



**ACT**  
Government

Community Services

# the newsletter for Housing ACT tenants

# Home front



## Message from Executive Director

Dear Tenants

Welcome to the autumn edition of the *Home Front* newsletter.

I am very aware of the impact that increasing costs of electricity and gas are having on the cost of living for many Canberrans, including tenants of public and community housing. Unfortunately these escalating costs are beyond Housing & Community Services' control but there are ACT Government programs that may assist.

There are energy concession programs which aim to improve the affordability of both electricity and gas for low income earners in the ACT. Energy providers such as ActewAGL administer a variety of concession and rebate schemes on behalf of the ACT government. If you hold a current pensioner concession, Health Care Card or Department of Veterans Affairs gold card, you may be eligible for an energy concession.

The Minister for Community Services, Joy Burch MLA has also recently announced the ACT Government will deliver \$12.3 million over four years to increase the concessions

### Ms Maureen Sheehan

available to low-income households to reduce the impact of energy and water costs (see article later in this newsletter).

Housing ACT has also received additional funding in the ACT Budget of \$8 million over four years to improve the energy efficiency of public housing dwellings. This will have the effect of reducing energy costs for tenants.

The Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) is also funded by the ACT Government to provide free, independent, expert advice on how to improve the energy efficiency of your home. HEAT can suggest ways to make your home more comfortable whilst saving money, energy and the environment (see article later in this newsletter).

Other services such as Care Financial Services receive ACT Government funding to provide financial advice and counselling. Energy providers usually have a range of payment options that allow you to budget for your high energy consumption periods etc.

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## Energy efficiency in public housing to deliver **lower energy bills for tenants**

**Housing ACT will receive \$8 million over four years to increase the energy efficiency of public housing dwellings across Canberra and ease cost-of-living pressures for tenants, Minister for Community Services, Joy Burch MLA announced recently.**

The \$2 million-a-year investment over four years will double the existing program to improve the

energy efficiency of the ACT's older public housing stock, resulting in lower energy bills for households.

The investment the ACT Budget provided will reduce cost-of-living pressures for families and low-income households, as well as benefit the environment through a reduction in energy consumption across thousands of properties.

This \$8 million investment will double the capacity and expedite Housing ACT's program, increasing from \$2million to \$4 million per annum over the next four years.

The funding will be used to retrofit dwellings and conduct upgrades to heating and hot water systems, with a long-term aim of bringing all Housing ACT properties to a minimum energy efficiency rating of 3 stars.

Although a significant amount of public housing has already undergone some energy efficiency measures, bringing the remaining stock up to a 3 star rating will beneficially impact on total greenhouse emissions for the ACT.

## Public housing for older persons **opens in Kambah**

**The first stage of a \$10.7 million, 47-unit residential development of public and affordable housing for older persons has been officially opened in Kambah.**

The Minister for Community Services, Joy Burch welcomed residents of the first 22 public housing units for older persons.

In stage 2 there are 25 properties being built, of which 14 are due to be completed mid year. Seven will be affordable rental properties (74.9 per cent of market rent) managed by Housing ACT, and the other seven will be available on long-term licence.

Stage 2 will also include a community meeting space and

garden, an idea which arose from consultation with the local community.

A community park has also been completed by the Department of Territory and Municipal Services adjacent to the Community Housing redevelopment.

A total of 297 units for older persons are being built at eight sites across Canberra, with developments in Macquarie, Curtin, Conder, and Bonython already tenanted and those in Chapman, Florey and Rivett to be

completed and tenanted in the coming months.

The Minister Joy Burch said she was pleased to be a part of the significant investment in public housing in her electorate - three of the eight complexes are in the Tuggeranong Valley, with Kambah to be completed soon.

These additional homes are allowing Housing ACT to house many families on the priority and high needs housing list.



## Starting work?

### Help is at hand with a rebate extension ■ Your rent will not increase for six months

To assist tenants when they start a new job a rebate extension is available for eligible persons.

If you start a new job, your rental rebate approval period can be extended by six months from the date the employment commenced. That is, the amount of rent payable will not increase for six months.

