

**Submission
No 2**

FOLLOW-UP REVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT OF NSW PUBLIC HOUSING MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS

Organisation: City of Sydney Council

Date Received: 18 December 2020

17 December 2020

Our Ref: 2020/525917

Committee Manager
Legislative Assembly Public Accounts Committee
via email: pac@parliament.nsw.gov.au and online portal

Dear Madam, Sir

Follow-up Review of the Management of NSW Public Housing Maintenance Contracts

Please find attached the City of Sydney's submission to the Follow-up Review of the Management of NSW Public Housing Maintenance Contracts.

The City of Sydney has a long and proud history of working with social housing tenants for resilient, safe, connected communities. We have a vision for a future city for all, one where high-quality social housing is available for those who need it.


We work collaboratively with NSW Land and Housing Corporation and the Department of Communities and Justice. We greatly value this partnership and our shared commitment to the wellbeing of social housing communities. Our submission makes recommendations based upon our experience of working with NSW Government agencies, local services and residents.

Our recommendations call upon the NSW Government to:

1. Commit to investment in a significant net increase of the supply of public housing in the inner city and invest in the retention and high-quality maintenance of existing public housing.
2. Commit to retaining dedicated inner city place-based managers for assets and places to foster and coordinate partnerships and support place-based community development approaches in high density public housing estates.
3. Increase the funding for tenancy support and brokerage provided by specialist services to support residents with complex needs to successfully maintain their tenancies and connect with their community.
4. Retrofit all public housing stock to align with the basic requirements of the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines.
5. Continue to support collaborative partnerships with the City of Sydney to address resident concerns and to enhance the safety, liveability and amenity of public housing estates and properties.
6. Invest in energy efficiency retrofits to improve lighting, temperature control and onsite solar sharing options to assist tenants to reduce energy bills and improve environmental outcomes.
7. Provide localised budget and delegation to Department of Communities and Justice local housing teams to assist tenants in completing minor repairs and maintenance works and deliver innovative responses for example the Maintenance Pop Up scheme on a regular schedule.

If you would like to discuss this submission in more detail, please contact [REDACTED]
by phone on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,


Monica Barone
Chief Executive Officer

Follow-up Review of the Management of NSW Public Housing Management Contracts

City of Sydney Submission to the NSW Government's
Legislative Assembly Inquiry into the Management of
the NSW Public Housing Maintenance Contracts

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Recommendations	4
3. City of Sydney Context	5
4. Response to the Follow-up Review	7
a) Whether changes to public housing maintenance introduced in 2015/16 have delivered measurable improvements and evidence-based outcomes for public housing tenants.	7
c) The current repair status and physical condition of the public housing stock.	9
d) Methodologies and processes for ensuring consistent public housing maintenance standards across NSW, including quality assurance, effectiveness, efficiency and contract supervision.	12
Appendix 1	14

1. Executive Summary

The City of Sydney (the City) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the *Follow-up Review of the Management of NSW Public Housing Management Contracts*. The City has a long and proud history of advocating for and with public housing tenants to increase the supply and quality of social housing in Sydney. Housing is a human right - access to safe and sustainable housing is fundamental to a resilient and thriving global city.

The Parliament of NSW Public Accounts Committee is following up its previous 2016 inquiry into the management of public housing maintenance contracts in NSW, with a view to reviewing improvements to the operation of the current system.¹

The review was prompted following the 2013 report of the NSW Auditor-General - *Making the Best Use of Public Housing* that found public housing in NSW only met 44 percent of need due to constraints in the portfolio and funding arrangements, with public housing ageing and increasingly not fit for purpose.

Impacts to the public housing environment are often related to anti-social behavioural issues many of which result from a lack of support for vulnerable people. This includes, property damage, illegal dumping, street drinking, discarded drug paraphernalia, hoarding and squalor, graffiti, and public urination.

The Public Accounts Committee's 2016 report noted that: "*Whereas public housing was initially established to accommodate low income working families after the Second World War, it has since evolved to become a safety net for vulnerable individuals and communities, including the elderly, people with a disability and those experiencing domestic violence.*"² The increasingly complex needs of public housing tenants require an investment in the people and the place to ensure the most vulnerable in our community are supported.

Social impacts along with a lack of investment in new public housing and reinvestment in existing housing contributes to ill health, physically unsafe environments, and places where people do not feel safe or connected. Compounding issues place increased demand on local health and police services and have significant negative economic impacts. Ongoing investment in property maintenance and support for vulnerable people is required to enable the success of social housing communities.

The City recognises that working collaboratively and in partnership with the NSW Government and local services is the most effective way to support thriving and diverse communities. The City employs a dedicated Social Housing Project Manager to work with residents and agencies to improve outcomes for social housing communities.

