

Community Housing Tenant News

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New tenant network starts

A new network has been started for community housing tenants who are interested in tenant participation. The aim of the network is to help tenants from different Housing Associations to find out more about tenant participation, exchange information and learn from each other.

If you are interested in discovering more, come to one of the free workshops that will be held in February and April 2006. Please see the application form inside this newsletter. You should also contact your landlord to ask what help they can provide for tenants who want to get more involved in their communities and with the work of the association.

Where did the tenants' network come from?

Four housing associations in the metropolitan area (Garrigal, Western Suburbs, St. George and Hume) were given a grant from the Office of Community Housing to run workshops for interested tenants and to look at ways of getting more tenants involved in community housing. They set up a steering group that includes tenants from each of the four associations. The steering group decided to open up the



Hume tenants visit Parliament House

Network to all community housing tenants in the Metropolitan area. In future, the steering group would like to invite all community housing tenants to join – but they feel that they need to 'walk before they can run' and get a metropolitan network going first.

The draft aims of the community housing tenants' network are:

- To get tenants' organisations to come together as a collaborative group and form a network for community housing tenants' groups
- Work towards the involvement of all community housing tenants
- To become a tenant led network
- To break down the isolation

felt by individual tenants' organisations

- To share information about successful projects and learn from other tenants' experience
- To promote effective tenant participation in the community housing sector
- To link up with the wider tenants movement
- To encourage and support tenant leaders
- To promote educational and training opportunities to support tenant participation in the sector

What do you think of these aims?

Are we hitting the mark? Or are there other things community housing tenants should be concentrating on. Please use the form inside this newsletter to let us know what you think.

In this edition:

- New tenant network
- Tenant participation - what is it - and why should you bother?
- Workshop invitation and more.....

Tenant participation - what is it and why bother?

What is tenant participation?

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service in the UK says that "tenant participation is a two-way process involving the sharing of ideas, information and power. That means tenants and their landlords working together to improve housing conditions and housing services."

There are many different ways that tenants can get involved. It's best if tenants have a variety of different ways they can participate, so that they can contribute in the ways that suit them best. This could include developing local tenant or resident associations, service monitoring panels or Tenant Advisory Groups. Associations often hold block or area meetings to consult tenants on local issues. Some have involved tenants in saying what their priorities are for the year ahead. This information was used in drawing up the strategic plan for the organisation. Some Housing Associations also have tenants on their Board of Directors.

Other landlords are more focused on participation in social activities. This can include helping tenants set up social clubs, run gardening schemes, develop good neighbour projects or work with young people.

Whichever type of participation you are interested in, there may help available in your local community. For example, your local community centre, multi-



Western Suburbs fire up the barbie for tenants' Christmas party

cultural centre or TAFE Outreach service may be able to link you into activities in your area.

Why bother?

Tenant participation will never appeal to everyone. But when it works there are clear benefits for tenants and landlords - so everyone wins!

Benefits include:

- Better communities, where people care about where they live and work together to improve things
- Better use of limited funding
- Better decision making from landlords
- Having your views listened to
- Getting things done
- Meeting new people
- Giving something back to the community

Online resources

www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au
Case studies and funding in NSW

www.TPAS.org.uk
Free practical tips for tenant participation and UK examples

Register for the Tenant Support Network by emailing your details to TSN@thenexus.org.au

How can I get involved?

- Your first step should be to contact your housing association and ask them what support they can offer.
- Ask for a copy of the Housing Hints on Tenant Participation structures and Starting a tenants' group
- Put your name down for the Tenant Network and apply to come to a workshop
- Contact the Regional Tenant Resource Service for your area for advice. They are tenant focused organisations funded by the Department of Housing to support and encourage tenant participation:

South Western Sydney

South Western Regional Tenants Association Inc
Tel: 9821 1700
Email: swrta@bigpond.net.au

Central Sydney South Regional

Tenant Resource Service
Tel: 9584 2811
Email: cssrtrs@bigpond.com

Central Sydney North

Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Inc
Tel: 9698 6558
Email: rtrs@inet.net.au

Western Sydney

Western Sydney Regional Public Tenants' Council Inc
Tel: 9676 5200
Email: wsptc@pnc.com.au

Or contact Adam West at the NSW Federation of Housing Association on 9281 7144 ext. 211 or adamwest@communityhousing.org.au for information on the Tenant Network project.