

# AT HOME WITH **ACCESS HOUSING** SPRING 2020



## Access Housing tenants and staff help Fremantle Men's Community Shed to 'tool up' on disability inclusion

**Access Housing staff and tenants living with a disability celebrated the conclusion of *The Shed* project at Fremantle Men's Community Shed (FMCS) in August.**

*The Shed* project was an 18-month collaboration between Access Housing, tenants and FMCS.

The FMCS is one of many Men's Sheds in WA and aims to provide a welcoming and safe space for people to participate in activities like wood and metal work, gardening, volunteering and music.

*The Shed* project aimed to identify how FMCS could enhance its inclusion of people with a disability. More than 50 people participated in the project including tenants living with a disability, carers, Men's Sheds WA and FMCS representatives and disability support workers.

*The Shed* project used a co-design method where tenants shared their experiences and thoughts to develop solutions and strategies around disability inclusion at FMCS. A handful of these strategies were then trialled by FMCS staff and Access Housing tenants in February and March.

Access Housing developed a report and presented

project findings at FMCS in August to celebrate the project and assist FMCS and Men's Sheds WA to enhance their inclusion of people with a disability.

The project also aimed to improve access to FMCS for Access Housing tenants with a disability. Many tenants that were involved in *The Shed* project have now become regular members of FMCS, including Bronwyn (pictured centre with breadboard).

Since *The Shed* project concluded, Bronwyn has been attending FMCS multiple times each week and making a variety of breadboards.

"Thank you Access Housing for all your hard work in helping people like myself to become a member of the Men's Shed. Without your backing, I wouldn't have found a way to join a group and take part in something like this," Bronwyn said.

"My daughter has also joined the Men's Shed now. It really has become a family affair."

A summary report for *The Shed* project is available on our website.

*The Shed* project was made possible thanks to a Department of Communities NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building grant.



## Words from our Community Housing General Manager Natalie Sangalli

Welcome to Spring! Throughout the colder and darker Winter months, like everyone, the team at Access Housing had to remain vigilant about our mental health and wellbeing. Our staff made time to exercise and connect with their community and people important to them to assist with their overall wellbeing. I'd love to hear what you did, and are doing, to stay well.

I am excited to announce Access Housing has achieved accreditation against the National Standards for Mental Health Services for our Independent Living Program (ILP). The ILP supports more than 270 tenants with mental health challenges to live securely in the community. Working towards accreditation during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when most of our staff were working from home required a massive team effort from our staff.

Access Housing has prioritised becoming a Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) provider to enhance our service delivery for people with a disability. We have also prioritised being part of the WA State Government's Social Housing Economic Reform Package

(SHERP). The SHERP will see \$319 million invested into delivering 250 new homes for low income households, refurbishments made to about 1,500 existing homes and the actioning of general maintenance on more than 3,800 properties. Access Housing will be advocating to have as many homes as we can included in the refurbishment and maintenance packages being offered. We have also consulted with our Advisory Committee of Tenants to ensure tenant needs are being thoughtfully considered in our submission for SHERP funding.

As you know, Access Housing merged with Housing Choices Australia (HCA) in July to form a national Community Housing Provider that will be able to deliver a far broader range of positive housing and community outcomes for current and future tenants. Our staff have been meeting regularly with our new colleagues in the eastern states to share knowledge and ideas to enhance our service delivery to all tenants living in an Access Housing or HCA property. Some of the projects staff in the newly merged organisation have been collaborating on include developing a Disability Services Plan and working together to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan. This has been an exciting period for our staff and we look forward to continuing to work and exchange ideas with our HCA colleagues to positively transform the resident experience.

As ever, stay well and please enjoy this edition of *At Home with Access Housing*.

## COVID-19 AND YOUR RENT

In the Winter edition of *At Home with Access Housing*, we told you Access Housing would not be actioning any rent increases until Thursday 1 October 2020, in line with the end date of the COVID-19 Residential Tenancies Act amendments brought in by the WA Government in April this year.

