



Housing Appeals
Committee

Annual Overview 2015-16



Message from the Director

2015/16 has been a successful year in all! I am very happy to report on this year's achievements for the Housing Appeals Committee (HAC). In 2015/16, we focused on the accessibility and transparency of the appeals process for NSW social housing clients.



Yasmina Kovacevic, A/Director

The HAC increased its contact with metropolitan and regional advocacy and support agencies that assist clients through an appeal. Stakeholder engagement was a primary focus this year, with the HAC visiting regional and metropolitan social housing districts and completing a major state wide mail-out to maintain sector knowledge and visibility of the independent appeals mechanism.

The HAC met all its benchmark targets across established performance measures, including time taken to schedule an appeal hearing and time taken to complete the appeal decision.

The HAC provided expert comment and feedback to FACS and community housing providers on policy development and review. The HAC also continued its function of regular reporting on systemic issues arising out of appeal case study analyses. The HAC provided feedback and advice on new policy guidelines to help identify appealable policy decisions for social housing applicants and tenants.

In 2015/16, the HAC delivered an ambitious Good Decision Making training program to public and community housing across NSW. A total of 15 training sessions were designed and delivered for frontline and senior staff and management.

The HAC developed internal guidelines for members and chairs following the introduction of new policy frameworks across the social housing sector.

This year, the HAC members broadened their policy expertise across the areas of appealable decisions with each training day having a specific policy theme.

Members participated in a 360 degree performance review and feedback survey, with pleasing results. The focus of the three presiding chair meetings in 2015/16 was to examine report writing techniques for recommendations particularly on complex and sensitive appeal matters, analyse new and emerging social housing policies, and participate in an informal peer review of report writing styles.

The HAC was represented at the National Council of Australian Tribunals (COAT) conference in Hobart in June. The conference offered expert conference sessions, including a session on evidence-based strategies for managing external complaints about tribunal members.

The HAC Secretariat achieved its key business objectives and met benchmarks in performance measures. This year, the Secretariat team completed performance development plans as part of the new people development framework.

In May 2016, the Secretariat team held a planning day to set the key project priorities for the 2016/17 year. The approved 2016/17 HAC Business Plan includes 13 projects, some of which includes phases of projects initiated in the 2015/16 year.

All agreed projects link into NSW government objectives as they relate to social housing.

New member recruitment was planned for 2015/16 however due to a number of activities across the sector, a decision was made to postpone recruitment action to the 2016/17 year.

In November 2015, Jill Moir resigned from the Committee due to family commitments. Jill served initially as member and later as a presiding chair, with

Who are we?

her first term commencing in 2010. Jill's professional expertise, dedication and exceptional judgement and decision making skills have been invaluable to the Committee. She will be greatly missed by all members and staff.

The HAC appointed one additional presiding chair, Ms Susan Fenwick, from its existing membership following an expression of interest process. Following the standard training transition period, Susan stepped up fully to the presiding chair role in the last quarter of 2015/16.

The 2015/16 year was defined by an ambitious communication and stakeholder engagement strategy, and building strong working relationships with the sector peaks and housing providers.

I am pleased to advise that the 2015/16 work program has delivered excellent results across the key business objectives for the HAC:

- Maintain a professional mechanism for social housing applicants and tenants to appeal following a declined first tier appeal
- Design and deliver high quality decision making training to frontline staff and senior managers
- Provide expert advice on systemic issues and policy interpretation to improve decision making through central office and districts
- Provide structured policy input/comment on new policy frameworks and reviews.

I congratulate members and staff for their continued efforts and hard work on maintaining their professionalism in everything they do. It is through this dedication and consistent adherence to professional standards that the HAC upholds its credibility and efficacy as the social housing external appeals mechanism for clients, social housing providers and the government of the day.

Yasmina Kovacevic
A/Director

The NSW Housing Appeals Committee (HAC) is an independent agency that deals with appeals from people who are unhappy with a decision of a social housing provider.

The HAC is classified as a Ministerial Advisory Committee and comprises Members appointed by Cabinet who hear appeals and Secretariat staff who perform a wide range of support functions. Secretariat staff are the first point of contact for users of the HAC services.

The HAC Service Charter expresses the Committee's commitment to providing high quality, timely and courteous services to our clients and other parties. For more information and key publications, visit the HAC website at www.hac.nsw.gov.au

What can be appealed?

The HAC can hear appeals on a range of decisions made by FACS Housing Services (public housing), community housing providers. Most social housing policy decisions that determine eligibility or level of entitlement for a specific product or service, can be appealed to the HAC. The HAC can also hear appeals about certain affordable housing decisions made by registered providers, for example, decisions about entitlement, rent setting and ongoing eligibility. For more information about the scope of decisions that can be appealed, visit our website at www.hac.nsw.gov.au

How does the HAC work?

We review decisions made by FACS Housing Services and community housing providers that provide long term social housing. The Committee is independent of FACS Housing Services and community housing providers, and considers individual cases in a fair and just manner using the merits review principles.

The HAC can affirm a decision or recommend a change of decision to the FACS Housing Services and community housing providers (binding decisions on strike notice appeals – see website for more details). The Committee's aim is to provide an appeal service that is fair, just, economical, informal and quick. Our services are free of charge to clients. For more detail on how the appeals process works, please visit our website at www.hac.nsw.gov.au

Key Performance Outcomes

Each reporting year, the HAC reports against six key areas to measure whether the intended outcomes have been achieved, following analysis of set outputs.

1. Timeframes

Hearing timeframes

The HAC aims to hear appeals within 28 days of the receipt of the appeal application. In 2015/16, the median number of days between the receipt of an appeal and the hearing date was 14 days, and the average was 15 days. This result is outstanding with clients having their appeal heard in an efficient and timely manner.

Appeal decisions completed

The HAC aims to complete the appeal decision within 14 days of the hearing date. An appeal decision can be a confirmation of the original decision, a recommendation to change the decision in full or in part, or in some cases, a resolved appeal decision.

In 2015/16, the median for completed appeal decisions was 7 days and the average was 9 days. The HAC once again achieved this important performance target and in doing so, provided timely outcomes to clients on social housing appealable matters.

