

The Kitchen Table

Newsletter of Women's Housing Company Ltd - August 2010



Welcome to the Women's Housing Company Newsletter

The Kitchen Table

Women's Housing Company

NSW Housing Pathways

Last newsletter we advised you about the Common Access System called Housing Pathways. The Housing Pathways system started at the end of April resulting in a big change to the ways that people apply for and are allocated social housing. At this stage, people can apply for Community Housing or Public Housing by submitting the Application for Housing Assistance at any Community Housing or Housing NSW office. Once assessed as eligible, applicants are added to the NSW Housing Register in order of their priority of housing need and may be made an offer of housing from any Housing Provider.

What does this mean for current tenants?

There will be ongoing gradual changes to WHC Procedures in line with Housing Pathways as well as from general reviews of current practice. We will keep you well informed as this happens. See inside this issue for some recent changes.

One significant impact is for current tenants whose needs have changed and who require **rehousing**. Currently, Housing Providers have the option of rehousing tenants internally however this will change in the future (most likely at some point this year). At the moment, if your housing needs change then you can apply for rehousing through WHC or for 'transfer' through Housing Pathways. If you apply for rehousing through WHC then you will be made an offer for housing *only* through WHC once a suitable property is available. If you apply for 'transfer' through Housing Pathways then you will be added to the NSW Housing Register and may be made an offer by any suitable Housing Provider. The benefit of applying for 'transfer' through Housing Pathways is that it will mean more options for the properties that may be offered (something to consider if you have specific needs or need a location that WHC does not have stock in) however it will mean that applicants cannot choose which Housing Provider makes offers to them. Please remember that at some point over the next year the WHC internal rehousing list will be moved to the common NSW Housing Register and offers may be made by any Housing Provider; we will inform any tenant that this affects prior to this happening.

AUGUST 2010 Inside this issue

NEWS

NSW Housing Pathways

CEO Report

Being A Good Tenant

Tenant Connect

Greetings From The Ops Manager

POLICY CHANGES

- applications

- rehousing

- rental bonds

- allocation zones

- pets

Women's Housing Company Ltd
level 5, 74-84 Foveaux St,
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Ph 02 9281 1764
Fax 02 9281 0148
reception@
womenshousingcompany.org

Linking the Women's Housing Community

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO WHC PROCEDURES

There are many changes that will be made internally in line with the introduction of Housing Pathways, due to the expected growth of WHC, and generally as WHC reviews and evaluates its current practices. These changes will be introduced gradually and we will keep you well informed through our Newsletters and other correspondence as required.

Please do not hesitate to call the office if you are unsure about any of these changes and how they might affect you.

UPCOMING PROCEDURE CHANGES

One change currently in process is the *Rebated Rent, Income Reviews and Market Rent Procedure*. Changes to this procedure will be to make processes around rent assessment easier, clearer and more accountable.

See the next newsletter for details.

What if you disagree with decisions?

If you disagree with any decisions made by WHC then the best action is to let us know. Your Housing Worker can give you information about appealing decisions made; this is usually by contacting the Operations Manager.



However, if you are unhappy with the outcome of an internal appeal then you can contact the Housing Appeals Committee (HAC) who may review the decision to determine if it is fair, correct and within policy.

HAC can be contacted on Freecall **1800 629 794** or more information can be found on their website www.hac.nsw.gov.au.

WHC strongly encourages tenants to contact the HAC with concerns about WHC decisions. WHC also regularly attends forums with HAC in order to review and improve our practices.

CHANGES TO APPLICATION FORMS

The new system means the WHC application form will no longer be used for General wait list applicants. We will continue to use the form for Social Housing Subsidy Program and Affordable Housing applicants ONLY.

CHANGES TO APPLICATION PROCESS & WAITLIST UPDATE PROCEDURE

Applications for housing will be made in line with the Housing Pathways procedures. Applicants for Social Housing will need to complete the Housing Pathways Application for Housing Assistance and submit it at any Community Housing or Housing NSW office. Applicants may be requested to submit 'supplement forms' and to attend an interview to ensure that Housing Pathways can best assess their housing needs. WHC will still only accept applications for single women who wish to live independently without children, partners or others.

CHANGES TO BOND POLICY 2.2.5

As with many other housing providers, WHC will be introducing Rental Bonds for all new tenants. Bond will be calculated at 4 weeks subsidised rent. WHC will lodge all bond payments with the Rental Bond Board and this amount may be claimed back by the tenant, minus any arrears, at the end of the tenancy.

CHANGES TO HOUSING OFFER LOCATIONS

WHC applicants previously nominated preferred Local Government Areas (LGA) for them to be offered housing in however, under Housing Pathways, offers for housing will now be made according to nominated 'Allocation Zones'. Allocation zones are set areas defined by Housing NSW which group together towns, suburbs or localities where social housing is available. An example of this is "GW2 Auburn/Granville" which includes: Auburn, Berala, Chester Hill, Granville, Guildford, Lidcombe, Merrylands, Regents Park, and Sefton. Applicants cannot select a specific suburb and may be offered housing in ANY of the suburbs listed for that Allocation Zone.

Applicants (including rehousing or 'transfer' applicants) must nominate a preferred Allocation Zone. Community Housing Applicants may indicate preference for more than one Allocation Zone during the interview/assessment process. More information regarding Allocation Zones is available on the Housing NSW website (<http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au>) or can be requested from the WHC office.