The City of Sydney acknowledges the merits of this follow up review on the management of NSW public housing management contracts and looks forward to continued collaboration with our state government partners to improve the quality and standard of public housing in Sydney.

¹ Management of NSW Public Housing maintenance contracts/Legislative Assembly, Public Accounts Committee. (Sydney, N.S.W.); the Committee, 2016. October 2016, p v.
[https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/ladocs/inquiries/2194/Managementper cent20ofper cent20NSWper cent20Publicper cent20Housingper cent20Maintenanceper cent20Contracts.PDF](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/ladocs/inquiries/2194/Managementper%20ofper%20NSWper%20Publicper%20Housingper%20Maintenanceper%20Contracts.PDF)

² Management of NSW Public Housing maintenance contracts, /Legislative Assembly, Public Accounts Committee. (Sydney, N.S.W.); the Committee, 2016, page v
[https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/ladocs/inquiries/2194/Managementper cent20ofper cent20NSWper cent20Publicper cent20Housingper cent20Maintenanceper cent20Contracts.PDF](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/ladocs/inquiries/2194/Managementper%20ofper%20NSWper%20Publicper%20Housingper%20Maintenanceper%20Contracts.PDF)

2. Recommendations

The City of Sydney makes the following recommendations to the NSW Government as part of the *Follow-up Review of the Management of NSW Public Housing Management Contracts*.

1. Commit to investment in a significant net increase of the supply of public housing in the inner city and invest in the retention and high-quality maintenance of existing public housing.
2. Commit to retaining dedicated inner city place-based managers for assets and places to foster and coordinate partnerships and support place-based community development approaches in high density public housing estates.
3. Increase the funding for tenancy support and brokerage provided by specialist services to support residents with complex needs to successfully maintain their tenancies and connect with their community and age in place.
4. Retrofit all public housing stock to align with the basic requirements of the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines.
5. Continue to support collaborative partnerships with the City of Sydney to address resident concerns and to enhance the safety, liveability and amenity of public housing estates and properties.
6. Invest in energy efficiency retrofits to improve lighting, temperature control and onsite solar sharing options to assist tenants to reduce energy bills and improve environmental outcomes.
7. Provide localised budget and delegation to Department of Communities and Justice local teams to assist tenants in completing minor repairs and maintenance works and deliver innovative responses for example the Maintenance Pop Up scheme on a regular schedule.

3. City of Sydney Context

City of Sydney Area

The City of Sydney Council Local Government Area includes the CBD, The Rocks, Millers Point, Ultimo, Pyrmont, Surry Hills, Woolloomooloo, Kings Cross, Elizabeth Bay, Rushcutters Bay, Darlinghurst, Chippendale, Darlington, Camperdown, Forest Lodge, Glebe, Alexandria, Beaconsfield, Centennial Park, Erskineville, Newtown, Redfern, Rosebery, Waterloo and Zetland.

In June 2019 more than 246,343 people were estimated to live within our boundaries, which take in 26 square kilometres. At that time, the median age of our residents was 32 and their median weekly household income was \$1,916. By the City's projections, we forecast that the City's population would reach about 339,498 by 2036 – well over double the 2001 population – with an average annual forecast increase of about 2.1 per cent.

City of Sydney LGA has one of the highest number of households living in social housing in the Greater Sydney area according to the 2016 Census, both in terms of the absolute number, as well as the proportion of all households that stated their tenure type. In June 2020 there were 9,630 social housing properties in Sydney with an estimated 15,000 residents.

A City for All – Investment in Social Housing in Sydney

An equitable city is one that creates the right circumstance where all people can flourish, fully participate and shape city life. It is where everyone is included, and benefits from the economic, cultural, social and democratic life of the City. Where no one is left out or left behind. Housing – as shelter – is a fundamental human right. Without affordable, secure and appropriate housing, people are limited in their ability to obtain and retain paid employment, access education and training, and build a better life for themselves and their dependents.

The lack of availability of social housing is a barrier to a diverse and equitable city. Safe, adequate, affordable and appropriate housing is critical to health, wellbeing and social and economic security, but many Australians cannot find housing in the private market, and the social housing system, incorporating public and community housing, is under-resourced and manifestly unable to meet demand.³ Through the City's 2050 community consultation, residents told us they value living in a neighbourhood that is home to people from all walks of life. They expressed concerns about being priced out of the city over time, thus losing their deep connections to place. This is particularly the case for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. People reported their concern about the impact of declining housing affordability and how this is undermining social diversity and forcing people to leave communities where they have always lived.

It is critical that social and supported housing be available for those who need it and that those properties continue to be improved and maintained to a high standard. This will enable people to continue to live in their neighbourhood and maintain social connections throughout their life.

