QON No. 10

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Social Policy

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Addressed to: Yvette Berry MLA

Reference: Housing/Community Services Directorate

Hearing: 11 February 2025
In relation to: Housing
Question received: 17 February 2025
Answer Due: 24 February 2025

(1) The Productivity Commission's Report on Government services indicates that the dwelling condition of our public housing stock is currently the second worst in the country. Have targets been set to change this?

(2) Does the ACT Government have any future targets for:

(i) the proportion of overall housing stock that is social housing, and/or

(ii) the number of homes per estimated resident population?

(3) Has the ACT Government undertaken modelling to estimate the future level of unmet demand for public and community housing if public housing stock continues to decline to 2027, when the current ACT Housing Strategy is set to expire?

(4) For the past financial year, how many applications were received for the ACT's public housing waiting list, and how many were accepted and registered on the waiting list?

(5) For the past financial year, how many registrations on the public housing list were cancelled or otherwise ended for reasons other than accessing public housing? Can you provide a breakdown of the reasons why people were removed from the waiting list?

(6) Is there a target vacancy turnaround time (i.e. the number of days public housing is vacant between tenancies) for

(a) re-letting a public housing property once it has been vacated by a former tenant and

(b) for letting a new public housing property?

Please indicate, for both scenarios the proportion of vacated public housing dwellings that did not meet the target for the vacancy turnaround time within the most 12-month period for which data is available.

(7) Between 2022 and 2023, the proportion of low-income households in community housing that were in housing stress (i.e. paying more than 30% of their income on rent) in the ACT more than doubled, from 4.6% to 10.2%. This makes the level of housing stress in the ACT's community housing sector much higher in 2023 in the ACT compared to any other jurisdiction, and more than three times the national rate for community housing households in housing (the nation rate is 3.1%). Can you please indicate:

(a) why the rate of housing stress in community housing more than doubled within one year

(b) why one in ten households in community housing in the ACT are in housing stress, and why the proportion in housing stress is comparatively higher compared to other jurisdictions?

(8) Can you please provide the most recent data (both in numeric terms and as a percentage of overall public housing stock) indicating how many public housing dwellings in the ACT are:

(i) deemed untenantable, or

(ii) undergoing major development?

Of those deemed untenantable, what are the most common reasons?

(9) The Productivity Commission's recent mid-year update indicated the ACT has the worst occupancy rate for community housing dwellings (86.4%, compared to 95.9% nationally), while more than one in 20 (5.2%) public housing dwellings were unoccupied as at 30 June 2023. Can you please provide the most recent data available for occupancy rates in public housing in the ACT? And can you outline

(i) the reasons for the ACT's comparatively poor performance on occupancy for social housing;

(ii) why social housing occupancy has steadily declined since 2020 (from 96.6% in 2020); and,
(iii) what measures were included in the 2024-25 Budget to rectify this issue?

(10) The most recent statistics from the AIHW showed that 318 public housing dwellings were untenantable as at 30 June 2023. Can you provide the most up-to date figure for the number of untenantable public housing dwellings? Can you please provide a breakdown of the primary reasons why public housing dwellings were deemed untenantable?

(11)The ACT Government has stated its intention to release an additional 21,422 new homes (both greenfield and infill sites) over the next five years under the Indicative Land Release Program (*Budget 2024-25, Housing Statement, p. 6*). Can you please indicate what percentage of these homes released under the Program will be:

(i) public housing,

(ii) community housing,

(iii) affordable *rental* housing?

(12) Can you please provide a breakdown of the numbers of public housing dwellings that are medium density versus single/dual occupancy homes for:

a. New public housing dwellings constructed and completed since 30 June 2020

b. In-progress and planned public housing dwellings

Yvette Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1) Housing ACT is required to meet obligations under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* (RTA). The Report on Government Services records the ACT at 76.0% of dwellings of an acceptable standard, which sits above the National average. It should be noted that this measure is driven from tenant survey results regarding dwelling condition, a measure which is not entirely property condition related and includes household responsibility elements (washing machine, food storage).

   Property Condition Assessments are performed by Housing ACT every 4 years to assess property elements and condition.

