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**Winter
2022**

HOUSING CHOICES AUSTRALIA

**HOUSING
CHOICES
AUSTRALIA**

Find us online

www.housingchoices.org.au



From the General Manager



Hi all,
Welcome to the Winter edition of Home Stories.

While the weather may be cooling down, the programs we have on offer are only heating up!

This edition includes info on some of the fantastic programs we have on offer for residents. Whether that's the Futures Scholarship program for residents pursuing educational pathways, the Keeping Connected program to help residents with their digital communication, or our annual and much-loved Home is Where the Art is competition. I encourage you to have a read through all the great things on offer, there is truly something for everyone.

Featured also is a beautiful story about Boronia residents Kerri and Polly. Kerri was awarded the Good Neighbour Award, after she was nominated by Polly for all the wonderful things she does for their local community. I hope you all enjoy reading their story as much as I did. It's a wonderful reminder of the deep bonds that exist in our communities.

Soon you will receive our annual Renter Satisfaction Survey. We will send the survey via post, and email or SMS if we have your details. Your survey responses and comments are really valuable in informing our next steps to continually improve our services. If you could please complete and return your survey, we would be grateful for your feedback.

Winter is known to be a chilly time, so we've put together some great and affordable tips for staying warm this winter season.

Happy reading.

Best,
Melissa Palframan
General Manager,
Housing Choices Australia



Good Neighbour Awards



Do you have neighbours who make a positive difference in your life? Perhaps they bring your bins in, mind your pets, or have picked up some groceries for you when you were in isolation. Here is your chance to recognise them and their impact!

We know our neighbours play a critical role in looking out for our well-being and our communities. Our annual Good Neighbour Award competition is a chance for us to recognise and reward neighbours who make positive contributions to your community.

Do you know a resident of Housing Choices Australia who ... ?

- is friendly and helpful
- provides assistance to others
- contributes to the local community
- is mindful of others
- has performed a good deed
- is respectful of others
- maintains their property
- alerts others to danger.

Those nominated for a Good Neighbour Award will go into the draw to win one of 12 x \$250 Vouchers, and all residents who place a nomination will also go into a draw to win two \$100 vouchers.

Nominations close **Friday 2 December 2022**, with the winners drawn later in December.

You can place a nomination by contacting Housing Choices Australia's Community Development team.

Remember to tell us:

- Who you want to nominate (name and address)?
- What makes them a Good Neighbour?



POST

HCA Community Development Team

Level 3, 350 Queen Street, Melbourne 3000



EMAIL

communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au



PHONE

1300 312 447





Future Scholarship Program

In semester 2, 2022 HCA will once again offer our Future Scholarship Program as part of our commitment to supporting residents to access education and training opportunities.

The Future Scholarship Program is open to residents of Housing Choices Australia, and their children, who will participate in the following recognised and accredited courses in semester 2, 2022:

- Year 11 or Year 12
- VET Course
- Certificate Courses Levels 1 to 5
- Diploma Certificates
- Bachelor
- Apprenticeship course.

We have 15 Scholarships of up to \$500 each available. These funds can be used by successful applicants to cover out of pocket expenses incurred as part of your studies. These may include course fees, textbooks, stationery supplies, excursions and tutoring. Scholarship funds will be supplied direct to the institution or provider, or via reimbursement against receipts for items that an applicant may have already purchased/paid for.

To apply for a Future Scholarship an eligible resident will need to complete the Future Scholarship application form available from Housing Choices Australia Community Development Team on **1300 312 447** or email to request one from **communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au**.

Applications for semester 2, 2022 **close on 1 August 2022** and will be announced by 15 August 2021.

Partake Program



The Community Development Team at HCA are rebooting the Partake Program in July 2022!

The Partake Program is part of Housing Choices' commitment to support our residents to access and engage in life opportunities local and relevant to them. We recognise the positive benefits of engaging in social, educational, and recreational groups for well-being and connection.

