

**Questions on Notice – Public Accounts Committee hearing into the Auditor-General's  
2013 performance report: *Making the Best use of Public Housing***

**Question 1**

With regards to the oversight of tenancy matters by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (which has assumed the role of the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal), are there any areas of tribunal policy or practice where the Department of Family and Community Services would recommend changes?

**Response 1**

The NCAT should have regard to the housing needs of those waiting for housing assistance as well as the needs of the individuals appearing before it.

The NCAT should also consider how it can assure itself that relevant neighbour and community voices are heard, particularly in serious cases where witnesses may be scared to provide evidence.

**Question 2**

What are the objects of the *Housing Act 2001* against which FACS should be reporting? Which objects are not included and why?

**Response 2**

FACS will report against any objects of the *Housing Act 2001* for which it has available data in early 2015.

**Question 3**

Can you report on progress to develop tools that draw on and use evidence to inform decision making? Can you give examples of improved policies and practices which reflects an evidence-based approach and or results achieved?

**Response 3**

FACS has made substantial efforts to build its research and evaluation capacity, including through creating an internal unit specifically dedicated to policy and practice relevant evidence collection.

FACS Analysis and Research(FACSAR) branch provides advice to the rest of the agency on relevant research, expertise in the development of internal evaluations and research, analysis of bodies of research to inform policy and program decisions and advice on gaps in evidence.

FACS draws on such evidence in developing policy and providing advice to the Government so that effective policies can be promoted and ineffective ones can be discontinued.

**Question 4**

Has the organisational planning strategy been commenced and when it will be completed?

**Response 4**

Development of the FACS Corporate Planning Framework (organisational planning strategy) is due to be completed in 2015. The Corporate Planning Framework will take account of social housing policy and the portfolio strategy.

**Question 5**

Can you outline the responsibilities for delivery and reporting detailed in the FACS business plans?

**Response 5**

District Directors deliver and monitor business plans and report on them to the FACS Board.

**Question 6**

What changes to performance measuring and reporting have been made or are under consideration as a result of updating the performance and reporting framework?

**Response 6**

FACS recently released its Strategic Statement which sets the out the vision, values and objectives that will guide and unite the department over the next few years. The FACS Performance Framework ensures that performance measures used within FACS align with the strategic statement. This will assist FACS to internally monitor and improve its performance and externally report on its achievements through its Annual Report and Annual Statistical Report.

**Question 7**

Has a review process commenced to identify and assess policies and procedures which limit the achievement of objectives? Can you report any results?

**Response 7**

As part of its approach to continuous business improvement, FACS has initiated a number of program reviews which remain in progress.

**Question 8**

What progress is being made to include efficiency and effectiveness reporting for public housing use as part of FACS' performance reporting process?

**Response 8**

Specific measures related to housing and homeless outcomes in the FACS Strategic Statement and linked to efficiency and effectiveness are being developed. These will focus on:

- improving the economic and social outcomes of people receiving housing, assistance;
- reducing the rate of people experiencing homelessness; and
- improving the financial position of the social housing portfolio to ensure that FACS can continue to assist as many people as possible

**Question 9**

Can you report progress on the development of the strategy for managing housing estates to deliver a sustainable reduction in disadvantage? What government agencies and NGOs are FACS working with on this strategy? How will the costs of the various contributions towards the strategy be attributed across and between agencies and NGOs?

**Response 9**

The development of a new policy approach to social housing and portfolio strategy will propose a long-term strategy for managing public housing estates. FACS will consult extensively with other Government agencies and relevant NGOs during the development of the new social housing policy.

**Question**

With regard to ... changes to the role and practice of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal, the Committee would be pleased to receive specific legislative and policy changes which your department may be actively considering.

**Response**

Anti-social behaviour in the form of nuisance and annoyance occurs when a tenant interferes with the peace, comfort, or privacy of neighbours.

The Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) can deal with matters involving potential breaches of a tenancy agreement by a series of actions ranging from informal approaches, documented arrangements, through to seeking formal orders from the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT). The action taken will depend on the seriousness of the breach.

FACS cannot take actions that are not breaches of a tenancy agreement to the NCAT for resolution.

In general, staff encourage complainants to resolve minor disputes themselves. In dealing with minor disputes, staff can provide advice to the complainant(s) on the options available to resolve the matter themselves.

If the complaint, or issue, is of a more serious nature and there are no appropriate options available to the complainant, or attempts at resolution have been unsuccessful, FACS can investigate and take appropriate action. Within the constraints of privacy law, FACS endeavours to explain that action to the complainant in a meaningful way.

FACS considers anti-social behaviour and property damage by tenants to be serious issues and is continually examining system improvements. However, in terms of specific legislative changes, FACS has no further advice to that already provided to the Committee during the hearing.