

The Kitchen Table

Newsletter of Women's Housing Company Ltd - September 2008



Welcome to the Women's Housing Company Newsletter

This edition of **The Kitchen Table** is written in the spirit of **sharing** stories and information.

Women's Housing Company is very aware that there is a wealth of knowledge and experience amongst our tenants. We hope to encourage you to share these with the WHC community for inspiration, insight and encouragement.

At the same time WHC as an organisation has access to information that may be useful to tenants in your daily lives, the **Kitchen Table** allows us to disseminate such information to you.

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Introducing new Staff at Women's Housing Company

WELCOME



My Name is **Teresa Staal**.

I joined WHC on the 2nd May 2008 in the position of Financial Assistant. My background is working in various Small Business as a Bookkeeper and Accounts Clerk.

I consider myself as a people's person always ready to help. I am glad to be part of a great team like WHC Finance

My name is **Daad Issa**.

I have joined WHC three month ago in the position of a part-time receptionist.

My professional background is a language teacher. I speak Arabic and French. I hope that I will be a good help when you need it.

I consider myself as a friendly, honest and caring person. And I am looking forward to meeting you over time.



WINNER—short story competition

Seek and Ye Shall Find — by Kellie

Many years I have been a journalist. My stories are practical; opinions, feelings and thoughts my own. Emotion contained until expression, circulated within a domain of interaction with friends and colleagues, provides relief. Granted this creates intimacy, I am personally rewarded by expression while I gain understanding of views and concerns of those I am in close contact with.

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LINKS Linking the Women's Housing Community

This section will give you as the tenants an opportunity to share information with other tenants. The information we would like to publish regards knowledge you have about services, organisations, and activities which could be beneficial for other tenants with a view to improve their lives emotionally, socially and

WINNER ... continued

Yet, I am often left uninspired to report. Today my leaf has turned. My risk came via curiosity; how could I keep a writing career alive? I wonder how people in mainstream society and those dwellers on fringes overcome such stagnations? I need to find out; I decided to explore.

I began at city mall. I travel to Ashfield—I ride the ferry to Manly. Mt Druitt beckons me—I am alive. My trusty Gregorys guides me; Louise Hay practically lead me; at random I opened pages, pointed my finger.

This is the perspective I have found. Everyday people strive for exception. All voices become worthy when beauty motivates us to seek. Reflected in our eyes, a simple sunset carries us home, the last light of day stills us.

Pleasantries with bus drivers keep faces smiling. We say hello to acknowledge each other's existence. Asian grocers at Paddy's Market banter, their laughter carries the scent of apples woven between us. Young children chase leaves caught in an autumn wind, colours move the sunlight of their hair.

Homeless people randomly smile at shadows, at us as we walk by. Their faces emanate the depth of it being returned. I say "excuse me", when I trip over that woman's shopping on the street, she replies "No matter love, this is city life".

I assent with a cursory nod and continue on my way. I sit at my desk, after hours are well and truly into the night. Work mates deliver deadlines. My editor asks what this is all about, my smile revealing more than my words could possibly say.

I explain recent events and the intention of the motive they seek; I am to explore creative expression by writing a book. The content is yet to be revealed, yet the answer to that lay within and is manifested by the journey I have begun. The practical nature of the exercise begins now.

I log onto 'Word' my font 'Times New Roman', my thoughts drift again to what I know—my first word is *Hope*.

2nd WINNER—short story competition

Willara's Journey — by Lenore

The land she grew up in was a remote dust bowl with the most appalling conditions. Her family were the Bungaroo people and she was a proud member of this indigenous clan.

As she packed her bags she knew she had to leave but deep inside her she was full of hope.



Her name is Willara, a beautiful doe eyed girl of just 17 years. She was wise beyond her years and had been a great comfort to her Nan who raised her and her sisters. Willara's mother had been a victim of violence and had died at a similar age leaving two babies behind. Nan had struggled to cope but had installed in both grandchildren honesty, hard work and respect.