This program is open to residents of Housing Choices Australia who are aged 18 years or over and are participating in organised community social or recreational programs with out-of-pocket costs.

Examples of these activities may include:

- programs or classes at your local Neighbourhood House
- community sport or recreational group/club (e.g. hockey, chess etc..)
- seniors social group
- local community garden memberships
- recognised partner organisation of Housing Choices Australia.

Applications are limited to one per household, with a maximum of \$100 per adult to contribute towards out-of-pocket expenses such as membership fees, participation fees or equipment. If awarded, funds will be supplied direct to the nominated agency or organisation, on behalf of the successful applicant.

To apply under this program, you will need to complete a Partake Application Form, available from Housing Choices Australia Community Development Team. You can reach us on **1300 312 447** or **communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au**

Staff profile: Amy Djuric, Housing Officer



How long have you worked at Housing Choices?

I started in July 2021.

What did you do before you worked at Housing Choices?

I did property management in the private sector, and then I moved into owners Corporation because I thought I wanted to be an owners' corporation manager. I was there for about 10 months but really didn't enjoy it, and that's when I moved over to Housing Choices.

What do you do in your role as a Housing Officer?

A lot of tenancy management. Following up rent, doing inspections, sign ups. Pretty much anything except maintenance and leasing.

What do you like about your role?

I like that it's different every day and that you get to meet different types of people. A lot of people that I wouldn't otherwise get to meet, so it's nice to be able to connect with all kinds of people and to get to know my residents.

What do you like about Housing Choices?

I love that they're so supportive and they care about their staff. We're also doing good work; we're housing people with the highest need.

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

I have an identical twin sister who works in public housing. I also have bunnies and love all animals in general!

What are the main challenges in your role?

With regards to neighbourhood disputes, we are restricted by the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA). A lot of the time if there's a dispute between two neighbours, unless it explicitly violates the RTA, we can be quite limited in what we can do. We do our best to resolve things, but we can only do so much. If you're struggling to pay your rent, just contact your housing officer and let them know what's going on. We have options to help you. We have funds that can help with bills or groceries, so we do have ways to help, and we can work out a plan. It's better to be in communication with your housing officer rather than waiting for us to chase you up. Because a lot of the time residents that do give me a payment plan are better at sticking to it. Just let us know what's going on!

Kerri and Polly: acts of kindness are never too small



Kerri

When Housing Choices' annual Good Neighbour Award nominations opened, Polly decided to nominate her neighbour, Kerri.

Polly, a single mum of three, moved into her Boronia property just before the pandemic and connected with Kerri soon after.

Polly has been a Housing Choices resident for some time, but after giving birth to her youngest child, she needed a bigger place. Polly's two youngest children have autism spectrum disorder (ASD) Level Three, and one has a Global Development Delay (GDD) while the other has an intellectual disability. As a single mum, Polly's schedule is pretty jam-packed, which often leaves her exhausted.

That's why Kerri's neighbourly gestures, no matter how big or small, have such a deep impact. Polly wants her to know these acts of kindness never go unnoticed.

This is Polly's nomination for Kerri:

"She goes above and beyond every time we see her. She's friendly and kind to my two young boys who have disabilities, they just adore her. She's always making sure our units are clean and tidy and she maintains the flowers at the front of our units. She's always offering to help me with my kids or offers me to use her rubbish bins. But for me, it's every time our bins get emptied, she brings all three of mine back into

my house as well as others' bins as well. I don't think she realises how much this little thing she does means to me. I'm a single mum with three kids, and I'm home-schooling all three. I'm tired most days and I get bad hayfever, so I dread walking out to the front to collect my bins. But every time I do, I legit have a cry because she's already brought them in for me. She's such a beautiful person in and out. I would love if she was rewarded for her kindness to others. Thank you so much."

Polly



Kerri was awarded the Good Neighbour prize, and Kerri and Polly received gift vouchers.

"It's not much but she literally makes my life so much easier. It's just so thoughtful, no one in my life has ever done that before," said Polly.

