



NSW Aboriginal Housing Office

Level 6, 33 Argyle Street
PO Box W5 Westfield Parramatta NSW 2150
Telephone 02 8836 9444
Facsimile 02 9635 3400

Ms Glenda Baker
Senior Council Officer
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE
21 JUL 2009
5109/68
RECEIVED

Dear Ms Baker

I refer to your letter in relation to the Inquiry into homelessness and low-cost rental accommodation.

The transcript has been reviewed and only two minor corrections are suggested on pages 20 and 22.

In terms of the additional questions on notice embedded within the transcript please be advised of the following:

i. The first question relates to whether the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) could map the distribution of housing shortages by LGA. I have attached a spreadsheet which shows the housing deficit by LGA. The spreadsheet does not include Aboriginal community housing dwellings of which there are approximately 4,300. I would also like to point out that the methodology used in this exercise was basic as it assumes that 30 percent of the Aboriginal population in every LGA requires social housing whereas in reality this will vary across LGAs. More sophisticated work on this is currently underway but will not be finalised for some months.

ii. The second question relates to the number of housing units purchased by community housing providers under various debt equity programs. As indicated at the Hearing, Aboriginal community housing providers were able to access these funds but did not. Housing NSW through its Centre for Affordable Housing has funded both not-for-profit and private organisations to deliver a total of 1143 new affordable rental homes. This includes 356 homes through the Affordable Housing Innovation Funds and 1074 dwellings through the National Rental Affordability Scheme (including 287 units that used a combination of the two sources of funding). I expect that in the future, as reforms to the Aboriginal community housing sector progress, such initiatives will be taken up by this sector as well.

Wentworth

25 Darling St.
PO Box 415,
Wentworth NSW 2648
Telephone 03 5027 3222
Facsimile 03 5027 3142

Coffs Harbour

Level 1 Suite C
144-148 West High St.
Coffs Harbour NSW 2450
Telephone 02 6691 9100
Facsimile 02 6658 0475

Tamworth

Level 2 Suite 12
454-456 Peel St.
PO Box 582
Tamworth NSW 2340
Telephone 02 6766 6045
Facsimile 02 6766 7683

Dubbo

Unit 2
14 Erskine St.
PO Box 790
Dubbo NSW 2830
Telephone 02 6882 8700
Facsimile 02 6882 8922

iii. The final question related to the survey of tenants of the West Dubbo Housing Estate. Please find attached a copy of the survey results.

Responses to the additional questions from the Hon. Ian West are attached.

Should any further information be required, please contact Claire Croumbie-Brown, Director, Policy Branch on 8836 9427.

Yours sincerely



Mike Allen
A/Chief Executive Officer

16.7.09

Responses to Additional Question from the Hon. Ian West

i. How accessible to Aboriginal people is public/community housing that is not specifically targeted for Indigenous residents?

Aboriginal households currently comprise over 8% of public housing tenants and 6% of community housing tenants. Community housing allocates new tenancies to Aboriginal households at a rate of 7% and public housing at the rate of 14%. Housing NSW is implementing an Aboriginal Access Strategy to increase access by Aboriginal people to mainstream community housing.

2. Many Aboriginal people prefer to live together in a community; sometimes this results in pockets of disadvantage. This question has been asked previously during this inquiry but what do you suggest can be done to address this issue while respecting the preferences of the Aboriginal community?

This type of situation generally relates to the ex-reserves and missions. For many Aboriginal people the ex-reserves and ex-missions are where they and their family come from and they feel a strong connection to these lands. However the ex-reserves present some challenges for Government in terms of addressing infrastructure, municipal services and the social problems that are often found there.

The history of Aboriginal Australia requires government to respect the rights of Aboriginal people to live on ex-reserves should they so wish and this history also requires governments to acknowledge that it was previous governments which forced Aboriginal people to live on the reserves. However, it must also be acknowledged that for many Aboriginal people, the ex-reserves offer limited or no opportunities in terms of employment and training. Within this context and combined with the problems of poor water and sewerage infrastructure, neither the AHO nor Housing NSW builds additional dwellings on the ex-reserves at this point in time.

In terms of addressing the disadvantage on the ex-reserves, this requires a whole-of-government response. Jodie Broun who has previously spoken at the Inquiry has outlined some of the initiatives underway. There is also a need for access to both training and employment opportunities. The Remote Indigenous Housing National Partnership requires the NSW Government to ensure that 20 percent of all people involved in the building and construction work are Aboriginal. Whilst this will help, it is not long term employment. There is a need for a concerted effort across Government.

3. During our inquiry into overcoming Indigenous disadvantage in NSW, this committee found that many Aboriginal communities are under housing stress, with inadequate accommodation and insufficient support services. As the Aboriginal population continues to grow at a faster rate than that of Australia as a whole, what extra considerations would you like taken into account when planning the development of future social housing for Aboriginal communities?

It is critical that Aboriginal people have access to social housing as well as other types of housing which provide access to employment and training opportunities.

Housing in the absence of socio-economic opportunities will not assist Aboriginal people to overcome their socio economic disadvantage. It needs to be remembered that the majority of Aboriginal people live in urban NSW. This is positive as in urban areas socio-economic opportunities are accessible. But housing by itself is not sufficient.

Reforming the Aboriginal community housing sector is also important as it will then become a vehicle for additional employment for Aboriginal people. It is expected that the Aboriginal community housing sector will grow in a way not dissimilar to the mainstream sector and in doing so an increased number of Aboriginal people will be employed within the management and delivery of social housing.

It's also important not just to limit thinking to social housing. Over time, one would expect to see less Aboriginal people being reliant on social housing. Increased rates of home ownership and better access to private rental housing must also be a focus of work.

The AHO and Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) have a partnership to help AHO tenants buy the houses they are living in. This scheme is known as the IBA/AHO Home Purchase Scheme.