2. Continuous improvement in service delivery

As part of the 2015/16 business plans, the HAC commenced two projects that aim to further improve service delivery for HAC clients; the HAC appeal online and the HAC Customer Satisfaction Survey. The two projects are expected to be completed during 2016-17 and early project outcomes will be published in the 2016-17 report.

The HAC appeal online project:

The HAC appeal online project seeks to improve the client service experience by modernising the appeal lodgement method for clients across NSW. It will do this by enabling a direct online lodgement process from any location in NSW, provided the client has an internet connection or, a support service that can provide access. This will be an additional option and will not prevent clients from sending their appeal in by post, email or fax. The HAC hopes to improve accessibility and efficiency of the appeals process once this project is realised. The project will complement the digital transformation work already underway through the Housing Connect program which includes the expanding of services available over the phone and online.

The HAC appeal online project is expected to be completed in the second quarter of 2016/17.



Key Performance Outcomes

The HAC Customer Satisfaction Survey:

This project seeks to measure levels of satisfaction and knowledge of the Housing Appeals Committee and service it provides to people in NSW. This research project will be supported by an online survey designed to collect information from all identified stakeholder groups, including HAC clients, public and community housing providers, and NSW support agencies. The survey will seek to answer two research questions:

- a. Do people working and interacting with the NSW social housing sector know about the Housing Appeals Committee?
- b. How satisfied are customers with the HAC appeals mechanism and the service it provides to people in NSW?

“The foundation of our service delivery framework is the HAC Charter which sets out our commitment to a respectful, safe, confidential and fair process for our clients”

It is the very first time the HAC has embarked on a broad reaching research project to gather evidence on how customers perceive the HAC, and levels of awareness of the service it delivers to the sector.

The complete research project will be submitted for external ethics approval to ensure the research is conducted in an ethical manner and the design and delivery proposal is in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). Complying with this process will lead to greater confidence in the results and in how the results can be reported.

Survey results and analyses will be completed in the second half of the 2016/17 reporting year. The findings will be used to inform a comprehensive evaluation of the HAC customer service and business operating model to ensure the agency maintains a sense of modernity and currency in its interactions with clients and stakeholders.

The foundation of our service delivery framework is the HAC Charter which sets out our commitment to a respectful, safe, confidential and fair process for our clients. The HAC Charter can be found on our website at www.hac.nsw.gov.au

3. Promoting continuous improvement in housing provider decision making

As part of our commitment to provide decision making skills-based training to the NSW social housing sector, in 2015/16 the HAC delivered an ambitious training program across NSW. An impressive 179 social housing practitioners participated in the range of workshops delivered across NSW.

100 frontline staff completed the Good Decision Making in Social Housing workshop, and a further 64 senior managers completed the masterclass on Discretionary Decision Making for Senior Managers. Both courses are informal and focus on practical tools and resources for operational environments. The course material is updated each year to incorporate important changes across the social housing service delivery and operational policy environment. In addition to this training program, the HAC regularly delivers a Certificate IV in Social Housing module titled ‘Managing complaints and appeals’. In 2015/16, 15 participants completed the Cert IV module.

This year, the HAC provided expert feedback and advice on appealable decisions affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) clients. The HAC met with the Aboriginal Housing Office and further established new working relationships with a range of NSW Aboriginal support agencies. In the context of working closely with Aboriginal housing providers and stakeholders, HAC continued its work as an active member (since 2006) of the Joint Aboriginal Housing Services Committee (JAHS). The objective of the JAHS is to provide information to support providers on the range of options available to Aboriginal people seeking assistance with housing issues.

4. Promoting policy and procedural improvement

The HAC continued its work on providing structured and responsive comment and feedback on policy development and review to the social housing sector. With public housing, this function was facilitated through quarterly recurrent meetings with FACS Housing Statewide Services. The HAC and community housing providers worked directly on requests for policy comment and feedback arising out of appeal cases. The community housing sector also receives information from the HAC via the NSW Federation of Housing Associations (NSW FHA), the peak resource and advisory body for the community housing sector in NSW. The NSW FHA advised that they are working on

Key Performance Outcomes

an innovative platform of networking, training delivery and information sharing to be introduced for the 2016/17 year. As part of this work, the NSW FHA has scheduled recurrent quarterly sessions for the HAC. This platform will facilitate a regular feedback loop on systemic issues across community housing and sessions on policy in focus highlights as they relate to appealable decisions in community housing.

In 2015/16, the FACS Antisocial Behaviour Management Policy was introduced, with two separate appealable decisions that can be heard by the HAC. This new policy framework was developed in conjunction with feedback from the HAC, particularly on decision points that can be the subject of an appeal and timeframes for clients to receive an appeal outcome.

5. Community forums and presentations

This year, the HAC participated and contributed to 10 community forums, events and presentations, six of which were regionally based and a further four located across the Sydney metropolitan. The HAC primary

objective in this activity is to inform stakeholders of the HAC appeal mechanism and the process of appealing decisions to the HAC.

The HAC developed a project plan for the next metropolitan HAC Information Forum, a priority event under the HAC stakeholder and communication strategy. Due to a number of competing events and activities, the 22 March 2017 was booked in as the most suitable date to deliver this important forum to stakeholders. Details of the event will be included in the 2016/17 Annual Overview.

6. Maintain strong and professional HAC membership

In 2015/16, the HAC had an active membership composition of six presiding chairs and eight members. One presiding chair resigned due to family commitments and another member was promoted to presiding chair role through an internal expression of interest process. The presiding chairs are responsible for writing appeal decision reports, managing the hearing process and post hearing deliberations with the member(s).

HAC Training Workshops 2015/16

Training Module	Location	Participants
Good Decision Making for Frontline Staff	FACS Housing – Lismore	15
	FACS Housing – Wagga Wagga	12
	FACS Housing – Newcastle	9
	FACS Housing – Charlestown	15
	FACS Housing – Dubbo	9
	FACS Housing – Orange	9
	Bridge Housing Surry Hills	20
	FACS Housing – Wagga Wagga	11
Combined Discretionary Decision Making for Senior Management & Good Decision Making Training	Compass Housing Dubbo	5
Masterclass: Discretionary Decision Making for Senior Management	Housing Plus	10
	FACS Housing Contact Centre – Liverpool	7
	NSW Federation of Housing Associations Surry Hills	10
	AHO and FACS Housing – Dubbo & Orange	12
	FACS Housing – Blacktown	20
Certificate IV in Social Housing – Complaints and Appeals Module	NSW Federation of Housing Associations Surry Hills	15
TOTAL	15 training sessions	179

Key Performance Outcomes



Front row from left: Alan Clarke, Julie Hourigan-Ruse, Blanch Lake, Maggie Smyth (Director), Adrian Williams, Catherine White, (Absent: Alicia Jillard, Claudia Kennedy).
 Back row from left: Ralph (Nick) Illek, Tacye Bowen, Mark Powell, Susan Fenwick, Paul Gallagher, Anny Druett.

