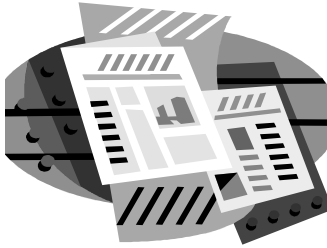


The Kitchen Table

Newsletter of Women's Housing Company Ltd - June 2011



MY STORY— A PROJECT FOR ALL



My Story will take submissions to this newsletter which is sent to all WHC tenants.



See My Story contributions in the annual report; a publication that reflects the diversity of WHC tenants.



Words and images from My Story will be used to create a 2012 calendar for all WHC tenants.

My Story is a free and voluntary tenant participation project developed from tenant feedback on past tenant activities.

The project is designed to allow you to be involved with Women's Housing Company through sharing your story. We believe that all of our tenants have inspirational stories, such as overcoming adversities, making contributions to the community and other achievements that are worthy of sharing.

You are invited to tell us *your story*, which we would like to share with other tenants, through publishing it in the Kitchen Table (this quarterly newsletter) and in the Women's Housing Company Annual Report and through creating a Women's Housing Company Calendar for 2012.

You are encouraged to submit photos of yourself partaking in an activity that reflects the story you are sharing. We have a number of disposable cameras, with flash, that we can provide to you. When returned, the images from them will be transferred into a digital format. This will be at no cost to you.



Please contact the Tenant Participation Worker if you would like to take part.

There are many ways you can be involved and the Tenant Participation Worker will meet with you to discuss your options.

Likewise, if you have an idea for tenant participation, we would love to hear about it-or if you are not sure what tenant participation is, you can contact us to chat about that too!

Finally, a word on privacy and confidentiality - we understand that people's circumstances change so, if you do take part, your story will not be repeated in any materials beyond 2012.

**Prize and contact details for the Tenant Participation Worker on back page.*

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FROM OUR CEO

Bobbie Townsend

We are already half way through the year and the office is settling down with a number of new staff. The organisation benefits enormously when change occurs as each person brings new skills and a variety of experiences with them.

Women's Housing Company now has 16 staff that carries out the many functions associated with providing housing management activities for over 700 units of housing.

We have a senior management team responsible for overseeing specific areas of work within the organisation. Above this sits a highly skilled and experienced board of directors who set the strategic directions, monitor key business activities and provide overall leadership.

Also Women's Housing Company must demonstrate compliance against requirements set out in the Housing Regulation under the Housing Act (NSW). To maintain compliance annual scrutiny of our key business activities and how we apply policies is checked to ensure we operate within guidelines and our own policies.

Women's Housing Company has an obligation to provide transparency and consistency in all the services we deliver.

We are working constantly to ensure policy and procedures are applied fairly to all tenants regardless of circumstances and experiences.

Your concerns and complaints are an essential part of service monitoring - as we can look at our procedures and rectify them if they are not working in the way they should. Often you may not be given the outcome you anticipate but we make sure we have looked into all information provided and then assess against our policies.

This edition also highlights our next tenant participation project My Story. Based upon meeting numerous tenants over the years you all have a lifetime of experiences and stories.

Many of you have stimulating stories of growing up in other cultures, working in a range of jobs and interesting careers, bringing up family, struggling to survive in war affected countries and arriving in Australia to start over again. Each of these stories is part of your history and may demonstrate joy, hardship and above all strength.

We want you to tell your stories to promote the diversity and commonality you all share as women; and as tenants of Women's Housing Company.

ANNOUNCEMENT: WHC will be having a quarterly draw for tenants who have no arrears (i.e., have paid rent 2 weeks in advance as per the lease agreement). Tenants will have the chance to win one of two \$100 gift vouchers. Winners will be contacted directly & (first) names announced in the Kitchen Table.

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 languages, please call the WHC office on 9281 1764 or email: reception@womenshousingcompany.org

WELCOME

Women's Housing Company wishes a very warm welcome to the following staff;

Elizabeth Frangieh – Housing Worker Maternity Cover (covering Nikki's leave),

Ana-Maria Nieto – Housing Worker Maternity Cover (covering Renee's leave) and

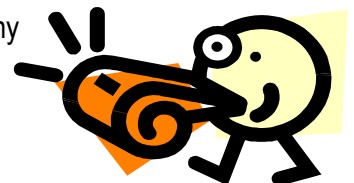
Amanda Kevric – Access & Allocation Worker.

WHC congratulates Nikki and her entire family on the safe arrival of a baby girl.

A RIGHT TO BE HEARD

We want to provide the best service possible and we like to hear from you. You have the right to complain and your comments will never be held against you. But, complaints and comments must be in writing so that we can take action and monitor that action. If you have any issues around writing a formal complaint there are services that can help such as Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service. For details on contacts in your area go to; www.tenants.org.au. You can also call Community Legal Centres NSW on; (02) 9212 7333 or go to www.clcnsw.org.au. Alternatively, WHC is happy to try to assist in referring you to a local service, just contact reception for details and please send any complaints in writing to;

Women's Housing Company
Level 5
74-84 Foveaux Street
Surry Hills
NSW, 2010



FINANCE FACTS

Water Usage

In accordance with the Residential Tenancy Agreement, Women's Housing Company (WHC) charges water usage to tenants who have separate water meters in their units. This charge is based on water consumption as recorded in the Sydney Water bills which are received by WHC.

