

**Submission
No 35**

TENANCY MANAGEMENT IN SOCIAL HOUSING

Organisation: Aboriginal Housing Company Limited
Name: Ms Lani Tuitavake
Position: General Manager
Date Received: 14/08/2014

- **The cost effectiveness of current tenancy management arrangements in public housing particularly compared to private and community housing sectors.**

Our answers will always be related to our particular company governance. For us it has been cost effective, but then again we have properties scattered throughout different LGAs. We do not have the manpower or workforce of a large company, but our situation is unique in that at the end of the day the tenant has a close relationship with our team, is a member of the company, but their property management is outsourced, therefore they are offered a property management service.

Our response time has a quick turn-around from the time something is reported from the time it is actioned, compared to public housing which can have a turn-around of up to 21 days. We have our own preferred tradespeople, but also with the level of competition, we are getting more value for dollar because everyone has an expected price.

One of the unique things about us and our organization is that if there is a death or sickness in a family, we take that into consideration and are in contact with the agents, we address cultural aspects, again we can do this because we are a small company and communicate well with our tenants.

As for situations where there is a complex situation whether it is a financial problem or domestic violence, we will bring the tenant into our office and have a discussion and try to resolve the matter. We get assistance for them/point them in the right direction. For example with tenants with high arrears, we have helped them seek financial assistance i.e financial counsellors. With domestic violence, we have the contacts and seek to ensure that even that they come to site, it isn't something that we second guess i.e changing locks.

Once we are notified of an incident, we take immediate action. It is the same if there is any incidence of child abuse notified, we take immediate action, so it is addressed as soon possible. I feel that when I have been out to properties, you can't go to a property and ignore something you see if it is not right. Our staff members attend property inspections with our agents and bring on board

necessary action, eg by utilising the Keep them safe initiative . You look at the cost effectiveness and try to balance it with the social impact.

- **The range and effectiveness of support services provided to tenants in social housing**

One of the issues it is all very having the range and policies, but it is another matter having the manpower and resources to meet these needs. Understanding that the frontline staff need to have specific training, and policies are needed to reflect what is happening currently. For example, when frontline people have abusive people eg Centrelink bar you if you behave abusively. The frontline people need to know they are valued and are safe, we are dealing in a time with escalating needs from community members in low socio economic brackets.

Even the physical presence of the building needs to be uplifted. We talk about equality but the places we send people to do do business is like stepping back in time., cold, depressing offices and buildings, makes people feel they really don't matter.

- **Outcomes for tenants from current tenancy management arrangements; and**

We have seen nil incidents, in the past 5 years we have only had one eviction. We have worked with tenants with arrears and arranged payment plans for them to pay their outstanding rent.

With our tenants there is definitely a strong sense of ownership, they consider their properties to be “home”.

I feel part of the problem is that it is a closed tendering system, and you basically get what you pay for. I do not think the R & M system gives value for money

- **Possible measures to improve tenancy management services**

I think if they were to give a budget and you work with that, you have to find your own...more flexibility