



Minister for Housing and Public Works

Ref: COM 08445-2014

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Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to Petitions 2348-14 and 2284-14 about the Temporary Absences policy of the Department of Housing and Public Works, received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly and tabled in the House on 27 November 2014.

Changes to the Temporary Absences policy for public housing tenants were implemented in February 2014. The policy drivers behind these changes include maximising the use of the public housing portfolio, minimising the risk of property damage, and balancing the needs of tenants and the needs of applicants on the Housing Register.

The changes to the Temporary Absences policy included:

- removing the automatic approval of absences up to three months, and shortening the time a property can be vacant because of a temporary absence to a maximum of four weeks in a calendar year
- requiring tenants to notify the department where their absence is more than seven consecutive days, but less than four weeks, regardless of the reason for the absence
- requiring tenants to seek the department's approval if they will be absent for any reason for more than four weeks in a calendar year
- requiring sole tenants to appoint an agent during an approved temporary absence.

For temporary absence requests greater than four weeks in a calendar year, approval is determined according to the circumstances of the particular request and on a case-by-case basis. However, longer absences are generally approved for circumstances such as the following:

- up to three months for incarceration (where there is a probable release date within three months or less)
- up to six months for health reasons, including hospitalisation or rehabilitation, being held on remand (if the person is convicted within this time the temporary absence ceases) or when undertaking study/work/training within Queensland
- on a case-by-case basis for domestic violence/child safety issues, family emergencies or other extraordinary circumstances.

The revised Temporary Absences policy is not intended to discriminate or to restrict the freedom of tenants to travel, visit relatives or friends, or provide care and support to their families. The department's visitor policy has not changed and tenants are still able to have family and friends visit them, but should let their local housing service centre know if the visitors are going to stay for longer than four weeks.

The newsletter sent to all public housing tenants on 25 June 2014, included information about the policy changes for temporary absences. Information is also available to tenants on the homes and housing franchise, and through a fact sheet on the department's website.

I hope this information answers your enquiry.

If I can be of help with other matters within my portfolio, please contact my office on (07) 3719 7270.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tim Mander', with a long, sweeping underline.

Tim Mander MP
Minister for Housing and Public Works