WHC pays water bills received from Sydney Water and requests reimbursement from tenants by issuing water debit notes. These debit notes will typically be accompanied by a copy of the water bill from Sydney Water for your reference. Tenants are requested to reimburse WHC (rather than Sydney Water) for the amount stated in the debit note.

If you are one of the tenants who has an obligation to pay for water usage, Women's Housing Company encourages you to check your water meter regularly and compare your reading with Sydney Water's reading so that any unusual charges can be immediately actioned.

If you identify any unusual water consumption charges you need to let us know as early as possible.

Making Payments

When you make payments to WHC, you need to quote your Agent Number or your name so that our finance team are able to allocate the payments to your account. If you make payments through the bank you need to ensure you use your deposit book which has your agent number on it. If you make payments via internet banking/electronic fund transfer you need put your agent number as reference. Please only use your deposit book for your own payments. If paying on behalf of your neighbour, friend or family member – ensure you use their payment book so that the funds are allocated to the correct account.

Payments should be made separately if you are paying rent and non-rent at the same time. This will ensure that our finance team will not assume the additional deposit relates to rent payments.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties, you can also make payment arrangements for any non-rent account with WHC by paying installments. Please ring your housing worker to make the arrangement.

Please be aware that WHC does not accept cash or personal cheques.

From time to time, WHC receives payments with the wrong agent number or no agent number. If you provide the wrong agent number, or no agent number and no name, the payments can not be allocated to your account. When this occurs the finance team have to trace the payments with the bank. Normally, a fee is charged for tracing payments by the bank. This results in an increased cost to WHC and WHC may pass this costs on to the relevant tenant.

Rental Bond

WHC has updated the tenant rental bond policy. From 1 July 2010 a rental bond equivalent to four (4) weeks subsidized rent will be charged to all new tenants, including tenants who are being rehoused.

The rental bond needs to be paid at the time of signing of the lease agreement. If you can't pay the full amount at the time of signing the lease agreement you can make arrangements with your housing worker to make payment by installments. Payment can be made via a maximum of three installments including the first payment at the time of signing the lease agreement. The remaining two installments need to be paid within one month after you sign the lease agreement.

The bond can be refunded to you when you terminate your tenancy. To request a refund you will have to fill in a bond claim form from the Rental Bond Board and lodge the claim form with them. However, if you owe any money to WHC, our office retains the right to claim your bond to cover the debts.

For clarification on these matters or any other issues regarding your tenancy with Women's Housing Company please feel free to contact your Housing Worker.

Phone reception on: (02) 9281 1764
Email: reception@womenshousingcompany.org

MY STORY

I am Zareena, from the little Island Paradise, Ceylon.

I grew up on a luscious Tea Plantation, up on the salubrious hills, with frost and waterfalls gushing down the hills of tropical forests.



Dad was a veteran tea planter, working for the British Raj in the years of World war two.

We lived in a bungalow with servants, maids, and private schooling.

The thing I miss most is the fragrance of the green tea; two leaves and a bud that would be manufactured in the factory, emanating such an aroma; it was wafting around the air.

The great big machinery ground, fermented and graded the tea for packaging, after sifting in rollers.

The days were so calm and peaceful. I never heard an angry word, or rebuke from my parents.

Gone are the days when I rolled on the lawn with the dog or relaxed under the Pomegranate tree. Only memories live in my mind now.

My dear family are all gone to the other shores, except for one sister.

Thank you to Zareena for being a part of My Story

Everyone that enters 'My Story' goes in the draw to win one of five, \$50 shopping vouchers.

TENANT NETWORK MORNING TEA

All Women's Housing Company tenants are invited to a morning tea hosted by the Tenant Network.

The Tenant Network is a committee run by tenants for tenants and *all tenants* are eligible to be a part of it.

Tenant Participation will be the discussion theme.

The network would like to have a Q&A session on Tenant Participation; what it means and how tenants can be involved with their housing association (WHC).

WHC Tenant Participation worker Meagan Fitton will attend the meeting to discuss the project 'My Story' and also to hear from tenants about their thoughts on tenant participation.



Date: 18 August, 2011

Time: 10.30am -noon

Location: NSW Federation of Housing - Kippax St, Surry Hills

RSVP: Susan Lucock by 18 July, 2011

Contact: Phone: (02) 88077932

Email: blueemu@optusnet.com.au

As you can see, My Story 2011 is now open!

Recently I met a Women's Housing Company tenant who I found an inspiration. I informed her of the My Story project and suggested she contribute to it.

Humble and unassuming, this tenant agreed to be a part of the project, not so that she was the focus, but so that she may encourage others to see what is available to them in the community and how anyone can affect their community - positively impacting on the lives of other, as well as their own.

I look forward to reading her story and seeing the images she has to share—I also look forward to hearing from you, about your ideas and how you might like to be a part of the project.

Of course, My Story can be an opportunity to share inspiring stories - or anything you think is appropriate.

If you would like to be involved, please contact me. I will gladly meet with you to discuss My Story, in detail.

Meagan Fitton
Tenant Participation Worker

Email to: meagan@womenshousingcompany.org
or phone (02) 9281 01 48 ext: 305