

17 November 2023

s9(2)(a)



Thank you for your request of 18 October 2023 to Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities for costs of decontaminating houses from methamphetamine and whether there is still a health risk to future tenants after methamphetamine contamination. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Methamphetamine (meth) use is a growing public health concern in New Zealand, and as the prevalence of meth use increases, so too does the impact on homes and properties.

Like other landlords, Kāinga Ora is faced with the issue of meth contamination in some of our homes. It is important to keep in mind that Kāinga Ora is New Zealand's largest single property owner, with 72,000 properties. The number of properties requiring meth testing and decontamination work, and the cost of this work, is relative to the size of our housing portfolio.

We take the issue of meth contamination in our homes very seriously. We also realise that meth use is, primarily, a health and addiction issue and that it can impact all members of a household, including children.

For that reason, we have adopted a health-based approach to managing meth, which places top priority on ensuring people and whānau are living well in our homes. If our customer is concerned about the health and wellbeing of those in their household, and suspects meth contamination, we will arrange for testing of the property.

When we become aware of suspected meth contamination at a property and have reasonable grounds to believe this to be true, we will follow a strict process to undertake testing, and decontamination if required. This is further explained in the answers below.

Our responses to your specific questions are set out below. Information has been provided by financial year, ending 30 June each year.

1. **How many Kāinga Ora houses/apartments/units have been decontaminated from meth since the beginning of the year?**
 - a. **How does this figure compare to last year?**
 - b. **What about five years ago?**

The number of Kāinga Ora properties decontaminated for meth each financial year is in the table below.

Financial Year	Decontamination
2019-2020	135
2020-2021	64
2021-2022	73
2022-2023	119
2023-2024 (1/07/2023 to 6/11/2023)	56

The lower numbers post the 2019-2020 financial year reflects Kāinga Ora's adoption of the Gluckman Report recommendations at the end of 2018 and our updated meth related policies taking effect. See the response to question 8.

The higher numbers in the 2022-23 financial year reflects the continued growth of meth issues in New Zealand which then affects Kāinga Ora as a landlord.

2. **What has been the cost of decontaminating these houses/apartments/units in 2023?**
 - a. **How does this figure compare to last year?**
 - b. **What about five years ago?**

The cost of testing, decontamination and then reinstatement, for each financial year, is in the table below.

It is important to understand that decontaminating from meth includes sometimes considerable work to reset the home back to a lettable standard, so we have included reinstatement costs in this table. Maintaining a quality home and ensuring it is safe and healthy for current and future customers is a priority, and the reinstatement costs reflect our high standards.

Financial Year	Testing costs	Decontamination costs	Reinstatement Costs	Total Per Year
2019-2020	\$594,474.14	\$898,830.23	\$6,341,332.41	\$7,834,636.78
2020-2021	\$671,862.74	\$864,623.06	\$3,591,146.85	\$5,127,632.65
2021-2022	\$601,566.87	\$725,816.53	\$2,964,984.31	\$4,292,367.71
2022-2023	\$893,552.75	\$1,575,285.44	\$2,190,605.37	\$4,659,443.56
2023-2024 (1/07/2023 to 3/11/2023)	\$513,786.28	\$701,929.96	\$599,317.20	\$1,815,033.44

3. Do you use contractors to carry out the decontamination? If yes, which company? If not, how many people from Kāinga Ora work on decontaminating?

Kāinga Ora uses external decontamination specialists, nationwide, to safely and effectively remove meth from homes. These suppliers are experienced and skilled in meth testing and decontamination and have been independently assessed by occupational hygienists to ensure their products, decontamination processes and final results provide safe, reliable outcomes for our customers.

Our current approved decontamination partners are Hygiene Pro Clean, Extreme Cleaning Solutions, and Fresh Living NZ.

In addition to the decontamination, Kāinga Ora also engages independent, IANZ accredited, testing partners who validate the decontamination results after the work has been completed.

