Amendments to Address Antisocial Behaviour in Public Housing

The Territory Government has today introduced amendments to the Housing Act which will allow for the introduction of Public Housing Safety Officers (PHSO) to patrol public housing residences.

Public and Affordable Housing Minister Chris Burns said the Bill, Housing and Other Acts Amendment Bill, will establish tools to better manage antisocial behaviour at public housing.

“We know the vast majority of public housing tenants are excellent,” Dr Burns said.

“But there are some tenants – and particularly visitors to public housing – who create issues which have an impact on residents and surrounding neighbours.”

An Exposure Draft was released in May which sought feedback on the proposed amendments including the proposed powers of the Public Housing Safety Officers (PHSOs).

Consideration of this consultation process has resulted in the removal of the provision that allowed for arrest, detain and frisk search powers for the PHSOs.

A Memorandum of Understanding will be established between Territory Housing and NT Police to establish strong working relationship between the PHSOs and Police.

“The PHSOs will be well equipped to deal with people causing problems and some of their powers will include banning people from public housing for up to 12 months, tipping out alcohol, seizing dangerous items and will have the capacity to act as witnesses in court,” Dr Burns said.

“They will undergo extensive training and be expected to have excellent communication skills and negotiation skills to work effectively with tenants, visitors, Territory Housing staff and Police.”

“PHSOs will be available to respond to antisocial behaviour around to clock, including after hours and on weekends.”

Dr Burns said there will be 15 PHSO patrolling the greater Darwin area, and five officers will be based in Alice Springs.

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