



## Petition

Registration No.	5
Title	Immediate eviction of all current tenancies at 2 Emery Avenue
Presented on	23 March 2021
Presented by	Member for Brennan
Referred to	Minister for Territory Families and Urban Housing and Public Accounts Committee
Assembly debate	If the Committee recommends the Petition be debated it will appear on the Notice Paper
Date referred	23 March 2021
Response due	12 August 2021
Response received	25 May 2021
Response presented	10 August 2021

### Petition

#### NT PUBLIC HOUSING PETITION: EMERY AVENUE, WOODROFFE

Dear Minister Kate Worden (Minister for Urban Housing), Mark Turner (Member for Blain), Eva Lawler (Member for Drysdale), Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal and NT Housing.

We write as a collective group of residents of the Blain and Drysdale electorates who are seeking immediate action to evict all tenancies of the units located at 2 Emery Avenue Woodroffe and remove the property from NT Housing stock by sale. We suggest that this be considered as part of a broader strategy to reduce the unfair burden of higher public housing density on Gray, Woodroffe and Moulden and replaced with housing in the newer suburbs. We believe that the abhorrent behaviour we witness on a daily basis would not be accepted in newer areas of reduced public housing density, tenants would be less influenced by friends and family who suffer from similar social issues and behavioural problems and would be more likely to conform to acceptable neighbourly behaviours.

We are forced to petition, following many years of a lack of effective action from the NT Government Housing department, to address our complaints about the constant and escalating anti-social behaviour from 2 Emery Avenue, Gray. The previous decade has seen a revolving door of tenants displaying shocking behaviour that has now escalated to such an extreme that we no longer feel safe in our homes. Some of us have built and

owned properties in this area for more than 20 years and witnessing the destruction of what was once a family friendly area has been devastating, traumatic and frightening. On Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December, fighting erupted in the driveway of 2 Emery Avenue involving tenants and non-tenants. Approximately 15-20 people were involved. The fighting spilled out onto the road, blocking traffic on Emery Avenue. The group hit cars with sticks and threw rocks. A man laid on Emery Avenue and was stomped on the head by another man. There were preschool aged children nearby.

On Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2020, neighbours of 2 Emery Avenue were verbally and racially abused by tenants of 2 Emery Avenue. The tenant brandished an axe threatening a 50 year old female neighbour and warned that he would return with his family to get them. Police attended with the officers advising they had personally attended 2 Emery Avenue over 40 times in the previous 12 months in response to anti-social behaviour.

On Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020, another neighbouring property was broken into in broad daylight, the offenders having entered the property over the backyard fence of 2 Emery Avenue. They then attempted to break in a second time via the backyard fence of 2 Emery Avenue, however were stopped when an Alidade Crescent neighbour spotted them. The victims were unable to enter their home for 6 hours waiting for police to arrive. They then had to arrange for their shattered glass sliding door to be boarded up and had to sleep in the living room that night as forensics had not yet attended to fingerprint the bedrooms. As they slept that night, the offenders attempted to break in for a third time, however were not successful. This family has been left terrified by these incidents as well as significantly out of pocket from the stolen property, repairs and their intention to spend \$7,000 on upgraded security to try and obtain at least some sense of safety.

Neighbouring residents have suffered break-ins to their homes and had property stolen by teenagers who reside at 2 Emery Avenue (whether or not they are on the lease). The offenders are brazen, entering property whether residents are home or not. One neighbour had keys stolen from his property, car stolen and burned last week, while they watched movies unaware. A separate incident occurred when a young female neighbour who was home alone, walked out of her bedroom to find a teenager who resides at 2 Emery Avenue, in her home ruffling through belongings, presumably looking for keys or other valuables.

Various neighbours have reported teenagers from 2 Emery Avenue being observed throwing rocks at vehicles driving by. Many of us have had damage to our property.

