

### **Question 1**

The Committee has heard evidence that community providers have been granted better stock and less difficult tenants? Is this correct, and if so, why has this occurred?

### **Response**

The above suggestion is incorrect although there are points of difference between public housing and community housing in some regards.

Community housing stock is generally in better condition than public housing stock. Few community housing providers (CHPs) manage estate portfolios, where older stock tends to be concentrated. As the community housing sector has only been in existence for 30 years its own stock is generally newer. In addition, almost 6,000 new properties were transferred to CHPs as part of the *Nation Building Economic Stimulus Program* between 2009 and 2012. Over 9,000 older public housing dwellings in rural and regional locations have been transferred to community housing management in the last 15 years.

The majority of long term community housing is managed by 25 CHPs which are required to use *Housing Pathways*. This is the multi-provider access system for housing assistance in NSW. It delivers a single waiting list known as the *NSW Housing Register* from which Housing NSW and the participating CHPs must select tenants. The same criteria for assessing eligibility and prioritising access to social housing applies across all parts of the system.

**Question 2**

The Committee has heard evidence that Housing NSW staffing recruitment, training and support practices are leading to unsatisfactory tenancy management. For example, the Committee has heard that frontline staff in some areas are comprised of nearly two thirds casual staff. If correct, is this a problem? What is being done to address staffing issues?

**Response**

The former Housing NSW occasionally used temporary staff or contingent labour. There is no evidence that this causes unsatisfactory tenancy management.

FACS has a number of training and management supports in place to control the quality of tenancy management services, and specifically to support new staff.

**Question 3**

Who should be responsible for addressing long term social issues like sense of entitlement, the attractiveness of welfare over work, or the inability to leave social housing? Should these costs be attributed to social housing? How is Housing NSW addressing these broader social issues?

**Response**

All three levels of government in Australia have roles in supporting people to participate in their communities, breaking disadvantage, and in providing opportunities and support to people who are looking for work or engaged in education.

The Commonwealth and states have previously sought to improve service delivery and funding settings. The White Paper on the Reform of the Federation is a new opportunity to work with the Commonwealth to reform roles and responsibilities to deliver better outcomes to clients.

Within the NSW Government, there is no one agency with overall responsibility for broad social issues. FACS has limited levers to address such broad issues on its own, but collaborates with other government agencies to influence policy settings and service system design with the aim of improving outcomes for tenants. Across social services, government agencies are required to work together to address such issues and put in place programs and services that interrelate and support joint outcomes across portfolio areas.

**Question 4**

Does NSW currently have any programs (or intention to have) that allow for or encourage equity buy-in to public housing?

**Response**

Under FACS' *Sale of Homes Policy*, people living in public housing may apply to purchase the home they are living in. FACS generally approves the sale if it is not excluded under specific circumstances outlined in the policy. Potential home purchasers are required to obtain their own finance through a private lender.

The Aboriginal Housing Office's *Home Purchase Scheme* also allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to potentially purchase the dwelling they currently rent.

**Question 5**

Would tenants who are part owners or have a potential to be part owners of their tenancy, be likely to be better tenants and reduce overall tenancy management costs associated with their home?

**Response**

It is difficult to predict how tenancy management costs would be affected by a scheme where ownership was shared. That said, if a person living in a social housing dwelling was a part owner of the property it would be reasonable to expect them to be partially responsible for certain costs associated with property ownership.

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**Additional Comment**

The Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) wishes to offer an additional comment further to its previous response in relation to the above question.

With appropriate support, FACS encourages tenants to improve their circumstances, which may include moving into private rental accommodation or even home ownership. To facilitate tenant transitions from public housing, FACS only offers time-limited tenancies to all new tenants, followed by an income review towards the end of their tenancy. In addition, tenants are required and assisted to move to private rental if their income crosses a certain threshold. The current rent policy also provides for a reduction in subsidy as a tenant's income increases, until a point where the tenant pays the same market rent as they would in the private sector.