

# *The Kitchen Table*

Newsletter of Women's Housing Company Ltd - March 2010



## Welcome to the Women's Housing Company Newsletter

### *The Kitchen Table*

## Women's Housing Company NSW Housing Pathways

At the end of April the long awaited Common Access System will be introduced. Essentially most Community Housing providers and Housing NSW will now have access to **ONE** system for new tenants called NSW Housing Register. This is great news for WHC, as not only will it improve access by streamlining coordination of the entry process to housing, it will enable us to assist more women in need of housing.

For the new applicants it will mean simpler and fairer access to housing assistance, and reduced barriers to entry and maximize opportunities for housing through a single application.

This new system does however mean that WHC must change some internal processes to ensure we are aligned with the other providers. Several changes here at WHC will be regarding our Policies. As you know WHC has your best interests in mind during all interactions with you, however we will have a reduced say on where applicants are housed. These changes will be gradually implemented and we will be sure to advise you every step of the way.

### OFFICE CLOSURE

WHC office will now be closed on Tuesday morning from 10 - 11 am. This is in addition to being closed on Wednesday mornings. We open at 1.30pm on Wednesdays. Please keep this in mind as we have had many tenants visit during these hours, while we are working on crucial matters that must be carried out uninterrupted.

Our Office will be **closed** for the **EASTER** long weekend.

**Good Friday - 2 April**

**Easter Monday - 5 April**

### Office phone numbers

Due to a some internal changes we wish to remind you of our contact numbers. Reception remains the same on **9281 1764** - contact numbers for housing workers extension numbers are:

Judith - 313

Renee - 314

Juani - 315

Kristy - 316 (Kristy is now looking after Stephanie's portfolio as Nikki has returned from Maternity leave.)

Nikki - 317

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Home Care Services

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# Linking the Women's Housing Community

## ANNUAL SURVEY RESULTS

We greatly appreciate the 147 tenants who took the time to respond to our annual Questionnaire sent out in Dec 2009. By answering these questions and providing feedback to us we can ensure we are delivering the right type of service to you, and importantly identify where we can improve.

This information is filtered up to the Board members who use the results to analyse performance and to assess if changes need to be made in our processes and procedures.

Results were, as in past years, positive and many of you are happy with our services. More importantly 86% of you are 'generally happy' and 85% of you feel 'generally safe'. This is good news for us to hear. One important reminder, the questionnaire is used to assess many things, it is not where you should request works to be done on your property. If you have advised us that something at your home needs to be fixed in the comments section you still need to call us. The results are viewed by another team at WHC and do not go to Housing Workers or Asset Managers.



WHC wishes to send **congratulations** to Stephanie Pickstone and her family who welcomed a baby boy into the world on 13 March 2010. He weighed in at 4 kg (8.8 pounds). Both mum and baby are doing fine.

## Appointments at WHC Offices

Attending appointments **ON TIME**. It is very important that you attend a meeting at WHC office at the time it has been arranged. Lately tenants are arriving up to 3 hours late, and by then the Housing Worker has had to leave the office for another appointment. Please be on time or call to arrange a new appointment.

## Your Confidentiality and Privacy Act

We wish to advise all tenants about how we must legally respect your right to Privacy, and that we have internal processes to ensure that this happens. All files and information relating to you are kept confidential and held securely in our office. These files are locked overnight.

We are required by law to provide some information to Centrelink, the police or the local courts, however we would notify you where possible before this occurs. From time to time we need to pass on contact information to our contractors to arrange for works to be carried out. They must also adhere to the Privacy Act.

# Industry Updates

## CEO Column

The start of this year has been extremely busy for staff at Women's Housing Company. A number of new programs and policy positions implemented by the Federal government has resulted in additional properties and internal adjustments. The most pressing commences on 27 April 2010.

A new common waiting list (called Housing Pathways) for all applicants for public housing and community housing will be ready for implementation. Overall the common waiting list, called Pathways, will see all applicants requiring subsidised housing have their application (whether it's for community housing or Public housing) assessed at any office, whether community housing or Housing NSW. Applicants will have a choice of being housed by either community housing or public housing.

Applicants will not be able to state they want a specific community housing provider. Alongside this a number of new forms and policy changes are required, as community housing providers and public housing have a number of different policy areas.