This also applies to other members of the household who were

approved occupants at the date the existing rebate was granted.

Employment includes full-time, part-time, casual work and self-employment and no particular duration of employment is required. However, gross weekly earnings from the new job must be a minimum of \$100 per week.

Although no formal application is required, satisfactory evidence of

employment must be produced to Housing ACT, such as a letter from the employer providing the necessary details.

These would include the date the job commenced and the weekly remuneration, or the expected number of hours per week and the hourly rate.

For more information, contact your housing manager.

## KIDS SECTION

### Competition for kids

**Congratulations to the three girls who won free tickets to the Royal Canberra Show for their families—we hope everyone had a wonderful time.**

Come on guys let us see what you can do in the new drawing competition.

#### NEW: colouring competition

Win a \$50 voucher to spend at Westfield Shopping Centres. We are running a drawing competition for children of Housing ACT and Community Housing tenants as well as children in homelessness services.

The competition is to draw a picture of a house and then have your parent or guardian send it to us to enter the competition.

The winning entries will be displayed in the new office front The Central Access Point being constructed on the ground floor of Nature Conservation House, Belconnen for Housing ACT.

The winners of different age groups will each receive a \$50 voucher to spend at Westfield Shopping centres.

Please include your full name, address and telephone number and a parent's or guardian's permission to enter.

Send your entries addressed to:

*Home Front*, Business Development  
Housing ACT  
Locked Bag 3000  
Belconnen ACT 2616

or drop it in to our office at:  
Ground Floor, Nature Conservation  
House, Corner of Emu Bank and  
Benjamin Way, Belconnen.

Entries close 30 July 2011



**Let's celebrate**  
...upcoming event

#### Canberra Nara Candle Festival

22 October 2011: Celebration of Canberra's Sister City Relationship with Nara, Japan.

#### For more information

**T** Canberra Connect 13 22 81

**E** [events@act.gov.au](mailto:events@act.gov.au)

**W** [www.events.act.gov.au](http://www.events.act.gov.au)

## Tips about rental rebates

### Housing ACT provides over \$11 million in rental rebates each year to housing tenants.

This involves processing over 19,000 rental rebates per year. Unfortunately a number of rebates are incomplete when supplied to Housing ACT, this causes delays in processing.

Here are a few tips to assist with processing your rebate:

- Return your completed rebate application as soon as possible after receiving the application in the mail.
- Ensure all sections are completed.
- All tenants must sign the application.
- Income details for all household members must be supplied with application.
- Wage earners should provide completed employer section or supply last 26 weeks of payslips.
- If someone has joined or left the household, details are to be provided including name, date of birth and date household composition changed.

Further information at: [www.dhcs.act.gov.au/hcs/policies/rental\\_rebate\\_policy](http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/hcs/policies/rental_rebate_policy) or contact your housing manager.

## New community housing provider for the ACT



### Argyle Community Housing Ltd is a new community housing provider that has entered the ACT social housing sector.

The ACT Government has handed over 52 units for older persons in Conder to Argyle Community Housing Ltd.

Minister for Community Services, Joy Burch joined the Federal Member for Canberra, Gai Brodtmann in welcoming the residents of the \$10.3 million complex, and welcoming Argyle's registration as a community housing provider.

Argyle Community Housing has offices in Queanbeyan, Bowral, Campbelltown, Young, Wagga Wagga and Griffith to manage almost 2000 properties.

Argyle has provided housing in NSW and brings a wealth of experience to the social housing

sector. It has an established track record in quality tenancy and asset management spanning over 20 years.

Argyle Community Housing has worked with Housing ACT's Gateway Services to identify and support existing public housing tenants to relocate into this complex. By relocating older public housing tenants who want to move into these new properties Argyle will be helping Housing ACT free up larger properties to house more families more quickly.

The 52 units are among the 297 units for older public housing tenants wanting to downsize that are being built at eight sites across Canberra under the Australian Government's Nation Building program.

