

Additional Questions - Department of Communities and Justice

Current administrative and contractual arrangements between Land and Property NSW and private providers of maintenance services

- Given there are four separate avenues for tenants, do tenants get confused about where they need to go in relation to maintenance requests?

Answer

Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) has no evidence that tenants get confused about how to report maintenance. Tenants can report maintenance using whichever channels are most convenient for them:

- Phone - calling the Maintenance line (1800 422 322) using their own device or by using the free phone services available in DCJ offices, or
- Online – through eRepair.

Tenants can seek assistance from DCJ staff at their local office should they need assistance in logging a repair request through either channel.

Tenants are advised at the commencement of their tenancy (sign-up) about how to log repair requests including the need to report urgent maintenance or repairs to the maintenance phone line as soon as possible. During the sign-up process, DCJ staff will assist the tenant in downloading and registering for the MyHousing App and advise them they can lodge non-urgent maintenance requests online via eRepair.

Tenants are reminded throughout their tenancy how and where to report maintenance, for example during a home visit where maintenance issues are raised or identified.

Management and lodging of maintenance issues

- Are all tenants aware that lodging a request electronically via DCJ website becomes a non-urgent repair?

Answer

The eRepair system caters for over 500 different types of repairs that can be selected and logged. Where a tenant attempts to log an urgent repair they are directed to call the maintenance line instead. For repair items that are considered by Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) as falling into the Planned Maintenance program, tenants are advised of this upon submission of the eRepair request. For all other repair items, the Maintenance Contractor Call Centre (CCC) will contact the tenant after the request has been received and advise the tenant of the response timeframes associated for each repair item.

- Who is responsible for the management of the repair and maintenance requests received via the eRepair website? Who manages the maintenance system in DCJ?

Answer

All eRepair requests are routed automatically to the CCC based on the postcode entered into the tenancy details page of eRepair. The CCC staff will register the request and action it accordingly.

The entire maintenance system (planned and responsive) is managed by the LAHC, with DCJ staff being the conduit between LAHC and the tenants. The eRepair 'system' is maintained within DCJ.

- How many requests are received by DCJ to manage self-funded alterations and unauthorised alterations to a LAHC property?

Answer

Information regarding alteration requests is recorded against an individual tenant's record in DCJ's record-keeping database. DCJ is not able to provide advice on the number of alterations requests.

Projects for tenant engagement/education

- Can you provide more details on the project "Set for Success" in partnership with LAHC? What are some of the achievements of this project?

Answer

Set for Success (SfS) is an initiative by DCJ and LAHC to expand the capabilities of the existing IVY (I Visit You) mobile application. IVY is an app that DCJ tenancy staff use when they are undertaking field work. The aim of SfS is to enable staff to more easily capture, report and respond to areas where a tenant may need more support in managing their tenancy.

Through SfS the IVY app is being enhanced to provide more real time information to staff about the support services that a tenant may have, so that staff can have more timely conversations with tenants where additional support may be needed. It will also introduce the capability to send tenants information on the spot about how to maintain their property (links to videos and factsheets), while improving the method by which property care, damage or hoarding issues are recorded and reported.

These enhancements are intended to equip tenancy staff with the tools and information they need to address property issues quickly and more effectively, ultimately helping tenants to maintain a successful tenancy. The SfS changes will be implemented state-wide by the end of 2021.

- How often does DCJ hold seminars to educate tenants and/or service agencies about common maintenance topics?

Answer

There is no widespread seminar program to educate tenants and/or service agencies regarding common maintenance topics.

There are however various marketing tools used by DCJ and LAHC to educate tenants and service agencies about maintenance and property care. These tools include educational videos on the DCJ website and YouTube, regular social media campaigns and articles in the tenant quarterly magazine *Your Home*.

DCJ also provides advice and information about maintenance through Tenancy Advocacy Services.

DCJ has recently launched the *Tenancy Hub* on the DCJ Housing website, which hosts a range of tenancy information, advice about maintenance, modifications, pest control, mould and other property related communications including informational videos all in the one place.

NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal

- How often is DCJ involved in tenant initiated NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) maintenance matters?

Answer

DCJ staff are authorised to appear at NCAT Hearings on behalf of LAHC where LAHC is the respondent. In 2020/21 there were 197 tenant initiated NCAT matters where LAHC was the respondent.

- How often does DCJ receive tenant appeals to a maintenance decision? What is the average cost to DCJ in handling such appeals?

Answer

In 2019/20 DCJ recorded 16 appeals relating to repairs and modifications. DCJ does not hold information about the cost to handle appeal matters.

Complaints handling and tenants' satisfaction

The department's submission notes that DCJ is responsible for managing client feedback and/or complaints relating to maintenance.

- Who is responsible for tenants' complaints? What are some of the strategies in place to improve tenant satisfaction and reduce tenant complaints?

Answer

DCJ manages and responds to tenant complaints regarding maintenance. DCJ seeks advice from LAHC to respond to specific matters repairs and maintenance matters.

The DCJ website encourages tenants to speak with a DCJ staff member first before entering a complaint. Our staff are trained to try and resolve the matter for the tenant wherever possible. At any time a tenant can submit Client Feedback over the phone or online and DCJ staff will investigate the matter.

Between July and September 2021 DCJ is delivering a new training package to all DCJ tenancy management staff via virtual classroom. The training will refresh staff knowledge about how the maintenance system works including the AMS contract, instructions on how staff are to support and inform tenants about maintenance, and the process for escalating tenant issues.