The new system is designed to make it easier for applicants and thus internal policy will be adapted to maintain the guiding principles of the new system.

Some examples of policy changes under consideration are:

- Women's Housing currently has a **3 offer policy** whilst Housing NSW has **2 offer policy**
- Women's Housing currently lists properties by **Local Government Areas** with Housing NSW having large **Allocation Zones**.
- Rehousing/ transfers - to date existing tenants have a choice of staying with their current provider as it's an internal matter. However if tenants want to be housed by another community housing provider or public housing then they can choose, but they cannot name a specific community housing provider. Staff are receiving information as it arrives and training will commence at the end of March whereby further information will be available.

In order to fully inform tenants on how changes in policy and implementation of Pathways will affect both Women's Housing Company and tenants, a special edition of the Newsletter will be issued in **May**.

## CHANGE TO WHC Re-housing Policy Policy 2.3.1 has an added paragraph

Tenants in leasehold properties whose actions result in Women's Housing Company receiving a termination notice from our Real Estate Agent will not be rehoused, particularly if there is a history of ongoing neighbours disputes or complaints. Exceptions to this rule will be considered if the tenant can demonstrate that the Real Estate Agent has acted in a discriminatory or unfair manner.

I live in a tall block of units, eight storey's high, and everybody seems to take the lift. It is good that we have a lift – can you imagine having to lug your furniture up (or down) eight flights of stairs? On the days that I go to Paddy's market, I'm glad I don't have to tote my trolley of fruit and vegetables up the stairwell. And of course, there are the elderly, the disable and parents with prams, who all need to use a lift to get out and about.

But if you're not in one of those categories, you do have a choice. When I first moved in, I decided to always use the stairs, because I need the exercise. My muscles get a little workout, and I can even get my heart pumping if I pick up the pace.

There are other reasons it makes sense to avoid the lift. On every floor of my block, there's a flat which shares a wall with the lift well. It's nice that every time I take the stairs, I've saved those people from another noisy episode of the lift rumbling past on its way up – and then down. And I've also saved the whole building some power consumption. You don't press any buttons when you take the stairs, your legs are the machinery. In these days of global warming and being mindful of energy consumption, it's good to save power when you can. Even if you need to turn on the lights when you're stair climbing, that's a lot less electricity than a trip in the lift consumes.

I've come to love my trips up and down the stairs. It's quiet, and I often get a lot of thinking done – it's a sort of meditation. It's amazing how often I find the solution to something which has been bothering me, just by taking a walk down the stairs.

There are other nice moments too. When I go down the stairs at the start of the day the windows show me the morning light and what the weathers like. The lift isn't like that, it's an enclosed box with no natural light or air. Give me the sunlight over that airless 'box' any time!

You may find that you can't climb up the stairs. If that's the case, you can start off by only using them for the journey down, which is often easier. It's basically about finding ways to use your legs, rather than the electricity grid.

Your body, your neighbours and the environment will thank you for it.

(Thanks Avril, your voucher is in the post!)

### **DEALING WITH YOUR NEIGHBOURS**

There are certain things that WHC cannot respond to, in these instances you need to call the Police. This includes unreasonable behaviour like violent or illegal activities. WHC cannot respond to illegal activities, this is the responsibility of the police. If there is excessive loud noise, between midnight and 8 am, you should call the Police.

**Accepting others** - remember that from time to time you will hear your neighbours.

**Responsibility** - you should try not to disturb others, try and be a good neighbour.

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Shockingly 1 in 5 women are affected by Domestic Violence. If you see or hear something that is of concern, please call the Police immediately.

Tolerance of violence against women is not acceptable. NSW Police advise that domestic violence is the most underreported of crimes, and underlying behavioural traits of power and control are then employed as tactics to commit the crime.

New South Wales law gives police and the courts the power to provide victims with immediate protection, at any time, day or night. If you feel threatened or are worried about someone's safety call Triple Zero (000).

## **INFO CORNER**

The Older Women's Network in NSW has several Wellness centres that cater for older women being able to get active in a range of different activities including gentle exercise, Tai Chi, massage, aqua exercise, social games, singing, craft, discussion group just to name a few.