4. What was the budget allocated every year by Kāinga Ora for decontamination?

While budgets allow a working estimate of spend, it's important to keep in mind that the management of meth is responsive, and contamination is removed whenever it is detected above safe levels. In our testing and decontamination decision making, priority will always be given to the health and wellbeing of customers and their families.

Kāinga Ora has prioritised adopting and refining modern treatment processes, to achieve effective decontamination of homes while keeping costs as low as reasonably possible.

The budget allocated to meth testing, decontamination and reinstatement work year by year is per the table below. Budget information prior to financial year 2022 is not available.

Financial Year	Testing Budget (\$ m)	Decontamination Budget (\$ m)	Reinstatement Budget (\$ m)
2022-2023	0.9	1.3	3.3
2023-2024 (current)	1.0	1.4	3.5
2024-2025	1.0	1.5	3.6
2025-2026	1.0	1.5	3.8
2026-2027	1.1	1.6	3.9

5. What percentage of the houses/apartments/units that have been decontaminated in the past had to be decontaminated again in 2023?

Kāinga Ora does not track this information therefore declines this part of your request under section 18(g) of the OIA, which provides that a request may be refused if the information is not held, and there are no reasonable grounds to believe it is held by, or more closely connected with the functions of, another Minister or agency.

6. How many Kāinga Ora houses/apartments/units sat empty in 2023 while a decontamination process was carried out?

- a) How does this figure compare to last year?
 - a. How does this figure compare to last year?
 - b. What about five years ago?

Under Kāinga Ora operating practices, all properties are required to be vacated prior to decontamination, due to the nature and extent of work that is required. As a responsible landlord, our top priority is the health and wellbeing of the people and families living in our

homes, so we will always relocate the household as we work through a thorough the decontamination process. Therefore, the number of properties that sat empty while decontamination was carried out, is the same as the answer supplied for 'How many Kāinga Ora houses/apartments/units have been decontaminated from meth'.

- 7. How many Kāinga Ora houses/apartments/units had to be demolished in 2023 because of excessive meth contamination?**
- a. How does this figure compare to last year?
 - b. What about five years ago?

With modern decontamination methods, there is no longer any need to demolish a home due to meth contamination. Chemical cleaning of meth residue is safe, relatively affordable and highly effective at returning the home to a liveable standard.

The last known demolition in our records due to meth contamination levels was one, in 2018.

- 8. Has Kāinga Ora's approach to decontamination changed since the release of the Gluckman report in 2018? If yes, how? If not, why?**

Since the release of the 2018 Sir Peter Gluckman report, Kāinga Ora adopted the habitability threshold of 15µg/100cm² (15 micrograms of meth per 100 square centimetres of surfaces sampled), in line with the recommendations of the Institute of Environmental Science and Research for homes where meth use has been found to have occurred. In the rare occurrence where manufacture has been discovered, the testing threshold of 1.5µg/100cm² is used.

While these initial testing thresholds were changed, any home that is found to contain contamination above the relevant threshold is still decontaminated to below 1.5µg/100cm² in line with the New Zealand Standard 8510:2017. This is because the New Zealand standard is the only guidance available in New Zealand and underpins IANZ auditing for testers which Kāinga Ora relies on to maintain consistency and reliability within the testing industry.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development undertook a public consultation on proposed regulation of meth contamination in rental housing earlier this year. See the below links. Kāinga Ora supports this consultation.

[Regulation of Methamphetamine Contamination in Rental Housing - Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga - Ministry of Housing and Urban Development \(hud.govt.nz\)](#)

[Consultation on proposed regulation of methamphetamine contamination in rental housing - Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga - Ministry of Housing and Urban Development \(hud.govt.nz\)](#)

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at <https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz> or by freephone on 0800 802 602.

Please note that Kāinga Ora proactively releases its responses to official information requests where possible. Our response to your request may be published at <https://kaingaora.govt.nz/publications/official-information-requests/>, with your personal information removed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Maling', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nick Maling
General Manager, National Services