



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 5

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2008-2009

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5

Housing, Western Sydney

Friday 17 October 2008

Answers to be lodged by: Wednesday 12 November 2008

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Questions relating to the portfolios of Housing and Western Sydney

17 OCTOBER 2008, 4.30 pm – 6.00 pm

Questions from Ms Hale

Increase in First Home Owners Grant

1. Should the increases in the FHOG have been targeted only towards new-build housing only to avoid an inflationary effect?

Bonnyrigg redevelopment

2. I refer to the redevelopment of the Bonnyrigg public housing estate in Sydney. The 'Living Communities summary of contracts' document indicates that the number of social housing dwellings on the site will fall from 833, at commencement of the development process, to 699, at complement of the contract period, and that 134 replacement dwellings will be found elsewhere in western Sydney for the shortfall. Can you indicate the stock acquisition process for those 134 dwellings:
 - a. How many of the 134 dwellings have been acquired or built as at the end of the 2007-08 financial year?
 - b. What suburbs are those dwellings in?
 - c. Is the acquisition or construction cost of the 134 dwellings to be financed from normal allocations to Housing NSW's normal capital works program, or from the \$25 million savings to the public that accrue to the development (as indicated in the 'public sector comparator')?

National Rental Affordability Scheme

3. How many units of affordable housing does the department expect will be built in the next calendar year, via the Centre for Affordable Housing administration of the National Rental Affordability Scheme?
4. How many expressions of interest have been received in response to the CAH's first round of funding offered through the National Affordable Rental Initiative?

Housing stock statistics

5. What is the average rent per-household, paid by public housing tenants (only - not community etc) across the state?
6. How many homes has Housing NSW sold to sitting tenants in the past 12 months?
7. What was Housing NSW's total water (only water) bill for all residential properties across the state for the past 12 months?
8. What was Housing NSW's total income derived from 'tenant water charges' for exactly the same period?
9. Exactly how many residential rental properties does Housing NSW have in its portfolio, state-wide, to date?

Social and affordable housing stock

10. Given the massive decline in new social housing compared to population growth and current record levels of housing unaffordability, is Housing NSW's program of new builds adequate, or should it be significantly increased?
11. Will Landcom increase its component of housing at more affordable prices for sale, provided they are sold to a pool of buyers who are on moderate incomes?

Guttering used by Housing NSW

12. Are you aware that new guttering now being used in housing can lead to overflow and water getting into the house cavities?
13. Are you aware that some plumbers believe this guttering, when installed according to the manufacturer's instructions, may not comply with the Building Codes of Australia?
14. Which manufacturers supply Housing NSW's new or replacement guttering?
15. Is Housing NSW ensuring that its new guttering allows for adequate drainage?

Street-based sex workers

16. What funds are being allocated for programs to enable street-based sex workers to break the cycle of homelessness and move out of the sex industry where they desire to do so?

Infrastructure Fund and Aboriginal Housing

17. What steps, if any, are being taken by the NSW Government to ensure this state receives a fair share of the Commonwealth's \$20 billion Infrastructure Fund?
18. What steps, if any, are being taken to ensure a priority call will be made on these funds for the unmet infrastructure need in discrete Aboriginal communities in this State, especially given the fact that NSWALC has had to commit more than \$100 million of Aboriginal compensation monies to assist the Government fix up the appalling water and sewerage services in Aboriginal communities?

Maintenance Contracts

19. It was reported that Housing NSW has extended its contract with Transfield, and that Transfield will be managing 40 per cent of Housing NSW's maintenance portfolio. Which companies will be managing the other 60%?

Purchase of private units in Shoalhaven area

20. Former Housing Minister Matt Brown authorised the purchase of a block of units in his own electorate, causing the eviction of amongst others, a single parent shift worker, Tracy Evinson from the private rental complex. How much was the block of units purchased for, and how much was spent on refurbishments?
21. Did Housing NSW consider a new build instead of buying up already-existing housing being used for private rental? If not, why not?

