

Submission  
No 6

## INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL, PUBLIC AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 14/01/2014

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Partially Confidential

## **Legislative Council Select Committee on Social, Public and Affordable Housing**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ & I have lived in public housing for 20 years.

When I moved into housing I was a single mother of one child. This child is now 21 and I have had no other children.

I have worked for a Government Department for 25 years.

I have been a good tenant and paid my rent on time. I have maintained my home well above surrounding properties. I have always reported any maintenance issues as needed to Housing NSW (HNSW). Very little maintenance has been done to this property outside of regular issues such as i.e leaking taps, an original hot water system being replaced etc.

HNSW recently installed a new kitchen and floor coverings. I was advised by HNSW this work was undertaken due to the “market rent increase” which was implemented 25 November 2013

HNSW increased my market rent from \$250.00 per week to \$ 395.00 per week; a \$145 a week increase.

I contacted the CTTT and lodged an application for “excessive rent increase”.

I contacted the Western Sydney Tenants’ Services (WESTS) as they are the free advice and advocacy service available to social housing tenants in Western Sydney.

I called the number (02) 8833 0911 and left a voicemail message. My call was returned a week later with little or no information provided by WESTS.

I asked if WESTS could accompany me to the CTTT hearing and was told there’s “*no funding for this*”. I made contact with WESTS again for advice for the next part of the CTTT process and once again left a voicemail message. My call was returned a few days later.

I again requested WESTS assistance in accompanying me to represent me on the day of hearing. I was told that “*probably wouldn’t be possible but ring back closer to the date*”.

I called back closer to the CTTT hearing date and again the morning of the hearing both times leaving voicemail messages. I represented myself at the CTTT.

I didn’t feel supported or assisted by during this process by WESTS. There is no one advocating or representing HNSW tenants which I find alarming given a good percentage of their tenants are high needs based than me. For example, mental illness, drug & alcohol, former offenders etc.

We proceeded to the first hearing 5 November 2013. I took a day of leave from work. The matter was adjourned as HNSW advised the CTTT that a valuation on the property had to be undertaken..

How can the HNSW send me documentation increasing my rent by \$145.00 per week without first receiving a valuation?

The next hearing was also adjourned. I again took a day of leave from work to attend. The next date 10 December 2013 (third day of leave from work) commenced with a mediation session with the HNSW Client Service Officer (CSO).

The valuation the HNSW undertook was submitted as evidence for which indicated a range of between \$350.00-\$370.00 per week as market value rent. A mid-range value of picked as \$360.00 was agreed upon.

We had a brief discussion and the CSO suggested I meet her half way which I refused. The CSO implied the CTTT may rule with HNSW and possibly even a higher per week value. I felt this was still too high and trusted the process of the CTTT and decided to proceed to the hearing.

This whole process is a very daunting and stressful one. I had to prepare myself 3 weeks before the hearing a submission of evidence to why the property wasn't worth the suggested value HNSW were increasing the rent to.

As part of my submission I indicated that I live in a social housing cluster of 197 dwellings (super lot) and that that alone should be reason enough that an increase of such a large amount wasn't warranted.

The CSO argument was that if I paid this amount of rent it would "*change the stigma of the now full housing cluster*". I disagree that just because tenants pay more rent doesn't constitute a change of stigma or a public opinion of the area in which we live.

I demonstrated my argument with many points of reference to the current property's condition; having a flooding/mould problem that has been outstanding for over 10 years or more years. I have emails as evidence to prove this. I have spent money on improvements of the property over the years.

I have also been affected by the Workers Compensation (WC) changes by the Government. As of the 31 December 2013 all my medical treatment will cease. Without this treatment I don't know how I will be able to work full-time. Any days off that are due to my WC condition will now exhaust my sick leave. I am concerned about my future earnings as I will exhaust my sick leave and then be on leave without pay. I will still have to pay full market rent.

I have married this year and my husband works but if the rent continues to increase and I am not working or am on leave without pay we will be under financial stress.

As a long term tenant of a housing property I feel it necessary to point out that when I have had contact with this housing CSO's and previous CSO I am treated with no dignity or respect.

When the kitchen was installed this year I was advised it would take 1 week. My husband took 1 week leave from work for a job that took 3 week 3.

The contractor did not do the work to standard and damaged the property and the new kitchen during installation.

I was constantly calling the contractor directly to follow up on the incomplete work as well as the damage done. The contractor made a complaint about me to HNSW.

The CSO called me an abused me. I asked her did she know the background of the matter. When I proceeded to explain in detail the matter to her she apologised.

I feel that the tenants that are paying full rent in housing properties are being pressured into moving out. The CSO asked me about buying privately, adding that all HNSW tenants were exempt from paying Stamp Duty.

Housing have made increases in rent that are inappropriate and unfair.

Housing want extra money for properties that are in great need of major upgrades & improvements.



Our Reference: T0760158

Dear

I refer to your emails in reference to your market rent challenge at the Consumer Trader & Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT). I understand that you have been requesting a formal letter from Housing NSW about the new market rent.

Housing NSW does not send such a letter. Your current market rent has not been set by Housing NSW therefore we do not formally advise you of the change. Your current market rent has been set by the CTTT therefore the CTTT orders are your formal notification of the new market rent.

For your convenience I have included a further copy of the CTTT orders that were handed to you at the conclusion of the hearing and a copy of your rent account statement that shows the change in the market rent you are being charged and the 3 weeks refund of the 3 weeks charged at the market rent you successfully challenged.

Should you wish to make further enquires, please contact

Yours sincerely

Amanda Annabel

**A/Team Leader  
Team 7  
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14 January 2014