

**Submission
No 16**

TENANCY MANAGEMENT IN SOCIAL HOUSING

Organisation: Johanna O'Dea and Alexandra Dwellings Tenants Group

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**Submission to the
Public Accounts Committee
NSW Legislative Council**

We welcome your inquiry into tenancy management in social housing. JAAG comprises of a number of residents from the Johanna O'Dea complex and Alexandria Dwellings. We have been meeting monthly for the past three years to discuss issues of concern to tenants. In the past our meetings have included people from Housing, the City of Sydney, the Police, non-government agencies and Jamie Parker, our local MP. The main aims of JAAG are:

- to facilitate participation of the local social housing residents in their local community,
- to facilitate improved communication between local social housing residents and significant local agencies, particularly Housing NSW,
- and to foster a sense of collaboration where new ideas and community initiatives will be encouraged and supported in an ongoing way, by residents and agencies.

We would like to inform the Committee about our problems with the current tenancy management arrangements in NSW social housing.

The current arrangements in relation to maintenance are a source of frustration for many tenants. In particular, reporting maintenance concerns to the Call Centre is a constant cause for frustration. Many tenants no longer have landlines, using instead pre-paid mobile phones. Tenants reporting issues often wait for long periods (up to 40 minutes), which is not feasible on mobile phones. Very often tenants report that 'nothing happens' with their maintenance reports and that they are not kept informed about plans. It seems to take a very long time for anything to happen and sometimes priorities seem to be wrong, with serious maintenance issues not addressed. Tenants at Johanna O'Dea have been complaining about a foul smell from a sewer for

over 2 years but nothing has happened. Water pressure within the building is also very unreliable, once again nothing has happened.

In the past we had regular meetings with staff from Housing and this helped identify the priorities as well as keeping us informed about progress. Contractors now arrive to undertake work and we are not sure why or where the decision was made. We've requested that this happen again but have been told Housing can no longer do this.

We believe meeting regularly helps not only tenants but also the government. Recently, for example, there was a problem with vandalism in our building. The government didn't discuss with JAAG or any other tenants what might be the cause, but instead came to us with a solution. The solution was costly and wouldn't have solved the problem. It would have saved time and money if they had spoken to us first.

Housing's draft tenant engagement framework states its commitment to engage with tenants and promote their participation in aspects of their property and tenancy management.¹ Indeed, as the framework highlights, tenant engagement helps improve the responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery and therefore is of particular importance to this inquiry in its exploration of the effectiveness of current tenancy management.

As tenants we are directly affected by poor maintenance management and hope the committee finds way to improve the current system.

Thank you,

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On behalf of JAAG.

¹ Housing NSW, 2012. *Tenant Engagement Framework. Consultation Draft*. Retrieved from <http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/1A029D92-A97B-4AFD-BE74-0C79021ECD25/0/TenantEngagementFrameworkConsultationDraft.pdf>