

Challenges for 2005 - 2006

HAC conducted a series of meetings and
ings during the year as part of the
munication strategy targeting housing
iders and support and advocacy agencies.
e included:

- a series of one-on-one information sessions with community housing organisations to raise awareness of the appeals process and assist them to establish appropriate internal decision making and good appeals policies and procedures;

Presentations to support and advocacy agencies such as Migrant Resource Centres and interagency groups. The aim of these briefings was to increase sector knowledge and awareness of the HAC and improve support worker's capacity to assist their clients in appeals.

Key Input to Housing Providers

HAC has regularly provided comment in
ast year on new policy developments or
ion of housing policies, particularly by the
l. Much of the comment has focussed on the
y appealable issues arising with proposed
ges to public housing (see below) and
ion of policies such as Succession of
nancy and Tenant Charges. Policy advice was
provided on rent policy affecting all
community housing providers and on individual
ies and procedures being developed by
ral community housing organisations.

Challenges for 2005 – 2006

Addressing Reshaping Public Housing Appeals
Social Housing

April 2005 the NSW government announced a range of changes to public housing policy, including new legislative provisions which will be introduced on proposed amendments, called 'Reshaping Public Housing', impacting on public housing eligibility, the length of time some people can remain in public housing tenants will pay and responsibility for costs.

appealable issues arising from these changes will be incorporated into the HAC jurisdiction the next 12 months and will be listed on the HAC website.

Recruitment of New Aboriginal Members

HAC aims to appoint several new Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Committee members for 2005/2006. We aim to provide an Aboriginal member during all hearings with Aboriginal applicants. Aboriginal members also sit on general hearings and provide important input to the operations of the HAC and the promotion of the appeals process to Aboriginal clients.

National Networking of Appeals Agencies

aim to maintain the flow of information on developments and best practice within all housing appeals jurisdictions across Australia and NZ building on the conference held in 2005.



*...oe singing her own composition 'Listen'
AC 10 year Anniversary Celebration.*

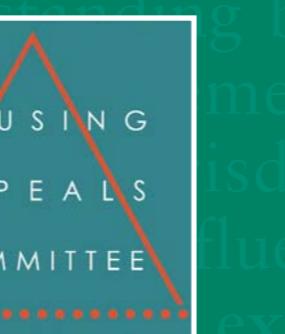
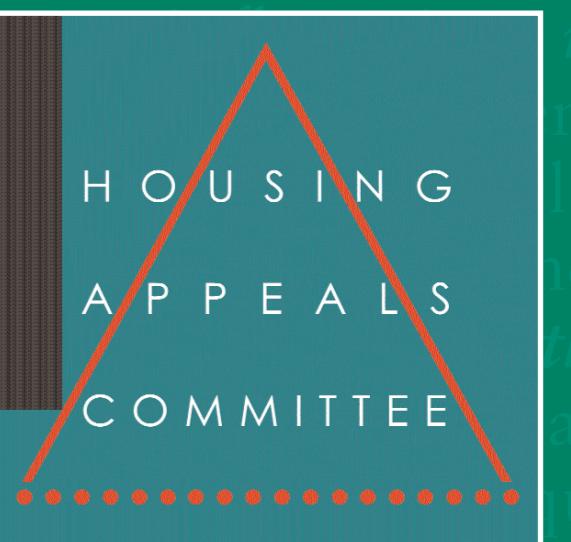


discussion at the HAC 10 year anniversary celebration.



*using Appeals Conference participants
around Australia & New Zealand*

The logo for the Housing Appeals Committee Annual Overview 2004/2005. It features a red triangle pointing upwards, containing the words "HOUSING APPEALS COMMITTEE" in white. Below the triangle is a horizontal dotted line.



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Introduction

The Housing Appeals Committee (HAC) has had a busy and exciting year in 2004/2005. We celebrated our ten-year anniversary in June with a very successful event highlighting a decade of commitment, achievement and excellence. In ten years the HAC has received over 4000 appeals about social housing decisions for NSW tenants and applicants. A special publication was issued to commemorate significant milestones and events and reflect on a decade of quality service to social housing clients and providers. (A copy of the 10 year publication can be obtained from the HAC Secretariat).



Lynden Esdaile
Executive Chairperson

In 2004/2005 the HAC continued its primary role of providing a fair, accessible and independent appeals service for NSW social housing clients. We have also made major contributions to policy review and development through comment provided to the Department of Housing (DoH) and to community housing agencies.

There have been some interesting statistical trends in the past year with changes in appealable issues and outcomes for clients.

