

LESS SPACE, MORE STYLE - TINY HOUSE LIVING MAGAZINE!

TINY LIVING



Tiny House
Hub

JULY 2025 | ISSUE 29



This was not part of my tiny house plan,
The most embarrassing day of my life.



They shared everything, until he
towed their home and disappeared.



Why Showerdome is a tiny home game-
changer

FEATURED LAND FOR LEASE

NEW SITE FOR LEASE
IN HAWKE'S BAY

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Will split the tiny
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HOW 2026'S GRANNY FLAT REFORM WILL SPLIT THE TINY HOUSE MOVEMENT IN TWO

By Sharla May

For over a decade, the tiny house movement in New Zealand has quietly rewritten the housing rulebook, offering shelter, security, and freedom to those left behind by the traditional market.

It began on the fringe, a few visionaries building homes on wheels to sidestep regulation, reconnect with simplicity, and reclaim control over their lives. But soon, tiny homes became more than a countercultural experiment. They became a financial survival strategy.

Tens of thousands of Kiwis, especially women aged 45 and older, separated adults, retirees, and single-income earners, found that a small, well-built home could provide a dignified life without massive debt. In many cases, it was the only viable pathway to housing stability. Yet once again, the ground beneath the movement is shifting.

Granny flat reforms, set to take effect nationally in early 2026, are about to change everything. And while the legislation hasn't officially rolled out, it's already reshaping the industry. Tiny living is on the cusp of its next evolution, and it's one that will split the movement in two.

The earliest tiny house owners did everything they could to fly under the radar. Most homes were built on trailers, not because people wanted to move them, but because that was the only way to avoid triggering full building consent processes, which makes no sense when you don't own the land.

On paper, they were vehicles. In practice, they were homes, parked semi-permanently on rural land, tucked into family properties, or leased on quiet back sections. But with that workaround came risk.

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**Granny
Minor
Modular
Tiny Homes on**

*flats
Dwellings
Homes
Wheels*

No formal recognition as a dwelling meant:

- No access to standard “home loan” bank loans.
- Limited insurance options.
- And no guarantee the council wouldn't ask you to move it.

The tiny house lifestyle worked, but it required courage, compromise, and often, legal limbo. Starting in 2026, councils around New Zealand will be required to allow a second dwelling, up to 70 square metres, on most residential and rural-zoned properties that are allowed second dwellings on them without the need for a building consent.

This opens the door for what were once seen as “granny flats” to become mainstream secondary dwellings. But the real significance lies beneath the policy language.

For the first time, people who own land and already have an existing dwelling on it will be able to build a single level, legally recognised small house without expensive, drawn-out building consent processes. In short, people will no longer need wheels to live tiny home. And that changes everything.

You'd expect a change like this to spark momentum after it's implemented. But the market's not waiting. Already, tiny home builders and consultants are reporting a clear pattern. Clients are pausing trailer-based builds, choosing to wait until the new rules come into force. For many, the cost of building now without financing or consent certainty just doesn't stack up when a better option is around the corner. And the industry is responding. Builders are actively

pivoting, shifting their focus from wheeled units to fixed-foundation granny flat-style homes that align with the 70m² guidelines. Design templates are being redrawn. Brochures updated. Marketing strategies rewritten.

This isn't a hypothetical reform. It's already reshaping the supply chain, the product offering, and the mindset of those looking to downsize, house loved ones, or invest in small-scale rental housing. What this reform is creating, whether by design or by accident, is a visible split in the tiny house movement. Two clear and distinct streams are now forming:

Path One: The Legalised Small Home Track

For those with access to eligible land, either their own, or shared family property, this is a game-changer.

These people will:

- Build foundation-based, single level homes under 70m².
- Use standard building materials and methods.
- Have better access to home loans.
- More insurance options.
- Avoid legal disputes
- Gain long-term housing security and potential for passive income.

These homes will be fixed in place, and considered “real” houses in the eyes of the law. Expect to see simple, single-storey designs optimised for this new opportunity, modular homes, transportables, and smart layouts that cater to older adults, intergenerational families, or rural landowners housing workers. This track is about stability, security, and mainstream adoption.

Clearly made for each other

Protect your tiny home and stop bathroom condensation, mould, mildew and steam at the source with a Showerdome® shower top.

Find out more

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Path Two: The Mobile, Grey-Zone Tiny House Track

But for those who don't own land, and don't have family willing or able to share, it's a very different story.

They'll remain on the path of:

- Building tiny homes on trailers.
- Leasing land (often informally).
- Relying on limited financing options or paying upfront.
- Navigating inconsistent council enforcement.
- Living with the ongoing risk of theft, eviction, or regulatory issues.

This stream isn't disappearing, it still serves a vital purpose. But its visibility and growth may slow as the legalised track becomes more dominant. Where once the movement was unified by its wheels, it's now splitting into mobility by necessity vs permanence by opportunity.