HAC members received extensive briefing and information on new policy areas, including the Antisocial Behaviour Management Policy and the Affordable Housing Ministerial Guidelines which set out policy decisions that can be appealed to the HAC. The objective of the training was to identify the intent of the policy and, how the intent is considered in the decision making merits review model. For appealable decisions under the Antisocial Behaviour Management policy, the HAC used practice case studies prior to any appeals being heard, given that the binding decision requirement is a new area of decision making for the HAC.

I am thankful to the dedicated members and chairs for upholding high professional standards at the HAC. This, together with a strong and reliable Secretariat has enabled the continued operations of the HAC as a credible, professional independent appeals mechanism for social housing clients in NSW.

2015/16 Presiding Chairs:

- Tacye Bowen
- Julie Hourigan-Ruse
- Adrian Williams
- Alicia Jillard
- Claudia Kennedy
- Susan Fenwick

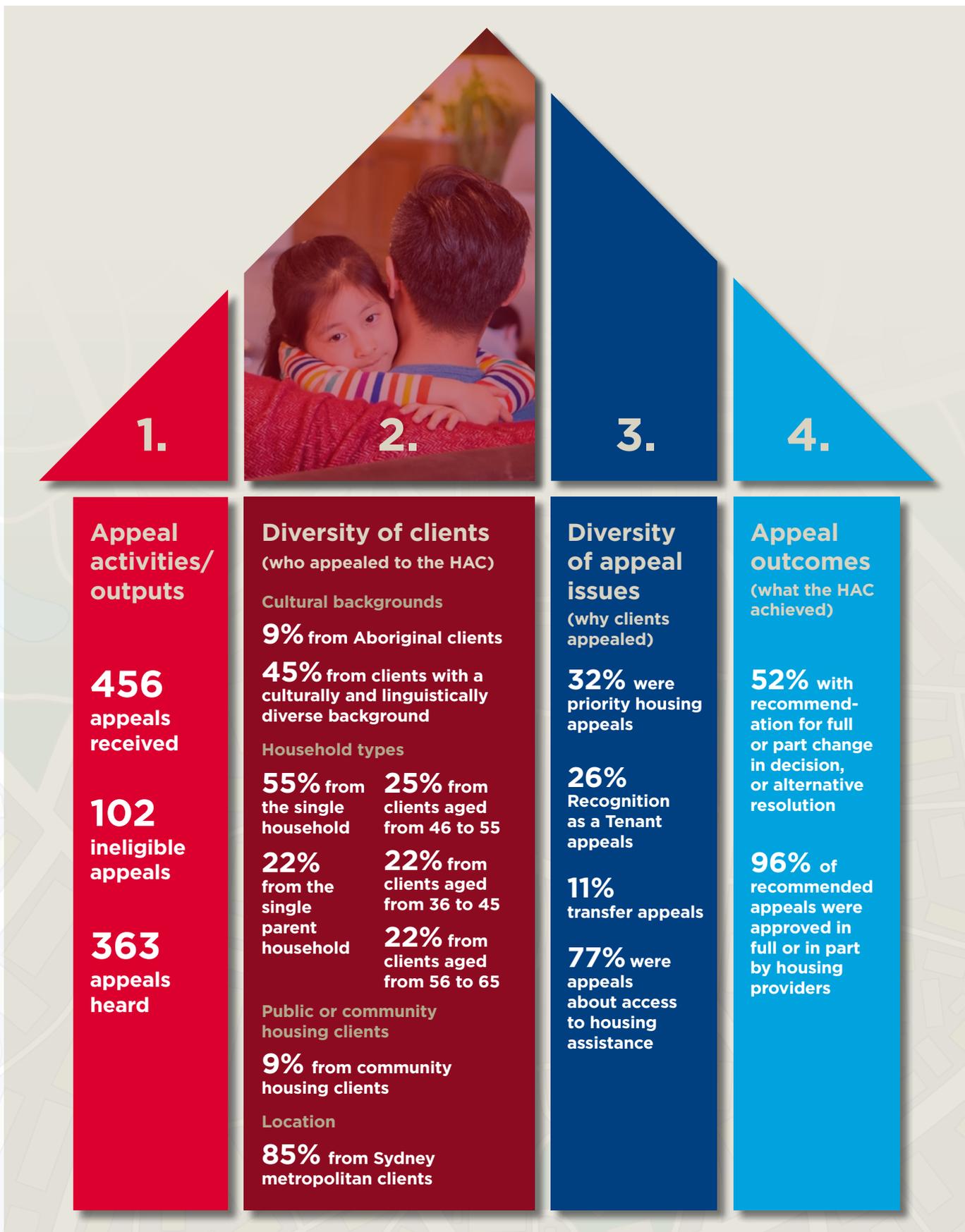
2015/16 Members:

- Nick Illek
- Alan Clarke
- Catherine White
- Blanch Lake (ATSI)
- Neva Collings (ATSI)
- Anny Druett (ATSI)
- Paul Gallagher
- Mark Powell

HAC involvement in community forums and presentations 2015/16

Date	Event	Location
17/7/15	FACS Multicultural Housing Assistance Seminar	FACS Housing - Ashfield
16/10/15	Council of Australasian Tribunals (COAT) Registrar and Executive Officer Conference	Sydney
23/10/15	Joint Aboriginal Housing Services Meeting (JAHS)	Sydney
10/11/15	Housing Interagency Meeting in Lismore (various support agencies)	Lismore
12/11/15	Northern Rivers Community Forum in Tweed Heads (facilitated by Legal Aid)	Tweed Heads
23/11/15	Joint Aboriginal Housing Services (JAHS) meeting (in HAC office)	Burwood
17/5/16	Western NSW Aboriginal Tenants Advice & Advocacy Service TAAS	FACS Housing - Dubbo
17/5/16	New England and Western Tennants Advice & Advocacy TAAS	FACS Housing - Dubbo
17/5/16	Troy Grant (MP) Electorate Office (Dubbo) staff	Electoral Office Dubbo
17/5/16	Dubbo Neighbourhood Centre (homelessness agencies and Aboriginal staff)	Dubbo

Key Statistics 2015-16



Statistical Report 2015-16

The HAC received 456 new appeal requests during 2015/16 compared with 608 the previous year. Many factors may have contributed to this decrease, including a range of sector wide HAC training workshops.

