

# Community Housing Tenant Network News

Vol.13

May 2009

## Tenants hold Environmental Workshop

To all tenants that attended the environmental workshop or gave input to this very important issue - the Network Committee/Newsletter Team would like to thank you all.

A special thank you, to Greg Dollin (Tenant) and Josh Smith (Asset Manager

- Central Tablelands Housing Association), along with Greg's daughter Francesca, who are so concerned about Global Warming/ Environmental and Housing issues that they travelled from Mudgee to attend the workshop! Thanks also to the tenants who travelled from Newcastle and Tamworth.

Thank you to our special Guest

Speakers: Nick Sable - President NSW Federation of Housing, Mary O'Neill - DECC (Dept Environment and Climate Change) and Sarath Mataraarachchi Housing NSW's Environment Unit. It was revealed by tenants attending the workshop that they were, informed knowledgeable and concerned (and already playing

their part).

The workshop revealed that tenants are hoping that, as a large component of tenants living in NSW (and growing), we can further our aims, in relation to playing a greater part and increase our participation in relation to:

- Addressing the concern over increasing costs and sustainability of energy and water supply
- Supporting current "Green Energy Electricity", but are restricted by the cost of this important energy supply
- Asking for green energy products to be installed into Social Housing properties on the understanding that these systems would need to be monitored and maintained
- The importance of sustainable housing/the impact that housing and related activities (waste, energy use etc) has on the environment/our communities/our families and our health



Tenant Network members discussing environmental issues

A list of tenants ideas on the environment can be seen at: [www.communityhousing.org.au/](http://www.communityhousing.org.au/)

### MAKE YOU THINK

1.2 billion people do not have access to drinking water. Americans consume an average 700 litres daily, Europeans 200 litres and a Haitian 20 litres. Every person should have access to 50 litres daily (washing, bathing, cleaning, drinking and cooking).

The hidden aspects of water use :

- It takes 1,000 litres of water to build a car, 40 litres to produce half a kilo of paper, 2.5 litres for 0.254 litres of coca-cola.

- More than five million people die from illnesses linked to unsafe drinking water
- 75-80% of ocean pollution comes from land sources.

Information Sources: "Ecopolis: Architecture and Cities for a Changing Climate" Paul. F. Downton

"Gnarly Planning" Tools for Local and Global Action" Jane Stanley

# Tenant Representative's Page

## LOVE GARDENS?

Visit the Hunter Valley Gardens - Australia's largest display Garden (Winner of the 'Most significant Tourist Attraction' Award in NSW 2004/05/06 and Hall of fame 2007.

60 acres of spectacular display gardens including, 10 stunning international feature gardens; over 6,000 trees; 35,000 rose bushes; 250,000 annuals; 600,00 shrubs; 1,000,000 ground covers. Guided Buggy Tours available - LET'S GO!



## SUPPORTING OUR WELL LOVED FOUR-LEGGED FRIENDS

Ryan Blunden is running a new on-line resource for tenants, helping to boost your chances of finding Pet-Friendly rentals - [www.petfriendlyrentals.com.au](http://www.petfriendlyrentals.com.au).

The Australian Companion Animal Council (ACAC) President, Kertsi Seksel said the identification of pet friendly properties was welcome news.

Australian bureau of statistics shows that around 28% of all houses in Australia are rented. The Real Estate Sydney Institute of Australia estimates that Sydney's vacancy rates are at 1.4%.

With 63% of Australian households having a pet and with low rental property access, allowing for pets is only

an added difficulty.

Mr Blunden says "When I found myself having to consider giving my dog Tonka away because of the difficulty I had in securing a house, I decided to do something about it. I created a low-cost search tool that people can use on the major real estate sites to find properties that accept pets". Kertsi Seksel said that "Responsible pet owners also make great tenants as they value continuity once they have found a pet friendly home".

Sourced by Susan Lucock from the Real Estate Section of The Standard, April 22nd 2009.

