

Public Accountability Committee:

Government's Management of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Answers to questions on notice from the public hearing on 17 August 2020

Question 1: How much funding was provided for the Rent Choice Assist (COVID19 Response) product delivered by Department of Communities and Justice?

In late March the NSW Government committed \$34 million to prevent and respond to homelessness in response to COVID-19, including \$20 million to provide further assistance through the range of already available Rent Choice Assist products delivered by Department of Communities and Justice (Rent Choice Assist, Start Safely, and Rent Choice Youth) as well as a new Rent Choice product - Rent Choice Assist (Covid-19).

Rent Choice Assist (Covid-19)

Assistance provided: Rent Choice Assist (Covid-19) provides a rent subsidy for 6 months (can be extended to 12 months) to ensure the recipient is not in rental stress. The subsidy is calculated as the difference between a reasonable market rent and 25% of the tenant's current gross assessable household income (including 100% of their Commonwealth Rent Assistance entitlement, if applicable).

Eligibility: Eligibility is based on a 'low income' band which has a higher cut off than for social housing.

DCJ information provided further information about the product in their [client FAQs document](#).

It is not clear how much of the \$20 million was provided for applicants of Rent Choice Assist (Covid-19), separate from additional funding for the other existing Rent Choice Assist products. Further information regards subscription of the Rent Choice Assist (Covid-19) is required from Department of Communities and Justice to answer this.

Question 2: How long was Rent Choice Assist (COVID-19) available for?

The Rent Choice Assist (COVID-19) product was available (open) April through July 2020. Those who were successful in their expression of interest/application receive assistance for at least 6 months, with the possibility of extending this up to 12 months in certain circumstances. Tenants' Union of NSW is aware the Department of Communities and Justice and Minister Gareth Ward are currently considering whether further financial assistance for private renters impacted by COVID-19 is required, including consideration of whether Rent Choice Assist (Covid-19) could be made available again for eligible renters possibly on a more limited or targeted basis, with application again through expression of interest.