2) (i) and (ii) The ACT Government has committed to deliver 30,000 more homes by 2030 including 5,000 public housing, community housing and affordable homes by the end of 2030.

3) As of 31 December 2024, there are 11,845 dwellings in the Housing ACT portfolio. Although the portfolio count will continue to fluctuate while the remaining sales, demolitions, and additions for the Program are completed, net portfolio growth is forecast year-on-year.

4) In 2023-24 there were 1079 applications received for the ACT's public housing waiting list, and 648 were approved.

5) As at 30 June 2024, 316 approved applications for public housing were cancelled from the waiting list in the 2023-24 financial year. The most common reasons applications were cancelled were due to "applicants not providing required documentation", "application was withdrawn", and "application exceeded the income barrier for eligibility".

   Note: Applications in the Housing Assistance System that have a status of 'cancelled' at the point in time of data collection. The status of applications, even once approved, is dynamic and subject to change.

6) a) The expected turnaround timeframes, from vacancy date to re-let date are:

   a. ROUT - 28 Days - Routine works (e.g. cleaning, minor repairs).

   b. SING - 48 Days – Routine works plus a single upgrade (e.g a bathroom or, a kitchen).

   c. MULT - 60 days – Routine works plus multiple upgrades (more than one upgrade, e.g a bathroom and, a kitchen).

   d. MAJ/INSU - 365 days – Offline for major upgrade, renovation, insurance rectification.

The year-to-date vacant property turnaround has reduced to an average of 43 days, down from 89 days in 2021–22.

b) The non-standard data required to fully respond to this question could not be provided within the given timeframe. Longer timeframes are required for reporting data not already contained in an established report as this requires additional methodology design, quality assurance and appropriate clearance for use by the Data Custodian, particularly when unpublished operational data is the underlying data source.

7) a) The Report on Government Services 2024 housing data at Table 18A.25 includes the Proportion of household income spent on rent – low income households in community housing, at 30 June, for each jurisdiction (included below).

Table 18A.25 **Proportion of household income spent on rent – low income households in community housing, at 30 June (a), (b), (c)**

	Unit	*NSW* (d)	*Vic*	*Qld*	*WA*	*SA* (e)	*Tas*	*ACT* (f)	*NT*	*Total* (g)
Less than or equal to 20%										
2023	%	17.3	28.8	30.9	30.6	22.5	30.4	35.1	na	22.8
2022	%	18.6	25.1	26.3	24.1	26.2	33.9	49.4	na	22.8
2021 (h)	%	17.1	24.8	26.7	28.8	22.3	36.6	52.1	na	21.9
2020 (h)	%	15.7	28.1	27.0	28.1	22.0	38.2	24.7	na	21.3
2019 (h)	%	13.2	23.7	25.3	21.4	17.1	38.0	37.7	na	18.5
More than 20% but not more than 25%										
2023	%	77.0	37.0	44.1	55.2	62.4	57.9	40.8	na	63.6
2022	%	76.6	44.8	48.0	49.2	62.9	54.8	42.6	na	64.7
2021 (h)	%	73.5	41.7	47.7	55.1	58.7	46.2	38.1	na	62.0
2020 (h)	%	75.4	45.4	50.9	55.2	61.8	48.8	70.2	na	64.5
2019 (h)	%	75.2	42.1	49.9	60.4	59.8	45.1	42.4	na	62.8
More than 25% but not more than 30%										
2023	%	2.5	34.1	18.6	10.2	12.7	7.6	13.8	na	10.5
2022	%	0.2	30.1	19.0	18.2	10.2	7.1	3.4	na	8.7
2021 (h)	%	2.5	33.4	20.9	11.4	9.1	9.7	6.3	na	10.2
2020 (h)	%	2.2	26.5	19.0	12.9	10.2	9.1	2.1	na	9.3
2019 (h)	%	2.6	34.0	19.7	14.5	11.2	10.9	8.5	na	11.6
More than 30%										
2023	%	3.1	–	6.4	4.0	2.5	4.1	10.2	na	3.1
2022	%	4.6	–	6.7	8.5	0.7	4.2	4.6	na	3.9
2021 (h)	%	6.9	–	4.7	4.7	9.8	7.5	3.5	na	6.0
2020 (h)	%	6.7	–	3.1	3.8	6.1	3.9	3.0	na	4.9
2019 (h)	%	9.1	0.2	5.1	3.7	11.9	6.1	11.4	na	7.1

As per the explanatory statement within Table 18A.4 of this dataset, the ACT's increase in community housing households in 2023 'is due to the inclusion of additional organisations in the data collection.' The inclusion of two community housing providers in the ACT for the annual data collection for the first time in June 2023 is likely to be a significant factor in changes to the data reported from 2022 to 2023.

