

# HOUSES HOPIES STORIES

Autumn  
2022

## In this issue:

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Good Neighbour Award **P3**

Teresa and Stjepan Find Home **P4**

Robbie's Flamenco Spirit **P6**

**HOUSING**  
**CHOICES**  
AUSTRALIA

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

# From the General Manager



**Hi Everyone,  
Welcome to  
another edition of  
Home Stories, and  
the first of 2022.**



We are happy to share that our offices are now open, and we have resumed inspections of your properties. All maintenance requests are now being processed, and we ask you to be patient with us as we work through the backlog of maintenance requests.

This newsletter brings a delightful array of resident stories, heart-warming displays of neighbourly kindness, and some general updates from our organisation.

The annual Good Neighbour Award is a wonderful way to reflect on the generosity of people within our communities, and how it is ultimately our residents who have the greatest impact on their neighbours' lives.

This edition features a story about St Albans residents Teresa and Stjepan. The retired couple were on the housing waitlist for nearly 10 years during which time, they faced some health battles too. It is wonderful to read how life has changed for the better since finding a home with Housing Choices.

Our Property Team share some great tips on how to care for your home.

With the Autumn weather creeping in and the leaves starting to change, I hope you all have a chance to get out into nature and see the beautiful colours this season brings.

Happy reading and as always, stay safe and stay connected.

**Best,**

**Melissa Palframan**  
General Manager,  
Housing Choices  
Australia



# Good Neighbour Award 2021!



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**Our neighbours play a critical role in looking out for our wellbeing and our communities, and that's why we run our annual Good Neighbour Award competition!**

This competition gives residents an opportunity to recognise and reward the neighbours that help them feel at home and who make positive contributions to their community.

We received a number of beautiful nominations, describing heartfelt thanks from people to the neighbours who have been there for them this last year.

## **Here are some of the award winners below:**

**Salina from Newport** was nominated for being a friendly and helpful neighbour.

**Tom, Ashwaq and Amy from North Melbourne** were nominated for being great neighbours who are there for others.

**Margherita from Seddon** was nominated for kindness and generosity, looking out for new residents, and even helping one have access to power prior to their connection being established.

**Denise from Pascoe Vale** was nominated for her support, and for giving her time to go and get groceries for her neighbours that were in isolation at home.

**Christine from Wantirna** was nominated for being a great neighbour to have.

**Safaa from Seddon** was nominated for helping her neighbour multiple times, right when they needed it the most.

**Kerri from Boronia** was nominated for being a friendly, kind and caring neighbour who keeps common areas clean and tidy. You can read more about Kerri and her neighbour who nominated her, Polly, in the next edition of Home Stories.





# Teresa and Stjepan Find Home

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**Despite working in Australia for more than 60 years between them, retired couple Teresa and Stjepan were struggling to make the ever-increasing private rental payments when they were offered a home in St Albans, Victoria.**

The pair moved into their brand-new apartment just in time for Christmas.

Located close to their only daughter and grandchildren in Melbourne's west, Teresa said becoming Housing Choices residents had been a welcome gift after a string of bad luck. A few years ago, Stjepan was diagnosed with cancer and Teresa left her job to be his full-time carer. During this time, the pair were forced

to tap into their pension in a bid to stay afloat. The couple were on the social housing waitlist for almost a decade when they were allocated their newly built, architect-designed home in St Albans.

Becoming community housing residents has reduced the pair's financial stress and allowed them to enjoy their retirement, while ensuring they have a safe, stable and affordable home.







# Staff Profile: **Jon Sutcliffe** Housing Officer

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## **How long have you worked at Housing Choices?**

I started in 2009, and then I went to eastern Norway for a couple of years. But I've been back at Housing Choices since January 2015.

## **What did you do before Housing Choices?**

I started my housing career in 1984. I've done Housing Officer jobs in the UK and filled in for some Team Leader roles over the years as well.

## **What are the main tasks you do in your role?**

Rent arrears, managing vacant properties, and getting new tenancies set up. My portfolio is mainly Supported housing. I've got 145 tenants of which I'd say about 125 are Supported or Transitional Housing Management (THM) residents and about 20 Affordable non-supported clients.

## **What do you like about your role?**

I like dealing with people. I like the freedom to go around and deal with a wide range of people. I strongly believe in social justice and everyone getting a fair go, so I love dealing with people on that basis.