³ 2019. AHURI. Social housing as infrastructure: rationale, prioritisation and investment pathway. Accessed Online: https://www.ahuri.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/43214/AHURI-Final-Report-315-Social-housing-as-infrastructure-rationale-prioritisation-and-investment-pathway.pdf

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice reports that there were 46,530 applicants on the NSW housing register at 30 June 2019, with 4,484 considered priority applicants. There is estimated to be 1,100 people on the list who have identified Sydney as a priority location for access to medical and social support.³ The average wait time is 10 years and even for those deemed high risk many can wait a minimum of two years to access long term housing. It is also widely accepted these figures grossly underrepresent the actual community need. Findings show there is a need for approximately 140,000 social housing properties in the greater Sydney area to meet the need by 2036.⁴

Despite the growing need there has been minimal investment in social housing in Sydney LGA. In the 13 years between June 2007 and June 2020 there was a net increase of 233 social housing properties in Sydney LGA. At June 2020 social (including public) housing dwellings comprised 8.1 per cent of private dwellings in the city. This proportion will continue to decline as the number of homes in the city increases to over 155,000 dwellings, unless there is significant investment in social housing in the future.⁵

The NSW Government must do more to increase the supply of social housing in the city. Investment must also be prioritised to improve and maintain existing public housing properties to support people to live in diverse communities with access to employment, cultural connections and critical support services in Sydney LGA.

Recommendation 1

Commit to investment in a significant net increase of the supply of social housing in the inner city and invest in the retention and high-quality maintenance of existing public housing.

⁴ Lawson, J., Pawson, H., Troy, L., Van den Nouwelant, R. and Hamilton, C. (2018) Social housing as infrastructure: an investment pathway, Final Report No. 306, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/306>, doi:10.18408/ahuri-5314301.

⁵ City of Sydney Housing Audit, June 2020. Access online: <https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/surveys-case-studies-reports/city-monitor-reports>

4. Response to the Follow-up Review

That the Committee inquires into and reports on the management of public housing maintenance contracts in NSW, with reference to:

a) Whether changes to public housing maintenance introduced in 2015/16 have delivered measurable improvements and evidence-based outcomes for public housing tenants.

The NSW Government supported all the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee's report of the *Inquiry into the Management of NSW Public Housing Maintenance Contracts*. The key initiatives included a new performance-based Asset Maintenance Service (AMS) contract, improvements in systems for tenants seeking repairs and better coordination of services for tenants, consistent work standards and service improvement.⁶

Ensuring tenants voices are central to decision making and responses contributes to improved systems and services that benefit the whole community. The Lord Mayor Social Housing Forums held for over 13 years provide an opportunity for public housing tenants to have their concerns addressed by senior staff and political representatives. Tenants can speak to senior staff for individualised support and raise concerns impacting multiple residents. The City welcomes the positive contribution and attendance of NSW Land and Housing Commission and Department of Communities and Justice.

The Neighbourhood Advisory Boards are another example of critical social infrastructure creating opportunities for tenants' voices to be shared and heard. This local governance structure requires ongoing funding and support to enable the meaningful participation of residents. These forums provide key feedback mechanisms for tenants to raise issues with government and non-government partners to improve social housing communities.

The City notes measurable improvement for public housing tenants following the changes to maintenance introduced in 2015/16. This is evidenced through feedback from tenants through Neighbourhood Advisory Board meetings, the Sydney Lord Mayor Social Housing Forums and records of resident requests through the City customer service channels.

The improvements can be largely attributed to the placed based coordinated approaches to supporting tenants and managing maintenance issues, examples include:

Dedicated place- based support

Inner City Asset Risk Manager

A dedicated NSW Land and Housing Corporation Asset Risk Manager for the inner city assists in addressing complex maintenance issues that cannot be resolved through the usual reporting channels. This position is critical in improving maintenance outcomes. The officer liaises directly with maintenance contract managers, tenancy managers and local government key workers who can assist in resolving issues. The asset risk manager attends tenant meetings and builds relationships with key stakeholder improving efficiencies and reducing confusion. This has led to

⁶ Family and Community Services: Land and Housing Corporation, Public Accounts Committee Inquiry into the Management of NSW Public Housing Maintenance Contracts, Progress Report, October 2017, pp 3-12
<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/ladocs/inquiries/2194/Progressper cent20Reportper cent20fromper cent20Landper cent20andper cent20Housingper cent20Corporation,per cent20Deptper cent20ofper cent20Familyper cent20andper cent20Communityper cent20Servicesper cent20-per cent20datedper cent2031per cent20Octoberper cent202017.PDF>

reductions in anti-social behaviour, increased actual and perceived safety and security in housing areas, and reports of improved general maintenance within individual properties and shared spaces.

