



MAYOR'S OFFICE

22 February 2006

The Committee Manager
 Public Bodies Review Committee
 Parliament House
 Macquarie Street
 SYDNEY NSW 2000

INQUIRY INTO THE ALLOCATION OF SOCIAL HOUSING

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the Inquiry into the Allocation of Social Housing.

Dubbo has a population in excess of 38,000 residents. Dubbo has a number of Department of Housing tenants residing in four specific locations. There have been ongoing social problems in some of the Department of Housing Estates, particularly in the Gordon Estate.

The Gordon Estate, located in West Dubbo, is relatively close to the Central Business District of Dubbo and has a large population of Departmental tenants. The Estate also utilizes a large proportion of Police resources due to the anti social behaviour and criminal activities common in this area. It is characterized by a large Aboriginal population, has a high Centrelink payment recipient base and a high youth and children population percentage.

The issues that I see as relevant, contributing factors to Social Housing allocation are:-

- Housing should be allocated on a basis that is culturally appropriate. There are a large proportion of Aboriginal people residing in the public housing estates in Dubbo and often extended family live in the one residence. This factor needs to be taken into account, so that adequate shelter is provided that will accommodate families who may require more sleeping space. The formula for the allocation of residences in a culturally appropriate manner may well be extrapolated from the Australian Bureau of Statistics demographic records.

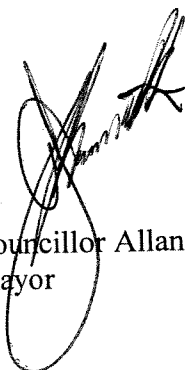


- There is a constant movement of people from smaller communities west of Dubbo who are migrating to the City in search of work, access to services and access to shopping. These people are generally transient and move to a community for a period of time and then move on or back to their own homes. These people usually live with family members or friends in homes that are designed to accommodate families of say five or six. In an extended family this can swell to thirteen and above.

Determining an appropriate length of time for visitors to temporarily reside in a public home in these circumstances also needs clarification and enforcement. The Department of Housing Tenancy Agreement states that visitors can stay for up to six weeks, yet the Residential Tenancies Act allows a temporary stay for up to 28 days. This issue alone can be problematic not just for the registered tenant but for the community in the immediate area.

- In previous years the tenancy make up in Estates has been one primarily of those in some form of employment. In the last ten years this has shifted to one of a high dependency on Centrelink payments. Of course, the challenges created have seen an impact within the whole community. One such challenge is a decreasing rate of home ownership. It is because of this lower socio economic demographic that many residents have been unable to purchase their own home. In the past, purchasing a Department of Housing residence generally provides the purchaser an entry into the home owners market. Following from this, pride in their home and its presentation ensures a valued and aesthetically pleasing neighbourhood. A bonus from living in this type of neighbourhood is it offers a sense of belonging and a real sense of community.

In closing, the allocation of social housing is impacted by a range of factors. Some of these factors can be examined and hopefully solved within existing legislation. Ultimately, the Department of Housing cannot alone, address social ills within their estates and the community. I would suggest that through a multi agency and community approach, positive outcomes for those tenants and the wider community will be achieved.



Councillor Allan Smith
Mayor