## **What's something fun that residents don't know about you?**

I'm a football supporter of Burnley in the English Premier League. I like running, and I also draw maps in my spare time. I've got my own business doing cartography, mostly drawing maps of mountains or interior maps.

## **What are the main challenges in your role?**

The biggest challenge has been the development of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). We had good, strong links with support agencies but then their funding

disappeared, and people were fixed up with NDIS plans. There's been staffing issues for support agencies, so it's been a very turbulent time for Supported residents.

There's been a lot of uncertainty, disruption and changes in support. One of the main problems is (if you're not having regular contact with people), it can be hard to know when people have gone under the radar and need support. We always encourage our residents to reach out if they need assistance, or even just to have a friendly chat.





## Resident Story: Robbie's Flamenco Spirit

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**Prior to finding home with Housing Choices, Robbie was living in all types of transitory accommodation: from boarding houses and backpacker hostels to the Salvation Army.**

The Housing Choices resident has been happily settled in his Mind Australia supported accommodation in Clifton Hill, since 2012.

***"I love it. It's my first home away from home. I know my neighbours well. Everyone is friends here."***

When one of Robbie's carers pointed out the 'You've Got Talent' quest in the Home Stories resident newsletter, he was excited to share his passion for Flamenco guitar with the Housing Choices community.

***"I've been playing Flamenco guitar for 10 years, I started around the same time I moved in here. My eldest brother used to play it when I was younger,"*** said Robbie.

Robbie owns four different guitars; a Flamenco, classical, blue slide electric and a folk guitar, but his favourite remains the Flamenco, which he says came to him naturally.

***"I love Flamenco because it has a lot of atmosphere... in Spanish 'ole' means spirit."***

Robbie enjoys sharing his musical talent with his neighbours when he isn't working at Ability Works Australia.

Performing under the stage name, 'Blue Rose,' Robbie plays at open mic nights at Elwood Lounge and other venues across Melbourne. He's even written an original song 'Blue Rose' – a beautiful Flamenco piece filled with emotion.

Because of the lockdowns, Robbie hasn't been able to perform publicly for a while but he's keen to get back. In the meantime he's enjoying busking locally, at Darling Gardens.

# New Rent Review Process



**The recent changes to the Residential Tenancies Act in Victoria have meant that Housing Choices is required to make changes to the Rent Review process. However, while the Rent Review process is changing, the way your rent payable is calculated will not change.**

The main changes to the process are:

**The Rent is now defined as the market rent of the property.**

Each year, our residents will be notified of the market rent for their property. When the market rent increases, the law requires us to send a Notice of Rent Increase to the resident.

On the same occasion, residents will be invited to apply for a **Rental Rebate**.

***If the resident/household is deemed eligible, a Rebate will be applied to their Rent. The portion of rent the resident is required to pay (Rent Payable) is either an income-based rent or a discounted market rent, depending on their situation.***

- An **income-based rent** is based on percentages of resident and household incomes. The percentages applied to the calculation depend on the tenancy's housing type and property program.
- A **discounted market rent** is a rent payable that is not more than 74.99% of the current property's market rent.

If no Rental Rebate application is submitted to Housing Choices, or if the resident/household is deemed no longer eligible for Social Housing, the Rent Payable may remain at the market rent.

## What does this mean for you?

1. Once a year, you will receive communication from our Rent Review team along with an application form for the Rental Rebate.
2. You are then required to fill out this form, attach your household income documentation, and submit them back to Housing Choices.
3. Housing Choices will undertake a review, calculate your Rent Payable and notify you of the outcome and date of effect in writing.
4. If your household income changes between annual reviews, you must inform your Housing Officer within 14 days.

**For more information, you can access our Rent Setting Policy on our website, under the Residents Tab, then select Victoria, and then look under the Policies tab.**







# Resident Contribution: Colin's Kombucha



**Kombucha is a fermented, sweetened black or green tea. Not only does it have the same health benefits as tea, it's also rich in beneficial probiotics. Kombucha also contains antioxidants, which can kill harmful gut bacteria and can help strengthen your immune system.**

One of our Lalor residents, Colin, loves brewing Kombucha and is excited to share his delicious mango flavoured Kombucha recipe.