The scheme assists approved applicants with the purchase of their home and AHO provides up to \$2,500 for legal and ancillary costs. Tenants may also be eligible for the First Home Owners Grant. Finally, tenants are exempt from paying the NSW State Governments Stamp Duty on both the purchase of an AHO house and mortgage. All in all these are substantial savings which will help make home ownership a reality for more Aboriginal people in NSW.

Housing NSW has been operating the Tenant Brokerage Scheme for several years which aims to assist low income people into private rental housing. Under the Scheme, staff from Client Service Teams broker housing with Real Estate Agents. This has assisted many more Aboriginal people to access private rental housing.

4. From your experiences with providing housing for Aboriginal communities, what do you regard as the essential elements for the creation and maintenance of cohesive communities? What needs to be done to enhance the current model?

Cohesion relies on a range of factors including interconnectivity, interdependence, and taking collective responsibility to achieve sustainability. These are complex issues to address. For many Aboriginal communities there is prevailing sense of despair and resignation. So opportunities and hope are important ingredients but these too are very difficult to provide. Housing needs to be considered as part of a broader continuum of responses. Housing needs to be provided in locations that offer access to schools, TAFE, other training and employment opportunities. It also needs to be located in areas which provide access to public transport, sport and recreational facilities, and health and social services. Housing needs to be provided outside of pockets of disadvantage. Concurrent to where housing is located, there needs to be investment in children going to school and doing well at school; and there needs to be investment in prevention and early intervention across the spectrum of need – family breakdown, health, drug and alcohol and crime.

There also need to be strategies implemented which help communities become more cohesive and which help build local leadership.

Much of this work is being done under Two Ways Together which the Director General of DAA has carriage for.

5. The United Kingdom is working towards a fixed rental system where all tenants pay the same rental regardless of income and housing associations are paid a subsidy to make up the shortfall. Is this similar to what is currently happening with Commonwealth Rent Assistance? How do you think a similar system would work for Aboriginal people? What do you see as the pros and cons of such an arrangement?

For AHO dwellings rents are set at 25% of income for rebated low income households, and at between 25% and 30% of income for rebated moderate income households. As of July 2009, the rent assessment will impute Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) which means that the AHO will collect the maximum amount of CRA. However, at present, the Aboriginal community housing does not collect CRA. This means that AHO dwellings will attract a higher rent than would be received if the property were public housing. However, the after-housing income of AHO and public housing tenants is the same, as public housing tenants are not eligible for Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

While retaining affordability, setting rent as a percentage of income means that rent increases as household income increases and, as such, can operate as a disincentive to participation in the workforce. However, research suggests that if they have any impact, housing assistance programs have only a small negative impact on workforce activity.¹ The provision of stable and affordable social housing that is well-located can also promote better outcomes in education and workforce participation. Social housing tenants face much greater workforce disincentives in the form of reductions in Centrelink benefits and higher taxes than in the withdrawal of housing assistance. Social housing tenants also face other barriers to labour market participation which make it difficult to determine the extent to which financial workforce disincentives impact on employment outcomes. For example, high incidence of disability, mental health issues, and the lower level of education and qualifications held by public housing tenants than the rest of the working age population.

There are a number of alternative approaches to the setting of social housing rents. These include fixed rents based on household composition, rents based on dwelling amenity, cost-based rents that reflect the cost of providing housing, and income-related rents. In considering the suitability of rent-setting models, the key issues that need to be considered include whether the model retains affordability for households, as well as whether the model is financially viable and sustainable in terms of recovering sufficient costs and the level of ongoing subsidy required. As such, the type of rent-setting policies that may be appropriate is linked closely to the funding environment for social housing.

The potential costs and benefits of a system of fixed rent regardless of income, and payment of a subsidy to housing associations to make up the short-fall, would appear to include the following.

- Risks that affordability for low income households may not be preserved.
- A lack of equity, as lower income households would not be provided with a greater level of assistance than comparatively higher income households.
- The removal of any workforce disincentives arising from income-related rents.

¹ AHURI, 2005: AHURI Research and Policy Bulletin, Housing assistance and workforce participation, Issue 63 September 2005, p.2

- A more financially viable and sustainable housing system, by covering the costs of housing providers' operations.
- Potential growth in the social housing sector by providing a sufficient and secure funding stream that allows providers to borrow to fund new investment.
- Risks that the financial cost to government may be high or difficult to contain.

6. Outline what you would like government, federal, state and local, to do to assist the growth of social housing for Aboriginal people in NSW.

For NSW it would have been preferable for the Remote Indigenous Housing NP to have supported the delivery of additional dwellings outside of just remote and very remote NSW. The demand for housing is very low in these areas and much greater elsewhere. Clearly additional funding will always be welcome and the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Package funds for social housing are indeed a significant boost for all people in need of social housing.

At the state level, there is already much work underway to address the needs of Aboriginal people. However, there needs to be a continued focus on closing the gap and this will be best achieved through continued whole-of-government approaches.

Local Government's role is more important in terms of providing services to Aboriginal communities living on ex-reserves. Services required here include garbage removal, footpaths, roads, street lighting. Aboriginal people on reserves pay rates and need better municipal services.

7. The Aboriginal Housing Office provides funding to registered Aboriginal community housing providers for both repairs and maintenance of existing properties and new housing supply (Government submission No. 51 - p25).

a. Is there sufficient funding for these purposes?

Courtesy of the Remote Indigenous Housing NP there is now \$286 million for 310 new houses and for repairs and maintenance there is

- o \$110 million for backlog maintenance on properties owned/managed by Indigenous community housing organisations across NSW
- o \$14 million for backlog maintenance and major upgrades on Indigenous housing in remote/very remote NSW
- o \$41 million for on-going repairs and maintenance of Indigenous housing in remote and very remote NSW
- o \$4 million for housing functionality checks

However, no, there is not sufficient funding for the supply and repairs of Aboriginal housing.

b. What is the level of excess demand for low-cost rental accommodation currently being experienced in the communities?

