

Home Stories

May 2015 EDITION 8

RESIDENT STORY

Robert Whitton
Gaffney Street, Pascoe Vale

Meet Robert Whitton, a pensioner who until settling in at his Housing Choices Pascoe Vale home, had been through some testing personal hardships. This included running away from home at 15 and five moves in the past seven months.

Robert says he now feels "pretty settled" since moving into his Gaffney Street home in January of 2014 with the help of Housing Choices and Good Shepherd Microfinance. Robert accessed a \$1,200 interest free loan through Good Shepherd Microfinance to help him purchase essential items like a fridge and washing machine. It was this assistance that motivated Robert to help promote the No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) and share his story with the general public.

According to Renee Hancock from Good Shepherd Microfinance, Robert has undertaken a number of speaking opportunities with small and large groups to help raise awareness about financial exclusion in Australia.

"Robert has been so generous giving his time to share his personal story and warn people against the dangers of payday lenders," said Renee.

Continued on page 2...



HELLO FROM HOUSING CHOICES

Hello and welcome to the second edition of Home Stories for 2015. I hope everyone has enjoyed the start to the year and is looking forward to the winter months ahead.

It has been a great start to the year for Housing Choices and in this edition I wanted to highlight some of them to you, these include:

- » HCA's expansion into South Australia
- » Performance Statistics for the first quarter of 2015
- » Public Art in Preston

I am also pleased to share with you an ideal winter recipe brought to you by our Housing Officer Angie Gonos and invite you to partake in our crossword competition where you can go into the draw to win two Gold Class movie tickets to Village Cinemas.

Finally, if you have any ideas for articles for the newsletter we would love to hear from you. Simply contact your Housing Officer on 1300 312 447.

Until next time,

Roberta Buchanan
General Manager, Victoria

ROBERT'S STORY (CONT.)

"Clients like Robert help us to bring NILS to life for people who are thinking about a loan. He's also been instrumental in helping us to demonstrate the positive impact that NILS can have on someone's life. It really is a life changing loan and for Robert it provided an opportunity to start afresh."

As a previous Building Manager himself, Robert feels that Gaffney Street is "really well maintained" and that some of its benefits include the building's "security, cleanliness and proximity to public transport".

We wish Robert all the best as he continues the next chapter of his life in his home at Pascoe Vale.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT NILS

The No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) provides individuals and families on low incomes access to safe, fair and affordable credit. Maximum loan amounts may vary, but credit can start from \$300 up to \$1,200 for essential goods and services. Once the application is approved, repayments are set up at an affordable amount over a 12 to 18 month period.

With NILS, no credit checks are made as this is a program based on trust and respect. To find out more, call 13 NILS (13 6457) or visit nils.com.au.

GROWTH INTO SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Housing Choices is going from strength to strength to help people find affordable housing across the country.

From 1 July this year, we are set to join forces with a respected South Australian housing provider, Common Ground Adelaide, which has specialist expertise in housing the homeless and people at risk of homelessness.

Common Ground Adelaide will retain its name, but will be part of the national Housing Choices Australia group.

What does it mean for existing residents in Victoria?

- » There will be no change to your tenancy or rent.
- » You will continue to deal with the same housing staff.
- » You will be part of a stronger, more diverse housing group that can house even more people in need and better address your needs.

What we can achieve together

HCA Managing Director Michael Lennon says: "We are delighted to have found in Common Ground Adelaide an organisation that shares our business ethos and goals, which delivers best practice housing and can help us realise our plan to be a truly national provider delivering local solutions."

Please contact your Housing Officer if you have any questions or concerns about this news.

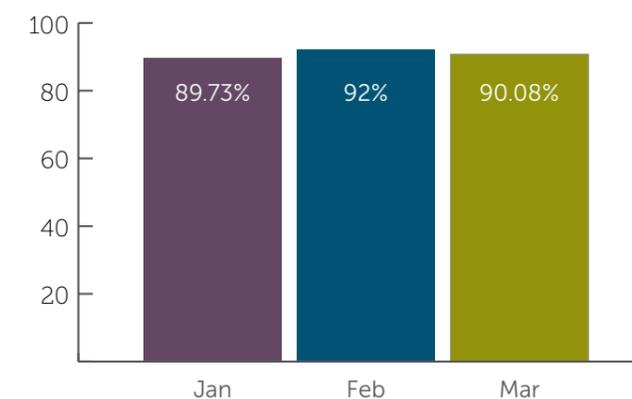
PERFORMANCE STATISTICS JANUARY–MARCH 2015

We want to give you clear information about our performance so you can see what we are doing well and what we need to improve on.

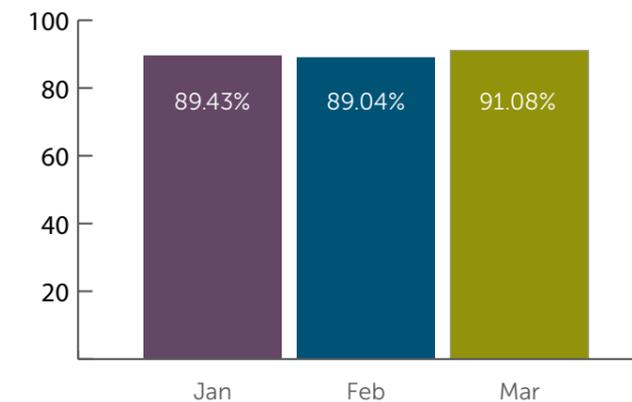
REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

You, the residents, rate repairs and maintenance as one of the most important services that we deliver. We aim to complete all repairs categorised as urgent within 24 hours, priority within 7 days and non-urgent within 14 days. The below graphs show the percentage of repairs completed on time.

