

**Submission
No 70**

INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL, PUBLIC AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Organisation: Inner West Housing Tenants Committee

Date received: 27/02/2014

Inner West Housing Tenants Committee



Date: 24th February 2014

Select Committee on Social, Public and Affordable Housing
The Director
NSW Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney
NSW 2000

Dear Members of the Select Committee:

My name is Anibal Arrarte and I am the current Chairman, of the Inner West Housing Tenants Committee. Our committee represents over a 1,000 properties and more than 2,500 people who are currently living in public/social housing and as such are directly impacted by the policies, strategies and the current and future state of Public Housing in NSW.

We welcome this inquiry and acknowledge the very serious situation that Public Housing finds itself in today. We firmly believe that unless a comprehensive review takes place coupled with a genuine commitment to innovative change and investment the state of Public Housing will continue to deteriorate at an alarming rate. The time is right for this inquiry requires an innovative approach.

We have identified 10 Key Issues that we believe need investigation, answers and ultimately action:

1. *Selling of public houses.*

Housing NSW has continued to sell public houses over the last 12 months with 1,300 fewer properties in Housing's portfolio. We ask the State government what has happened to these properties and why are there less properties available today than 12 months ago.

2. *Accountability and Transparency.*

We ask the State government for a full-disclosure of where the funds from these sales have gone. Is the State government just propping up the annual deficits of Housing's operations via the sales of public housing?

3. *Poor Condition of Public Housing Stock.*

The very poor condition of much of Housing's 150,000 properties is a real concern. We ask the State Government to commit to a genuine policy of improving housing conditions across Housing NSW's portfolio.

4. *Unacceptable Standard of Bedsits*

The completely unacceptable standard of bedsits throughout NSW Housing's portfolio is a major issue to be addressed. Bed sits are often around 25 square meters almost half the floor space of what Housing today accepts as adequate. We ask the State Government to implement a staged strategy to eradicate bedsits within next 10 years.

5. *Waiting List*

The unacceptable long waiting list for people seeking properties, currently there are 57,000 people on the waiting



list. This list has grown by 2,000 over the last 12 months. Without a commitment to increase property numbers this problem will only continue to grow in the future.

6. *Family waiting List*

This is of major concern with some families having to wait almost 8 years for a 3 bedroom home. We ask the State government to make a genuine commitment to increase the number of 3 bedroom apartments, to assist in the drastic shortage of family sized public housing.

7. *Idle properties*

There are way too many properties that have lain idle for long periods of time, reportably at times up to 12 months. Even I am aware of a property in my area of Five Dock that has been unoccupied for the past 12 months.

8. *Decrease in New Homes Built*

Fewer new homes were built last year. Only 536 new homes were built last year while the previous year over 1,500 new homes were available to social housing. Unless a commitment is made to increase the numbers of new properties the current crisis of lack of housing available will continue to escalate.

9. *Maintenance Cuts*

The reduction of maintenance spending by \$42 million. Already much of the Housing stock is in poor condition requiring a great deal of maintenance to see the budget, with these massive cuts the standard of housing will only continue to deteriorate

10. *Selection and Screening*

We have a real concern with the Screening and selection process for new residents. We believe who receives housing assistance. We believe that time and again there has been poor decisions made on who is allowed into the community

If the Committee thought it would be of benefit I would be more than happy to address the public hearings on 12th and 13th March. In addition, I would also like to extend an invitation to the committee to visit our Housing community in Five Dock which is a typical Housing development with a mixture of bedsits and 1 and 2 bedroom homes. I am sure it would be highly advantageous to the committee members in making its recommendations having had a first hand experience of the look and feel of a typical housing Estate

Sincerely,

Anibal Arrarte
Chairman, Inner West Housing Tenants Committe