The WA Government recently extended the Residential Tenancies (COVID-19 Response) Act 2020 to be in effect until 28 March 2021. **As a result of the WA Government making this extension, and until further notice, Access Housing will continue to defer rent increases.**

Access Housing is continuing to do rent reviews. Rent reviews that result in a rent decrease will be actioned immediately. Rent reviews that result in an increase to rent payable will not become effective until further notice.

For more information about the COVID-19 RTA amendments, please visit the Department of Mines, Industry, Regulation and Safety's website. Access Housing staff will also keep tenants up to date with information relating to our deferring of rent increases.

## Do you have (or plan to have) a carer living with you?

**If you answered 'yes', you may be eligible to have your rent capped through our Co-resident Carer Rent Policy being applied to your tenancy.**

If you would like more information, please contact your Tenancy Officer or our Rent Review Team on **9534 0400** or email [rentreview@accesshousing.org.au](mailto:rentreview@accesshousing.org.au).

## Tip for Tenants from Joan, your ACT Secretary



**Did you know you can request a rental or water statement from Access Housing?**

I would encourage tenants to call Access Housing and request a rental statement to help you keep track of your accounts. - Joan

# ANNUAL TENANT SURVEY RESULTS



Earlier this year, 599 tenants gave us feedback on our services via our Annual Tenant Survey. Below is a snapshot of some of the results.

## WHAT WE DID WELL

You said we had done a great job in the past year in the overwhelming majority of our service delivery areas. This is fantastic news and a great source of pride for our staff. Thank you.

### Our maintenance services

You told us our contractors were courteous and respectful and left your homes clean and tidy. You also told us repairs were completed to a high standard and our maintenance staff were helpful.

### Information and tenant involvement

You told us we have improved how we involve and communicate with tenants, with particular improvements made to the information and advice we provided around complaints and how we listen and act on tenant views.



**92% overall satisfaction**



**92% satisfied with condition of home**



**93% satisfied with communication**

## WHERE WE CAN IMPROVE

### How we handle complaints

Although we have made improvements around how we handle and monitor complaints, you told us we could improve how we keep you informed throughout the process and about the speed in which we handle complaints.

### Rights and responsibilities

You told us we could do more to help tenants understand their rights and responsibilities.



## TENANT EVENTS

Access Housing's tenant groups and events are informed by tenant feedback. You told us you wanted more opportunities to connect with other tenants and talk about your changing needs. We are excited to be responding to tenant feedback and restarting our tenant groups!

### 'MANAGING CHANGE' TENANT GROUPS



As part of our 'Managing Change' series, Access Housing will be running two groups to support tenants to manage their wellbeing in times of change.

Sessions will be in Rockingham and Armadale in October and November.

Contact our Tenant Engagement and Capacity Building Officer Alex Kepes on **0437 887 675** for details.

### END OF YEAR TENANT CELEBRATIONS!



Access Housing is excited to announce we will be holding our first ever End of Year Tenant Celebration events in December!

Look out for your invitation in your letterbox in the coming months!

### NAIDOC WEEK



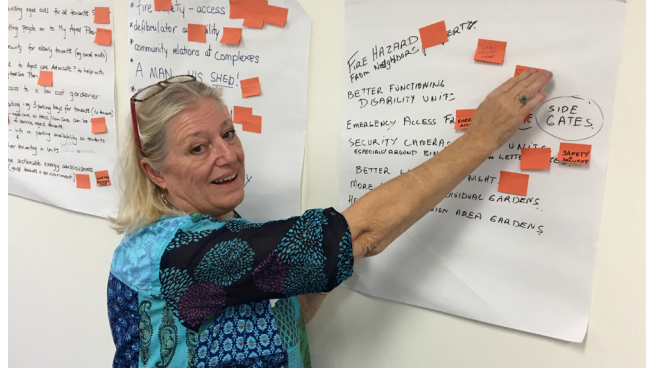
NAIDOC Week will be held from **8 - 15 November**.

The week celebrates the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. NAIDOC Week is celebrated by Australians from all walks of life.

NAIDOC week is a great opportunity to participate in activities in your area to support your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Access Housing will be celebrating NAIDOC week by hosting an event for staff to learn more about some of our Aboriginal tenant artists.

