

WHC COVID-19 Update



TAG meeting in Royal Alfred Park

As COVID-19 numbers continue to remain high in NSW, we are taking steps to protect tenants, contractors and staff by keeping our offices temporarily closed and working from home.

Home visits, face-to-face tenant engagement activities and property inspections (including pest inspections, preventative plumbing, gutter cleaning and smoke alarm testing) are also suspended. However, you can still contact us by phone or email, and our business hours remain 9.00am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Please continue to report any property repairs or maintenance issues. Only emergency and urgent property repairs (where there is an immediate risk to health and safety) will be completed for now. All other repairs and maintenance will be logged and prioritised.

If you or any member of your household is diagnosed with COVID-19, please notify us immediately as we have a duty to take precautions with service delivery.

We will continue to assess the evolving situation and will resume face-to-face activities as soon as it is safe to do so.

Introducing Our New Head, Community Housing Operations, Christina Hough

We're delighted to announce Christina Hough has been appointed as our new Head, Community Housing Operations. The newly created role provides strategic direction to the Tenancy and Property Services teams, as well as Community Engagement.

Christina has 15 years' experience in the social and affordable housing sector and is also an active member of the Australasian Housing Institute (AHI) NSW Branch Committee, as well as the NSW Director of the AHI Board.

Christina said, "I'm so excited I have joined the Women's Housing Company. Having the opportunity to work with a team of fantastic women as well as support fellow women to access and sustain secure, affordable housing is an honour and a privilege."



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BUSINESS HOURS:

9.00am – 4.30pm
Monday – Friday

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Phone: 02 9281 1764

Email: contact@womenshousingcompany.org

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

Phone: 02 8202 9313

Email: repairs@womenshousingcompany.org

Website Form: <http://www.womenshousingcompany.org.au/tenants/maintenance>

After hours emergency repairs: 1300 556 057

Translations and Interpreter: 131 450

Offices
closed due
to COVID-19
restrictions

Women's Housing Company

Suite 901, Level 9, 418A Elizabeth St, Surry Hills NSW 2010

T: 02 9281 1764 or 1300 942 111 (outside Sydney)

E: contact@womenshousingcompany.org

www.womenshousingcompany.org

CEO Message



Welcome to the first Newsletter for 2022 – a very special year for the Women’s Housing Company as we mark our 40 Years of Service. The Company was established 4 decades ago to respond to the needs of single homeless women in inner Sydney. Today we are the largest women’s housing organisation in Australia, providing housing and homelessness support services and advocating for change.

Throughout this time, many have contributed to the growth and success of the organisation – staff, Directors, funders and supporters. We are grateful to everyone who has been part of this journey and lent a hand in both small and significant ways. We have a housing portfolio comprising almost 1,100 properties, two Specialist Homelessness Services, and deliver a range of programs to support women who have experienced homelessness. In 2017 we expanded our brief to also assist women with children, an important development in our history. There is indeed a lot to celebrate this year and we’ll have more information in the coming months.

There is also so much more that we need to do and we are committed to dialling up our advocacy in this important year. The housing affordability crisis in Australia and

the rates of domestic and family violence are having a detrimental impact on women’s safety, security and wellbeing.

In addition, here is an update on a few other matters:

- Vaccination Policy – the Board approved a new policy in December 2021, requiring our all staff to be fully vaccinated.
- New housing – we are commencing our search for new blocks of units to purchase, with assistance from the NSW Government and our own funds.
- Expansion of programs – we received an additional 15 packages under the Together Home Program to provide housing and support to women that have experienced homelessness (total 45 packages).

- Wellbeing calls – we are resuming our calls to all tenants. Given we can’t have the same level of contact due to COVID-19, our team will resume calls to all tenants to check in on your wellbeing and any other matter relating to your tenancy.
- New staff – with our recent growth, we have established a number of new positions to support our operations. We have also had some staff turnover and recruited new people to fill these roles. We welcome our new team members and look forward to gradually introducing everyone.

I wish everyone a happy and safe new year.

Best regards,
Debbie Georgopoulos
CEO WHC

Staff Updates



Susan Walker, Tenancy Manager

Susan joined the Tenancy team in December. She comes with extensive experience in the social housing sector, having worked for North Coast Community Housing and Pacific Link Housing. Susan will be managing the Northern Sydney portfolio. Welcome Susan!

Amanda Liu, Financial Accountant

Amanda joined our Finance team in November. Amanda has 14 years’ experience across various accounting roles and is a Certified Practising Accountant (CPA). Amanda is responsible for much of our financial accounting and statutory returns.