Smart Meters

22. What percentage of Housing NSW stock now have Smart Meters for electricity installed? What is the timetable for the installation of Smart Meters across all your properties?

Hurstville Office

23. Are you aware of concerns that there are serious and endemic problems in both the Hurstville and Miranda Offices of Housing NSW?

Leasehold housing ownership

24. What is Housing NSW's position on building houses on state-owned land, with moderate-income buyers owning the building – often a third or less of the total value of the house and land – while the state retains the land under a leasehold arrangement?

25. Is Housing NSW aware of the ACT Government's initiatives on such leasehold schemes?

26. Could LandCom offer a similar form of housing on leasehold land?

Community housing

27. The Government said it was considering introducing long-term leases for community housing properties, designed to give providers a steady income stream to support borrowing that can be used to build affordable housing. Has this commenced, or if not, when will it commence?

28. OCH will expect community housing providers to be more financially self-sufficient. How much extra funding is to come from the tenants themselves, because of the decision to change rents in order to capture a greater proportion of Commonwealth Rent Assistance?

Questions from Mr Clarke

29. Affordable Housing

- a. What plans are there to increase the benefits available to first homebuyers under the First Home Plus Scheme now that the Federal Government has increased benefits under the First Home Owners Scheme until 30 June, 2009?
- b. What were the total benefits made available under the First Home Plus Scheme during the last year?
- c. What were the 5 leading local government areas, in which properties were purchased and benefits made available under the First Home Plus Scheme?
- d. Last year, the former Premier announced that he was reviewing Government charges. What were the department's submissions to Treasury and the Premier for a reduction in charges, which are up to 35% of the purchase price of a basic land and house package?
- e. Many lower paid essential workers such as Police, Ambulance, Council workers and School Teachers can no longer afford to live in the areas like the inner city, yet the residents of these areas need these workers. What action has the department taken to assist low paid essential workers to live within a reasonable distance of high cost residential areas?

30. Mortgage Assistance

- a. What plans are there to increase the total amount available under the Mortgage Assistance Scheme during this period of unprecedented economic uncertainty?

- b. How many applicants were there for mortgage assistance during the last year?
- c. How many applicants were assisted during the last year?
- d. How many applicants were declined during the last year and for what reasons?
- e. What was the total amount lent by the scheme to borrowers during the year?
- f. How much money remained available to lend at 30 June, 2008?

31. Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project

- a. How many more disadvantaged families would be able to obtain public housing if the department maintained the ratio of 89% public and 11% private housing, which applied in the Bonnyrigg Estate, rather than increasing the private housing component to 69% in the new project?
- b. Why are a further 134 homes being purchased for public tenants in Bonnyrigg and adjacent suburbs, to achieve the former total of 833 public housing homes, rather than including the 134 homes in the total of 2230 to be constructed?
- c. When will the additional 134 homes be purchased and how much has been allocated for their purchase?

32. Tenant Fraud Amnesty

- a. When is it expected that the amnesty calls investigations will be completed?
- b. How much money is expected to be recovered, as a result of the amnesty and how does this compare with the \$53 million annual losses from the fraud?
- c. What was the cost of the amnesty?
- d. What percentage of public tenants does the department believing are committing fraud in relation to the information, which they have provided to the department?

33. Homelessness

- a. Housing of the socially disadvantaged in our community is included in the housing portfolio. Is it considered to be an important component of the portfolio?
- b. Is it conceded, that in view of the extent of homelessness, the Commonwealth government's "A Place to Call Home" strategy, whilst "heading in the right direction", does not even scratch the surface of this enormous social problem?
- c. How many homes will be completed by June, 2009 as part of this strategy and what plans are there to extend the programme?
- d. How many people are, at the latest count, living on the streets of Sydney?
- e. How often does the department do a count?
- f. What checks do are made that these people have welfare assistance?
- g. Is there a team to meet them and see if they need emergency accommodation? If not, why not?
- h. Has the Minister gone out personally with the Salvation Army or the St Vincent's de Paul Society? If so, when did this happen? If not, why not? After all, they're across the road in Martin Place every day.
- i. The homeless used to sleep in the window gardens of Parliament House located between Parliament House and the State Library and also on the walkway. What's happened to those people now that Parliament has put barriers in the gardens to stop them sleeping there? What enquiries have been made?
- j. How many people were accommodated in emergency accommodation last year who would be regarded as street people?