## SHARE YOUR STORIES

Please share your newsletters with others that do not have access. We also welcome new members who can begin to enjoy the increased social and vocal events that we hope to run in the future, when we will be far more ready to deal with such events (we have done our crawling and are now walking, we are almost running, Come run with us! Send in your news and stories, share your group news. All welcome!!



Greg's daughter Francesca's drawing - Created as Greg speaks on environmental issues

# News

## HUMAN ENERGY = VOLUNTEERING

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### **The value, benefits, connections and fun of volunteering.**

Giving free time reaps rewards for everyone. Australians pride themselves on their generous nature. In some countries volunteer fire-fighters and lifeguards are unheard of. Money does not need to be a motivator but volunteering should not come at a cost to the Volunteer. According to the Bureau of Statistics, in 2007 34% of the population "volunteered" their time. How many volunteers are not recognised in that count?

We hope to be running a series of stories about tenants that are volunteering either in recognised voluntary work or non recognised roles. It is well known that volunteers are an important and vital part of many school and community sporting programmes - training teams, running canteens and raising funds - the list is endless.

Are you one or a part of the huge group of people that contributes time and care in a Volunteer role in NSW? We would love to hear your story. We would also like to hear from anyone who would like to become involved in volunteering, so that we can support your aim if you don't know where to start. Or talk to your local neighbourhood centre.

Certificates I, II and III in Active Volunteering Australia is a response to an increasing demand from the volunteer sector for accredited training. These Certificates are part of the National Volunteer Skills Centre Project, funded by FaHCSIA (Dept of Community Services).

The Active Volunteering Certificates are Flexible, comprising of stand-alone units (single subjects can be done - you can choose which subjects you are interested in or need in relation to your needs, either personally or for your volunteer work. If you have already been trained in a subject you will gain recognised prior learning (RPL) on that subject which can be credited to your Certificate.

Volunteer work is recognised in relation to future work opportunities (especially good for high school students) and further training. Being involved can increase your connection to your community and extends your links to others. Who knows, you might discover a skill you didn't know you had, run into an (old) school friend or make connections with others that share your views and passions!

Visit: [www.volunteeringaustralia.org](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org)

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## HOUSING SOLUTIONS FORUM

Housing Solutions Forum (HSF) is a small community based think tank in Mudgee which has gathered information about housing over 11 years. The Global conversation about the environment during this period of time has been riveting. The HSF have found that a triple bottom line of Ecological, Social and Economic approach to housing development is helpful.

HSF have, following our research, recommended some basic planning design, construction and development guidelines to Government at all levels and they have shown a degree of interest. We hope that in the spirit of future listening and co-operation between community input and Government bodies more can and will be done.

Currently we are working on developing the NSW Fibro Footprints programme to retrofit existing community and Publicly Owned homes for Energy and Water efficiency. The first stage is a 2009/10 proposal for 7 properties in Mudgee to apply the triple bottom line approach and we hope this can then be applied and used in other regions and cities.

At the recent 'Environmental Issues in Community housing workshop', we would like to add our felt

support in relation to the benefits that could be gained by working together - in relation to addressing energy and water efficiency, by the use of appropriate products to allow this.

**SOCIAL CONNECTIONS** of community. Decentralised social infrastructure has slowly disappeared in communities and needs to be reintroduced. Imagine access to more people friendly community places and spaces.

Food gardens; laundries; cafes; homework centres; kitchens; Men's sheds and small technological industry centres could become foundational in future planning and community development policy.

We would appreciate hearing from you should you share our ideals, aims and goals. To do so please contact Greg Dollin in Mudgee on (02) 6372 1124 or to make your own statement of approval, our advice is to contact your Local Member of Parliament,

## SEEING THE LIGHT

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Flick the switch and the light comes on – that is all there is to it. Far from it! Thousands of people are adversely affected by artificial light - Fluorescent, Halogen and LED. Unfortunately, many light-sensitive people are unaware that the uncovered fluorescent lights in their workplace and shopping centres are making them ill. Artificial light has many components - Ultraviolet B, Ultraviolet A, Blue light and red light. Fluorescent and halogen lighting also contains electromagnetic circuitry. Fluorescent lights have large peaks and troughs in emissions and are harmful to light sensitive individuals.