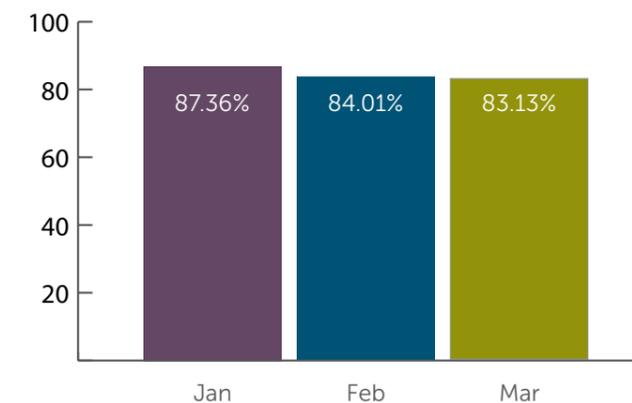
URGENT REPAIRS COMPLETED ON TIME



PRIORITY REPAIRS COMPLETED ON TIME



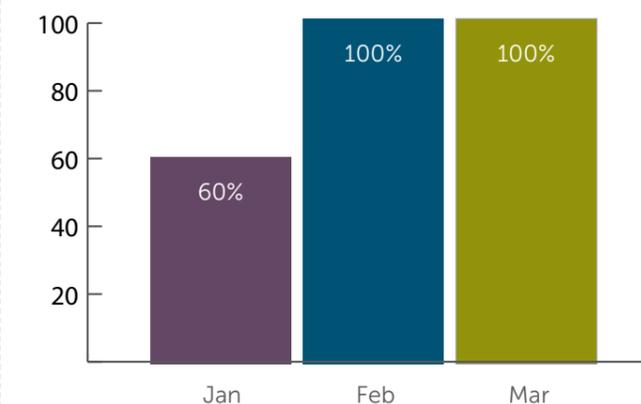
NON-URGENT REPAIRS COMPLETED ON TIME



COMPLAINTS

Housing Choices responds to a number of complaints on a daily basis regarding a range of matters including neighbourhood disputes, noise concerns, dissatisfaction with our service and repairs and maintenance. The graph below illustrates how many complaints were resolved within 30 days.

COMPLAINTS DEALT WITH WITHIN 30 DAYS



RENT ARREARS

Managing our rental income is important to us as it enables us to maintain our homes, build new homes and deliver services to our residents. Our rent arrears as at March 2015 was **0.87%** of our rental income.

Collecting this income would mean that we were able to provide the following services:

- » 6 homes—being upgraded with new kitchens, bathrooms, painting and carpets
- » 16 homes—being painted and carpets replaced
- » 50 homes—having air conditioning installed
- » 65 grants—these are grants that we provide to residents to assist with community events e.g. gardening, BBQ and social activities.

EVICTIIONS

It is always with regret for our staff when we have to evict someone from their home. We work tirelessly with our residents to provide support to people so that they can remain in their home. However sometimes there is no alternative and we had to go to VCAT and seek a repossession order. Thankfully this does not happen too often as our statistics show that 3 tenancies ended due to eviction.



RESIDENTS' PUBLIC ART PROJECTION IN PRESTON

Together with artists from the Neami Splash Studio, a number of our residents in Preston have been creating a public art project about 'What it is like living in their community'. A guest multimedia artist has turned their work into public art which will be projected onto a building on the corner of Raglan Street and High Street in Preston on the 13 May from 6pm to 9pm. Funded by Darebin City Council and hosted in our Preston Hub community facility, the budding artists have been making art and playing with new techniques and mediums in weekly workshops over the past 2 months. If you can, please go see the artwork on Wednesday, 13 May and congratulate the residents and artists.

Paul, a resident who has produced a film for the project said "I enjoyed getting together; meeting people I hadn't met before, great to see people's creativity being expressed."

Pictured above: Star, playing with new techniques and mediums for artwork for projection

RECIPE: WINTER WARMER

Baked Eggplant Slices with Minced Lamb (For vegetarians delete the meat)

Ingredients:

- » 2 large eggplants
- » 500g minced lamb
- » 250g feta cheese (crumbled)
- » 1 can of mixed beans
- » 1 can of tomato pieces (or salsa)
- » 1 cup of grated mozzarella cheese
- » Salt and pepper
- » Parsley (continental)
- » Oregano
- » Chili (if desired)

Instructions

1. Pre-heat oven: 180 to 200C
2. Slice eggplants in 1cm thick pieces, lay flat in large ovenproof dish, season with salt and pepper and cook until eggplants are slightly cooked
3. In fry pan cook the mince until brown (let cool a little)
4. Mix in a large bowl, the feta, beans, cooled mince, parsley and chili
5. Take each piece of Eggplant (which has been sliced length wise and cooked) and place a handful of the mixture in the middle and roll up, then place in an oven proof dish.
6. Pour over some tomato pieces or salsa and then some mozzarella cheese.
7. Bake in oven until cheese melts and slightly brown
8. Serve with crispy bread and salad

Everyone will love this dish, even the kids!

ENTER THE CROSSWORD COMPETITION TO WIN

Complete the enclosed crossword and send it back to us with your details filled in and you can go in the draw to win two Gold Class movie tickets. Send your entry in by Friday, 26 June to go in the draw.

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