

IMPORTANT UPDATES TO OUR SERVICE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

In response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, on Wednesday 25 March Access Housing temporarily closed our Rivervale, Mandurah and Bunbury offices until further notice.

The majority of our staff will be working remotely / out of the office to encourage physical distancing and minimise contact between staff and tenants.

Our decision to change the way we work is guided by Federal and State Government Health Department recommendations and aims to assist the ongoing health and safety of our staff, tenants and broader community.



Words from our Community Housing General Manager **Natalie Sangalli**

I hope this newsletter finds you safe and well in these pretty trying times.

We have had to assess and adjust how we work over the past few weeks to ensure Access Housing is doing all it can reasonably do to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

You will see examples of how we will be working differently as you read through this newsletter, including changes to our maintenance service, inspections and tenant engagement work. I encourage every tenant to read this edition of the newsletter thoroughly, as it contains information about what our services will look like in the coming days and weeks.

Access Housing will, however, continue to provide a high standard of service to our tenants, but it will be a slightly different kind of service delivered through a different way of working. We have made each decision carefully in order to protect our staff, our tenants and our maintenance contractors as best we reasonably can whilst we continue to provide services to tenants.

We are continuing to investigate new and different ways to stay connected with you and support you through this difficult time. Our staff continue to be available via email or telephone if you need to speak with us. In the meantime, I encourage you to:

- stay up-to-date with advice from the Australian Government Department of Health, the WA Department of Health and World Health Organisation
- only get your COVID-19 news information from reputable media sources, and
- keep yourself and your loved ones safe and well.



Introducing Interim CEO Neil Starkie

I joined Access Housing as Interim Chief Executive Officer on Monday 17 February. These first few weeks have flown by and have not quite been what I was expecting, mainly because of the evolving COVID-19 situation we all find ourselves dealing with.

COVID-19 has meant that the plans and ideas in my head six weeks ago for Access Housing have had to take a back seat for a short time while we undertake everything we can reasonably do to protect our staff, tenants and maintenance contractors from the risks posed by the virus.

We are also diligently planning so we can be in the best possible position to further assist current and future tenants when the COVID-19 situation eases.

Just like you, Access Housing is dealing with a particularly tumultuous set of circumstances at the moment. I kindly ask that a level of patience, understanding and kindness is afforded to our staff as we navigate the days and weeks ahead whilst also continuing to serve you as best we can.

Before joining Access Housing, I worked for Uniting Church in the City (UCIC) in Perth. I managed the business side of the church and developed outreach programs for the elderly, people without a home or at risk of being without a home, refugees and people experiencing long-term

unemployment. Outside of work, I volunteer with a number of organisations assisting people who are without a home and organisations specialising in mental health support and suicide prevention.

One of the main reasons I joined Access Housing was the company's commitment to its values – to be present in people's lives, to listen, be understanding, build trust and adapt to changing environments to always improve how we operate. My philosophy is that I work for the staff of Access Housing who, in turn, work for our tenants.

I look forward to serving Access Housing over the years ahead and to Access Housing continuing to make a positive difference to people's lives.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

The following are some wellbeing strategies to look after ourselves and each other during difficult times like the one currently presented by the COVID-19 situation:

- Be mindful of your exposure to news and media. Choose specific times of day when you will get updates and ensure they are from reputable and reliable sources.
- Stay connected with friends, family and colleagues via email, social media, video conferencing or telephone.
- Find a buddy or group to set daily challenges with. These could include a healthy habit or a creative pursuit. Be sure to encourage and check in daily to stay motivated.
- Establish routines as best you can. This can include things like getting up at the same time daily.
- It is extremely important to seek help if you feel you need it. Below is some information about organisations who can help:

Lifeline (call): 13 11 14

Lifeline (text): 0477 13 11 14

Lifeline Chat (online): <https://www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat>

beyondblue (call): 1300 224 636



STAYING CONNECTED STAYING INFORMED



HOW TO STAY CONNECTED

Even though our offices are closed until further notice, you will still be able to get in touch with us. When you ring our offices, you will hear a forwarding voice message. It is important you leave your name and phone number and tell us the name of the person you want to contact. Our staff will get back to you as soon as possible.