The AHO undertook research in 2008 which found that the social housing needs gap was 4,270 dwellings as of June 2008 and expected to increase to 4,830 dwellings by 2011. However, this does not take into account dwellings which will be available through the Nation Building dwellings or the Remote Indigenous Housing NP.

Aboriginal Unmet Social Housing Need Indicator by NSW Local Government Area

Local Government Area	Total Population ABS 2006	Total ATSI Population ABS 2006	ATSI % of population	*Estimated number of Aboriginal households needing social housing	+ Number of Aboriginal Households already in social housing	Estimated Unmet Aboriginal Social Housing Need (households)
ALBURY	48629	1036	2.13%	114	147	-33
ARMIDALE DUMARESQ	24533	1357	5.53%	158	188	-30
ASHFIELD	41309	215	0.52%	24	15	9
AUBURN	68104	502	0.74%	55	14	41
BALLINA	40266	1108	2.75%	122	83	39
BALRANALD	2546	174	6.83%	21	11	10
BANKSTOWN	176817	1185	0.67%	130	111	19
BATHURST REGION	37542	1319	3.51%	145	114	31
Baulkham Hills	165931	443	0.27%	49	5	44
BEGA VALLEY	32429	861	2.66%	95	95	0
BELLINGEN	12985	338	2.60%	37	11	26
BERRIGAN	8337	106	1.27%	12	0	12
BLACKTOWN	279759	7600	2.72%	836	795	41
BLAND	6343	165	2.60%	18	5	13
BLAYNEY	6891	161	2.34%	18	2	16
BLUE MOUNTAINS	76080	986	1.30%	108	25	83
BOGAN	2994	351	11.72%	49	12	37
BOMBALA	2645	40	1.51%	4	0	4
BOOROWA	2390	44	1.84%	5	1	4
BOTANY BAY	37586	687	1.83%	76	66	10
BOURKE	3217	1004	31.21%	167	48	119
BREWARRINA	1998	1252	62.66%	209	27	182
BROKEN HILL	20139	1300	6.46%	160	38	122
BURWOOD	32276	128	0.40%	14	11	3
BYRON	30635	500	1.63%	55	17	38
CABONNE	12907	295	2.29%	32	2	30
CAMDEN	50950	673	1.32%	74	14	60
CAMPBELLTOWN	147177	4114	2.80%	453	426	27
CANTERBURY	136032	825	0.61%	91	72	19
CARRATHOOL	2911	178	6.11%	22	11	11
CENTRAL DARLING	2911	178	6.11%	22	16	6
CESSNOCK	48265	1700	3.52%	187	26	161
City of CANADA BAY	68883	235	0.34%	26	4	22
CLARENCE VALLEY	50143	2426	4.84%	283	118	165
COBAR	5112	556	10.88%	74	23	51
COFFS HARBOUR	68021	2473	3.64%	272	177	95

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CONARGO	1743	31	1.78%	3	0	3
COOLAMON	4176	49	1.17%	5	0	5
COOMA-MONARO	10166	172	1.69%	19	8	11
COONAMBLE	4342	1124	25.89%	169	36	133
COOTAMUNDRA	7597	269	3.54%	30	11	19
COROWA	11454	128	1.12%	14	3	11
COWRA	13025	791	6.07%	98	55	43
DENILIKUIN	7715	219	2.84%	24	31	-7
DUBBO	39499	4321	10.94%	576	331	245
DUNGOG	8432	186	2.21%	20	0	20
EUROBODALLA	36595	1687	4.61%	197	97	100
FAIRFIELD	186414	1183	0.63%	130	122	8
FORBES	9755	667	6.84%	82	39	43
GILGANDRA	4702	605	12.87%	85	21	64
GLEN INNES SEVERN	9095	494	5.43%	58	13	45
GLOUCESTER	4985	179	3.59%	20	6	14
GOSFORD	162017	2852	1.76%	314	108	206
GOULBURN MULWAREE	27277	611	2.24%	67	23	44
GREAT LAKES	33982	1055	3.10%	116	40	76
GREATER HUME SHIRE	10167	164	1.61%	18	2	16
GREATER TAREE	46979	2028	4.32%	237	154	83
GRIFFITH	24867	955	3.84%	105	148	-43
GUNDAGAI	3851	69	1.79%	8	2	6
GUNNEDAH	11966	1228	10.26%	164	72	92
GUYRA	4402	456	10.36%	61	17	44
GWYDIR	5516	137	2.48%	15	0	15
HARDEN	3725	123	3.30%	14	0	14
HASTINGS	71407	1873	2.62%	206	120	86
HAWKESBURY	62031	1213	1.96%	133	50	83
HAY	3535	150	4.24%	18	5	13
HOLROYD	93052	784	0.84%	86	60	26
HORNSBY	157387	461	0.29%	51	11	40
HUNTERS HILL	13838	73	0.53%	8	3	5
HURSTVILLE	76913	383	0.50%	42	13	29
INVERELL	16152	867	5.37%	101	86	15
JERILDERIE	1711	28	1.64%	3	0	3