As a lupus sufferer, I am affected greatly by the UVB emissions from the sun but also from uncovered fluorescent lights, particularly in shopping centres, offices, hospitals and doctor and dentists surgeries. UVA affects me as well, from photocopiers and digital photo printers in shops. To make matters worse, I am affected by blue light, for example, any light in the blue end of the spectrum that is fluorescent, halogen and LED.

Can it be any worse than that? Oh Yes! I am affected by the electric circuitry in Compact Fluorescent lamps (CFLs) and Halogen lamps and the peaks and troughs in emissions from these lamps. Only the old fashioned incandescent globe suits me! What a shame the world is phasing incandescent globes out in favour of CFLs. This means that light sensitive individuals that like me cannot go out or participate in “outside our home” activities. What did I say? Oh it is getting worse by the minute- CFLs have invaded my home! The Phase-out of incandescent globes in Australia has already begun. What can I do about that? Go out and buy hundreds of old fashioned incandescent bulbs. Yes, that’s right-

every time I open my cupboard to get something out fall dozens of packets of globes - I am set until I am ninety years old - if I make it!

Not only individuals with lupus are affected (in various degrees) by fluorescent lights, halogen and LEDs, but many people. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (also suffer all of the above symptoms), Electro-sensitive individuals (circuitry and emission peaks) and people with Macular Degeneration disease (blue light) to name but a few.

What have I done about this? I have been very active writing to the Department of Environment on behalf of all these individuals, so that our Government is aware that the Phase-Out policy severely affects the health of thousands of Australians. The UN Charter forbids Governments from placing any man; woman or child in danger and that is exactly what the Phase-Out policy will do.

So if you don’t like the cold colour of fluorescent CFLs and think this is making you feel a bit off colour - think again it may be really making you off colour!

Verna Cunliffe, Garrigal Housing

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We would to love from you as to what your community or local council is doing in relation to Environmental issues. Please email your news to the Newsletter team or post it to Adam West (AdamWest@communityhousing.org.au; Suite 301, 64-76 Kippax St, Surry Hills NSW, 2010) or ring a rep and ask them to write it down to present at the next committee meeting.

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## GOVERNMENT MOVES ON AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING

One fifth of the new homes approved under the Federal Govts National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) will include special features to make them accessible for older people.

The 600 specially designed homes will be among 3,899 homes approved under the first round of the scheme.

Federal Housing Minister Tanya Pilbersek said the project would target low income renters aged over 70 “creating a market that meets the needs of older Australians is a key part of our vision”... “Australia needs a better range of housing products that are universal in their design and can be modified over time”. (Which brings us to the question of sustainability?).

Of the homes approved under the National Rental Affordability Scheme:

- 1,074 homes will be built in NSW
- 696 in QLD
- 56 in ACT
- 587 in TAS
- 401 in WA
- 422 in SA

Thank you Minister, for having an interest in your portfolio, being active and listening to those that live in Social Housing!

Greta - Garrigal Housing

Sourced from: The Senior News, May 09

## **THE ECONOMY AND CLIMATE**

Climate change policy debates have been preoccupied with the economic cost of taking action to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. Yet, recent assessments have reframed the question, focusing on the cost of inaction. The damage caused by unmitigated climate change may be the bigger threat to the global economy.

Benjamin Preston and Roger Jones elaborate - see ECOS towards a Sustainable Future Magazine - a bi-monthly CSIRO magazine reporting on the science and news behind sustainability in the environment and industry.

Contact CSIRO Publishing (03) 9662-7500 email publishing.sales@csiro.au or www.publish.csiro.au/ecos

Ultimately, what can we as a Community Housing Tenants, do in relation to our role and participation?