Due to population size, the ACT has a smaller number of community housing properties than other jurisdictions (except for the Northern Territory). As a smaller dataset, the ACT data may be more sensitive to income and rental price changes between years.

b) The ROGS dataset provides the following information regarding the data:

- Table 18A.4: Data may not be comparable across jurisdictions and over time and comparisons could be misleading.
- Table 18A.25: Some community housing organisations may have included Commonwealth Rent Assistance as part of rent and income in their survey returns, which can affect the comparability of the results. In addition, other out of scope charges such as those for utilities may have also been included in rent charged amounts. This may result in a higher proportion of households that appear to be paying more than 30% of their income in rent.

Community housing includes both long-term social and affordable rental housing which cater to a broad range of income levels. The income distribution of community housing tenants at a state and territory level can therefore influence the vulnerability of community housing households to housing stress.

Some community housing sectors will have a greater focus on social housing where households are insulated from housing stress as their rent is a fixed portion of income (usually around 25 per cent), whereas some sectors will have a greater focus on affordable housing where household rent is more impacted by market prices.

The ACT has a higher per capita share of public housing to deliver social housing. The ROGS community housing dataset does not include the experience of public housing where almost all households pay less than 25 per cent of their income (as per Table 18A.23).

The ABS Household Income and Wealth reports on rental stress for lower income households across private and social housing. In 2019-20 (the last year for which relevant data are currently available), 27.7% of low-income rental households in the ACT were in rental stress. This was the lowest across states and territories and lower than the national rate of 42%.

The rental vacancy rate is also a good measure of rental market health across different housing tenures. As of May 2024, the ACT had the highest rental vacancy rate of any capital city at 1.8 per cent, higher than the national vacancy rate at 1.2 per cent.

8) On 31 December 2024, 522 (4.7%) out of 11,040 public housing properties were not tenanted. Of these, 420 (3.8%) were untenantable for the following reasons:

Vacant properties	Number	Percentage of public housing
Vacant – not available		
Maintenance or upgrade	297	2.7%
Under planning/assessment	53	0.5%
Final stage development	23	0.2%
Awaiting disposal		
For sale/redevelopment	47	0.4%

9)

Occupancy rate	
	as at 30 Dec 2024
Actual	94.7%*
Target (minimum)	96%

*This figure is point-in-time and may fluctuate as the Growing and Renewing Public Housing Program prepares selected vacant properties for sale or redevelopment, in advance of newly purchased or constructed properties joining and growing the portfolio.

(i) Under the Growing and Renewing Public Housing program, the program aims to renew 1,000 properties by divesting and selling existing stock. This has seen an increase in vacant activity to facilitate sales and prepare properties for redevelopment.

(ii) As above

(iii) To support bringing offline properties back online sooner, Housing ACT was supported through $6.25m in Commonwealth funding through Housing Support Program, to enable upgrades to assist efficient returns of properties to be a lettable standard.

10) As per answer 8.

11) As the current affordable, community and public housing targets are determined on a year-by-year basis, it is difficult to determine the percentage break-up of affordable, community and public housing in future years. However, at least 15 per cent of the eligible residential component of the Indicative Land Release Program will be allocated to affordable, community and public housing.

12) As of 31 December 2024, the Growth and Renewal Program has delivered 314 single or dual occupancy homes and 450 homes with more than two dwellings. For the remainder of the Program, an additional 65 single or dual occupancy homes and 275 homes with more than two dwellings are forecast to be delivered.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature:

Date: 12/03/25

Minister for Homes and New Suburbs, Yvette Berry MLA