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JUNEE	6050	337	5.57%	39	5	34
KEMPSEY	28474	2719	9.55%	363	204	159
KIAMA	19973	228	1.14%	25	1	24
KOGARAH	55119	193	0.35%	21	7	14
KU-RING-GAI	106029	115	0.11%	13	1	12
KYOGLÉ	9686	561	5.79%	65	10	55
LACHLAN	6927	1050	15.16%	147	75	72
LAKE MACQUARIE	191955	4553	2.37%	501	288	213
LANE COVE	31989	69	0.22%	8	3	5
LEETON	11742	531	4.52%	62	42	20
LEICHHARDT	51127	447	0.87%	49	59	-10
LISMORE	44225	1668	3.77%	183	118	65
LITHGOW CITY	20650	646	3.13%	71	2	69
LIVERPOOL	170607	2402	1.41%	264	176	88
LIVERPOOL PLAINS	7849	769	9.80%	103	8	95
LOCKHART	3312	37	1.12%	4	0	4
MAITLAND	64793	1715	2.65%	189	101	88
MANLY	39103	103	0.26%	11	2	9
MARRICKVILLE	75525	1261	1.67%	139	160	-21
MID-WESTERN REGIONAL	21983	612	2.78%	67	5	62
MOREE PLAINS	14580	3024	20.74%	454	329	125
MOSMAN	27936	24	0.09%	3	3	0
MURRAY	6699	192	2.87%	21	3	18
MURRUMBIDGEE	2607	242	9.28%	32	1	31
MUSWELLBROOK	15944	775	4.86%	90	55	35
NAMBUCCA	18633	1096	5.88%	128	49	79
NARRABRI	13680	1274	9.31%	170	126	44
NARRANDERA	6233	592	9.50%	79	47	32
NARROMINE	6776	1087	16.04%	152	34	118
NEWCASTLE	149075	3234	2.17%	356	243	113
NORTH SYDNEY	62407	125	0.20%	14	3	11
OBERON	5260	113	2.15%	12	1	11
ORANGE	37009	1656	4.47%	193	251	-58
PALERANG	12913	113	0.88%	12	0	12
PARKES	14846	1070	7.21%	132	50	82
PARRAMATTA	154158	1281	0.83%	141	106	35

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PENRITH	176661	4263	2.41%	469	219	250
PITTWATER	56619	182	0.32%	20	1	19
PORT STEPHENS	63408	1866	2.94%	205	75	130
QUEANBEYAN	37885	1006	2.66%	111	115	-4
RANDWICK	126877	1733	1.37%	191	196	-5
RICHMOND VALLEY	22172	1289	5.81%	150	89	61
ROCKDALE	96640	487	0.50%	54	10	44
RYDE	101283	281	0.28%	31	10	21
SHELLHARBOUR	63409	1493	2.35%	164	114	50
SHOALHAVEN	92196	3555	3.86%	391	250	141
SINGLETON	23005	619	2.69%	68	33	35
SNOWY RIVER	7554	74	0.98%	8	2	6
STRATHFIELD	33592	99	0.29%	11	6	5
SUTHERLAND	212813	1313	0.62%	144	62	82
SYDNEY	164547	2594	1.58%	285	448	-163
TAMWORTH REGION	55899	3935	7.04%	485	30	455
TEMORA	6101	87	1.43%	10	1	9
TENTERFIELD	6787	476	7.01%	59	12	47
TUMBARUMBA	3692	93	2.52%	10	0	10
TUMUT	11260	372	3.30%	41	43	-2
TWEED	82955	2533	3.05%	279	103	176
UPPER HUNTER SHIRE	13609	421	3.09%	46	9	37
UPPER LACHLAN	7347	106	1.44%	12	0	12
URALLA	5989	350	5.84%	41	5	36
URANA	1305	42	3.22%	5	0	5
WAGGA WAGGA	59908	2472	4.13%	288	281	7
WALCHA	3327	191	5.74%	22	8	14
WALGETT	7199	2122	29.48%	318	98	220
WARREN	2871	353	12.30%	49	19	30
WARRINGAH	139476	469	0.34%	52	8	44
WARRUMBUNGLA SHIRE	10208	779	7.63%	96	33	63
WAVERLEY	64190	232	0.36%	26	6	20
WEDDIN	3793	62	1.63%	7	0	7
WELLINGTON	8406	1320	15.70%	185	76	109
WENTWORTH	7086	643	9.07%	86	37	49
WILLOUGHBY	67434	82	0.12%	9	4	5

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WINGECARRIBEE	44379	558	1.26%	61	12	49
WOLLONDILLY	41300	789	1.91%	87	4	83
WOLLONGONG	194590	3422	1.76%	376	286	90
WOOLLAHRA	53667	115	0.21%	13	3	10
WYONG	142724	3976	2.79%	437	105	332
YASS VALLEY	13747	247	1.80%	27	2	25
YOUNG	12488	321	2.57%	35	10	25
	6,812,435	147,466	2.16%	17,291 31.7%	9,810	7,481

Data sources: 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data and the Housing Analysis and Research Unit of Housing NSW

* Figures are weighted by location - At least one third of the Aboriginal population are deemed to require social housing. The proportion increases in areas with higher Aboriginal concentrations.

33% has been applied in all populations with incremental increases for Aboriginal proportions above 4%

The percentage is then divided by 3, the size of the average Aboriginal family/household.

+ Includes public housing, AHO properties managed by Housing NSW and mainstream community housing. Does not include housing provided by Aboriginal community housing sector

Dubbo Estate Reform Process – Impact Analysis

Introduction

Background

The decision to redevelop the Gordon Estate in West Dubbo was announced in May 2006. This announcement was followed by the beginning of a staged three year relocation of all public housing tenants from the Estate, and the auctioning of the land and housing on the private market. Tenants, depending on their preference, are being relocated to other areas of Dubbo and NSW. The impetus for the redevelopment was the resolution of long standing 'significant social issues' on the Estate, including vandalism, crime, violence, drug use, and serious civil disorder.

To date, approximately two thirds of tenants on the estate have been relocated. This impact analysis assesses how the relocation has affected the tenants and the wider Dubbo community. It draws from data concerning 102 tenant relocations, information from local individuals and agencies and records of recent social and economic trends in the Dubbo area.