Tenancy participation support

Continued funding by NSW Departments of Communities and Justice for tenancy participation and community engagement provides localised tenant support to facilitate capacity building initiatives and forums for tenants to raise and address local issues. Participation by NSW Land and Housing Corporation and Department of Communities and Justice staff in community meetings and events maintains relationships and collaboration with tenants, local organisations and local government in addressing maintenance related issues. These partnerships and linkages within communities establish trust, accountability and reliability which result in improved environmental and social outcomes for local areas.

Placed Based Community Development Workers

Each public housing community experiences its own challenges and opportunities. Where localised responses are delivered in partnership with agencies and residents there are notable positive outcomes. This has shown to be most successful when a dedicated community development worker or team is allocated to public housing estates. The Department of Communities and Justice operates placed based initiatives with dedicated community development workers in two key social housing estates in the inner city – at Redfern (RedLink) and at Surry Hills (Surry Hills Community Connect).

Redlink has operated since 2015 providing a co-location hub for essential health and support services for Redfern residents. Over 400 people attend the hub every week and receive legal, health, tenancy, social connection and food relief support. Redlink also enables community events, support groups, education and training and capacity building initiatives.

Surry Hills Community Connect has operated as a place-based initiative since 2017. The service provides community development activities on the Northcott estate. The program facilitates resident engagement as well as co-location of support services at a drop-in hub on the estate. Over 150 people access support at the Surry Hills Connect hub every week.

Both services operate with a community development focus that builds the capacity of tenants to collectively report issues and develop localised responses. A crucial feature of this approach is the presence of community development workers on the ground who can address and if necessary, escalate issues as they arise. This contributes to the improvement of the overall amenity and general maintenance on housing estates within the inner city.

Recommendation 2

That the NSW Government commit to retaining dedicated inner city place-based managers for assets and places to foster and coordinate partnerships and support place-based community development approaches in high density public housing estates.

Support for tenants with complex needs

The increasingly diverse and growing vulnerability of public housing communities requires specialist coordinated support for people with complex needs. Ongoing reports of anti-social behaviour and property damage are attributed to a minority of residents, many of whom have multiple support needs and are not linked with support services.

Evidence shows vulnerable people require support to access a range of services to maintain their tenancy long term. This is particularly the case for people exiting prison or other institutions, those who have experienced homelessness, people leaving domestic violence, and for those with a disability. Services required can include financial, legal, specialist disability services, acute health care, community transport services, drug and alcohol services, and community care for older people and family support services.

The City supports a housing first model for people exiting homelessness. This requires intensive individualised support for people moving into a public housing property. The current levels of support provided is often for a limited period of 3-6 months. For those with multiple and complex needs including mental health diagnoses, alcohol and other drugs use, and cognitive disability, such as acquired brain injury, and for those exiting institutions, maintaining a tenancy without support can be even more challenging. Lack of support can contribute to property damage and anti-social behaviour and impact upon the safety and amenity of the public housing community.

Recommendation 3

Increase the funding for tenancy support and brokerage provided by specialist services to support residents with complex needs to successfully maintain their tenancies, connect with their community and age in place.

c) The current repair status and physical condition of the public housing stock.

The physical condition of public housing stock in Sydney requires significant further investment. The standard of housing has direct impact on the safety and wellbeing of tenants. In 2010, LAHC reported that between 30 and 40 percent of its properties were not at its own 'well-maintained' standard.⁷ The Public Accounts Committee's 2016 report noted that the average age of a public housing dwelling is now 37 years, with 20 per cent of existing dwellings being over 50 years old.⁸

City staff and Councillors receive regular feedback from community members about a wide range of issues with the public housing stock including general maintenance, security, amenity, cleansing and waste, pest control and safety.

The City of Sydney welcomes the commitment of approximately \$270 million outlined in the 2020-2021 NSW budget for repairs and maintenance and upgrades of existing public housing properties across the state. This funding for maintenance and upgrades of current public housing properties will contribute to addressing a range of chronic maintenance and stock quality issues within the existing public housing stock.

Further investment is necessary to improve the quality of the stock in Sydney. Where possible, buildings should be retrofitted to meet the requirements outlined in the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines.⁹ Universal housing design is a key concept within the guidelines. Universal housing design features enable key living spaces to be more easily and cost-effectively adapted to meet the changing needs of home occupants across their lifetime. The guidelines recommend the inclusion of features that make homes easier and safer for all occupants, particularly including people with disability, older people, those with temporary injuries, and families with young children.