- k. How much financial assistance is being provided to the Salvation Army and other refuge centres by the Department, this year? If this funding is via DOCS, what representations have been made to ensure that DOCS is focused on this issue?

34. Public and Community Housing

- a. What impact will next month's Mini-Budget have on this capital programme, which was outlined in the budget?
- b. How many homes will commence construction and how many will be completed in the following areas?
 - i. Central Sydney
 - ii. Central Coast
 - iii. Hunter
 - iv. Northern Region
 - v. South Eastern Region
 - vi. South Western Region
 - vii. Western Region
 - viii. Western Sydney
- c. How many homes in the portfolio were sold during last year in the above areas?
 - i. How many homes in the portfolio were sold on the open market during the last year, in these same areas and what was the market value of the homes sold?
 - ii. How many homes in the portfolio were sold to public tenants during the last year, in these same areas and what was the market value of the homes sold?
 - iii. What was the total amount received from sales during the last year from sales on the open market and sales to public tenants, in each of the areas?
 - iv. What is the basis of the decision to sell homes from the portfolio?
- d. How many people were on the public housing waiting listing at 30 September, 2008, in the following areas?
 - i. Central Sydney
 - ii. Central Coast
 - iii. Hunter
 - iv. Northern Region
 - v. South Eastern Region
 - vi. South Western Region
 - vii. Western Region
 - viii. Western Sydney
 - ix. and how do these figures compare with the previous year?
- e. What is the waiting time for properties in the Eastern Suburbs compared to that of the Western Suburbs?
- f. At the current level of construction and of people vacating their tenancies, how long will it take to satisfy the waiting list?
- g. How many homes in the portfolio are heritage listed?
 - i. How much is the annual maintenance cost on these homes?
 - ii. What is the current rent received for the heritage listed homes in the portfolio?
 - iii. What is the current market rent for these properties?

- iv. How many heritage-listed homes were sold last year and how many are currently for sale?
 - v. How many leases of heritage-listed homes were sold last year and how many are currently for sale?
- h. How many housing properties does the Department own valued at \$1 million or more as at 30 September 2008 and where are they located?
 - i. What is the rent collected on these properties?
 - ii. What is the expected market rent of these properties?
 - iii. How long has the Department owned these properties?
 - iv. What are the annual strata fees and council rates of these properties?
 - v. Are all of these properties tenanted, if so, which ones and for how long have the current tenants been there?
- i. How many properties valued at over \$800,000 has the department acquired in the last 2 years and where are they located?
- j. How many incidences of graffiti were experienced on Department homes, during the last year?
 - vi. What was the cost of removing the graffiti?
 - vii. What action is being taken to eliminate or reduce the incidence of graffiti?
 - viii. Does the Department have an anti-graffiti taskforce?
 - ix. If there is a taskforce, what is its annual cost?
 - x. If there is no taskforce, why isn't there one?
- k. How many public tenants were discovered drug dealing from their Department homes, during the year?
 - i. On how many occasions were charges laid against public tenants for drug dealing?
 - ii. What action did the Department take in each of the incidences, regarding the public tenants' leases?
 - iii. How many public housing estates have secure needle disposal units installed similar to those installed in the Pacific Del Mar Estate, Tumbi Umbi?
 - iv. What is the annual cost of these secure needle disposal units?
- l. How many public tenants were in arrears with their rent as at 30 September, 2008?
 - i. What was the total amount in arrears at this time in each of these areas:-?
 - 1. Central Sydney
 - 2. Central Coast
 - 3. Hunter
 - 4. Northern Region
 - 5. South Eastern Region
 - 6. South Western Region
 - 7. Western Region
 - 8. Western Sydney
 - ii. What action is being taken to recover the rental arrears?

