

# ***The Kitchen Table***

**Newsletter of Women's Housing Company Ltd - December 2010**



## **Welcome to the Women's Housing Company Newsletter**

### ***The Kitchen Table***

Women's Housing Company

## **PROPERTY CARE Repairs & Maintenance**

This issue of The Kitchen Table is all about the care of properties — your homes. In order to keep them in the best possible condition, both WHC and yourself, as the tenant, have certain responsibilities. In this edition of The Kitchen Table we will be covering the difference between urgent and non-urgent repairs and maintenance. We also want to highlight the difference between Women's Housing Company's obligations as the housing provider and your responsibilities as a tenant. We trust the mutual understanding will assist us to improve the delivery of maintenance and service to you and your home.

The WHC office will be closed on the Christmas and New Year Public Holidays. We will be open on the other days during the period but will have limited staff and no appointments will be made or non-urgent matters attended to.

Friday 24th December: OPEN  
Monday 27th December: CLOSED  
Tuesday 28th December: CLOSED  
Wednesday 29th December: OPEN (limited staff)  
Thursday 30th December: OPEN (limited staff)  
Friday 31st December: OPEN (limited staff)  
Monday 3rd January 2011: CLOSED  
Tuesday 4th January: OPEN



**We wish you a happy and safe holiday period!**

Felices fiestas | Joyeuses fêtes | Besinnliche Feiertage | Bones Navidaes | Sretan Božić | Zalig Kerstfeest | Häid Jõule | Nollaig Shona Dhuit | Mele Kalikimaka | Selamat Hari Natal | Gutpela Krismas Tru | Ia Manuia Le Kerisimasi | Yeni Yılınızı Kutlar | Sinifisela Ukhisimusi Omuhle | Kilisimasi Fiefia | Ia Ora I Te Noera |

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# FROM OUR CEO

As we approach the end of the year, Women's Housing Company reflects upon how we carry out our business. We have identified the need to look at certain issues in regards to property maintenance and repairs.

It is with this in mind that this edition of the newsletter has a focus on asset management items.

Because Women's Housing Company needs to regulate and account for the amount of money spent on repairs, it is essential that regular reviews are carried out. Women's Housing Company has a particular budget set for repairs and maintenance items and must report all amounts spent to the board and our funding body. We also have benchmarks which determine how much can be spent.

Over the coming months, staff will be testing new systems to see what works. This may mean that when you report a repair that is not urgent (as defined in the Residential Tenancy Act), you may need to wait until a contractor is visiting the property to have it fixed at the same time as other repairs are being attended to at the same block of units.

The relevant points of the Residential Tenancy Act, relating to urgent repairs, are listed in your lease, the Tenant Information Manual and this newsletter.

In the past Women's Housing Company has organised and paid for some repairs that the tenant is responsible for. This is being reviewed so that we can direct the funds more appropriately so that WHC can continue to provide outstanding service to our ever growing portfolio of properties, allowing us to assist single women to have affordable housing.

Whilst we wish for all of the positivity that the upcoming holiday season brings, as well as new hopes for the coming year, we must take a clear approach on both your and our responsibilities.

This is also in regards to passing on service calls to the tenant if a contractor has to attend to your home to make repairs and you are not at home.

We are researching some items that the Residential Tenancy Act is not clear on – such as changing light bulbs. Once the information is clear we will inform you of the protocol regarding this.

It is pleasing to note that many tenants take excellent care of their homes and many report issues that are essential to maintain the quality of the property.

What we are attempting is to improve the delivery of maintenance services to tenants.

When you ring the office to report a problem, it is important that you give as much detail as possible by trying to explain what you think is wrong or what caused the problem. By this we mean simple straightforward issues, we do not expect you to know complicated matters. This will assist staff to process a work order for the appropriate contractor to attend.

With any changes it takes time to sort through what will work and for all involved to adapt to the new procedures. Please be patient whilst we resolve what works best for both you and Women's Housing Company's accountability and good service delivery requirements.

Bobbie Townsend

## TENANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Our Tenant Questionnaire 2010 is included in the mail out with this newsletter. Your feedback is important to us.

**Please respond openly and honestly so that we can provide the best service to you! Thank you!**

## FREE HELP TO SAVE POWER

Up to 220,000 eligible households will be able to reduce their power use by up to 20% each year through the Home Power Savings Program.

The program, run by the NSW government Department of Climate Change and Water, includes a free energy assessment by an energy expert who will identify ways in which you can reduce your energy use around the home.

The energy expert also installs a free energy saving kit that includes a draught excluder, two door snakes, energy saving light globes and a stand-by saver power board. You will also receive a free personal action plan after your assessment which details other ways to reduce energy use.

For more information call **1300 662 416**

or visit; [www.savepower.nsw.gov.au/freehelp](http://www.savepower.nsw.gov.au/freehelp)

## DIGITAL READY

If you need help switching to digital TV, information and assistance is available!

The government has introduced the Digital Switchover Household Assistance Scheme that will, at no cost to eligible households, supply, install and demonstrate a set top box.