To make Kombucha, you will need a scoby (symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast). Colin has very generously offered to give some for free to anyone who is wanting one to start making their own Kombucha. Please reach out to Housing Choices' Communications team via [communications@hcau.org.au](mailto:communications@hcau.org.au) if you're wanting to be put in touch with Colin about a scoby. Alternatively, you can

also purchase a scoby from a specialised supplier. Each scoby will come in half a litre of fermented tea (starter tea). That amount will be enough to brew four litres of tea. The ratio is 125ml of starter tea for every litre of tea to be fermented. The starter tea contains the bacteria and yeasts to inoculate the fermenting process.

## Recipe:

### INGREDIENTS:

- **Kombucha scoby**
- **125ml of starter tea (the tea where the scoby has been stored) for every litre of water.**
- **130g of mango pulp (frozen is fine)**
- **280ml of Coles Multivitamin Juice**

### METHOD:

- Water needs to be boiled and left to cool overnight.
- Then re-heat water to infuse 2 green/black tea bags per litre of water for 5 minutes.
- Remove tea bags and mix in 50 grams of sugar for every litre of water.
- Let cool down to minus 30°C then mix in the starter tea.
- Place the tea in a glass container and place the scoby on top of the tea.
- Cover the glass jar with a cloth and elastic and place in a warm dark location where it will ferment for a few days, depending on the temperature. The warmer the weather, the quicker the fermentation process.
- Familiarise yourself with the taste of the sweetness of the tea.
- Start to taste after 3 days and stop fermentation when most of the sugar has been consumed (tart flavour).





- Remove scoby and pass fermented tea through a sieve into a plastic/glass container. Colin likes to use empty bottles of Aldi's lightly sparkling water to bottle his Kombucha.
- In a separate container, puree 130g of mango pulp (frozen is fine) with 280ml of Coles multivitamin juice for every litre of tea. Then mix this puree into the fermented tea.
- Bottle this mixture now and allow to ferment in a warm environment till the bottles are hard and the lids have slightly domed. Every day have a feel of the bottle, the harder it is, the more carbonated the Kombucha is. Colin usually waits three days so it's nice and sparkling.

**Scobys are reusable, and after you have finished fermenting your kombucha, make sure to store your scoby so you can keep making more Kombucha batches.**

You will need to remove some fermented tea (starter tea) from the batch you have just made, to store the scoby in. For example, setting one litre aside to store the scoby in will then be enough to brew 8 litres next time and so forth.



# Tips For Caring For Your Home and Yourself

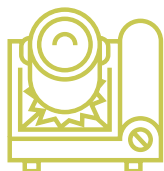


## Split Systems:

**Housing Choices are responsible for servicing your split system every 12 months as part of annual electrical safety checks.**

Residents are responsible for cleaning the split system's filter, and it is recommended that you do this every six months. To clean your filter, open the front cover of your machine inside your home, and follow instructions to clean the filter. If there are no instructions on your machine or in an operating manual at your property, we recommend that you search on the internet for the brand and model of your unit to obtain information or video tutorials which show how to clean the filter. In most cases, it's simply a matter of removing the filter, washing it in warm soapy water, rinsing in clean water and drying thoroughly before replacing.

If you experience problems with the functioning of your split system, please contact our maintenance team on **1300 321 185**.



## Portable Gas Appliances:

**Please do not use any portable gas cylinder or butane gas powered appliances inside your homes.**

These are designed for outdoor use only and if used indoors, can result in serious illness or death due to carbon monoxide poisoning.



## Caring For Your Balcony:

**Remember to keep your balcony tidy, and free of clutter and materials that might be dangerous, including gas cylinders and BBQs in the interest of your safety.**

Please ensure that water does not pool on your balcony by using saucers underneath any pot plants and being careful with your watering. Please do not use carpets, fake grass, or mats on your balcony, as these can hold water and cause deterioration and mould on your balcony.

If you notice water is pooling or not running off your balcony properly, please contact our maintenance team on **1300 321 185**.



## Afterhours Maintenance:

**Housing Choices Australia has a dedicated Maintenance team to receive and respond to maintenance requests.**

Our Property Coordinators work closely with a panel of contractors to coordinate maintenance and repairs.

Our Property Coordinators are available during business hours (9am-5pm Monday-Friday, excluding public holidays, on our maintenance hotline **1300 321 185** or email [maintenance@hcau.org.au](mailto:maintenance@hcau.org.au)).

Please DO NOT contact the maintenance line outside of business hours if it is not an emergency.

# From Our **Property Team**



A contractor answers out of hours calls, but will not action any maintenance works unless they are urgent.

