house                                                     | 3               | 3               | 6           |
| Previous rental house sold                                                         | 2               | 2               | 4           |
| Location of house                                                                  | 5               | 1               | 6           |
| Size of house                                                                      | 2               | 1               | 3           |
| Opportunity to get out of PRS                                                      | N/A             | 4               | 4           |

## Section 2: Tenants' opinions on the condition of their homes

### 4. Before the warrant of fitness assessment, had you noticed ways in which the house could be made safer, warmer or dryer?

Twenty (20) participants – about half the sample - said they had noticed ways in which the house could be warmer, dryer or safer. Seventeen (17) participants had not noticed ways they thought the house could be dryer, warmer or safer. In answering no, they made supporting comments, such as that they were happy with the house, that it was “up to standard” or “good for its age” or “considering when it was built”. Two (2) participants said they had not thought about the issue.

*Table 5: Tenant opinion of warmth, dryness or safety of the house*

| Opinion                                                                | Private tenants | Council tenants | All tenants |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Have noticed ways the house could be warmer, dryer or safer            | 13              | 4               | 17          |
| Have <b>not</b> noticed ways the house could be warmer, dryer or safer | 10              | 10              | 20          |
| Don't know                                                             | 1               | 1               | 2           |

**5. [if q4 yes] Please tell me about the ways you think that the house could be made safer, warmer or dryer.**

The 17 participants who had noticed ways in which their house could be warmer, or safer, were asked what needed to happen in the house. Where participants mentioned several different issues, each issue was included in the tally. Issues of warmth and dryness were mentioned most often.

*Table 6: Tenant opinion on how house could be improved*

| Items to be improved            | Private tenants | Council tenants | All tenants |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Heating                         | 6               | 0               | 6           |
| Insulation                      | 2               | 2               | 4           |
| Ventilation/ dealing with mould | 2               | 0               | 2           |
| Lighting                        | 1               | 1               | 2           |
| Double glazing                  | 1               | 1               | 2           |
| Fixing leaks                    | 1               | 0               | 1           |
| Hand rails                      | 1               | 0               | 1           |
| Air transfer system             | 1               | 0               | 1           |

**6. [if q4 yes] Did you take any action to make the house safer, warmer or dryer? This could include talking to the landlord about the issues, or something you did yourself.**

Of the 17 tenant participants who had noticed ways in which their house could be warmer, dryer or safer, ten chose to speak to their landlord about the issue. Two people modified their behaviour to address the issue.<sup>4</sup>

**7. [if q4 and q6 yes] What was the result of you taking this action?**

Of the 7 participants who had noticed issues of warmth, dampness, and safety in the house, 10 chose to talk to the landlord about the issue:

- Five reported that the issue had been dealt with. One of those said the improvement had been requested twice, and only occurred a week before the WOF assessment.
- Five reported that the issue had not been addressed

<sup>4</sup> One of the objectives of this report was to investigate tenants' knowledge of how their behaviour might influence the performance of the home. Question 6, as written, prompted only two participants to say they modified their behaviour in order to deal with issues in the house. It seems likely that many people do take other actions, such as opening windows or using a fan while showering, that they do not consciously think of as an action to affect the performance of the house. In retrospect it seems clear that a more specific question – such as "How would you deal with issues of mould and damp? –would have been useful.

The remaining seven participants who had noticed issues of warmth, dampness and safety chose not to talk to their landlord about the issue. This was because:

- Tenant judged the issue was not able to be fixed (2)
- Tenant said that the issue did not really matter (2)
- Tenancy would end soon (1)
- Tenant did not expect result (1)

*Table 7: Tenant action to improve warmth, safety or dryness of house*

| Action                                | Result/Reason                              | Private | Council | Total |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------|---------|-------|
| Talked to landlord                    |                                            | 7       | 3       | 10    |
|                                       | <i>Fixed/installed</i>                     | 5       | 0       | 5     |
|                                       | <i>Not (yet?) fixed/installed</i>          | 2       | 3       | 5     |
| Did not talk to landlord              |                                            | 4       | 3       | 7     |
|                                       | <i>As tenant judged unable to be fixed</i> | 1       | 1       | 2     |
|                                       | <i>As tenancy would end soon</i>           | 1       | 0       | 1     |
|                                       | <i>Because did not expect result</i>       | 0       | 1       | 1     |
|                                       | <i>Because "it doesn't really matter"</i>  | 1       | 1       | 2     |
|                                       | <i>No answer</i>                           | 1       | 1       | 2     |
| Modified behaviour to deal with issue |                                            | 2       | 0       | 2     |

### Section 3: The assessment process

#### 8. Please tell me about the experience of arranging and having the assessors come to your house to inspect it.

All the council tenant participants answered positively to this question:

- All were present at some stage of the inspection.
- Participants commented on the speed, punctuality, politeness, and friendliness of the assessors.
- Two reported that they appreciated the time the assessor took to sit down and discuss the houses issues with her.
- One tenant commented that she was accustomed to inspections, and to having no action being taken to deal with the issues.

Private tenant reactions were more varied:

- No comment as not present during assessment (6).
- Tenant appreciated options to pick suitable time (3).
- Tenant appreciated assessor's advice on dealing with mould (1).
- Scheduling was easy only because of tenant being off work at the time (2).
- Specific negative feedback was received from four people:
  - A landlord's desire to be present during the assessment made it difficult to arrange an appropriate time.
  - A landlord's attempt to fix the house's issues in advance of the WOF was annoying.
  - It was frustrating to have to prepare the house for an assessment so soon after having had a property inspection.
  - One assessor rescheduled twice, and in both phone calls was overly chatty, which was time consuming.



**9. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the experience of having a WOF assessment carried out on your house, with 1 being positive, easy and simple, and 5 being negative, complicated or annoying?**

Most tenant participants were pleased with the experience of the WOF; 69% of tenant participants thought that the experience of the WOF assessment was either very or relatively positive. The remainder were either neutral, didn't know, or didn't answer about the experience of the WOF. Nobody described their experience of the WOF assessment as negative.

Council tenants were the most satisfied; 87% of council tenant participants described the experience as positive, as opposed to 58% of private tenant participants.

*Table 8: Tenant rating of assessment process*

| Score                                               | Council tenants | Private tenants | All tenants |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 1 (positive)                                        | 9               | 11              | 20          |
| 1.5 (where tenants said "1 or 2" or "1 and a half") | 1               | 2               | 3           |
| 2                                                   | 3               | 1               | 4           |
| 3 (neutral)                                         | 1               | 9               | 10          |
| 4                                                   | 0               | 0               | 0           |
| 5 (negative)                                        | 0               | 0               | 0           |
| Don't know/no answer                                | 1               | 1               | 2           |

**10. Do have any suggestions to make the WOF process easier for tenants?**

No council tenants had any suggestions for making the WOF process easier for tenants, reflecting their positive experience of this WOF assessment.

Seventeen private tenant participants did not have had suggestions for making the WOF process easier for tenants. The remaining participants had the following suggestions:

- A more concrete time schedule (2)
- Give tenants a copy of WOF results (2)
- Sync up property manager's inspection with WOF, so that property manager can deal with issues at the same time.
- Tell us how many visits we will have so we know what to expect (this participant was surprised to have two assessments)

Additional suggestions may be gleaned from the negative feedback given in question 8:

- More flexibility in arranging an assessment time.
- Making repairs in preparation for a WOF should not interfere with a tenant's right to quiet enjoyment.
- Assessments should occur at the same time as property inspections, so as not to be disturbed twice.
- Assessors should be more respectful of tenants' time when rescheduling assessments.
- Tenants should be able to be present if they wish.

## Section 4: Tenant learning and expectations from the WOF

### 11. How do you think the improvements planned will affect your experience of living in this house?

Three of the tenant participants (8%) had discussed the results of the WOF assessment with their landlord:

- No council tenants had discussed the WOF assessment with their property manager.
- Three private tenants (13%) had heard from their landlord since the WOF assessment. Two of these had received emails from their landlord, but they had not read them.
- One tenant had discussed the WOF results with her landlord at the time of the assessment. She had not learned about any ways to modify her behaviour to influence the conditions of the home, but the WOF had reminded the landlord of the need to better spread the insulation, so it may make the house marginally warmer.

The low number of tenants who had discussed the WOF assessment with the result may be a reflection of the short timeframe, rather than landlord intentions. Landlords might not have received their assessment reports when we interviewed tenants. Those who had received the report might well have planned to relay them to tenants, but had not yet had the opportunity to. It also inhibits one of the objectives of this study: to investigate their knowledge of how their behaviour might influence the performance of the home.

## Section 5: Tenant concerns about the WOF

### 12. Do you have any concerns about changes to your housing situation as a result of having a WOF assessment conducted?

This question was included because of concerns that a WOF might influence rents. We were interested in whether such fears were shared by tenant participants. This question was asked only of the 24 private tenant participants, as council tenants do not pay market rents. The results were as follows:

- 18 participants said they had no concerns. Four of those made additional comments:
  - that the tenant's wife was concerned that the landlord's tidying up of the house in preparation for the WOF assessment meant that he was thinking of selling;
  - that the rent would go up regardless; and
  - that she believed the WOF would have an effect on rents, though not in her own case.
  - that the rent had been increased twice since the WOF, and she had wondered if this were prompted by the WOF. (It seems like the participant is probably referring to discussion of the WOF, rather than the WOF assessment on her home, as it is unlikely the rent would increase twice in such a short timeframe).
- One tenant participant was concerned the WOF assessment would lead to a rent increase.
- Five participants did not know or did not answer the question.

Most tenants (75%) had no concerns about the WOF assessment; however, it did seem like the question made them wonder if they should have concerns. The fact that half of tenant participants saw no need for improvements in the house (question 4) may mean they answered in the negative because they believed no improvements would be made, and there would be no additional expense to the landlord. As explained in the previous comment, a different result may have been obtained if

more time had elapsed between the WOF and the interview: for example, if landlords had decided to make improvements and increase rents.

## Section 6: Tenant support for the WOF

**17. Do you support the idea of a rental housing warrant of fitness to assess the quality of a rental house? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being support, and 5 being oppose, and 3 not having an opinion.**

Most tenant participants supported the idea of a rental WOF to assess quality:

- 77% supported the idea of a rental WOF (rating 1 or 2).
- 10% described themselves as neutral (rating 3), and another 10% said they didn't know or have an opinion.
- One participant, a private tenant, opposed the idea of a WOF.

*Table 9: Tenant support for the WOF*

| Rating      | Council | Private | All tenants |
|-------------|---------|---------|-------------|
| 1 (support) | 11      | 18      | 29          |
| 2           | 0       | 1       | 1           |
| 3 (neutral) | 2       | 2       | 4           |
| 4           | 0       | 0       | 0           |
| 5 (oppose)  | 0       | 1       | 1           |
| Don't know  | 2       | 2       | 4           |

**18. [If support] Should the warrant of fitness be optional or mandatory?**

- 10% of tenant participants thought that the WOF should be optional. One of those suggested the WOF be optional at first, and become mandatory.
- 56% of tenant participants thought that the WOF should be mandatory. Two added the caveat "for old houses". Another commented that if it were not mandatory, it would not be effective.

*Table 10: Tenant opinion on whether a WOF should be mandatory or optional*

|                       | Council | Private | All tenants |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Optional              | 3       | 1       | 4           |
| Mandatory             | 6       | 16      | 22          |
| Don't know/ no answer | 6       | 7       | 13          |

**19. [If support or oppose] Why do you support / oppose the idea of a rental housing warrant fitness to assess the quality of a rental house?**

Most tenant participants who supported the WOF said that this was because improving housing quality was important (46%). Other reasons mentioned are listed below. If a participant listed several reasons for their support, all were marked on the table.

*Table 11: Reasons for tenant support for WOF*

| Reasons                                                   | Private tenants | Council tenants | All tenants |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| To save tenant expenses                                   | 2               | 0               | 2           |
| To improve quality of houses                              | 8               | 10              | 18          |
| To improve health (to reduce health costs)                | 4               | 3               | 7           |
| To improve tenant's knowledge of the house before renting | 4               | 0               | 4           |
| For children                                              | 3               | 1               | 4           |
| Fairness                                                  | 1               | 0               | 0           |
| For the benefit of landlord                               | 1               | 0               | 1           |
| To keep bad landlords in line                             | 3               | 1               | 4           |
| For regulatory purposes                                   | 1               | 0               | 0           |

Two council tenants said they supported the WOF because it was important to keep an eye on tenant behaviour, which may indicate that they misunderstood the purpose of the WOF. Comments were made by the three tenants who were neutral or who opposed the idea of the WOF were:

- "No one's forcing tenants to take house."
- The WOF would not solve the problem of tenants who disrespect houses.
- The WOF would cause rent increases and contribute to a housing shortage, and poor people will lose out.
- It is more important to strengthen the voice of tenants – for example, by improving access to tenant advocacy.
- It is more important to address the issues of lack of enforcement of standards, poverty, not enough social housing, and slumlords, rather than pursue a WOF.
- The WOF is too strict: her house failed even though it is warm, and failed on safety issues not relevant to how the house is used.
- The WOF is not strict enough. The tenant participant commented that her house would probably pass, and be used to attract tenants, even though there was no way to heat it well.
- There is a risk of assessor companies making a lot of money without much added value.
- Waste of money.

## Summary

- Thirty-nine tenants were interviewed. Tenants interviewed represent about 28% of the 144 houses assessed. Many houses were untenanted or no phone number was provided by the building assessor.
- On average, tenants had lived in their house for two-years.
- About half of the tenants had noticed ways their house could be warmer, dryer or safer. The most common ways they mentioned that the house could be improved were through more insulation or heating. A minority of those tenants had talked to their landlord about the issue and were happy with the action the landlord had taken.

- Most tenants (69%) had had a positive experience of the assessment process. Main suggestions for improving the process for tenants were better scheduling of the assessment and receiving a copy of the results.
- When interviewed, only one tenant had discussed the results of the WOF with the landlord. For this reason, we were unable to assess how the WOF will affect the tenants' experience of the house.
- Seventy-five percent (75%) of private tenants had no concerns about the WOF process. One tenant feared it may lead to a rent increase.
- Seventy-seven percent (77%) of tenants supported the idea of a rental WOF. Top reasons for support were to improve house quality, improve health, to keep bad landlords in line and to improve tenants' knowledge of the house before they moved in.

## Chapter 6: Feedback from landlord participants in the Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness Pre-Test

This chapter presents the feedback from landlords and property managers<sup>5</sup> who participated in the Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness (WOF) pre-test. Obtaining landlord feedback was one of the objectives agreed upon by participating organisations. Feedback was to be obtained by sourcing the landlord or property manager's phone number from the assessment report, and calling them in order to conduct a short telephone interview.

### Development of survey

The Joint Agreement for delivering pre-test of a Rental Housing WOF agreed, in objective two, that feedback would investigate:

- Appropriate and acceptable ways of engaging with landlords;
- Landlords' attitudes to having their house inspected;
- Landlords' feedback on the pre-test;
- Landlords' post-inspection intentions.

Towards this, a survey was developed by the UoOW and then circulated to the five participating councils and the New Zealand Green Building Council for feedback, which was incorporated. The final survey is attached in Appendix C:

- Section 1 (questions 1-5) sought insight into the landlord-tenant relationship, and what the landlord knew about the house.
- Section 2 (questions 6-7) assessed the assessment process.
- Section 3 (questions 8-15) investigated the WOF's content.
- Section 4 (questions 16-21) sought feedback on the assessor.
- Section 5 (questions 22-24) investigated landlords' intentions following the WOF.
- Section 6 (questions 25-27) assessed landlords' support for the WOF.
- The answers to the final question (question 28), which asked for any additional feedback on the WOF tool or assessment process, were incorporated into the sections to which they were relevant.

### Results

We had assessment reports for 144 houses.<sup>6</sup> However, interviews were conducted with only 29 landlords. This was because in many cases (including in the case of council houses), one landlord or property manager was interviewed for their thoughts on the multiple houses. If a survey participant owned or managed several houses in the pre-test, we considered that they represented multiple houses.