Methodology

The methodology of this assessment was designed around the needs of a rapid analysis (two weeks) and the absence of baseline data relating to tenants.

A survey was used as the main data collection instrument for tenant outcomes (Attachment 1). Of the 102 recorded tenant relocations, it was determined that 78 were potentially contactable individual tenants.¹ Attempts were made to contact all these tenants, including 12 located outside Dubbo. There was a 60% survey response rate with 47 of the 78 tenants completing a survey (including 5 from outside Dubbo). Most surveys were completed face to face (90%), the remainder as phone surveys (10%). In addition, 8 in-depth tenant interviews were undertaken. The 7 tenants whose tenancies had failed prior to relocation, were not included in the analysis.

Further information was collected through:

- Interviews with agency representatives and community members
 - Housing NSW (Managers, Relocation manager and team members, Team Leader of Dubbo client services)
 - Aboriginal Housing Office (manager)
 - Western Aboriginal Tenants Service (advocate and office manager)
 - DCC Aboriginal Liaison officer
 - DADHC (early intervention worker)
 - NSW Health (Gordon Estate community health worker)
 - West Dubbo Preschool (director)

¹ The figure of 102 included 7 failed tenancies and a number of 'double shuffles' of tenants (those who were initially temporarily relocated within the Gordon Estate before being relocated out of the estate).

- Dubbo Tourism (managers)
 - Community members x3
- Dubbo Whole of Government Working Group reports (reports from all government agencies operating in Dubbo)
 - Police crime statistics

Limitations

The extent of this analysis was limited by a number of factors. These include:

- Lack of baseline data on tenants (e.g. in relation to school attendance, community ties, satisfaction with housing etc).
- Lack of data at an individual level (e.g. agencies were not able to provide data on individual tenant involvement with law enforcement processes or child protection agencies)
- Lack of data specifically relating to the unauthorised residents of Gordon Estate (anecdotally, these individuals were responsible for a disproportionate amount of the crime and problems on the Estate)

Tenant demographics

Tenants from the Gordon Estate are primarily households with children, with the great majority identifying as Aboriginal. Due to privacy and data limitations, a precise breakdown of tenant demographics is not possible – however the broad demographic characteristics of relocated tenants and ages of children are given in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Tenant demographics

Characteristic	%
ATSI	77
Households – children	70
Households – no children	30
Sole parent/carer	52

Source: Housing NSW, extracted from tenant database.

Table 2. Children in tenant households

Children	No.	%
Preschool	6	7
Primary School	48	58
High School (age)	28	35
TOTAL	82	100

Source: Housing NSW, extracted from tenant database.

The relocation process

The relocation of tenants from Gordon Estate began in mid 2006, with the process being managed by staff from the Dubbo Transformation Strategy Team established for this purpose. Relocation has involved highly complex and intensive processes of client and property management, including:

- Individual needs analyses conducted for each household
- Locating appropriate housing for the tenant (e.g. offering two choices, helping tenant consider issues of affordability)
- Ensuring tenants have access to appropriate social supports when they move
- Finding alternative accommodation for unauthorised tenants
- Sorting out problems of property damage and rubbish
- Sorting out any other issues which could threaten the tenancy of the relocated person
- Replicating improvements made by the tenant (or providing compensation)
- Assisting to organise removalists and moving
- Moving pets and organising micro-chipping
- Reimbursement of costs associated with the relocation (e.g. mail redirection, service reconnection)

Tenant views of the relocation process

Relocated tenants were generally happy with the relocation process engaged in by Housing NSW, (leaving aside their feelings about the actual need to relocate - see below). This satisfaction level is reflected in the mostly high ratings in regard to aspects of the process (Table 3).

Table 3. Tenant views of relocation process

ISSUE	HAPPY	OK	UN-HAPPY	TOTAL
Letting you know what was happening	31	8	8	47
%	66	17	17	100
Quality of your home	36	4	7	47
%	77	9	15	100
Listening to what you wanted and needed	31	7	9	47
%	66	15	19	100
Help and assistance with your move	38	4	4	46
%	83	9	9	100
Relationship with housing staff	42	4	1	47
%	89	9	2	100
Your overall feeling about the relocation	30	8	9	47
%	64	17	19	100

Source: Argyle Research (2008). Gordon Estate relocation, tenant survey.

In instances where tenants were unhappy with the relocation process, the following issues were raised:

- Feeling hurried to relocate
- Not being properly informed
- Lack of choice about relocation (being compelled to take the second choice)
- Maintenance problems in new home
- Poor quality removal (breakage and loss of items)
- House not meeting requirements (e.g. number of bedrooms)
- Not liking the new house
- Perceiving that other tenants had moved to far better houses

Tenant outcomes

The survey was designed to gauge a range of tenant outcomes including the satisfaction with their new home and neighbourhood, and access to services and facilities. Tenants were also asked to compare their situation currently to when they lived on the Gordon Estate.

Satisfaction new house

A high level of satisfaction was expressed by tenants in relation to their new homes.

Table 4. Tenant satisfaction with new house

	Very Happy	Happy	OK	Bit Unhappy	Unhappy	TOTAL
Satisfaction	21	10	6	3	6	46
%	46	22	13	6	13	100

Source: Argyle Research (2008). Gordon Estate relocation, tenant survey.

A couple of typical comments included:

"I just love my house – it is so peaceful here."

"The house is just great – it is perfect for us, we are really happy here"

Neighbourhood Perceptions

Tenants were asked to rate two statements, the first in relation to living in the Gordon Estate and the second in relation to living in their new neighbourhood:

- 'Gordon Estate was a good place to live'
- 'My current neighbourhood is a good place to live'

In relation to both Gordon Estate and their new neighbourhoods, the majority of tenants agreed or strongly agreed that the neighbourhood was a good place to live (60% for Gordon and 79% for new neighbourhoods).