For non-urgent maintenance requests, please wait until the next business day to call us or email [maintenance@hcau.org.au](mailto:maintenance@hcau.org.au) at any time.

## **Examples of Urgent Maintenance that can be actioned outside of business hours:**

- a burst water service
- a blocked or broken toilet system when there are no other toilets in your home
- a serious roof leak
- a gas leak
- a dangerous electrical fault
- flooding or serious flood damage
- serious storm or fire damage
- a failure or breakdown of any essential service or appliance for hot water, water, cooking, heating or doing laundry
- the failure or breakdown of the gas, electricity, or water supply
- any fault or damage in the premises that makes the premises unsafe or not secure
- an appliance, fitting or fixture that is not working properly and causes a substantial amount of water to be wasted
- a serious fault in a lift or staircase.

## **HCA's Keys, Security and Lockout Policy:**

**Housing Choices Australia do not provide spare keys or open properties after business hours (5pm-9am), in the instance you have locked yourself out or lost keys.**

Keys are the responsibility of residents. Any damage to the premises from attempts to enter the building and/or duplication of keys will be at the residents' own expense. No alterations to the locks are permitted during this time.

## **If you find yourself locked out of your home after hours (between the hours of 5pm and 9am), you can:**

- call a locksmith at your own cost and expense\*
- find alternative accommodation for the night (at own expense)
- wait until 9am and then contact Housing Choices who will arrange for an accredited locksmith or staff member to let you into your property\*\*

\* you will need to supply a copy of the freshly cut key to Housing Choices

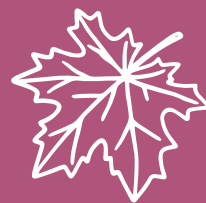
\*\* there is a charge associated with replacing lost or misplaced keys.





# Home Stories Autumn Puzzle

## Win a \$50 Bunnings Voucher!



Find all of 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.

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

### FIND THESE WORDS IN THE GRID

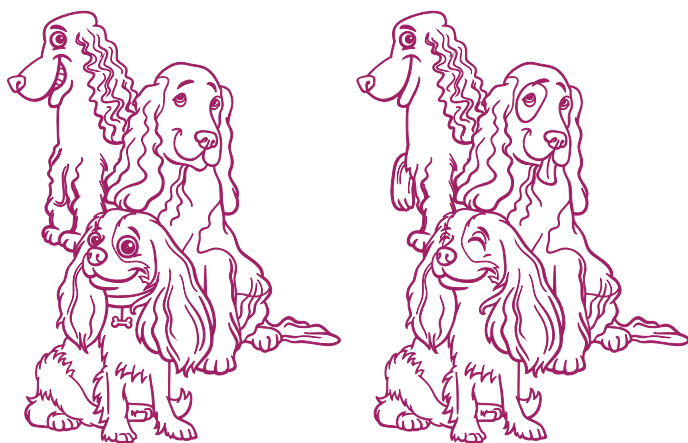
AUTUMN	UPDATE
LEAVES	CENTREPAY
FALL	ONLINE
GUTTERS	CONNECT
DRAINS	MENTAL
APPEAL	HEALTH
TRAINING	CREATIVE
WEBSITE	ARTISTS

Please tell us the remaining word before **Friday 27 May 2022** by emailing [communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au](mailto:communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au) or posting your answer to:  
**Level 3, 350 Queen Street, Melbourne VIC 3000**

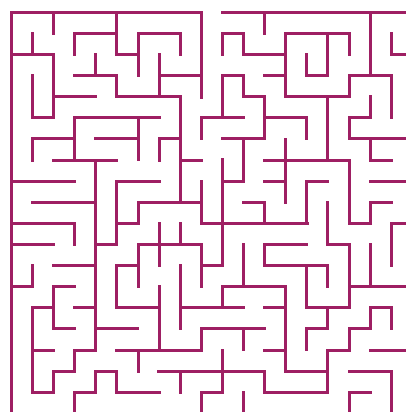


Only one entry is allowed per household. The winners will score themselves a \$50 Bunnings voucher and will be drawn from the correct entries. Good luck!

### Find 6 Differences



### Find Your Way Out



**HOUSING**  
**CHOICES**  
AUSTRALIA

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Melbourne VIC 3000

#### Preston Hub

137 High Street  
Preston VIC 3072

#### General Enquiries

1300 312 447

#### Maintenance

1300 321 185

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