Having many participants represent multiple houses, means that the interviews could be conducted in a more time-efficient manner. However, there are distinct disadvantages as well. For example, in Christchurch, all private houses are represented in one interview. This means that not only do we have only one private landlord voice from Christchurch, but that participant is not as likely as the owner or manager of one house to know the house as well, or have studied the WOF assessment

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<sup>5</sup> This report will refer to both as "landlords"

<sup>6</sup> In the paper, "house" is also a proxy for "unit" or "apartment".

quite so closely. As a result, readers of this chapter must be careful to note that numbers and percentages refer to survey participants, rather than to numbers of houses.

- The five council representatives interviewed represented 100% of the 47 council houses assessed. The 24 private landlords interviewed represented 65 of the total 93 private rental houses assessed, or 70%.
- Three landlords declined to be interviewed.
- We had contact details for three additional landlords but were unable to contact them. Those landlords were phoned at different times of the day, at least four times. Where those landlords had answerphones or cell-phone numbers, voicemails and text messages were also sent.
- We had no contact details, or incorrect phone numbers, for the landlords of the remaining 28 houses assessed.

The breakdown of the samples was as follows:

*Table 1: Interviews conducted with private landlords in the WOF pre-test*

| Region       | Houses assessed | Interviews completed | Houses represented in interviews | % of houses assessed represented by interviews |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Auckland     | 26              | 13                   | 19                               | 73%                                            |
| Christchurch | 12              | 1                    | 7                                | 58%                                            |
| Dunedin      | 9               | 1                    | 1                                | 11%                                            |
| Tauranga     | 15              | 2                    | 12                               | 80%                                            |
| Wellington   | 30              | 7                    | 26                               | 87%                                            |
| Total        | 93              | 24                   | 65                               | 70%                                            |

*Table 2: Interviews conducted with council representatives in the WOF pre-test*

| Region       | Number of council houses assessed | Number of interviews completed | Number. of houses represented by interviews | % of houses assessed represented by interviews |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Auckland     | 8                                 | 1                              | 8                                           | 100%                                           |
| Christchurch | 10                                | 1                              | 10                                          | 100%                                           |
| Dunedin      | 15                                | 1                              | 15                                          | 100%                                           |
| Tauranga     | 10                                | 1                              | 10                                          | 100%                                           |
| Wellington   | 9                                 | 1                              | 9                                           | 100%                                           |
| Total        | 51                                | 5                              | 51                                          | 100%                                           |

*Table3 Total interviews conducted with landlords or their representatives in the WOF pre-test*

| Region       | Total number of houses assessed | Number of interviews completed | Number of houses represented by interviews | % of houses assessed represented by interviews |
|--------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Auckland     | 34                              | 14                             | 27                                         | 79%                                            |
| Christchurch | 22                              | 2                              | 17                                         | 77%                                            |
| Dunedin      | 24                              | 2                              | 16                                         | 67%                                            |
| Tauranga     | 25                              | 3                              | 22                                         | 88%                                            |
| Wellington   | 39                              | 8                              | 35                                         | 90%                                            |
| Total        | 144                             | 29                             | 116                                        | 81%                                            |

## Section 1 - Information about the landlord-tenant relationship

### 1. Why did you decide to participate in the trial?

This question was included in the survey to give insight into landlord motivations, and how take-up of the WOF might be encouraged. The question was asked of the 24 private landlords who were interviewed. Landlords who mentioned several reasons were marked several times. Most landlords were motivated by a desire to learn about the WOF, and to see how their house stacked up.

*Table 4: Reasons cited by private landlords for participating in the pre-test*

| Reasons                                                               | Number of landlords |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Wanted to learn about the WOF                                         | 8                   |
| Desire to contribute or provide feedback                              | 2                   |
| Because the WOF is important                                          | 3                   |
| Desire to see how house “stacked up”, know where to make improvements | 8                   |
| Personal connection recommendation                                    | 4                   |
| No answer                                                             | 2                   |

In lieu of this question, council representatives were asked why particular houses were assessed. The answers were as follows:

- Houses assessed were a sample of the range of properties council owns, in terms of type or level of upgrade (4).
- Houses assessed were those tenanted by cooperative tenants who maintained their property well (1).

### 2. How long have you owned the house?

This question was asked of the 24 private landlords who were interviewed. It was aimed at assessing whether there was any correlation between length of ownership and other variables, such as the quality of the house, or post-WOF intentions.

However, we were not able to gain much insight into this factor. This was due to the fact that many participants owned or managed a number of properties, and within their interview were not able to list the number of years each house had been owned. Those houses were included under the “don’t know” category.

Of the landlords who were able to name the amount of time the house or houses had been in their ownership, there was substantial variation in time owned.

*Table 5: Amount of time private landlords in pre-test has owned houses*

| Years in ownership | Number of houses |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Less than a year   | 1                |
| 1-4 years          | 6                |
| 5-9 years          | 3                |
| 10+ years          | 5                |
| Don’t know         | 50               |



**3. Before the warrant of fitness assessment, had you noticed ways in which the house/s could be made safer, warmer or dryer?**

Questions 3-5 were included in order to gain insight into the private houses assessed under the pre-test. The questions were asked of the private landlords.

Of the 24 landlords:

- Nineteen (19) had noticed ways their house/s could be warmer, dryer, or safer.
- One did not know.
- Four landlords had not noticed ways their house/s could be warmer dryer or safer.

**4. [If q3 yes] What changes, if any, had you made to the house to make it warmer, dryer or safer?**

Of the 19 landlords that had noticed their house/s could be warmer, dryer, or safer:

- Fifteen (15) had acted to improve the house.
- Four landlords had noticed ways their house/s could be warmer, dryer, or safer and had not acted on those.

Four of the 19 landlords who had noticed ways in which the house could be warmer, dryer or safer had not acted:

- A landlord who thought the house would benefit from a better heating system had not installed it because of the tenant's concern for electricity expenses.
- A landlord who was aware of mould saw it as the current tenant's responsibility, as mould had not been a problem with previous tenants.
- Two (2) landlords did not say why they had not acted.

The 15 landlords who had taken actions to promote warmth, dryness and safety mentioned the following improvements. The table below presents the results. Where a landlord mentioned several improvements, they were marked several times.

*Table 6: Ways landlords had improved their house prior to the WOF assessment*

| Improvements    | Number of landlords |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Insulation      | 16                  |
| Heating         | 8                   |
| DVS system      | 2                   |
| Ventilation     | 2                   |
| Carpet          | 2                   |
| Lighting        | 2                   |
| Replaced floor  | 2                   |
| Double glazing  | 1                   |
| Balustrades     | 1                   |
| Reroofed        | 1                   |
| Security stays  | 1                   |
| Water temp      | 1                   |
| Cleaned mould   | 1                   |
| Repairing holes | 1                   |

Most landlords in the sample appear to be committed to improving their houses. The houses assessed in the pre-test have already been through significant improvements.

**5. [If q3 yes] What changes in behaviour, if any, had you suggested to the tenants to help make the house warmer, safer or dryer?**

Eight of the 24 landlords who had noticed ways that the house could be warmer, dryer or safer said they had made suggestions to tenants on modifying their behaviour. Advice mentioned by landlords is listed below; where one landlord mentioned several areas of advice, this is marked several times:

*Table 7: Ways landlords suggest tenants modify their behaviour to improve the performance of the house*

| Suggestion                | Number of landlords |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Ventilation               | 7                   |
| Heating                   | 4                   |
| Mould                     | 1                   |
| Not drying washing inside | 3                   |
| Curtains                  | 3                   |
| Brochure                  | 2                   |

Of the 16 people who did not reply or said they had not made suggestions to tenants on modifying behaviour, one person said the property manager dealt with these issues; another said it was “not his place” to tell tenants how to live.

## **Section 2: The WOF process**

**6. Please rate the experience of arranging a WOF assessment for your house on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being positive, easy and simple, and 5 being negative, complicated or annoying.**

*Table 8: Landlord rating of the experience of arranging the WOF*

| Rating       | Number of landlords |
|--------------|---------------------|
| (positive) 1 | 12                  |
| 2            | 18                  |
| 3            | 7                   |
| 4            | 2                   |
| 5            | 0                   |

Most people had a positive experience of arranging a WOF assessment for their rental house:

- Three commented that they simply put the assessor in touch with the tenant to arrange a time.
- One said it was helpful that the WOF had been in media, as tenants “knew what we were talking about.”
- Assessors were described as obliging and flexible.

Three of those that did not have an opinion said this was because their property managers had taken care of the arrangement.

Negative comments included:

- Assessment time was changed multiple times (3).
- Process too rushed; not enough time for notification (2).
- Assessors were not flexible enough in arranging assessment times.
- It was time consuming to arrange.
- Assessment took longer than they were told it would.
- The process took too long, and there was not enough communication. Six weeks passed between the landlord's delivery of the key and its return. Three weeks passed before the landlord was contacted and informed there was a delay.
- Assessor insisted on getting tenant's number. Having assessors call tenant might confuse them.
- Landlord was not aware he and tenants would be asked if they wanted to be surveyed.
- The landlord did not give permission for the inspection to occur. He had spoken on the phone to the property manager about the WOF assessment, but did not fill in the paper work.

Such comments show that it is difficult to please everybody. For example, some landlords found arranging a WOF an easy process as they were able to simply put the tenant and the assessor in touch. On the other hand, one landlord was uncomfortable with this idea, as she thought it might confuse the tenant.

**7. Do you have any suggestions about how we can make the process of arranging a WOF assessment easier?**

- The process and all the steps involved should be set out more clearly (3);
- Should be able to request and arrange WOF assessment electronically (2);
- Assessments should be available out of business hours (3);
- Landlords should be able to see WOF checklist in advance (2);
- Conduct WOFs between tenancies (2);
- To minimise tenant disturbance, tie in WOF with other visits, i.e. inspections (1).

Some suggestions can also be gleaned from negative feedback (question 7):

- Assessors should be more flexible in arranging times for assessments (1);
- Less time consuming to arrange (1);
- Assessor should not change assessment times (3);
- Landlords should be informed of legal rights to enter house for WOF assessment (1);
- Timeframe should be longer (2).

## Section 3: The WOF content

### 8. Did the WOF assess anything that you thought it should not assess?

One landlord didn't know.

Eight landlords said the WOF "assessed the right things". One of these said it should be stricter.

The remaining 21 landlords listed items that they thought should not be assessed under the WOF:

The least popular items were:

- Window stays: picked by 9 landlords;
- Balustrades: picked by 7 landlords;
- Smoke alarms: picked by 6 landlords.

*Table 9: Landlord opinion on what should **not** be included in the WOF*

| Item                  | No. of landlords who thought this should not be included in the WOF |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Window stays          | 9                                                                   |
| Balustrades           | 7                                                                   |
| Smoke alarm           | 6                                                                   |
| Mould                 | 4                                                                   |
| Curtains              | 4                                                                   |
| Ventilation           | 3                                                                   |
| Fixed heating         | 3                                                                   |
| Lights                | 3                                                                   |
| Water temperature     | 3                                                                   |
| Egress                | 2                                                                   |
| Secure storage        | 2                                                                   |
| Insulation            | 2                                                                   |
| Ground vapour barrier | 1                                                                   |
| Fixed floor coverings | 1                                                                   |

Of the total 29 landlords interviewed, 31% oppose the inclusion of window stays, 24% oppose the criteria for balustrades, and 21% oppose an aspect of the criteria for smoke alarms. Some landlords explained the reasons why they were opposed to the inclusion of certain items in the WOF (See Appendix E).

### 9. Are there any additional things you think the WOF should assess?

Thirteen landlords (45%) thought there were no additional things that the WOF should assess. Of these one moderated this by saying it should be more flexible. Two landlords did not know or had no opinion and the remaining 14 landlords interviewed thought the WOF should assess additional things, but there was little consensus. Two landlords thought that methamphetamine should be tested for, and another two thought that fire extinguishers should be present. The other items were suggested by just one landlord each.

Those items were:

- Measure for humidity;
- Security screens on doors;
- Resilience for future disaster i.e. water tank, emergency kit;
- Presence of plants: spiky plants cause harm, privets causes asthma;
- Leak or rot in internal structure i.e. under sinks, kickboard, around hot water cylinder;
- Disabled access;
- Presence of fire extinguisher (2);
- Security of building against rats (overhanging trees, holes in basement);
- Presence of wasps, rats, cockroaches;
- DVS system;
- Earthquake safety;
- Mains-connected smoke alarm system - useful because it means tenants can't take out batteries;
- Recessed light fittings;
- Methamphetamine (2);
- Wind and sun;
- Shower-dome (just as good for dealing with mould as ventilation);

Another comment was that tenant behavior should be assessed; however, the WOF is designed to assess the house rather than its inhabitants.

**10. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being satisfied and 5 being unsatisfied, how satisfied were you that the WOF provided a fair and accurate assessment of the quality of your house?**

Twenty-two (22) landlords were very or fairly satisfied that the WOF provided a fair and accurate assessment of the quality of their house/s. 5 landlords were unsatisfied with their assessment, and a further two chose a neutral response.

*Table 10: Landlord rating of the fairness and accuracy of the WOF assessment of their house/s*

| Rating             | Number |
|--------------------|--------|
| 1 (very satisfied) | 9      |
| 1.5                | 2      |
| 2                  | 10     |
| 2.5                | 1      |
| 3                  | 2      |
| 3.5                | 1      |
| 4                  | 2      |
| 4.5                | 0      |
| 5 (unsatisfied)    | 2      |

The landlords who were not satisfied thought the WOF was unfair or too strict, or that their houses were at a 'lettable' standard.

**11. Did the WOF assessment come up with things that you were unaware of that required fixing in your rental property?**

One landlord did not answer the question.

Eight people said that the WOF did not come up with anything that they were unaware of that required fixing in the house. Three of those said this was because they were already knowledgeable about the house and one of those said this was because it failed on ridiculous things that do not require remedying.

The remaining 20 landlords said that the WOF came up with things that they were unaware of that required fixing. Most of those things were mentioned are part of the WOF. In addition to this:

- Two landlords learned about things that needed to be repaired in the house that the tenants had not reported.
- Two landlords learned about issues with leaks around or beneath the house that they did not know about.
- Two landlords learned that there were issues around repairs or interventions that they had recently hired tradesmen to make.

**12. Did you learn about ways you can make the house/s drier, safer or warmer?**

Eleven (11) people did not learn about ways that they could make the house warmer, drier or safer:

- Two of those commented that this was because they were already knowledgeable about the house.
- One of those said this was because the WOF assessment came up with problems that cannot be remedied.
- One of those said this was not possible with just the WOF assessment: they would not to have also received supplementary information.

The remaining 17 landlords said that they did learn about ways they could make the house warmer, dryer or safer. One person did not know whether she had learned anything.

**13. Did the WOF assessment fail to come up with any issues that you think affect the warmth, dryness or safety of the house/s?**

Twenty-four (24) landlords said that the WOF came up with any and all issues that they think affect the warmth, dryness or safety of the house. One landlord did not answer.

The remaining four landlords said that the following issues failed to come to the attention of the assessors:

- Hole in laundry wall.
- Sky-lights that have only a corrugated plastic covering, and no blinds.
- Curtains (note: curtains in bedrooms and living-rooms are part of the WOF already).
- Drainage issues under house, as well as plants next to house that contributes to damp.
- Lack of insulation on hot-water.
- Sensor lights were not checked.

#### **14. What, if any, additional information did you receive with the assessment?**

Twenty-two (22) landlords said they received no additional information with the assessment. However, two of those mentioned that the information received from the assessor during the assessment was very useful; this including discussion and recommendations on insulation providers. One landlord did not answer the question.

The remaining six landlords said they received pamphlets on a range of issues including:

- water tanks;
- heating pamphlets;
- subsidies;
- how-to guides;
- funding information.

#### **15. What additional information, if any, would it have been useful to receive from the assessor?**

Twenty-two (22) landlords said there was no additional information that it would have been useful to receive. Two of those said that this was because they were knowledgeable about houses and policies already.

