



Home front

Message from Executive Director

Dear Tenants

Welcome to the Spring edition of *Home Front*. This edition is full of information on a number of initiatives that Housing ACT has been implementing over the last year.

As we have been reporting in the last few editions of *Home Front*, Housing ACT is expanding its property redevelopment program with the *New Housing Choice for Older Public Housing Tenants*. This program enables tenants to 'age in place' by moving into new purpose-built homes while remaining in their neighbourhoods, and in close proximity to familiar shops and local services. I am pleased to announce that 18 tenants will be relocating to the first site in Macquarie during November 2010. Allocation to the Curtin site has been completed, and successful tenants have been notified.

Ms Maureen Sheehan

In this edition there is also information about the *Social Housing Register*, which was introduced in September, enabling Housing ACT to manage the application process for both public and community housing applicants. This new system streamlines the application process and provides applicants with more housing choices and a greater opportunity to be housed in either public or community housing.

You will also meet one of our most important members of staff, Housing ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison officer, Maurice Walker.

Executive Director
Housing and Community Services

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International Tenants' Day Art Exhibition and Competition

The Tenants' Union ACT and Housing ACT have staged another successful 2010 International Tenants' Day Art Exhibition and Competition which attracted 49 entries.

Canberra's most creative private and public housing tenants submitted artworks themed Rent or Own — it's still my home, which included paintings, drawings, sculpture, photography and pottery.

The artwork was on show during early October with the Canberra community voting for their favourite in this year's People's Choice Award.

Congratulations to everyone who entered!

Ms Novie Creech from Dickson with her third prize winning 'Mining' — a line drawing on canvas.



Tenants give Housing ACT **the thumbs up!**

An independent survey of more than 1000 public housing tenants has found 75% of public housing residents are increasingly satisfied with the services they receive from Housing ACT.

This was up from 71% in the previous survey in 2008, and 69% satisfaction rate in 2006.

The survey allows Housing ACT to better understand tenant concerns in relation to the services they receive.

It revealed that there is still room for improvement in responding to non-urgent home maintenance with 68% satisfaction.

On a positive note, as a result of their housing, 92% of public housing tenants say they are feeling more settled in their lives and 88% said they are better able to manage money.

Housing ACT, in the last five years, has continued to improve their relationship with public housing tenants.

The involvement of the 2009–2011 Joint Champions Group (JCG), who are a tenant participation group, has gone a long way in fostering a stronger relationship between Housing ACT and housing tenants.

Recently, a subgroup of the JCG Maintenance Working Group wrote to the Department of Territory and Municipal Services about increasing the level of garbage collection, recycling and green waste in public housing multi-complexes.

Meet Maurice: a champion for our city's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community

- ✓ **Neighbourhood dispute resolver**
- ✓ **Information provider**
- ✓ **Cultural confidant**
- ✓ **A friendly face**

Housing ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer, Maurice Walker, is a well-known and highly regarded member of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, having settled in the capital almost 30 years ago.

Maurice has a variety of roles which keep him very busy during the week and says no two days are ever the same but he loves it that way.

"Every day I get to meet with people from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and help them with one of the most important aspects of their lives—their homes," Maurice said.

He has been working in his current role for the past two years and liaises closely with Housing ACT to sustain tenancies, and increase housing allocation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"Canberra is home to approximately 4000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and roughly half of those are Housing ACT tenants," Maurice said.

"Essentially, I'm here to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing tenants with any needs they have.

"That could mean filling out forms, helping them find the right documentation, and ensuring their housing meets their needs.

"We work with them to deal with neighbourhood disputes, making sure their tenancies are going well, or just having a chat to check they are ok."

Maurice said many tenants don't identify themselves as Aboriginal

or Torres Strait Islander on their housing application form and are unaware of services available to them by Housing ACT.

"If people do identify themselves, it means the right funding will be allocated so they can receive appropriate entitlements."

Mr Walker said he was pleased to be part of the Housing ACT team and is focused on improving tenancy life.

**Housing ACT
Aboriginal and
Torres Strait
Islander clients
and applicants
can contact
Maurice by
telephone on
6205 5305.**



Cutting of additional Housing ACT tenancy keys

All tenants can now get additional Housing ACT (Falcon) keys from Bunning's at the following store locations— Fyshwick, Tuggeranong and Belconnen and from Mister Minute at Belconnen Mall.