Argyle's entry into the ACT goes to one of the ACT Government's objectives of growing the territory's community housing sector while continuing to provide rebated rent to persons on low incomes.

## RECIPE CORNER

### Spaghetti Bolognese (Aussie style)

Spaghetti bolognese is a real Aussie family staple and this recipe contains tomato soup in the ingredients. It doesn't get any easier than this!

#### Ingredients:

1 tablespoon olive oil  
 2 onions, finely diced  
 500g minced beef  
 1 clove garlic, crushed  
 1/4 cup tomato paste  
 1 teaspoon oregano  
 1 cup red wine  
 1 tin tomato soup  
 1 tablespoon sweet chilli sauce (or 2 if you like chilli)  
 2 tablespoon tomato sauce  
 1 cup chicken stock  
 salt and pepper to taste

#### Method:

In a pan, heat the oil and brown the mince onion and garlic.

Add the tomato paste and oregano to the pan and cook for 2 minutes.

Stir in the tomato sauce, sweet chilli, red wine, chicken stock, tomato soup.

Bring to the boil and simmer for 30 minutes.

Season with salt and pepper.



## Compliment about service from a housing tenant

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To DHCS Feedback Service

My name is [name withheld], and I am an ACT Housing Trust tenant, and I'd like to pay Spotless a compliment for the way that Mr Graeme O'Rourke of Spotless recently responded to a complaint that I submitted about a Spotless subcontractor. While I normally find the Spotless subcontractors to be professional and efficient, in this particular instance, the subcontractor fell very far short of the ideal. I complained to Spotless by email.

Mr O'Rourke responded in a prompt and timely manner (he telephoned me the same day). He (very importantly) made me feel that my complaint was welcome and valued as customer service feedback. Mr O'Rourke also made me feel that Spotless would use my complaint to improve the service that Spotless could give to tenants through that particular subcontractor. Finally, Mr O'Rourke explained to me how Spotless would achieve this (in practice).

Mr O'Rourke's approach to managing my complaint (and I assume, complaints in general) was a model of best practice, and helped to resolve the issue with a minimum of further action by either Spotless or by me.

I hope there is some mechanism for this compliment to be recorded permanently.

”

Editor's comment: Congratulations Graeme—it is very satisfying to get a compliment on your excellent service and assistance to a tenant.



## Homeless young people to receive wrap-around services at new Braddon development

Youths at risk of homelessness in the ACT will receive additional support to sustain a tenancy and reconnect with their education, training and employment opportunities under a new program to be delivered at an \$11.65 million social housing development in Braddon.

Minister for Community Services, Joy Burch officially open a 42-unit social housing development recently in Braddon which will include 15 units for a new Youth Integrated Education and Accommodation Service, 18 for public housing, and the remaining nine will be transferred to CHC Affordable Housing to be used for rebated renters.

The new youth service, to be delivered by Anglicare and Barnardos as the

successful tenderers, will provide young people at risk of homelessness with education and training links to improve their employment prospects and reconnect with the community and their families.

The Youth Integrated Education and Accommodation Service will provide a unique approach to addressing youth homelessness in the ACT, recognising that young people need more than a roof over their heads.

The program will provide on-site, personalised support and connect young people with education, training and employment providers.

The \$1.58 million Youth Integrated Education and Accommodation Service is jointly funded by the

ACT and federal governments through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

The ACT Government provided the land at Braddon (a former car park) for the development, which was funded under the Australian Government's Nation Building Program. The 42 units are among more than 400 social housing dwellings constructed in the ACT under the initiative.

In addition to Barnardos and Anglicare's service, the Rotary Club will provide a mentoring role to the young people and will play an advisory role in overseeing the provision of services to the program.

## Plans to reduce violence

**A specialist counselling and intervention program for adult males who perpetrate domestic violence will be established in the ACT. The purpose of the program is to effect long-term behavioural change and reduce re-offending.**

The 2011–12 ACT Budget provides \$0.424 million over four years to deliver the new Family Violence Prevention Program, which aims to enhance the capacity of a community service organisation in providing services that address the needs of perpetrators. The funding is in addition to the \$2 million recurrent funding provided to services annually for the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.