The remaining landlords would have liked to receive the following information:

- A list of recommended tradespeople who could make the corrections.
- Suggestions for how to address the issues in the house (2) – esp. where solutions are not obvious.
- Information on how “enforceable” failed items are.
- More detailed explanation of why things failed and what is required.
- Information on exact requirements (i.e. for where alarms go, insulation specifications, legal requirements).

## Section 4: The assessor

### 16. Were you present during the WOF assessment?

Eighteen (18) landlords were present for at least one assessment and 11 landlords were not present for any assessment.

### 17. Please rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, your satisfaction with the assessor.

Of the 18 landlords that were present at an assessment:

- Fifteen (15) were satisfied with the competence of the assessor
- One did not know.
- One was unsatisfied.
- One was neutral about the competence of the assessor.

However, even some of those who rated the assessor highly had negative feedback (See Appendix E).

*Table 11: Landlord satisfaction with the competence of assessor*

| Rating        | Number of landlords |
|---------------|---------------------|
| (satisfied) 1 | 8                   |
| 1.5           | 1                   |
| 2             | 6                   |
| 2.5           | 0                   |
| 3             | 1                   |
| 3.5           | 1                   |
| 4             | 0                   |
| 4.5           | 0                   |
| 5             | 1                   |

### 18. Do you have any suggestions for how the assessor could be more to your satisfaction?

Suggestions for how the assessor could be more to the landlords' satisfaction were received from 10 of the 18 landlords who were present at assessments. Some of the suggestions come from the negative feedback on the assessment experience as discussed in question 17:

- Assessors should be more thorough – they sometimes made assumptions, and chose not to access areas they could access.
- Assessors should be more knowledgeable.
- Assessors should dress and act more professionally.
- Assessors should carry ID cards.
- Assessors should be able to explain the rationale behind the inclusion of items in the WOF.
- Assessments should be more rigorous.
- It should be clear what of the information given by the assessor is relevant to the WOF.
- Assessor should pass on any issues raised by tenants, so landlords could follow up.



## Section 5: Landlord intentions

### 19. Have you made, or do you plan to make, any improvements to your rental house/s as a result of the WOF assessment?

Twenty-four (24) landlords said they would make improvements to the house or one of the houses that they owned or managed.

- Ten (10) people said they were making improvements, but ones that they had planned to do anyway, and not as the result of having a WOF assessment.
- Fourteen (14) said this was because of receiving a WOF assessment.

Two landlords said they would be making no improvements and one said he did not know if he would make any improvements. Landlords were asked what kind of improvements they intended to make. Where a landlord intended to act on several issues, each was marked.

*Table 12: Landlord post-WOF intentions*

| Issues landlords intend to act on | Number of landlords who intend to act on WOF recommendations |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Insulation                        | 7                                                            |
| Smoke alarm                       | 6                                                            |
| Water temperature                 | 5                                                            |
| Window stays                      | 4                                                            |
| Ventilation                       | 3                                                            |
| Heating                           | 3                                                            |
| Unspecified                       | 2                                                            |
| Vapour barrier                    | 2                                                            |
| Fix leak                          | 2                                                            |
| Spouting                          | 2                                                            |
| Balustrades                       | 1                                                            |
| Draft                             | 1                                                            |
| House number                      | 1                                                            |
| Clean mould                       | 1                                                            |

### 20. [if 19 yes] Will you put up the cost of rent to cover any costs associated with fixing your rental property?

Of the private landlords, three people said they would put up the cost of the rent:

- One of those said this was merely a consideration.
- Two said the rent on a house would be put up because of the installation of heating or insulation. One of those said this would be by \$10-20.

One person said they did not know if the rent would be increased, because this was the jurisdiction of the property manager

Twenty (20) people said they would not put up the rent.

Of the 20 participants who said they would not increase the rent on the house or any of the houses they were responsible for. This was because:

- No fixes will be made (5).
- Fixes recommended are relatively small (i.e. smoke alarms) (7).
- Rents are set by the market condition (2).
- House is rented out charitably (2).
- House obtains good profits (1).
- “Tenants need to live” (1).
- Two people who intended to make major fixes (such as insulation or heating) said they would not put up the rent, and did not say why.

**21. Have you, or do you plan to make, any suggestions to your tenants to modify their behaviour as a result of the WOF assessment?**

Seven landlords said they would talk to tenants about modifying their behaviour as a result of their WOF assessment. Their recommendations would be:

- To use a different heater (2);
- To ventilate (4);
- To clean mould;
- To check smoke alarms;
- To change water temperature.

Among the 22 who said they would not talk to tenants about modifying their behaviour, one said this occurred at the annual inspection, one that this was not relevant as the property was untenanted, and another that his property manager took care of such issues. Others said that they already talked to tenants about such issues.

## Section 6: Support for the WOF

**22. Do you support the idea of a rental housing warrant of fitness to assess the quality of a rental house? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being support, and 5 being oppose and 3 not knowing.**

The majority of landlords (19 out of 29) support the idea of a WOF.

*Table 13: Landlord support for the WOF*

| Rating      | Number of landlords |
|-------------|---------------------|
| 1 (support) | 16                  |
| 2           | 3                   |
| 2.5         | 1                   |
| 3           | 5                   |
| 4           | 1                   |
| 5           | 2                   |

**23. [If yes] Should such WOF be optional or mandatory?**

Fourteen (14) landlords said the WOF should be mandatory, and nine landlords said the WOF should be optional. The remainder did not know or did not support the idea of the WOF.

However, many of those who responded did so saying that their support for either option would depend on various things or conditions, including:

- Cost and frequency of WOF assessments.
- That certain options be optional, and others mandatory.
- That a scheme be mandatory only for some people or some houses.
- That a scheme be optional for a certain period.
- That the WOF be changed to a rating system.

For this reason, it is difficult to make a broad presentation of the results.

**24. [If support or oppose] Why do you support / not support the idea of a rental housing warrant fitness to assess the quality of a rental house?**

Landlords who supported the idea of the WOF did so for the following reasons:

- To improve the quality of rental houses.
- To protect children/the poor/the vulnerable/migrants.
- To hold bad landlords to account.
- So tenants know about prospective houses.
- So landlords know how they can improve houses.
- Fairness/justice.
- Market is not competitive enough to improve quality.
- To professionalise landlordism.
- To promote health.
- Absence of law around good housing.

Landlords who opposed the WOF did so for the following reasons:

- There cannot be one rule for the whole country with its varied climate.
- Too expensive/time consuming to implement nationwide.
- Better to improve housing through other means (i.e. insulation subsidies; deal with high electricity prices; tenant advocacy; tenant education).
- Might increase rents or increase housing shortage.
- Potential corruption of assessors.
- Tenants' right to choose what quality house to live in.

## Summary

- Twenty-nine (29) landlords or landlord representatives were interviewed. Many of these were responsible for multiple houses. These interviews represent 116 houses – or 81% of the total 144 houses assessed.
- Most private landlords who participated in the WOF pre-test were motivated by a desire to learn about the WOF and see how their house stacked up.
- The houses in the sample had already been substantially improved. Almost half (49%) of private landlords had noticed ways that their house could be warmer, dryer or safer. Most of those had acted on this. The most commonly mentioned ways they had improved their rental house/s were by installing insulation and heating.
- Over three-quarters of landlords (77%) had a positive experience of arranging the WOF inspection. To improve the experience, they made recommendations around a clearer process, and more flexible assessment times.
- Almost half the landlords (48%) thought that the WOF assessed things that should not be assessed, i.e. window stays, balustrades, and smoke alarms.
- Three-quarters of landlords (76%) were satisfied that the WOF provided a fair and accurate assessment of the quality of the house.
- Over half the landlords (58%) learned about ways they could make the house drier, warmer or safer; some of those did not were already knowledgeable about the issues in the house.
- Just over half of landlords would have liked to receive additional information with the WOF: ideas included information on exact requirements, recommended tradespeople, and specific fixes for failed items.
- Most landlords present (83%) at an assessment thought the assessor did a good job. Suggestions for improvement were around being more knowledgeable, thorough, rigorous, and professional.
- Most landlords (83%) intended to make improvements to the house/s after the WOF assessment; however, in the case of over a third of them, the improvements were already planned prior to the WOF assessment.
- Twelve percent (12%) of private landlords interviewed would put up the rent as a result of improvements made.
- One-quarter of landlords interviewed would talk to the tenant about modifying their behaviour in response to their WOF report.
- Two-thirds of landlords (66%) supported the WOF for a variety of reasons, including improving quality, protecting the vulnerable, increasing tenant knowledge, and keeping bad landlords in line. Much landlord support depended on factors such as the potential cost and frequency of a WOF, whether it was optional or mandatory, and whether some items were excluded from the WOF checklist.

## **Chapter 7: Discussion**

### **Limitations of the pre-test**

This rental housing WOF pre-test has been limited by time. Training of the assessors took place before the Christmas break, which meant some assessors had forgotten some of what they were taught. Landlord reports were often not sent to the landlords until well after the inspection. As we were limited by time to interview tenants and landlords, this often meant that landlords had only just received their feedback, which gave them no time to digest it or to act on the findings.

Moreover, the sample of houses was not randomly selected, so while it can give a good indication of the perceived acceptability and utility of the Rental Housing WOF, it cannot be generalised to all the landlords and tenants in New Zealand. Nonetheless, it is the first evaluation of its kind and it gives a better indication than we have had before of the largely positive reception of the WOF.

### **Tenants/landlords expectations**

Half of the tenants interviewed reported no issues with warmth, dryness or safety in the rental houses. This response, together with the tenants who were sampled having lived in their homes for longer than the average renter, may mean that tenants in the pre-test are relatively satisfied with their homes. Yet the majority of houses (94%) did not pass the WOF, which measures the health, safety and energy efficiency of a house. This discrepancy echoes the BRANZ survey, which found that 80% of renters surveyed considered their properties to be in good condition, and only 2% of renters thought that the properties were in poor condition. Yet assessors of the same homes found that 22% of those properties were in good condition, and 44% were in poor condition. According to the authors, this was probably due to renters' optimism and low expectations, their high tolerance for poor conditions, or willingness to accept lesser conditions as 'the norm' (Buckett, Jones, & Marston, 2011).

The idea of New Zealanders having low expectations of housing quality is supported by some of the comments made by participants who said they had not noticed ways the house could be improved, but added that the house was fine "considering its age". In addition, the one tenant who planned to leave soon due to frustrations with her landlord was also the most negative about the house's condition.

Some of the feedback is inconsistent, which indicates that it may not be possible to please everybody. Where some tenants find the chattiness of the assessor useful another finds it annoying and time-consuming. While some tenants found the experience hassle-free, as they were out of the house at the time, it was important to other tenants to be present. The comment from a council tenant participant, on having experienced inspections that did not amount to any house improvements, raises the issue of the expectations created by the WOF pre-test.

### **Adjustment to items in the rental housing WOF checklist**

Almost all houses in this pre-test failed the rental housing WOF, with most houses failing for more than one reason. The top five items that did not pass were: unsafe water temperature; lack of security stays; no smoke alarms near bedrooms; handrails or balustrades not up to the recent Building Code Standards; or not having a fixed efficient form of heating.

If houses in this rental housing WOF pre-test fixed low-cost items that include the correct installation of smoke alarms, security stays on the windows, and hot-water at a safe range, 44 extra houses would have passed the housing WOF assessment, which would have given a pass rate of 36%. It is felt that these items would be easy to fix as most assessors (7/9) were happy to adjust water temperature. Most assessors said they were happy to change smoke-alarm batteries (8/9) or to install a smoke alarm (5/9). While most assessors would be happy to get smoke-alarms up to standard, some landlords felt that it was the tenants' responsibility to replace smoke-alarm batteries and it would be unfair for them to fail on this point. It is recommended that in future assessments that assessors should replace smoke alarm batteries, but leave the installation of smoke alarms to landlords. It is also recommended that assessors receive training in adjusting hot-water cylinders, so they are able to do this at the time of the inspection.

The assessment of window stays was problematic for almost all of the assessors and was also unpopular with landlords. However, less than 1% of houses failed solely because of a lack of window stays. There are few controlled studies have examined the risk and protective factors for injuries due to falls in children aged 0-6 years. The only study to examine falls from a population health perspective suggests that age, sex and poverty are independent risk factors for injuries due to falls in children. One New Zealand study reported that between 2005 and 2009, 409 children were admitted to hospital for falling from or out of a building structure (IPRU). Safekids.org.nz campaign for the inclusion of security stays on windows over two meters.

The steering group, which has representatives from each of the councils, ACC, UoOW and NZGBC met on April 14<sup>th</sup> 2014 to discuss the preliminary results of the pre-test. Table 1 below summarises changes that were been suggested to be made to the criteria and assessment manual following decisions made at this meeting. These changes will be confirmed and updated by June 2014.

A copy of the draft revised checklist and assessor manual can be found in Appendix F.

*Table 1 Items that are suggested to be changed in the WOF assessment criteria and assessment manual*

| Checklist item    | Title                            | Decision | Change/Comments                                                                                              |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4                 | Water Temperature                | Keep     | Assessor training to ensure consistency across different hot water systems.                                  |
| 8                 | Fixed heating                    | Keep     | Amend to 'adequate' heating. Recommend 'fixed' where possible.                                               |
| 11                | Power outlets and light switches | Keep     | Change to 'Electrical Safety' and include assessment criteria for the general condition of wiring.           |
| 13                | Smoke alarms                     | Keep     | Requirements revised with respect to code (clause F7).                                                       |
| 16 (15)           | Security Stays                   | Remove   | Advisory can be given.                                                                                       |
| 18                | Thermoplastic cables             | Remove   | Added to 11 Electrical Safety.                                                                               |
| 17 (19) & 18 (20) | Insulation                       | Keep     | Refine requirements to ensure consistency.                                                                   |
| 20 (22)           | Ground vapour barrier            | Keep     | Refine requirements to ensure consistency.                                                                   |
| 24 (26)           | Light at main entrance           | Keep     |                                                                                                              |
| 25 (28)           | Handrails                        | Keep     | Emphasis should be on structurally sound and fit for purpose. Provide more detail regarding code compliance. |
| (29)              | Two points of egress             | Remove   |                                                                                                              |
| 27 (30)           | Address clearly labelled         | Keep     |                                                                                                              |
|                   | Vermin                           | Excluded | Can provide advice.                                                                                          |
|                   | Building WOF                     | Excluded | Research current requirements and provide advice to assessors.                                               |
|                   | Drier vented externally          | Excluded | Advisory can be given.                                                                                       |

## Implementation

It is recommended that in future housing WOF assessments training of the assessors should be tailored to building assessors, who in general have more building assessment experience and to Environmental Officers.

There needs to be a clear and concise process of implementing a housing WOF. Clear roles and responsibilities need to be outlined at the outset of the process. A format to report back to landlords needs to be established. This needs to include referral information, as just over half of landlords would have liked to receive additional information with the WOF.

It is recommended that an iPad or tablet checklist is developed for assessors to use.

The estimated cost for a housing WOF inspection, including a re-check is \$200 to \$300.

There have been suggestions that implementing a rental housing WOF may lead to an increase in rents. However, this is not thought to be the case as this pre-test found that of 24 tenants one was concerned that their rental costs may increase as a result of the housing WOF. Furthermore, of private landlords 12% interviewed said they would put up the rent as a result of rental housing improvements made.

## **Proposal for future policy research**

This next step after developing the final Rental WOF is to conduct an implementation trial. Such a policy trial would reassure all interested parties about the likely outcomes of the proposed policy and measure both intended and unintended consequences.

This trial would need to be formulated carefully and carried out by independent, experienced researchers. It could, for example, involve one council introducing the rental Housing WOF with the support of landlords and tenants and matching this city with another city where the WOF has not yet been introduced. Comparisons could then be made of rent movement before and after the introduction of the WOF, the effect on the quality of the rental stock and to what extent this is reflected in the value of the property. The effect on the tenants could be measured by whether it affected their length of tenure and possibly the effects on their health. A range of other evaluation methods could be considered depending on the range of implementation options being considered, the questions that need to be answered, and available resources (including institutional support from councils and other interested agencies).