Appeal Statistics 2004/2005

Appeals Received: The HAC received 537 appeals from clients across the state in 2004/2005. A total of 471 clients had their appeal heard by the Committee. In comparison to 2003/2004 there has been a slight decrease in the number of appeals received (583 last year). There are a number of external factors which may have influenced this reduction.

These factors include:

- The slightly improved vacancy rates and cost of private rental accommodation in metropolitan Sydney over the past year, giving low income households slightly better capacity to rent privately (and therefore fewer people in crisis seeking priority housing).
- Changes in the priority housing assessment and service delivery models in Department client service teams throughout the state. These changes have led to more detailed assessment at original application stage by staff specialising in priority housing and a higher level of resolution or alternative strategies for applicants and fewer appeals.

...The HAC's future is about balancing our achievements with the challenges of doing even better – being more accessible, being more influential, being more recognised by potential clients..."

Lynden Esdaile

Source of Appeals

Appeals Received by Housing Services Division	2004-2005	Percent
Central Sydney	216	41%
Greater Western Sydney	206	38%
Northern NSW	64	12%
Southern and Western NSW	34	6%
Community Housing	17	3%
Total appeals received	537	100%

These statistics show that 41% of all appeals to the HAC were from Central Sydney and 38% from the Greater Western Sydney Divisions of the DoH. This means that 79% of all DoH appeals were from Metropolitan Sydney. In 2003-2004 this proportion was 85%. The Sydney area has the greatest proportion of public housing stock and the greatest demand on allocation of scarce resources leading to more applications for assistance or services. There has however been an increase of 8% in regional appeals received compared to 2003/2004 with 18% of appeals originating from regional DoH appellants. This is expected to rise further as more regionally based clients become aware of the HAC.

In 2004/2005, 3% of appeals were from community housing clients. The HAC has identified a steady increase in community housing appellants in the past year. Only 1% of total appeals were from community housing appellants in 2003/2004. As this is a new appeal jurisdiction it is expected to be slower to develop and it is a smaller sector. The DoH manages approximately 129,000 tenancies across the state and 13,000 properties are managed by the community housing sector.

Achievements

HAC Appeal Results

This figure shows the result of appeals to the HAC over the past 2 years. It is interesting to note a change in the proportion of matters referred with a recommendation of a change of decision by the Housing Provider.

Appeal Results	2003-04		2004-05	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Declined (agreed with housing provider)	345	67.8%	246	52%
Recommended change of decision	131	25.7%	196	42%
Resolved/Withdrawn	30	5.9%	29	6%
TOTAL	509	100%	471	100%

During the past year 29 matters were adjourned for additional information from the client or further review of new information or circumstances by the housing provider. Following adjournments 59% of these matters resulted in a resolution of the appeal by the housing provider.

Final Outcome of HAC Recommendations 2004/2005

Cases referred for change of decision 2004/2005

Final Outcome	Number	Percent
Decision changed	186	95%
Decision not changed	10	5%
TOTAL	196	100%

This figure shows that in 95% of matters subject to recommendation to the housing provider there was a change of decision for the client. This is an increase on the previous years figure of 93.5%. A change of decision occurred in all community housing cases.

HAC Performance Data

Meeting Reports: We aim to provide a detailed meeting record to the appellant within 14 days of the hearing date. The overall average for completion of appeal meeting records was 12.8 days in 2004/2005.

Hearing Interviews: Face-to-face hearings were held for 57% of appellants, with the remaining appellants having their appeal interview via conference telephone. All clients are offered a face to face interview.

"... I know from the feedback from clients that they are very happy that there is an appeals process which ensures that they have a right to be heard if they are unhappy with a decision. The professionalism, thoroughness and high quality of the Committee's work is well known across the housing sector..."

Terry Barnes,
Director General,
Department of Housing

Cultural Diversity: 50% of the appeals to the HAC were from 'culturally and linguistically diverse' (CALD) clients. Of these:

- 42% were born in the Middle East or Gulf Region and speak an Arabic dialect.
- There has been an increase in appeals from clients with an Afghani, Iraqi and Iranian background which tends to reflect the housing difficulties of recent arrivals.
- Interpreters were used for 56% of CALD clients. The most common languages requested were (in order): Arabic, Turkish, Serbian, Dari, Farsi, Persian, Vietnamese, Bosnian, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish and Greek.

Family type: The trend of increasing appeals from older clients continues with a noticeable proportion being single people. In 2004/2005 there were 200 single appellants to the HAC and of these 40% were over the age of 55. 25% of all single appellants were residing in bedsitter style accommodation and seeking transfer to alternate accommodation, predominantly due to medical and harassment/nuisance issues.

