

**Submission
No 20**

INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF NSW PUBLIC HOUSING MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS

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NSW PARLIAMENT

Submission to NSW Parliament Inquiry into the Management of Public Housing Maintenance Contracts:

Your assistance would be Appreciated in Please accepting this Submission from gathered information provided through my NSW Local Government role as an Indigenous Greens Councillor for boondiboondi Bondi Ward Waverley Council assisting NSW Public Housing Tenants (PHTs) and dealing with some of these issues which have also been raised at various Times with NSW Local and State Elected Members.

Inquiry Terms of Reference (a) to (g) are covered in the text of this Submission.

Tenants complain about the inappropriate perhaps illegal Asbestos Removal processes particularly prevalent in the older Public Housing stock. Asbestos Removal from Bondi taken from bathroom ceilings and Asbestos removed from other dwellings' kitchens have occurred without the Workers observed having proper safety equipment (masks etc). Asbestos has been dumped uncovered by some contractors in the front yard of PH. SomeTimes this improper treatment of Asbestos has been on a Friday afternoon making it difficult to get the responsible contractor and NSW PH administration to attend to the problem. In such cases calls for Help to Municipal Council Rangers have been made and brought to my attention.

There is a general expectation that PHTs should be properly warned of such health risky Asbestos Removal and similar health risk maintenance. Internal and External Neighbours are not being properly warned about maintenance PHT work that may have adverse health risks for inadequately and insensitively communicating with Special and Vulnerable Tenants with Mental Health and Rare Health problems , which is the reason why They are PH Tenants in the first place. Workers are routinely observed not wearing masks with dust everywhere. The proper cleaning and avoidance of dust and toxic air means the contract Workers and Tenants need to be protected , but are not.

The Communication Strategy in relation to maintenance contractors also lacks Due Notice and recognition of the Literacy , Education and Language NonEnglish Speaking Background and Disabilities levels of PHTs. This problem occurs in

reverse when the English speaking competency of the PH contractors is such that the PHTs cannot communicate properly with these contractors which then leads to obvious miscommunication and strained relationships that could be Avoided between PHTs, Contractors and PH Administrators. Consultation over the use of materials for renovation should occur with PH Tenants , especially those who suffer with a health problem or disability.

Some PHTs complain that the High pressure Water needed for Fire hose safety is lacking and maintenance slow or lacking. Emergency Accommodation in such health risk maintenance situations is not provided to PHTs to escape the health risk whilst it is present from maintenance work being done on the PHT's residence or nearby Internal and External Neighbours.

Assurances given that a mess will not be made or it will be cleaned up have proven to be empty words on some occasions when the PHTs have then been left to contend with the mess in perhaps exacerbated adverse health circumstances.

Elders and other PHTs with Asthma, Emphysema and similar respiratory ailments and rare Multiple Chemical Sensitivity , or Chemical Injury, should have Their interests and health protected by the use of nonvolatile solvent paint. Melamine , plastic coverings of kitchen renewals, and evaporating glue have been known to cause PHT breathing problems every time the PH Tenant opens the PH renovated kitchen cupboards because the plastic melamine covering is very slowly evaporating in the enclosed space. The use of V.O.C. Volatile Organic Compound paint should be examined.

Sewerage leaks into garages below PH residents have been observed where the Plumbers didn't use plastic sheeting to avoid sewerage going everywhere , resulting in Gastroenteritis being suffered by PH Tenants coming into contact with the contamination.

Sewerage blocks and overflows have not resulted in some instances with compensation to PHTs for furniture and other loss.

A Client Service Officer effectively saying when asked by a PHT about the provision of Emergency Accommodation in circumstances of needing to escape adverse effects from PH maintenance , "I'll decide if You need it (Emergency Accommodation) " , and then talking with the PHT's General Practitioner Doctor and shouting at that Doctor during the process of confirming the PHT's medical condition is unacceptable NSW Public Servant behaviour and the Inquiry should also cause the examination and investigation of such incidents. Due Notice and the real option of emergency housing if the PH Tenant has no Family or Friends with whom to stay should be made available in circumstances of escaping adverse health circumstances during PHT contractor work.

PHTs object to being seen as Living in a kind of prison model and being treated like Detainees. PHTs seek a respectable degree of Honesty, Transparency and Respect for verifiable Health conditions making PH Living difficult and vulnerable. The Tenants see Themselves as providing these PH Public Servant and Contractor jobs but strenuously Object to being taintedly treated like scum, criminals, and with a 'Prison guard mentality'.

The sensitivities of Tenants reportedly are demonstrated in an incident where an Elderly PHT died of Lung Cancer 2 years after staying in Her house while the kitchen was replaced that may have had Asbestos risks , but on the assurance from contractors that it was OK. Complaints occur that Contractors don't use the right materials, or drop sheets and do not isolate working areas in order to minimise dust and associated trouble producing a lack of Safety , and in one instance what was described as "kilograms of dust".

Nearby construction affecting PHTs is also a tangential matter to the Inquiry that raises externally the internal issues covered by this Inquiry and Submission's complaints.

Whilst there is recognition that Public Housing stock is sometimes run down PHTs complain that contractor repairs are slipshod , only temporary, and shortterm solutions rather than permanent repairs to very old housing stock eg. Rotting wood in sash window frames.

Multiple Toilet flushings are required sometimes because of inadequate water pressure to flush down waste products. This makes it more difficult for older People and increases the risk of Tenants getting Sick. Step visibility enhancing bright strips could Help visually Impaired Clients/ Elderly Tenants if installed and maintained properly thereby reducing the liability of Trip N Falls.

In relation to costs the PHTs question the efficiency of lots of small jobs being continually patched compared to longer term lasting repairs. The NSW PH vision is seen as shorttermism.

Some PHTs in particular buildings report little Vandalism of PH property but ask to be seen as Vulnerable, Underprivileged People and Individuals not tainted as criminals.

An observed incident where verification of contractor work quality was done by NSW PH Administration , showed redoing was required but the Contractor did not follow up with repairing the poor work, and the PH Administration did not follow up to make sure that what was required was redone.

Poor Contractors and ad hoc Quality Surveyor follow up wastes PH funds.

Some PHTs feel the Grand Contradiction that the NSW PH Administration really don't want Tenants to really complain, otherwise the PHTs who complain are labeled as troublemakers and at risk of losing Their Homes.

If I can Help this Inquiry further Please let me know.

Yours in Community,
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