Industry Updates

CEO Column

Welcome to another edition of the WHC newsletter.

We are now half way through the year and can see the impact of growth on the community housing sector. Currently across NSW community housing organisations manage over 21,000 properties, within the next 12 months this will increase to 30,000. This is both an exciting and challenging time for community housing.

Growth is coming from 2 main sources – large scale property transfers from Housing NSW and Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan.

For Women's Housing Company growth is gradual but still vital. Through success of BlueCHP, the affordable housing development company established by five housing organisations including Women's Housing Company, we have obtained 73 new properties in the last 12 months. Whilst a percentage has been aimed at affordable housing with a higher rental income, many of the new properties are also for applicants on a lower income. This enables Women's Housing Company to maintain a balance in our housing portfolio and to continue to house those in most need.

Women's Housing Company has just made 24 new tenants very happy by acquiring through success of BlueCHP, a nation building economic stimulus plan property located in western Sydney. The property was specially designed for people with limited mobility and is a highly desirable property for our tenants.

Along with additional properties, Women's Housing Company must ensure there are appropriate resources to provide quality services to tenants and maintain business objectives.

Women's Housing Company is regulated by government and core business is monitored on a monthly and quarterly basis.

Community housing must maintain key performance indicators and be guided by legislation in many activities. This means we review and adjust practices regularly to ensure we maintain standards. This work is ongoing and critical for Women's Housing Company to

EXCITING WIN FOR WOMENS HOUSING COMPANY!!!

Community housing manages capital properties purchased by government with providers assuming all ownership responsibilities but not title to the properties. For many years we have worked towards aiming to have title of the properties.

This would mean being in a position to raise finance by borrowing money from banks, as we would have equity in order to acquire more properties for tenants.

Earlier in the year government announced a tender for eligible providers to commence a process to obtain title to a limited number of existing properties.

We are pleased to announce we were successful and in the next few months will receive ownership to 100 of our existing properties. This is a major victory for Women's Housing Company. The success will also bring challenges as we need to acquire additional housing. It also means we are in a position to redevelop any inappropriate or extremely old existing properties.

Being A Good Tenant

In order for you to have the best chance at an easy and enjoyable tenancy it is very important to consider your responsibilities as a tenant. How you act during your tenancy can impact your relationships with your neighbours and your landlord. It can also affect your future tenancy options.

The WHC Tenant Information Manual has these guidelines for being a good tenant. Make sure to:

- care for the premises;
- pay rent on time;
- report the need for any repairs or maintenance;
- get the landlord's approval before altering or modifying the premises;
- report and pay for any damage caused by you or your guests;
- not cause a nuisance;
- not interfere with the peace, comfort or privacy of neighbours;
- not use the premises for illegal purposes;
- give 21 days notice when you are moving out;
- leave the premises in the same condition as when you rented them, except for normal wear and tear.



Greetings from the Operations Manager

Heya all. My name is Skye McElvenny and I started with WHC as the new Operations Manager back in April (just days before the introduction of Housing Pathways - eep!). I would like to firstly thank you all for your patience during the gap in this position for the few months before I started and for the last few months as I have gradually settled into this new role.

So, I've come on board at a very interesting time! With all of the changes to the sector due to growth and Housing Pathways I'll certainly be kept busy for a while yet! Currently I'm focusing on getting up to date with WHC's history and current practices, smoothing the integration of Housing Pathways processes internally so that WHC can continue to provide the best services to our tenants (current and new), and reviewing, redrafting, finalising and then ensuring free access to WHC Policy and Procedures. I've also prioritised making sure that we are responsive to our various stakeholders including partnership agencies, regulatory bodies and *you*, the tenants. It's vital to me that I am available to you so please do not hesitate to get in touch with me as required either by mail (74-84 Foveaux St, Surry Hills, 2010) or by phone (02 9281 1764).

Can you read me?

Due to feedback about some difficulties reading the small print size in our Newsletters we have enlarged the font slightly. Please continue to give us feedback about the Newsletter or any other aspect of WHC services.



Would you like to contribute to this newsletter?

WHC are calling for tenants to contribute to the newsletter. If you have any suggestions for articles, interesting hints, or know of something happening in your local area and you would like to share this information with others, then please send it to us.

Remember that this column is partly your space and is a great opportunity for you to share with other tenants your ideas.

All tenants whose work is selected to be published will be presented with a voucher (\$50).

Submit entries via post to:

WHC Newsletter

74 – 84 Foveaux St , Surry Hills, NSW 2010

Tenant Connect

The Australian Red Cross provides a free 'check in' service for older tenants living in Social Housing called Housing NSW Tenant Connect.

How does it work?



For more information about eligibility and access to this program please call
1800 827 677

Newsletter Inserts

Rent Statement

Please check your rent statement and the entries of your rent payments against your own records.

At times mistakes are discovered either due to bank error, WHC entry error, or tenant error. We can only rectify such mistakes once we are aware of them, please tell us immediately if you believe a mistake has occurred.

The most recent rent statement always slightly overlaps with your previous statement to ensure that no payments are missed or that late entries and corrections can be viewed.

This information is available in following languages:

Arabic, Bosnian, Chinese, Spanish

If you wish to receive the information in any of these language please call the WHC office on 9281 1764 .