

# STATE AND RENTAL HOUSING POLICY

## OUR VISION

Labour recognises that accommodation costs can be a major burden for many households and that the best way we can assist is as a fair and active landlord, providing affordable rents and liveable homes for those the market would leave behind.

Adequate housing is fundamental to the health and well being of families and communities. It's about people's homes and it is about building communities. For this reason all New Zealanders must have access to quality, affordable housing. Where the market does not adequately provide, Labour will work in partnership with community organisations, local government, iwi and other agencies to improve the delivery of social housing for low and modest income families in all areas of the country.

## STATE HOUSING AND INCOME-RELATED RENTS

Labour is committed to ensuring that those on low income or modest incomes or with special housing needs receive the help they need to find affordable, good quality housing.

### Labour has:

- Restored income-related rents for state housing so that qualifying low-income tenants pay no more than 25 per cent of their income in rent. More than 57,000 families (representing about 171,000 people) are benefiting. The average household in a state house is \$35.00 per week better off. As a result, turnover in state houses has nearly halved, contributing to greater stability for families and communities. About 90 per cent of all state tenants now pay an income related rent.
- Stopped the bulk state house sale programme of the previous government and increased the stock. There are now 5,700 more state houses than there were when the Labour led government took office. Under National about 13,000 houses were sold and they had plans to sell another 19,200.
- Purchased the Auckland City Council housing stock of 1,666 homes to ensure those homes remained in social housing at a cost of \$83 million. A further \$75 million is being spent over five years on their upgrading and redevelopment.
- Set out a comprehensive programme of action in the New Zealand Housing Strategy under which we will take steps to further improve housing quality and the capacity and capability of the housing sector, and ensure that there is an appropriate environment that supports and encourages the private rental market.
- Improved thousands of state houses through intensive maintenance and modernisation programmes. An energy efficiency programme to improve insulation of state houses has also begun. Since 2001, \$4 million a year has been

invested to improve the insulation of 2,500 state houses each year. More than 5,400 homes have now been retrofitted.

- Tackled substandard housing in rural Northland, East Cape and Bay of Plenty, in collaboration with local iwi, with \$33.5 million of assistance.
- Changed the focus of Housing New Zealand from profit to people, to reflect the government's social housing objectives. By creating a 'one stop shop' for those with housing needs, we are ensuring those most in need get greater access to housing.
- Tackled meningococcal meningitis and other infectious diseases spread in overcrowded living conditions through the Healthy Housing project which improves living conditions by building new houses, extending existing homes to accommodate large families and modifying houses to improve ventilation and insulation.

**Labour will:**

- Continue to charge low-income state tenants no more than 25% of their income in rent.
- Invest in a significant but achievable building programme to expand the state housing stock and reduce waiting times. We have already provided an additional 5,700 state houses since 1999, and committed funding for an additional 3,288 over the next four years. Labour commits to expanding these numbers even further in the third term. Our top priority will be building in Auckland, where waiting lists are most severe.
- Continue to work with local government to develop partnerships in housing provision and also encourage retention of local authority-owned housing stock.
- Continue the major programmes of modernisation, energy efficiency, community renewal and healthy housing that better match state houses to today's needs and thereby improving the quality of life and health outcomes for many thousands of New Zealanders.
- Implement community renewal programmes in areas with a high state housing concentration.
- Maintain the Rural Housing Programme that is operating as a whole of government programme to address acute housing need in rural communities.

**COMMUNITY HOUSING**

Labour is also committed to helping community groups find the right home in which to provide their services.

Labour has:

- Provided community groups with rent relief of nearly \$4.5 million a year and provided 449 additional community houses. These houses are used by groups helping some of the most vulnerable members of our community - including women and children seeking refuge, people with physical or intellectual disabilities, and those with a mental illness.
- Introduced and extended the successful Housing Innovation scheme to allow community groups and organisations as well as local government to provide more social housing for people with a diverse range of needs.

**Labour will:**

- Expand community housing provided by HNZC by providing an additional \$40 million over three years to fund at least another 100 homes to meet the needs of people with mental health issues, intellectual or physical disabilities, women seeking refuge, youth at risk and people needing emergency housing.
- Expand the grants and low interest loans available through the Housing Innovation Fund, and make sure it is easy to use, with a focus on providing rental housing and home ownership opportunities.

**SUPPORTING THOSE IN PRIVATE ACCOMMODATION**

Labour recognises that modest income households in private accommodation also need assistance.

Labour has:

- Continued to provide the Accommodation Supplement to those in private accommodation. This year approximately \$814 million will be spent on the Accommodation Supplement to assist low-income private sector tenants, boarders and those who require mortgage assistance.

**Labour will:**

- Maintain the Accommodation Supplement, as enhanced through the Working for Families package, to help with the housing costs of those renting in the private sector.
- Complete the review of the Residential Tenancies Act to ensure it provides a good balance between the needs of tenants for a decent home and the needs of landlords to manage their rental properties effectively.
- Complete and review of the Unit Titles Act to modernise this legislation and better protect the interests of all stakeholders in medium and high density housing.
- Ensure that the rentals paid by organisations that rent these properties are set on a sustainable and affordable basis