The program will support the objectives of the ACT Strategy to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children which will be launched later this year. It aligns with the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 (National Plan).

Research tells us that the likelihood of recidivism can be reduced by addressing the underlying causes of offending behaviour.

The ACT will target perpetrators of domestic violence with both early intervention and prevention as well as with post-sentencing support.

This will include addressing issues underlying or exacerbated by violence: alcohol and other drug dependency, mental illness, support and individual counselling.

Housing ACT has also implemented “The Staying at Home after

Domestic Violence Program” initiative developed in conjunction with the Domestic Violence Counselling Service (DVCS) to provide support for victims of domestic violence to remain housed in their long term accommodation. This program supports the family to remain in the home, and have the perpetrator removed from the tenancy agreement and rehoused as appropriate. This takes place, where appropriate, after final domestic orders have been granted.

Training has also been provided by the Domestic Violence Crisis Service to Housing ACT staff about domestic violence. All staff who undertook the training were informed of the processes for identifying possible domestic violence. They were also advised of when to inform the tenant of their options for applying for sole tenancy on their home.

## Natural gas safety checklist from ActewAGL

### Maintaining appliances

**Natural gas appliances, such as stoves, hot water systems or heaters, should be checked and maintained annually by a licensed gas fitter in accordance with the manufacturer’s guidelines.**

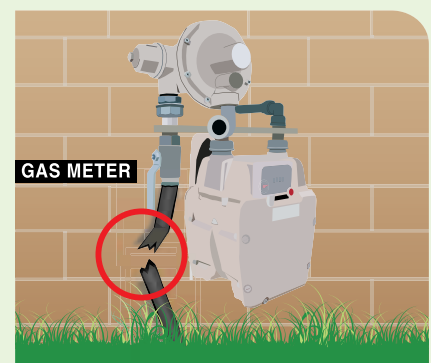
Always ask for a written report of the work undertaken.

### What to do if you smell gas

Natural gas has no odour. To help you detect the presence of gas, a strong odourant that smells like rotten eggs is added.

If you smell gas:

- 1 ensure gas appliances are turned off
- 2 open windows and doors
- 3 remove sources of ignition
- 4 leave the premises and turn off the main gas tap at the meter by turning the yellow valve lever so it runs at right angle to the pipe
- 5 **call ActewAGL’s 24-hour gas emergencies and faults line on 13 1909.**



For more natural gas and electrical safety tips go to [actewagl.com.au/safety](http://actewagl.com.au/safety)

# Are you bothered by something your neighbour does?

**Rather than stewing about it, why not contact the Conflict Resolution Service (CRS) to talk it over? CRS provides confidential dispute coaching services free.**

It's much easier to settle disagreements if you act early, rather than letting things escalate.

We are the experts when it comes to arguments or disputes between neighbours, and there is nothing wrong with asking for advice.

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## Option 1:

We can talk with you on the 'phone or in our office in Civic.

We get your perspective on the situation and what your goals are for resolution, and we discuss the options for reaching an outcome which meets everyone needs.

This is also an opportunity to increase your knowledge of conflict resolution techniques and strategies to help you manage the current situation and prevent it getting worse. This meeting does not commit you to any further resolution options.



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## Option 2:

Referral to other services that may be of assistance to you, independent of any involvement with CRS

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## Option 3:

We can arrange a mediation session between you and your neighbour. Mediation is a way to bring people together to talk about problems or disagreements. It is a step-by-step approach to talking through issues and working things out.

People find the impartial mediators and the structured process helps them talk constructively with their neighbours, especially where communication has stopped or is stressful.

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CRS offers an impartial and confidential service. Using CRS's services is voluntary. CRS does not take sides, nor make decisions for you.

Our main aim is to assist everyone involved to resolve differences they have in a fair and acceptable manner.

Meetings with CRS can only be held during business hours, but mediation sessions can be held during or outside office hours at a time convenient to you.

If any of this reminds you of your situation, give us a call on 6162 4050. Visit the CRS website [www.crs.org.au](http://www.crs.org.au) for more helpful advice.

