

According to the report by Sapere Research Group released on Monday, the NZ Power proposal of the Labour and Green Parties does little to address the issue of fuel poverty. A household in Britain is defined as being in fuel poverty when it needs to spend more than 10% of its income on household energy in order to be adequately warm and it is thought that many households in New Zealand would be in this position.

“This report supports our stand that the focus needs to be on improving insulation and heating in rental accommodation in order to improve the health of children and the elderly,” said Andrew King, Executive Officer of the NZ Property Investors’ Federation (NZPIF). “The recent debate on a warrant of fitness for rental housing, which proposes criteria of 27 points, has taken attention away from this very important basic requirement. However, research by Professor Philippa Howden-Chapman and her colleagues in 2007 clearly proved the effectiveness of increasing home insulation and home heating in order to improve children’s health. In addition a further trial called Warm Homes for Elder New Zealanders, during which participants were given \$500 towards electricity costs, proved that subsidized heating reduced the exacerbation of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. ”

King says “We are aware that some tenants try to save money by not turning on heating and do not always know how to best operate their homes to keep them warm and dry. If tenants act in this way, then even insulated properties will remain cold and damp. We also know that mould will develop in well insulated houses unless these are adequately ventilated.”

Above all private landlords who are members of Property Investors’ Associations affiliated to the NZPIF know that providing safe, comfortable and well maintained properties makes good business sense and tenants stay longer in properties that meet their needs.

“Action is now required to improve those aspects beyond our control, including enabling tenants to purchase the amount of electricity they need,” said King.