Let's be honest, those who already have access to land will be the biggest beneficiaries. They'll build wealth. They'll create housing options for family or tenants. They'll gain equity in legally recognised homes.

Meanwhile, those still shut out of land ownership remain stuck in limbo. For them, tiny living remains a workaround, not a protected right. And as banks, builders, and policymakers embrace the foundation-based granny flat model, there's a risk that those still living on wheels become further marginalised, viewed as the "unregulated fringe" of an otherwise maturing industry.

"The wheeled tiny house won't vanish. But it may no longer be the public face of the movement. Instead, it becomes a subculture within a broader shift toward small, smart, and legal."

We're heading toward a future where the term "tiny house" may no longer mean a home on wheels. Say it in five years, and someone may picture a clean-lined, 70m² build tucked behind a family home, complete with double glazing, a bank mortgage, and a linen cupboard.

The wheeled tiny house won't vanish. But it may no longer be the public face of the movement. Instead, it becomes a subculture within a broader shift toward small, smart, and legal. This moment, quiet as it might seem, is the pivot point of the tiny house movement in New Zealand. The reform opens the gates to a whole new type of small living: grounded, financeable, secure. But only for those who can walk through them. Tiny house designs are evolving, priorities are diverging, and a quiet divide is taking shape. That divide isn't the end of the movement, it's the clue to where it's heading next. The future of tiny living in New Zealand will be defined not by a single path, but by the choices made in this moment of change.

Curious about tiny houses?



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AUCKLAND'S TINY HOUSE TUG-OF-WAR: AUCKLAND COUNCIL CONCEDES, BUT BETHAN'S FIGHT IS FAR FROM OVER

By Sharla May

When Bethan Collings first spoke out about her protracted standoff with Auckland Council over her tiny house, it was as much an act of necessity as protest. She'd spent months in limbo, evicted, recently made unemployed, and scraping to survive, because her home, an off grid movable tiny house, was deemed an "illegal dwelling" after a neighbour's complaint. Now, in a rare turn of events, the council has blinked. In a formal email on June 16, Auckland Council confirmed that Bethan's home, under current conditions, does not meet the legal definition of a "structure" under the Resource Management Act or the Auckland Unitary Plan. Nor is it considered a "minor dwelling." That means no resource consent is required, at least for now. It's a significant, if temporary, reprieve. But for Bethan, it's hardly a victory lap. "It's not the end," she wrote in a message. "But it's a good temporary win. In writing. Until they create the TH [tiny house] guidelines."

In official correspondence reviewed by The Tiny House Hub, the council's language was cautious. The home doesn't qualify as a structure "based on the degree and purpose of annexation." But should Bethan fix it to foundations or connect it permanently to services, the classification could change, and with it, the council's entire regulatory response. That ambiguity is precisely the problem. The line between compliance and contravention is invisible, shifting, and determined by interpretation, something Bethan knows too well. In March, after spending 6 months converting her tiny home into a fully certified self-contained "caravan" and living off-grid on leased land, she was once again under threat of investigation. After the neighbour complained again, this time citing a portaloos temporarily delivered while her composting toilet was under repair and citing that living in a caravan on private property was "not allowed"; prompted

council staff to consider her caravan “a dwelling” once more. The neighbour is not just any resident. They sit on an Auckland Council Taskforce and are a large property developer. Several people have questioned whether their persistent complaints amount to harassment, or worse, an abuse of influence.

Bethan’s saga highlights a deeper, unresolved tension in council enforcement: when does a mobile home become a dwelling? And why are some residents punished while others with similar setups fly under the radar?

Auckland Council has no clear guidelines for tiny homes on wheels, and its enforcement often hinges on complaints. “It all depends on who your neighbour is,” Bethan says. “And if they feel wronged in some way as tiny houses challenge the status quo of home ownership”.

Her story is not unique. Across the country, dozens of tiny house owners, many of them single women or financially vulnerable, are facing similar enforcement action with little recourse. They’re being asked to comply with rules that don’t yet

exist or that fail to account for mobile, off-grid housing on leased land.

Bethan, a university lecturer in health and education, has been trying to live simply, legally, and quietly. Her income is too low to qualify for rental subsidies, but too high to receive welfare. Renting in Auckland is out of reach. Her tiny home is, quite literally, her only option.

What she didn’t anticipate was the psychological cost. “I was homeless for five and a half months,” she says. “I’ve lost two jobs in the last year. I’ve had to explain to council, repeatedly, why I’m doing everything I can to be compliant. And still, it’s ambiguous.”

She has medical documentation detailing the toll of the past 18 months. Stress, anxiety, and a grinding sense of instability have become her baseline. “I can’t keep packing up and moving every time someone decides they don’t like my house,” she says. “I’m not a criminal. I’m just trying to live.”

For now, the council’s latest response offers Bethan some breathing room. But it’s conditional, and precarious.