It's much easier to settle disagreements if you act early, rather than letting things escalate.

# Advice from Spotless **about mould**

**Mould is a form of fungus growth and its spread is primarily by air spores that develop and grow on almost any surface provided the following conditions are present:**

- a relevant indoor humidity of 80% or higher
- moisture, usually from condensation—mould can grow without actual condensation on the walls, but the condensation promotes it
- a nutrient for the mould to feed on.

Research has shown that certain ingredients in most types of paint and house fluff impregnated with cooking fumes provide excellent foods for mould.

Two types of mould are common in Canberra. Sooty mould leaves surfaces with a brown or black stain and is usually found on the walls and ceilings of bedrooms and in cupboards. If left untreated it will spread to other rooms of the house. The other common type is a green, furry mould, which grows on shoes and clothes.

## **How to prevent mould**

Mould cannot grow if dry air is circulating. It follows that proper ventilation prevents mould. Whenever possible open windows and doors to allow fresh air to circulate around inside your dwelling. Also make sure there is adequate ventilation when drying clothes or showering etc.

To prevent green, furry mould every care should be taken to ensure that footwear and clothes are not put away in wardrobes or in dark confined spaces in a damp condition.

## **How to eradicate mould**

The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) has recommended the following treatment for mould infestation:

- walls and ceilings heavily infested with mould should be washed with water to remove as much of the mould as possible
- all affected surfaces should then be washed with a solution of one part of a household bleach containing sodium hypochlorite to three parts of clean water

- change cloths frequently because dirty cloths spread the infestation rather than remove it
- it may be necessary to repeat the bleach treatment to arrest any recurring infestation.
- condensation should be dried from walls and windows whenever it appears
- mould spores are airborne and it is advisable to wash curtains as well as furniture—where possible, dry the curtains in sunlight.

This treatment has already been proved to be successful in Canberra homes.

## **Tenant responsibility**

Tenants are responsible for the prevention and removal of mould from walls and other surfaces of the property unless this is directly attributable to water entry through the building structure.

If deemed through a Total Facilities Management inspection that the cause of the mould is a tenant responsibility (ie. not adequately ventilating property when using dryer, showering etc) the tenant will be given 14 days to rectify the property prior to a further inspection by the Spotless Supervisor.



Change cloths frequently because dirty cloths spread the infestation rather than remove it.



## A new gateway to housing and homelessness services

### The Central Access Point

Many tenants will be familiar with the arrangements for Gateway Services at Nature Conservation House. Whilst these arrangements have served tenants and staff well over the years, we know we can always improve the way we deliver services to the ACT community.

Construction is currently nearing completion on the new "Central Access Point" to provide a new look for Gateway Services and improved experience for people who need to access public housing and other support services.

The Central Access Point will co-locate a range of services including Gateway Services, First Point and the Supportive Tenancies Program to streamline access to the services people need. We will also look at how a range of other services, such as Centrelink can be included within the Central Access Point.



New gateway service area in process of construction for Central Access Point

A concierge will meet people as they enter the Central Access Point to quickly find out what their needs are and what service or help can be provided. People will also have access to a range of facilities including the internet and photocopying. If they need to wait for an interview or appointment they may choose to watch television, access the internet, or print out documents etc.



New gateway service area in process of construction for Central Access Point



Clients will have comfortable seating and areas where they can read newspapers or could comfortably fill in forms. There will also be a much improved area for kids to play.

The service area will be open and welcoming, including client assistance stations, self service stations, and meeting/privacy rooms (see concept picture below).

At this stage we anticipate that the Central Access Point should commence operations in June 2011.

We are excited about the new Central Access Point and are looking forward to seeing you there.

## Offer to Canberra residents

### ACT Government's vehicle anti-theft initiative—Vehicle Immobiliser Scheme

The Council on the Ageing (ACT) (COTA) administers the vehicle immobiliser scheme which is part of the ACT government's vehicle anti-theft initiative.

