



Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2021-2022

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Mark Parton MLA:

Reference: Housing ACT Properties

In relation to: Property Upkeep

Regarding the upkeep of Housing ACT properties that are both tenanted and vacant. This includes grounds maintenance, rubbish dumping, property damage etc

- (1) For properties tenanted what process occurs when a complaint is made regarding their upkeep of the property?
- (2) What timeframe is given to remedy the property?
- (3) If not remedied what occurs?
- (4) For vacant properties that are awaiting demolition or to be sold who is responsible for the upkeep given that gardens in particular are left unkept for months or years and squatters occasionally appear?
- (5) On average how long are properties left vacant prior to being sold?
- (6) On average how long are properties left vacant that will be redeveloped?
- (7) Will Housing ACT start looking after vacant properties more frequently?
- (8) Will Housing ACT ensure that tenants continue to look after properties when previous notices to remedy have been served?

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

- (1) When a complaint is received about the condition of a Housing ACT property, an investigation is conducted to identify if a breach of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA)* has occurred, and

if so, to gather evidence to substantiate the breach. Housing ACT will engage with the client and conduct a home visit.

Should a breach be identified, a Notice to Remedy (NTR) is issued to the client outlining the breach and the actions required to return the property to standard.

A follow up home visit is then conducted to ensure the client has remedied the breach.

- (2) The timeframe provided to remedy the property condition is in accordance with the *RTA*, which is 14 days.

However, in line with being a Model Social Landlord, the client's circumstances will also be considered at the time of issuing the NTR. For example, a client may have mobility concerns, they may be socially isolated or have a disability, and in circumstances like these the timeframe allowed for the client to remedy the breach will take these needs into consideration.

Referrals will also be made to a Tenant Support and Community Connections Officer or to an appropriate service provider to assist the client to return the property to standard should they require additional assistance.

- (3) If the client has not taken the requested actions by the expiry of the first NTR, a second NTR may be issued in accordance with the *RTA*.

Should a client not return the property to standard at the expiry of the second NTR, the matter may progress to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal to seek general orders in accordance with the *RTA*.

- (4) Where a property has been identified for disposal, property and grounds upkeep remains the responsibility of Housing ACT's Total Facilities Manager, Programmed Facilities Management.

Once possession of site has been granted to a building contractor or the property handed to a real estate agent, responsibility for grounds maintenance transfers to that party.

- (5) In 2021-22, the average timeframe of a property being vacated to referral to one of Housing ACT's panel real estate agents, sat between 2-3 months.

This period allows sufficient time for tenants to relocate their belongings, Housing ACT's Total Facilities Manager to engage the required sub-contractors and undertake the necessary pre-sale works, and internal processing/agent allocation.

The average timeframe of a property being referred to one of Housing ACT's panel real estate agents, to settlement, was approximately 3-months. This period encompasses the agent's sale preparation, commissioning of the necessary reports, the marketing period, and settlement.

- (6) The average timeframe of a redevelopment property being vacated to demolition is 546 days. This period considers the timeline for design development, Development Application process, procurement of a Head Contractor, Building Application documentation and approval and demolition of the property.

- (7) Where a property is surrendered or becomes vacant, Housing ACT endeavours to minimise the vacancy period by assessing, maintaining, and returning properties to a lettable standard as efficiently as possible.

In partnership with our Total Facilities Manager, Housing ACT continues to identify process improvements that ensure properties undergo required maintenance and upgrades prior to reallocation in the shortest turnaround possible.

- (8) Depending on the individual circumstances for the client, Housing ACT follow up on NTRs issued and provide necessary support to the client as required.

Once the client has returned the property to standard, the matter is closed.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Signature:

Date:

13/12/22

By the Minister for the Housing and Suburban Development, Minister Yvette Berry MLA