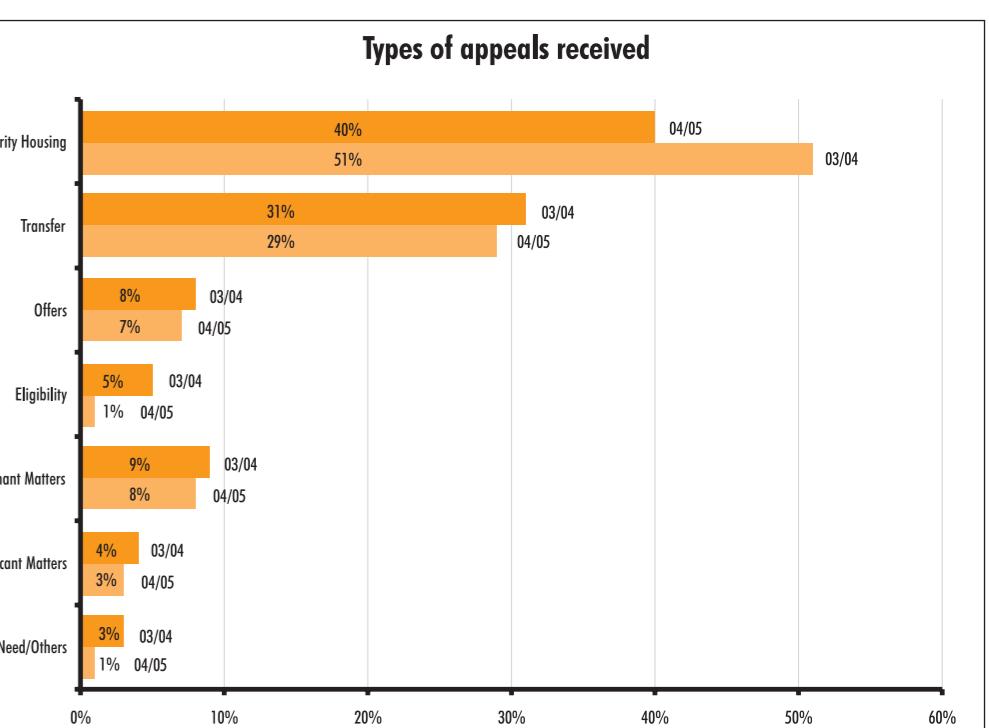


Housing Appeals Committee Secretariat staff
Left to right: Yasmina Kovacevic, Alberto Marino, Wilma Falcone, Jenny Rowe & Siniua Su'a.

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Achievements

Appeal Issue Trends



There has been a shift in the types of appeals received by the HAC in the last year. Priority Housing appeals, while still the largest group, have experienced a significant decline at 40% of all appeals in 2004/2005 compared to 51% in 2003/2004. Appeals on less common tenant and applicant matters (such as eligibility and subsidy) have increased over previous years. Transfer appeals have increased, continuing the growth trend of the last 3 years.

Achievements for 2004-2005

Ten Year Anniversary celebrations for the HAC

In June 2005 the HAC celebrated 10 years since it heard its first appeal in June 1995.

The HAC hosted a celebratory event with 200 guests attending from all housing sectors, tribunals and support agencies. The focus of the celebration was to share achievements and to also look to improved knowledge of appeal rights by all clients.



Housing Appeals Committee Members
Front row left to right: Jack Burns, Stamatia Stamatellis, Rebecca Gleeson, Angela Van Dyke, Kate Timbs & Jenny Ciantar. Back row left to right: Lynden Esdaile, Seth Merritt, Tacye Bowen, Raymond Brazil, David Dobell & Lynn Houlihan.

Absent: Peter Davidson, Beverley Simon, Jim Allen & Trevor Kapeen.

Inaugural Housing Appeals Agencies Conference Hosted by NSW

In June the HAC hosted an inaugural conference of Social Housing Appeals Agencies from Australia and New Zealand with every jurisdiction represented. This was an opportunity for appeals agencies to share information about their own appeals systems and to explore best practice issues.

Training in Good Decision Making Paying Dividends

During 2004/2005 the HAC delivered the 'Good Decision Making' course to 125 staff from the DoH and 35 staff from the community housing sector.

The participants gained a better understanding of the principles of procedural fairness, skills in good decision making and knowledge of the merits review model. The particular challenges of decision making in social housing is a key focus. The HAC has received very positive feedback from the participants and there is continued demand for more sessions across the state. We hope that the recent reduction in appeal numbers may be, in part, a result of this training.

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