Thrilled and surprised to be nominated, Kerri said she was brought up to help others and that Polly's nomination brought tears to her eyes.

"I appreciate a thank you or if I can put a smile on people's faces," said Kerri.

Kerri lives alone and worked as a Support Worker for 11 years at Calvary Community Care. Last year, Kerri lost her mother

and was, "unable to support people how I would normally support them."

Despite stopping work, it's clear Kerri continues to support her local community, and was thoughtful enough to hand deliver a Christmas card to her new neighbours.

Polly's son, who struggles with socialisation was so taken with her gesture, he reciprocated:

"The youngest boy was so excited, said Kerri.

"He made a Christmas card for me and brought it to my door. I invited them in and since then they often come over."

Polly said the Christmas card gesture resulted in a wonderful friendship for both her son and herself:

"He's very funny with selective people, so for him to want to hang out with Kerri is a big deal. He'll go over and do art with her. I was just so humbled and honoured that she would take us in," said Polly.

"We're more than neighbours now, she's a friend. We look after each other. Besides the things we have in common and what we've gone through, it's always nice to know if you need something, she's there," said Polly.





Keeping residents connected

Housing Choices Australia's Keeping Connected program is due to close at the end of June 2022.

This program was implemented in October 2020 by our Community Development team to assist our residents to access and maintain digital connection during the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the financial year ending June 2021, the Keeping Connected program was able to support 77 households to access or maintain access to phone or, internet connections and digital devices by contributing up to \$125 dollars to these costs.

This financial year that will end June 2022, the Keeping Connected program has supported 75 households to access or maintain access to phone or, internet connections and digital devices by contributing up to \$100 dollars to these costs.

The Keeping Connected program was also able to support 40 residents to access remote, digital education sessions through our partners at Ready Tech Go.

Residents were able to use these lessons to learn more about using their digital devices, help them choose digital devices and programs to meet their needs, communicate remotely and perform tasks online.

Applications are still open for eligible residents for our Keeping Connected program until **30 June 2022**.

If you would like an application form or more information, please contact us on **1300 312 447** or email communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au.

Renter Satisfaction Survey



Tell us what you think about Housing Choices services

We are keen to hear from you about what you think about Housing Choices services, and we invite you to participate in our short Annual Renter Satisfaction Survey.

The survey, which takes less than 5 minutes, is anonymous and you do not need to provide your name. Your opinions and feedback are important because they help us shape the way we deliver services to you and other renters. We are committed to listening to you and letting you know what changes may be made from your feedback.

You may have received the survey link in your email inbox, as an SMS text or you will have received your paper copy in the post.

If you would like assistance completing the survey, please phone your Housing Officer on **1300 312 447** or feel free to come in to the office.

There will be opportunities for renters interested in joining a focus group to help us review the results of the survey and develop action plans to respond to feedback. More information on this opportunity will be provided in August.

A summary of the survey results and the actions will also be published on our website and included in a future edition of *Home Stories*.

To make sure your views are counted, please complete the survey by **Thursday 23 June 2022**.



Home is where the art is competition



HCA's Community Development team will once again run the annual Home Is Where the Art Is competition in 2022.

This year the theme is **'Change'**. There have been many changes occurring in our daily lives over the last couple of years! Change can be wonderful and exciting, change can be challenging but one thing is for sure, there will always be change! Change is a continued part of our daily lives and surroundings, and we invite you to explore the theme with us this year.

Competition categories for 2022:

1. Children (14 years and under)
2. Youth (14-25 years)
3. Fine Arts
4. Mixed Media
5. Mindful Expressions: Exploring Wellness Through Art
6. Best Representation of Theme

There will be prizes for each category as follows:

- **First Prize:** \$200 Voucher to an art store of your choice
- **Second:** \$50 Coles/Myer Voucher
- **Third:** \$25 Coles/Myer Voucher

In addition, our 1st prize winners will receive an offer:

- to have work professionally framed
- have their artwork included in promotional material and internal publications (i.e. Home Stories, Annual Report, Board Report and external communications)
- offer to have work included in HCA Home Is Where the Art Is Exhibition in the future.