The underlying issue remains: there is still no formal policy on tiny homes in Auckland. And in the absence of regulation, enforcement will remain discretionary, inconsistent, and ripe for challenge.

Bethan is considering her options. Legal action is expensive, but so is moving. Selling her home isn't viable in the current market and moving it to another Auckland property risks triggering the same complaints all over again.

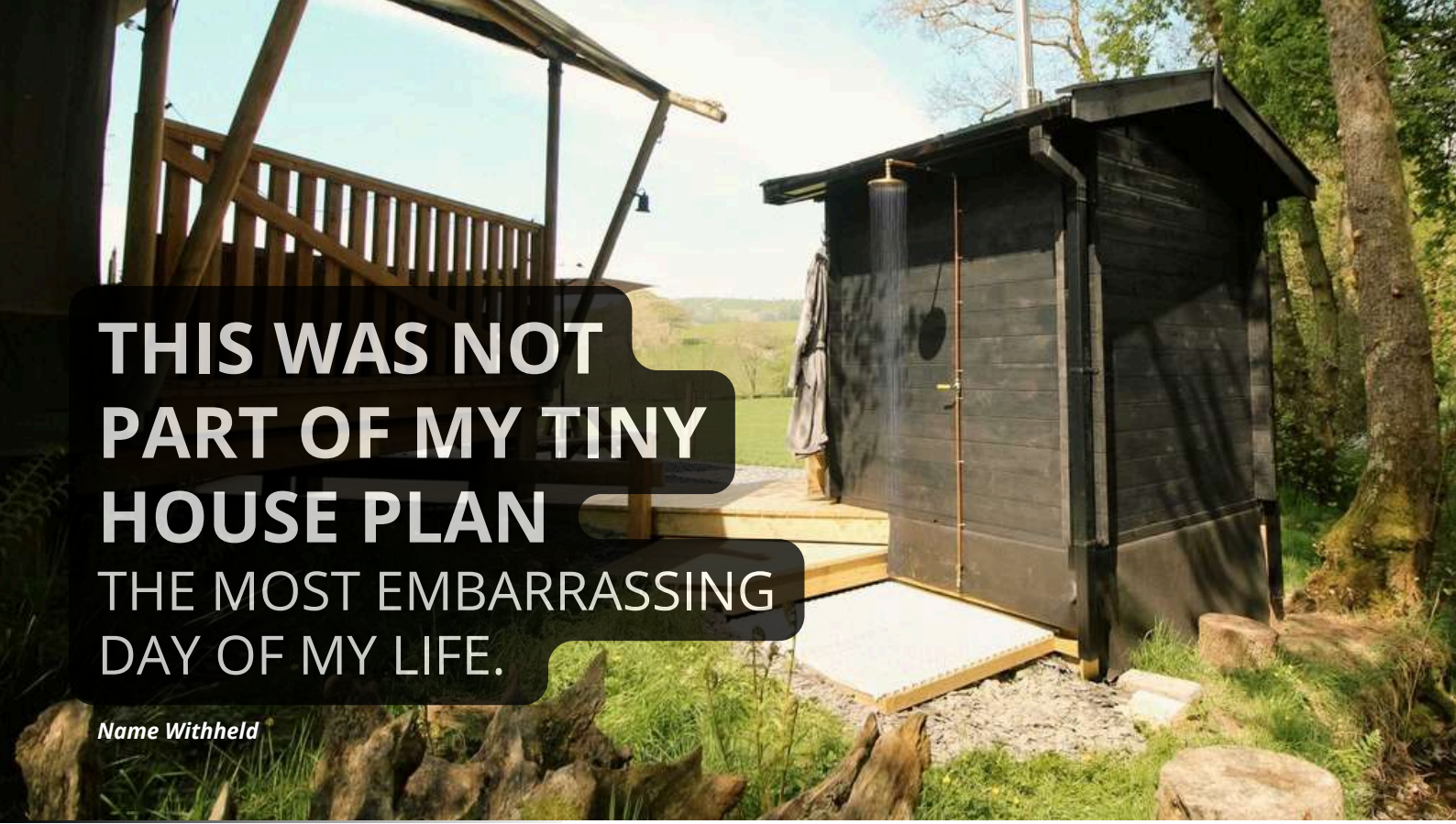
"It's like I am being punished for trying to do the right thing" she says. "The rules are not clear, those with the most wealth have the most power, and I'm the one taking the hits to my housing security."

Until there are clear guidelines, Bethan's story remains a cautionary tale, and a rallying cry. Because in the city's blind spot between regulation and reality, people are falling through the cracks. And in a housing crisis, that's not just bad policy. It's inhumane.



Photo Credit, Stuff





THIS WAS NOT PART OF MY TINY HOUSE PLAN THE MOST EMBARRASSING DAY OF MY LIFE.