For more information call the **Digital Ready Information Line: 1800 20 10 13** or visit; [www.australia.gov.au/digitalready](http://www.australia.gov.au/digitalready)

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# REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

Women's Housing Company is committed to providing tenants safe and suitable housing. If we are responsible for repairs and maintenance we will aim to take action on them in a timely manner.

It is important to understand what Women's Housing Company can do and also what your obligations are, as well as the difference between urgent repairs and non urgent repairs.

"Women's Housing Company will take reasonable action to assist with repairs and maintenance ..."

## Urgent Repairs

Women's Housing Company operates in accordance with the Residential Tenancy Act 2010. Under the act *urgent repairs* are as follows:

- a) A burst water pipe
- b) An appliance, fitting or fixture that uses water or is used to supply water that is broken or not functioning properly, so that a substantial amount of water is being wasted.
- c) A blocked or broken lavatory system
- d) A serious roof leak
- e) A gas leak
- f) A dangerous electrical fault
- g) Flooding or serious flood damage
- h) Serious storm or fire damage
- i) A failure or breakdown of the gas, electricity or water supply to the residential premises
- j) A failure or breakdown of any essential service on the residential premises for hot water, cooking, heating, cooling or laundering.
- k) Any fault or damage that causes the residential premises to be unsafe or insecure.
- l) Any other damage prescribed by the regulations, but does not include work needed to repair premises not owned by the landlord or a person having superior title to the landlord.

Women's Housing Company will take reasonable action to assist with repairs and maintenance of the above listed items.

## Non-urgent Repairs

With non-urgent repairs Women's Housing Company aim to repair a number of items at the same time. This is a more economical way of dealing with maintenance on a limited budget. For this reason, rather than going to individual properties for one-off repairs we may wait until there are a few tenants at the complex who require a tradesperson so that we can send them for the day to attend to all the repairs.

Please keep a list so that at your annual inspection you can advise your housing worker and they can arrange for a handyman to visit your complex.

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## Contractors

When access has been arranged by you with a contractor and you are not home - any call out fee will now be charged to you. Likewise, if we send a letter advising of termite inspections or fire inspections and access cannot be gained and the contractor has to go back to your property, any additional call out fees will be charged to you. Therefore, if you cannot be home please arrange access with a neighbour or relative.

"it is great to see our tenants taking pride in the common area."

## Common Area

We would like to thank our tenants who take particular pride in the common area and attending to the additional care of our gardens. While we have gardeners at most complexes their time is limited due to budget constraints and it is great to see our tenants taking pride in the common area.

We have, however, had problems with inappropriate trees being planted that grow too large for the area or get into our sewer lines, gutters etc.

Please don't plant trees on the common area and if you would like some additional plants please advise us in writing and we can look at the property and try to allow some money in the next budget or talk to the local council about some appropriate plants for the area.

## Dealing with Pests in Your Home

Most people can relate to the surprise and shock of coming across pests in their homes. Do not ignore the presence of pests and hope it will disappear. Pests in your home are your responsibility, so deal with the issue immediately, before they multiply into a problem that you will be unable to handle.

### What are pests?

Pests are insects and vermin such as ants, spiders, cockroaches, millipedes, silverfish, rats and mice.

Even wildlife such as birds, snakes and possums can become pests if not handled.



### How do I prevent pests in my home?

A home that is regularly cleaned and tidy will assist in keeping pests under control.

You can minimise pests from becoming a problem by adhering to the following:

- Store your pantry items well sealed.
- Empty your inside rubbish bin regularly.
- Keep pets and their bedding clean; ensure they have appropriate toilet space and that their mess is disposed of regularly.

### How can I control an infestation of pests?

If there is a serious pest problem in your home, you must contact an exterminator or wildlife handler to deal with the issue. There are goods available at most supermarkets that you can use to control less serious pest issues. You can use traps or 'rid' items to capture or deter pests.

### Are there natural remedies I could try?

Yes, there are many alternative remedies for pest control. For **cockroaches**, create a 50/50 mix of granulated sugar and baking soda. Place it on a tray in their path. The roaches will eat this and within four days you will notice a reduction. Two weeks later, no roaches. This works because roaches have an acid stomach. They can't resist the sugar, and the baking soda mixes with the acid in their stomachs causing death. Also, because the roach is a cannibal and they eat their dead, the whole process cascades through the colony. If **ants** are troubling you, mix 1 tablespoon of white vinegar with a cup of water. Spray this around the house foundations to repel ants.

**IMPORTANT:** If you notice the presence of White Ants please contact Women's Housing Company immediately. Also, if you have large gaps in your home caused by foundation movement or construction issues then you are also advised to notify Women's Housing Company.

For more information please review the Women's Housing Company Website:

[www.womenshousingcompany.org.au](http://www.womenshousingcompany.org.au)

## Newsletter Insert

### 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 languages, please call the WHC office on 9281 1764 or email: [reception@womenshousingcompany.org](mailto:reception@womenshousingcompany.org)



**AGM 2010**

### Women's Housing Company AGM 2010

The Annual General Meeting for 2010 was a great success. Tenants and partners attended to hear the valuable contributions of the guest speakers; Di Fingelton (inset) and Janelle Goulding. Thanks to all who came along!