To enter the Home is Where the Art is Competition 2022, please send:

- a photograph of your completed work
- title and description of your work
- category you are submitting under
- your full name.

To the HCA Community Development Team



EMAIL:

communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au



POST:

Level 3, 350 Queen Street, Melbourne 3000

If you need assistance entering a photo of your artwork and providing these details, please give us a call on **1300 312 447** and a member of our team will be able to assist.

We are looking forward to seeing your amazing entries!

Getting ready for winter



Winter is now upon us! If you have a heat pump or split system, make sure you clean the dust from the filter regularly. You can wash it in the sink, or clean with a brush or vacuum.

Tips to reduce heating cost:

To keep your bills in-check, make sure your heater is set to maintain a constant temperature, this way the unit must work less to keep your room nice and warm. Alternatively, you can always throw on another layer of clothing. If you have drafts in your home, use door snakes and draft tape to prevent heat escaping from under and around doors.

Use curtains to keep the heat in and the cold out, and extra bedding is a simple way to keep warm without huge heating costs. It's also vital to open windows and doors on sunny days to help with air circulation and prevent dampness or mould, particularly in the bathroom.

Tips for cleaning damp and mould:

Winters can be cold and wet, resulting in problems with condensation and mould growth around your home. To prevent this, wipe down any damp windows in the morning, open doors and windows as often as possible when you're at home, and use the exhaust fan in the bathroom and extractor fan when cooking.

There are several products that kill mould or mildew.

Some natural remedies include:

Tea tree oil mixed in a ration of 1 tsp of oil to 1 cup of warm water. Put it in a spray bottle and shake. Then spray on problem areas but do not rinse.

Another method is to put straight white vinegar into a spray bottle and spray directly on problem areas. Do not rinse, the smell will go away after a few hours.

The best thing you can do to prevent the mould from happening is to make sure your home is dry and well-aired.



Changes to how you make your rental payments



For residents who pay their rent directly to the Housing Choices bank account, please note we have changed our bank account details.

If you pay your rent via a direct deposit, we kindly request that all future rental payments, **effective immediately**, are made into the new Housing Choices bank account.



OLD ACCOUNT DETAILS:

Name of bank
Commonwealth Bank Australia

Name of account holder
Housing Choices Australia/
Melbourne Affordable Housing Ltd

BSB
063-449

Account number
1012 1337

(Please **don't use these details** to make your rental payments any longer)

Please note if you are currently paying via a deposit book at the Commonwealth Bank these will no longer be a valid option and you must pay into the account details on the right.



NEW ACCOUNT DETAILS:

Name of bank
National Australia Bank (NAB)

Name of account holder
Housing Choices Australia

BSB
083 001

Account number
35-830-9651

Effective date
Now

(Please **use these details** to make all future rental payments to Housing Choices Australia)

Please note this is NOT for all residents, **only the residents who pay rent via a direct deposit** into the Housing Choices bank account.

Please feel free to contact our office on **1300 312 447** or contact your housing officer, should you have any queries about this.



Home Stories winter 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.

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

FIND THESE WORDS IN THE GRID

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| WINTER | GLOVES |
| HOME | SNOWMAN |
| RAINING | STORM |
| FIREPLACE | BOOTS |
| FREEZING | CHIMNEY |
| COMMUNITY | BLANKET |
| JUMPER | HOT COCOA |
| FROST | COAT |

Please tell us the remaining word before **Friday 8 July 2022**
by emailing 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 winner will score themselves a \$50 Bunnings voucher and will be drawn from the correct entries. Good luck!

Hidden Meaning Brain Teaser

1. CYCLE CYCLE CYCLE	2. DEAL	3. MIND MATTER	4. STAND I
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Answers: 1. Tricycle 2. Big deal 3. Mind over matter 4. I understand



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Melbourne VIC 3000

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