

LESS SPACE, MORE STYLE - TINY HOUSE LIVING MAGAZINE!

TINY LIVING



**Tiny House
Hub**

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FEATURED LAND FOR LEASE

NEW SITE FOR LEASE IN
CANTERBURY

INSIDE THIS EDITION!

FREE LABOR & NO PRIVACY:

What More Could a
Tiny House Tenant
Ask For?

AT 50, SHE BUILT A TINY HOUSE:

And it gave her the life
she always wanted

A DECADE OF TINY LIVING:

How the Industry Has
Evolved in New Zealand

FREE LABOR AND NO PRIVACY, WHAT MORE COULD A TINY HOUSE TENANT ASK FOR?

By Sharla May – Tiny House Hub

The tiny house movement has been celebrated as a groundbreaking response to modern housing challenges, offering people the chance to live simply, sustainably, and affordably. But, for many, this dream is being derailed by landowners who view tiny house owners not as tenants or partners, but as easy targets for exploitation.

Consider a recent listing in rural Kaitaia as an example. The landowner sought \$250 per week for a small patch of land, on top of that, they demanded five hours of weekly labor, equivalent to \$115.75 at minimum wage. Altogether, this added up to over \$365 per week just for the privilege of parking a tiny house in a remote area of Kaitaia (with no power access). The indignity didn't end there: the tenant was banned from

having domestic pets but was still expected to care for the landowner's pets and farm animals during their absences.

This isn't an isolated case; it's part of a troubling trend of unreasonable demands. Some landowners charge \$300 per week for nothing more than a strip of grass the size of a parking space, often located between a driveway and their home, offering no privacy or peace. Others enforce oppressive rules, such as requiring the tenants to seek written approval for every single visitor, creating a stifling and dehumanising environment. In some cases, tiny house owners are asked to invest thousands of dollars to establish infrastructure—like foundations, water systems, and electrical hookups—only to be given a three-month trial lease. These practices are blatantly exploitative.

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At its core, the tiny house movement is about redefining the concept of home. It embodies freedom, sustainability, and community. But when landowners impose unreasonable costs and draconian rules, they stifle the movement's potential. These exploitative practices not only harm individuals but also undermine the credibility of tiny house living as a viable alternative to traditional housing. Why would anyone invest in a tiny home when finding fair, reasonable land to lease feels almost impossible?

Landowners offering property for tiny houses need to step up. Leasing land shouldn't be about exploiting people for profit; it's an opportunity to support a movement that can genuinely transform lives and communities. By charging fair rates for land that might otherwise go unused, landowners can create a win-win situation—earning a reasonable income while contributing to a more sustainable and inclusive housing solution.

To create a fair and thriving tiny house ecosystem:

- Rural land is not luxury real estate. Price your listings fairly and reasonably.
- Micromanaging tenants' lives, from restricting visitors to banning pets while demanding care for your animals, is hypocritical and dehumanizing.

- Short-term leases with high upfront costs foster distrust. If you want tenants to invest in your property, show them you're willing to invest in them.
- Tenants deserve space to feel at home. Don't create a situation where they feel constantly surveilled.

The tiny house movement stands at a critical juncture. One path leads to innovation, sustainability, and community, while the other is a descent into greed and exploitation. Landowners have the power to decide which direction the movement takes. It's time for landowners to stop treating tiny house owners as cash cows or unpaid labor and start recognising them as pioneers of a better, more sustainable way of living. Anything less betrays the movement and its values.

“These exploitative practices not only harm individuals but also undermine the credibility of tiny house living as a viable alternative to traditional housing.”

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Tiny House Hub



AT 50, SHE BUILT A TINY HOUSE, AND IT GAVE HER THE LIFE SHE ALWAYS WANTED

By Sharla May - *Tiny House Hub*

What does it truly mean to come home? For Louise Southerden, this question carried a unique resonance. At 50, with homeownership seemingly out of reach and a burgeoning housing crisis sweeping across Australia, Louise found herself yearning for more than just a place to live. She craved a sanctuary—a space that felt truly her own. That quest led her to a radical and liberating decision: building a tiny house on wheels.

For years, Louise's idea of home had been shaped more by her travels than by traditional housing. She had found comfort in compact spaces that offered a sense of safety and simplicity—from snug cabins on ships to small, tranquil hotel rooms. Living in a studio apartment in a seaside village near Byron Bay, she relished the area's lush greenery and relaxed pace. Yet, like many Australians, she felt the pinch of escalating rents and an uncertain future as regional areas became less affordable.

