QTON No. 214

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Select Committee on Estimates 2026-2027

Inquiry into Appropriation Bill 2026–2027 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2026–2027

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Housing and Homelessness

In relation to: Housing and Homelessness and Vacant properties allocation

Hearing: 30 July 2026
Uncorrected Proof Transcript pp 35-38, 39
Transcript provided: 4 August 2026
Answer Due: 11 August 2026

MR EMERSON: Thank you, chair. I wanted to ask about vacant public housing and condition of the stock. In response to a recent question on notice, I was told that: Housing ACT does not categorise vacant properties by their condition. Instead, vacant properties are categorised based on their intended outcome. This includes whether they are being returned to stock, sold, redeveloped or subject to further decision making. For those assets that are being returned to stock there are subcategories based on whether they have been repaired, maintained or upgraded, or awaiting allocation. Are you able to provide a breakdown of how many vacant public housing properties are in the ACT right now?

Ms Yates: Brooke Yates, Executive Branch Manager, Housing and Inclusive Policy. As at 30 June the total number of vacant properties was 588. As we alluded to in that question, there are different pathways for those vacants around awaiting decision, returning to the portfolio, leaving the portfolio or awaiting allocation. At 30 June there were 285 that were being maintained or upgraded and that also includes properties that were subject to insurance works. We had 57 properties that were being assessed for their future in the portfolio. We had 15 that were in their final stage of development, so that was recent acquisitions or recent constructions that had been handed over to Housing ACT but were awaiting sort of final clearances before they could be tenanted. We had 43 that had been identified as being disposed of out of the portfolio, so were either in a sale or a redevelopment pipeline. And then we had 188 that were awaiting allocation.

MR EMERSON: Okay. The 285 that were set to be maintained or upgraded, maintaining something is, you know, obviously quite different from upgrading. Are you able to provide a further breakdown of what is in what category there?

Ms Yates: Not here, but I can take that on notice.

MR EMERSON: Okay, that would be helpful. Anything that just needs kind of essential maintenance, fixing up to re-tenant, as opposed—I guess on that, what is the difference between—you have got 43 set to be either sold or redeveloped. What is the difference between that and upgrading? Upgrading is, "This kitchen needs replacement."

Ms Yates: Yes.

MR EMERSON: But it is not—we are not adding an extension or anything like that?

Ms Yates: No, yes.

MR EMERSON: It is just, "This is now not really fit for purpose."

Ms Yates: Yes, there is a major element that needs to be upgraded in the property before it can be re-tenanted.

MR EMERSON: Okay, and the maintenance is more, "There is damage or mould or"—

Ms Yates: It could just need a clean before it is returned to stock. So there are different pathways around the single routine or multi pathway, depending on the amount of work that is required to that vacant property. So it can range from a simple clean; it may require carpet or painting; it may require a kitchen upgrade or a bathroom upgrade.

MR EMERSON: Okay. Are you able to provide a figure for how long those that are waiting, as I said, to be maintained or upgraded have been without a tenant? Like, what is the average?

Ms Yates: Yes, we can provide an average I think. I will have to confirm that when we look at it. The issue that we have is that the vacant properties are highly variable. So the vacant number I have quoted there at 30 June is unlikely to be the same. Even if today the same number was 588, it is unlikely to be the same 588 just because of the natural churn in the portfolio. So I will look at what we can provide in terms of the average vacancy times on those.

MR EMERSON: Okay, so they are, like, broken down by category because obviously they would be quite different in each of those categories.

Ms Yates: Yes, yes, absolutely.

MR EMERSON: Yes, okay. 588, I think the last number was maybe 520 that I had heard, something like that. So that is a bit of an increase and would be above the target percentage in your strategic indicators. Is that 4 per cent?

Ms Yates: Yes. 96 per cent occupancy with 4 per cent vacancy.

MR EMERSON: Yes, 4 per cent vacancy, yes. Okay.

Ms Yates: Yes, so we have seen—

MR EMERSON: Do you know what the reason for the increase is?

Ms Yates: Yes, so between 31 March and 30 June we have seen a slight increase in the number of vacancies. But importantly, what we have seen in that time is an increase in the number of vacant properties that are awaiting allocation. So whilst, over that three-month period, 24 additional properties became vacant, what we saw was 89 become available for allocation. So it just points to the amount of churn that we have through the portfolio, but also how quickly we are getting those back and maintained or upgraded through Programmed, and then available for allocation to tenants; prospective tenants or transfer tenants.

MR EMERSON: Okay. Sorry, just jumping back to that breakdown, 57 were assessed as—what was that second category provided?

Ms Yates: So 57 were subject to decision-making. So they are either properties that have recently become vacant and they are awaiting our consideration through the asset assessment panel as to what pathway that we will put that property on, or they are subject to more detailed planning and decision-making.