- Recycle, Reuse, Respect the use of energy and water and care for the environment
- Ring the Salvation Army/St Vincent's to organise a pick-up of unwanted items or put unwanted items in Charity Bins (don't put rubbish or unusable items in charity bins -the expense of getting rid of this costs charities thousands of dollars a year for unusable items.)
- Have a garage sale or give it to someone
- Old toys are often repaired by local groups - ask your local council community officer for information
- Old items might be a valuable antique - good luck; it could be worth a fortune!
- Feeling really motivated? Join an environmental group
- Teach your children and grandchildren to get involved. Read, research and pass it the information on
- Each small part played adds to the bigger picture.

"I hope that in the Future, your life on earth will resemble what the planet offers us today: A sustainable ecological and living reality. Bon Voyage"

Source: Yann Arthus-Bertrand, www.goodplanet.org

## **NEED TENANCY ADVICE?**

Visit [www.tenants.org.au](http://www.tenants.org.au) to download factsheets, sample letters and keep informed about issues affecting tenants and the work of the tenant's union such as rent increases, repairs, bonds, access and privacy, locks and security and the tenant database. Find your local service, including - Sydney metro/Coastal/Greater Western NSW/Specialist Services/Aboriginal Services.

## **TENANT'S ADVICE/ADVOCACY SERVICE**

Voice your concerns, give input, make contact – you have to be in it to win it!

- Tenant Hotline (ph 1800 251 101)  
Mon-Fri, 9:30AM - 1pm and 2pm - 5pm
- Attend Tenant Network workshops to speak to your rep or members of the Network Committee/Newsletter team

## **PARENT LINE**

Parent line is a Centacare Project, funded by the NSW Dept of Community Services which offers a confidential service where you can speak to a counsellor if you are finding it hard to cope. It's the cost of a local phonecall, from anywhere in NSW.

Parent line (ph 132 055) Confidential  
Mon - Sat, 9:30am - 4:30pm

# News

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## Invitation to our Inaugural General Meeting

The theme of our next workshop will be “the future of community housing”

It is a very exciting time in community housing as housing associations are growing and will be working to provide more homes for people in housing need over the next 18 months. This workshop will be an opportunity for tenants to find out about some of the changes that are happening in the community housing world and to let housing associations know what they think about this.

We are calling it an ‘inaugural’ general meeting because, although we have been operating with some terms of reference as rules, we hope to adopt a new formal Constitution at the meeting.

Content of the event:

- Discussion and adoption of the new Constitution
- Announcement of representatives to the Tenant Network where associations have held elections
- ‘Changes in community housing’ Adam West, Federation of Housing Associations
- Involving tenants in a merged housing association’ – Michelle Robinson, Tenant Director Compass Housing
- Discussion groups: what do current tenants think of the changes in community housing’?

This is a free workshop but **you must RSVP to our Chair, Susan Lucock on 88077932 or susanlucock@yahoo.com.au** for catering purposes and so we can send you a copy of the new Constitution.

**When: Monday 22nd June 2009**

**Arrive 10 am for registration. Starts 10.30am, finishing at 1:30pm**

**Where: Club Ashfield**

**Address: 5-9 Charlotte Street, Ashfield 2131 NSW (just next to Ashfield Station)**

**Refreshments and Lunch Provided.**

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## Events

### Organic Family Fun Markets

A Tenant Council Project of Affordable Community Housing Ltd.

**1st Saturday of each Month  
Starting on 2nd May 2009**

**Location: Able Reserve  
1b Marco Ave, Revesby  
From 8:30am to 3:00pm**

- \* Organic Fruit and Veggies
  - \* Arts and Craft \* Scented Candles
  - \* Perfumes & Fragrances
  - \* Books \* Bric a Brac
  - \* Coffee and Teas & BBQ
  - \* And Lots, Lots More Fun and Bargains
- For the whole family**

For more information please  
call OFFM Market Manager Allan on 9644 4862

### Guringai Festival

**25th May-12 July 2009**

**This year the festival theme is STAR DREAMING to coincide with the Year of Astronomy. There are many traditional Dreaming stories about the relationship between ancestral beings and the sun, the moon, stars and the planets.**

**Lots of activities across Northern Sydney Region**

**For more information visit:**

**<http://www.guringaifestival.com.au/gf/index.html>**