- m. How many public tenants are in the Bidwill Housing Estate?
 - i. What action is being undertaken to reduce the level of crime and anti-social behaviour including the incidence of graffiti and property damage, which has escalated in recent years, in the Bidwill Housing Estate?
- n. In view of the Premier's announcement of a reduction of 20% in SES personnel, across the Public Service:-
 - i. How many SES personnel are there in the Department?
 - ii. How many SES personnel will be retrenched?
 - iii. What is the annual cost of SES personnel in the Department?
 - iv. What will the retrenchment cost be for the Department?
- o. Has the Minister been asked to introduce a cost saving programme by Treasury? If so:-
 - i. What percentage of costs are incorporated in the cost saving programme?
 - ii. Where are the cost savings targeted?
 - iii. Has the cost saving programme commenced?
 - iv. What is the total value of the cost saving programme for the Department?
- p. What was the breakdown of people, who unsuccessfully requested public housing in the year to 30 September 2008 in:-
 - i. Central Sydney
 - ii. Central Coast
 - iii. Hunter
 - iv. Northern Region
 - v. South Eastern Region
 - vi. South Western Region
 - vii. Western Region
 - viii. Western Sydney
 - ix. How do these figures compare to the previous year?
- q. How many additional single person units of accommodation were created in 2007/2008?
- r. How many additional two person units of accommodation were created in 2007/2008?
- s. How many additional three or more person units of accommodation were created in 2007/2008?
- t. In each case how many were built and how many were purchased?
- u. At what age can someone request public housing?
 - i. Are there any recorded incidences of a person requesting public housing at the age of 17 years or under?
 - ii. Is there any connection with the children of public housing tenants seeking public housing themselves?
 - iii. How many public housing tenants are currently serving a gaol sentence? In the case of each of those tenants how long has each of them been in gaol?

- iv. What was the number of people assisted seeking Crisis Accommodation in the year ending September 30, 2008 in:-
 - 1. Regional NSW
 - 2. Central Coast
 - 3. Metropolitan Sydney
 - 4. Newcastle/Hunter
 - 5. Wollongong/Illawarra
- v. What was the total cost? And what is the estimated number for this coming year?
- v. What is the number of Public Housing, Community Housing and Crisis Accommodation properties currently held by the Department as at 30 September 2008?
 - i. What is the breakdown of how many apartments, townhouses and units?
 - ii. Of those how many are currently tenanted as at 30 September 2008?
 - iii. How many of those are paying market rent as at 30 September 2008 in:-
 - 1. Regional NSW
 - 2. Central Coast
 - 3. Metropolitan Sydney
 - 4. Newcastle/Hunter
 - 5. Wollongong/Illawarra
 - iv. How many are not paying market rent?
 - v. What are the criteria for determining market rent? Who does this?
- w. How many properties were vacant as at 30 September 2008 in:-
 - i. Central Sydney
 - ii. Central Coast
 - iii. Hunter
 - iv. Northern Region
 - v. South Eastern Region
 - vi. South Western Region
 - vii. Western Region
 - viii. Western Sydney
- x. What is the estimated value of the Department's properties as at 30 September 2008, in:-
 - i. Central Sydney
 - ii. Central Coast
 - iii. Hunter
 - iv. Northern Region
 - v. South Eastern Region
 - vi. South Western Region
 - vii. Western Region
 - viii. Western Sydney
 - ix. How often are they valued?
- y. Does the Department hold land with no housing on it as at 30 September 2008? If so, where and what is its value?
- z. What is the total income from all of the Department's properties as at 30 September 2008?

