

# \$25m leaky homes bill

## Tauranga among worst affected in the country

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Leaky home owners face paying more than \$25 million to weatherproof their homes.

Figures obtained by the *Bay of Plenty Times* reveal Tauranga City Council has the fifth highest number of leaky homes among 74 district and city councils nationwide, lodged in the Government's Weathertight Homes Resolution Service system.

The Ministry of Building, Innovation and Employment told the *Bay of Plenty Times* it would cost about \$25.2 million to repair 277 leaky homes in the Tauranga City and Western Bay of Plenty districts. These properties have active claims lodged.

Most leaky buildings were built in the 1990s and early 2000s. Some homeowners were only now finding out their home was leaky.

Tauranga barrister and leaky homes specialist Nathan Smith told the *Bay of Plenty Times* many homeowners were no longer eligible for the Government's Financial Assistance



Package, which has a time limit of 10 years. The assistance package can cover up to 50 per cent of a homeowner's repair costs (25 per cent from the Government and 25 per cent from the local council).

Mr Smith, of Legal Disputes and Litigation Ltd, said the biggest issue facing homeowners with leaky homes was that they fell outside the time limit.

"These people are in a really unfair and unjust situation," he said. There were 276 properties with 87 active claims in Tau-

**"These people are in a really unfair and unjust situation."**

Nathan Smith, leaky homes specialist barrister

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ranga to January 31; and 14 properties with 14 claims in the Western Bay district. Auckland City Council has 2531 properties.

Graeme Blissett, owner of Building Surveying Services, said the true number of leaky homes in the Western Bay was higher and government figures represented only about 20 per

cent of cases. Leaky homes expert Michael Sharp, of Holland Beckett Lawyers, which represents parties involved with leaky buildings claims, said anecdotal evidence suggested many homeowners had chosen not to lay a claim and either sold their property or fixed the problem themselves because the claim process was lengthy and expensive.

Mr Sharp said a major development in the leaky building saga was the Spencer on Byron case, in which a claim was allowed against a local council in regard to a leaky commercial building. In the past, claims had only been allowed in regard to residential buildings. The average sum for remedial work in the cases he had worked on was about \$200,000, although one he had recently worked on was about \$700,000.

Greg Nock, of the Home and Building Inspection Team (HABiT) Tauranga, said sometimes there were no visual signs to identify a leaky building. Other times, homeowners were in denial, he said.