

People who rent in public and community housing need safe, secure homes

We are Tenant Advice and Advocacy Services and community legal centres across NSW, who provide advice and advocacy to renters in public (including Aboriginal Housing Office homes) and community housing.

Everyday we help thousands of people whose lives and health is directly affected by the state of their public housing and community housing homes. For some of our services we provide direct support for people to try and get fundamental repairs – to make sure their houses are safe and habitable – a basic right under the law.

For many other services we support clients with complex legal issues where it is common that poorly repaired and maintained community and public housing is a backdrop to their lives. Our clients are women who have escaped domestic violence, people suffering from chronic illnesses and disability and people who are struggling to make ends meet. The poor state of their housing impacts on their wellbeing.

Recent tragic events have put a spotlight on long understood and acknowledged critical failures in the current system, underscoring the need for additional resourcing and action to ensure all people in public and community housing live in safe and healthy homes.

The explosion at Waikanda Crescent in Whalan, resulting in the death of Mhey Yumol Jasmin and injuries to several others, is heartbreaking. Our deepest condolences go out to Mhey Yumol's family, the injured residents, and the affected local community.

This tragedy, suspected to be caused by a gas leak, has raised serious concerns. We acknowledge and appreciate the urgency with which the NSW government has moved to support impacted residents and community members, and to investigate the cause further.

The incident has focused attention on a historic and ongoing pattern of neglect in public and community housing. All renters should be able to raise maintenance concerns and have those concerns promptly attended to. This requires all providers, whether public or private, to be reliable and accountable in their approach to building safety and maintenance.

Sadly, the state of public and community housing is a story of neglect. Our clients have to deal with issues such as chronic and severe mould, sewerage issues, water leaks and problems with essential services without speedy resolution. Renters in public and community housing report they fear retaliation or poor treatment when seeking repairs. They often face prolonged waits for essential repairs, and receive only temporary fixes that fail to address the root problems. Even when they take legal action the work is not undertaken as ordered. This is exhausting for people who already are juggling many other things in their lives.

Safe, secure housing is a human right, and poor housing affects all aspects of a persons' life. The current system is broken.

We welcome the recognition and promise from Minister Jackson that Homes NSW must do better.¹ Keeping this promise requires investment and a commitment to the public benefit of a healthy public and community housing sector.

In the NSW State Budget to be released on 18 June, and ongoing the NSW Government must commit the resources and sustained focus required to ensure this is possible.

¹ Nick Dole, [Housing Minister Rose Jackson says gas issues fixed before Whalan explosion but is 'embarrassed' by social housing horror stories](#), ABC News Stateline, 8 June 2024 - Minister Jackson: "I hate the fact that people in public housing don't feel as though their concerns are listened to and they're respected by government," she said. "At the end of the day... I do not accept a situation in which people who live in public housing are living in substandard conditions."; Media release: [Homes NSW will rebuild the social and affordable housing system in NSW](#), 2 Feb 2024 - Minister Jackson: "I am sick and tired of public housing being the 'worst house on the block'. NSW will rebuild a broken system, properly repair homes and better support our people which means we can build better communities and neighbourhoods."; [A message to tenants from Minister Jackson](#), 30 January 2024 - "This is the NSW Government's firm commitment to rebuilding the public housing system in NSW and treating you with the dignity and respect that you deserve."

Signed:

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