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## Dying woman in mouldy home

By MATT CALMAN

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**SICK OF MOUDLY WALLS:** Danielle Koveskali, of Titahi Bay, has to empty the the dehumidifier in her room every seven hours and has to clean black mould from the walls every few weeks.

ROBERT KITCHIN / THE DOMINION POST

A dying woman waiting for a kidney transplant to save her life has developed breathing problems from living in a mouldy state house.

Danielle Koveskali, 21, who has renal failure and needs dialysis treatment to keep

In another Porirua case, the agency has apologised for a nine-month delay installing insulation in a Cannons Creek house, but says it is on target to insulate nearly two-thirds of its housing stock by 2013.

The two cases have focused attention on living conditions in state homes. About \$100 million was stripped from the upgrading and buying of state houses in May's Budget, and the Green Party has called for more investment in state housing to ease the strain on the health system.

Ms Koveskali's mother, Donna, said their house had a heat pump and insulation but was still damp.

They regularly had to wipe black mould from the walls.

"I told Housing [NZ] she's going to die here."

Ms Koveskali said she had developed bronchitis and often woke up struggling to breathe.

Green Party co-leader Russel Norman said it was a "false economy" to cut the funding for improving state houses because tenants in damp houses put unnecessary pressure on the health system.

"They should just get on and do it. It's so small-minded. Meanwhile, these poor people have to live in these environments."

Housing Minister Phil Heatley said \$124.5m was put into the housing stock in February last year because it had been left in a "serious state of disrepair" by the Labour government.

The one-off cash injection was in addition to Housing NZ's baseline funding so there had been no funding cut, he said.



Koveskari family was offered a four-bedroom property with a modern kitchen and carpet in July last year but declined "because the rooms were too small".

Their present property was inspected after complaints about mould and dampness in May.

Mrs Koveskari said the home they were offered did not have enough space to accommodate dialysis equipment.

Cannons Creek woman To'a Finau, 41, said extreme dampness in her state house's bedrooms forced the family of four to sleep in cramped conditions since her son was born 15 months ago.

The dampness had aggravated her heart condition and her 14-year-old daughter's asthma.

"It's not good for a baby."

The family had been promised insulation in September. Housing NZ apologised for the delay after being contacted by The Dominion Post, and said insulation would be installed this week.

Porirua Deputy Mayor Litea Ah Hoi said it should not take the media to get involved to get Housing NZ to act. "I just think it's a big indictment on ... their attitude towards their tenants."

An agency spokesman said 30,000 of the country's 66,000 state houses had been insulated and it was on track to insulate its target of 39,000 houses by 2013.

### HOME SWEET HOVEL

Porirua mother-of-two To'a Finau, is sick of waiting for Housing New Zealand to fix her damp home. Water runs down a bank behind the walls of her downstairs bedrooms.

Last year, Housing New Zealand contractors cut a hole in their wall and dragged piles of mud from the house on tarpaulins. Insulation was supposed to be installed in September.

She, her husband and 15-month-old son have been sleeping in the family's sitting room for more than a year.

When The Dominion Post entered the Warspite Ave home last week, there was a



"This is so horrible. I never know when it's going to be a flood. I don't want any more talk. I just want action," Mrs Finau said.

The house was inspected by a Housing New Zealand manager last week, after The Dominion Post's inquiries.

A spokeswoman apologised for the insulation delay but said the rooms were considered habitable.

"It just seems to be their choice to be living upstairs."

Porirua Deputy Mayor Litea Ah Hoi was appalled when the family said they were told to open windows, let some air in, then buy a heater.

"Conditions like that are just unacceptable these days. We're not living in a Third World country."

### **DAILY STRUGGLE TO BREATHE**

Every morning Danielle Koveskali wakes up in her state house struggling to breathe.

Her body is already weakened by renal failure and the gruelling five-hour sessions of dialysis she needs to keep her alive while she waits for a kidney donor to be found.

Every seven hours the dehumidifier in her room needs to be emptied, and every few weeks she has to clean black mould from the walls of her bedroom with powerful cleaners.

Because of her condition, she feels the cold and is more susceptible to infections. But she says the house is making her sicker.

"They [Housing New Zealand] try to tell me I have too much stuff and that's what's



Her mother, Donna, says the last power bill of \$480 was because they had to run the dehumidifiers almost constantly to soak up the moisture. The bill has put her in debt.

"They don't hear us up all night coughing. They know the whole situation. Danielle is dying [and] they don't care."

Mrs Koveskali's builder, nephew Richard King, said the black mould on the wallpaper was a symptom that mould was growing inside the walls.

"Everyone's got sick in the house and especially Danielle. Mould's no good for anyone."

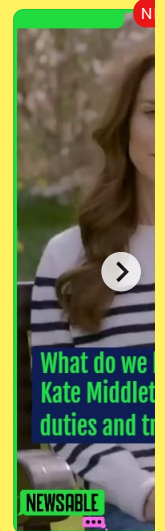
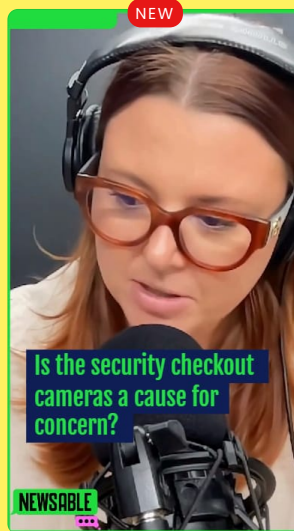
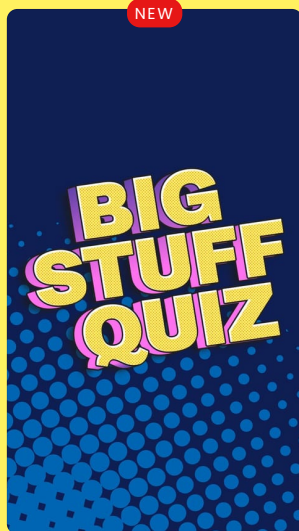
He was hired to do maintenance on Housing New Zealand houses in Porirua about six years ago.

"Everything was done cheaply. It was a matter of not actually solving the problem, just delaying it. If the next tenant didn't moan about it, they don't worry about it."

- The Dominion Post

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