This may have influenced better decision making and therefore a reduction in the volume of appeals received. The HAC are working closely with housing providers to ensure maximum visibility and accessibility to the HAC external appeals process for clients in NSW.

1. Appeal requests that did not proceed to a hearing

In 2015/16, 102 appeal requests¹ did not proceed to a hearing. Among those 102 requests, five were resolved before proceeding to a hearing while 97 were not eligible for the 2nd tier appeal, due to one or more of the reasons shown below. The most common reason for ineligible appeal requests was the requirement for clients to have an internal review completed prior to a HAC appeal, which accounted for 45% of ineligible appeal requests.



Table 1: Ineligible appeal applications in 2015/16

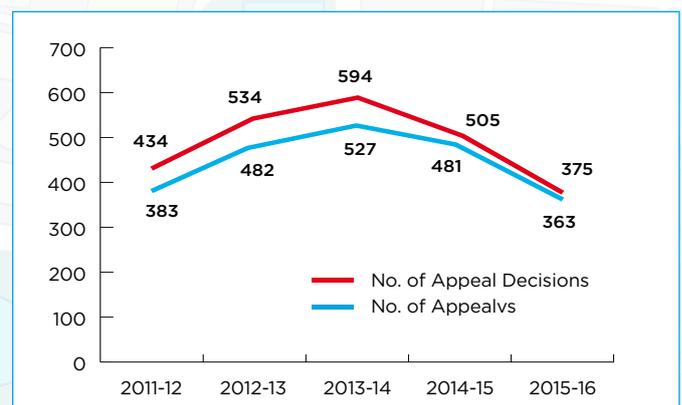
Reasons	Number Received	Percentage
Internal review required	48	39%
Not an appealable issue	36	29%
Out of timeframe for appeal lodgement	17	14%
Resolved*	23	19%
Two or more reasons	8	8%
Total	102	100%

Note: *Includes appeals withdrawn at client request

2. Appeals heard

The HAC conducted 363 hearings² in 2015/16. The blue line in Chart 1 below shows the trend of the appeal hearings over the last 5 years. The red line represents the trend of the appeal decisions, which will be discussed under section 4.

Chart 1: Appeals heard and appeal decisions - historical analysis



¹ Among the 102 appeal requests that did not proceed to a hearing, 3 of those were received in the previous year 2014/15.

² Among the 363 hearings undertaken during 2015/16, 15 came from appeals received from the previous year 2014/15.

Table 2 shows the number and percentage of each appeal type by public or community housing providers.

Table 2: Number and percentage of appeals heard by appeal and provider type in 2015/16

Appeal type	Public Housing	Community Housing	Total	Total %
Housing Register Eligibility	27	5	32	9%
Offers of Accommodation	31	4	35	9%
Priority Housing	105	10	115	32%
Private Rental Subsidy	11	0	11	3%
Rental Subsidy	12	5	17	5%
Recognition as a Tenant	93	1	94	26%
Transfer	34	5	40	11%
Other applicant matters	4	0	4	1%
Other tenancy matters	14	1	15	4%
Total	332 (91%)	31 (9%)	363	100%

2.1 Appeals by provider types

Table 2 shows that the majority of appeals heard (91%) were from public housing clients. The proportion of community housing appeals (9%) is similar to that in the previous years, as shown in Table 3. The HAC expects the overall proportion of appeals from community housing clients to increase as the sector experiences further growth.

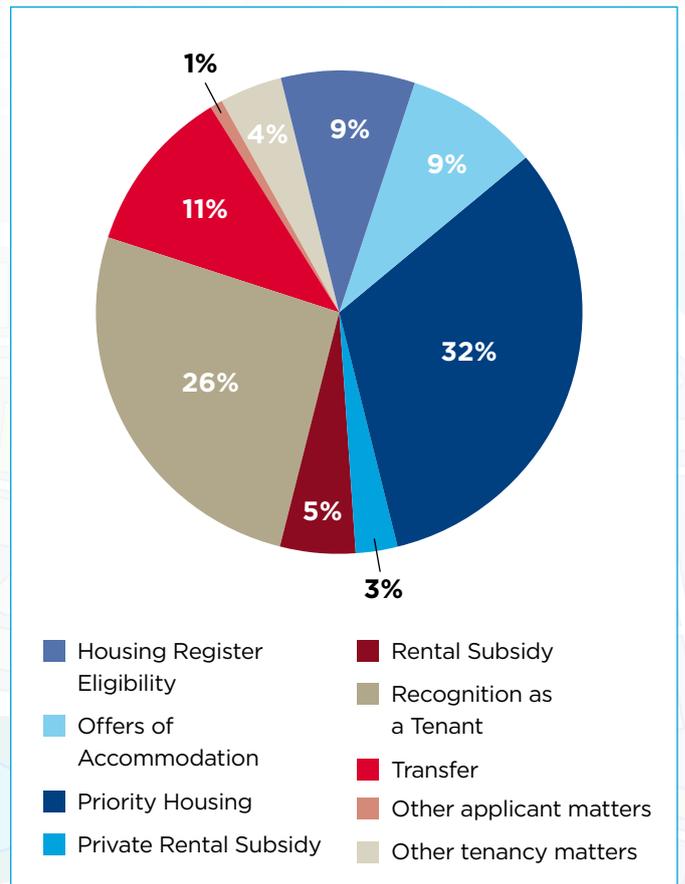
Table 3: Appeals heard – historical analysis

Year	Public Housing	Community Housing	Aboriginal Housing Office	Total
2011/12	351 (92%)	31 (8%)	1	383
2012/13	452 (94%)	30 (6%)		482
2013/14	485 (92%)	42 (8%)		527
2014/15	435 (90%)	46 (10%)		481
2015/16	332 (91%)	31 (9%)		363

2.2 Appeal types

Social housing applicants and tenants can appeal for a range of decisions made by public and community housing providers. Both Table 2 and Chart 2 illustrate the percentage of different types of appeals heard during 2015/16. The most common appeal type is Priority Housing (32%), followed by Recognition as a Tenant (formerly Succession of Tenancy) (26%), which combined, account for nearly 60% of the appeals heard. These two issues relate to requests for access to the social housing system and require the applicant to meet strict criteria as evidence of an urgent need for housing.

