

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

Organisation: Housing Action Plan Now (HAPN), Forest Lodge and Glebe Co-ordination Group (FLAG)
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Partially
Confidential

SUBMISSION TO THE Public Accounts Committee
Follow up review of the Management of NSW Public Housing Maintenance Contracts

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Re: Followup of the Management of NSW Public Housing Maintenance Contracts

Glebe Housing Action Plan Now (Glebe Hapn) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission re the follow up review of the management of NSW public housing maintenance contracts.

- Background to submission.

Glebe HAPN, has provided information to many people living in social housing and heard many tenants' stories of ongoing repair sagas and in the Glebe and Forest Lodge area over the period of the review.

Assisting tenants through the provision of information to activate the repair process:

- how to report repairs,
 - how to follow up on repairs, to ensure that repairs are timely
 - by assisting them to navigate reporting systems to ensure their home is habitable,
 - so that their home is a healthy place to reside.
- This submission has been developed drawing on information from and support for community members with regard to housing and draws upon their experience.

About Glebe Housing Action Plan Now (HAPN)

Glebe is an inner city village situated within the City of Sydney Local Government Area.

HAPN is a subcommittee of the Forest Lodge and Glebe (FLAG) coordination group made up of local residents and representatives from local service providers, community organisations, churches, local council in the Glebe and Forest Lodge area. FLAG meets monthly.

Glebe HAPN has been a voice for tenants issues: since 2014 the group has provided support and has represented the interests of the tenants from the local community

HAPN's primary aim is to build and support a resilient community that can engage and participate in processes, conversations and appropriate forums and networks regarding social housing in the Glebe Estate and infill developments including social housing properties in Ferry Road, Wentworth st and Minogue Crescent.

Whether changes to public housing introduced in 2015/16 have delivered measurable improvements and evidenced based outcomes for public housing tenants.

Benchmarks

It would be of interest to hear or see table the claims for improvements and evidence based outcomes

In the Glebe estate HAPN continues to see evidenced many properties which appear to have had a long period of neglect, to redress external repair and maintenance.

They are progressively age- ing and becoming unfit for purpose.

Planned program of works

We carry out most maintenance under our large scale planned program of works.

We use the annual compliance assessment information to find out what work is required on your home. These details will inform the planned program of works.

Extracted: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/living/maintenance/repairs-to-your-home> 1 jun 2020

There is no visible evidence of a progressive planned maintenance programme being activated to redress issues of the local housing stock – of social housing tenants homes.

See photographic evidence in *attachment A at the end of the submission*) and infographic indicating repairs remain the biggest issue for tenancies.(see *attachment B at the end of submission*)

Some recent considerable renewal in stairways, ramp access and externals at the Minogue Crescent properties, has been witnessed.

Whilst the call centre seems to be more responsive to calls, with phone wait times decreasing, perhaps its the way repairs are recorded or the training of work responders that does not always seem to match the job need.

Overall there is witnessed an apparent high use of 'patch up' techniques: makeshift repairs using cheap replacement materials as evidenced with popular use of the caulking gun and silicone apparently being the fixer of choice for a wide range of repairs

The current and contractual arrangements between Land and Property NSW and private providers of maintenance services.

IN reviewing the current contractual arrangements, Glebe HAPN would request the Committee looks at

- Review quality outcomes from government contracts/contractors and assess against industry benchmarks for service.

- Review effectiveness of business with large contractors, where there appears to be no follow through, no consistency in work standards.

- Review the possibility of forming 'area contracts' with relevant industries for responsible maintenance and overview for specific properties.

- Where possible, preference should be given to local contractors in the delivery of Maintenance contracts.

- Reviewing contractors staff capabilities for the job: It would seem to be a priority that contractors have Tafe training or other industry experience in roofing, carpentry etc. and protocols of working with diverse customers and working in a culturally responsive and inclusive manner

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

Comprehensive quarterly reporting on area goals and progress released to relevant local agencies could provide an appropriate update on the current repair status and physical condition of the public housing properties.

It is unclear to tenants when their properties are not repaired to standard, if this is due, to LAHC policies or veto or to poor workmanship.