⁷ NSW Auditor-General's Report, Performance Audit, Making the best use of public housing, Housing NSW/NSW Land and Housing Corporation, 2013, p 22
https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/pdf-downloads/2013_Jul_Report_Making_the_Best_Use_of_Public_Housing.pdf

⁸ Management of NSW Public Housing maintenance contracts, Legislative Assembly, Public Accounts Committee. (Sydney, N.S.W.); the Committee, p 3 2016, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/ladocs/inquiries/2194/Managementpercent20ofpercent20NSWpercent20Publicpercent20Housingpercent20Maintenancepercent20Contracts.PDF>

⁹ Housing for All: City of Sydney Local Housing Strategy, City of Sydney, 2020, p 30
<https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/strategic-land-use-plans/local-housing-strategy>

Through supporting vulnerable people through the pandemic access to WIFI has been identified as critical infrastructure to ensure the wellbeing of vulnerable communities. The ability to supply WIFI and 4G access is hindered by the current building design causing issues for tenants. In future proofing the quality of social housing stock, provision of free WIFI should be available for all tenants.

Recommendation 4

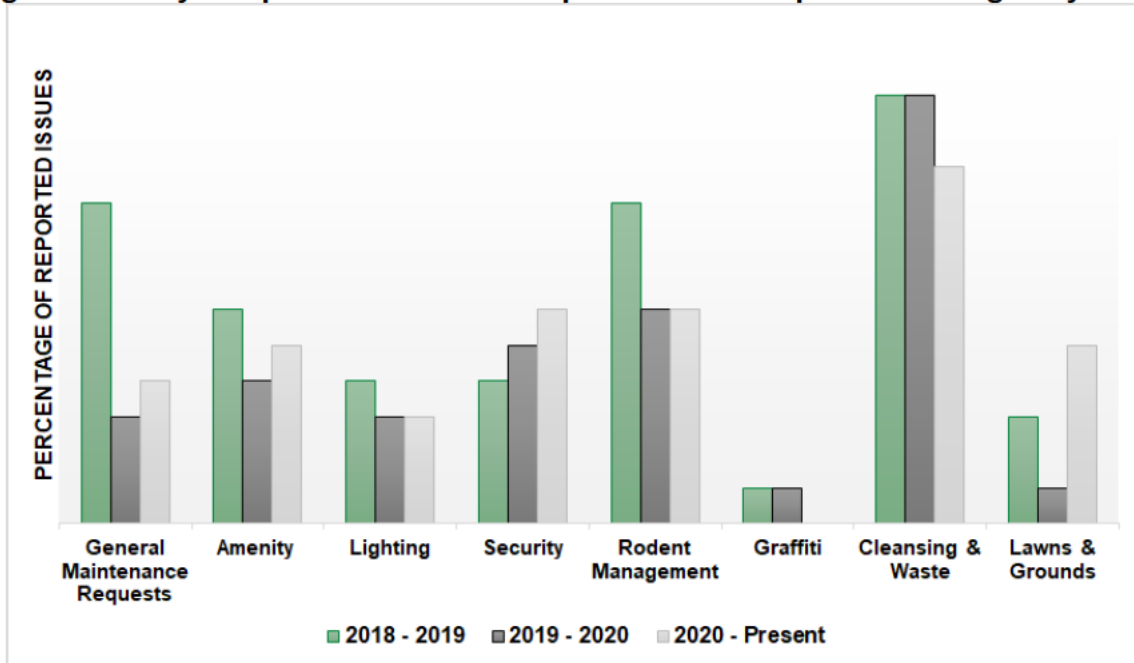
Retrofit all public housing stock to align with the basic requirements of the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines.

Managing the physical environment of public housing requires a close partnership between the City, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Land and Housing Corporation, and residents to ensure the best outcomes for public housing tenants.

The City of Sydney in partnership with Department of Communities and Justice and NSW Land and Housing Corporation established the Social Housing Operations Group in 2016 to resolve issues, and to implement collaborative responses to improve overall housing and service delivery for social housing tenants living in the Sydney local government area. Items are escalated to the meeting through all agencies from tenant feedback, site visits and planned works. All items are tracked and referenced, and reports are provided back to tenants through the Neighbourhood Advisory Meetings, Lord Mayor Social Housing Forums and direct staff responses. This partnership between state and local government contributes to improved safety, amenity and maintenance of the housing areas in the inner city.

The following graph, (figure 1) shows the predominant issues escalated to the Social Housing Operations group for the period June 2018 to November 2020. There has been a 7 per cent increase in security related issues reported and 9 per cent decrease in general maintenance escalations. Cleansing and waste being the predominant issue across all three years, with an average of 28 per cent of all issues escalated to the working group.

Figure 1. Yearly comparison of resident reported issues in public housing in Sydney¹⁰



¹⁰ This graph represents all reported issues from 2018 received through the City of Sydney Social Housing Operations group where NSW LAHC are the lead response agency.

An example of the success of the collaboration between the City of Sydney, NSW Land and Housing Corporation and the Department of Communities and Justice is the recent implementation of collaborative strategies to address rat infestation in public housing hot spot areas.