Chart 2: Appeal Types – all housing providers



The most common appeal type is Priority Housing
32%

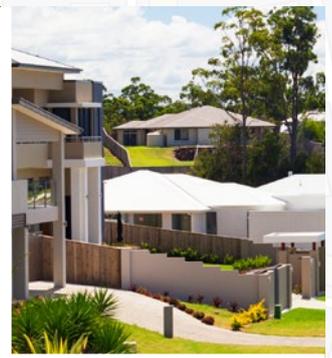
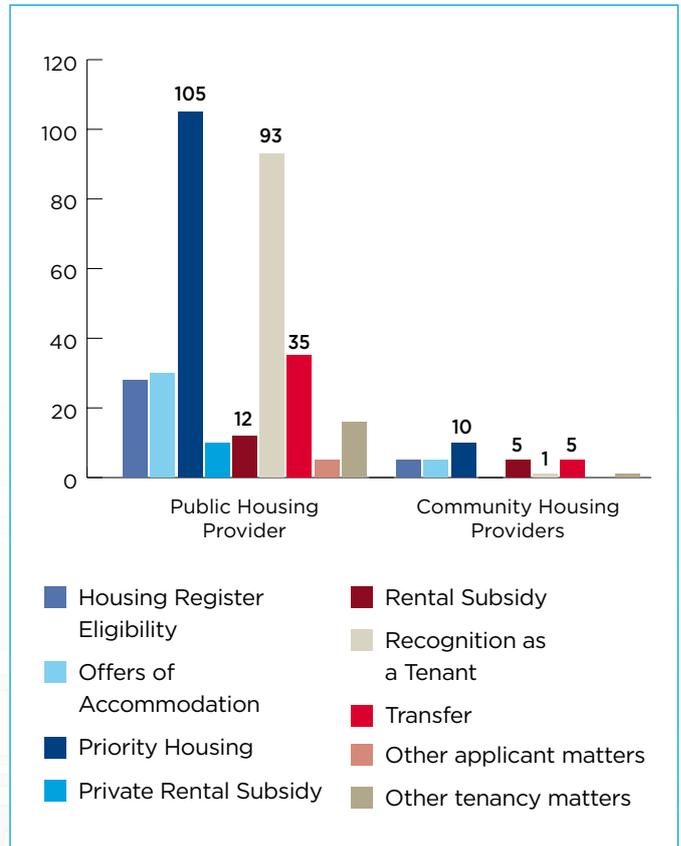
Types of appeals: Public and community housing

The analysis of appeal types across public and community housing, identifies that the most common appeal type in public housing continues to be Priority Housing, followed by Recognition as a Tenant (RaaT) and Transfer as shown in Chart 3. Appeals about RaaT are automatic accelerated appeals and this may be a key driver in the numbers received during 2015/16. Priority housing appeals have remained proportionally consistent in recent years. People seeking priority housing often have complex needs as well as housing affordability issues particularly if they are trying to secure housing in the Sydney metropolitan private rental market.

Compared to public housing, the distribution of appeals types in community housing is relatively even, with Priority Housing accounting for the highest number (10), followed by Housing Register Eligibility (5), Transfer (5) and Rental Subsidy (5).

“People seeking priority housing often have complex needs as well as housing affordability issues”

Chart 3: Appeal types by public housing and community housing providers



3. In focus

3.1 Appeals from Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander (ATSI) clients

Table 4 shows the number and percentage of appeals from different ethnic backgrounds. Appeals from Aboriginal clients this year (9%) are slightly higher than the previous year (7%). This figure is consistent with the percentage of Aboriginal Social Housing tenants (9.7%) from the 2014/15 FACS Annual report. The HAC were involved in a range of forums, workshops relevant to ATSI clients, staff and key stakeholders. Although low in volume/numbers, the HAC sees this increase as a positive outcome given the breadth of activity undertaken by the HAC in 2015/16.



Table 4: Appeals Heard - Ethnic background

	Number	Percentage
Aboriginal	34	9%
CALD	164	45%
English speaking	164	45%
Not known	1	0%
Total	363	100%

3.2 Appeals from clients from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds

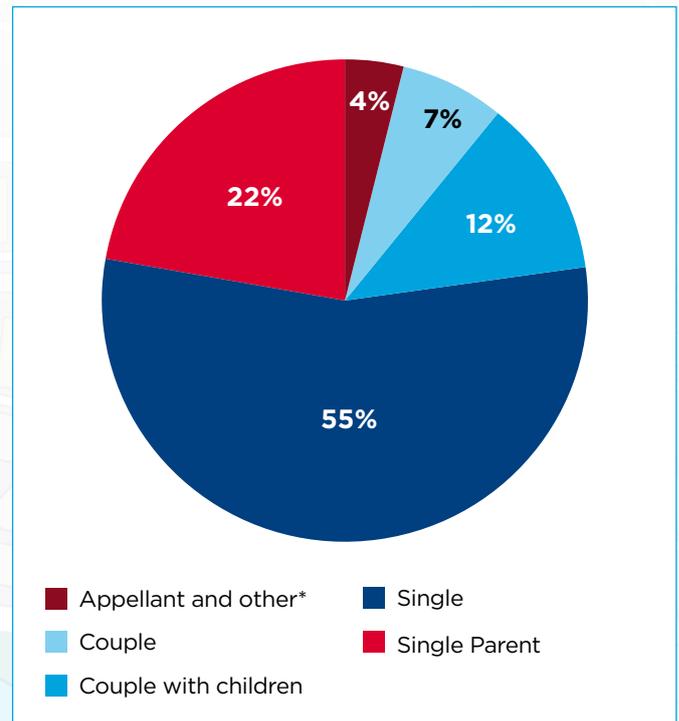
As shown in Table 4, the proportion of appeals heard from clients with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds (CALD) continues to be significant. The percentage has been fluctuating around 45% in recent years, with 50% as the highest observed in 2012/13 and 43% as the lowest in the previous year 2014/15.

