

Community Housing Tenant Network News

Vol.11

February 2009

Tenant Network Christmas Boat Trip

Eighty seven brave souls embarked on the Penrith Platypus on Monday 8th December with some very understanding cheerful staff on board. Some braved the upper deck with the skipper but most of us stayed on the main lower deck and talked and talked and occasionally noticed the scenery.

The Network Representative Committee had decided to hold a fun event in place of one of our quarterly workshops to encourage different people to come together and to thank our regular attendees for their support this year. We did indeed attract new people and we hope that they will return for future events.

The boat only scraped the bottom twice and to my knowledge only one person was interested in a life jacket and jumping overboard (the Narrows). We also saw a goat doing impossible things on a fairly sheer rock face. The buffet meal was most enjoyable with a number of salads, choice of protein and a really scrumptious apple dessert and a hot drink of our choice.



Tenant Network members in front of the Platypus Cruise at Nepean River, Penrith NSW

All of this fun would not have happened without the inspiration of tenants and the financial and moral support of the Wentworth Community Housing Executive Officer Nick Sabel and his staff. Our very sincere thanks to them for a great day. Affordable Housing tenants group must also be congratulated as they paid the entire cost for their subscribing members who attended.

Affordable have one of the most progressive tenant groups in the community housing sector. Thanks also to St George, Garrigal, Women's, Metro, NSW Federation of Housing for their moral and financial support. Last but not least Peter Harris from North Coast Community Housing who once again travelled down a long way to enjoy a day with us tenants. Hope all who attended had as much fun as I did.

*Written by: Susan Lucock
Chair,
Tenant Network*

Tenant Connect Operating

Australian Red Cross is delivering a telephone monitoring service called Housing NSW Tenant Connect. It is available to public and community housing tenants (including co-ops and housing associations) on a voluntary and free of charge basis.

For more information call 1800 827 677

Tenant Representative Contacts

Thank you to the tenant reps that are happy to give their details to allow tenants to make contact. Please see page two to contact your Tenant Representative.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Stacey our Federation Office worker that has assisted the Tenant Network with meetings and the Newsletter, Stacey will be a new mum in May.

Tenant Representatives Page

North Coast Community Housing

G'day city slickers, from the bloke from the bush (I was going to use another "B" word, but this is a family publication). Seeing we are the first cab off the rank as far as regional tenant councils go, I thought you might like to know a bit about us.

The North Coast Community Housing Co. (NCCHC for short) has been going for over 20 years, & has an income of \$4 million with 528 properties to manage. However, the big thing about us is our area. We cover an area roughly equal to one from Wollongong to Newcastle & out to the Blue Mountains. To service that area we have 3 offices, (Grafton, Lismore & Tweed Heads) but other towns include Ballina, Byron Bay, Murwillumbah, Kyogle, Casino, Evans Head & Yamba. You might think that tenants in these towns would grumble a bit, but a recent survey (mid 2008) showed that 63% of them were very satisfied with the service, & only 2% very dissatisfied (that 2% came from the Lismore area). A lot of the reason for this satisfaction lies with the workers, remember Kate De Marco? They

are a very dedicated bunch, and that brings me to the tenant council.

The council has been going for about 4 years, with people dropping in & out, but the present members are determined to work with the company to not only provide for present tenants, but also for homeless people, sanctuaries, & people with mental, physical, & intellectual disabilities, youth etc. To help us understand the problems, we need training & experience. One way we can get this is to join with other tenant groups. We are affiliated with local tenant groups, but see a real plus in being with you, the tenant network, & hope we can contribute a bit whilst picking your brains.

I personally, have enjoyed tremendously meeting you, and hope our association will be a long & mutually beneficial one.

Peter Harris,
Tenant Council Rep, NCCHC

St. George Affordable Housing

St George Community Housing Ltd. are the proud owners of 50 brand new units in the Mosaic Complex at Leumeah near Campbelltown.

There are 180 units in the complex in 5 blocks of which SGCH Ltd. have units in 4. All have 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms with an internal laundry space, and most are on 2 levels with a balcony while the ground floor units have a courtyard some of them have 2. The complex has a swimming pool and a small gym for tenant use.

40 of the units are classified as affordable and the tenants had to meet the criteria laid down by the Office of Community Housing as rent is discounted from the market rent and is not to exceed 30% of their income / while 10 were reserved for Social Housing.

It was pleasing to note the SGCH Ltd. had a large number of people applying for the affordable and social units and already over 80% are occupied.

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Nellie Womens Housing Company

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Phone: (02) 9897 7256 anytime

Malcolm, Metro Community Housing

Phone: 9697 2306 (Available Monday to Friday 9.30am-10.30am (up to 8pm most evenings) You can leave a message)

Peter, North Coast Community Housing Company

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Phone: (02) 6622 2503 M 0407 120 599

Dale, Argyle Community Housing

Via the Argyle - Campbelltown Office 02 4627 0002

Social Inclusion / non-profit sector in Australia

In February 2008, Senator Ursula Stephens Secretary for social inclusion and the voluntary sector gave a perspective on the Rudd government social inclusion agenda and the role that the non-profit sector can play.