A sample key testing box has been provided at these outlets and to Housing ACT at the Belconnen Application Services Centre at Nature Conservation House, Emu Bank, to find out the identification of your key category.

If you provide a key at these outlets that cannot be reproduced due to

that key category being discontinued, please contact the Maintenance Call Centre on 6207 1500.

They will arrange for a locksmith to attend your home to upgrade your locks and provide new keys to suit the new range of key categories.



Housing ACT Total Facilities Management SPOTLESS — Spring jobs

As we are all aware, the ACT has been enjoying above average rainfall over the past few months. The rain, combined with some warmer weather can be hazardous to our homes and the environment around us.

It's important to remember: to reduce fuel and other hazard outside the home; and to maintain the grass in yards.

It is also time to:

- check and clean out debris from the roof and gutters
- check the operation of your smoke detectors 
- for those tenants whose homes are flats or units, please ensure that you don't place any items including furniture, unwanted goods or rubbish in the stairway, public hallways or other common areas.

Placing items in these areas may be a breach of your tenancy agreement and or the *Emergencies Act 2004*. The Emergencies Act allows fines to be issued for obstructing people from leaving the building in case of a fire and/or for storing or depositing flammable material which poses a danger to life or property. If you would

like help with these tasks, please contact your housing manager for advice and a list of support agencies.

For further information on fire safety, please visit www.esa.act.gov.au or ask for the *Fire Safety In Your Home* brochure from your housing manager.

Did you know?

The Maintenance Call Centre received 66,421 calls during July 2009–June 2010! That's over 255 calls received each work day (Monday to Friday). The busiest days were Monday and Tuesday. From those calls 43,613 work orders were raised for responsive repairs. That means on the work days available (Monday to Friday) around 167 work orders were raised each day which saw contractors attending a Housing ACT property on each occasion. In addition to the responsive repairs, over 9000 work orders were also raised for planned repairs and upgrades.

That's a whole lot of telephone calls, work orders and visits!

Social Housing Register — a common waiting list

A centralised waiting list for public and community housing was introduced in September, providing low and middle income Canberrans with a greater choice of housing products with a single application.

The new system will mean that for the first time, the ACT will have a single entry point for people applying to enter the social housing system. This will create a more efficient and responsive social housing system.

People seeking public and community housing will now only have to fill out one form and engage in one assessment process to be registered for multiple housing providers.

They can also nominate their interest in shared accommodation. The register will facilitate a simpler and fairer way to access housing assistance, provide greater housing choice and present a clearer understanding of housing demand.

Mythbuster: visitor or resident?

For those people who are receiving a rental rebate, any change to the composition in your household will require you to lodge a new *Application for a Rental Rebate*.

A statutory declaration advising of the date the household resident moved in must also be provided.

Failure to do this may later result in a back date of rent to when the household resident moved in, and a corresponding debt being charged to the tenant's account.

Similarly, should a household resident leave the household, the tenant should immediately lodge a new *Application for a Rental Rebate* as they may be entitled to a reduced rebated rent.

A visitor should not be confused with a resident. Where a person is accepted as a bona-fide visitor, a period of four weeks is normally allowed before they are regarded as a resident of the household and are required to declare their income on the *Application for a Rental Rebate*.

Should you need more information, please contact your housing manager.



Accessibility

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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

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

Housing ACT Complaints Unit
Phone **6207 1515**

Joint Champions Group
Secretariat
Phone **6207 1507**

New Chief Executive for DHCS

Mr Martin Hehir has been appointed as the new Chief Executive (CE) of the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS).

Mr Hehir has held the CE role in an acting capacity following the retirement of Ms Sandra Lambert earlier this year.

Mr Hehir was formerly the Deputy Chief Executive, DHCS and the Executive Director, Housing and Community Services, and remains committed to the improvement of services to Housing ACT.

Access to Art

Are you a tenant of public or community housing and have an interest in art? ...Then this is for you!

Access to Art is a program that will enable public and community housing tenants to participate in different art courses across Canberra. The program has been running since October 2007 and has seen over 40 people produce some fantastic works. Last year's courses culminated in a public exhibition of the wonderful work produced! The program will assist tenants in finding out what art courses are available and will meet the cost of the course and some materials. No experience is necessary, this is a great way to have some fun and enjoy the well known benefits of creativity. If this sounds like your kind of thing then get in touch!

The best thing is this is a program run by tenants for tenants! For more information call Lynton on 6234 6822