

HELPING HAND TO MAKE HOMES HEALTHIER

Around a hundred homes in Nelson are warmer, drier, healthier and a lot cheaper to heat thanks to the Warmer Healthier Homes Nelson Tasman project.

JODIE'S STORY

Mother of four, Jodie Colvin had no idea insulating her house would make such a difference to her family's life. She says winter was always a very stressful time for her as she struggled to keep her children, aged five, seven and ten-month old twins, warm in their home.

"Every winter my five year old daughter would become unwell and would need medication for a respiratory illness," says Jodie. "Our house was so cold, we used to feel a breeze around our feet and the condensation used to run down the windows in rivers."

When the heating went off at night Jodie says the temperature used to drop dramatically and the house became icy cold again.

Since her doctor referred her family to the Warmer Healthier Homes project and their 1950s house

was fully insulated, Jodie says she can't believe the difference it has made to their lives.

"The installers put insulation under the floor and re-laid it in the ceiling and fixed all the gaps up," she says. "I would never have believed it would make this much difference—the condensation has reduced dramatically and my daughter has had no recurrence of her illness this winter—it's amazing."

The money the family spends on heating, Jodie says is now actually heating their house and staying around for a lot longer: "There are still more things we can do, but we are so glad to have had this opportunity."

The Healthy Homes Nelson Tasman project is a partnership between NMDHB, Nelson Bays Primary Health, Canterbury Community Trust, Nelson Tasman Housing Trust, Absolute Energy, and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority.

This project began in 2014 and enables low-income families and those with high health risks to have their home retrofitted with insulation and draught-proof materials at no cost to the householders.

Alan Bywater from NMDHB's Public Health Service says people with respiratory conditions or other illnesses affected by a cold, damp home are referred to the project by clinicians.

"We have limited resources so we want to make sure they go where they will have the most impact," he says, "and often the people with higher health needs aren't the people who put their hand up for help—so an invitation from a clinician can literally change their lives."

He says the project is going well but the job's far from done and there are 'potentially thousands more homes to upgrade yet'.

People at risk from illness linked to cold, damp housing can be referred to the Warmer Healthier Homes project by their doctor. All referrals are forwarded through the Public Health Service. Once eligibility is confirmed with the tenant or homeowner, the referral is passed on to the Nelson Tasman Housing Trust, which liaises with Absolute Energy who undertakes the insulation.

Nearly 100 homes have been retrofitted and the project is on track to meet the target of 150, or around 500 warmer people. Stage two is underway.