Turning 50 was a pivotal moment. After decades of navigating life's uncertainties, Louise began to long for stability. The idea of a tiny house first appeared as a faint glimmer of possibility, a solution that combined financial accessibility with environmental consciousness. Tiny houses, often built on trailers, offered a chance to own a home without the crushing weight of a mortgage. For Louise, it was also about reclaiming the art of homemaking and living with intention.

"The more I learned about tiny houses, the more they made sense to me," Louise recalls. She admired their minimalist ethos, sustainable design, and adaptability. A tiny house on wheels wouldn't require land clearing or hefty building materials. It offered mobility, reduced environmental impact, and encouraged a simpler lifestyle. Historically, humans have thrived in small, intimate dwellings. Long before sprawling suburbs and mega-mansions, our ancestors lived in huts, yurts, and cottages made from natural materials. For Louise, tiny houses represented a

return to this way of living—a life more connected to nature and less cluttered by material possessions.

Yet, the path to creating her dream home was anything but straightforward. Without land or significant savings, Louise had to get creative. She drew inspiration from pioneers of the tiny house movement, like Fred Schultz, who championed the idea of reclaiming shelter-making. “The tiny house movement is about putting the hammer back in people’s hands,” Schultz once said. This ethos resonated deeply with Louise, who took a hands-on approach to designing her home. Because tiny houses on wheels are classified as vehicles rather than buildings in Australia, they fall outside the scope of the national building code. This regulatory loophole meant Louise could design her house without the need for official approvals, giving her the freedom to craft a home that perfectly suited her needs.

She began by envisioning how she lived her life and what was truly important to her. Living in a studio apartment had taught her to appreciate natural light, efficient layouts, and multi-functional spaces. Her wishlist for the tiny house included a dedicated workspace, ample storage for her surfboards and books, and a comfortable space to host friends. She also prioritized sustainability, planning for solar panels, a rainwater tank, and a composting toilet.

Designing her tiny house became a deeply personal journey. Louise took an online course led by tiny house architect Macy Miller, who encouraged participants to focus not just on the physical aspects of a home but also on how they wanted to feel living in it. For Louise, this meant creating a space that was serene, filled with natural light, and connected to the outdoors. Her design featured a long kitchen bench that doubled as a dining table, stairs with built-in storage leading to a loft bed, and plenty of windows to frame views of the surrounding trees and sky.

The challenges of downsizing were real but liberating. Louise had to pare down her belongings to fit within 25 square meters, including two lofts. This process of letting go became a form of self-discovery. “When you live in a tiny house, every item has to earn its place,” she says. “It’s about choosing quality over quantity and keeping only what truly matters.” Construction began with a standard 7.2-meter trailer as the foundation. Louise sourced sustainable materials and kept costs low by incorporating recycled and repurposed elements. Her home’s design was simple yet elegant: a contemporary cabin with white interiors and timber accents. Outside, she added a deck and an outdoor shower to extend her living space and connect with nature.



Building the house was a team effort. Louise enlisted the help of friends, local craftspeople, and tiny house enthusiasts. The process wasn't without setbacks, from unexpected weather delays to the steep learning curve of DIY construction. But with each challenge came a sense of accomplishment. "Every nail I hammered and every board I placed brought me closer to my dream," she reflects. Living in the tiny house has transformed Louise's relationship with home. Nestled in a tranquil setting, surrounded by trees and the sounds of nature, her tiny house has become a sanctuary. The minimalist lifestyle it fosters has allowed her to focus on what truly matters: her work, her well-being, and her connection to the environment.



Perhaps most importantly, the tiny house represents freedom. Free from the pressures of rent or mortgage payments, Louise has found financial stability and peace of mind. The mobility of her home means she can adapt to life's changes without being tied to one location. And the act of building her own shelter has given her a profound sense of empowerment.

For Louise, the journey to tiny house living wasn't just about creating a physical space. It was about redefining what it means to have a home and crafting a life aligned with her values. "A tiny house isn't just a place to live," she says. "It's a statement about how I want to live." In a world where housing is increasingly unaffordable and environmental concerns loom large,

Louise's story is a testament to the power of thinking small. Her tiny house may only be 25 square meters, but it has given her a life that feels boundless. And in that small, self-made sanctuary, Louise has found something that had eluded her for years: a place to truly call home. To explore Louise's full story and dive deeper into her journey, [check out her book Tiny](#). It's an inspiring read for anyone curious about the tiny house movement or looking to rethink their relationship with home and the environment.