Name Withheld

Tiny house living strips life down to the essentials. Unfortunately, sometimes that includes your dignity. It had been a good morning, sunny, still, deceptively calm. I'd just finished washing the sheets, made a smoothie, and was about to head into town to run some errands. My off-grid goddess fantasy life was thriving.

The plan was simple, lock up the house, use the loo, head to town. Except I live tiny. And my loo isn't in the house. It's a separate little outhouse, just across the deck. It has fairy lights, a perfectly balanced composting system, and a framed print that says "You Got This." Which, in hindsight, felt mocking. Because what happened next... was not that.

Now, I'm going to say this delicately. It was that time of the month. I was mid wardrobe change, if you catch my drift. Standing. Half dressed. Managing things. Keys in my cardigan pocket. Not my hand. Not wedged under my boob. Not balanced on a windowsill. I did everything right. Then it happened. The wind, that sudden, invisible menace, came roaring through the

valley. SLAM. The outhouse door flung open. And standing there, right at that moment, framed like a painting in the open doorway. Farmer Dave. Holding a sack of lemons, he came to give me. Eyes wide. Mouth slightly open. In the shock of it, the door, the lemons, the eye contact, I flailed. And as I moved, the keys flung up and out of my cardigan pocket with perfect comedic timing... and disappeared straight down the compost toilet. Gone.

Let's talk about Dave. Dave is my neighbour. Sixty-something. Wears Crocs and short shorts year-round. Smells faintly of diesel, burnt toast, and existential dread. He means well, but in the way that possums mean well when they climb into your ceiling. He was just as shocked as I was. His eyes widened. The lemons fell. They hit the ground in a burst of citrus chaos. Lemons everywhere. It was like a Mediterranean confetti cannon had gone off.

There was a moment, very brief, very surreal, where Dave and I just looked at each other. Me, half-dressed and horror-struck. Him, ankle-deep in lemons, blinking like he'd just walked in on

someone giving birth to a crisis. Out of sheer panic, I let out a squeaky “AH SORRY!” and tried to pull the door shut. In doing so, my keys slipped from my pocket. And fell. Not onto the floor. Not onto the deck. But into the open compost toilet. Straight down. Gone. Then, mercifully, Dave disappeared. Not saying a word. Just turned around and left.

So there I was. Standing in my tiny outhouse. In a state of mid-change. No phone. No keys. No way into my tiny house, because, in a fit of responsible adulthood, I had *locked the door* before heading to the loo. My car was locked too. Even the dog was locked inside the house, probably napping smugly on my laundry pile. I had no dignity, no backup plan, and no spare key hidden under a rock (because I “hadn’t got around to it yet”). And all I could think was, this is peak tiny house living.

I couldn’t see the keys. They were gone, swallowed whole by the dark, mysterious layers of sawdust, and whatever emotional baggage lives inside a composting toilet. No glint. No jingle. Just vibes. Bad, bad vibes.

I stood there frozen, cardigan flapping in the breeze, trying to logic my way out of this moment. For five long minutes, I ran through my options like a Choose Your Own Adventure book written by a sadist:

- Option A: Walk across the paddock and find Dave. Ask him for something I could use to fish my keys out of the loo like this was normal.
- Option B: Break into my own house.
- Option C: Set fire to the toilet. File an insurance claim. Start over.
- That left Option D: The one I dreaded most. The only one that didn’t require further humiliation or arson: Reach in.

So I did. Rolled up my sleeve. Swallowed my pride. And with the silent scream of a woman at the edge of sanity, I plunged my hand into the unknown. It was warm. Damp.



Horribly *textured*. I focused on my breathing. I focused on my ancestors. I questioned every life choice I’d made since the fourth grade. And then, something metal. Got them.

I yanked my hand out like it was on fire and held up the keys, triumphant and traumatised. I had never hated and loved an object more in my life. Once back inside I bathed the keys in white vinegar. Then Dettol. Then vodka. Then burned sage around them, just in case. The dog sniffed them once and backed away like she, too, knew things had gone too far.

What I learned:

- Never take your keys into the toilet.
- Periods do not care about your plans. Or your compost system.
- Always say yes to a key hiding box.
- Dave needs therapy. Or perhaps I do.
- Citrus will forever be a reminder of a moment I would rather forget.

Tiny house living? It’ll humble you. Fast.



The Rebuild Project - Part 3

THE FIRST HOUSE BUILD BEGINS

WE BREAK GROUND, HIGH HOPES, AND A SUSPICIOUS NUMBER OF FACEBOOK PLANT PURCHASES.



This is Part 3 of The Rebuild Project, my own journey from financial burnout to building a life that finally works, on my own terms. 10 years ago, I owned a traditional house, but trying to cover all the costs on a single income left me stressed, exhausted, and constantly on edge. Selling it was the turning point. I went tiny living off-grid in a house bus, it gave me the financial breathing room to save, plan, and eventually buy a 1.3-hectare block near Whangārei, something I never thought I'd be able to do on a single income. Instead of building one big house, I'm building two smaller ones: one to live in, and one to rent out. I've also set up space to lease to two tiny house tenants, creating a long-term income stream that keeps this whole thing sustainable.