If you know the name of your Tenancy Officer and would like to talk to them directly, please see the table below for their direct phone number:

NAME	ROLE	LOCATION	Number
Anna Atkins	Tenancy Officer	Rivervale	9430 0959
Candice Thorpe	Tenancy Officer	Rivervale	9430 0961
Diana Campbell	ILP Tenancy Officer	Rivervale	9430 0914
Judy Chester	ILP Tenancy Officer	Rivervale	9430 0912
Maria Farooq	Tenancy Officer	Rivervale	9430 0990
Nicola Davies	Tenancy Officer	Mandurah	9534 0410
Sonya Wirth	Tenancy Officer	Mandurah	9534 0411
Alana Tonkin	ILP Tenancy Officer	Mandurah	9534 0431
Nina Peck	Tenancy Officer	Bunbury	9722 7204
Shelley McGovern	ILP Coordinator	Rivervale	9430 0951

HOW TO STAY INFORMED

The COVID-19 situation is changing rapidly, so it's important to stay informed. For up-to-date information about COVID-19, please visit the following trusted and credible websites:

www.health.gov.au for the latest information from the Federal Health Department
www.health.wa.gov.au for the latest information from the WA Health Department
 You can also call the **National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080** or visit the World Health Organisation website on **www.who.int**.

For the most up-to-date information about Access Housing's business operations during the unfolding COVID-19 situation, please refer to our website. Our website has a Google Translator function. This translates words, phrases and web pages from English on our website to a language of your choice. Visit **www.accesshousing.org.au**.



DO WE HAVE YOUR PHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL ADDRESS?

It's important we can stay in touch with you, particularly during the weeks ahead.

Please make sure we have your most up-to-date phone number and email address. Our staff may be contacting you about your tenancy, maintenance requests or just to check in to see how you are going.

MAKING SURE IT'S YOU

We may ask you to verify your identity when you ring us. We will use your Security Question or, if you haven't set one up yet, we'll ask you for other forms of ID.

We will also send a code to the mobile phone number you have given us to check that it's really you we're speaking with.



TENANCY SERVICES UPDATE

Access Housing has made some changes to our tenancy service delivery. We have had to put some services on hold, but there are many of our services we will continue to provide to tenants.

INSPECTIONS

All routine inspections will be postponed until further notice. If you have an inspection already scheduled, your Tenancy Officer will be in touch with you via phone or email.

YOUR RENT

Access Housing will continue to undertake and complete Rent Reviews and tenants are expected to pay rent, however we recognise that this is a time of extreme hardship and financial uncertainty for many of our tenants.

If you are experiencing difficulties paying rent, please call our Rent Review and Debt Recovery Teams.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

We will continue to respond to, investigate and act on anti-social behaviour and nuisance complaints. Our investigations of these complaints will be carried out by phone, email and mail.

We will take necessary action against tenants who cause serious damage or cause, or are likely to cause, injury to anyone. We

ask that tenants be respectful, patient and understanding with each other during this particularly trying time.

TENANT REQUESTS

All tenant requests will be reviewed and processed as normal, including requests for alterations and modifications, pets and transfers.

Please note that tenants are still required to complete the appropriate forms and paperwork for their requests.

While we will be processing transfer requests, we won't be transferring tenants until further notice unless it is an emergency.

Please contact your Tenancy Officer if you would like more information.

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

If you are unhappy with a staff member, a maintenance contractor or with a decision we have made, you have the right to make a complaint or an appeal. Access Housing will continue to investigate and deal with complaints and appeals whilst staff work remotely.