# Nominations are now open to join Access Housing's Advisory Committee of Tenants!



Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the work of the Advisory Committee of Tenants (ACT) throughout 2020, Access Housing has extended the tenure of the nine current ACT members until the end of 2021.

Access Housing recognises the importance of providing an opportunity for tenants to have their voices heard and join the committee. **As a result, we are opening up five general committee member positions that any Access Housing tenant, lodge resident or tenant carer can nominate for!**

## What is the ACT?

The ACT is a tenant-led group that meets every two months to discuss issues important to tenants and Access Housing. The ACT advises Access Housing on how we communicate and engage with tenants and provides feedback on our policies, procedures and services.

## What is the role of a general committee member?

The role of a general committee member is to attend regular meetings and contribute to discussions and decision making at meetings.

## How will new members be selected?

Tenants who complete a nomination form will go into a ballot for a general committee member position. New members will be selected at random to make sure all nominees get an equal chance to be involved.

## Hear from ACT Deputy Chairperson Suzanne!



Having been an Access Housing tenant for nine years, I am so heartened by the fact that we now have representation as tenants and can share our valuable feedback with our landlords and have input into Access Housing's decision making. This means we have a voice and someone wanting to listen!

I would like to encourage all tenants, at some point, to participate in the ACT. I felt a bit intimidated at first and I was unfamiliar with a lot of terms used but, gradually, I felt more settled and could ask for explanations and didn't feel that I was past it!

My role is not demanding and I have learnt so much about Access Housing and myself in the past year. It's been a valuable experience for me to date.

If you are interested in joining the ACT, fill out the form and get in touch with Access Housing!



## ACCESS HOUSING ACT NOMINATION FORM

Please complete this form and post it to Access Housing, PO Box 105, Burswood WA 6100 or hand it in to your local Access Housing office. Applications close **Monday 26 October 2020**.

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Why would you like to join the Access Housing ACT?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like help completing this form, or want more information about the ACT, please contact Amy Kidner at Access Housing on 9430 0900 or via [act@accesshousing.org.au](mailto:act@accesshousing.org.au).

# MAINTENANCE MATTERS



## What is responsive maintenance?

Responsive maintenance is one type of maintenance we undertake in your home. It is unplanned and reactive maintenance that is not urgent and includes day-to-day maintenance or repairs caused by fair wear and tear. Examples of responsive maintenance include fixing a kitchen cupboard or replacing a fly screen.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Between 1 July and 1 September Access Housing;



Received **2,000** maintenance phone calls



Spent **\$260,367** on responsive maintenance in our properties

## What is the timeframe for responsive maintenance to be completed?

The turnaround time for responsive maintenance is within 21 days of it being reported.

## How do I report responsive maintenance?

Call our Maintenance Hotline on **1800 203 383** or email us on [maintenance@accesshousing.org.au](mailto:maintenance@accesshousing.org.au).

## MAINTENANCE MATTERS TENANT GROUPS!

In response to tenant feedback, Access Housing is launching a **NEW** series of tenant groups about our property maintenance services.

The **Maintenance Matters** groups will provide an opportunity for you to ask questions, learn more about our maintenance services and discuss maintenance tips.

We will be heading to Fremantle for our first Maintenance Matters group in the coming months.

If you are interested in attending this group, or want a Maintenance Matters group in your area next year, contact our Tenant Consultation and Communications Officer Amy Kidner on **0429 858 127** or via [amy.kidner@accesshousing.org.au](mailto:amy.kidner@accesshousing.org.au).

## SNAKE SEASON STARTS EARLY

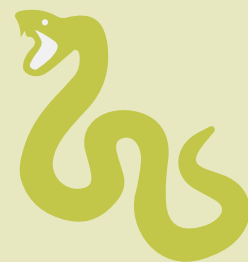
There have been some reports of snake sightings already this Spring. In the warmer months snakes become more active as they leave their winter retreats. During this time you should take precautions to minimise your chances of encountering snakes.

### Keep your garden safe from snakes by:

- Mowing the lawn and keeping your garden areas tidy and free of clutter. Snakes love to remain undetected in tall grass, piles of rocks, wood and other debris.
- Keeping hedges and bushes pruned. This reduces hiding spots for snakes and increases your chance of seeing them from a safe distance.
- Adding a top layer of rough mulch to your garden as a deterrent for snakes. You can also use natural materials like eggshells or pine cones.

