**News:** 'He hasn't been talking to the industry' - Builders slam insulation rollback [RNZ’s](https://substack.com/redirect/cb775a18-8866-4489-9d8e-f894f4d6c6eb?j=eyJ1IjoiMThscnNhIn0._NaPL5FtJnbRGpAjYEeWfT8fS9l1dUTWyZIG-Vq8ETg) **Samantha Gee**

Certified Builders chief executive Malcolm Fleming said the organisation was surprised to hear the government was considering a roll-back of the standards and it did not support such a move, given the changes had made New Zealand's homes more liveable and sustainable.

Building costs in New Zealand were too high, which stifled demand, so the industry understood the drive to reduce them, he said.

But New Zealand's insulation regulations remained below international standards and Fleming said the industry had been supportive of changes to improve them.

Fleming said talking to some of the organisation's 2350 members, it appeared the H1 standard added between $10,000 to $20,000 in costs for a standard home. Costs of $40,000 to $50,000 were more likely on a home that was worth $2 to $3 million, he said.

"I'd be very interested to know who the minister has been talking to, because he hasn't been talking to the industry, he may have spoken to players within the industry but in terms of trade associations that represent the broader industry, they are not the people who've been providing him the figures that have been quoted.

"Given the savings in heating costs of about 40 percent going forward, it is a relatively small up front investment to be made for significant long term gain."

Certified Builders met with Building and Construction Minister Chris Penk last month to discuss how changes to the standards could reduce building costs without reversing the most effective components.

Fleming said that could include changes to wall and ceiling insulation requirements, window flashings and materials and slab perimeter insulation.

Overheating issues could occur because of insulation, if houses were not designed to have adequate cross ventilation or windows were north facing and had a lack of shading, issues that were fixable through design work, he said.

There had also been significant investment by the government and the industry to ensure builders were prepared for the new standards when they were introduced last May, Fleming said.

Joinery manufacturers had also invested heavily in new plant and machinery to produce thermally efficient windows and thermally broken window frames that were critical to meet the H1 specification.

"They did that because the demand was guaranteed as it was regulated... and if there was a u-turn on H1, demand would evaporate which sends a sorry signal to the business community who've ramped up on the basis of having to do so."

**Interview**: Health expert slams Govt's signalled shift on insulation. [1News](https://substack.com/redirect/d3e690e8-b23c-4683-9cf5-a18805713bda?j=eyJ1IjoiMThscnNhIn0._NaPL5FtJnbRGpAjYEeWfT8fS9l1dUTWyZIG-Vq8ETg)

article

Why rolling back housing insulation is a bad idea

Philippa Howden-Chapman & Lucy Telfar-Barnard

The Post

July 19, 2024

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There is ample evidence to support ceiling insulation in modern homes, but not so much to support claims that it causes homes to over-heat, write Philippa

Howden-Chapman and Lucy Telfar-Barnard.

KENT BLECHYNDEN / THE POST

Distinguished Professor Philippa Howden-Chapman and Dr Lucy Telfar-Barnard are from the He Kāinga Oranga/ Housing and Health Research Programme at the

University of Otago, Wellington.

OPINION: On a quixotic quest to further weaken government regulation, the Government is

considering reducing the thickness of insulation required in new homes.

This would mean ignoring the strong research evidence that the benefits of the current insulation standard outweigh its costs.

Aided by good ventilation and sensible design, internal housing insulation has a dual purpose - keeping the indoor environment warmer in winter and cooler

in summer. This under-appreciated dual effect is critical when we consider the reality of accelerating climate change, which means that we will all have

to adapt to increasing extremes of both heat and cold and will rely on our homes to protect us.

Insulation does not heat homes - that comes from solar gains through the windows and radiant heat from the roof. So, despite what some have claimed, overheating

is not driven by insulation.

The current 2023 H1 stronger building code standards were introduced after extensive and exhaustive consultation with builders, community trusts and researchers,

with almost universal support. This was strong, informed support with eyes wide open.

Increasing the thickness of insulation meant that there would have to be changes in the manufacturing of insulation materials and timber framing. There

would be necessary significant change-over costs, but these were considered worthwhile for improving the housing standards.

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Building and Construction Minister Chris Penk has cited anecdotal advice from builders as basis for investigating a rollback of healthy home insulation

standards.

ROBERT KITCHIN / THE POST

However, an anecdotal complaint from one builder in Tauranga to Building and Construction Minister Chris Penk, that these improved standards could cost

an additional “rampant” $40,000 to $50,000 was apparently sufficient evidence for the minister to look at rolling back insulation standards that save an

estimated 40% on home heating.

Such a rollback would take our insulation standards back to about a half or even less the levels required in places we might compare ourselves to, like

Australia, Ireland, or the UK. Insulation required in Tauranga is still less, and underfloor insulation about the same as or less, than in Sydney or Melbourne

- where dark-coloured roofs must have more insulation than light, in recognition of insulation’s role in keeping homes cool on hot days.

When we build homes in New Zealand they tend to stay up for a long time – 90% of our housing stock stays up at least 60 years. The best and cheapest time

to install insulation for the lifetime of that dwelling is when it’s being built.

With insulation saving up to hundreds of dollars per home per year, insulation is an important contribution not only to energy and carbon saving, but to

household budgets and our future prosperity.

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Improved home insulation standards introduced last year were intended to combat New Zealand’s history of cold, damp houses.

SUPPLIED / UNSPLASH

There is a 20-year history of solid research in Aotearoa New Zealand showing that it’s not only energy efficiency that’s improved by insulation, but also

our health. This research informed the World Health Organization’s International Housing and Health Standards, and the previous National Government under

John Key was sufficiently convinced by the rigour of the evidence from randomised controlled studies and accompanying benefit-cost studies, that he continued

the Warm-Up NZ programme begun by the previous Labour-Green government.

The extra home warmth which insulation retains in winter reduces illness, days off school and work, pharmaceutical prescriptions, hospitalisations and

mortality – and even just a top-up to older insulation provides health benefits that make the top-up worthwhile. The health benefits of insulation are

nearly six times greater than the cost of the insulation.

If serious reflection on the merits of existing policy does not lead to sensibly retaining the 2023 H1 standards, there will be adverse and avoidable consequences.

For example, another consideration is that we should take a precautionary approach to improving our homes to protect us from weather extremes, while contributing

to reducing carbon emissions in order to help stabilise the climate.

According to Branz, homes built to a higher standard emit significantly less carbon over their lifetimes.

The most basic function of a home is to provide shelter from the elements. In New Zealand, we’re still working out the best ways to make our homes do that.

One thing we can be sure of, though, is that making them harder and more expensive to heat in winter, by reducing insulation, is not the solution to summer

overheating.

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