In Part 1, I shared how going tiny gave me back my freedom. In Part 2, I got stuck into the land, setting up sites for the tiny homes, finding tenants, and applying for building consent. And now? It's time to build.

They say timing is everything, and in my case, the timing was borderline poetic. The same day the digger arrived to break ground for the rental house, both tiny houses rolled onto the land like a synchronised convoy of dreams. It felt like the land was shifting, literally and figuratively. One minute it was clay and gorse, the next it was a building site with tiny homes and tenants.

The foundation went in first, with only a slight delay thanks to Cyclone Tam brushing past just as my builder was arranging the concrete pour. It barely set them back. The slab was poured, and from there, things moved fast.

The external framing went up next, and suddenly there was height, structure, shape. Once the roof was on and the house was wrapped, we hit a big milestone, the shell was watertight. Internal walls followed, and the whole space shifted from blueprint to reality. You stop imagining it, and start walking it.

Then came the polished concrete floors, subtle, durable, and exactly the low-maintenance pet friendly finish I was after. The whole build has been smooth so far. No dramas. No chaos. Just a steady, well-run process. It helps that I've got a great builder and a clear vision. I'm not crossing my fingers, I'm ticking things off. I'd mentally prepared for decision fatigue. You know, the emotional burnout of standing in Bunnings debating if your

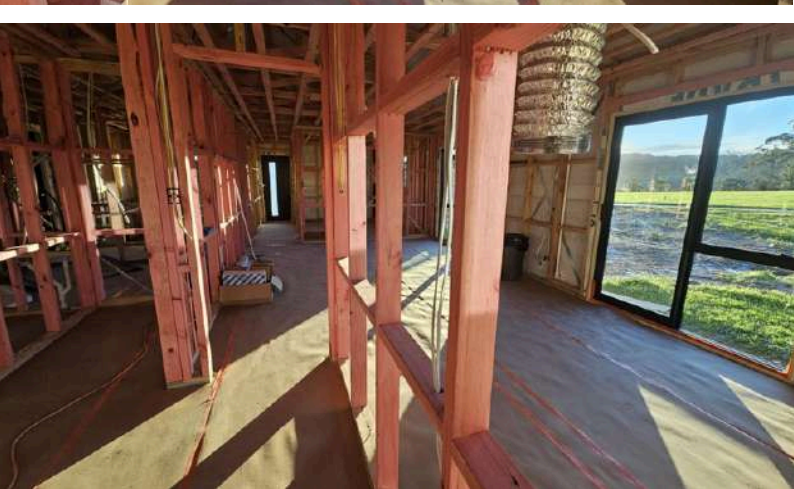
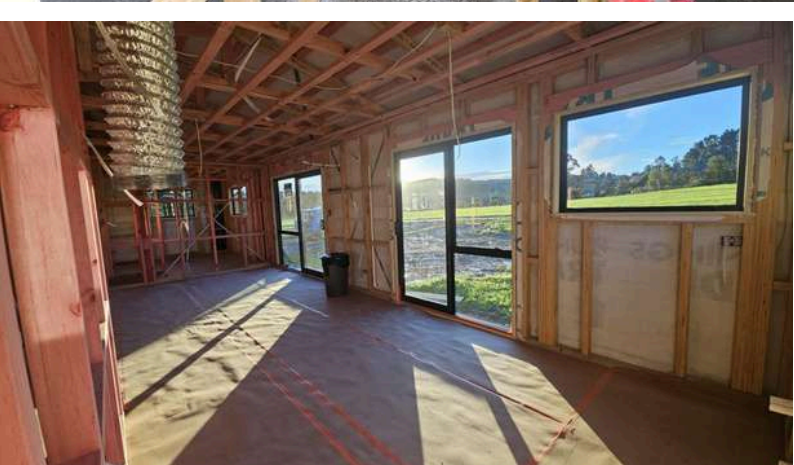
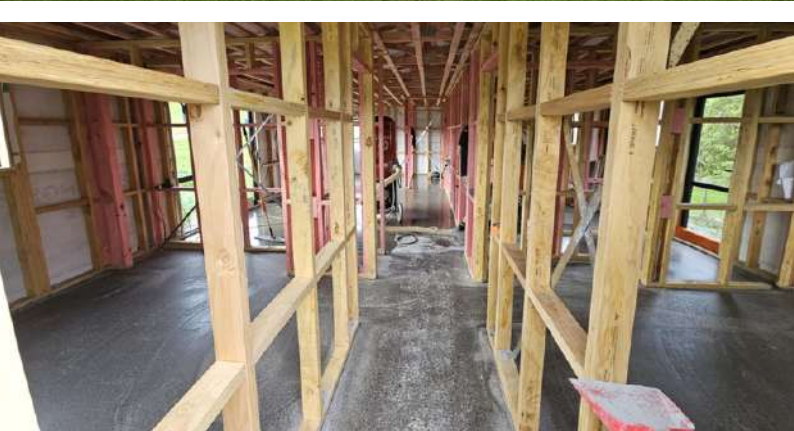
towel rail should be matte or gloss. But to my surprise, it's actually been... easy. Credit goes to a **TikTok series I stumbled across: Looks Good, Cleans Bad**. It's basically commercial cleaners exposing the dirty secrets of trendy interiors. Think grout lines you'll hate in six months and shower niches that trap mould like it's a sport. Their advice became my Bible.

