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Media Release

Major new survey reveals New Zealanders' views on the state of their homes and policy solutions

More than a quarter of the nation's homes could be making their occupants ill.

This is revealed in a new Survey of New Zealand Housing, released today.

The survey accompanies the release of a major research project report on New Zealand homes and how to improve their performance.

The accompanying survey of 3526 New Zealanders nationwide, conducted in October and November this year, reveals poorly insulated and inefficient homes are causing widespread suffering.

26% report their homes have made someone living in them sick. That means more than 410,000 of New Zealand's 1.6 million homes may be causing illness.

Ten per cent say they're warmer at work or where they study than at home (and 5% are not warm or comfortable at either). Only 29% rank their homes as very warm and comfortable, while 59% say their homes are warm but could be warmer and more comfortable.

The survey confirms an earlier one showing 16% of homes have no insulation at all, 71% have uninsulated walls, 64% no insulation under floors and only 29% of ceilings have been fully insulated.

People talk of living in the lounge during winter to avoid mouldy and damp bedrooms; families talk of constant asthma and respiratory infections they put down to cold, damp and mouldy homes. Some say their poorly performing homes have contributed to deaths.

New Zealanders report their children are particularly suffering. Those who have moved into improved homes report major health improvements in addition to lower power and other bills.

People aged 25 to 34 years most report their homes causing illness (35%), followed by those aged 35-44 years (34%). By household type, those suffering most are those with a single parent and three or more children (61%).

By local government area, Opotiki district has the highest number reporting home-caused illness (77%), followed by Otorohanga (76%), Waitomo (63%) and Queenstown lakes (59%). (Note these results are based on small samples sizes and are not as reliable as those based on the larger national sample).

The survey was conducted by ShapeNZ for the New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development. Respondents were weighted by age, gender, personal income, employment status, ethnicity and party vote 2005 to provide a representative population sample. The maximum margin of error on the national sample is + or - 1.7%.

The survey finds strong support for Business Council research project policy proposals to improve the performance of homes nationwide.

These include:

- a new mandatory performance rating being required for homes being sold in New Zealand (58% support the idea, 13% oppose)
- mandatory performance ratings for rental properties (62% support)
- Government rental assistance being paid only to tenants in dwellings with an adequate
Introducing “green tape” solutions, to reduce time and costs involved in getting innovative sustainable home designs consented by local councils, is supported by 73%, while only 4% oppose
- Government and building sector jointly developing a plan to improve existing and new houses (80% support)
- Government funding market research to find what solutions consumers want, as a way of accelerating the uptake of greener home solutions (80% support).
- households should pay directly for the actual amount of water they use and waste water they discharge, rather than through general rates (56% support), to provide a benefit for those making water efficiency improvements.

Voters from almost all parties represented in Parliament back the proposed policies. Act supporters back the proposed mandatory performance rating system if a payment is made to landlords who upgrade rental properties to meet a required standard.

Other findings include:

- Between 76% and 95% of people who have rented or bought a home during the past two years did not check insulation, hot water cylinders, heaters and other water and energy efficiency appliances (some paying dearly for the oversight later)
- 60% say their homes could be warmer and more comfortable
- 83% know their water heating could be more efficient
- 69% can't afford to improve their home's performance
- Of home owners, half don't feel informed on options to improve their homes' performance, and
- 93% would welcome expert advice on the best solution to improve their homes if it were available

The “*Better Performing Homes for New Zealanders*” research report and associated “*2008 New Zealand Housing Survey*” are available at www.nzbcscd.org.nz.

Ends

For media assistance, please contact:

Peter Neilson: 021 395 891, Email: peter.neilson@nzbcscd.org.nz

Graeme Colman: 021 325 377, 09 624 4125 (home), Email: graeme.colman@nzbcscd.org.nz

The Business Council believes sustainable businesses are profitable, contribute to social progress and ecological balance – and protect New Zealand's quality of life. The Business Council's 71 members jointly employ more than 88,000 people in managing resources, manufacturing, retailing and the service sector. Members contribute annual sales of \$59 billion to the economy, equivalent to 43% of GDP. The Business Council runs a national online survey panel, ShapeNZ, to allow public input on major issues. The panel has more than 14,000 members, is built from purchased lists and is representative of the population as a whole, compared with the 2006 census. ShapeNZ members register and provide demographic and previous party vote information to ensure results can be accurately weighted to reflect the New Zealand population. A report is available [here](#) on ShapeNZ methodology. Registration is also available at www.shapenz.org.nz.