

## Media Release

### Release of *How do you tell someone they have to move?* – 31 July 2023

The ACT Ombudsman, Iain Anderson today published a report entitled *How do you tell someone they have to move? - Housing ACT's implementation of mandatory relocation under the Growing and Renewing Public Housing Program*.

The ACT Government's Growing and Renewing Public Housing Program (the Program) commenced in 2019. It aims to deliver 1400 new homes across 6 years (originally 5 years but extended due to the impacts of COVID-19), to support more people and households in need of housing assistance. In February 2022 the Program shifted from voluntary to mandatory relocations.

The ACT Ombudsman commenced an own motion investigation in December 2022, building on earlier comments made to Housing ACT as a result of investigations of complaints made to us by tenants and having regard to the vulnerability of many of the ACT's public housing tenants and the likelihood of the Program having a big impact on these lives of tenants who had been living in properties and locations for years. The investigation found that although Housing ACT has improved delivery of the Program since it commenced, further changes should be made, especially in relation to Housing ACT's policies and procedures, communication with tenants, and planning and evaluation.

Mr Anderson stated that 'Housing ACT did not keep engagement and support for vulnerable tenants front of mind as it implemented the mandatory relocation phase of the Program. Noting the impact of mandatory relocation on vulnerable people, we consider that further work should have been conducted prior to implementation of the mandatory relocation phase,' Mr Anderson said. The report makes 9 recommendations focused on improvements that will strengthen the support and assistance provided to tenants with known vulnerabilities to balance the legitimate public policy goals of the Program with the needs of public housing tenants.

The ACT Ombudsman welcomes the response from Community Services Directorate (CSD) which is published in full as an appendix to the report. CSD and Housing ACT accepted all 9 recommendations and we welcome the commitment to implement them in the coming months. The ACT Ombudsman will seek progress reports on implementation in due course.

While the recommendations in the report are directed specifically to implementation of the Program, the report should be considered by any ACT Government agency considering current or future programs involving vulnerable ACT residents. Agencies should design and implement such programs by:

- having a people-centred approach to communication and engagement, which takes account of vulnerabilities from the outset
- publishing clear and up-to-date information that is easily located and accessible, and
- conducting appropriate program and risk planning, including building review and evaluation into program delivery.

The full report is available [here](#).