

**Submission
No 9**

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 7 December 2020

Partially
Confidential

Dear Chair, Deputy Chair, and Committee Members,

Thank you for providing an opportunity to lodge a submission on the management of NSW public housing maintenance contracts.

I live in the suburb of Mount Hutton, which borders the suburb of Windale.

Windale has several hundred public housing dwellings and is widely acknowledged as one of the most disadvantaged communities in the state of NSW.

Over the past ten years, I have made efforts to improve the liveability of Windale, by reporting various maintenance matters and seeking the provision of new infrastructure in the area. Each year I lodge over 100 requests with Lake Macquarie City Council, Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC), and various other infrastructure asset owners (eg. Ausgrid, Hunter Water Jemena, Telstra, etc.).

My requests which relate to public housing, typically regard graffiti; illegal dumping; vegetation maintenance; and broken fencing. These issues can be observed from public roads or public land in the area. I report these matters with the aim to improve community safety and visual amenity.

In my experience, it is quite difficult to report and follow up on these matters. They often take several weeks or months to resolve.

For instance: I understand that non-offensive graffiti is considered planned works, rather than responsive maintenance. One of my requests to remove non-offensive graffiti from an external wall of a public housing dwelling took over 12 months to be completed. Achieving this outcome required a significant number of follow up emails and phone calls to LAHC.

While I can understand that removing offensive graffiti is far more urgent than removing non-offensive graffiti, the open-ended timeframe for removing non-offensive graffiti does little to help improve the liveability of the local area. By comparison, other infrastructure asset owners typically remove non-offensive graffiti from their assets in the Windale area, within one to six weeks of my report.

Typically, my requests to remove illegal dumping/ littering, and for vegetation maintenance are resolved faster. In my opinion, the regular fortnightly lawns service (mowing of common areas and open spaces) is quite good. However, the contractors do not collect any litter left lying around. I assume this likely falls outside their contract. This activity should be included in the contract, so when the lawns get mowed, any litter is collected and removed. Larger piles of rubbish/ bulky items should be reported back to LAHC for their attention.

In relation to boundary fencing adjacent to public roads and public land: there are many fences in Windale which are in a state of disrepair, in particular along Merrigum Street. I feel as though it is not my place to report damaged fences, as I have no relationship with the tenant; however, this issue seems to remain unreported and undetected year after year. The poor state of the fencing significantly detracts from local amenity.

Lastly, the quality of work performed by Spotless and their various sub-contractors is very poor. For instance, they recently painted over a graffiti tag on a timber fence on Merrigum Street, Windale and rather than paint over the graffiti in a rectangle shape, they simply painted over each letter individually. Similarly, another job looked like it had been painted with a sponge, rather than a brush or roller. It was very mismatched.

The local Mayfield-based LAHC team are always very pleasant and apologetic. They are clearly under financed and under resourced to tackle the significant maintenance backlog.

I hope the NSW Government will increase funding to significantly reduce the maintenance backlog; address the various issues regarding the quality of repairs; and reduce the timeframe for completion of repairs.

People who live in public housing deserve to live in a safe and pleasant environment. Children who grow up in these areas shouldn't have to walk home past broken fences, graffiti and piles of

dumped rubbish and feel as though no one cares about their family, and the area in which they live. I look forward to reading your report on this matter.

Sincerely,

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