Also no black tapware, lesson learned the hard way in a previous build. It looks great in magazines, but in real life it shows every water mark and fingerprint. I went with simple chrome this time. It's easier to clean, timeless, and doesn't make you mutter under your breath every time you wash your hands.

And no downlights in the living areas and bedrooms. I know they're everywhere these days, but I just don't like them. They turn ceilings into Swiss cheese, the light they throw is harsh and unflattering, and most of them these days are sealed units, which means when the bulb goes, you can't just swap it out. You have to replace the whole unit. Wasteful, expensive, and frankly ridiculous. I chose pendants instead. They're softer, easier to live with, and have removable bulbs. The design brief was simple: neutral, durable, practical. We made one layout tweak, moved the bathroom door so it didn't open directly into the lounge, and extended a kitchen wall to allow for a bigger fridge space. Because if there's one thing I've learned, it's that tenants all have different size fridges.

Every build has one, that what have I done moment. Mine was when the joinery went in. I'd chosen flaxpod for the cladding at each end of the house and for the joinery too, gull grey for the roof and long sides of the house, a compromise between style and heat-reflecting common sense. But when I first saw it all up together, I had a moment. A "Have I ruined this entire house?" moment.





Thankfully, future plans for a pergola and lush planting around the entrance have calmed the panic. I've been using AI to mock up front elevations with tropical foliage and some smart landscaping. It helps.

Bonus design win? All internal walls are non-structural. If future-me wants to move things around, it's an easy fix. It's the little things that make me feel clever.

So how's the budget going? The build contract was for \$304,000 including council fees, and all ground works, the only curveball so far is the Council requiring the driveway to be concreted or asphalted, when I'd only been quoted for gravel. Annoying, but not catastrophic. Everything else? Ticking along. Slowly. Sensibly. Spreadsheeted to within an inch of its life.

I've heard horror stories. Builders who ghost you mid-foundation. Ones who think timelines



are optional. But my experience working with Rick from AMCAS Construction in Whangarei has been the exact opposite. I found him through a friend, and heard glowing reviews from other tradies too. He's communicative, flexible, and lets me handle certain tasks like painting the interior myself to help reduce costs on the build.

I'm not on site every day, but I keep things moving behind the scenes. I've been working directly with the kitchen supplier, sourcing items like IP65-rated outdoor lights (because without eaves, you can't muck around the lower IP outdoor lights that are not water proof), and coordinating with Rick when things need decisions. It's a good balance. I'm involved, but not micro-managing. Which, to be honest, suits us both.

While the build is happening, I'm still renting. I'm in a small one-bedroom place up on a hill with a stunning harbour view I'll genuinely miss. It's quiet, peaceful, and currently doubling as a tropical plant nursery. I've been buying up palms, heliconias, canna lilies on Facebook Marketplace, growing seeds in trays on every spare spot, and mapping out future garden beds like I'm planning a botanical invasion. It's my happy place, part therapy, part preparation, and full of potential.

People keep asking how I'm managing the juggle of rent, mortgage, running the business, and building. Truth is, it's been pretty full on. Living so far from the build means I lose at least half a day of work every time I need to go onsite. It's a lot to juggle. But even with the chaos, I still love what this project represents. Freedom.

"Like the terrifying realisation that this thing I'm building, this actual, permanent house, is probably going to outlive me."



When it all feels too much, I picture myself sitting on my porch, first cup of tea in hand, looking out over my land and thinking, I did this. No one handed it to me. I made it happen. There's pride, for sure. But also moments of disbelief. And sadness, too, my dad's not here to see it. He would've loved this. He always believed in working hard, being practical, and backing yourself quietly.

Then there's the more confronting stuff. Like the terrifying realisation that this thing I'm building, this actual, permanent house, is probably going to outlive me. I mean, that's the goal, right? To build something solid and lasting. But also... yikes. It's no longer just a project. It's a real, physical mark I'm leaving on the world. And there's something beautiful and mildly horrifying about that.

This whole journey? It's not just a build. It's a life reshaped. And somehow, it's all starting to look exactly like the life I imagined.