## **Conclusion**

This pre-test of the Rental Housing WOF has established that some elements in the WOF have needed to be slightly adjusted or no longer assessed as part of a rental housing WOF. These items have been adjusted on the basis of the risk that the measured hazards posed to the population. In general the results are very positive. There is a workforce willing and able to carry out the inspections at a reasonable price and both landlords and tenants appear to generally support a rental housing WOF.

The challenge will be to establish the appropriate regulatory framework to support the Rental WOF and carry out an implementation trial to evaluate the costs and benefits of a housing WOF.



## **References**

Bucket NR, Jones MS, Marston NJ, BRANZ 2010 Housing Condition Survey – Condition Comparison by Tenure; Study Report SR 264 (2012): 2011, BRANZ.

Injury data provided by the Injury Prevention Research Unit (IPRU), University of Otago. July 2011.

## Appendix A

| Assessor Details             |   |                                                                                                                                               |   | Assessment Date:             |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|---|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Assessor Name:               |   |                                                                                                                                               |   | Assessor ID:                 |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| Organisation:                |   |                                                                                                                                               |   | Phone:                       |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| Property Contact Information |   |                                                                                                                                               |   | Property Contact Information |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| Tenant Name:                 |   |                                                                                                                                               |   | Owner Name:                  |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| Property Address:            |   |                                                                                                                                               |   | Contact Address:             |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| Property Phone:              |   |                                                                                                                                               |   | Owner Phone:                 |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| Email:                       |   |                                                                                                                                               |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| Property Information         |   |                                                                                                                                               |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| House Age                    |   | (approx. yr.):                                                                                                                                |   | Approximate Size             |   | m <sup>2</sup> |                                                             |                             |  |
| Storeys                      |   |                                                                                                                                               |   | Number of bedrooms:          |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| Type                         |   | <input type="checkbox"/> detached <input type="checkbox"/> duplex <input type="checkbox"/> terrace <input type="checkbox"/> apartment         |   |                              |   | Start Time:    |                                                             |                             |  |
| F                            | P | Kitchen & Laundry                                                                                                                             |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Wall and ceiling linings, and floor intact                                                                                                    |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Surfaces clear of mould                                                                                                                       |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Functioning stove and oven                                                                                                                    |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Effective ventilation to the outside                                                                                                          |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Adequate food preparation and storage                                                                                                         |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Working artificial lighting                                                                                                                   |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Potable water supply                                                                                                                          |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Hot water temperature at tap (55°C ±5°C)                                                                                                      |   |                              |   |                | °C                                                          |                             |  |
|                              |   | Waste water drainage with sound connection                                                                                                    |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Visibly safe power outlets and light switches                                                                                                 |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Secure storage (1.2 m high or child-safe lock)                                                                                                |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| F                            | P | Bathroom & Toilet                                                                                                                             |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Wall and ceiling linings, and floor intact                                                                                                    |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Surfaces clear of mould                                                                                                                       |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Operational toilet                                                                                                                            |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Sewage connection functional                                                                                                                  |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Functioning bath or shower                                                                                                                    |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Effective ventilation to the outside                                                                                                          |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Waste water drain connected                                                                                                                   |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Working artificial lighting                                                                                                                   |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Visibly safe power outlets and light switches                                                                                                 |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| F                            | P | Living Areas                                                                                                                                  |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Wall and ceiling linings, and floor intact                                                                                                    |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Surfaces clear of mould                                                                                                                       |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Working artificial lighting:                                                                                                                  |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Living, lounge, dining</li> <li>Hallway</li> <li>Stairs (switch at each end)</li> <li>Other</li> </ul> |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Visibly safe power outlets and light switches                                                                                                 |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Heating, fixed, effective and safe                                                                                                            |   |                              |   |                | kW                                                          |                             |  |
|                              |   | Opening window (each area) with secure latch                                                                                                  |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Window security stays (where required)                                                                                                        |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Curtains/drapes present                                                                                                                       |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| F                            | P | F                                                                                                                                             | P | F                            | P | F              | P                                                           | Bedrooms                    |  |
|                              |   |                                                                                                                                               |   |                              |   |                |                                                             | Opening window, with latch  |  |
|                              |   |                                                                                                                                               |   |                              |   |                |                                                             | Window stays (if required)  |  |
|                              |   |                                                                                                                                               |   |                              |   |                |                                                             | Wall/ceiling linings intact |  |
|                              |   |                                                                                                                                               |   |                              |   |                |                                                             | Surfaces clear of mould     |  |
|                              |   |                                                                                                                                               |   |                              |   |                |                                                             | Working artificial light    |  |
|                              |   |                                                                                                                                               |   |                              |   |                |                                                             | Safe power & light switches |  |
|                              |   |                                                                                                                                               |   |                              |   |                |                                                             | Smoke alarm within 3 m      |  |
|                              |   |                                                                                                                                               |   |                              |   |                |                                                             | Curtains/drapes present     |  |
| F                            | P | Entrance                                                                                                                                      |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Address clearly labelled and identifiable                                                                                                     |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Securely locking door(s)                                                                                                                      |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Working light                                                                                                                                 |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| F                            | P | Ceiling                                                                                                                                       |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Insulation to requirements (120 mm)                                                                                                           |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | No gaps, tucks, or folds                                                                                                                      |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | No dampness in insulation                                                                                                                     |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Clearance from lights, ducts and roof                                                                                                         |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Thermoplastic insulated cabling                                                                                                               |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| F                            | P | Under Floor                                                                                                                                   |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Insulation to requirements                                                                                                                    |   |                              |   |                | <input type="checkbox"/> Foil <input type="checkbox"/> Bulk |                             |  |
|                              |   | Dry underfloor                                                                                                                                |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Ground vapour barrier                                                                                                                         |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | No ponding                                                                                                                                    |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| F                            | P | General                                                                                                                                       |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Envelope in reasonable repair and weather tight                                                                                               |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | No cracks, holes in roof                                                                                                                      |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | No cracks, holes in external cladding                                                                                                         |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | No cracks, holes or missing panes in windows                                                                                                  |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Spouting and stormwater functioning and not leaking                                                                                           |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Two effective methods of egress                                                                                                               |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Structurally sound                                                                                                                            |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Glass doors include visibility strips                                                                                                         |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Handrails and balustrades to code                                                                                                             |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Non-potable water labelled                                                                                                                    |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   | Paths, decks and surfaces non-slippery/free from moss                                                                                         |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| Comments                     |   |                                                                                                                                               |   | Fail                         |   | Pass           |                                                             |                             |  |
|                              |   |                                                                                                                                               |   |                              |   |                |                                                             |                             |  |
| Signed:                      |   |                                                                                                                                               |   | Date:                        |   | End Time:      |                                                             |                             |  |

## Appendix B

### Assessors' survey

Date:

Name:

Address:

I'm Rachel Hansen and I work for the University of Otago, Wellington. I'm helping to evaluate the Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness field trial in order to assess its practicalities, usefulness and cost. We are interested in learning about your experience of assessing the houses.

I have a few questions. It will only take 10-20 minutes, depending on how much you want to say. Everything you say is confidential.

#### **Do you agree to participate?**

Yes

No

#### **Is now a good time to talk?**

Yes

No

#### **What time would you prefer?**

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **I would like to record our conversation. Is that ok?**

Yes

No

[Turn recorder on or keep it off]

#### **Do you have any other questions before we start?**

Let's begin.

1. Did the training day adequately prepare you for conducting a WOF?
  - a. (If no) Do you have any suggestions for ways the training could prepare you better to conduct a WOF?
2. Did you find the assessment manual useful?
  - a. (If no) Do you have any suggestions for ways the assessment manual could be better?
3. Do you feel comfortable about explaining the rationale behind the inclusion of items on the WOF?
  - a. (If no) Please tell me about those items.
4. Do you have any suggestions for how the process of arranging a WOF could be made easier?
5. Does the WOF assess any things that you think should not be assessed? Please tell me about them.
  - a. (If yes) Why should these things not be assessed?
6. Is there anything else that you think the WOF should assess?
  - a. (If yes) Why should these things be included?
7. Please tell me about any times that you had trouble deciding if an item should pass or fail.
  - a. (If yes) Do you have any suggestions for how to overcome this?
8. Do you think the WOF gave a fair and accurate assessment of the quality of the houses?
  - a. (If no) Do you have suggestions for how the WOF could be changed to give a fairer or more accurate assessment of the quality of the houses?
9. Was the form easy to fill out?
10. Did you like having a paper form to use or would you have preferred an iPad/tablet?
11. If a housing WOF was implemented along the same lines as the field test, how much would you charge per assessment?
12. How much would you need to charge if you had to go back for a re-inspection?

13. Would you feel comfortable fixing or replacing the following items if it meant a house would pass?
  - a. replace smoke alarm batteries,
  - b. replacing or installing or moving a smoke alarm,
  - c. replacing a light bulbs
  - d. adjusting hot water temperature,
  - e. other
14. Did you give the landlord any additional information besides the WOF?
15. Do you have any suggestions about information that would be useful to give landlords?
16. Do you have suggestions about the implementation of a housing WOF across all rental houses?
17. Do you support the idea of a WOF to assess housing quality?
  - a. Why/ why not?
18. (If q17 yes) Should this be optional or mandatory?
19. Do you have any other feedback about the WOF tool and the assessment process??

## Tenant survey

[Introduction] I'm [name] and I work at the University of Otago, Wellington. I'm helping to evaluate the Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness in order to assess its practicalities, usefulness and cost. We are interested in learning about your experience of having a Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness carried out on your house.

I have a few questions. It will only take 5-20 minutes, depending on how much you want to say. Everything you say is confidential and will not be attributed to you. You do not have to answer any questions.

a. Do you agree to participate?

b. Is now a good time to talk?

[If no] c. What time would you prefer?

d. I would like to record our conversation. Is that all right with you?

e. Do you have any other questions before we start?

f.. Has an inspector come to your house to carry out a rental warrant of fitness assessment?

1. How long have you lived in this house?

2. How long do you intend to live in this house?

3. Why did you leave your last house?

4. Before the warrant of fitness assessment, had you noticed ways in which the house could be made safer, warmer or dryer?

5. [if q4 yes] Please tell me about the ways you think that the house could be made safer, warmer or dryer.

6. [if q4 yes] Did you take any action to make the house safer, warmer or dryer? This could include talking to the landlord about the issues, or something you did yourself.

7. [if q4 and q6 yes] What was the result of you taking this action?

8. Please tell me about the experience of arranging and having the assessors come to your house to inspect it.

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the experience of having a WOF assessment carried out on your house, with 1 being positive, easy and simple, and 5 being negative, complicated or annoying?

10. Do have any suggestions to make the WOF process easier for tenants?

11. Has your landlord discussed the results of the WOF assessment of your house with you?

12. [if q11 yes] Did you learn any ways that you can make the house warmer, safer or dryer?

13. [if q11 yes] Did the landlord make (or does he/she plan to make) any improvements to your house as a result of the WOF assessment?
14. [if q11 yes] How do you think the improvements planned will affect your experience of living in this house?
15. [If private tenant] Do you have any concerns about changes to your housing situation as a result of having a WOF assessment conducted?
16. [If yes] What are your concerns?
17. Do you support the idea of a rental housing warrant of fitness to assess the quality of a rental house? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being support, and 5 being oppose, and 3 not having an opinion.
18. [If support] Should the warrant of fitness be optional or mandatory?
19. [If support or oppose] Why do you support / oppose the idea of a rental housing warrant of fitness to assess the quality of a rental house?
20. Do you have any other comments on the Housing Warrant of Fitness tool and the assessment process?

## Landlord survey

Date:

Name:

Dictaphone:

I'm [name] and I work at the University of Otago, Wellington. I'm helping to evaluate the Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness in order to assess its practicalities, usefulness and cost. We are interested in learning about your experience of having a Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness carried out on your house.

I have a few questions. It will only take 10-20 minutes, depending on how much you want to say. Everything you say is confidential and will not be attributed to you. You do not have to answer any questions.

- a. Do you agree to participate?
- b. Is now a good time to talk?
- c. [If no] What time would you prefer?
- d. I would like to record our conversation. Is that all right with you?
- e. Has an inspector come to your house/s to carry out a rental warrant of fitness assessment?
- f. Have you received the results of the WOF assessment?

### Section 1 - Information about the landlord-tenant relationship

- 1. Why did you decide to participate in the trial? (In the case of the council representatives, why were these particular houses chosen?)
- 2. How long have you owned the house?
- 3. Before the warrant of fitness assessment, had you noticed ways in which the house/s could be made safer, warmer or dryer?
- 4. [If q3 yes] What changes, if any, had you made to the house to make it warmer, dryer or safer?
- 5. [If q3 yes] What changes in behaviour, if any, had you suggested to the tenants to help make the house warmer, safer or dryer?

### Section 2 The WOF process

- 6. Please rate the experience of arranging a WOF assessment for your house on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being positive, easy and simple, and 5 being negative, complicated or annoying.
- 7. Do you have any suggestions about how we can make the process of arranging a WOF assessment easier?

### Section 3 The WOF content

- 8. Did the WOF assess anything that you thought it should not assess?



9. Are there any additional things you think the WOF should assess?
10. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being satisfied and 5 being unsatisfied, how satisfied were you that the WOF provided a fair and accurate assessment of the quality of your house?
11. Did the WOF assessment come up with things that you were unaware of that required fixing in your rental property?
12. Did you learn about ways you can make the house/s drier, safer or warmer?
13. Did the WOF assessment fail to come up with any issues that you think affect the warmth, dryness or safety of the house/s?
14. What, if any, additional information did you receive with the assessment?
15. What additional information, if any, would it have been useful to receive from the assessor?

#### Section 4: The assessor

16. Were you present during the WOF assessment?
17. Please rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, the competence, helpfulness, knowledge and professionalism of the assessor.
18. Do you have any suggestions for how the assessor could be more to your satisfaction?
19. Did the assessor provide you with an explanation of the assessment and why certain items passed or failed?
20. [If q19 yes] On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very useful, and 5 being not useful, how did you find the assessor's explanation?
21. Do you have any suggestions for how the assessor's explanation could be more useful to you?

#### Section 5: Landlord intentions

22. Have you made, or do you plan to make, any improvements to your rental house/s as a result of the WOF assessment?
23. [if 22 yes] Will you put up the cost of rent to cover any costs associated with fixing your rental property?
24. Have you, or do you plan to make, any suggestions to your tenants to modify their behaviour as a result of the WOF assessment?

#### Section 6: Support for the WOF

25. Do you support the idea of a rental housing warrant of fitness to assess the quality of a rental house? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being support, and 5 being oppose, and 3 not knowing.
26. [If yes] Should such WOF be optional or mandatory?

27. [If support or oppose] Why do you support / not support the idea of a rental housing warrant fitness to assess the quality of a rental house?