SUPPORT FOR FREMANTLE RESIDENTS DURING COVID-19

The City of Fremantle is launching the 'Neighbour to Neighbour' initiative to support people who are socially isolated and concerned by the developing COVID-19 situation.

The 'Neighbour to Neighbour' program links individuals with a volunteer who supports them with any help they need - be it dog walking, grocery shopping, other errands or just a friendly phone call.

We encourage tenants living in the Fremantle area to reach out for support and take advantage of this program if you think you need it.

To register yourself for assistance through the 'Neighbour to Neighbour' initiative, please visit: www.fremantle.wa.gov.au/neighbour-neighbour-helping-each-other-time-crisis

Access Housing recommends all tenants visit their Local Government website for information about initiatives their Council or Shire may be implementing to help support you during this time.





MAINTENANCE UPDATE

To ensure the safety of tenants and contractors during the COVID-19 outbreak, we are changing how we undertake maintenance repairs as of Monday 23 March 2020 until further notice.

WHAT IS CHANGING?

Tenants are encouraged to report maintenance as per normal. However, the types of maintenance we will be actioning have been amended to reduce the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus.

All emergency, urgent, priority and routine repairs **outside** of the home are to continue as normal.

Emergency and urgent repairs inside of the home will continue as normal.

Priority repairs **inside** homes will be assessed at our discretion to see if they can be deferred.

All routine maintenance **inside** homes will be deferred until further notice.

When you call our Maintenance Hotline to report a repair, our staff will talk to you about your maintenance issue and advise you of whether your issue will be actioned at this time.

After we have confirmed these details with you and, if your issue is approved for works to be done, a contractor will call you to arrange a time to complete maintenance works at your home.

Remember: if your maintenance request is approved but you don't get a call from a contractor, or your works are not completed within the advised time frame, please let us know.

MAINTENANCE APPOINTMENTS

If you have arranged a specific day and time for one of our contractors to do repairs at your property, it is important you are there to let them in. Not doing so may result in you being charged the call out fee.

If you need to change an appointment, please call our Maintenance Hotline.

KEEPING YOU AND OUR CONTRACTORS SAFE

Your safety and the safety of our contractors is our priority. When our contractors get in touch with you to arrange a time to visit, you must let them know if you or a household member have been feeling unwell.

Our contractors will adhere to recommended hygiene practices while they undertake works at your home. This will include washing their hands and maintaining a safe physical distance. Tenants will also need to adopt these measures while your maintenance issue is being addressed.

MAINTENANCE HOTLINE 1800 203 383

Our Maintenance Hotline hours remain unchanged.

Tenants can report maintenance matters to our Maintenance Hotline between 8am and 4pm.

Maintenance	What we will action during the COVID-19 pandemic	Time frames	Examples
Emergency	All works will continue to be undertaken	6 hours	Gas leak, broken window, burst water pipes, electrical sparking
Urgent	All works will continue to be undertaken	24 hours	No hot water, no electricity, broken locks
Priority	All works outside the home will continue to be undertaken. All issues inside the home will be assessed on a case by case basis.	7 days	Oven not heating, appliances not working, pest control, reticulation, damaged fences
Routine	All works outside the home will continue to be undertaken. All works inside the home will be deferred until further notice.	21 days	Gutter cleaning, door repairs, blinds replacement



TENANT SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

All face-to-face tenant engagement activities, including focus groups and Advisory Committee of Tenant (ACT) meetings, are on hold until further notice.

While we value the work we do with tenants, the health and safety of tenants and staff is our number one priority.

We recognise this is a difficult time for many and that staying connected is more important than ever. In line with this, Access Housing is going to continue to provide some of our programs and deliver them in a different way.

We are also developing some other ways you can stay involved and connected with us in the days and weeks ahead.

WHAT IS NEW?