Next up: *Bathrooms, kitchens, and the slow descent into madness that is choosing all the things people touch, handles, switches, plus soundproofing decisions, paint colour debates, and the creeping fear that someone in 2045 will look at my tapware and think, bold choice.*

Better Together: Why *Showerdome* Is a Tiny House Essential



Sponsored Content

In the world of tiny living, every design decision matters and nowhere is that more obvious than in the bathroom. In compact homes, motorhomes, cabins, and tiny houses, the bathroom is often a multifunctional zone: a place to refresh, store essentials, and sometimes even double as a laundry space. But small bathrooms have one big problem - moisture. Steam builds up quickly, fogging mirrors, dampening surfaces, and creating the perfect breeding ground for mould and mildew.

That's where **Showerdome®** comes in. Thoughtfully designed for small spaces, it protects your tiny home from excess moisture, ensuring a drier and warmer home, all without taking up an inch of extra space, or compromising design aesthetics or layout.

"Whenever You Can Eliminate Moisture at the Source, It's Best to Do So"

That's the advice from one tiny home owner featured in a recent design video, and we couldn't agree more. In fact, that particular episode gave an unscripted, enthusiastic shout-out to **Showerdome®** as a must-have in tiny

home builds - highlighting how a small space can benefit hugely from steam elimination.

With limited airflow, it doesn't take much for warm, moist air to spread, settle, and cause condensation on every surface. That excess moisture not only makes your space feel damp and uncomfortable, but over time constant dampness can lead to peeling paint, warped cabinetry, and expensive damage.

Moisture control in tight spaces isn't just about comfort—it's about protecting your investment.

A **Showerdome®** shower top stops steam from forming in the first place. By preventing the warm air inside your shower from mixing with the cooler air in the bathroom, it eliminates the root cause of steam and condensation at the source.

"With limited airflow, it doesn't take much for warm, moist air to spread, settle, and cause condensation on every surface".



The result? Dry walls, clear mirrors, and a bathroom that stays in better condition for longer. In smaller living spaces, that's a game changer.

More Comfort, Less Energy

A **Showerdome®** helps contain the warmth where it matters most - inside the cubicle. This reduces the need to heat the entire bathroom or rely on constant ventilation to manage moisture.

Many customers also find they use less hot water, since the enclosed space stays comfortably warm without needing to turn up the temperature. For Tiny Homes with solar setups or limited water heating systems, that's a real advantage.



Plus, because steam is stopped at the source, moisture doesn't seep into nearby spaces, helping to keep furnishings, bedding, and storage areas dry and protected.

Less Mould. Less Cleaning. More Living.

Without a **Showerdome®**, steam condenses on ceilings, tiles, and walls. Over time, that constant moisture becomes the perfect environment for mould and mildew. In small spaces, especially those with limited natural light or airflow, mould can be hard to control and even harder to clean.

By keeping your bathroom dry, a **Showerdome®** drastically reduces mould risk. That means fewer harsh chemicals, less scrubbing, and a healthier home environment - especially important for anyone with allergies, asthma, or sensitivities to damp.

Perfect Fit for Small Spaces

Showerdomes come in a range of sizes and shapes and can be trimmed to fit

most standard shower cubicles. To support the tiny living movement, we've specifically developed two low-profile **Showerdome®** models with a reduced height of just 60mm, making them ideal for compact spaces with lower ceiling clearance. These "low-blow" designs were created with tiny homes in mind, offering all the same steam-stopping benefits without compromising on any of the benefits.

Installation is quick and non-invasive, and once in place, it's virtually invisible and won't crowd your space or change the look of your bathroom.

Proudly Kiwi Made – and Loved

At **Showerdome®**, we take pride in being New Zealand owned and operated—and we're equally proud of the incredible feedback we receive from customers across the country. With countless five-star reviews and word-of-mouth recommendations, Kiwis consistently tell us that installing a **Showerdome®** makes a noticeable difference to the comfort, look, and longevity of their bathroom. Installing a **Showerdome®** in your Tiny Home is a smart investment in protecting your space, your health, and the value of your home for years to come.

Ready to Transform Your Tiny Bathroom?

Visit www.showerdome.co.nz to learn more, view sizes, or book an installation.

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They shared everything, until he towed their home and disappeared.

Ella left town for two nights. When she returned, her house was gone. There were no police reports. No public outrage. No headlines. Because legally, no one considered it a theft. Why? Because in New Zealand, if your home is on wheels and your name isn't on the right form, someone can tow away your life and no one will stop them. In a country that prides itself on fairness and decency, Ella's story is a masterclass in how bureaucracy enables abuse.

She spent one year building her tiny house with her partner, Tom. She poured her savings, sweat, and heart into it. They weren't married, and had only been dating for 18 months, but they shared everything, or so she thought.