Some points made were:

- “Moving forward with fairness,
- Transforming education,
- Taking decisive action on climate change,
- Tackling the growing problem of homelessness and poverty, and
- Ending the blame game between levels of government once and for all.

Social exclusion is an issue for everyone of us as individuals as organisations as business’ as governments and as citizens because the complexity of social exclusion impacts on the wellbeing of society and our economy.”

How does it involve community housing? Is being a part of a community housing organisation a way to increase social inclusion?

The Tenant Network hopes so, that being a part of a social housing network we will be able to provide greater social inclusion for those housed in community housing. That by further discussion, involvement of tenants, doing some research, working together, gaining support, we will see far greater tenant inclusion in the years ahead.

How can that be done?

- Tenant Advisory Groups to work with housing provider staff and management boards. Being involved when policy is discussed, changed or improved.
- Tenant Committees for social inclusion, arranging social gatherings, outings, and to create groups to follow areas of interest.
- Becoming involved in our communities and further development of communities.
- Being vocal when decisions are made that do not have the best interests of the people living in their community. An example being, the planned closing of hospitals in many areas across Sydney.
- Make contact with the Tenant Network with issues or concerns that you may have or to gain support should you be interested in becoming more involved in any way or to form group as mentioned above.

As Senator Stephens further stated ‘The non-profit sector has a crucial role to play in the agenda of social inclusion. Inclusion is about rights, about access and about opportunity.

The non-profit sector (of which community housing is a part) can best promote social inclusion because it is such sectors that are often in close touch with the excluded communities and are therefore well placed to ensure that missing voices are heard and in fact, the excluded groups are mobilised to claim rights that are theirs as citizens.

Our Right to have Peace, Quiet and Privacy

As you may remember, when you first became a tenant with Community Housing you signed a Residential Tenancy Agreement. Within that Agreement you will see that you are entitled to peace, quiet and privacy. The Agreement is a legal document by which we are supposed to abide. We hope that you and your family are able to enjoy the benefits of this signed agreement.

HOLISTIC APPROACH

A house is not just a physical dwelling; it exists within a social environment that is important to the health and well being of the tenant.

IN ANGER WE FORGET WHO WE ARE

If a neighbour is making excessive noise request politely that the noise is lowered. However, we all make more noise sometimes, please make reasonable allowances. Police have the authority to deal with unreasonable noise levels, especially at certain times of the day or

night. They also have the authority to deal with unacceptable behaviour targeted at tenants, allow them to deal with any matters that raise concern. Your Housing Provider is there to support reasonable and acceptable behaviour and assist when tenants and neighbours are not allowing others to enjoy their “home”. Gossip can be destructive to neighbours, tenants and individuals, especially for people living in blocks of units.

The Tenant Network believes in respecting all tenants in a holistic way. Each individual needs to have privacy, peace and quiet and be recognised as worthy of respect and non interference. We hope that all tenants agree and apply this to your neighbours and those in your community.

If you are experiencing any difficulties in your home / residency please contact your Housing Provider, Tenant Rep or the Tenant Network to gain assistance.

News

All I need to know about life I learned from Noahs Ark

Don't miss the boat. Remember that we are all in the same boat. Plan ahead, it was not raining when Noah built the Ark. Stay fit, when you are 600 years old someone may ask you to do something really big!



Don't listen to critics, just get on with the job that needs to be done. Build your future on high ground. For safety sake travel in pairs. Speed isn't always an advantage, the snails were on board with the cheetahs.

When you're stressed, float awhile. Remember the Ark was built by amateurs, the Titanic by professionals. No matter the storm, when you are with God there is always a rainbow waiting. John Evans - SWISH.

Some handy community development websites:

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

An organisation that helps people to help themselves in building their own home.

Website: <http://www.habitat.org.au>

AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF HOMELESSNESS ASSOCIATION:

Website: <http://www.afho.org.au/>

CONSUMER CREDIT LEGAL CENTRE NSW

For free legal advice about borrowers' rights, consumer credit and debt problems.

Website: <http://www.cclnsw.org.au/>
Phone: 9212 4111 or 9212 4711

AGED CARE RIGHTS SERVICE:

Website: <http://www.tars.com.au/>

Notice Board

The Network Committee and Newsletter Committee welcomes any invitations from Housing Associations that would allow us to visit and expand on the aims and goals of our Network.

Please contact Adam West to arrange a meeting see details below.

If you have difficulty understanding English contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on
Phone: 131 450

Free Training

Central Sydney Resource Service are offering free training sessions. The Network Committee will be taking advantage of this great offer.

If you are interested in attending please contact Susan Lucock. David and Charmaine have already given training sessions for the Network Committee and interested tenants. They continue to support the Network by attending Meetings and giving advice. If you are interested in forming a tenant group in the Sydney Metropolitan area please contact them.

- Get involved in Tenant Participation
- Learn new skills
- Make new friends
- Contribute to your community
- Find pathways to higher education
- Have a voice
- Understand how policy affects you

Some examples of courses that we run:

- Effective Organisation for Tenant Groups
- Committee Skills
- What Makes a Good Tenant Rep?
- Producing a Newsletter
- Modern Communications

You do not need previous experience in tenant participation activities to attend training sessions.

Everyone is welcome to attend

For more detailed information and to book for courses and sessions please contact either David or Charmaine via email or phone, details below:

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