Among the 164 hearings from CALD clients, nearly 59% of them (96) required language interpreter services. In total, there were 25 different languages the HAC provided interpreter services for. The top five language groups requested from clients were Arabic, Persian, Dari, Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) and Korean.

3.3 Appeals from household types

As in Chart 4, the greatest proportion of appeals were from single person households (55%) followed by single parent households (22%). It is interesting to note that single people continue to be the leading household type appealing decisions to the HAC.

Chart 4: Household type

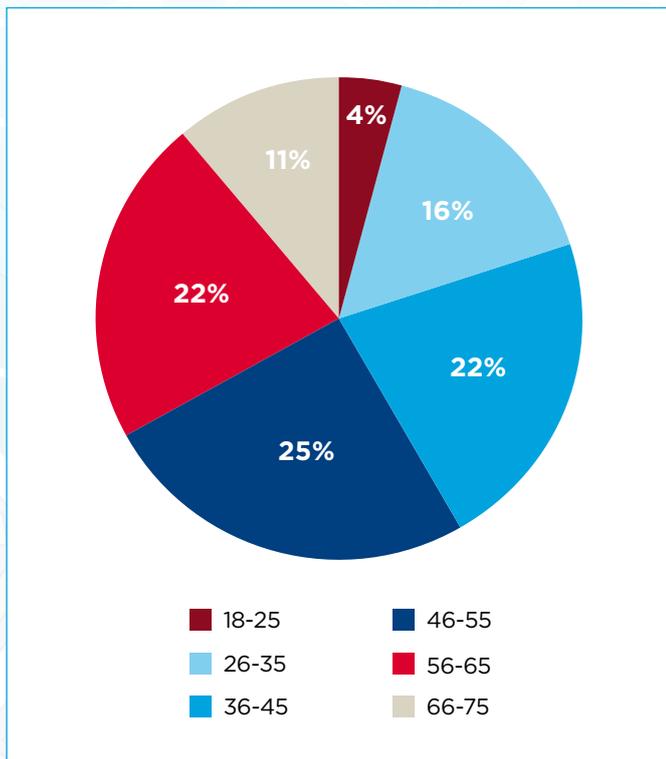


Note: *Combined count of appellant and other and appellant and carer

As shown in Table 5, although the top three issues at appeal were the same for singles and all household types, RaaT topped the list for single person households compared to Priority Housing for all households. This finding is similar to that in the previous year. This is partly attributed to the automated appeals process for RaaT appeals whereby they are directly referred to the HAC following an internal appeal. It is also an indicator of the many challenges single person households face in locating and securing affordable private rental accommodation, particularly in the Sydney metropolitan. It is interesting to note that the percentage of RaaT appeals from the single male household (36%) was higher compared to that from the single female household (29%).



Chart 5: Appeals by client age group (age at the appeal)



3.4 Appeals by age groups

Among the 363 hearings in 2015/16, the largest proportion were from the client group aged from 46 to 55, which was at 25%, followed by the age group of 36-45 and 56-65, which were both at 22%. It is also interesting to note that the age group of 18-25 only represented 4% of the total appeals³. Whilst it is pleasing to see that not many young people are seeking an external appeal about social housing decisions, the HAC have committed to establish closer working relationships with youth services across NSW, specifically those that provide a range of supports to young people in need of housing. This action is planned to ensure the visibility and accessibility of the HAC appeals process for young people that have been denied a housing service or product, and may wish to appeal the decision under relevant policy provisions.

³ The percentage of public housing tenants aged 18 to 25 is around 1.7% (data provided by FACS).

Table 5: Top three appeal issues – household type

Appeal type	All household types	Single person household	Single female household	Single male household
Recognition as a Tenant	26%	33%	29%	36%
Priority Housing	32%	23%	24%	22%
Transfer	11%	13%	15%	13%
Housing Eligibility	9%	8%	10%	7%

3.5 Appeals from FACS Districts

There were 15 FACS Districts across NSW in 2015/16. Among the 332 hearings for public housing clients, chart 6 shows the number of appeals heard by District in 2015/16.

As shown in Table 6, applicants for housing in the Sydney metropolitan districts and current tenants in these districts accounted for the majority of appeals heard in 2015/16. The attribution factors remained unchanged as follows:

