



Minister for Housing and Public Works

Ref: COM 14116-2012

19 DEC 2012

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Level 7 80B George Street
Brisbane Queensland
GPO Box 2457 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +617 3237 1832
Facsimile +617 3012 9017
E: housingandpublicworks@ministerial.qld.gov.au
ABN 65 959 415 158

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to Petition 2028-12 from principal petitioner, Ms Constance Dailey, seeking guarantees on behalf of public housing tenants.

These are identical to the issues former Minister Bruce Flegg responded to on two occasions; paper petition 1942-12 and e-petition 1917-2 on 3 September 2012, and paper petition 1973-12 on 11 October 2012. The issues relate to current social housing reforms and their impact on public housing tenants.

As previously stated, the Queensland Government's goal is to ensure the most effective use of the public housing system to provide housing assistance to as many people in need as possible, for the duration of their need.

In June 2012, the former Minister sent a letter to all public housing tenants explaining the issues with the public housing system and seeking their input on proposed reforms to address the levels of under-occupancy. The petitions make reference to that letter which was seeking the views of tenants on three possible options to address under-occupancy. These options were tenants transferring to smaller properties, paying more rent, and/or sharing their property.

Feedback indicated that downsizing was the most popular option, followed by paying more rent to remain in an under-occupied property. The third option, relating to sharing arrangements, was not popular with respondents and will only be considered if directly requested by a tenant.

Reviews of under-occupied households are occurring gradually and are conducted with the utmost compassion and sensitivity. Each review considers the individual circumstances of the household, for example, locational needs and the need to remain in the larger property. There will be instances where a household no longer needs the larger property and will be asked to either transfer to a property that meets their housing need or offered the option to pay a higher rent to remain in the under-occupied property.

It is the intention of the Queensland Government to offer tenants more appropriate housing and to free-up larger properties to assist those larger families eligible for long-term public housing.

Earlier this year the department offered an amnesty for households with undeclared occupants. That amnesty uncovered more than 1600 people who had been living in public housing without paying any rent. The appropriate rent can now be collected from those properties which will bring in an estimated additional \$4 million each year that can be directed into the social housing portfolio.


Other areas for public housing reform include cost savings in administrative and maintenance expenses and also focus on exploring opportunities to partner with the private sector and non-government housing providers to revitalise the housing portfolio. An excellent example of this is the Logan Renewal Initiative, a proposed partnership between the Queensland Government, Logan City Council and various non-government organisations. The intent of this initiative is to revitalise government-owned and managed public housing and increase the supply of new affordable housing for rent and sale to meet the needs of Logan's growing community.

With the demand for public housing growing faster than the state government's capacity to assist, and costs to maintain public housing increasing from year to year, some tough decisions have to be made about the best use of available resources. The implementation of the housing reforms outlined above are aimed at addressing the pressure on Queensland's public housing system and will help to house vulnerable and homeless Queenslanders.

In addition, the Queensland Government is actively working towards lowering the cost of living for Queenslanders through a range of initiatives. As I informed the House on 29 November 2012, the government has scrapped the former government's sustainability declarations, reformed plumbing laws to remove the cost of council approvals, overhauled Building Services Authority judgement debt system and implemented a broader review of the organisation.

I trust this information addresses your enquiry. If I can be of assistance with other matters within my portfolio, please do not hesitate to contact my office on telephone 07 3237 1832.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tim Mander', written in a cursive style.

Tim Mander MP
Minister for Housing and Public Works