

A message from your Property Manager

November 2019



Healthy Homes Compliance - Pt1

So what are the issues you might face complying with the HHL? We have broken this into two parts as Heating is so big. Accompanying this update is the latest Tenancy Service HH guides.

Some companies are already charging \$150-\$400 for a HH compliance report, and often they are using this to get some new business so it can end up very expensive. We include compliance in our service to you, as we are looking to keep compliance as inexpensive as possible for our customers.

Insulation

Insulation Top-ups: Essentially the Govt has moved us from the 2000 standard to 2008 standard. If you installed new insulation to meet the 2016 insulation requirements you are going to be fine. If you have a 2000 to 2008 home or prior to 2016 had retrofitted insulation you may well need to top-up. Top-up sounds like a little but in reality is more like a new installation. "If a home has less than 120mm of ceiling insulation, then this must be topped up, or new insulation installed in order to meet the healthy homes minimum R-value requirements, which are consistent with the 2008 building code". So as part of our HH assessment we have to measure 12cm of insulation or have some proof it is over R2.9. If it is thinner in places it would be possible to just cover these spots and meet requirements.

Foil underfloor insulation: If you have foil underfloor insulation it can stay as long as it is in good condition. Once it gets ripped it needs to come out and new underfloor insulation installed. The minimum standard is R1.3 and all underfloor insulation on the market meets this minimum. This is not too expensive, and if a tenant complains to the Tribunal about a rip, it is likely they would just say replace the insulation. Current cost is around \$14 per m² including installation.

True story... one landlord had an exemption from putting in underfloor insulation as he had no access. Upon pressure from the tenants the landlord had a hole knocked through a brick wall in order to get access and then did the underfloor insulation. The tenant then took them to the Tribunal who awarded damages against the landlord for not insulating before July 1st as the making of the hole showed access could in fact be gained.

Internal Garages: The Tribunal has already put out some shonkey decisions about insulating these. In practise this means that if you have a garage or carport space below your house you do need to insulate the ceiling. However, if the ceiling of the garage is already lined, then we think you have a good case for an exception as this would cause damage to the premises in order to insulate, which is one of the accepted exemptions.

Ventilation

Bathroom Fans: Many bathrooms have extractor fans already, and the good news is that existing fans are “grandfathered” in. We will take photos of fans to show they have been there prior to 2019. If you do have to put in a new fan be aware that the standard is a 12cm vent or over 25ls extraction power. The good news is that almost all 10cm fan are over 25ls so you can pick nearly any fan. The bad news is that the most popular and hard wearing fan is Manrose and it is 23ls. So do not put a 10cm Manrose in! Fans are \$50-\$150 including an external covering and installation should cost around \$250-300 as an electrician needs to do the connection. You may also have to pay for repainting if holes in the wall were needed to bring power to the fan.

Many new homes have combined ceiling/fan units which will normally comply. But, in some cases the fans simply vent into the ceiling which is expressly forbidden. In this case we need a builder or handyman to run a vent to the outside of the building. We have to confirm in our records where the internal fans vents to. Costs will vary depending on the distance required, but the materials are cheap.



Not vented so needs to be replaced

Kitchen Extractor Fans: Again, many kitchens already have range-hoods and as long as they vent outside they are “grandfathered” in. However many landlords installed the cheap \$100 internal range-hoods which do not comply as they don't vent outside, and these must be replaced. A new rental quality range-hood costs about \$150-\$300 (but you can spend much more), and all 15cm vent models (which is the standard) will comply. Even if you need to have a 10cm hole all range-hoods will have more than the 50ls power required. If there is an existing wall plug then this is a fairly simple builder task, costing around \$250-\$450 for installation.



No much room here

If there is no existing range-hood then an electrician will be required so this will cost a bit more on top of the builders costs. We are trying to train up some electricians to do the whole installation job, as this should save some travel time costs. In many cases the reason there is no existing extractor is that the stove is next to a window or internally stationed where there is no external wall nearby. We have seen some cases where landlords have gone to rather expensive and impractical lengths to install a new range-hood. But.... the

legislation only requires an 15cm extractor fan in the room. If the kitchen didn't need a range-hood before, then we can just install an extractor fan on any external wall of the room to comply. It doesn't have to be used or be practical, it just have to be in the room! The cost would then be about the same as for installing a new bathroom extractor.



An expensive & odd looking result

Moisture Ingress - Drafts & Drainage

Moisture Barriers: If your house has a “sub-floor space” (which means you can get under the house) you need to put polythene over the ground. It gets pinned down, and taped up to piles, and the edge of the house. The standard cost is \$8m2+GST, and its not particularly difficult so you can do this yourself if you wish.

Drafts: More for older houses, this just means that drafts should be blocked which is something all landlords and PM's would do anyway, but also that fireplaces need to be sealed off.

Drainage: Drains need to connect to drainage! This comes about from one media story (which was pretty bad) about a landlord who would not fix a leak under his house. We don't know of any landlord who would not fix a leaky storm or grey water pipe. As this is a standard thing to take care of it is not something you need to think about too much.



Moisture barrier & underfloor done

Record Keeping

See the attached Tenancy Services compliance list for what type of records are required. The investigation unit of MBIE is already doing fishing expeditions asking landlords for proof of insulation compliance. So far they don't appear to know much about which rules apply. We will be keeping compliance records, but we need receipts & photos for work you arrange for in order to complete our certification of compliance. Or we will both get fined... sigh.