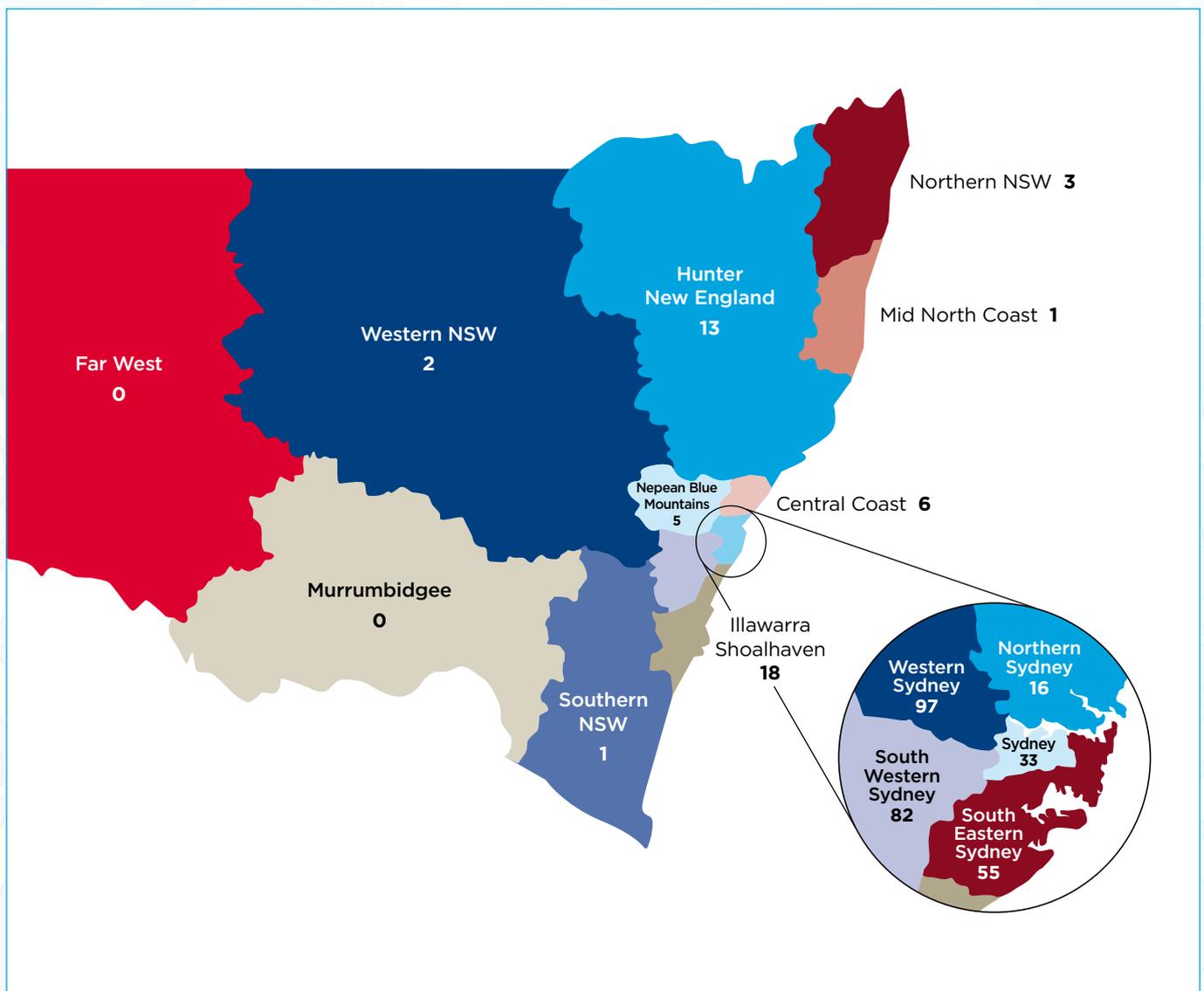
- The vast majority of public housing properties were located across the Sydney metropolitan
- Housing affordability across the Sydney metropolitan continued to be a significant issue

It is not surprising that most appeals from Regional NSW came from the Illawarra Shoalhaven and the Hunter New England Districts, where services are more established. These two districts also carry a higher proportion of social housing dwellings compared to other regional locations.

Table 6: Public housing appeals heard by NSW Region

NSW Region	Number	Percentage
Metropolitan Sydney	283	85%
Regional NSW	49	15%
Total	332	100%

Chart 6: Appeals heard - FACS NSW Districts



4. Appeal decisions and final outcomes

4.1 Appeal decisions

Table 7 shows the number of different appeal decisions by provider type. In total, the HAC referred 52% of all appeals to the housing provider with a recommendation to change the decision in full or in part, which is higher than last year (43%). In examining this finding by housing provider type, FACS housing received a higher rate (51%) of recommendations to change the decision compared to that (42%) in the previous year. The rate of recommendation to change the decision for community housing clients was 55%, slightly higher than the previous year (52%).

Table 8 shows the proportion of cases where HAC agreed with the provider for the previous 5 year reporting periods.

52% of all appeals decisions were referred by the HAC with a recommendation to change the decision in part or full

Table 7: Appeal decisions following the hearing

Appeal results	Public Housing	Community Housing	Total
Declined-agree with housing provider	150	13	163
Recommendation to change the decision	143	17	160
Recommended alternative resolution or part change decision	27		27
Resolved	12	1	13
Total	332	31	363

Table 8: Percentage of cases where HAC agreed with the provider - historical analysis

Year	Public Housing	Community Housing
2011/12	58%	55%
2012/13	66%	53%
2013/14	63%	45%
2014/15	54%	46%
2015/16	45%	42%



Table 9 outlines reasons for recommendations to change a decision and their corresponding numbers. The HAC provided specific feedback on systemic issues arising out of client appeals. The purpose of this feedback loop was to support ongoing improvement of social housing operational policies and procedures and ultimately, build a foundation for better decisions for clients.

Table 9: Reasons for recommending a change of decision

Reason for recommendation	Number	Percentage
Inadequate consideration was given to the available information when the original decision was made	105	39%
New information has been provided or additional information is available since the original decision	55	20%
The procedure used to reach the original decision was not fair or reasonable	52	19%
The original decision involved a poor interpretation of the housing provider's policy	53	20%
The original decision was based on incorrect information	5	2%
Total	270⁴	100%

4.2 Outcomes of recommendations to change a decision

In 2015/16, housing providers agreed with up to 96% of recommended cases and only 5 cases were not agreed to by the housing provider, as shown in Table 10. This is an outstanding result and testimony to the confidence and trust of the sector in relation to the independence and credibility of the HAC. This is also a reflection of the quality of decision making and overall professionalism of the HAC members and the external appeals process.

Table 10: Final outcomes from housing providers to recommendations

Outcome	Public Housing	Community Housing	Total
Approved	162	15	177
Declined	3	2	5
Resolved	2		2
Total	167	17	184

96% of recommended cases and only 5 cases were not agreed to by the housing provider

⁴ The total number of reasons (270) is greater than the total number of outcomes in Table 9 (184), as one case may have more than one reason for recommending a change of decision.