A main issue as referred to above is little sign of an effective roll out of planned works in over a decade: e.g. gutter replacement and failure to redress has secondary effects on the properties from waterflow run off, damage to fascia, privacy screens between properties, courtyard brickwork, and damp inside living spaces of tenants homes. This scenario can be further compounded by lack of gutter cleaning, blocked downpipes due to leaf litter, etc. OR failure to cut those trees down where roots cause lifting of pavement, trip hazards and more. When will planned repairs on property be scheduled: what is priority?

Looking at the whole property: suggestion: a property liaison person at different units could be an eye for the government: What's still outstanding with regard to repairs in these units this week?

The apparent use of poor quality materials or perceived popular usage of silicone in repair of public housing assets and tenants homes. Who is ticking the box for expenditure for address of problems?

As mentioned, silicon is a key tool utilised by contractors: useful for the botched lock installation, useful for the hole in the roof, for the faulty measurement of materials and to patch the gap.

What percentage of repair costs: are silicon?

Replacement materials are cheap, repairs are makeshift: Again it is questionable if these are repairs or a patch up? Who agrees to metal strapping of plywood for fence replacement.

It is time to implement a holistic approach to assess, measure, analyse and report on property conditions at a local level and more, in relation to maintenance contracts.

We feel that information about repair policies should be easily accessible and publically available to provide for greater accountability of government to the tenant and the public on the management of public assets: with clarity e.g. when **planned works** will be implemented and tracking to gain a clear picture of progress.

Meanwhile tenant impact is considerable: many put up with increasingly poor quality homes that can impact their health and ultimately that increases the NSW health budget.

Poor health outcomes also impacts peoples capabilities to participate in employment, and potential to contribute to community outcomes.

The costs of maintenance of the current public housing stock, variations in expenditure trends over the previous five years and projected expenditure for the next five years

The recent trend to sell off public assets or proposals for development of publicly owned publicly owned land and social housing: including

Cowper/Elger Streets, a Glebe demolition, and subsequent redevelopment;
the Cowper st Wentworth park rd submissions currently with the City of Sydney;
and the latest proposal on the table for 'Forsyth St'

will not result in an increase of like for like in the supply of social housing in Glebe or the greater Sydney area.

The Auditor General advised that selling properties and delaying some capital and maintenance expenditure will only impact the level of stock and is not a financially sustainable long-term.

(Making the best use of public housing, New South Wales Auditor-General's Report, Audit Office Of NSW, 30 July 2013). The drive to reduce the cost of maintenance to public housing stock via redevelopment is not supported by policy.

Delaying the commencement of works from the previous 5 years and over the next 5 years will contribute to increased cost to the LAHC in the long term given properties continue to deteriorate as a result of neglect and incomplete works or "band aid" solutions.

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

HAPN were recently advised of an issue, where water was running down the wall, which required temporary re-housing for tenants during repair. The tenants were subsequently rehomed into a property where the carpet and underfelt were not replaced – impacting health.

Although maintenance is welcomed by social housing tenants, tenants need to have the opportunity to expect a reasonable standard of repair and a healthy home.

HAPN continues to hear of countless accounts of the provision of substandard maintenance and repairs to properties and of tenants and ongoing repairs that never get to resolution, including for aged and disability modifications.

HAPN recommend a transparent process where tenants are given assurances for real time dates for outcomes on maintenance required and the possibility of review of outstanding or unresolved issues either from 'planned maintenance' and allocation of a realistic timeframe for work completion.

Conclusion

The Glebe social housing cohort deserve a well founded and implemented asset management system.

Government overall retains direct responsibility for efficient management of the tenants rental contribution and any public subsidy

The challenge is to review what is effective with input from tenant, social housing groups, clarity re expected property standards, transparency re benchmarks and effective oversight to effectively maintain healthy homes and a viable social housing portfolio

Social housing tenants deserves the right to safe and secure shelter that affords ease of participation in the broader community.

We look forward to hearing from you with regards to this submission

Glebe HAPN

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See attachments over page:

Attachment A:

Example of a Glebe job still waiting, waiting, waiting, falling



This is in line with front door and exit to gate. Pieces fall on tenants head as coming or going



Example of pieces that fall down on access steps to tenancy



Attachment B: Glebe HAPN infographic based on survey from tenants responses re key issues in housing in Glebe: compiled Dec 2018

