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Dear Minister,

We, the undersigned, welcome your government's support for achieving zero energy (and carbon) ready buildings and the development of a national framework to implement mandatory energy efficiency standards in rental homes.

Everyone should have a healthy home. But right now, property investors and rental housing providers are not required to ensure that rental homes can affordably be kept at liveable temperatures year-round - at the peak of summer or in the depths of winter.

And this is making people sick.

That is why we are calling for immediate action by your government – we ask that you commit in 2021 to a process making it mandatory for all rental properties to meet basic minimum energy efficiency standards by 2025.

This would mean decent, liveable homes for the one in three people of Australia who rent – more than seven million people.

- People like Lisa, who lives in a home with no insulation in the walls or ceiling. A home that is so cold in winter, Lisa uses fourteen wool blankets, two doonas, a wool underlay, and a hot water bottle just to get a decent night's rest.
- Or Leanne, who has had housemates leave her sharehouse because they had to run two heaters in the bedroom at night to stay warm, and ended up footing an enormous energy bill.
- Or Natalie, a mum of two who lives with her kids in a cold, dark, and damp house that she can't keep warm in winter. As a result, damp fungus grows in stringy lengths from her lounge room ceiling.

Everyone should have a healthy home

These cases show the problems our friends, family and neighbours face when rental properties fail to meet decent standards. They demonstrate how difficult it is for people who rent to affordably support their health in a low-quality rental home.

The benefits of introducing minimum energy efficiency standards for rental properties have been well-documented overseas and will be seen and felt across the board:

- **Better public health.** Energy-efficiency interventions lead to improved health outcomes such as fewer days off work and school, fewer visits to doctors, and fewer hospitalisations due to respiratory conditions.[1] Conversely, the consequences of ongoing inaction on introducing minimum standards are disturbing: a 2015 study published in *The Lancet* examined the contribution of cold or hot temperatures to mortality, looking at thirteen countries and 27 years of data. It found that 6.5% of deaths in Australia are attributable to cold – more than the rate found in a cold-climate country like Sweden.[2]
- **Job creation and economic stimulus.** Energy efficiency standards would create jobs directly, while reduced consumer bills would increase disposable income and discretionary spending, leading to further economic benefits. Over 120,000 FTE job-years of employment could be created by implement energy efficiency measures.[3] These jobs would be concentrated in small to medium local businesses covering trades, services and manufacturing. The *Report for achieving low energy existing homes* found a net present value of \$3.4 billion for implementing all proposed policies (including energy efficiency standards) in all jurisdictions by 2025.[4]
- **Increased climate resilience and reduced emissions.** Efficiency standards mean that Australians can keep warm or cool while using less energy – increasing the climate resilience of housing stock while reducing greenhouse pollution. Homes contribute more than 11 percent of Australia's greenhouse emissions.[5] *The Report for achieving low energy existing homes* found that implementing all policies by 2025 in all jurisdictions would achieve abatement of 40.3 MtCO₂-e. In many cases this abatement is cost-negative.

The immediate and ongoing benefits of making rental homes healthy are immense. As Australia looks towards a recovery from COVID-19, minimum energy efficiency standards would create jobs and economic opportunities, cut pollution and power bills, and improve the lives and health of people who rent their homes.

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These are matters your government has already agreed to in principle, as part of the *Trajectory for Low Energy Buildings – Existing Buildings*. We now seek a firm commitment to the implementation of minimum energy efficiency standards for rentals, and for your government to establish a clear timeline of milestones to achieve that implementation by the end of 2025.

We look forward to your earliest response.

[1] Howden-Chapman P, et al. Effect of insulating existing houses on health inequality: cluster randomised study in the community. *BMJ* 334(7591):460 (2007); doi: 10.1136/bmj.39070.573032.80

[2] A. Gasparrini et al., 2015, “Mortality risk attributable to high and low ambient temperature: a multi-country observational study”, *Lancet*, vol. 386 p. 369

[3] Green Energy Markets 2019, Energy Efficiency Employment in Australia, commissioned by Energy Efficiency Council (EEC) and Energy Savings Industry Association (ESIA)

[4] Report for Achieving Low Energy Existing Homes, Commonwealth of Australia 2019.

[5] Department of Environment and Energy, Australian National Greenhouse Accounts: National Inventory by Economic Sector, February 2018.

Signatory organisations



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