

Tenant Accountability Policy Statement

Public Housing Reform

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Context

In March 2025, the NT Government set out a Public Housing Reform agenda to restore fairness, accountability, and safety to the public housing system. The reform agenda targets anti-social behaviour and rent debt, strengthening mechanisms to hold tenants to account.

In August 2025, the NT Government released the Reducing Crime Strategy, which outlines 26 strategic initiatives to deliver on five strategic priorities. One of those strategic initiatives is to improve tenant accountability in public housing.

This Policy Statement sets out the Government's clear position on tenant accountability, to be implemented by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development (DHLGCD).

Accountability

Public housing empowers many Territorians to live safe, stable, and productive lives. Most public housing tenants do the right thing, and benefit from the stability that public housing provides.

Empowering tenants to meet challenges and make the right choices means encouraging them to access the range of support services that are available from DHLGCD, the Department of Children and Families and a range of non-government partners.

Strengthening tenant accountability is about creating a fairer system – for the public housing tenants, for the broader community and for people still waiting for a home. It is about taking immediate action against anti-social behaviour and rent arrears. It also about protecting the longevity of the housing system that provides a home for Territorians.

Responsibilities

The opportunity provided by public housing comes with responsibility. Public housing tenants must:

- Look after the property
- Pay the rent
- Be good neighbours

Where needed, tenants are provided with support to meet these responsibilities.

Non-compliance with these responsibilities will not be tolerated. If there is serious or repeated non-compliance with these responsibilities, firm and swift action is taken.

Enforcement action

Public housing operates under clear, enforceable rules. Strong and timely enforcement action will be taken when a tenant does not meet their responsibilities and breaks these rules:

1. Look after the property

- Tenants are expected to maintain their properties in line with the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* and their lease agreement. This includes responsibilities to keep the premises clean, maintain outdoor areas, prevent rubbish build-up and avoiding unauthorised occupancy including camping or squatting.
- Frequent routine and risk-based inspections are conducted to detect damage early and prevent escalation.
- Where these responsibilities are not met, DHLGCD may issue a Notice to Remedy Breach. Repeated failures to meet these responsibilities will result in tenancy termination.
- Tenants are financially responsible for all intentional or negligent damage caused by themselves, household members, or visitors, and will be considered liable for the actions of anyone they allow onto the premises.
- If the damage is intentional, all repair costs, including labour and materials to fix damage, is charged back to the responsible tenant.
- If repayment is refused, compensation is pursued through the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NTCAT) under section 122(1)(a) of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* (RTA).
- Where a tenant is a victim of violence or coercion, those circumstances will be taken into account to ensure enforcement remains firm, proportionate and fair to victims.
- Obstruction of access will trigger use of statutory powers and enforcement action
 - Lawful entry will occur under section 72 of the RTA in cases of emergency or serious damage
 - Applications will be made to NTCAT for an order permitting access under sections 76, 77 or 77A of the RTA.

2. Pay the rent

- Clear rent compliance rules apply to all tenants, with prompt follow up action taken when arrears arise.
- Where rent arrears arise, Agreements to Pay (ATP) are negotiated on strict terms with clear legal consequences for default.
- If an ATP is breached, a formal Notice to Remedy Breach is issued under the RTA, giving the tenant an opportunity to fix the arrears.
- If the breach is not remedied within the required timeframe, action is taken to seek termination and eviction orders through the NTCAT.

3. Be good neighbours

Anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated. Tenants are accountable for their behaviour and the behaviour of their visitors.

- To provide a **secure environment**, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design measures are taken to strengthen visibility, access control, lighting and natural surveillance in crime affected areas to reduce opportunity for offending and support enforcement activity.
- Strengthened **frontline enforcement action** identifies and deals with anti-social behaviour:
 - Targeted Housing Behaviour Enforcement Drives in hotspot locations will deliver concentrated compliance and enforcement outcomes.
 - High visibility joint operations with the NT Police Force and partner agencies disrupt public drinking, suppress anti-social behaviour and pursue repeat offenders under public order, alcohol and trespass legislation.
 - Expanded frontline enforcement and intelligence sharing under the *Police Public Safety Officers Act 2025* will enable Police Public Safety Officers to operate as frontline responders to anti-social behaviour and support legal action.
 - Alcohol restricted premises powers under the *Liquor Act 2019* are systematically applied across high-risk tenancies and complexes, if required without tenant consent. This provides additional powers for frontline enforcement officers.
 - Trespass controls are applied to all public housing complexes, strengthening frontline powers to move on loiterers.
- Swift enforcement and eviction **action** is taken where there is serious or repeated anti-social behaviour. This includes a simpler and streamlined approach to progressing enforcement action that includes:
 - a strikes-based system with mandatory escalation, including a new zero-tolerance category for severe incidents and fast-tracked enforcement pathways to the NTCAT for high impact cases under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999*.
 - strike records follow tenants between properties to prevent repeat harm and system abuse.
 - no automatic expiry of strike records.
 - community impact and harm elevated as key enforcement considerations, including by strengthening how community impacts and victims' voices are considered.
 - application of the same enforceable standards to both tenant and visitor behaviour.

Strengthening legal settings

To reinforce tenant accountability, we are pursuing targeted amendments to the *Housing Act 1985* and the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* to:

- establish community safety and harm as key decision considerations; fast-track serious anti-social behaviour matters where conduct is causing significant and ongoing community harm, including through mandatory timeframes; and improve transparency and public confidence by publishing statistics on NTCAT housing matters.

Rewarding good tenants

Most public housing tenants do the right thing, and it is important that this is recognised. We will introduce reward mechanisms to acknowledge tenants who consistently meet their responsibilities, including paying rent on time, caring for their home and being considerate neighbours, with recognition tied to sustained positive conduct.

Acting on complaints

If you experience, witness or are affected by anti-social behaviour associated with public housing, you can report it and trigger action. Every report strengthens our ability to protect your neighbourhood, intervene early and hold offenders and disruptive tenants to account. The clearer and more detailed your information, the faster and more decisively we can investigate, verify and act.

How to report

- Phone through your concerns: you can report anti-social behaviour in or around public housing properties by calling the 24/7 housing complaints line on [1800 685 743](tel:1800685743)
- Report directly using our online form: [Online anti-social behaviour complaint form](#)

Your report drives enforcement, supports eviction action where required and helps restore safety and amenity for residents.