### What do I do if I find a snake?

If you find a snake in your garden or home, do not approach or aggravate it in any way. Contact the Wildcare Helpline on **9474 9055** to be referred to a reptile remover.



## SPRING HAS SPRUNG AND NOW YOU CAN TURN YOUR SPRINKLERS ON!

**Did you know almost 50% of household water is used in the garden?**

The Winter sprinkler ban has ended, but it is important to be water wise this Spring and Summer. Remember to only water once a day on your rostered watering days, either before 9am or after 6pm.

The Water Corporation can issue warnings and fines for watering outside designated watering days. Tenants are responsible for paying these fines if they are issued, so make sure you are aware of and abide by your watering days.

For more information about watering days, visit the Water Corporation website [www.watercorporation.com.au](http://www.watercorporation.com.au) or call **13 13 85**.

# FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Family and domestic violence (FDV) includes violence or threats of violence to a family member and includes other behaviour that coerces, controls or causes fear for a family member. A family relationship includes married and de facto couples, children, relatives, carers and broader family groups recognised in your culture.

If you are a tenant who is affected by family violence, there is a new law in place to help you to either leave your tenancy quickly and easily or stay in your home more safely. The new law is gender neutral, which means women, men, trans and gender diverse people are protected under the law.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

### GO

You can end your interest in your tenancy with as little as seven days' notice using a Family Violence Termination Notice and a supporting document. Any other tenant named on the lease (even if they are the perpetrator of the violence) has seven days to decide whether they want to continue or end the tenancy.

You don't have to return to the property if you go, but you must keep paying rent until the notice expires. If you have pets you are concerned about, the RSPCA has a free Pets in Crisis service that provides temporary foster homes.

### STAY

You can apply to court to get the perpetrator's name removed from your tenancy agreement. This means your tenancy will continue in your name only and the perpetrator has no rights as a tenant in your home. We will reassess your rent if you get less household income as a result of doing this.

### SECURE

If you are at risk of family violence, the new law allows you to change the locks at your home without our permission, but you must give us a key for the new locks within seven days of them being changed. The law also allows you to make certain additional security changes to your home without asking our permission, but you must tell us about the changes you are making and make sure they are done by a qualified tradesperson. You must pay for the work that is done and restore the property back to its original condition when you move out.



If you can, please talk to us before you make any changes, as we may be able to identify agencies that could help pay for the work and help you reduce any tenant liability, while also keeping you safe.

## HOLD THE PERSON COMMITTING THE FAMILY VIOLENCE RESPONSIBLE FOR COSTS

If you end your tenancy using a Family Violence Termination Notice, you can apply to court for an order that the person who committed the family violence must pay for rent arrears or damages to the property.

### GET HELP

There are many organisations that will help you with forms and processes. Call one of the following to find someone near you who can help:

- Your Access Housing Tenancy Officer
- Tenancy WA: **9221 0088** or country free call **1800 621 888**
- The National Family Violence Support Telephone Line: 1800 RESPECT (**1800 737 732**)
- Crisis Care Helpline: **9223 1111** or country free call **1800 199 008**

# TENANCY TIPS

The Access Housing ACT has been advising Access Housing on how we communicate with tenants and what information is important to share with tenants in the newsletter. This edition's tenancy tips are based on some of the topics the ACT has raised with Access Housing.



## ACCESS TO INTERPRETERS

Access Housing is a registered user of the national Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), which enables people who don't speak English, or speak very little English, to talk to organisations.

### Access Housing tenants can use TIS for free.

In order to provide a quality service to you, we need to know that you understand the information we are giving you and that you are fully involved in any decision making. We may use an interpreter to speak to you if English is your second language.

If you wish to use an interpreter, you can tell us and we will organise one for you, or you can ring TIS yourself on **131 450**.

*\*\*\* TIS interpreters are bound by a strict code of ethics including confidentiality.\*\*\**

You'll need to tell us or the TIS operator what language you need and whether you need a phone or face-to-face interpreter. You can request a male or female interpreter.

