

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Higgins to the Minister for Housing and Community Development:

Smoke Alarms in Territory Housing Assets

1. With regard to the Coronial Investigation (2015) into the death of Moetu Ahpene on 19 June 2014, please advise of what work has been undertaken to ensure that maintenance free smoke alarms are installed in all Territory Housing assets.
2. Please provide details of the extent to which the Coroner's recommendations have been complied with.
3. Please provide details of each and every Territory Housing asset that does not currently have a maintenance free photoelectric smoke alarm installed with this information to be collated according to urban or remote locality and further by suburb or community
4. For those assets that do not have a maintenance free photoelectric smoke alarm installed, please provide details regarding the installation dates for the existing smoke alarms and the dates by which those smoke alarms are due for replacement under the manufacturer's warranty.

-
1. All urban housing assets had 10 year warranted smoke alarms installed in the 2005-07 period. Remote houses have had similar smoke alarms fitted since 2008 as part of the new, upgrade or vacate housing programs.

In response to the Coronial Investigation in 2014, the then Department of Housing commenced work on a program of targeted housing safety compliance inspections and replacement works.

In December 2015, the department entered into five regional panel contracts for the audit and/or replacement of smoke alarms as the 10 year renewal period for the alarms installed between 2005 and 2007 was approaching.

2. The following Coroner's recommendations have been complied with by the department:

Recommendation 1: Install appropriate fire alarms, such that it is not necessary to rely upon the tenant for their maintenance.

Under the NT Fire and Emergency Regulations, both landlords and tenants in the Northern Territory have certain responsibilities with regard to the installation and maintenance of smoke alarms.

It has been identified that since the initial smoke alarm installation program in 2005 through to 2007, a significant amount of installation of hardwired smoke alarms has been undertaken in urban assets.

Smoke alarms are tested during all vacate and upgrade works, prior to a dwelling being allocated to a tenant.

Recommendation 2: Audit the building where the tragedy occurred and any others that might have undergone similar structural repair to ensure that the integrity of the fire walls has not been compromised.

In November 2014, the complex located at 335 Stuart Highway, The Narrows (Fenton flats) was sold to a private developer who subsequently demolished the building.

An audit of duplexes and complexes that have had significant structural modifications has been completed and confirmation of the firewall status has been obtained. Building certification has been received and documented in accordance with the building regulations.

3. The department is planning to have smoke alarm compliance in each asset by early 2017, in line with the 10 year renewal period for the mass smoke alarm renewal program in 2005 to 2007.
4. The current replacement/installation program also includes documented evidence both on the alarms and the date the alarms are due for replacement.