

# Tiny homes for big housing problem

QUEENSTOWN'S Pete Oswald wants "opaque" planning laws around tiny homes tidied up so they can better help fix the rental housing problem.

Yesterday, Oswald hosted a group of local decision-makers in the Queenstown-based tiny home he built, to raise awareness of the issues and hopefully find solutions.

The group, including local Southland MP Joseph Mooney, some Queenstown councillors and Chamber of Commerce chair Angela Spackman, experienced first-hand life inside a diminutive house.

Oswald says there are lots of people keen on the affordable option of a tiny home, keen to build them and landowners willing to put them on their property.

The problem is there's "no legal pathway" to legitimise the process.

The primary issue is many tiny houses are portable and, under the New Zealand Building Act, can't be used on a site as residential accommodation for more than two months at a time.

After two months, they're con-



**"No legal pathway":** Queenstowner Pete Oswald in front of his tiny home, currently being rented to a family of four

sidered a fixed building and must comply to stringent building codes, consents and provisions of council district plans.

"The rules require that you do not live in it for two more than months at a time, but councils could interpret it in a different way.

"For example, people might not live in it for one day [after two months] then move back in.

"There's so much opaqueness."

Oswald's portable tiny house is located on private property, being rented by a family of four who were "in desperate need of a house".

He previously lived in it with his family for two years, during which time they were forced to move it to three different locations.

"Including once when our baby was three months old — a horrendous time that impacted the income from our business and our mental health.

"When you boil it down to what people need, it's a safe and affordable house to live in."

He gives Queenstown's council credit for "not getting in the way" of tiny house dwellers in the district.

"Council's stance has been 'stay out of sight, stay out of mind, stay hidden'.

"That may have worked when there was just a few of us in the Basin, but I estimate there's now at least 100 tiny houses in the district, all operating under the radar.

"Tiny houses are a really good market-driven solution to the housing crisis that we want to be able to better use."

Councillor Niki Gladding says she'll take the matter back to council.

— MATT PORTER