Table 5. Tenant views on neighbourhoods as 'a good place to live'

Rating	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Ag/Disag.	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Gordon %	26	34	19	17	4	100
Current %	36	43	9	4	9	100

Source: Argyle Research (2008). Gordon Estate relocation, tenant survey.

In many instances, those who thought the Gordon Estate was not a good place to live had been personally affected by continual antisocial activity, crime and violence:

"I was a prisoner in my own home. You couldn't leave the house or they would break in. I had to get my niece to come over if I wanted to go out"

"I hated it – it was shocking: drug dealing and fighting – people walking up and down whistling and yelling"

"It just never stopped, the shouting and cars."

Although clearly problematic, it should be noted that for these tenants, issues of crime and social disorder were quite of recent origin. In their view, the Estate had only become a bad place to live in recent years, and with the influx of residents from outside Dubbo:

"Everything got bad in the last few years – before that it was fine."

"Once they started putting people from all over, from Bourke and Bree, into the Estate – that's when the problems started."

"Gordon was a great place to live, we liked living there – the problems all started in the last few years or so."

Changes in access: community, education and social

Community services and facilities

Access to community services and facilities has generally remained the same or improved for relocated tenants (see Table 6).

Table 6. Access to facilities and services – post relocation

Facility/Service	Easier	Same	Worse	Total
Supermarket	12	27	8	47
%	25.5	57.4	17.0	100.0
Corner Shop	13	20	3	36
%	36.1	55.6	8.3	100.0
Doctor	13	27	6	46
%	28.3	58.7	13.0	100.0
Hospital	12	26	4	42
%	28.6	61.9	9.5	100.0
Comm. Health	3	8	4	15
%	20.0	53.3	26.7	100.0
TAFE	7	4	0	11
%	63.6	36.4	0.0	100.0
Movies	2	14	1	17
%	11.76	82.35	5.88	100.00
Housing	5	29	7	41
%	12.2	70.7	17.1	100.0
Comm. Centre	3	14	4	21
%	14.3	66.7	19.0	100.0

Source: Argyle Research (2008). Gordon Estate relocation, tenant survey.

Social connections

Access to family and friends and facilities for social and sporting activities tended to remain the same for over half of the tenants. For those who found access changed, roughly equal proportions found that relocation improved or made access more difficult.

Table 7. Social access – post relocation

TYPE	EASIER	SAME	WORSE	TOTAL
Family	12	24	11	47
%	25.5	51.1	23.4	100
Friends	8	30	9	47
%	17.0	63.8	19.1	100
Park	11	12	4	27
%	40.7	44.4	14.8	100
Sports	9	15	4	28
%	32.1	53.6	14.3	100

Source: Argyle Research (2008). Gordon Estate relocation, tenant survey.

In terms problems having access to friends and family, a distinct theme was the breaking of connections and ties that had existed on the estate:

"It's quiet here, but I feel really lonely – people used to always drop by for a yarn."

"I really miss having my friends close by."

"All my friends and family were close to me – it was where I belonged"

Schools and children's services

Table 8. Access to schools and children's services – post relocation

Service	Easier	Same	Worse	TOTAL
High School	6	9	1	16
%	37.5	56.3	6.3	100
Prim. School	8	9	4	21
%	38.1	42.9	19.0	100
Preschool	2	3	3	8
%	25.0	37.5	37.5	100
Childcare	2	2	2	6
%	33.3	33.3	33.3	100

Source: Argyle Research (2008). Gordon Estate relocation, tenant survey.

General factors affecting access to services and facilities

Changes in access to services, facilities, friends and family was mainly affected by where the tenant was relocated and whether the household had a reliable car. The area of West Dubbo (within which the Gordon Estate is located) is reasonably close to Dubbo Town Centre, and is the location of two preschools, West Dubbo Public, local shops, doctors, community health services and the Gordon Community Centre. Thus, for tenants who had no car and were relocated away from West Dubbo, who still had children enrolled in the area, or friends and family residing in the area – the relocation

made access more problematic. For tenants who were relocated within the wider West Dubbo area or who had a car, access tended to improve or remain fairly similar.

Social Problems: new neighbourhood compared to the Gordon Estate

Crime, violence, vandalism and general social disorder were some of the main reasons for redeveloping the Gordon Estate. In terms of exposures to these problems, the relocation has resulted in marked improvements for tenants. In the survey, tenants were asked the degree to which various problems and annoyances were an issue for them, before on the Gordon Estate, and now in their new neighbourhood. The rating was either 'no problem', 'slight problem' or a 'serious problem'. The results are compared in Table 9.

Table 9. Experience of Problems – Gordon Estate compared to new neighbourhood

Issue	No prob.	Slight	Serious	TOTAL
Vandalism	53.2	21.3	25.5	100.0
Now	93.6	6.4	0.0	100.0
Graffiti	67.4	17.4	15.2	100.0
Now	95.7	4.3	0.0	100.0
Dogs	63.8	21.3	14.9	100.0
Now	83.0	12.8	4.3	100.0
Litter	42.6	27.7	29.8	100.0
Now	87.2	12.8	0.0	100.0
Neighbours	80.9	14.9	4.3	100.0
Now	78.7	14.9	6.4	100.0
Racism	80.9	8.5	10.6	100.0
Now	89.4	8.5	2.1	100.0
Noise	59.6	23.4	17.0	100.0
Now	91.5	4.3	4.3	100.0
Crime	51.1	17.0	31.9	100.0
Now	93.6	6.4	0.0	100.0
Drug Use	51.1	17.0	31.9	100.0
Now	85.1	12.8	2.1	100.0
Appearance	59.6	23.4	17.0	100.0
Now	97.9	2.1	0.0	100.0