28. Do you have any other comments on the Housing Warrant of Fitness tool and the assessment process?

## Appendix C



Form Updated: November 2013

### UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE APPLICATION FORM: CATEGORY B (Departmental Approval)

- 1. University of Otago staff member responsible for project:**  
 Surname *Bennett* First Name *Julie* Title (Mr/Ms/Mrs/Dr/Assoc. Prof./Prof.) *Dr.*

- 2. Department/School:**  
*Department of Public Health*

- 3. Contact details of staff member responsible (always include your email address):**  
*Julie Bennett*  
*14A Florence Street*  
*Newtown*  
*Wellington 6021*  
[Julie.Bennett@otago.ac.nz](mailto:Julie.Bennett@otago.ac.nz)  
*Phone 021321993*

- 4. Title of project:**  
*Field test of a Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness*

- 5. Indicate type of project and names of other investigators and students:**  
**Staff Research**

|                          |              |                                      |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Names</b> | <i>Prof. Philippa Howden-Chapman</i> |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|

|                         |                          |              |                        |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| <b>Student Research</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Names</b> | <i>Elinor Chisholm</i> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|------------------------|

|                                                 |            |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <i>Level of Study (e.g. PhD, Masters, Hons)</i> | <i>PhD</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------|

|                           |                          |              |  |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|--|
| <b>External Research/</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Names</b> |  |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|--|

**Collaboration***Institute/Company***6. When will recruitment and data collection be completed?***February 2014*

|                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| New Zealand Green Building Council,<br>Wellington, Auckland, Christchurch, Tauranga,<br>Dunedin City Councils, Accident Compensation<br>Authority (ACC) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**When will data collection be completed?***April 2014***7. Brief description in lay terms of the aim of the project, and outline of the research questions that will be answered (approx. 200 words):**

*This field study is designed to test a draft housing Warrant of Fitness (WOF) methodology for use as an assessment tool to determine the quality of rental accommodation. The field test will analyse the practicalities, utility and cost of a draft Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness assessment.*

*The project aims to:*

- *Assess the practicality of the tool:*
  - *To establish the likely costs of each inspection to enable costing on a wider scale.*
  - *To understand how houses are likely to fail and the reasons for failure.*
- *Get feedback from assessors:*
  - *To survey the assessors to ascertain their views on the usability of the housing WOF and any suggestions for fine tuning the tool.*
  - *To establish the average length of time it takes to conduct an inspection.*
- *Get feedback from participating landlords:*
  - *To establish appropriate and acceptable ways of engaging with landlords.*
  - *To ascertain their attitudes to having their house inspected, their feedback on the field test and their post inspection intentions.*
- *Get feedback from participating tenants:*
  - *To establish tenants' attitudes towards having their homes inspected and their understanding of the benefits, or otherwise, of a WOF.*
  - *To understand tenants' knowledge of how their behaviour might influence the performance of the home.*

**8. Brief description of the method.**

*This field trial is voluntary. Wellington, Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Tauranga City Councils are responsible for identifying approximately 25 properties each (to produce at least 125 in total for the field test) to participate in the field test, interested participants may come from the following sources:*

- *Property investor associations*
- *Property management companies*
- *Social housing providers (including council housing)*
- *Individual landlords*
- *Networks available to councils (i.e. colleagues that also happen to be landlords).*

*Assessors (who hold building qualifications and have been trained by the University of Otago researchers) will visit each home and perform a housing WOF on the property. Data from these inspections will be sent back to Julie Bennett at Otago University to be analysed. The results will be written in a report, which will be made available to participating parties.*

*In addition landlords and tenants will be asked if they wish to participate in a short (20 minutes) telephone survey. Elinor Chisolm will be conducting these surveys and will help draft the report, which may also form part of a chapter in her doctoral thesis on private rental tenants.*

*Assessors will be providing feedback and will have face-to-face or skype interviews at the end of the project. Results of these findings will also be reported. Results from all of the analysis will be available to the tenants, the landlords, the assessors and all our collaborators.*

## **9. Disclose and discuss any potential problems:**

There are no potential problems envisaged.

**\*Applicant's Signature:** Julie Bennett

**Name (please print):** Julie Bennett  
30/02/2014

**Date:**

*\*The signatory should be the staff member detailed at Question 1.*

## **ACTION TAKEN**

Approved by HOD

Approved by Departmental Ethics Committee

Referred to UO Human Ethics Committee

**Signature of \*\*Head of Department:**

**Name of HOD (please print):**

**Date:** .....

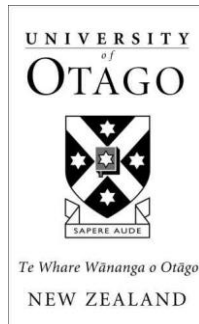
\*\*

Where the Head of Department is also the Applicant, then an appropriate senior staff member must sign on behalf of the Department or School.

**Departmental approval:** *I have read this application and believe it to be valid research and ethically sound. I approve the research design. The research proposed in this application is compatible with the University of Otago policies and I give my approval and consent for the application to be forwarded to the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee (to be reported to the next meeting).*

**INFORMATION SHEET: NOTES FOR APPLICANTS**

[Reference Number: *as allocated upon approval by the Human Ethics Committee*]  
[Date]

**Field test of a Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness  
INFORMATION SHEET FOR TENANTS.**

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

**What is the Aim of the Project?**

The aim of this study is to establish tenants' attitudes towards having their homes inspected and their understanding of the benefits, or otherwise, of a housing WOF.

**What Types of Participants are being sought?**

Tenants who have recently had a housing WOF conducted on their home are sought to participate in a short telephone interview.

**What will Participants be asked to do?**

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to participate in a telephone interview of approximately 10 minutes, the interview would like to explore your attitudes towards having your home inspected and your understanding of the benefits, or otherwise, of a housing WOF.

In the event that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable about any of the questions you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

I will record and later transcribe our conversation. If you wish you may request any parts that are relevant to my research to you for comment and review. I

may also contact you for clarification if I am unsure I have understood you correctly.

Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

### **What Data or Information will be collected and what use will be made of it?**

The result of the project may be published but anything published that makes a participant identifiable will be cleared with the individuals involved. You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned below will be able to gain access to it. Data obtained as a result of the research will be retained for **at least 5 years** [*or at least 10 years for health research*] in secure storage. Any personal information held on the participants [*such as contact details, audio or video tapes, after they have been transcribed etc.,*] may be destroyed at the completion of the research even though the data derived from the research will, in most cases, be kept for much longer or possibly indefinitely.

On the Consent Form you will be given options regarding your anonymity. Please be aware that should you wish we will make every attempt to preserve your anonymity. However, with your consent, there are some cases where it would be preferable to attribute contributions made to individual participants. It is absolutely up to you which of these options you prefer.

### **Can participants change their mind and withdraw from the project?**

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

### **What if participants have questions?**

If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Julie Bennett  
Department of Public Health  
University of Otago, Wellington  
[Julie.Bennett@otago.ac.nz](mailto:Julie.Bennett@otago.ac.nz)  
021 321 993

Philippa Howden-Chapman  
Department of Public Health  
University of Otago, Wellington  
[philippa.howden-chapman@otago.ac.nz](mailto:philippa.howden-chapman@otago.ac.nz)  
04 918 6047

This study has been approved by the Department stated above. However, if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479-8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.



**Field test of a Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness**  
**CONSENT FORM FOR TENANTS**  
**PARTICIPANTS**

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. Personal identifying information [*specify e.g. video-tapes/audio-tapes etc*] will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for at least five years;
4. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

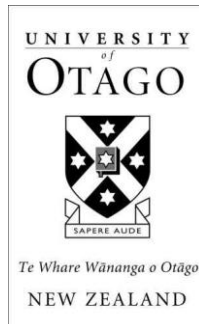
.....  
 (Signature of participant) (Date)

.....  
 (Printed Name)



**INFORMATION SHEET: NOTES FOR APPLICANTS**

[Reference Number: *as allocated upon approval by the Human Ethics Committee*]  
[Date]

**Field test of a Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness  
INFORMATION SHEET FOR LANDLORDS.**

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

**What is the Aim of the Project?**

The aim of this study is to establish landlords' attitudes to having their rental house inspected; their feedback on the field test and their-post inspection intentions.

**What Types of Participants are being sought?**

Landlords who have recently had a housing WOF conducted on their rental home are sought to participate in a short telephone interview.

**What will Participants be asked to do?**

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to participate in a telephone interview of approximately 10 minutes, the interview would like to explore your attitudes to having your rental house inspected; your feedback on the field test and any post inspection intentions that you may have.

In the event that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable about any of the questions you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

I will record and later transcribe our conversation. If you wish you may request any parts that are relevant to my research to you for comment and review. I

may also contact you for clarification if I am unsure I have understood you correctly.

Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

**What Data or Information will be collected and what use will be made of it?**

The result of the project may be published but anything published that makes a participant identifiable will be cleared with the individuals involved. You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned below will be able to gain access to it. Data obtained as a result of the research will be retained for **at least 5 years** [*or at least 10 years for health research*] in secure storage. Any personal information held on the participants [*such as contact details, audio or video tapes, after they have been transcribed etc.,*] may be destroyed at the completion of the research even though the data derived from the research will, in most cases, be kept for much longer or possibly indefinitely.

On the Consent Form you will be given options regarding your anonymity. Please be aware that should you wish we will make every attempt to preserve your anonymity. However, with your consent, there are some cases where it would be preferable to attribute contributions made to individual participants. It is absolutely up to you which of these options you prefer.

**Can participants change their mind and withdraw from the project?**

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

**What if participants have questions?**

If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Julie Bennett  
Department of Public Health  
University of Otago, Wellington  
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021 321 993

Philippa Howden-Chapman  
Department of Public Health  
University of Otago, Wellington  
[philippa.howden-chapman@otago.ac.nz](mailto:philippa.howden-chapman@otago.ac.nz)  
04 918 6047

This study has been approved by the Department stated above. However, if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479-8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

**Field test of a Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness**  
**CONSENT FORM FOR LANDLORDS**  
**PARTICIPANTS**

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. Personal identifying information [*specify e.g. video-tapes/audio-tapes etc*] will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for at least five years;
4. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

.....  
 (Signature of participant) (Date)

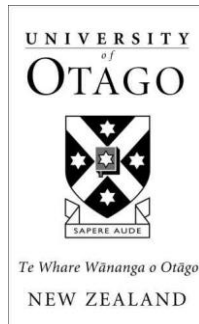
.....  
 (Printed Name)





**INFORMATION SHEET: NOTES FOR APPLICANTS**

[Reference Number: *as allocated upon approval by the Human Ethics Committee*]  
[Date]

**Field test of a Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness  
INFORMATION SHEET FOR ASSESSORS**

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

**What is the Aim of the Project?**

The aim of this study to review the practical usability of the Rental Housing WOF from the assessor's perspective.

**What Types of Participants are being sought?**

Housing Assessors who have been employed to conduct housing inspections on rental properties for the field test of a Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness, which is a joint project between the University of Otago, The New Zealand Green Building Council, Auckland Council, Tauranga Council, Wellington Council, Christchurch Council and Dunedin Council.

**What will Participants be asked to do?**

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to participate either a face-to-face or skype interview of approximately 20 minutes, the interview would like to ascertain your views on the usability of the housing WOF and any suggestions for fine tuning the tool. Throughout the course of the study you have also provided us with feedback, this information will also be used to form part of a report.

In the event that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable about any of the questions you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

I will record and later transcribe our conversation. If you wish you may request any parts that are relevant to my research to you for comment and review. I may also contact you for clarification if I am unsure I have understood you correctly.

Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

**What Data or Information will be collected and what use will be made of it?**

The result of the project may be published but anything published that makes a participant identifiable will be cleared with the individuals involved. You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned below will be able to gain access to it. Data obtained as a result of the research will be retained for **at least 5 years** [*or at least 10 years for health research*] in secure storage. Any personal information held on the participants [*such as contact details, audio or video tapes, after they have been transcribed etc.,*] may be destroyed at the completion of the research even though the data derived from the research will, in most cases, be kept for much longer or possibly indefinitely.

On the Consent Form you will be given options regarding your anonymity. Please be aware that should you wish we will make every attempt to preserve your anonymity. However, with your consent, there are some cases where it would be preferable to attribute contributions made to individual participants. It is absolutely up to you which of these options you prefer.

**Can participants change their mind and withdraw from the project?**

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.



**What if participants have questions?**

If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Julie Bennett  
Department of Public Health  
University of Otago, Wellington  
[Julie.Bennett@otago.ac.nz](mailto:Julie.Bennett@otago.ac.nz)  
021 321 993

Philippa Howden-Chapman  
Department of Public Health  
University of Otago, Wellington  
[philippa.howden-chapman@otago.ac.nz](mailto:philippa.howden-chapman@otago.ac.nz)  
04 918 6047

This study has been approved by the Department stated above. However, if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479-8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

**Field test of a Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness**  
**CONSENT FORM FOR ASSESSORS**  
**PARTICIPANTS**

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. Personal identifying information [*specify e.g. video-tapes/audio-tapes etc*] will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for at least five years;
4. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

.....  
 (Signature of participant) (Date)

.....  
 (Printed Name)



## Appendix D

# Housing Warrant of Fitness (WOF) Assessment Manual

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## 1 Background

Housing is one of the key material determinants of health and shelter is a fundamental human need. New Zealand has substandard housing, which has resulted from poor regulation of minimum housing standards and lack of maintenance. In 2008 The Business Council for Sustainable Development identified that at least one million of the 1.6 million existing homes in New Zealand were poorly performing, meaning they are cold, damp and difficult to heat<sup>7</sup>.

Several national surveys and research studies have shown that private rental housing is in poorer condition than either social housing, or houses that are owner occupied. These results are consistent, regardless of the measurement tool used. Following the recommendations of the Children's Commission's Expert Working Group on Solutions to Child Poverty, the position of the large proportion of children in poor households who are renting in the private sector, has again highlighted the importance and utility of a Housing WOF in policy and government circles.

New Zealand also has the second highest rate of asthma in the world<sup>8</sup>. The impact of our housing on health has been well researched and documented by Healthy Housing He Kainga Oranga and the University of Otago. The social cost of injury in the home is estimated to be approximately \$13 billion a year<sup>9</sup>. In addition, New Zealand has a high incidence of fuel poverty.

During 2013, representatives from Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin Councils initiated a meeting of interested parties to discuss the growing need for a Warrant of Fitness (WOF) for rental properties.

Subsequently and independently to this, the Government indicated renewed interest in a WOF scheme for state housing stock and a private members bill to introduce a WOF was drawn from the ballot in October.

This draft methodology for a housing WOF has been created through collaboration between the University of Otago and the New Zealand Green Build Council (NZGBC), in consultation with the following organisations:

- Auckland Council
- Wellington City Council
- Christchurch City Council

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<sup>7</sup> New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2008, *Better performing homes for New Zealanders: Making it Happen*, [http://www.sbc.org.nz/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/56545/Better-Performing-homes-for-New-Zealanders.pdf](http://www.sbc.org.nz/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/56545/Better-Performing-homes-for-New-Zealanders.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://asthmafoundation.org.nz/your-health/living-with-asthma/asthma-in-new-zealand/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.otago.ac.nz/news/news/otago045641.html>

- Dunedin City Council
- Beacon Pathway
- Building Research Association of New Zealand (BRANZ)
- Energy Efficiency & Conservation Authority (EECA)
- Centre for Research Evaluation and Social Assessment (CRESA)
- Accident and Compensation Corporation (ACC)
- Community Energy Network (CEN)

## 2 Assessment Process

This methodology documents provides a manual for the criteria and assessment detail for each point described in the criteria list (Appendix A). A checklist is set out for a room-by-room inspection and is included in Appendix B. It's anticipated that the printed checklist could easily be converted to an electronic form, allowing the inspection to be carried out using a tablet or similar mobile device

For the purpose of the field trial which will be conducted in late 2013 and early 2014 by Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Tauranga Councils, the paper based checklist has been developed to cover all the points described in criteria list. The full implementation of a WOF process, including governance and enforcing remedial action, will depend on the local authority and the role of the service provider during the proposed field trials of late 2013 and early 2014.

General suggested guidelines for the inspection include:

- Use Rental Housing Warrant of Fitness Assessment Checklist (hardcopy or electronic format, such as an iPad).
- A pass requires passing **all** applicable criteria.
- Minor fixes such as replacing light bulbs and smoke alarms, can be carried out onsite in order for an inspector to deem the house as passing, if safe and appropriate to do so at the discretion of the assessor.

### 2.1.1 Reporting Safety Issues

If the assessor identifies any issues that may present a direct and significant risk to the health and safety of the occupants of the house, the tenant and landlord should be verbally notified at the time of the assessment.

# Assessment Criteria

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## 1 Cooking Facilities

### 1.1 Criteria

*There must be at least one safe working element, hob or means of cooking as well as an oven.*

### 1.2 Assessment

- Visual inspection and verification that cooking facilities are in working condition.
- No obviously visible unsafe wires, broken glass or gas connections.

### 1.3 Further Information

A form of safe cooking facility is a requirement of the New Zealand Building Code (NZBC) and is considered a minimum for a dwelling.

Housing Improvement Regulations (1947) require facilities to boil and bake.

For further information see:

- NZBC Clause G3 Food Preparation and Prevention of Contamination.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/clause-G3.pdf>.

