

Retrofit plan aiming to make homes healthier

A MAJOR retrofitting programme worth more than \$500,000 is about to get under way in Gisborne and on the East Coast, in an effort to make homes healthier and more energy efficient.

Under the scheme, residents who have poorly-insulated homes can apply for a subsidised energy-efficiency retrofit of their homes.

The healthy homes package can include a home energy check plus ceiling and under-floor insulation, polythene ground covers, hot water cylinder wraps and pipe lagging, and draft stopping around doors.

It is the first of a number of energy-efficiency objectives targeted by the Tairāwhiti

Development Partnership energy group.

A total of \$504,000 has been allocated to the project, a joint initiative involving Eastland Energy Community Trust, Contact Energy, the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA), Tairāwhiti District Health, and Work and Income New Zealand.

Recent research by the Wellington School of Medicine's housing and health research programme found that people living in insulated homes experienced fewer visits to the doctor, fewer days off work or school, fewer admissions to hospital for asthmatic or respiratory conditions and reduced power bills.

Gisborne Healthy Homes Committee chairman David Smart said the committee was proud to be involved with such a positive initiative and he strongly encouraged people to register their interest.

"If the interest level is high enough, then the scheme can be extended after the first 200-plus homes have been completed," he said.

EECA communities manager Katie Mathieson said the organisation was delighted to be part of a project that would improve health and energy efficiency, as well as making homes warmer and drier.

The scheme would also result in increased employment.

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Simple insulation can make a difference

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Medical officer of health for Tairāwhiti, Bruce Duncan, said about one-third of New Zealand homes were colder than the World Health Organisation recommended healthy average temperature of 18 degrees.

“Evidence suggests that cold and damp homes lead to increases in respiratory illness,” said Mr Duncan.

“Simple insulation measures can make a huge difference to a home’s warmth and energy consumption and the health of its occupants,” he said.

Gisborne District Councillor Brian Wilson said with all of

the improvements installed, people could save up to \$500 a year and enjoy a warm, dry, healthy home.

Contact Energy chief executive Stephen Barrett said the company was proud to support the scheme.

“By improving the insulation and energy efficiency of homes there are real benefits in reduced illness, particularly for those suffering from asthma or respiratory conditions as well as lower energy costs,” he said.

Anyone interested in having their home insulated under the healthy homes scheme should phone the tollfree hotline 0508 WARMUP (0508 927687).

HELPING MAKE HEALTHY HOMES: Project committee members (from left) back, Contact Energy corporate brand manager St John Craner, councillor Brian Wilson, Energy options general manager Jo Hunt, Housing New Zealand regional manager Amos Forrester, economic development officer Phil Wauchop, front, Dr Bruce Duncan, EECA representative Mike Fairfield, Te Runanga o Ngati Porou representative Anne Huriwai and Eastland Community Trust chief executive David Smart sign off the \$500,000 deal.

Picture by Dave Thomas