Case Study of collaboration – Inner city rat abatement program

In 2019, the City received a large number of reports of rat activity and infestation in and around NSW Land and Housing Corporation properties. In response, the City, NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) and the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) worked together to respond to issues of pests and improve rodent management in the LGA.

Issues included increased rat population, incidents of leptospirosis and decreased community amenity in affected areas. Existing collaboration enabled direct communication between City and LAHC, sharing of data and intelligence related to hotspots, trialling a joint approach at key locations, agreed evaluation measures and sharing consistent key messages for community.

This partnership approached resulted in:

- Increased baiting and inspection frequency
- Intense response in hotspot areas
- Shared strategic approach
- Improved communications to ensure a coordinated approach to controlling rats in the City of Sydney.
- Waste education information provided to social housing tenants

Safety Audits

The City of Sydney conducts regular safety audits of the social housing estates in our Local Government Area in partnership with residents, NSW Land and Housing Corporation, Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Police and NSW Health.

These audits involve a coordinated approach, using Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to:

- Identify possible safety concerns and community perceptions of safety using group ‘walk throughs’ in a local area in the day and at night
- Make recommendations to appropriate agencies to respond to safety concerns such as maintenance issues and lighting
- Enable the community to monitor the implementation of recommendations.

Since 2016, the City of Sydney has completed Safety Audits in social housing areas in Waterloo, Redfern and Glebe and Camperdown. These audits have resulted in improvements to lighting, pest control, waste management and safety across these areas.

The City of Sydney values our established partnerships with NSW Land and Housing Corporation and the Department of Communities and Justice and strongly endorses the continuation of these collaborative relationships.

Recommendation 5

Continue to support collaborative partnerships with the City of Sydney to address resident concerns and to enhance the safety, liveability and amenity of social housing estates and properties.

Improve energy efficiency

Energy efficiency retrofits and operational improvements are required to ensure comfort and amenity for residents, especially with increasing extreme weather, in particular heat waves. Increasing temperatures can pose a significant risk for vulnerable community members increasing their risk of injury and death.

All lighting should be LED. Heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems should be efficient and utilising smart sensor technology and onsite solar where possible. Solar sharing technology can enable demand management facilitating equitable sharing between individual residents (for multi-unit buildings where there is sufficient roof space). Trees and greening can also reduce temperature in hot months and combined with good insulation and efficient fixtures and fittings can drive utility bill reductions for residents. The City recommends NSW Land and Housing Corporation to partner with Sydney Water who are supporting bulk purchase of water efficient shared washing machines to drive down water and energy costs in public housing.

Recommendation 6

Invest in energy efficiency retrofits to improve lighting, temperature control, water usage and onsite solar sharing options to assist tenants to reduce energy bills and improve environmental and health outcomes

d) Methodologies and processes for ensuring consistent public housing maintenance standards across NSW, including quality assurance, effectiveness, efficiency and contract supervision.

In its October 2017 progress report NSW Land and Housing Corporation notes that its new Asset Maintenance Services contract has achieved:

- An average tenant satisfaction rating of over 85 percent
- A call wait time averaging below the three-minute benchmark
- A consistent score of above 95 percent for attending and making properties safe within urgent response times, and
- A 14 percent increase in work orders completed, compared to the previous contract.¹¹

However, despite these improvements, residents continue to advise issues with the process for reporting repair and maintenance issues, including the reporting of issues in individual dwellings, common areas and shared facilities such as lifts.

An example of a successful response to this was through the Housing Maintenance Pop-Up scheme. The pop ups provided an opportunity for tenants to communicate directly with NSW Land and Housing Corporation and their local maintenance contractors. Over 50 maintenance pop-up sessions were held across NSW in 2016/2017. The pop-ups resulted in 1,600 tenants connecting with their maintenance contractor or other supports and approximately 3,600 work requests actioned. The pop-ups enabled issues to be addressed on the day or with a two-week period for more complex requests. This scheme was widely supported by tenants and partner agencies. The pop-ups should be continued to respond to minor repair works.

Tenants report frustration with the requirement to report issues to the Housing Contact Centre as they find that the call centre staff lack the local knowledge of the area and their building. For many

¹¹ Family and Community Services: Land and Housing Corporation, Public Accounts Committee Inquiry into the Management of NSW Public Housing Maintenance Contracts, Progress Report, October 2017, p 3
[https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/ladocs/inquiries/2194/Progressper cent20Reportper cent20fromper cent20Landper cent20andper cent20Housingper cent20Corporation.per cent20Deptper cent20ofper cent20Familyper cent20andper cent20Communityper cent20Servicesper cent20-per cent20datedper cent2031per cent20Octoberper cent202017.PDF](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/ladocs/inquiries/2194/Progressper%20Reportper%20fromper%20Landper%20andper%20Housingper%20Corporation.per%20Deptper%20ofper%20Familyper%20andper%20Communityper%20Servicesper%20-per%20datedper%2031per%20Octoberper%202017.PDF)

tenants, particularly those with English as a second language, their preferred escalation point is their local Department of Communities and Justice Housing Office.