Complaints

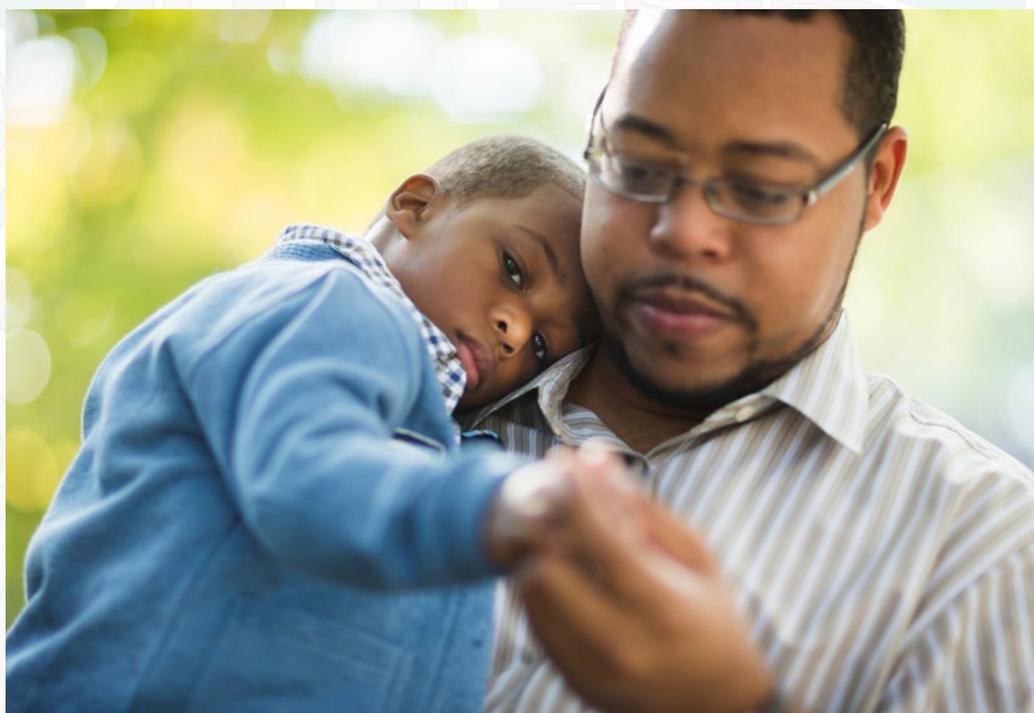
The HAC received six formal complaints during 2015/16. Table 11 summarises the key issues of complaint and the time frame within which a response was issued to the complainant. The HAC aims to provide a response within 14 days however, where complaints are complex, the timeframe is extended in order to adequately investigate and respond to complainants.

The HAC complies with its Complaints Policy in accepting, investigating and responding to all complainants. The HAC aims to implement continuous improvement practices across its client facing activities and all complaints are analysed and used as an evidence base in examining where services to clients may need review. In order to maintain high professional standards in the area of complaints management, the HAC Secretariat staff aim to complete tailored training through the NSW Ombudsman’s complaint handling training program. This training will take place early in the 2016/17 year.

The HAC Complaints Policy is publicly available on our website at www.hac.nsw.gov.au

Table 11: Complaints received 2015/16

Nature of complaint	Number received	Days taken to respond and provide complaint resolution/other options
Client seeking a reconsideration of HAC appeal matter	4	Less than 14 days
Lack of procedural fairness arising out of the original housing provider application process and official forms.	1	19 days
Request to withdraw appeal matter after the appeal has been heard and determined. Questioning consent granted to the HAC to hear the appeal.	1	6 days



The Year Ahead

With a number of exciting developments currently underway in the social housing sector, the HAC expects that the year ahead will be defined by innovation and change.

New policy areas as part of the NSW Government *Future Directions in Social Housing* initiative are likely to impact on the HAC and require the inclusion of related new appealable decisions in the overarching appeals mechanism for social housing. The requirement for tenants to relocate from identified redevelopment areas will lead to offers of alternative accommodation. The HAC may see an increase in appeals across these decisions as the pace of activity increases.

The year ahead will also see an innovative transformation of how we connect with our clients. The HAC expects to launch its first ever HAC online form aiming to improve and modernise accessibility to the external appeals process for all people in NSW.

The HAC looks forward to a year of change, innovation and modernity and to achieving the planned business objectives across the six key reporting areas.

In the coming year we expect the HAC will experience some level of transition or change. For this reason, it is important to remind ourselves of why we are here:

To deliver an easy, fair, quick, informal and free of charge external appeals mechanism to social housing clients, providers and stakeholders in NSW.



To maintain government and public confidence in the external appeals mechanism for social housing in NSW.

In keeping focused and grounded with our core principles, the HAC looks forward to the challenges and successes the year ahead will bring.

Lastly, we would like to thank the HAC clients for continually trusting in the HAC appeals process. Thank you for helping us meet our vision and we look forward to continuing to provide a quality professional service to you in the year to come.

Yasmina Kovacevic
A/Director

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Housing Appeals Committee Members and Staff 2015-16

Director:

Maggie Smyth (July-September 2015)

Yasmina Kovacevic (November 2015-June 2016)

Executive Assistant:

Eloise Bru

Committee

Presiding Chairs:

Tracye Bowen, Susan Fenwick, Julie Hourigan-Ruse,
Alicia Jillard, Claudia Kennedy, Adrian Williams

Members:

Alan Clarke, Neva Collings, Anny Druett,
Paul Gallagher, Nick Illek, Blanch Lake,
Mark Powell, Catherine White

Secretariat staff

Registrar:

Milana Gravorac (July-October 2015)

Carol Pereira-Crouch (November 15-July 16)

Deputy Registrar:

Sudesh Kumaran

Senior Registry Officer:

Siniua Su'a

Secretariat Support Officers:

Tara Murphy/Jason Robinson

Business Support Officer:

Jenny Rowe



Secretariat Staff.

Contact Us

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A special thanks to Hui Tan and Nik Nimpradit from FACS Analysis and Research, and the Secretariat in the preparation of this report.

Key Statistics 2015-16

1.

Appeal activities/outputs

456 appeals received

102 ineligible appeals

363 appeals heard

2.

Diversity of clients (who appealed to the HAC)

Cultural backgrounds	45% from clients with a culturally and linguistically diverse background
Aboriginal clients	9% from Aboriginal clients
Public or community housing clients	9% from community housing clients
Location	85% from Sydney metropolitan clients
Household types	55% from the single household followed by 22% from the single parent household 25% from clients aged from 46 to 55, 22% from clients aged from 36 to 45 and 22% from clients aged from 56 to 65

3.

Diversity of appeal issues (why clients appealed)

32% were priority housing appeals	26% are Recognition as a Tenant appeals and	11% are transfer appeals	77% were appeals about access to housing assistance
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4.

Appeal outcomes (what the HAC achieved)

52% with recommendation for full or part change in decision, or alternative resolution	96% of recommended appeals were approved in full or in part by housing providers
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