For more information in the following areas please call:

Bankstown (Greek) Centre	9247 7046
Illawarra Wellness Program	9247 7046
Northside Wellness Centre	9247 7046
Penrith Wellness Program	9247 7046
Sutherland Wellness Centre	9247 7046

Or email at - [info@ownnsw.org.au](mailto:info@ownnsw.org.au)

### **HARMONY DAY - 21 MARCH**

Managed by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), Harmony Day celebrates the cohesive and inclusive nature of our nation and promotes the benefits of cultural diversity. The continuing message of Harmony Day is '**Everyone Belongs**'. It's about community participation, inclusiveness, respect and a sense of belonging for everyone. Check your local papers for events in your area.

**Bankstown will be holding an event on March 20 at Carysfield Park Bass Hill to celebrate Harmony Day**

**Parramatta Farmers markets** - Every Saturday in the Church Street Mall. Fresh produce and art and craft stalls  
- Check it out -

### **Seniors Week - 21 March - 28 March**

Look at local council websites and papers for events near you.

### **- EASTER -**

Easter commemorates the resurrection (return to life) of Jesus Christ following his death by crucifixion. It is the most significant event of the Christian calendar.

Check your local paper for celebrations and church services.

### **Sydney Royal Easter Show**

The Annual Royal Easter Show is on from April 1 - 14 at Homebush.



## Message - Asset Management Team

We have received calls regarding the roof insulation program. WHC has contacted Unicorn Builders and Abacus who carried out the installation of insulation. Both companies can confirm that all properties insulated which had spotlights present in the roof spaces had either;

- 'Safety spacers' – These are dome shaped plastic protectors that are placed over the spotlight to prevent the insulation coming into contact with the light;  
Or

- 200mm spaces cut out around the spotlight to ensure the insulation and spotlight does not come into contact. WHC uses safe and reputable companies who have provided all required safety certification before work was commenced.

## Message from the Housing Team

### Health & Safety for the Housing workers

It is important for the safety of our workers that they can visit a safe and healthy environment. While staff are visiting you, if you could try not to smoke while the inspection or the matter is being addressed, it would be greatly appreciated. Also it is important that there are no obstacles in the way of an inspection



Thanking you!

Your housing team.

**Important information** for Tenants who pay rent at Commonwealth Bank using **Rental books**. We have had a few instances where the tellers are not using the correct Agent number. **Please check** your **Rental Statement** to ensure your rental book payments match what is on your statement.

What is an **URGENT REPAIR**,  
what is a **NON-URGENT REPAIR**?

If you call with an **URGENT** repair, we will process a work order immediately and someone will be in contact with you usually within 24 hours. This is for repairs like - a broken hot water system, gas leak, blocked toilet, flooding and major electrical issues.

All other repairs are considered **NON-URGENT** and can take 28 days or more to fix. Further delays may be caused by needing to collect 3 quotes from different contractors.

### 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

## Community Development

Considering the needs and request of our elderly tenants, Women's Housing Company got in contact with My Home Living Care an organisation that provides a range of services in Personal Care, Transportation, Respite Care, Domestic Care and light maintenance.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> January Women's Housing Company and Maree from My Home Living Care hosted a BBQ / Information session with tenants over 55 at Rydalmere.

The day started off with all of the tenants being able to get together and catch up with their neighbours. The tenants then were able to enjoy the BBQ, salads, fruit and drinks provided by Women's Housing Company and MY Home Living Care. While the tenants were enjoying the lunch Maree from My Home Living Care introduced herself and the rest of the team and explained to the tenants who they were, and the services they provide. My Home Living Care also advised the tenants that they are currently seeking funding from the government so they will be able to provide subsidies to their clients, meaning the services they provide will be cheaper. The tenants were able to ask questions about their specific needs and situations and receive answers and advice.

After speaking with Maree, the tenants decided to have an impromptu block meeting as the entire block were together and had a Women's Housing Company staff member there to answer any questions. Tenants were able to voice any concerns they may have had. This also gave the tenants a chance to report any maintenance issues that they were having and discuss even general things that they wanted answers to.

All of the tenants had a great day and found it helpful and informative as well as being a nice and relaxing day. My Home Living Care enjoyed the day immensely and have expressed their interest in being able to be involved with another event.

Women's Housing Company looks forward to being able to organise more of these events. If any tenants have some ideas or would like something in your area please feel free to call Renee de Villiers at Women's Housing Company on 9281 1764.

## 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 .