Now it was time to leave all this behind and look for a chance to become a nurse in the big city. Aunty Louina had written and said that there were wonderful opportunities, chances to learn a few years down the track and would be a great help to Willara's community.

As Willara walked down the rough road toward the distant town the image of her acquired skills helping her people played over and over in her mind. She thought of Nan's tears and her stomach knotted. But she pushed on until she saw the train station in the distance.

Settling comfortably into her seat, Willara kicked off her shoes and unwrapped her sandwich that Nan had lovingly made for her. It had been a long walk, but now she was here and as the train lunched forward, Willara looked out the window to see the changing scenery on her journey of *hope*.

The Recipes of Community Development on the "Kitchen Table"

Hello again and welcome to the spring edition newsletter of *The Kitchen Table*.

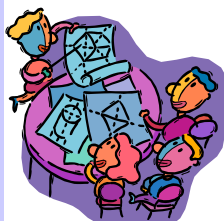
Thank you to all the tenants that have taken part in the "short stories" competition.

WHC is pleased to publish the winner and the second winner.

We are delighted for the contributions sent and for the time and effort that some of the tenants have taken in sharing their thoughts, feelings and ideas.

Thank you very much for the beginning of a 'long line' of participation, creativity and input.

Stay tuned for future opportunities to keep stimulating the participation and to share the views of WHC tenants.



Another appreciation to all of the tenants who participated in our first geographical tenant meeting. Tenants living in the broader Inner West of Sydney were invited to get together for a services information session.

The responses from our tenants were overwhelmingly positive with great suggestions for improvement especially as it relates to the topics for discussion. We will take these suggestions on board and are looking forward to prepare our next geographical tenant meeting which will be held in Liverpool; look out for invitations in your mail before the end of the year.

At the time of writing we are in the process of making the last preparations for our excursion to the Art Gallery of NSW as part of our recreational / social tenant participation activities. We will report back in the next

The Kitchen Table



The WHC 'recipe' for this quarterly newsletter also has the aim to promote our annual activity. Last year we have received a very positive feedback from the tenants who participated in the making of the WHC Calendar.

This experience enabled tenants to be involved in and share amongst other tenants a common objective; this was very encouraging, not only for the tenants who participated in this activity but to the whole organisation. As a community housing provider, we are always trying to promote common activities amongst our tenants to encourage you in taking 'ownership' for your environment. This has been recognised as a fundamental principle in building communities; active participation to obtain a healthy, participative community where we all will enjoy the benefits.



WHC wishes to encourage and involve you again in participating in the making of the 2009 Calendar.

The process for this activity will be following these steps:

- Tenants are requested to send in Expression Of Interest slip, enclosed with this newsletter, to begin the process of organising the number of tenants wishing to get involved.
- WHC will contact you to organise a meeting to discuss the theme for the Calendar and to listen to your ideas.
- Distribution of the cameras to take the photos.
- Launch of the "WHC Calendar 2009" and distribution among tenants.

WHC is aware that due to different life circumstances and commitments; we can not expect all tenants to get involved in the various activities on offer. Nonetheless we will keep building opportunities to provide a space to give you a chance to voice your opinion and to influence future decisions regarding your housing needs and well being.

We are optimistic that providing necessary support and resources we can ensure the involvement of our tenants that have chosen to play a more active role in their involvement and in the future direction of community housing.

I really encourage you to send in the form to participate in the calendar to make this "2009 Calendar" a successful story of participation, to keep building the foundations for a participative practice in service delivery. Take care, Graciela

Industry updates

CEO Column

As reported in previous newsletters, the housing sector is going through substantial change across Australia.

Recently the Federal government announced it would aim to increase new housing by 50,000 units by offering incentives, with enormous interest in community housing participating in development and playing a new role in the delivery of housing.

The successful growth provider BlueCHP, of which Women's Housing Company is an active member, has submitted a proposal to gain access to the incentives aiming to provide much needed new housing.