35. Maintenance backlog

- a. What is the level of maintenance backlog as at 30 September 2008 in:-
 - i. Western Sydney
 - ii. Northern Beaches
 - iii. Central Coast
 - iv. Newcastle / Hunter
 - v. Wollongong / Illawarra
 - vi. South Eastern Sydney
- b. What is the expected waiting period for requested maintenance as at 30 September 2008, in:-
 - i. Western Sydney
 - ii. Northern Beaches
 - iii. Central Coast
 - iv. Newcastle / Hunter
 - v. Wollongong / Illawarra
 - vi. South Eastern Sydney
- c. What is the total expenditure on maintenance for these properties as at 30 September 2008?
- d. What is the expected waiting period for cyclical maintenance as at 30 September 2008? For example, how often are kitchens, bathrooms, carpet, interior/exterior paint replaced in:-
 - i. Western Sydney
 - ii. Northern Beaches
 - iii. Central Coast
 - iv. Newcastle / Hunter
 - v. Wollongong / Illawarra
 - vi. South Eastern Sydney
- e. Is there a sub-maintenance schedule to replace things like kitchen benchtops, flyscreens, gutters, etc...?
- f. Are there criteria for the cycle of maintenance?
- g. Have any Public Housing tenants been forced to pay for repairs to their property caused by themselves? How many in the year to 30 September 2008?
- h. How is this enforced? Is it the same for those on Government assistance compared to those that are employed?
- i. Has the concept of programmed maintenance being used by the department in the past or is it being introduced now for the first time?

36. Vandalism

- a. How many tenanted properties were vandalised in the year to 30 September 2008 in:-
 - i. Central Sydney
 - ii. Central Coast
 - iii. Hunter

- iv. Northern Region
 - v. South Eastern Region
 - vi. South Western Region
 - vii. Western Region
 - viii. Western Sydney
- b. How many vacant properties were vandalised in the year to 30 September 2008 in:-
 - i. Central Sydney
 - ii. Central Coast
 - iii. Hunter
 - iv. Northern Region
 - v. South Eastern Region
 - vi. South Western Region
 - vii. Western Region
 - viii. Western Sydney
- c. How many public housing tenants that caused deliberate damage to their property such as, fire, water or structural damage and are still located in public housing 2007/08 in:-
 - i. Central Sydney
 - ii. Central Coast
 - iii. Hunter
 - iv. Northern Region
 - v. South Eastern Region
 - vi. South Western Region
 - vii. Western Region
 - viii. Western Sydney
- d. Is cyclical maintenance ever refused on a public housing property due to a tenant's bad record of vandalism and/or property maintenance?
- e. Have any tenants been evicted or refused further public housing because of their record of vandalism to their public housing property in 2007/08?
- f. How many tenants were evicted from public housing during the year ending 30 September 2008 for non payment of rent, in:-
 - i. Central Sydney
 - ii. Central Coast
 - iii. Hunter
 - iv. Northern Region
 - v. South Eastern Region
 - vi. South Western Region
 - vii. Western Region
 - viii. Western Sydney
 - ix. How do these evictions relate to the figures for the previous year?

37. Consultancies

- a. How many consultancies have commenced in the year to 30 September 2008?
- b. To whom were consulting fees paid and how much was paid to each person or company?

38. Subletting

- a. How many complaints did the Department receive regarding tenants subletting their properties in 2007/08 in;
 - i. Central Sydney
 - ii. Central Coast
 - iii. Hunter
 - iv. Northern Region
 - v. South Eastern Region
 - vi. South Western Region
 - vii. Western Region
 - viii. Western Sydney
- b. How many people have been investigated for subletting in 2007/08 in:-
 - i. Central Sydney
 - ii. Central Coast
 - iii. Hunter
 - iv. Northern Region
 - v. South Eastern Region
 - vi. South Western Region
 - vii. Western Region
 - viii. Western Sydney

39. Private leasing

- a. How many properties does the Department lease from the private sector as at 30 September 2008 in:-
 - i. Central Sydney
 - ii. Central Coast
 - iii. Hunter
 - iv. Northern Region
 - v. South Eastern Region
 - vi. South Western region
 - vii. Western Region
 - viii. Western Sydney?
- b. How many of these properties leased by the Department are valued at over \$500 per week?
- c. What is the rent paid by the tenants on these properties?
- d. What is the total cost to the Department of leasing from the private sector?

- e. Are there any circumstances in which a public housing tenant would be asked/forced to find alternative accommodation within the private sector without assistance?
 - i. Is there a cap on how much a public housing tenant can earn?
 - ii. If they were to go over that limit, would they be given notice to find alternative housing in the private sector?

