

Media release

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Kiwis called to trade in their unhealthy heaters for free



Photo caption: Akram Mohammed swaps out an unflued gas heater for a healthier and safer electric heater.

Images [here](#)

In a bid to make Kiwi homes healthier, The Warehouse has launched a first-of-its-kind ‘Healthy Heater Swap’ – and is inviting anyone using a portable indoor LPG gas heater, to trade it in for an electric option for free.

The ‘Healthy Heater Swap’ is running from 13 June to 3 July in 30 stores across the motu and is part of The Warehouse’s annual [Warmhouse campaign](#) - an initiative which educates Kiwis about how to create a warm, dry and healthy home affordably.

According to a new report commissioned by The Warehouse 61% of Kiwis are living with poor heating and insulation, mould and damp in their homes, and young people^[1] and renters are disproportionately affected by unhealthy housing.

The report also highlights that 42% live with someone who has a respiratory illness, cardiovascular disease, skin infection or asthma.

After being made aware of the damaging respiratory impacts of indoor LPG gas heaters, found in many New Zealand homes, The Warehouse decided it wanted to help tackle the problem, says The Warehouse Group’s Sustainability Lead, David Benattar.

“By encouraging Kiwis to remove unflued gas heaters from their homes and offering a free swap for a more energy efficient and healthier alternative, we’re helping families ensure they have warm and healthier homes this winter.

“Indoor LPG gas heaters emit significant amounts of carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide, pollutants that can trigger asthma and other respiratory conditions. The heaters also release moisture and can be expensive to run, making them unhealthy for Kiwis and the environment, and is the reason why experts are calling for the switch to electric heating,” says Benattar.

“The dangers of indoor LPG gas heaters are relatively unknown to many people, especially the deferential effect they can have on indoor air quality,” says Associate Health Minister Dr Ayesha Verrall.

“It’s great to see The Warehouse taking the proactive steps to do something about this issue. Especially in not just helping educate people around the potential harms that indoor gas heaters can cause, but also offering an exchange for a new, safer electric alternative.”

“This is a great initiative that offers a tangible solution which will help ensure kiwis keep warm, dry and more importantly healthy in their own homes this winter.”

Nevil Pierse, Associate Professor from Otago University says, “I’m delighted The Warehouse is raising awareness about the health implications associated with unflued gas heaters and providing a healthier, more sustainable alternative for families.

“We know there are about 96,570 unflued gas heaters being used in homes across Aotearoa. These heaters have proven health impacts, including on children, who present with a range of respiratory conditions as a result of being exposed the nitrogen dioxide and toxic gases emitted by the heaters. Replacing unflued gas heaters with healthier electric heaters will significantly improve the health of these Kiwi kids and their whanau,” he says

The Healthy Heater Swap will see 1,800 11-fin electric heaters being made available for swapping. The Warehouse is also donating an additional 2,000 heaters to The Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity and Healthy Homes providers to support Kiwis who are most in need.

All indoor LPG gas heaters will be accepted as part of the Swap no matter where they have been purchased. LPG bottles need to be removed. The returned heaters will be recycled through social enterprise All Heart NZ.

Nik Gregg, co-founder of Sustainability Options, an organisation which works with the Ministry of Health's 'Healthy Homes Initiative', says that housing and living conditions are a significant determinant of health, with numerous bodies of research highlighting the association between the two.

Gregg says the Healthy Heater Swap will help raise awareness about the negative impacts of unflued gas heaters and help to influence change.

“Cold temperatures and damp conditions have a direct impact on both respiratory and cardiovascular conditions. For those who are elderly, very young, unwell or in vulnerable health, to not only be comfortable over the winter months, but to avoid time in hospital, a warm and dry home is critical.”

Chris Limmer, Sustaining Tenancies National Lead for The Salvation Army says the funds raised through add a dollar in The Warehouse stores and the provision of heaters will make a huge difference for the whanau it works with.

“Most of the people we work with are at risk of losing their tenancy which is often related to debt, or high rent or increased living costs. For these families, keeping a warm and healthy home can be put down the priority list when compared to keeping their home or providing food. This initiative will

help to relieve some of this pressure. In addition, 79% of our Sustaining Tenancies clients are parents with children so this will also have a direct impact on children's well-being."

Conrad LaPointe, CEO Habitat for Humanity Northern said, "Unflued gas heaters are a ticking time bomb, they present both a significant fire hazard and are slowly but quietly making people sicker every day. We are pleased The Warehouse is addressing this little known but highly impactful issue. This initiative will have positive, long-lasting outcomes for the vulnerable families we support."

The Warehouse has developed an online content portal, called The Warmhouse, to educate Kiwis on affordable and more sustainable ways to make their homes healthier and more energy efficient. The hub features information and advice sourced from Gen Less, an Energy, Efficiency & Conservation Authority (EECA) initiative, as well as a series of animated videos, commissioned by The Warehouse, to bring problems and solutions to life.

The Healthy Heater Swap will be available at 30 The Warehouse stores nationwide.

Kiwis wanting to swap their heater will need to book a time slot via The Warehouse's Warmhouse platform on www.thewarehouse.co.nz/heater-swap-initiative. There will be allocated time slots to head in store over the three-week period, with 20 swaps available per week, per store.

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Notes to editors:

***Key findings from the research**

- 64% of Kiwis are living with one or more of the following: presence of mould, poor or no insulation, gaps in floorboards, walls, windows, no heating in the main living area or bedroom.
 - 74% of under 35s are living with one or more of these issues in their home
- 23% of renters reported the presence of mould in their homes, compared to 12% of homeowners.
- 95% have been impacted by the increase in the cost of living. Of these 71% are having to cut back in order to afford heating this winter (34% from their apparel budget and 29% from their grocery budget).
- 42% of people report cost as a reason for not addressing healthy homes problems.
- 25% of respondents in Wellington reported experiencing mould, as opposed to 15% of the whole population.
- 13% of people in urban areas say their home is neither dry, warm, safe or efficient (24% of renters say this). As opposed to 13% of the whole population, and 8% of homeowners.

- 24% of renters answered “None of the above” when presented the statements “My home is dry,” “My home is warm,” “My home has safety measures in place,” and “My home uses efficient lighting, heating and power,” compared to 8% of homeowners.
- 42% of Kiwis live with someone who has a respiratory illness, cardiovascular disease, asthma, or skin infection. 25% live with someone who has asthma.
- Looking ahead, 87% of people will be balancing working from home and working in the office. 38% plan to work from home as often as possible in the coming months. 49% will juggle working from home and working in the office.

The survey of 1,002 New Zealanders was conducted by PureProfile on behalf of The Warehouse from 16th-20th May 2022.

¹¹ Under 35 years old.