Women's Housing Company will benefit if the proposal is successful and further information will be published later. The newly established development company, BlueCHP has recently obtained funds to procure 40 new properties. Women's Housing Company will obtain 8 new properties located in Bankstown. These properties are to be used for affordable housing and aimed at women with slightly higher incomes and trapped in the increasingly difficult and expensive private rental market.

Women's Housing Company already operates a limited number of similar units which are very successful.

There will be other opportunities for increasing the number of properties and thus number of women we can house, but at this stage details are not known.

This makes it difficult to operate as on one hand there is much talk about expansion but progression is slow. It is essential that Women's Housing Company participates in new opportunities as recent data shows that women are the most vulnerable to housing crisis.

Of people who receive the Aged Pension 18.6% are single people living in the private rental market with escalating rents making life very tough.

Only 8.8% of couples on pensions live in private rental accommodation.

Women comprise more than 66% of public housing tenants which demonstrate limited income is a primary factor in being able access affordable housing.

Planning is commencing for the next Annual General Meeting which will be held at the end of November, details will be provided closer to the date.

Finally, I would like to thank all tenants for their understanding in the matter of the new rent policy. Women's Housing Company understands many of you are on limited incomes and any extra demand on your expenses is difficult for you.

Bobbie Townsend, CEO

Changes to Rent Policy—a reminder

Tenants currently in receipt of an income support payment from Centrelink are likely to be affected by the changes to the rent Calculation in regards to rent assistance as per special edition Newsletter from July 2008.

This is just a reminder to note that Women's Housing Company will conduct the next scheduled income review in October/November. The changes for the majority of tenants will come into effect at this point.

Do You.... like to have fun?

Do you sing in the shower? Do you sometimes dance to music on the radio? Do you remember the old songs (or may be the tunes)? Do you like to hear people laugh?

Do you love
Do you enjoy
a piano?.....



music?
singing around

If you answer
the above
likely you are a
member of the
Older Women's
Network Theatre Group !!!

"yes" to any of
questions, it's
missing
famous

Come along on a Tuesday and watch us rehearse at Mott Hall (*at the foot of Observatory Hill in the Rocks*).

No audition necessary. We'll answer all your questions. Even give you a cuppa tea.

First step to fun please ring **Jo Allon 9520 2854** (copied from material of the Older Women's Network Theatre Group)

Water consciousness — Water Meters

Checking for leaks

Did you know that just one dripping tap can waste more than 2,000 litres a month?

When you consider this, it's easy to see why regularly checking for leaks and repairing them makes such good sense. And the great news is it's easy to check for leaks using your water meter.



How do I check for leaks using my water meter?

Before you go to bed, check your water meter reading and write it down somewhere safe. You'll also need to make sure no-one in your household uses any water during the night. The following morning, before anyone starts using water, go and check your meter again.

Write this new figure down next to the figure from the night before and compare them. If the morning figure is higher, you have a water leak that needs to be traced and fixed.

If you currently do not get charged for water it probably means that your unit does not have a separate water meter.

In some cases, water meters are locked away, if this is the case and you would like to check your water meter please talk to your housing worker about options.

Handy Hints

from the Asset Management Team

The Asset Team would like to advise that it has now employed a contractor to clean the gutters on all of our capital properties. Annually, some properties with a lot of trees close to the properties will be cleaned twice a year.

This has started in August and will continue throughout the next few months.

We have also enclosed a home fire safety brochure from the Fire Brigade please take time to read it and take note of the helpful advise. Hopefully we are coming into the warmer weather and we put all our heaters away and enjoy the sunshine!

Kind regards
Mardi and Donna

Message from the Finance Team

Paying of Water bills

Could all tenants please be reminded that when you receive debit notes attached with a copy of Sydney Water Bill from Women's Housing Company, ensure that you pay Women's Housing Company using your deposit book, **DO NOT** pay Sydney Water. Also please pay the water usage separately from your rent so that we do not assume that the extra amount is to go into your rent account.

Thanks & Regards, Teresa

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.

Fire Safety Brochure

Please find brochure enclosed

Expression of Interest—WHC Calendar 2009

Please find EoI enclosed, return date: 30/9/08