A primary school is located directly across the road from 2 Emery Avenue. The transition area where the youngest children of the school play, is located along the Emery Avenue fence. The school has recently had to upgrade their fence to a taller version to make the school safer for children, however this does not prevent children from exposure to anti-social behaviour from the property. Emery Avenue is a frequently used pathway for children who travel to both primary schools located on the street. Good Shepherd Primary have had to call the police and hold children back after school to prevent them from travelling past 2 Emery Avenue due to safety concerns. A young child was sworn at and chased home by a visitor to the property as he walked home from school, leaving him fearful and anxious for months after.

The domestic violence, drunkenness, swearing, yelling, all night parties through the week, smashing of glass, vehicles coming and going at all hours, screeching tyres, car alarms and honking horns are a constant source of frustration. Our children are scared and anxious from the violence they have been exposed to, they use headphones at night to block out the noise to sleep. As such a common pathway for children travelling to and from

school, we believe that 2 Emery Avenue presents an ever-increasing risk to young children and are fearful that a major incident resulting in harm to a child is inevitable.

We have witnessed serious domestic violence incidents involving offenders trying to smash down doors to gain access to the units. We have seen toddlers and tiny children nearby while violent fighting erupts. We have seen women being punched in the face while holding small babies. We have seen toddlers and small children play near the road and run onto the road late at night, while their parents drink and fight.

The driveway of 2 Emery Avenue becomes a campground for itinerants on a regular basis. There are currently at least 2 persons who sleep in the garden. At times, there have been half a dozen mattresses spread out through the common areas. These visitors contribute to the negative behaviour we see, including the violence and fighting. They leave rubbish thrown around that NT housing contractors are left to clean up.

We have followed the correct processes in place to try to improve the situation. We call 131 444 on a regular basis, we lodge complaints through NT Housing and have contacted the various local members over the years asking for help. We have sent videos of anti-social behaviour as evidence that has been ignored. We have been made to feel guilty when demanding action be taken to end problem tenancies when public safety officers suggest that tenants will become homeless if evicted. We have been gas-lighted by public safety officers who have investigated incidents and have believed tenants when they have denied involvement. We have had face to face meetings with NT housing, who promise they are addressing the issues, but nothing changes and given recent events, the situation has now deteriorated to the point where we will no longer be ignored.

We are all employed, however are unable to sleep at night because of the noise and fighting from the property. We have-become increasingly scared of break-ins, leaving us waking to every noise to check our property is secure. We are feeling increasingly vulnerable and unsafe in our own homes. Our children often have to stop playing outside, to remove themselves from fighting and violence from the property. We have spent money on additional security and CCTV, some of us are sleeping with weapons to protect ourselves and our families.

Those of us who have lived in the area for a long time, remember when things were peaceful. Tenants were elderly and respected their neighbours and the properties they lived in. They kept an eye out for each other and contributed to the friendly community that the area once was. We are angry that years of ignorance by NT Housing has failed to rectify the situation leaving us terrorised in our own homes on a daily basis.

We have lost all faith in the ability of NT Housing to improve the situation in any meaningful way. We, the undersigned, are calling for the immediate eviction of all current tenancies at 2 Emery Avenue. We demand that the property be removed from NT Housing stock as we feel strongly that any evictions will result in the continued revolving door of problematic tenancies that are an unacceptable risk to our community.

## **Response**

The Department is taking the following actions to address the concerns raised in the petition:

- implementing a range of tenancy management options and solutions to assist tenants to improve tenancy outcomes and address instances of antisocial behaviour and visitor management issues;

- attending fortnightly meeting with representatives of the Northern Territory (NT) Police to share intelligence, discuss persons of interest and identify potential risks in relation to incidents and trends within the complex;
- liaising with the NT Police regarding placing a CCIV unit at the complex; and
- ensuring Public Housing Safety Officers continue to respond to incidents in this area as tasked and conduct proactive patrols in the area when shift priorities and police taskings allow.

Recent commitments made by the Department include exploring transfer opportunities of smaller public housing complexes in Palmerston and Alice Springs, such as the complex at 2 Emery Street, to an existing registered Community Housing Provider to improve tenancy management outcomes and reduce instances of antisocial behaviour.