40. Departmental staff

- a. What measures are taken to counsel staff in dealing with difficult persons?
- b. What training do staff receive to assist them in dealing with difficult people? Is it ongoing?
- c. What is the number of staff as at 30 September 2008 on stress related leave?
- d. What percentage of the Department's workforce is this?
- e. Have there been any recorded incidence of assault on Department of Housing Staff in the year to 30 September 2008?
- f. How many complaints were made by Department officers to the Police for assaults or threats of assaults in the year to 30 September 2008?
- g. How many tenants were evicted for violence or threatened violence towards Departmental staff?
- h. How many staff took out AVO orders against tenants in the preceding 12 months?

41. Aboriginal Housing

- a. Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement
 - i. What is the status of the Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Agreement (IHIA) which was due for re-negotiation with the Commonwealth prior to its expiry in June 2008?
- b. 2007-2008 Budget Funding Promises
 - i. How many additional Aboriginal community-owned dwellings were completed in FY 2007-08? (14 promised)
 - ii. What was the total amount expended for repairs and maintenance works to community owned dwellings in FY 2007-08? (\$16.8M promised)
 - iii. How many premises were repaired and/or had maintenance work conducted in FY 2007-08?
 - iv. What was the total amount expended for repairs and maintenance works for AHO-owned dwellings? (\$10.3M promised)
 - v. How many premises were repaired and/or had maintenance work conducted in FY 2007-08?
 - vi. What was the total amount expended for resourcing community organisations, sector support and training in the FY 2007-08? (\$7.9M promised)

- vii. How many of the 30 indigenous housing works in progress receiving capital expenditure from AHO were completed in FY 2007-08?
- viii. How many of the 31 new indigenous housing works receiving capital expenditure from the AHO were completed in FY 2007-08?
- c. **Aboriginal Housing Office**
 - i. What is the Government doing about reducing repair and maintenance costs for the Aboriginal Housing Office considering that the budget costs for AHO owned and Community-owned dwellings increased from \$27.1 million or 36% of the AHO's budget in 07/08 to \$33.1 million or 41% of the AHO's budget in 2008/09?
 - ii. What type of repairs and maintenance are covered by these funds considering that the AHO Asset Management Program has increased by \$5.7 million to \$23.6 million in the 08/09 Budget for improvements ranging from minor repairs to major upgrade works for current Aboriginal housing?
 - iii. How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing units are available as at 30 September 2008, in –
 - 1. Regional NSW
 - 2. Central Coast
 - 3. Metropolitan Sydney
 - 4. Newcastle/Hunter
 - 5. Wollongong/Illawarra
- d. What is the waiting list for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander housing units as at 30 September 2008 for:-
 - i. Regional NSW
 - ii. Central Coast
 - iii. Metropolitan Sydney
 - iv. Newcastle/Hunter
 - v. Wollongong/Illawarra

42. Interagency plan to tackle child sexual assault in Aboriginal communities

- a. What responsibilities has your department been allocated in combating child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities under the Interagency Plan?
- b. What has been the financial cost to your department for the 2007/08 financial year of this interagency plan?
- c. What funding has been allocated by your department for the financial year 2008/09 to enact your responsibilities under the Interagency plan?

43. Other Programmes

- a. How much was spent in Rentstart for the year ended June, 2008?
- b. Why has the budget for Rentstart been reduced to \$25.8 million when there is a rental crisis across the state?
- c. How much was spent in the Special Assistance Subsidy programme for the year ended June, 2008?

44. Indigenous Staff

- a. How many indigenous staff are employed by your department?
- b. What percentage does this represent of your overall department staffing?
- c. Have you met your benchmarks for the employment of indigenous staff levels for your department?

45. Staff with disabilities

- a. How many people with disabilities are employed by your department?
- b. What percentage does this represent of your overall department staffing?
- c. Have you met your benchmarks for the employment of people with disabilities for your department? If there are no benchmarks – why not?