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Abstract: Managing Difficult Tenancies – A Continuum Framework

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In June 2004 the NSW Parliament passed amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act 1987, enabling provision for the Department of Housing to introduce *Acceptable Behaviour Agreements* in circumstances of persistent antisocial behaviour by public housing tenants.

The NSW Department of Housing has initiated the *Antisocial Behaviour Strategy*, which incorporates several projects designed to address antisocial behaviour at a number of levels. The key project involves the implementation of the legislative changes and other projects focus on strategies designed to improve the management of nuisance and annoyance.

This paper explores some of the experiences of the NSW Department of Housing in implementing these initiatives, highlighting work undertaken to strengthen cross-agency partnerships as a strategy to more effectively manage nuisance and annoyance.

Client service staff spend considerable time on complaints relating to the management of nuisance and annoyance and antisocial behaviour. In addition to being resource intensive, this work also raises questions about the role of social housing providers in respect of their asset management and human service functions. In this context the appropriate management of difficult tenancies contains some inherent tensions.

The paper will outline the nature of the legislation, the initiatives undertaken by the NSW Department of Housing in relation to antisocial behaviour. It will also identify some of the significant challenges facing housing providers in the context of managing such behaviour, and comment on some of the inherent dilemmas confronting such initiatives.

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