

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mrs Jo Hersey to the Minister for Housing and Homelands:

Katherine Public Housing

An increasing number of complaints are coming in from concerned constituents about anti-social behaviour in Katherine Public Housing dwellings and the lack of action resulting from lodging complaints.

1. How many Housing Officers are located in Katherine?

As at 18 August 2022, there are 25 positions within the Big Rivers Housing structure. This structure includes Client Services Officers, Urban Housing Officers, Public Housing Safety Officers, Remote Housing Tenancy Officers, Operational Manager and Administration Support.

2. How many Housing Officer positions are vacant in Katherine?

As at 18 August 2022, the Big Rivers Housing Office has five vacant Housing Officer positions.

3. Is recruitment being undertaken to fill these vacant positions? If yes, when will they be filled? If no, why not?

Advertising vacant positions is a priority for the Big Rivers Region.

Two new Remote Tenancy Officer recruits are confirmed to commence in September 2022.

Recruitment is underway for the additional three Remote Tenancy Officer vacancies. The advertised vacancy closed on 22 August 2022.

4. How many complaints have been received by the Housing Office in Katherine each month since 1 January 2022?

Refer to table on page 4.

5. How many of these complaints have been followed up on and resolved?

Refer to table on page 4.

6. How many of these complaints are based on alcohol fueled anti-social behavior?

Refer to table on page 4. The Department does not collect data to specifically identify alcohol fuelled antisocial behaviour, only incidents that had alcohol tipped out or involved a breach of alcohol are included in the report.

7. How many warnings can a Public Housing tenant receive about alcohol fueled anti-social behavior before they receive an eviction notice?

The Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (the Department) takes public housing safety seriously. The Department promotes community safety and works closely with the Northern Territory Police, and other government agencies to manage antisocial behaviour. The Public Housing Safety Officers (PHSOs) will assist the Northern Territory Police by responding and investigating antisocial behaviour happening in and around public housing only.

All complaints of antisocial behaviour are investigated by the Department including contacting the complainant during this time. In some circumstances the complaint may be referred to the Northern Territory Police. Referrals to Northern Territory Police will occur when the complaint is related to criminal activity, or legally required because of mandatory reporting purposes.

If the Department can substantiate the antisocial behaviour incident occurred, further action may result in any of the following:

- demerit points issued to the public housing tenancy;
- issue of a notice to the household to enter into an Acceptable Behaviour Agreement; and
- issue of a notice of intention to terminate the tenancy agreement due to serious breaches.

When a tenancy is at risk, the Department will take reasonable steps to engage with the tenants to offer support and help them to sustain their tenancy.

The decision to evict a tenant is made by an independent official in the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The Department compiles a brief of evidence to support the process.

8. What sort of support is provided to other Public Housing tenants that have to put up with this behavior day in day out, impacting on the quiet enjoyment of their home?

The role of a PHSO is to engage with tenants and neighbours to resolve and reduce antisocial behaviour in and around public housing. PHSOs contact neighbours and others in the vicinity of an incident to ascertain who and how they may have been affected.

The Department encourages Public Housing to tenants report all incidents of antisocial behaviour, in or around public housing premises.

To report antisocial behaviour in and around public housing:

- call 1800 685 743 (Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 4.00pm) or 131 444 (24 hours); and
- in emergencies always dial 000 and ask for police assistance. Emergencies include life threatening or physically violent behaviour.

Public Housing tenants may lodge a complaint with the Department after an incident of antisocial behaviour, in or around public housing premises, by calling 1800 685 743 Monday to Friday, from 8.00am to 4.00pm. Complaints assist the Department to be aware of the impact to a tenant's quiet enjoyment of their home.

Public housing safety statistics for Katherine, Katherine East, Katherine South housing properties between 01/01/2022 and 31/08/2022

	As at 30 August 2022	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August
<i>Total Complaints</i>		12	7	19	37	19	24	43	48
<i>Public Housing Safety Officer reports</i>		15	12	10	32	21	2	34	57
Total complaints and reports		27	19	29	69	40	26	77	105
<i>Number of properties incl. common area's</i>		18	16	20	43	24	17	47	53
Completed investigations		27	19	28	68	39	25	67	68
<i>*Events about alcohol seizure and/or breach of alcohol restrictions</i>		1	3	0	3	2	0	10	4
<i>Litres of alcohol tipped out</i>		0	1	0	6	0	0	6	1

*The Department does not collect data to specifically identify alcohol fuelled antisocial behaviour, only incidents that had alcohol tipped out or only involved a breach of alcohol are included in the report.