A number of submissions to the 2016 Inquiry, including Redfern Legal Centre, Tenants Union of NSW, Housing Action Plan Now and Mr Ross Smith, tenant representative from Waterloo, stated that Client Service Officers, who are familiar with the tenants and their properties are well placed to assist tenants with repair requests as they did under the previous scheme.¹² The local knowledge would assist with the timeliness of minor repairs and with repairs to common areas and facilities where there are often significant barriers and delays.

The committee's Inquiry report recommendations to respond to these concerns did not fully address the problem. These recommendations focused on improving the communication between the Department and with tenants, and with protocols between the asset and tenancy management functions rather than directly addressing in-built operational issues arising from the separation of functions between the (now) two departments.¹³

The City of Sydney calls on the NSW Government to amend the administrative separation of functions between NSW Land and Housing Corporation and the Department of Communities and Justice to enable Department of Communities and Justice Housing Client Service Officers to have a greater role in assisting tenants in seeking repairs. Providing local Department of Communities and Justice Housing tenancy teams with budgets and the autonomy to respond to resident's minor repair concerns would significantly improve the safety and amenity of the public housing estates.

Recommendation 7

Provide localised budget and delegation to Department of Communities and Justice local teams to assist tenants in completing minor repairs and maintenance works and deliver innovative responses for example the Maintenance Pop Up scheme on a regular schedule

¹² Management of NSW Public Housing maintenance contracts, /Legislative Assembly, Public Accounts Committee. (Sydney, N.S.W.); the Committee, 2016, pp 12-16

[https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/ladocs/inquiries/2194/Managementper cent20ofper cent20NSWper cent20Publicper cent20Housingper cent20Maintenanceper cent20Contracts.PDF](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/ladocs/inquiries/2194/Managementper%20ofper%20NSWper%20Publicper%20Housingper%20Maintenanceper%20Contracts.PDF)

¹³ Management of NSW Public Housing maintenance contracts, /Legislative Assembly, Public Accounts Committee. (Sydney, N.S.W.); the Committee, 2016, p 16 [https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/ladocs/inquiries/2194/Managementper cent20ofper cent20NSWper cent20Publicper cent20Housingper cent20Maintenanceper cent20Contracts.PDF](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/ladocs/inquiries/2194/Managementper%20ofper%20NSWper%20Publicper%20Housingper%20Maintenanceper%20Contracts.PDF)

Appendix 1

The City of Sydney in partnership with Department of Communities and Justice and NSW Land and Housing Corporation established the Social Housing Operations group in 2016. The purpose of the working group is to respond to issues and improve outcomes for social housing communities. The following graphs depict issues escalated to the Social Housing Operations group for the period June 2018 to November 2020.

Figure. 2.1

2018 – 2019 Resident reported issues escalated to the Social Housing Operations Group