When the relationship ended, she gave him space. She stayed with her mother for a weekend. And that's all it took. Tom hitched the house to a truck and vanished. No warning. No

discussion. Ella returned to find nothing but tyre marks on the grass and a message: "It's mine now." Ella did what anyone would do, she called the police. They told her it was a civil matter. She called a lawyer. They told her it would cost thousands, and there were no guarantees she would win. "It was like I didn't exist. Like the house didn't exist. Like the last two years of my life weren't even real."

This isn't a fringe case. It's an inevitable result of how the law treats tiny houses on wheels, as chattels. Not homes. Not dwellings. Not even protected property in many cases. If your name isn't on the trailer registration or you don't have a formal co-ownership contract, you have no rights. This isn't an accident. This legal blind spot exists because regulators have refused to evolve alongside reality. As the housing crisis pushes more New Zealanders into alternative

living, tiny homes, house buses, cabin shares, the government continues to cling to legal categories designed for buildings that don't move and relationships that don't end.

"They told me to take him to court," Ella says. "But how do you take someone to court when you can't afford to live anywhere now?"

This isn't just about Ella. This is about power. And in the tiny house world, power belongs to the person who controls the paperwork, or the parking spot.

- The one whose name is on the rego holds the keys.
- The one who owns the land decides who stays.
- The one who can afford legal representation decides who loses.

Tiny homes have promised freedom, simplicity, a way out of the traditional housing trap. But as this story shows, that promise can be ripped away in a single weekend, not by a disaster, but by someone you once trusted.

If you're building or living in a tiny home, and you're doing it with a partner or on someone else's land, you need to protect yourself now. Here's what you must do, even if it feels unromantic or paranoid:

- Co-ownership agreement. Write it. Sign it. Get legal advice.

- Trailer registration. Your name must be on it. Not just theirs.
- Land lease agreement. If it's not your land, your presence can be revoked overnight.

And don't assume kindness or fairness will save you. That's not how the system works. That's not how power works. After months of back-and-forth and a \$6,000 legal bill, Ella walked away.

"He offered me \$5,000 to 'settle it quietly.' I spent more than that trying to get what was already half mine. In the end, I had to choose peace over possession."

She now rents a one-bedroom flat in town and is saving to build again, this time, solo.

"I'll never go into another project like that without legal protection. Love makes you naive. Losing everything makes you smart."

This isn't a warning story. It's an indictment. A home was stolen in broad daylight.

And the people most at risk, those building alternative housing solutions for survival, are being left exposed by the very institutions meant to protect them.

Until that changes, this will continue to happen. And the next house that rolls away might be yours.



 **Tiny House Awards**

Time to show NZ your amazing tiny house build!

ENTER NOW

Entries close 22nd July 2025

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Wondering how to find land for your tiny house or motorhome?

Landshare: New Zealand's online directory connecting tiny house owners and land owners.



NEW

LAND FOR LEASE



Land Lease Opportunity for Tiny House in **Hawke's Bay**



 [Click here to view the full listing](#)

 \$150 per week

- **Available:** Now
- **Site foundation:** Land/Grass
- **Water connection:** No
- **Power connection:** No
- **Off-street parking:** Yes
- **Pets:** Yes
- **Child Friendly:** Yes
- **Smokers:** Yes
- **WiFi connection:** No
- **Private location:** Yes



HAWKE'S BAY

Centrally located in Waipawa near schools and local amenities, this property offers the perfect blend of lifestyle and convenience. Kids can walk to school or catch the bus to nearby secondary schools. Enjoy vibrant cafes, the library, museum, and the famous Waipawa Butchery just minutes away. With Hastings only 40 minutes' drive, commuting is easy. Surrounded by recreational options like river fishing and cycleways, it's an ideal spot for families seeking both connection and tranquillity.

NEW

LOOKING FOR LAND

New Plymouth, Taranaki



 [Click here to view the full listing](#)

 **NEW PLYMOUTH**

Looking for:

- **Power connection:** Yes
- **Water connection:** Yes
- **Off-street Parking:** No
- **Pet Friendly:** Yes
- **Child Friendly:** No
- **Smokers:** No
- **WiFi Connection:** No
- **Private Location:** No



**Tiny House
Landshare**

Mature 57-year-old woman seeking long-term lease for her 9m x 3m sleepout/tiny home in New Plymouth. Ideally around 200sqm or more, with access to water and electricity. Relocated after her mum's passing, she's hoping to make New Plymouth home. Works part-time in Waitara and has a beloved cat who must come too. Currently in Urenui but needs to relocate soon. Hoping to lease while saving to buy. All leads and kind-hearted offers appreciated.

Leasing land for a tiny?

Protect your interests with a land lease agreement by the Tiny House Hub

[Get a copy.](#)



Tiny House Hub



Need help funding your tiny house dream?



We get it – finding finance for a tiny house can be tricky. Talk with our advisors who can help to make your tiny house dream a reality.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



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