A DECADE OF TINY LIVING: HOW THE INDUSTRY HAS EVOLVED IN NEW ZEALAND

By Sharla May - Tiny House Hub

Shaye and Tom with the Lucy Tiny House

When I first stepped into the tiny house industry, it felt like joining a secret club. It was niche, grassroots, and driven by people with a passion for living lightly. The homes were true to their name: small, lightweight, and often built on a shoestring budget. They were homes for dreamers—people who wanted to reduce their environmental footprint and embrace a simpler way of life.

But over the past decade, the tiny house industry in New Zealand has undergone a remarkable transformation. It has grown, matured, and diversified, responding to shifting needs and demographics. The story of tiny living has evolved, and so have the homes themselves. In the early days, the typical tiny house buyer was younger—often in their 20s or 30s—and deeply motivated by environmental concerns. These

early adopters saw tiny homes as a way to tread lightly on the planet, embracing sustainability and minimalism. Back then, the industry was small, with only a handful of builders, and tiny homes were designed to be affordable and efficient, catering to a lifestyle that prioritised freedom over frills. Fast forward to today, and the landscape looks very different.

While sustainability remains an important factor, financial realities have become a major driver for tiny house buyers. The demographic has shifted noticeably. Now, many buyers are aged 45 and older, turning to tiny homes as a solution to financial pressures, retirement planning, or re-entering the housing market after years of renting. These buyers aren't just looking for a lifestyle—they're looking for security.



As the people buying tiny homes have changed, so too have the designs. The lofted sleeping spaces that were once a hallmark of tiny homes are no longer the default. Older buyers, in particular, prefer ground-floor bedrooms, prioritising comfort and accessibility over climbing ladders.

Another emerging trend is modular living. Instead of a single, self-contained unit, many buyers now opt for multiple small structures—a main house paired with additional pods or cabins. These modular designs allow for greater flexibility, with spaces connected by decks or pergolas. This approach accommodates changing needs, whether it's adding a guest room, a workspace, or an art studio.


The industry's growth has been extraordinary. What started as a handful of builders has expanded into a bustling market with options ranging from budget-friendly DIY kits to high-end, architect-designed homes. The designs have become more sophisticated, offering better insulation, smarter storage solutions, and even off-grid capabilities.

However, this growth hasn't come without challenges. Rising material and labor costs mean that tiny homes are no longer as affordable as they once were. For the industry to continue thriving, it's crucial to find ways to keep homes accessible to those who need them most, especially in the face of New Zealand's ongoing housing crisis.

Looking back on the past decade, I'm struck by how far the tiny house movement has come. What began as a niche lifestyle has become a mainstream solution for a diverse range of people. Tiny homes have proven their versatility and their value, offering not just shelter but freedom—freedom from debt, from environmental guilt, and from the constraints of traditional housing.

As we look to the future, I'm excited to see how tiny homes will continue to evolve. Whether it's through innovative designs, new building techniques, or the ways they adapt to changing lifestyles, tiny homes remain a symbol of hope and possibility in an ever-changing world. And after ten years in the industry, I can confidently say: the best is yet to come.

Curious about tiny houses?

 Tiny House Expo

31st Oct - 2nd Nov Mystery Creek Hamilton

[Find out more >](#)



10

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



1/4 Acre Near Hanmer Springs



CANTERBURY

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

 \$150 per week

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

Approximately 1/4 acre of private, sunny land just 9km from Hanmer Springs Village, with a water supply.

Perfect for a garden, veggie growing, or keeping chickens. Not ideal for young children due to an unfenced stream. No cats (to protect abundant birdlife), but a dog may be negotiable with secure fencing.

Additional 1–2 acres of paddock available separately for sheep, horses, or horticulture. Potential for long-term tenancy for the right person or couple. Enquire for details.

NEW

LOOKING FOR LAND

Doc looking for tiny home parking spot



WĀNAKA

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

Looking for:

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

Professional in my 30s relocating south to chase mountains! Quiet, easygoing, and love hiking and travel.

My 12-year-old cat is a total love bug. My 7.8m Fox Cabins tiny home (built last year) features a wood fireplace, gas cooking, and water heating. Ideally seeking a long-term (1+ year) spot with water access; power would be great but I can go solar if needed.

Happy to provide references from my current landowner. Let me know if you have a suitable space! 😊



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