



Inquiry into annual and financial reports 2024–2025

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Ms Chiaka Barry MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs

Reference: Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs/Health and Community Services Directorate

Hearing: 10 November 2025

In relation to: Public Housing Complaints

Question received: 11 November 2025

Answer Due: 25 November 2025

1. I refer to your complaints data at Table 7, can you clarify what constitutes a complaint?
2. Would a call to a Housing Manager complaining about a response, or following up lack of action on a job be characterised as a complaint?
 - a. If not, how do you track unsatisfied tenant responses?
3. I note you have only had 435 complaints about maintenance, that seems surprisingly low to me, given the hundreds of people raising concern with my office.
 - a. Why is it that a Housing tenant may be reluctant to raise a formal complaint?
4. I note you've had 176 complaints about staff, can you tell me the nature of those complaints?
 - a. Do you have a breakdown of different categories?
 - b. Have any of these complaints resulted in formal disciplinary action against staff, if so, what was the issue and what was the outcome?
5. Do you have a mechanism for staff to record complaints or concerns about tenants?
 - a. How are these complaints or concerns addressed?
 - b. Have any staff complaints resulted in disciplinary action or charges against a tenant?
 - c. If so, what were the circumstances and what was the outcome?
6. Can you tell me more about the 62 allegations of fraud?
 - a. Who investigates fraud allegations relating to Housing ACT?
 - b. Were all 62 fraud allegations referred to the Integrity commissioner?
 - c. Were any fraud complaints upheld?

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

1. The Health and Community Services Directorate (HCSD) Complaints Handling and Management Policy (CHaMP) defines a complaint as “an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the directorate, related to its services, policies, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required”. This definition is consistent with the Australian Standard AS NZS 10002:2022 Guidelines for complaint management in organizations.
2. Business as usual interactions between a Housing Manager and a tenant are often used as a mechanism to raise property and/or tenancy related issues. In some instances, if the Housing Manager is unable to resolve the tenant's concerns, the tenant has the option to escalate the matter by lodging a formal complaint through the complaints team. This process ensures that their concerns are thoroughly investigated by the appropriate business unit, provides them with a formal response, and enables further escalation pathways should the tenant remain dissatisfied.
 - a. Tenant dissatisfaction is formally recorded and monitored through the established complaints process. When a tenant indicates that they are not satisfied with the outcome of an interaction or service, they are encouraged to lodge a formal complaint. This ensures that their concerns are documented, assigned to the appropriate business unit for investigation, and tracked through to conclusion. The process provides transparency and the ability to report on trends, enabling continuous improvement in service delivery.
3. Whilst HCSD does not specifically ask tenants why they may be reluctant to raise a formal complaint, the barriers to raising a complaint can be broad. These can range from some people finding it difficult to engage with Government agencies, to people being time poor, to difficulty navigating complaints processes. To address this, we have ensured that our complaints process is accessible, and client focused. Tenants can submit complaints in their preferred form of communication and engagement with our service. Tenants can raise a complaint anonymously, via telephone, email, letter or through a guardian or advocate. The complaints process is widely publicised through our website, on fact sheets and via correspondence to clients.
4.
 - a. Staff complaints fall into the following categories:
 - Unprofessional behaviour/attitude of an officer
 - Communication (unclear, incorrect or lack of)
 - Responsiveness (delays, outside of timeframes)
 - Failure to apply process and procedures
 - Access to services and resources.
 - b. If a complaint uncovers an issue with staff actions or behaviours, these matters are addressed via management action. Management actions are undertaken in accordance with the ACT Public Service Enterprise Agreement and *Public Sector Management Act 1994*. Management actions are not disaggregated in the manner outlined in the question.

5. If there are concerns about a tenant's interactions or behaviour towards staff, the Complaints Handling and Management Policy provides clear mechanisms for staff to manage unreasonable complainant behaviour ensuring tenants are treated fairly and respectfully, with consideration for vulnerabilities such as mental health or disabilities.

- a. If a tenant's interaction or behaviour is assessed as constituting unreasonable complainant behaviour, as defined in the policy, such as *unreasonable persistence, excessive demands, abusive language or vexatious conduct*, an initial warning letter will be issued. This letter will outline the specific incident, describe the behaviour considered unreasonable, and remind the tenant of their rights and responsibilities. Should the behaviour continue despite appropriate engagement efforts, Housing ACT may implement a mutually agreed communication protocol. This may involve directing future communication through an advocate or third party while ensuring the tenant retains access to our services in a manner that is appropriate and sustainable.
- b. Housing ACT does not take "disciplinary action" against its tenants, however, in situations where a tenants behaviour escalates to threatening or violent conduct it may require referral to ACT Policing and, if necessary, escalated to the Magistrates Court for the issuance of a workplace protection order.

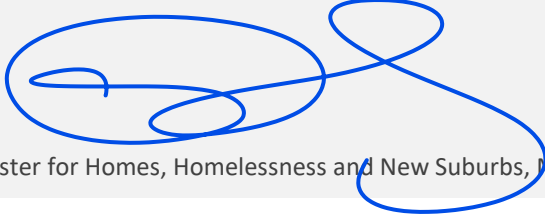
These actions are not punitive and are implemented solely to safeguard staff after all reasonable engagement strategies have been exhausted. The primary focus remains on early intervention and constructive engagement, as outlined in the Complaints Handling and Management policy.

6. Allegations of fraud within this category refer to instances where complainants have reported suspected fraudulent activity by clients. Out of the 62 allegations of fraud:
- 31 were in relation to subletting of Housing ACT properties
 - 23 were in relation to undeclared residents in Housing ACT properties
 - 8 were in relation to a business being run out of Housing ACT properties without permission.
- a. This complaint type does not include allegations of staff fraud or corruption, which fall outside the scope of the Complaints Handling and Management Policy. Such matters are managed through a separate process in accordance with the ACT Public Service Enterprise Agreement and *Public Sector Management Act 1994*.
 - b. None of these complaints were referred to the Integrity Commissioner as they were not in relation to staff misconduct.
 - c. 10 of these 62 complaints or 16%, were upheld.

OFFICIAL

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' shape with a loop at the end.

Date:

01/12/25

By the Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs, Ms Yvette Berry MLA