MR EMERSON: Okay. The latest ROGS data from the Productivity Commission shows almost 30 per cent of Housing ACT's stock is not of an acceptable standard, which is the second-worst proportion in Australia. What is your understanding of why that is the case?

Ms Yates: We have an ageing portfolio.

MR EMERSON: But doesn't everyone?

Ms Yates: Yes.

MR EMERSON: Okay. Who provides the data to the Productivity Commission? Who provides that data to Housing ACT?

Ms Shields: We provide some data on the public housing stock and then our community housing providers would provide additional data in relation to the programs that they look after.

MR EMERSON: The head lease ones, yes, okay. And how is that data used by Housing ACT to assess the overall stock and make perhaps proactive maintenance; tryto improve that proportion that are of an acceptable standard?

Ms Shields: So because it is our own data, we use our own data to consider our stock, so rather than relying on ROGS data specifically. While that is a useful indicator to see how we are progressing against other jurisdictions and how they are performing, we know that that data is our data, and we can use that data to look at our own stock. We have done that in the past 12 months in the number of vacant upgrades that we were able to achieve, which is what Ms Yates just described to you. The volume that we were able to turn around and bring back online and at a lettable standard, we were able to do more than we had done previously. So using that data to understand what is in our portfolio and what needs to happen. That is why that planning and assessment group that we have just described, and the process that we go through with that group as they come back from tenancies, is so important; so we can work out what the best use of our funds is to put them on a pathway that is going to be the best outcome for the portfolio, whether that is redevelopment, whether that is an upgrade, whether that is repairs and maintenance.

MR EMERSON: Okay. And to the table, maybe just in with that question, I also forgot to ask if you could also include a breakdown—it might be a separate table—of how many of these are in high density complexes, and how many are considered hard to- let tenancies as part of that?

Ms Shields: Can certainly look at that

UPT p 39

MR EMERSON: Sorry, just jumping back to this questions that were taken on notice, it would be great to get an average and perhaps a time series, as Ms Vassarotti was saying, for those awaiting allocation as well. Yes, thank you.

Ms Suzanne Orr MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

The category of *"Maintenance or Upgrade"* can be further separated into the following pathways, which depend on the amount of work required to bring a property back to a lettable standard:

- **Routine:** Routine turnover works only, such as cleaning and minor repairs, required to return a property to a lettable standard.
- **Single Upgrade:** Routine works plus one significant upgrade, for example a bathroom or kitchen upgrade.
- **Multiple Upgrades:** Routine works plus more than one significant upgrade, such as both a bathroom and kitchen upgrade.
- **Major / Insurance:** Properties taken offline for major upgrades, renovations, or insurance-related rectification works.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the 588 vacant properties at 30 June 2026 by pathway.

Table 1. Vacant properties by pathway at 30 June 2026

	No. of properties	Proportion of Vacant Properties %
Vacant - not available for allocation	**357**	**60.7**
Maintenance or upgrade	285	48.5
Routine	*79*	*13.4*
Single upgrade	*80*	*13.6*
Multiple upgrades	*69*	*11.7*
Major works/insurance	*57*	*9.7*
Under planning/assessment	57	9.7
Final stage development	15	2.6
Vacant - available for allocation	**188**	**32.0**
Properties within low demand complexes	28	4.8
Properties excluding low demand complexes	160	27.2
Vacant - awaiting disposal	**43**	**7.3**
Total vacant properties	**588**	**100**

In response to your question *"are you able to provide a figure for how long those that are waiting…to be maintained or upgraded have been without a tenant",* I can advise the average vacancy time for the 285 properties in the *"Maintenance or Upgrade"* category was 284 days at 30 June 2026. It is important to note this average is skewed by properties requiring extensive works or in an insurance path.

Table 2 provides the number of public housing properties available for allocation at the end of each quarter during 2025-26 and the average number of days these properties have been vacant. It also identifies the proportion of those properties located in low demand complexes. It is important to note that vacancy days are calculated from the date the property become vacant (i.e. the keys were handed back to Housing ACT following the last tenancy), not the date it became available for allocation.

Table 2 - Public Housing Vacant Properties - Available for Allocation

Date	Total Number of Properties Available for Allocation	Properties within Low Demand Complexes Available for Allocation	Average days Vacant (all properties)	Average days Vacant (Low demand only)	Average days Vacant (excluding low demand)
30/09/2025	140	56	201	303	132
31/12/2025	100	52	273	390	147
31/03/2026	99	29	269	537	158
30/06/2026	188	28	251	586	192

The data demonstrates properties in low demand complexes remain vacant for substantially longer than other vacant properties. Not only does this reflect that these properties are in low demand from prospective tenants, but they are also at higher risk of unauthorised occupation and vandalism, which can result in additional repair and maintenance cycles.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2026-2027

Signature: Date: 13/08/26

Minister for Housing and Homelessness, Ms Suzanne Orr MLA