Access Housing also has resources in the reception areas of our offices that can help you identify and communicate your interpreting needs to our staff.



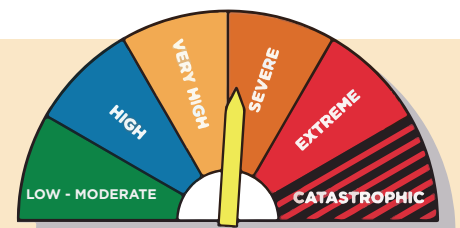
## ARE YOU BUSHFIRE READY?

**Did you know that bushfire season is from October to April each year?**

This means now is the time to make sure you are bushfire ready!

### How to prepare yourself and your home for bushfire season:

- Ensure each room has unobstructed exit points, enabling you to leave quickly.
- If you have deadbolts on your exit doors, have a spare key close to the door, as you may not have time to search for keys!
- Prepare your garden by mowing the lawns and regularly removing weeds, leaf litter and twigs.
- Prepare an emergency kit with important papers, medications and personal belongings.
- Check all gutters for debris such as leaves and bark.
- Have a plan! Know where to go in an emergency and plan alternate routes to get there.



### FIRE DANGER RATINGS

#### How Access Housing can help

If you notice your gutters are full of leaf matter or there are overhanging branches causing a fire hazard, contact our maintenance team on **1800 203 383**.

We will inspect the problem and undertake any necessary works to ensure there is no fire risk.

If you would like more information about bushfire safety, please contact your Tenancy Officer who can provide our bushfire safety fact sheets.

Alternatively, for more information you can visit the Department of Fire and Emergency Services website [dfes.wa.gov.au](http://dfes.wa.gov.au) or call their emergency information line on **13 33 37**.

## SPRING PUZZLE - WIN A \$50 BUNNINGS VOUCHER!

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

FIND THESE WORDS IN THE GRID - GOOD LUCK!

SPRING  
BLOOM  
WILD  
FLOWERS  
KANGAROO  
PAW  
WATTLE  
GARDENING  
POLLEN  
SEEDS  
SPROUT  
STEM  
BUSHFIRE  
READY  
WARM  
WEATHER  
SNAKES  
SHRUBS  
WATER  
WISE

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 Spring Puzzle**, Access Housing, PO Box 105, Burswood WA 6100 or hand it in at your local office. Competition closes Friday 4 December 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 Erika, last edition's puzzle prize winner.**

### PAULA WORKS ON HER GREEN THUMB WITH HELP FROM ACCESS HOUSING'S OPPORTUNITIES FUND

Paula (pictured) recognised gardening could be beneficial to her mental wellbeing but physical challenges had presented her with barriers to pursuing it as a hobby. With support from the Opportunities Fund, Paula was able to purchase raised garden beds, which enabled her to overcome both the financial and physical barriers she faced in taking up gardening.

"A big thank you for your ongoing support and encouragement with my Opportunities Fund application and my gardening project, which has become a much loved and enjoyed long term hobby," Paula said.

Paula has continued to keep Access Housing updated on her gardening project! For more information about the Opportunities Fund, please contact our Tenant Engagement and Capacity Building Officer Alex Kepes via **0437 887 675**.



#### Head / Metro Office

Level 7, 25 Rowe Avenue  
Rivervale WA 6103  
PO Box 105  
Burswood WA 6100  
P (08) 9430 0900  
E [info@accesshousing.org.au](mailto:info@accesshousing.org.au)  
Office Hours (Mon-Fri): 8.30am-4pm

#### Peel Office

4 Stevenson Street  
PO Box 1200  
Mandurah WA 6210  
P (08) 9534 0400  
E [mandurah@accesshousing.org.au](mailto:mandurah@accesshousing.org.au)  
Office Hours (Mon-Fri): 8.30am-4pm

#### South West Office

1st Floor, 25 Victoria Street  
PO Box 1539  
Bunbury WA 6230  
P (08) 9722 7200  
E [bunbury@accesshousing.org.au](mailto:bunbury@accesshousing.org.au)  
Office Hours (Mon-Fri): 8.30am-4pm

[www.accesshousing.org.au](http://www.accesshousing.org.au)