The scheme supplies and fits immobilisers to unprotected vehicles. This includes most standard vehicles manufactured before 2001 when anti-theft technology became mandatory. The scheme has run for several years and targets owners of older vehicles.

#### How does it work?

The scheme works with an initial enquiry to Canberra Connect on 13 22 81 to establish eligibility.

A voucher is forwarded to eligible applicants who will then arrange installation by one of the approved installers listed on the voucher.

The installer will receive the voucher as payment and subsequently redeem the voucher with COTA who will issue payment to the installer.

There are two categories of subsidy.

- **Full subsidy** (\$200.00) to ACT resident, health card holders which includes full time students on Austudy and Abstudy.
- **50% subsidy** (\$100.00) to all other ACT residents.

The maximum subsidy will fully purchase and install an immobiliser from an approved product list.

Applicants have the option of purchasing a more expensive item and paying the balance.

For more information call **13 22 81** or go to [www.cota-act.org.au](http://www.cota-act.org.au) ■ [www.justice.act.gov.au](http://www.justice.act.gov.au) ■ [www.carsafe.com.au](http://www.carsafe.com.au)

## New older persons development with the Salvation Army

### Housing ACT is launching an exciting new older person's development with the Salvation Army.

The development aims to assist public housing tenants who live in three bedroom or larger homes who wish to relocate to these spacious two bedroom apartments with 6 star energy ratings located in the prime suburb of Narrabundah.

The development is within walking distance of the shopping centre and also includes a community room which will be available to the residents.

The Salvation Army will manage the development and the tenants will receive the support of a well regarded and nationally renowned organisation.

#### Interested?

If you would like to discuss this further or express an interest to relocate please contact Housing ACT's:

- Ms Tracey Harwood  
6207 0924

or

- Ms Darlene Mitchell  
6207 1391

## Smoke alarms

### ...are very important for your safety

#### ...is yours working?

You can test your smoke alarm by pressing the 'test' button. If you suspect your smoke alarm does not work please ring the Maintenance Call Centre on 6207 1500 and report it.

#### ...don't burn up... ring up



## Big congratulations for 15 years of the *Big Issue*

**The Minister, Joy Burch applauded the work of the *Big Issue* magazine after attending a recent celebration for the 15th anniversary of the publication in Australia.**

The *Big Issue* has helped turned around the lives of many people in Australia, giving them the means with which to kick start personal transformations.

This has no less been the case in the ACT where since it was launched in 2004, it has grown from two vendors selling around 50 magazines a fortnight to

20 vendors selling around 2000 magazines a fortnight.

The *Big Issue* magazine supports the social inclusion of people experiencing homelessness through regular vendor meetings, fortnightly gatherings, Street Soccer, and other social events. In addition, the magazine provides vendors with the opportunity to earn an income while working towards longer term goals.

Within the territory, the *Big Issue* magazine is operated by Woden Community Service through the assistance of \$138,500 in ACT Government funding.

## From the Editor

**Can you send to *Home Front*:**

- your handy tips or recipes
- feedback on services
- matters you would like covered or addressed.

Remember *Home Front* is for you so we would like to cover issues you and your family are interested in hearing about.

*Robert Martin*

Editor

**Please send to:**

**E** conchita.fernandez@act.gov.au, or

**E** robert.martin@act.gov.au, or

**F** (02) 62071996

or write to us at:

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Please include your full name, address and telephone number.

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If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like to receive this publication in an **alternative format**—such as large print or audio—please telephone **(02) 6205 0619**.

If English is not your first language and you require the **translating and interpreting service**—please telephone **131 450**.

If you are deaf or hearing impaired and require the **TTY typewriter service**—please telephone **(02) 6205 0888**.

## Contact details — Housing ACT

**Housing ACT General Enquiries**  
Phone **13 34 27**  
[www.dhcs.act.gov.au](http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au)

**Spotless Maintenance line**  
Phone **6207 1500** (24 hours, 7 days)

**Housing ACT Complaints Unit**  
Phone **6207 1515**

**Joint Champions Group**  
Secretariat  
Phone **6207 1507**