

Social housing

About this report

Social housing is affordable rental housing provided to households with low incomes. In NSW, there are around 156,000 social housing dwellings. Social housing includes public housing, community housing and Aboriginal housing.

On 1 February 2024, Homes NSW was established as a division of the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) with responsibility for managing housing and homelessness services.

This audit assessed whether social housing is effectively and efficiently prioritised to meet the needs of vulnerable households, and whether social housing tenants are effectively supported to establish and sustain their tenancies.

Conclusion

The audit concluded that the process to apply for a social housing property is inefficient and inequitable. The application process requests substantial amounts of evidence to determine whether an applicant is a priority. Some applicants are supported by external agencies to collect this evidence while others cannot access support.

The process to allocate available social housing properties is inefficient and inequitable. In June 2024, DCJ took an average of 33 days to fill a vacant property. Just under a third of offers of housing result from manually selecting an applicant, rather than using the priority ranked list of applicants. DCJ does not centrally monitor manual allocation decisions, which risks inequitable outcomes.

Social housing tenants do not consistently receive effective support to help them establish a successful tenancy or sustain that tenancy when issues arise. DCJ does not have a clearly articulated strategy for supporting tenancies, nor does it monitor or report on the support it coordinates for tenants.

Recommendations

The report made five recommendations:

1. Simplify the social housing application process.
2. Review and improve the allocation and offer process.
3. Regularly monitor and report on the use of manual allocations.
4. Clearly articulate the role of Homes NSW as a social housing landlord.
5. Align key data sets between DCJ and community housing providers.

Fast facts

56,000

approved applicants waiting for a social housing property as at June 2024

76%

proportion of newly housed households who were priority applicants in 2023–24

33 days

average time taken for DCJ to sign up a new tenant to a vacant property in June 2024

6,000

approved applicants who have been waiting for a social housing property for over 10 years as at June 2024

31%

proportion of offers of housing allocated manually in 2023–24

58%

proportion of DCJ managed tenancies who received an initial visit within 12 weeks (against a target of 95%) in June 2024