## 2 Food Preparation & Storage

### 2.1 Criteria

*There must be adequate facilities to store, wash, and prepare food as per Acceptable Solution G3/AS1 of the NZBC. This includes:*

- A sink capable of fully containing a solid cylinder of 300 mm diameter and 125 mm depth.
- Clear food preparation area of at least 600 mm x 500 mm.
- Food storage capacity of at least:
  - 0.5 m<sup>3</sup> for a 1 bedroom house.
  - 1.0 m<sup>3</sup> for a 2 to 4 bedroom house.
  - 1.0 m<sup>3</sup> + 0.2 m<sup>3</sup> per additional bedroom over 4 bedrooms.

### 2.2 Assessment

- Visually inspect sink, bench top and dedicated food storage areas to check for general state of repair.
- Confirm dimensions with a tape measure if required.

### 2.3 Further Information

For further information see:

- NZBC Clause G3 Food Preparation and Prevention of Contamination.

- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/clause-G3.pdf>.

## 3 Potable Water

### 3.1 Criteria

*There must be a reliable and adequate source of hot and cold water, plumbed in to the house.*

### 3.2 Assessment

The first preference for assessing potable water should be at the kitchen tap.

- Confirm that adequate water flows from both cold and hot taps.
- Water should be visibly clean.
- Fittings should be effective and not leaking.
- Any non-potable water (such as untreated rainwater) must be clearly labelled.

### 3.3 Further Information

- A slow dripping tap should be noted but should not fail an inspection.
- For adequate flow, the rate should be at least 4 litres per minute (sufficient to fill a 1 litre jug in 15 seconds), but no more than 9 litres per minute for a kitchen or bathroom.

For further information see:

- NZBC Clause G12 Water Supplies.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/G12-water-supplies-3rd-edition-amendment-8.pdf>.

## 4 Hot Water Temperature

### 4.1 Criteria

*Hot-water at the tap should be supplied at a temperature of 55 °C ±5 °C.*

### 4.2 Assessment

Select the most easily locatable the hot water tap which is closest to the main hot water supply.

- Measure temperature of water using either an electronic or analogue probe-style thermometer placed in the flow of the hot water supply.
- Allow temperature to stabilise before confirming temperature.
- An allowance of ±5 °C is acceptable (i.e. 50 °C – 60 °C).

### 4.3 Further Information

- Temperatures higher than 55 °C area risk for burns.

- Temperatures lower than 60 °C in a storage cylinder, increase the risk of legionella bacteria.<sup>10</sup>
- It is unreasonable to expect all hot water to be delivered at exactly 55 °C as some systems will fluctuate during a 24 hour period and thermostats are not always accurate.

It is not recommended that assessors touch or adjust thermostats.

For more information see:

- NZBC Clause G12 Water Supplies.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/G12-water-supplies-3rd-edition-amendment-8.pdf>.

## 5 Functional Toilet

### 5.1 Criteria

*There must be a functional toilet, which does not have a cracked or broken seat, cistern or bowl.*

### 5.2 Assessment

- Visual inspection for damage.
- Confirm toilet flushes effectively.

### 5.3 Further Information

Sanitary fittings are required under the building code.

For more information see:

- NZBC Clause G1 Personal Hygiene.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/G1-personal-hygiene-2nd-edition-amendment-6.pdf>.
- NZBC Clause G13 Foul Water.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/G13-foul-water-2nd-edition-amendment-4.pdf>.

## 6 Provision of a Bath or Shower

### 6.1 Criteria

*There must be a suitably located bath or shower in good working order.*

### 6.2 Assessment

- Confirm that at least one bath or shower is present.
- Test taps, mixers, spouts or showerheads to confirm that they're in good working condition.

<sup>10</sup> The greatest risk of Legionella bacteria thriving occurs between 37 °C and 42 °C. The risk is significantly reduced by maintaining 50 °C for at least 2 hours, or 60 °C for just 2 minutes. Legionellae is nearly completely destroyed instantly at 70 °C. (Source: World Health Organisation, 2007, *Legionella and the prevention of legionellosis*, [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/emerging/legionella.pdf](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/emerging/legionella.pdf))

- Confirm that water flows from both cold and hot taps.
- Water should be visibly clean.
- Fittings should be effective and not leaking.
- Confirm that water is delivered at a suitable rate of flow (estimate only required) and that within shower units, temperature can be adequately controlled.

### 6.3 Further Information

- Slow dripping fittings should be noted but should not fail an inspection.
- For adequate flow, the rate should be at least 6 litres per minute for a shower.

For more information see:

- NZBC Clause G1 Personal Hygiene.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/G1-personal-hygiene-2nd-edition-amendment-6.pdf>.

## 7 Secure Storage

### 7.1 Criteria

*The house must contain secure or high level cupboards or shelves for storing hazardous or toxic substances out of children's reach.*

### 7.2 Assessment

Visually confirm the presence of storage which is either:

- Secure and lockable, or
- Above 1.2 m above floor height.

### 7.3 Further Information

The assessment guidelines for this feature are derived from the Homestar credit *MAN-2 Security*.

## 8 Fixed Space Heating

### 8.1 Criteria

*The house must contain a fixed form of safe and effective space heating.*

### 8.2 Assessment

- Confirm that at least one form of fixed heating is present and is in working condition. The appliance is to be located within the main living area or where heat can be delivered to the main living areas of the dwelling.
- Unflued gas heating and portable heaters do not comply.
- Where possible, record the capacity of the heater (kW output).



## 8.3 Further Information

- Most houses in New Zealand will require an effective means of space heating in order to achieve and maintain healthy living conditions.
- A form of fixed heating should be present to ensure that:
  - Heating is a permanent feature of the house and is not likely to be removed.
  - The risk of fire or injury is minimised due to the secured nature of the heater.
- Unflued gas heaters emit high levels of moisture and toxic gases. These gases will accumulate in the area if it is not adequately ventilated.
- A minimum heating output (Wattage) is not required for the purposes of the WOF, as this can often be hard to assess. For information purposes, the following minimum outputs are required in Clause G5 of the NZBC.
- Open fires are deemed to be compliant if they're operational and providing they can be legally used under normal circumstances in the specific region/council area.

**Table 1: Acceptable Heating Output for Spaces of up to 10 m<sup>2</sup> Floor Area (source: [NZBC Clause G5 Interior Environment](#))**

| Locality     | Average R-Value | Heating wattage (W) for a space which has |                      |                    |                   |
|--------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
|              |                 | Four external walls                       | Three external walls | Two external walls | One external wall |
| North Island | 1.5             | 720                                       | 650                  | 580                | 510               |
|              | 0.7             | 1,250                                     | 1,100                | 950                | 800               |
| South Island | 1.5             | 1,040                                     | 940                  | 840                | 740               |
|              | 0.7             | 1,650                                     | 1,410                | 1,170              | 930               |

For further information see:

- NZBC G5 Interior Environment.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/G5-interior-environment-1st-edition-amendment-2.pdf>.

## 9 Effective Ventilation

### 9.1 Criteria

*The bathroom(s), kitchen, bedrooms and livings areas must have some form of ventilation to the outside.*

### 9.2 Assessment

Check that either an opening window or mechanical vent is present and operational in each of the following:

- Kitchen,
- Bathrooms and ensuites,
- All bedrooms
- Living areas.

If there is no mechanical ventilation such as an extracting hood above the stove in the kitchen, then an opening window should be no more than **2 metres** away from the cooking facilities.

### 9.3 Further Information

Adequate ventilation is a requirement of the building code and is important for maintaining healthy internal conditions.

For more information see:

- NZBC E3 Internal Moisture.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/E3-internal-moisture-3rd-edition-amendment-4.pdf>.

## 10 Mould

### 10.1 Criteria

*The house must be reasonably free of visible mould, having no more in total area of mould than an A4 sheet of paper.*

### 10.2 Assessment

Visually inspect and sum up the estimated total area of mould throughout the whole house. Surfaces include:

- Internal walls, ceilings and floors and floor coverings,
- Internal surfaces of window frames and glazing,
- Internal tiled surfaces,
- Internal surfaces of doors and door frames,
- Curtains, blinds and window furnishings.

Any mould on furniture and clothing may be noted, but is not included in the total area.

Wardrobes and cupboards should not be inspected unless asked to do so and explicit permission has been given by the tenant and/or landlord.

### 10.3 Further Information

The presence of mould is a sign of inadequate ventilation and excess moisture. Mould is known to contribute to poor health, particularly respiratory illness for occupants.

Research by the University of Otago suggests that bedrooms are the most likely place for mould to occur<sup>11</sup>.

For more information and research into the health implications of mould, see:

- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/ws-mould-info-sheet>

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<sup>11</sup>Howden-Chapman et al, 2002, *A national study of the health effects of insulating homes: the baseline data (Report 1)*, <http://www.healthyhousing.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/Insulation-and-Mould-Study-%E2%80%93-Baseline-Report-1.pdf>

- [A national study of the health effects of insulating homes: the baseline data \(Report 1\)](#)
- [A national study of the health effects of insulating homes: the baseline data \(Report 2\)](#)

## 11 Safe Power Outlets and Light Switches

### 11.1 Criteria

*All power outlets and light switches must be safe and in good working order.*

### 11.2 Assessment

Visual inspection only that none of the following are present:

- Cracked or missing faceplates,
- Exposed cables,
- Sockets or switches too close to a defined wet zone, for example;
  - Not within 0.3 metres of the floor of a bathroom or laundry;
  - Not within 0.4 meters above or 0.15 lateral distance from the rim of a sink;
- Sockets in a bathroom, laundry or wet area without a residual current device (RCD);
- Unexplained humming, hissing or other noises from electrical fittings.

### 11.3 Further Information

Inspection for electrical safety at the WOF level should not require a qualified electrician.

If the assessor has any concerns about the immediate safety of electrical fittings and outlets, professional, qualified advice should be sought immediately.

For further information see:

- [New Zealand Electrical Code of Practice for Homeowner/Occupier's Electrical Wiring Work in Domestic Installations.](#)

## 12 Indoor Lighting

### 12.1 Criteria

*There must be at least one working light in each room and staircase, and staircases must have a working light switch at both the top and bottom of the stairs.*

### 12.2 Assessment

- Visually inspect and confirm that a fixed electrical light is present and operational in each room.
- Plug-in lighting, such as standard lamps, desk lamps and bedside lamps that are not permanently wired, should not be included.
- For stairs, confirm that a safe and operational light switch is present at both the top and bottom of each staircase.
- If sensor or automatic lighting is present and functioning, this may satisfy the need for dual switching.

- Spare bulbs may be carried by the inspector to confirm that lighting circuits are functioning providing it is safe to do so and at their discretion.
- Where it cannot be verified that a room has at least one working light, the house will need to be reassessed once remedial action is taken.
- For open plan areas, there should be adequate lighting for each distinct zone.

## 12.3 Further Information

For more information see:

- NZBC Clause D1 Access Routes.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/D1-access-routes-2nd-edition-amendment-5.pdf>.

## 13 Working Smoke Alarms

### 13.1 Criteria

*There must be operational smoke alarms within 3 metres of each bedroom in the house.*

### 13.2 Assessment

- Visually inspect that smoke alarms are present.
- Test each alarm using the alarms built-in test function.
- Spare batteries may be carried by the inspector to confirm that smoke alarms are functioning providing it is safe to do so and at their discretion.
- For wired alarm systems, check with the owner how to test the system and either conduct a test or verify that the system has been tested within the last 6 months.

### 13.3 Further Information

A house or apartment containing a sprinkler system, may not have smoke detectors to the required level. In this case, evidence should be provided that the system has been checked within the last 12 months.

It would be appropriate for an inspector to carry spare 9 volt batteries and compliant smoke alarms to replace any that might be required in the home.

## 14 Effective Window Latches

### 14.1 Criteria

*Each opening window must have an effective latch or means of closure.*

### 14.2 Assessment

- Visually inspect that window latches are present and that they effectively close and lock opening windows.
- Confirm that latches effectively allow for weathertightness of the window when closed.

### 14.3 Further Information

The ability to open windows is a requirement for ventilation. Latches are required in order to be able to lock and secure the house from an intruder as well as contribute to the weathertightness of the house.

## 15 Window Security Stays

### 15.1 Criteria

*Any window where it is possible for persons to fall out of the building and where the possible fall height is more than 1,000 mm must have a safety stay which will prevent the window from opening more than 100 mm on the opening edge.*

### 15.2 Assessment

Visually inspect the windows and check that security stays are present and operational on all windows with a possible fall height of more than 1,000 mm and where the sill is less than 1,500 mm from the ground.

Exempt windows include:

- High level windows,
- Clerestory<sup>12</sup> windows,
- Bottom pivot windows,
- Any other window where there is no risk of a person climbing through.

### 15.3 Further Information

Security stays allow for improved passive ventilation of the house while keeping the house secure from an intruder.

Security stays also prevent falls, particularly by children through windows.

## 16 Curtains or Blinds

### 16.1 Criteria

*Windows in bedrooms and living areas are required to either be doubled glazed or have effective curtains or blinds installed.*

### 16.2 Assessment

Visually inspect any windows in the lounge (including open plan lounge/dining areas) and bedrooms where the sill is below 2 metres above floor level (i.e. high level and clerestory windows are excluded).

If the windows are not double or secondary glazed (with an R value of at least 0.3), then curtains or suitable blinds must be present with the following features:

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<sup>12</sup> Clerestory windows are those above eye level.

- Either a single layer of heavy weight material or lighter weight material lined with a thermal backing.
- Cover at least 100% of the glazed area of the window.
- Able to be easily opened and closed.

Curtains or blinds are **not** required in the following locations:

- Bathrooms
- Kitchens
- Entrance areas
- High level windows
- Skylights

Venetian or slat blinds can be deemed to comply if they are in good working condition.

### 16.3 Further Information

For the purpose of a warrant, curtains on a working track or blinds (such as Roman-style blinds) should be at least 100% of the size of the glazed area. However, for improved performance, the following is recommended:

- The minimum length is at least 200 mm below the bottom of the window frame.
- Curtains should be at least 2 times as wide as the window so as to not fit completely flat and taut across the window.

Venetian and slat blinds are deemed compliant for the purposes of a warrant because they will help contribute to privacy and can also reduce overheating. It should be recognised however that their thermal performance for heat retention is negligible.

## 17 Glass Visibility Strips

### 17.1 .Criteria

*Glass doors with clear glazing must have visibility strips.*

### 17.2 Assessment

Visually inspect that visibility strips are present wherever there are clear glazed, full sized doors without any structural or decorative components through the centre of the glazing.

### 17.3 Further Information

Visibility strips should be present to reduce the risk of injury to occupants in cases where glass doors might otherwise be hard to see, or to distinguish between an open and a closed door.

## 18 Thermoplastic Insulated Electrical Cabling

### 18.1 Criteria

*The electric cable used in the property must be thermoplastic insulated*

## 18.2 Assessment

Visually inspect the electrical cables used within the property and confirm that tough plastic sheath wiring is used and not black rubber.

Examination of the type of electrical cables is best undertaken when assessing the roof space. Inspectors may not undo switches, sockets, etc. in order to ascertain the type of cables that are in use.

Where there is a mix of cabling, or older types of cables appear to be in use, the house will be deemed to fail and the property owner should seek the advice of a qualified electrician.

## 18.3 Further Information

Older cables which have been used in the past for domestic purposes included Rough rubber sheath (TRS) and Vulcanised Indian Rubber (VIR) both of which have been out of use since the 1960s and are no longer likely to be safe.

The fire risk from 1940s and 1950s wiring is 70% higher than modern wiring and in 2005, contributed to approximately 30 house fires<sup>13</sup>.

For further information see:

- <http://www.fire.org.nz/Christchurch-Recovery/business-support/Documents/106.pdf>
- <http://www.renovate.org.nz/1940-60s/services/electricity-and-gas/>
- <http://www.esc.org.uk/public/home-electrics/periodic-inspection-explained/>

## 19 Ceiling Insulation

### 19.1 Criteria

*Ceiling insulation is required to WOF standard for all houses where access to the roof space is feasible.*

- Insulation must be at least 120 mm thick.
- There should be no patches of damp insulation.
- The total area of gaps or missing segments must be less than approximately 1 m<sup>2</sup> for all accessible areas (excluding area required as clearance around lights and flues).
- Chimneys and flues must have a least 50 mm of clearance.
- Unducted extractor fans must have at least 200 mm of clearance.
- Any CA (closed abutted) recessed lighting must not be covered with insulation.
- Any recessed lighting with no clear labelling or rating must have at least 200 mm clearance of insulation on all sides.
- Downlight transformers must not be covered.