TENANT HARDSHIP RELIEF FUND

We are developing a temporary Tenant Hardship Relief Fund to provide emergency relief to tenants who are experiencing significant financial hardship and barriers to accessing essential goods and services. This may include supporting you to stay connected by mobile phone.



If you are experiencing hardship at this time, please contact your Tenancy Officer or our Tenant Engagement and Capacity Building Officer Alex Kepes by calling 9430 0945 for more information.

TIME TO TALK!

Do you want advice on how to stay mentally and physically healthy in your home?

Do you want ideas on what you can do to keep connected to your community?

Do you just want to check in and talk to someone?

If you do, please contact Alex Kepes by calling 9430 0945 or texting 0437 887 675.



WHAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO DO!

ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF TENANTS

The ACT must go on! We are working with our Advisory Committee of Tenants to find alternate ways of getting their feedback until we can recommence face-to-face groups.

TENANT ART

Our Tenant Art Display has been put on hold temporarily while our offices are closed. Instead, Access Housing is starting an art competition for tenants! Contact Alex Kepes for more information.

OPPORTUNITIES FUND

The Access Housing Opportunities Fund will continue to be available for tenants to access. We encourage tenants to think positively about the future and reach out to see how Access Housing could provide financial assistance to help you achieve your goals.

ANNUAL TENANT SURVEY

We are still planning to conduct our Annual Tenant Survey in 2020. Keep an eye on your letterboxes and the Access Housing website in the coming months for more information as it becomes available.

INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM (ILP)

Our ILP staff will continue to provide support coordination to tenants by telephone, email, mail and text messages.

Our ILP Coordinator Shelley McGovern is continuing to have regular contact with Mental Health Clinics and other Mental Health Support providers to ensure everyone receives the support they need to stay well.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF TENANTS UPDATE



JOIN THE
VIEWS@HOME
EMAIL FEEDBACK
GROUP!

From the ACT Chairperson Trish Owen



The ACT is off and running, with our first meeting taking place in January.

In our first meeting, the ACT had input into communications regarding updates to how Access Housing calculates rent. This included giving feedback on an information brochure and having input into the development of Rent Setting Information sessions for tenants.

I was really proud of how each ACT member was able to put aside their personal views and use their experiences to tell Access Housing how to best inform tenants about rent setting. We hope that having this issue pass through the ACT made it easier for the wider tenant community to process and understand this update.

Maintenance was also on the agenda, which is a topic many tenants have expressed their interest about. This item brought about a lot of discussion and one action has been the implementation of a regular section in the newsletter about maintenance processes.

The second ACT meeting was unfortunately cancelled, in light of the unprecedented times we are in. The ACT is communicating with Access Housing about how to proceed with meetings.

One topic the ACT has been able to discuss recently is the development of an email feedback group for the wider tenant group. The ACT members have contributed their perspective on this via email or phone so that Access Housing can communicate about this initiative. It seems, in these times, that finding alternative ways to communicate and connect is a pressing issue.

Please do not hesitate to use the ACT email address - act@accesshousing.org.au - to present your concerns, especially in these difficult times as tenant concerns and priorities may be challenged in new ways.

Stay safe and calm.

Trish Owen
ACT Chairperson

The *Views@Home* email feedback group is a **NEW** email based initiative that provides a different way for tenants to give feedback on how Access Housing is communicating with tenants.

The *Views@Home* email feedback group will complement the work of the ACT by giving all tenants a quick and easy way of commenting on our communications. The email group allows us to talk to you about our services and get your feedback while we are not running tenant focus groups or speaking with you face-to-face.

WHY SHOULD TENANTS BE INVOLVED?

Tenants should be involved so they remain an active part of their community and stay connected with Access Housing. It also gives tenants the opportunity to have their voices heard and impact change around our service delivery.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Views@Home group members will be asked to comment on Access Housing publications, forms, fact sheets and more on an occasional basis. Access Housing will consider all of the feedback and will incorporate tenant advice and recommendations wherever possible.