Fiona Forrest, Tenant and Community Engagement Coordinator

After more than four years, Fiona will be leaving the WHC team. While we will be sad to see Fiona go, we wish her well in her new role and will let you know when we have a new Community Engagement lead in place.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey Action Plan 2021-22

We reported on our 2021 Tenant Satisfaction Survey results in our Winter 2021 newsletter. We met or exceeded targets under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing but there is always room for improvement. We have developed an action plan of service improvements based on your feedback. The action plan will be monitored by the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) over the coming months. [View the full action plan here: www.womenshousingcompany.org.au/news/96-Tenant-Satisfaction-Survey-Action-Plan-2021-22](http://www.womenshousingcompany.org.au/news/96-Tenant-Satisfaction-Survey-Action-Plan-2021-22)

	You said:	We will:
Communication		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent response to phone messages and emails • Hard to know who your current Tenancy Manager is • Rent reviews and statements can difficult to understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake customer service training • Notify you of a new Tenancy Manager within 14 days • Review the rent review procedure • Review rent statements to ensure they are easy to understand
Complaints		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service complaints process could be improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Complaints and Appeals Policy • Implement regular complaints and appeals training • Discuss complaint or appeal outcome with you before sending a letter
Repairs and maintenance		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent repairs quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to embed the new repairs contract with improved monitoring • Improve contract management and feedback
Condition of home		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsure when upgrades will take place or how to manage household issues such as mould 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include more newsletter articles explaining carpet renewal and other planned maintenance lifecycles • More tips on mould control and who's responsible for what
Neighbourhood		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear how neighbour disputes and nuisance is handled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop neighbour dispute and nuisance policy
Tenant engagement		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling more isolated due to COVID-19 • Want more influence on decision making or having views listened to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume face-to-face activities, including social events as soon as it's possible to do so • Increase digital capability so more tenants can participate online • Complete two local area meetings this year, with senior managers available for questions

Home At Last Report Launch

On 3 December 2021, the Ageing On The Edge Coalition launched its new 'Home At Last' report, calling on the NSW Government to provide more social housing and fund a specialist homelessness support service for older people.

The launch took place at the latest installation of UNSEEN, a multimedia arts project which features the powerful, yet often hidden, voices of women who have experienced homelessness and precarious housing. The day also commemorated the passing of UNSEEN artist and WHC tenant, Dr Emily Stafford.

Speakers included Rose Jackson MP, Jenny Leong MP, and Alex

Greenwich MP, with Women's Housing Company staff and tenants involved in both projects amongst the presenters.

CEO, Debbie Georgopoulos, welcomed the new report saying, "housing is critically important for the physical and mental wellbeing of older people. With a decline in home ownership, unprecedented increases in housing prices, and a reduction in social and affordable housing stock in NSW, older women are now the fastest growing group at risk of homelessness.



Home At Last Report Launch, Circular Quay

We urgently need more good quality, social and affordable housing to help avoid crises."

You can read the full report here:

https://www.older tenants.org.au/sites/default/files/home_at_last_report_web.pdf

Please contact us if you would like to share your story and advocate to end homelessness for women.

Masks still mandatory in common areas

Just a reminder that masks are still mandatory for all indoor common areas of residential premises in NSW.

Common areas include:

- lifts ● car parks ● garbage areas ● lobbies ● stairwells ● corridors
- and any indoor areas that residents may pass through.

For more information go to: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/stay-safe/rules>



The Older Persons COVID-19 Support line (OPSCS) provides information and support for Older Australians, their relatives, carers, friends or supporters. Call 1800 171 866, Monday to Friday between 8:30 am to 6 pm AEDT (excluding public holidays).

TAG News

The Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) is your platform to share information and experiences about the Women's Housing Company services. It's also a great way to upskill and gain confidence. We meet every two months at different locations and new members are always welcome.

Time	Dates	Location
10.00am to 12.00pm	Wednesday 16 February	Chester Hill
10.00am to 12.00pm	Tuesday 12 April	Woolloomooloo
10.00am to 12.00pm	Thursday 23 June	Ashfield
10.00am to 12.00pm	Wednesday 17 August	Parramatta
10.00am to 12.00pm	Tuesday 11 October	Northern Beaches
10.00am to 12.00pm	Thursday 15 December	Surry Hills

The next TAG meeting will take place at 10am on Wednesday 16 February at Chester Hill or online if COVID-19 numbers remain high. Please contact us on **9281 1764** or **contact@womenhousingcompany.org** if you would like to attend any event or activity.