<sup>13</sup> Patel, V., 2005, *Electrical Wiring Systems and Fire Risk in Residential Dwellings*, <http://www.med.govt.nz/energysafety/documents/about/publications/surveys/industry-surveys/Electrical%20Wiring%20Systems%20and%20Fire%20Risk%20in%20Residential%20Dwellings%20-Published%2020%20April%202005.pdf>

Loose fill insulation may be acceptable if all the above criteria, including clearances, are met **AND** an effective means of maintaining clearances is in place.

## 19.2 Assessment

Visually inspect the roof space from the access hole.

Where accessible parts of the roof are not visible from the access hatch, the inspector should enter the roof space to ensure a thorough inspection.

If ceilings are too high or otherwise unsafe to inspect, they should be deemed as not accessible.

Where there is no access, or access is obstructed and a roof cavity does exist, the home owner must provide evidence of the insulation. If no such evidence can be provided, the house will be deemed to fail until such time that access can be created or unobstructed and insulation can be verified. This may mean that an access hatch and then insulation is required to be installed.

Skillion or flat roofs are exempt as inspecting or retrofitting insulation will not always be practically feasible.

## 19.3 Further Information

Where there is no access to the roof space, such as a flat, skillion or cathedral style roof, insulation does not have to be assessed.

Insulation was only required in New Zealand homes from 1978. The current building code standard (Acceptable solution H1/AS1) for ceiling insulation is given in Table 2.

**Table 2: Minimum roof R-values for schedule method, Acceptable solution H1/AS1 NZBC**

| Climate Zone | Required R-Value       |                    |
|--------------|------------------------|--------------------|
|              | Non-Solid Construction | Solid Construction |
| Zone 1       | 2.9                    | 3.5                |
| Zone 2       | 2.9                    | 3.5                |
| Zone 3       | 3.3                    | 3.5                |

For further information see:

- NZBC Clause H1 Energy Efficiency.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/H1-energy-efficiency-3rd-edition-amendment-2.pdf>

## 20 Underfloor Insulation

### 20.1 Criteria

*Underfloor insulation is required to WOF standard for all houses where there is access to the sub-floor.*

(Not applicable for concrete floors)



- Insulation may be any of the following:
  - Bulk insulation, at least 90 mm thick,
  - Rigid polystyrene, appropriately secured between joists,
  - Foil, in good condition,
  - Other form of insulation as deemed appropriate and of reasonable quality by the inspector,
- There should be no patches of damp insulation,
- The total area of gaps or missing segments must be less than approximately 1 m<sup>2</sup> for all accessible areas.
- Any lighting affixed to the underside of the floor (e.g. for a garage or storage space) with no clear labelling or rating, must have at least 200 mm clearance of insulation on all sides.
- Chimneys and flues must have a least 50 mm of clearance.

## 20.2 Assessment

Visually inspect under the floor from the access hatch.

Where accessible parts of the under floor are not visible from the access hatch, the inspector should enter the subfloor space to ensure a thorough inspection.

## 20.3 Further Information

- Only suspended floors with reasonable access (more than approximately 400 mm clearance) are assessable.
- Only the ground floor for the house is required to have insulation.
- Insulation was only required in New Zealand homes from 1978. The general requirement under the current building code (Acceptable solution H1/AS1) for under floor insulation is R 1.3.

For further information see:

- NZBC Clause H1 Energy Efficiency.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/H1-energy-efficiency-3rd-edition-amendment-2.pdf>

## 21 Ground Vapour Barrier

### 21.1 Criteria

*A ground vapour barrier is required for all houses where there is an accessible and fully enclosed sub-floor.*

(Not applicable for concrete floors)

- A polythene sheet (or similar) must be installed on the ground and secured at the perimeter and around piles.
- A vapour barrier is only required in cases where there is a continuous perimeter foundation, i.e. floors elevated on poles or where the floor is exposed are exempt.

## 21.2 Assessment

Visually inspect under the floor from the access hatch.

Where accessible parts of the under floor are not visible from the access hatch, the inspector should enter the subfloor space to ensure a thorough inspection.

## 21.3 Further Information

- Only suspended floors with reasonable access (more than approximately 400 mm clearance) are assessable.

For more information see:

- <http://www.smarterhomes.org.nz/design/moisture/>
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/WHRS/pdf/external-moisture-an-introduction.pdf>

# 22 Weathertightness

## 22.1 Criteria

*The house must be weathertight with no obvious leaks or moisture stains on the walls, ceilings or floors.*

## 22.2 Assessment

Visually inspect the interior of the house for evidence of leaks or prolonged moisture on all floor, wall and ceiling linings.

Visually inspect the exterior of the house for obvious holes, cracks or missing sections in any of the following elements:

- Roofing material,
- Soffit,
- External wall cladding,
- Windows,
- Doors,
- Floors.

## 22.3 Further Information

The condition of the foundation perimeter wall is excluded. An intact perimeter wall should allow for ventilation while protecting against the elements and animals. However, it may not be feasible for all perimeter walls to be closed in (e.g. houses or parts that are elevated on piles).

# 23 Reasonable State of Repair

## 23.1 Criteria

*The house, installed services, and finishes must be in a reasonable state of repair*

## 23.2 Assessment

Visually inspect the overall condition of the house to check that there are no major and obvious faults, cracks, holes, unevenness or serious damage to any of the following building elements:

- Roofing material,
- Cladding,
- Glazing,
- Entrances,
- Electrical and water services,
- Pathways immediately adjacent to the building,
- Internal walls,
- Floors,
- Floor coverings.

Also confirm there are no obvious slip hazards, including moss or slippery surfaces on decks and pathways immediately adjacent to the house.

## 23.3 Further Information

The inspector should use their discretion to determine if any obvious defect is serious enough to deem the house to fail. A defect should be deemed serious if it is a risk to the health and safety of the occupants, or will directly impact the weathertightness or security of the dwelling.

Cracked or damaged paint and other aesthetic issues are not considered. While damaged paint may indirectly contribute to decreasing weathertightness over a period of time, assessment should be restricted to solid structures.

Any risk of possible exposure to lead paint should be verbally communicated to the tenant and landlord.

# 24 Stormwater and Waste Water Discharge

## 24.1 Criteria

*There must be a reasonably watertight stormwater collection system and sound connection to a waste water system.*

## 24.2 Assessment

Visually inspect the check the following:

- Spouting and downpipes are connected securely and effectively to an appropriate stormwater system,
- Waste water pipes (where possible),
- Check the ground under and immediately around the house for evidence of excessive ponding.

## 24.3 Further Information

House are required to have effective guttering for the whole roof.

Guttering should be designed to overflow to the outside and should have a cross sectional area of at least 2,500 mm<sup>2</sup>.

For more information see:

- NZBC Clause E1 Surface Water.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/E1-surface-water-1st-edition-amendment-8.pdf>
- NZBC Clause E2 External Moisture.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/E2-External-Moisture-effective-24-December-2011.pdf>

## 25 No Ponding Under House

### 25.1 Criteria

*The ground under the house should be free of ponding and surface water*

(Not applicable for concrete floors)

### 25.2 Assessment

Visually inspect under the floor from the access hatch.

Where accessible parts of the under floor are not visible from the access hatch, the inspector should enter the subfloor space to ensure a thorough inspection.

### 25.3 Further Information

- Only suspended floors with reasonable access (more than approximately 400 mm clearance) are assessable.
- Only the ground floor for the house is required to have insulation.

## 26 Entrance Way Lighting

### 26.1 Criteria

*There must be adequate, operational lighting at or near entrance ways.*

### 26.2 Assessment

Visually inspect that lighting is present and operational at the main front and back doors of the house.

### 26.3 Further Information

- [http://www.acc.co.nz/PRD\\_EXT\\_CSMP/groups/external\\_ip/documents/publications\\_promotion/wpc093961.pdf](http://www.acc.co.nz/PRD_EXT_CSMP/groups/external_ip/documents/publications_promotion/wpc093961.pdf)
- [http://www.smarterhomes.org.nz/design/safety-security/#toc\\_3](http://www.smarterhomes.org.nz/design/safety-security/#toc_3)
- <http://www.consumerbuild.org.nz/publish/materials/materials-design-safety.php>

## 27 Structurally Sound

### 27.1 Criteria

*The house must appear to be structurally sound, with no obvious indications of current or imminent movement or collapse.*

### 27.2 Assessment

Visually inspect the house to verify there are no obvious indications of movement, instability of collapse. Examples of building elements to check include:

- Walls are straight, not bowed or sagging.
- Roof is straight and not sagging or collapsed.
- Floor is level and solid.
- No obvious damage, major degradation or missing joists.

### 27.3 Further Information

It is not the purpose of the WOF assessment to do a full structural analysis of a house as this would require a structural engineer. Only obvious and potentially dangerous faults should be noted and deemed to fail.

## 28 Handrails and Balustrades

### 28.1 Criteria

*There must be handrails for all internal stairs and all outdoor steps that access the house, and all balconies and decks of 1,000 mm above ground level must have balustrades to the current Building Code.*

### 28.2 Assessment

- Confirm that handrails and balustrades are secure.
- Measure heights and clearance to confirm the minimum barrier heights;
  - For stairs, ramps and their landings is 900 mm,
  - For balconies and decks and edges of internal floors or mezzanine floors is 1,000 mm.
- Measure and confirm that the horizontal spacing of rails is no more than 100 mm.

### 28.3 Further Information

Acceptable Solution F4/AS1 of the building code stipulates that a house where there are likely to be frequented by children under the age of 6,

- NZBC Clause D1 Access Routes.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/D1-access-routes-2nd-edition-amendment-5.pdf>
- NZBV Clause F4 Safety from Falling.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/F4-safety-from-falling.pdf>

## 29 Fire Egress

### 29.1 Criteria

*There must be at least two clear exists from the house.*

### 29.2 Assessment

Visually inspect the property to confirm at least one alternative exit path in addition to the main entrance.

Flats, apartments and similar multi-unit dwellings may seek exemption from the requirement of an alternative path if it can be proven that only a single fire escape route or safe path has been provided which is compliant with relevant codes and standards.

### 29.3 Further Information

- NZBV Clauses C1 – C 6 Protection from Fire.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/c1-c6-protection-from-fire-a3.pdf>.
- <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Compliance-documents/c-as1-as7-protection-from-fire-commentary.pdf>

## 30 Address Clearly Labelled and Identifiable

### 30.1 Criteria

*The house number and main entrance must be clearly labelled and identifiable.*

### 30.2 Assessment

Visually inspect to confirm that the house number is clearly labelled and that the main entrance is clearly identifiable.

### 30.3 Further Information

Clear identification is important for visitation as well as to ensure that emergency services are able to locate the address.

## 31 Securely Locking Doors

### 31.1 Criteria

*The house must be able to be secured by means of lockable doors or entranceways.*

### 31.2 Assessment

Confirm that locks are present and properly functioning for the main entrances to the house.

Also confirm that windows and other openings are able to be secured.

## Appendix A: Assessment Criteria

1. Is there a functional, safe stove-top and oven? (Yes/no)
2. Is there adequate space for food preparation and storage? (Yes/no)
3. Is there an adequate supply of hot and cold potable water? (Yes/no)
4. Is the hot-water at the tap 55°C ( $\pm 5^\circ\text{C}$ )? (Yes/no)
5. Is there a functional toilet, which does not have a cracked or broken seat, cistern or bowl? (Yes/no)
6. Is there a suitably located bath or shower in good working order? (Yes/no)
7. Are there secure or high level cupboards or shelves for storing hazardous or toxic substances out of children's reach? (Yes/no)
8. Is there a fixed form of safe and effective space heating? (Yes/no)
9. Do the bathroom, kitchen and all bedrooms have some form of ventilation to outside? (Yes/no)
10. Is the house reasonably free of visible mould, i.e. the total area of mould is less than an A4 sheet of paper? (Yes/no)
11. Are the power outlets and light switches safe and in good working order? (Yes/no)
12. Is there adequate indoor lighting? (Yes/no)
13. Does the house have adequate working smoke alarms? (Yes/no)
14. Have the windows got effective latches? (Yes/no)
15. Have high windows got security stays? (Yes/no)
16. Are there curtains or blinds in the bedrooms and living area? (Yes/no)
17. Do glass doors have safety visibility strips? (Yes/no)
18. Does the house have thermoplastic insulated cabling? (Yes/no)
19. Does the house have ceiling insulation to WOF standards? (Yes/no)
20. Does the house have underfloor insulation to WOF standards? (Yes/no)
21. Is the house weathertight with no evident leaks, or moisture stains on the walls or ceiling? (Yes/no)
22. Is a ground vapour barrier installed under the ground floor? (Yes/no)
23. Is the house in a reasonable state of repair? (Yes/no)
24. Is the storm and waste water drainage being adequately discharged? (Yes/no)
25. Is there any water ponding under the house? (Yes/no)
26. Is there adequate outdoor lighting near entrance ways? (Yes/no)
27. Does the house appear to be structurally sound? (Yes/no)
28. Are there handrails for all internal stairs and all outdoor steps that access the house, and do balconies/decks have balustrades to the current Building Code? (Yes/no)
29. Is there fire egress to the current Building Code? (Yes/no)
30. Is the address clearly labelled and identifiable? (Yes/no)
31. Are there securely locking doors? (Yes/no)