Negative tenant impacts

Loss of place and social disruption

For some individuals and households the relocation has had a strong negative psychological and emotional impact. This sentiment was particularly marked amongst people who had resided in Gordon Estate for many years, had found it a good place to live, and had strong family and emotional ties to the area. These people found the move unnecessary and disruptive, and in some instances were struggling to settle into their new neighbourhoods. In addition, some tenants who were relocated to old Housing NSW properties with maintenance issues, expressed a high level of dissatisfaction

- The move was unnecessary: *“we were happy there, we were really good tenants – I can’t see why we all had to move.”*

- The move was unfair: *"why should we all be tarred with the same brush? We never caused any problems."*
- The relocation was traumatic: *"I raised all my children in that house; I was planning to die there." "It hurt me very deeply."*
- The quality of house is poor: *"Not happy with my house at all. I hate this house." "I keep asking them to fix these things and they never do."*

A few indigenous tenants have also expressed difficulties with settling into their new neighbourhoods. They can feel isolated and conspicuous as the only indigenous family in the street, and/or that they are under constant surveillance (*"they are just waiting for us to slip up"*). One issue is that families can feel they are subjected to the subjective standards of behaviour of neat suburbanites – that is, fairly ordinary behaviour is made problematic by the views of others (e.g. not having a perfectly clipped lawn or drinking a beer on the front step). Both the Western Aboriginal Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service and members of the Dubbo Transformation Strategy Team identified a need to support any tenants experiencing difficulties settling in to their new neighbourhoods, including where necessary to advocate on their behalf with local neighbours and in order to protect the tenancy.

Community level impacts

The crime and social problems present on the Gordon Estate were seen as having a negative impact on the wider Dubbo community. In particular, community members were concerned about criminal activity being generated by some Estate residents, such as high levels of car theft and stealing. The 'riots' in 2005 and 2006 and subsequent high levels of media attention were viewed as stigmatising the entire Dubbo community. In general, concerns were expressed by the wider community at the apparent break down of social order within the Estate, including endemic crime and violence, drunk and disorderly behaviour, drug dealing, continual vandalism, lack of supervision of young children and serial truancy.

Any consideration of the community level impacts of the relocation must also acknowledge the concurrent activities of agencies within Dubbo. Coinciding with the relocation process has been a whole of government strategy to reduce crime and violence and to improve social and economic indicators for Dubbo. A wide range of initiatives has included those aiming to:

- improve school attendance and engagement
- reduce crime and violence (see below)
- intensively case manage families experiencing complex problems
- improve health and social well being
- improve social integration and community harmony
- improve business and economic opportunities

Crime

There is a strong perception that crime in Dubbo has substantially reduced since the relocation process began.² This perception is supported by police statistics that show falling crime incident levels between 2005 and 2007 for the Orana Local Area Command. The decline in incidents by type of crime is shown at Table 10.

Table 10. Decline in crime incident rates, Orana Local Area Command 2005-07

Offence	Incidents 2005	Incidents 2007	Decline 05-07 %
Assault	897	844	5.9
Break and Enter	1049	712	32.1
Malicious Damage	1224	1079	11.8
Robbery	36	38	+5.5
Stealing	1680	1071	36.2
Stolen Vehicle	472	242	48.7

Source: Extracted from incident data provided by Dubbo Police

These figures would suggest that the relocation has had a positive impact on crime – particularly considering the records of some residents of the Estate for stealing and car theft. Several of the interviewees for this report considered it obvious that relocating a number of the 'trouble makers' out of Dubbo would reduce crime in Dubbo. Some also noted that a positive effect would be expected from removing the 'collective effect' of a concentrated group of people involved in criminal activity. However, it is difficult to make a precise assessment of the impact on crime of the

² This comment was made repeatedly by those interviewed for the analysis.

relocation. Examining the trends from 2003 for 'break and enter', 'stealing' and 'stolen vehicle' (see figures 1-3) it is evident that incident rates were declining from prior to the relocation process – although the proportionate fall in stolen vehicles from 2006 is substantial. Crime statistics for 2008 indicate a continuing downward trend in stolen vehicles and a slight upward trend in stealing.³

Crime rates were a serious issue for the entire Dubbo community, resulting in a range of crime reduction initiatives and social interventions. It would be expected that these activities would also have contributed to reduced crime - they include:

- Proactive policing
- Community crime prevention activities
- Anti Social Behaviour Program
- Dubbo Crime Prevention Plan
- Better Futures Strategy
- Aboriginal Community Patrol
- East-West Strategy⁴

³ Dubbo Police (2008). Presentation to Whole of Government Meeting – June 2008.

⁴ Dubbo Whole of Government Working Group (2008). 2020 Vision for the City of Dubbo: Progress Report number 2.

Figure 1.

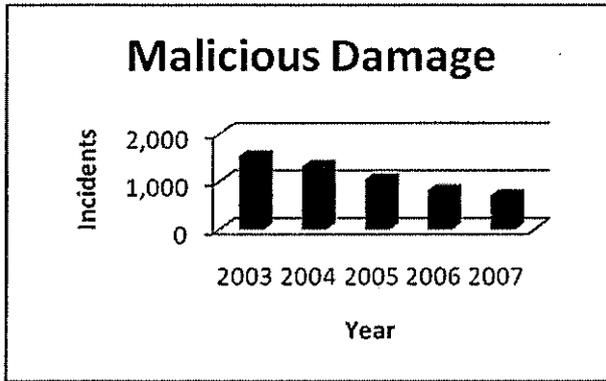


Figure 2.