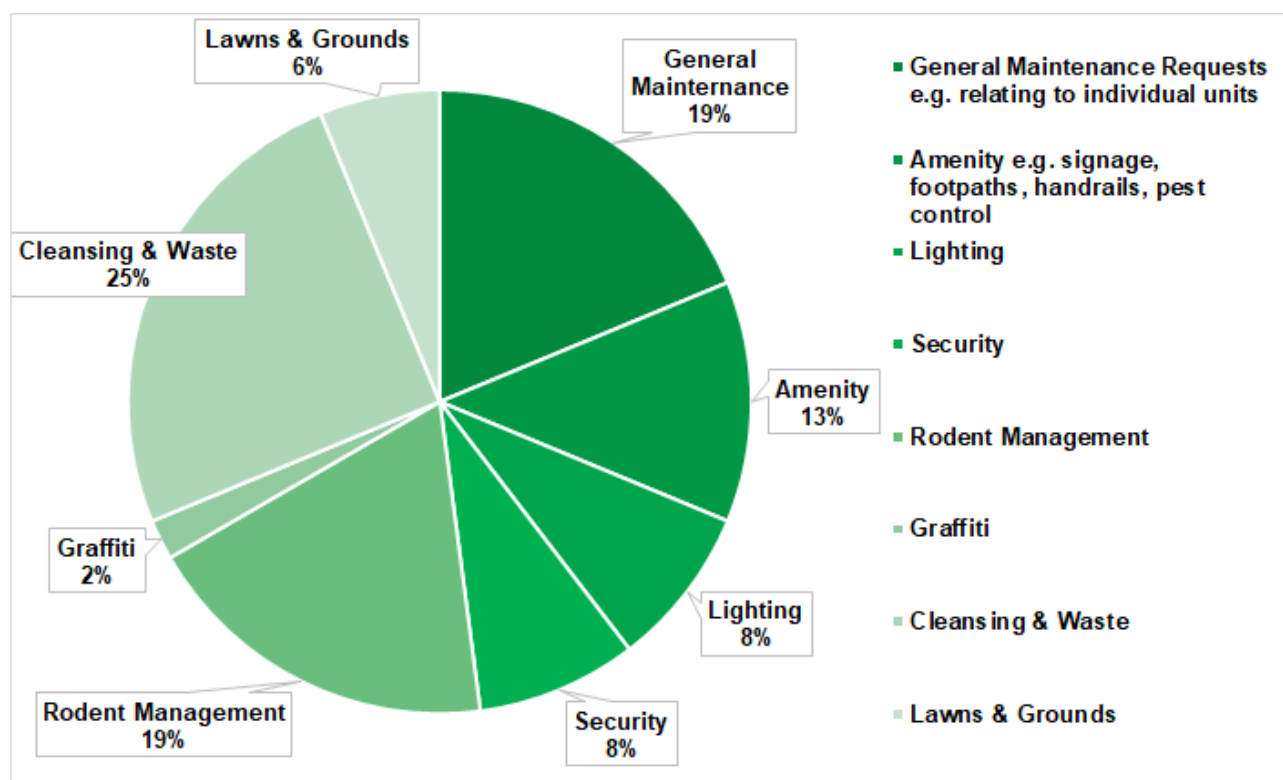


Figure 2.2

2019 – 2020 Resident reported issues escalated to the Social Housing Operations Group

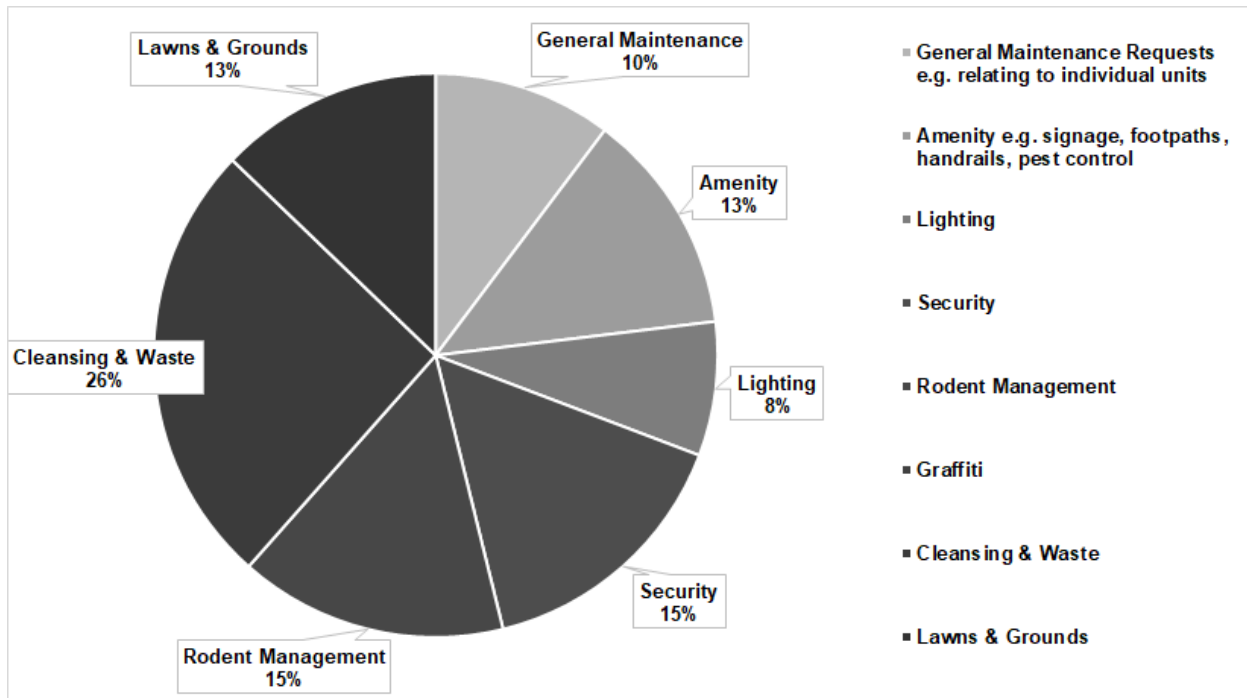


Figure 2.3

2020 – Present Resident reported issues escalated to the Social Housing Operations Group