| Assessor Details             |   |                                                                                                                                       |  | Assessment Date:             |    |                |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
|------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|----|----------------|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Assessor Name:               |   |                                                                                                                                       |  | Assessor ID:                 |    |                |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
| Organisation:                |   |                                                                                                                                       |  | Phone:                       |    |                |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
| Property Contact Information |   |                                                                                                                                       |  | Property Contact Information |    |                |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
| Tenant Name:                 |   |                                                                                                                                       |  | Owner Name:                  |    |                |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
| Property Address:            |   |                                                                                                                                       |  | Contact Address:             |    |                |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
| Property Phone:              |   |                                                                                                                                       |  | Owner Phone:                 |    |                |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
| Email:                       |   |                                                                                                                                       |  |                              |    |                |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
| Property Information         |   |                                                                                                                                       |  |                              |    |                |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
| House Age                    |   | (approx. yr.):                                                                                                                        |  | Approximate Size             |    | m <sup>2</sup> |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
| Storeys                      |   |                                                                                                                                       |  | Number of bedrooms:          |    |                |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
| Type                         |   | <input type="checkbox"/> detached <input type="checkbox"/> duplex <input type="checkbox"/> terrace <input type="checkbox"/> apartment |  |                              |    | Start Time:    |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
| F                            | P | Kitchen & Laundry                                                                                                                     |  |                              |    | F              | P | Bedrooms                                                                               |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Wall and ceiling linings, and floor intact                                                                                            |  |                              |    |                |   | Opening window, with latch                                                             |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Surfaces clear of mould                                                                                                               |  |                              |    |                |   | Window stays (if required)                                                             |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Functioning stove and oven                                                                                                            |  |                              |    |                |   | Wall/ceiling linings intact                                                            |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Effective ventilation to the outside                                                                                                  |  |                              |    |                |   | Surfaces clear of mould                                                                |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Adequate food preparation and storage                                                                                                 |  |                              |    |                |   | Working artificial light                                                               |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Working artificial lighting                                                                                                           |  |                              |    |                |   | Safe power & light switches                                                            |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Potable water supply                                                                                                                  |  |                              |    |                |   | Smoke alarm within 3 m                                                                 |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Hot water temperature at tap (55°C ±5°C)                                                                                              |  |                              | °C |                |   | Curtains/drapes present                                                                |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Waste water drainage with sound connection                                                                                            |  |                              |    |                |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Visibly safe power outlets and light switches                                                                                         |  |                              |    |                |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Secure storage (1.2 m high or child-safe lock)                                                                                        |  |                              |    |                |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
| F                            | P | Bathroom & Toilet                                                                                                                     |  |                              |    |                |   | Entrance                                                                               |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Wall and ceiling linings, and floor intact                                                                                            |  |                              |    |                |   | Address clearly labelled and identifiable                                              |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Surfaces clear of mould                                                                                                               |  |                              |    |                |   | Securely locking door(s)                                                               |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Operational toilet                                                                                                                    |  |                              |    |                |   | Working light                                                                          |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Sewage connection functional                                                                                                          |  |                              |    |                |   | Ceiling                                                                                |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Functioning bath or shower                                                                                                            |  |                              |    |                |   | Insulation to requirements (120 mm)                                                    |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Effective ventilation to the outside                                                                                                  |  |                              |    |                |   | No gaps, tucks, or folds                                                               |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Waste water drain connected                                                                                                           |  |                              |    |                |   | No dampness in insulation                                                              |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Working artificial lighting                                                                                                           |  |                              |    |                |   | Clearance from lights, ducts and roof                                                  |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Visibly safe power outlets and light switches                                                                                         |  |                              |    |                |   | Thermoplastic insulated cabling                                                        |  |  |  |
| F                            | P | Living Areas                                                                                                                          |  |                              |    |                |   | Under Floor                                                                            |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Wall and ceiling linings, and floor intact                                                                                            |  |                              |    |                |   | Insulation to requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Foil <input type="checkbox"/> Bulk |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Surfaces clear of mould                                                                                                               |  |                              |    |                |   | Dry underfloor                                                                         |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Working artificial lighting:                                                                                                          |  |                              |    |                |   | Ground vapour barrier                                                                  |  |  |  |
|                              |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Living, lounge, dining</li> </ul>                                                              |  |                              |    |                |   | No ponding                                                                             |  |  |  |
|                              |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hallway</li> </ul>                                                                             |  |                              |    |                |   | General                                                                                |  |  |  |
|                              |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stairs (switch at each end)</li> </ul>                                                         |  |                              |    |                |   | Envelope in reasonable repair and weather tight                                        |  |  |  |
|                              |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other</li> </ul>                                                                               |  |                              |    |                |   | No cracks, holes in roof                                                               |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Visibly safe power outlets and light switches                                                                                         |  |                              |    |                |   | No cracks, holes in external cladding                                                  |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Heating, fixed, effective and safe                                                                                                    |  |                              | kW |                |   | No cracks, holes or missing panes in windows                                           |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Opening window (each area) with secure latch                                                                                          |  |                              |    |                |   | Spouting and stormwater functioning and not leaking                                    |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Window security stays (where required)                                                                                                |  |                              |    |                |   | Two effective methods of egress                                                        |  |  |  |
|                              |   | Curtains/drapes present                                                                                                               |  |                              |    |                |   | Structurally sound                                                                     |  |  |  |
|                              |   |                                                                                                                                       |  |                              |    |                |   | Glass doors include visibility strips                                                  |  |  |  |
|                              |   |                                                                                                                                       |  |                              |    |                |   | Handrails and balustrades to code                                                      |  |  |  |
|                              |   |                                                                                                                                       |  |                              |    |                |   | Non-potable water labelled                                                             |  |  |  |
|                              |   |                                                                                                                                       |  |                              |    |                |   | Paths, decks and surfaces non-slippery/free from moss                                  |  |  |  |
| Comments                     |   |                                                                                                                                       |  |                              |    | Fail           |   | Pass                                                                                   |  |  |  |
|                              |   |                                                                                                                                       |  |                              |    |                |   |                                                                                        |  |  |  |
| Signed:                      |   |                                                                                                                                       |  |                              |    | Date:          |   | End Time:                                                                              |  |  |  |



## Appendix E

### Assessor interviews

**Q2. Did you find the assessment manual useful? Do you have any suggestions for ways the assessment manual could be better?**

#### **General suggestions:**

- There needs to be parameters around the questions, only being able to give a pass/fail only half answers the question.
- Perhaps the layout could be different – different headings, headings that coincide with the layout of the checklist. Headings that work with the layout of the house.
- Great if it was digitised or an app – hover over words for explanations. Have diagrams with risk/definitions to explain to landlord/tenant (need a digital version to access the links there and then).
- Improvements would be to add a glossary of terms and more visual elements/diagrams.
- More detail on security stays.

#### **More detailed suggestions:**

- Item 16.2: Says secondary glazing is 0.3, when the building code is 0.26 – need uniformity.
- Material for curtains – thermal backing doesn't actually add to thermal performance, I prefer a lining.
- Ceiling insulation, to this description add "or labelled with relevant R-value"
- Item 3: Gaps or missing segments of insulations, add "not including downlights" when we referring to the gaps, as those gaps need to be there.
- Entering the roof space – need to clarify the guideline "only if can be done safely".
- Item 20: Underfloor insulation. Generally not 90mm. Add "or labelled to recognise R-value"
- Item 21: Underground vapour. Add to 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet point: "If timber piled house, advise rather than fail"
- Item 23: Delete exterior paint and finishes, as this is not a health concern.
- Clarify egress. In many cases there is only one egress. Change: "If there are two exits, they must both be clear".
- There were some areas where things weren't as clear as they could be. So that if two people read the same thing, they would interpret it differently. For example:
- Lighting – what is "adequate"? What is "safe" (wire)?
- Powerpoint in bathroom – distance from sink.
- There needs to be more clarification on specific points of contention. For example:
- External areas of home damage, what is a fail/pass
- Lighting – unless there is a bulb in the fitting we can't test it, assessors would need to take bulbs with them (all types) and a step-stool just to test.
- Heating – electric specifications are easy to see. Wood burner = how many kilowatts? Is it big enough for the space required to heat = no way to know.
- Oven switches – the casings of many were fractured, however this is not a safety concern as there is no exposed wire. This is a grey area. The NZ Building Code links didn't qualify this.

- Hot water temperature – the tempering valve is no way to ascertain what the temperature ACTUALLY is at the tap.
- Is a cracked window a fail, or does it actually have to be broken?
- Mould is contentious. If the landlord refurbishes well, provides ventilation etc but the tenants refuse to open the curtains or windows – where does the burden fall?
- Do lounges and bedrooms have to have a door? Why?
- Methods of egress e.g. block of flats – usually only have one door.
- “Adequate food preparation and storage” – how much is enough?
- “visibly safe” power outlets – what does this mean?
- Window stays – they don’t need to be on every window.

**Q6. Is there anything else that you think the WOF should assess? (If yes) Why should these things be included?**

#### **General suggestions**

- Tripping hazards on paths.
- Corrugated iron fences, some only 4ft high – hazardous to fall on.
- There used to be a requirement for an earth wire (electrics). This is not in the safety WOF – should it be?
- Laundry: Sometimes the electric cord to the washing machine needs to be draped over the sink. Not safe!
- Internal deadbolts on doors a safety issue. If tenants need to exit house in a hurry (fire), and the keys are not in the lock. Should be a turnable lock on the inside.
- Ovens up against walls with no heat shields and not fire-retardant gib.
- Some houses do not have two doors between the toilet and the kitchen.
- Out-buildings are not on the WOF – they should be. For Health & Safety they need to be lockable (poisons etc).
- Property – pooling water outside the home over 6 inches deep – could freeze and be a slip hazard, although drowning risk for kids.
- If a woodburner is the heating source the landlord needs to provide an appropriate area to keep the wood.
- The quality of the water delivery, e.g. mixed pressure systems – 6 litres or less per minute = poor water pressure.
- Needs to be mandatory extraction fan in bathrooms, with a specification attached e.g. more than 125mm.
- Window condition. When the putty is cracked = moisture ingress = mould/moisture, and then it gets into the wall cavity.
- Presence of vermin – assessors to look in cupboards for droppings, cockroaches as these are a health hazard.
- Liquefaction – specific to Christchurch, but other areas may have items specific to their geography.
- House cladding e.g. leaky homes, this lends itself to mould growth.
- Foundation piles – could be a quick observational check to see they are ok ie. not on a lean or unconnected.
- Rodents and pests.

#### **Grading system**

- It should be a grading system. Stage one should be simple health and safety, stage two would be home sustainability, energy efficiency and water efficiency.

### **Mould**

- We need to look at the CAUSE of the mould. Rather than a house problem it could be a tenant problem, for example they are not opening the window or not cleaning.

**Q7. Please tell me about any times that you had trouble deciding if an item should pass or fail. (If yes) Do you have any suggestions for how to overcome this?**

### **Curtains**

- If the tenant has provided the curtains is this a fail? i.e. interpretation of manual – need more specifics.
- Many had only cheap blinds. One only had a sheet draped over it. Does ANY window covering count?
- Curtains – need more detail, e.g. “touches the window sill or the floor”

### **General**

- One tenant had put nails in the wall to hang up cloths – potential safety issue, but who takes responsibility for this – landlord or tenant?
- Lighting in the bedrooms
- The exterior cladding – if there are cracks in the weatherboards, but they are only minor, the house shouldn't have to fail. “How bad does it have to be?”
- “Two effective methods of egress” – not all dwellings have this. In an apartment is a balcony an egress.

### **Handrails**

- Handrails and balustrades – built to Code when constructed, but do they need to be at current Building Code standards? For example entire apartment block has horizontal railings on their balconies – to fail this is thousands of dollars!
- Outside balustrades – the perception of height, and also where you draw the line – if it's attached to the house, if it's in the garden...

### **Heating**

- Some things were difficult to interpret – e.g. heating. It is easy with a heatpump as we can see the k/w. But an open fire – how many k/w? Also, the council has moved away from providing a fixed source of heat (like a heat pump) and are just supplying a plug in heater. This is totally fine in a 40 sq m house.
- Unless house had a heat pump, they all failed. An open fire is not an adequate heat source. Tenants don't tend to use woodburners.
- It should be OK to have a plug-in heater, this should be a 'pass'.

### **Hot water**

- Hot water temperature if it's not out by much, e.g. if it is 49 degrees it seems petty to fail it.
- Problem with testing water – it works 90% of the time, but sometimes the cylinder can be set to 70 degrees, but has a tempering valve. Also, the TYPE of water heating should be noted on the form.

### **Insulation**

- Problem with some houses having no underfloor access. If they are sitting on small piles and we just can't see.
- Insulation – many failed because of downlights - the government requirements are different to WOF requirements. But I don't think that actually insulation IS a fire risk.

### **Mould**

- "Surfaces clear of mould" = element of discretion. It says the size of an A4 piece of paper, but this seems arbitrary and it doesn't say if it is toxic mould or not. More art than science! If mould is toxic it should be referred to a pest company.

### **Power and power-points**

- Bathroom power-points.
- What if the power is off and we can't test the electric stuff?
- Power-points in bathrooms not labelled at RCD and close to splash zones. Link for the Building Code was ambiguous.
- Thermoplastic coated wiring – hard to find in ceiling. An easier way to test this e.g. power-boards. Some houses had a mix.
- Wiring can be a grey area – older cabling in attic and sometimes it is hard to tell if it is still operational.
- Lights – can't test when power not on.

### **Security stays**

- The height for secure stays was 1.5 metres inside, but sometimes this meant only a 1 metre fall on the outside. Incongruous. All houses were failing the window stays!
- Window stays – if window higher than 1m = fail. Over the top.
- Window stays – there were some windows that were dangerous but didn't need window stays according to the WOF, and others that the WOF specified they needed them but there was actually no danger.

### **Smoke alarms**

- Fire alarms – landlord kept replacing the batteries, tenants keep taking them out.
- When a smoke alarm was slightly more than 3m away.

### **Ventilation**

- Ventilation in the kitchen/bathroom – need more detail e.g. is this an effective means of ventilation? Does the tenant use the window? Can the tenant open the window?
- Bathroom – when a window was within 2 m of a shower, but not able to be opened

## Landlord interviews

Key reasons for landlord opposition to particular items were when items were not relevant to the current tenants in the house, or where the item was considered to be the tenant's responsibility.

Landlords opposed the inclusion of window stays in the WOF because:

- Tenant had removed window stay
- The window was too high to be unsafe for children
- Current tenants do not have children
- Stays are a matter of personal taste
- Should be a recommendation rather than a requirement
- Children's safety is parent's responsibility
- There are more important issues

Landlords opposed the inclusion of balustrades in the WOF because:

- Difficulty in moving furniture if installed
- Tenants did not have children
- In some buildings, units are on separate titles but stairs are accessible from one unit: that landlord should not be responsible for safety

Landlords opposed the inclusion of smoke alarms in the WOF because:

- House failed because of absence of smoke alarm outside a room which was used as an office, not a bedroom
- 3m from the bedroom may be in the kitchen, in which case it would be removed
- Smoke alarms were the tenants' responsibility
- Tenants remove batteries

Landlords opposed the inclusion of mould in the WOF because:

- Mould is the tenant's responsibility - better would be "mould indicating a leak"

Landlords opposed the inclusion of curtains in the WOF because:

- They are the tenants' responsibility

Landlords opposed the inclusion of ventilation items in the WOF because:

- The room in question was well ventilated by a window
- Ventilation to the outside can't be installed in a concrete apartment building
- Ventilation not necessary in laundry without dryer

Landlords opposed the inclusion of fixed heating in the WOF because:

- House had adequate heating that is not fixed
- Tenants do not want fixed heating
- Tenants had removed fixed heating
- Tenants might not use fixed heating if it were there

Landlords opposed the inclusion of lighting in the WOF because:

- Bulbs are tenant's responsibility

Landlords opposed the inclusion of water temperature in the WOF because:

- Some tenants want the temperature hotter than the recommendation
- The temperature varies depending on the time of day

- The temperature can vary in different places in the house

Landlords opposed the inclusion of egress in the WOF because:

- Some apartments not built with two exits

Landlords opposed the inclusion of aspects of the insulation item in the WOF because:

- Should not be all or nothing – landlords should be commended for what insulation they do have, even if it is not up to standard
- Too strict: if insulation was up to standard when installed, it should pass

Landlords opposed the inclusion of a ground dampness in the WOF because:

- Subjective and season-dependent

Additional comments by landlords were:

- Landlords should receive a copy of the WOF checklist prior to the inspection.
- The criteria around the distance from window to bed is not logical for certain houses – for example, an open-plan bedsit.
- The criteria is too black and white (2). For example, some insulation is better than no insulation, and new carpet is better than threadbare carpet.
- A grading system would be superior.
- Various items are a result of the house design and cannot be remedied.
- The WOF should be divided in two: one of items which are pass/fail, and one that are recommended, or that only need to be fixed within a certain timeframe.
- The WOF should differentiate between recommended items, and items that are required by law.
- The WOF is inconsistent: some items are very minimal (i.e. stove element), and some very specific (i.e. positioning of smoke alarm).
- The WOF should be able to attribute fails to tenant behavior or to building functioning.

## **17. Please rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, your satisfaction with the assessor.**

Negative feedback was relayed from 9 landlords:

- Lack of thoroughness. For example:
  - Assessor assumed that since the underfloor insulation was installed under a scheme, it would not have been installed without ceiling insulation. But he did not check ceiling insulation.
  - Assessor said he could not access the ceiling to check the insulation, but could have moved fridge in front of door to attic to do so easily.
  - Assessor questioned whether bathroom was ventilated to outside, but did not go into roof to check.
  - Assessor only checked water temperature in one place, but there are two hot water cylinders.
- Lack of knowledge. For example:
  - Assessor did not know whether sheeting on electric cable was up to standard.
- Lack of professionalism. For example:
  - Assessor talked too much to tenants. This was invasive and annoying.

- Assessor did not have ID card.
  - Assessor dressed and acted casually.
- Lack of rigour. For example:
  - Assessor unable to explain rationale behind some of the items
  - Balustrades were marked as pass only after landlord debated issue with assessor.
  - Assessor decided a wall had insulation, but landlord was not convinced.
  - Assessor could not check ceiling has insulation so failed it on the tenant's word that the house was cold.
- Discrepancies between what the assessor said during the assessment and what showed up on the final report. For example:
  - Landlord was told bathroom should be ventilated, but noted on report that a nearby window helps with ventilation. Landlord does not know if this is a pass or fail.
  - Assessor commented on lack of hot water cylinder wrap, but this does not show up on report. Landlord does not understand if this is part of the WOF or not.

## **Appendix F**