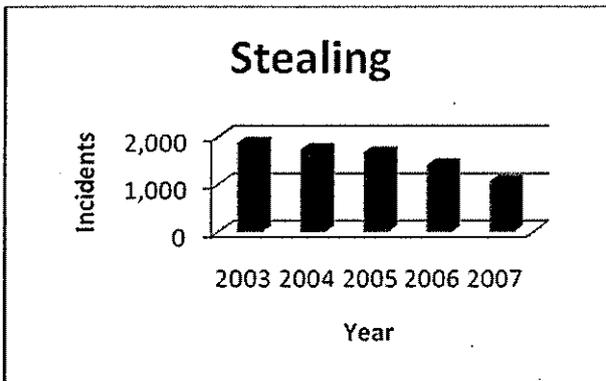
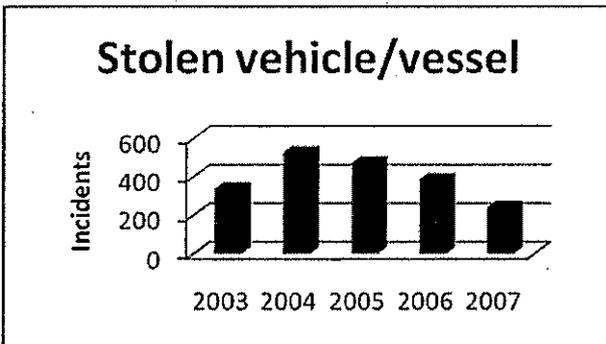


Figure 3.



School and preschool attendance

Across Dubbo schools there has been a general decline in enrolments, and a steady pattern of attendance. The impact on of relocation on attendance rates cannot be determined without data on individual children's attendance patterns prior and post relocation. Anecdotally, only one tenant reported any problem with getting their children to school in their new neighbourhood (due to an unreliable car) – and others reported it was easy to get their children to school and that they could now catch the bus (which had been perceived as unsafe in West Dubbo).

The director of Dubbo West Preschool reports that their preschool is currently full (60 places) and that attendance has improved markedly in the last year. ATSI family numbers have doubled from 17 families to 35 families. These improvements have coincided with the purchase of a bus which collects the children from the Gordon and Apollo estates and other areas.

Child protection

One of the aims of the relocation was to improve the living environment of families with children, and reduce the exposure of children to anti social influences. It is currently too early to ascertain whether relocation has contributed to improved child protection outcomes for children relocated from the Gordon Estate (for example, whether rates of DoCs reporting for relocated children have declined).

Economic

Tourism appears to be the main economic activity on which negative aspects of the Gordon Estate had an impact. The 'riots' and ensuing publicity resulted in tourist bookings being cancelled and evidence of concern about 'Dubbo being safe' from potential visitors. A belief developed that Dubbo was a 'dangerous town.' Tourism responded to the problems by developing the "I love Dubbo" promotional campaign. Subsequently, visitor rates to Dubbo have increased markedly with currently the best occupancy rates in 6 years.

Whether any of the improvement in visitor numbers to Dubbo can be attributed to the relocation process, cannot be accurately determined. However, it can be seen that the fact that there are no longer violent incidents and public disorder for the media to report – should have a positive impact on perceptions of Dubbo amongst potential visitors.

Housing affordability

Low cost land and housing has become available on the Gordon Estate in the areas vacated by tenants. This has provided the opportunity for first home buyers and investors to buy into the redeveloped estate. Houses have sold from between \$30,000 and \$148,000. Given median house prices in Dubbo are currently \$240,000, the Estate land and housing is highly affordable and potentially a worthwhile investment. One local taxi driver commented: *"There's really cheap houses there: I got one for \$120,000"*

Impact of relocating tenants on the wider community

When the Gordon Estate relocation was announced, a degree of fear and uncertainty was expressed by some in the Dubbo community about the impact of relocated tenants would have in the new neighbourhoods. Currently, reports by agencies indicate that tenants relocated to non concentrated housing areas of Dubbo have generally settled well and very few of the anticipated issues have arisen. According to both the Aboriginal Housing Office and Housing NSW, Dubbo Client Services

Office 'if there were any problems we would have definitely heard about them.' Community members have also reiterated this:

"There are relocated tenants living near me – and they cause absolutely no problems."

Having noted this – it was also reported that some of the 'problem residents', including an indeterminate number of unauthorised tenants, have not been relocated into the wider Dubbo community. Rather they have moved out of Dubbo, into the Apollo Estate (another Housing NSW estate in Dubbo) or are yet to be relocated from the Gordon Estate.

Conclusion

The aim of the Dubbo Gordon Estate relocation was to reduce the incidence and concentration of crime and social problems in Dubbo. In these terms, the relocation process appears to have been largely successful. Clearly, problems on the Estate itself have sharply diminished. This impact is apparently more than a result of 'shifting the problem elsewhere'; there are also substantial reductions in crime for the whole Dubbo area, with a large fall in stolen vehicles.

Other social outcomes such as school attendance, child protection, domestic violence and drug use could not be accurately assessed by this analysis – but if the wider impact of relocation is to be assessed, it is recommended that the outcomes for former tenants be longitudinally assessed.

There is a perception that the stigma attached to Dubbo as a result of problems on the Estate has disappeared. Tourism occupancy rates are well up and Dubbo is no longer receiving 'bad press' in the state media.

Individual tenants are mostly very satisfied with their new houses and neighbourhoods. They have generally settled well and very few of the anticipated problems have occurred. Access to facilities and services has generally remained the same, and exposure to problems such as crime and social disorder have greatly decreased. Although the dislocation and emotional distress caused to some long term tenants should not be discounted – tenants were mostly happy with the way the relocation process was managed. The majority acknowledged the intensive level of support and assistance provided by the Dubbo Transformation Strategy Team. It is recommended that the small number of tenants experiencing problems adjusting to the relocation continue to be supported with their tenancies.