All members of the feedback group will be sent a copy of what has been developed so they can see how their comments have been incorporated.

WHO CAN JOIN VIEWS@HOME?

All Access Housing tenants and household members are encouraged to get involved. If you need help or support to participate, please let us know.

To be involved with the *Views@Home* feedback group, tenants and other residents must have an active email address.

HOW TO JOIN

If you would like to join the email group, or have any questions about the *Views@Home* email feedback group, please contact Amy Kidner on 0429 858 127 or email amy.kidner@accesshousing.org.au.

AUTUMN PUZZLE - WIN A \$50 BUNNINGS VOUCHER!

M	M	C	V	I	E	W	S	Q	Y	L	I	M	A	F
Q	A	W	E	R	T	Y	U	I	T	O	P	A	S	D
R	T	I	Z	X	C	V	B	C	N	M	Q	W	H	E
E	T	R	N	T	Y	U	E	I	O	P	A	S	Y	D
S	E	F	G	T	H	N	J	M	H	K	L	Z	G	X
I	R	C	V	H	E	B	N	M	A	S	F	R	I	B
L	S	C	V	O	B	N	E	R	N	I	T	E	E	G
I	Q	W	C	M	X	C	A	V	D	N	L	N	N	N
E	R	N	S	E	C	F	W	N	S	A	H	O	E	I
N	A	U	T	U	M	N	B	S	C	W	H	H	U	E
C	P	A	T	I	E	N	C	E	T	E	T	P	S	B
E	H	A	F	S	D	N	E	I	R	F	L	H	Q	L
G	T	O	G	E	T	H	E	R	C	W	A	X	H	L
T	W	A	S	H	F	G	H	J	K	L	E	K	L	E
C	O	M	M	U	N	I	T	Y	Q	F	H	X	B	W

FIND THESE WORDS IN THE GRID - GOOD LUCK!

- EMAIL
- PHONE
- CONNECT
- RESILIENCE
- MAINTENANCE
- MATTERS
- FRIENDS
- FAMILY
- HYGIENE
- WASH
- HANDS
- VIEWS
- HOME
- COMMUNITY
- HOPE
- AUTUMN
- WELLBEING
- HEALTH
- TOGETHER
- PATIENCE

Find all the words in the word search except for one, which is not actually in the grid. Words may be forward, backward, up, down or diagonal. Write this leftover word on a postcard or piece of paper with your full name, address and contact number and post it to **At Home Autumn Puzzle**, Access Housing, PO Box 105, Burswood WA 6100. Competition closes Friday 5 June 2020. The winner of a \$50 Bunnings voucher will be drawn from all the correct entries after this date. Only one entry per household. Good luck!

Congratulations to Allan, last edition's puzzle prize winner.

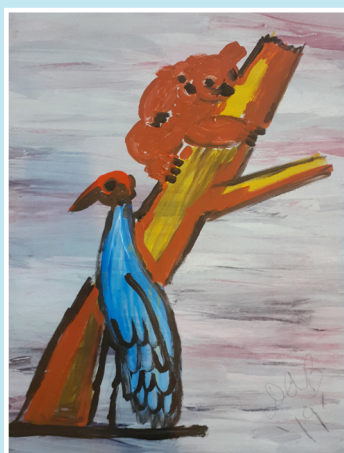
ARTIST OF THE EDITION: DEAN

During our Engaging in Art event in December last year, tenants suggested an artist should be featured in each of our tenant newsletters. This edition we are featuring Dean, an Access Housing tenant who loves painting portraits, animals, still life and landscapes.

"I love doing art. It challenges my head, is good for my mental health and helps me express myself," Dean said.

Dean told us he didn't have much experience with art before he got started three years ago and that support and confidence have been really important in how far he has come as an artist.

"It was great when I was told that I didn't need to change the way I was painting or need any help, I just needed a bigger canvas," he said.



'Bluebird' by Dean



Dean's lion

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