

FOR THE

**Autumn
2022**

In this issue:

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**Refurbishment Grant
Success P4**

**Resident Profile:
Pauline is Keeping the
Community Spirit Alive P6**

Calling All Creatives P8

**Cover Painting
In the Pink
by Simon Marchment**

**HOUSING
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WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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www.housingchoices.org.au



From the General Manager



Salaam, kuso dhawaada gacma furan iyo Warsidaha Housing Choices WA 2022.

Hello and welcome everyone to the Housing Choices WA 2022 Autumn newsletter.

This Somali welcome comes from Housing Choices WA tenant Luul, who featured in our Summer edition. At Housing Choices WA, we believe celebrating and respecting people of all backgrounds, cultures, genders, sexualities, and abilities is incredibly important. It is a focus for our organisation in the

coming year and we will begin each newsletter with a different welcome to acknowledge the diversity of our tenants.

In January, Housing Choices WA staff celebrated the development of our national Diversity and Inclusion Policy. We were lucky enough to be joined by inspiring tenant and advocate for people with a disability, Melanie Hawkes.

Melanie shared her experiences and ideas around how Housing Choices could be more inclusive for people living with disabilities. We all learnt a lot about Melanie and the full and interesting life she leads.

During her talk Melanie challenged staff to open a wrapped lolly and an envelope without using their fingers (as Melanie does every day). It was an important insight into considering life from the perspective of others. I challenge you to do the same in your day-to-day lives.

We look forward to inviting more tenants to speak to staff about their experiences in the year ahead as we work on projects to celebrate diversity including becoming a Rainbow Tick accredited organisation,

A Word on COVID-19



As an organisation our way of working, and our service delivery may look different depending on the COVID-19 situation in WA in the coming months.

We will regularly review and revise our operations to ensure we are putting the safety, health and wellbeing of tenants, staff and the broader community first.

We understand that some tenants are concerned for their safety and are anxious about the spread of COVID-19 in WA. We want to reassure you that Housing Choices WA are following all WA Government mandates and advice regarding COVID-19. All of our staff and contractors are fully vaccinated against coronavirus and we have adopted the recommended hygiene and physical distancing practices.

For the most up-to-date information about Housing Choices WA's business operations, please regularly visit our website [**www.housingchoices.org.au**](http://www.housingchoices.org.au).





developing a national Disability Action Plan, and progressing actions from our Reconciliation Action Plan.

On another important note, please read the following information about our services and COVID-19. If you have any questions about our operations during this time, please contact your local office.

We encourage you to reach out if you are experiencing hardship or are otherwise

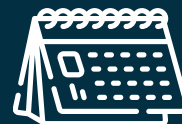
impacted by COVID-19 so we can help link you with services or support you may need.

Please look after yourselves and keep an eye on your friends, family and neighbours as we navigate the next few months together.

In the meantime, enjoy our Autumn edition of Home Stories WA.

Natalie Sangalli
General Manager WA

Below: Melanie Hawkes pictured with Housing Choices WA staff at the launch of our Diversity and Inclusion Policy.



Housing Choices WA Public Holiday Office Closures

All Housing Choices WA offices will be closed over the Easter period **from 4pm Thursday 14 April 2022 until 8.30am Tuesday 19 April 2022.**

Offices will also be closed on **Monday 25 April 2022 for ANZAC Day and Monday 6 June 2022** for WA Day.

All calls to the maintenance team will be diverted to the Emergency Maintenance Hotline during office closures. We ask that tenants only call maintenance when offices are closed if there is a maintenance emergency such as a burst water pipe or gas leak.

**Maintenance Hotline:
1800 203 383**





Refurbishment Grant Success!

Housing Choices WA recently applied for grant funding under the WA Government Social Housing Economic Recovery Package (SHERP) towards new homes and the maintenance of existing homes.

We are very happy to announce we received \$6.75 million to undertake refurbishments in 360 properties across the Perth, Peel and South-West regions.

As a not-for-profit organisation, these funds will go a long way to providing well maintained properties. The works will be completed between 2022 – 2024 and we will notify relevant tenants of what works will be undertaken and when they will take place.

Our applications for funding were completed quickly and we couldn't

have done it without your assistance.

We sincerely thank you for your understanding, co-operation and patience, particularly during our visits to your home to take photos of items we are hoping to refurbish.

Even though we did not receive funding for all the properties we completed applications for, we are still completing the majority of these works in the future as part of our ongoing refurbishment program.

We have also applied to build 55 new homes in areas of high demand, and we look forward to hearing the outcome of this application as well.

If you have any questions about this information, please contact your closest Housing Choices WA office.

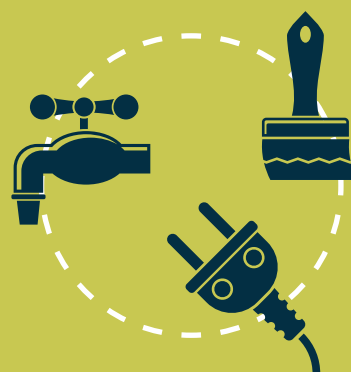


Maintenance Response Times Impacted by COVID-19

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic our maintenance team is experiencing delays. This is due to shortages in tradespeople and delays in accessing materials to complete repairs.

This means that if you are waiting for a routine repair, it might take longer than usual to complete the works. Our maintenance team is doing all they can to ensure emergency and urgent repairs are completed without delay.

We apologise for any disruptions in addressing your maintenance issues and we ask for your patience and understanding about this matter.





From ACT Chairperson Sue Newman



Hello fellow tenants, I'm Sue and this is my first newsletter column as the Chairperson of the ACT (Advisory Committee of Tenants) for 2022.

Firstly, a huge thanks to Trish for doing an excellent job as the first ACT Chairperson. I feel quite daunted trying to fill her shoes!

I would also like to welcome our new committee members for 2022. We had a wonderful training session together in January and I am sure our new members will find being in the ACT is both insightful and enjoyable.

I urge anyone who is able to consider a year as an ACT member. One new member recently asked: "But what can I contribute to the ACT?" The answer is that everyone has experiences, ideas and different perspectives on everyday life as a tenant - that's what you can contribute!

We know this year is going to be challenging with COVID-19 and so

we are getting prepared to try out Zoom meetings if we can't meet in-person. We welcome the very helpful Leah from Housing Choices WA and her tenant engagement team, who's helping us navigate meeting online.

I feel quite chuffed when I tell my grandchildren I have a Zoom meeting to plan our next ACT agenda, as if I didn't have to ask for instructions three times on how to Zoom in!

At our last ACT meeting we had a look at the results from the 2021 Tenant Survey and talked about what issues we should work on for 2022. It was great for the committee to get a better understanding of what issues were most important to tenants and made us excited about the year ahead.

I look forward to being the Chairperson of the ACT this year and doing my best to make sure tenant voices are being heard.

Sue
ACT Chairperson

2022 ACT Members Snapshot

10 ACT
members



From Perth
Metropolitan and
Peel regions



Tenants from
a range of
backgrounds



Combined
90 years
experience as
Housing Choices
WA tenants.



Your ACT members

Chairperson:

Suzanne from Rockingham

Deputy Chairperson:

Trish from Greenfields

Secretary:

Luul from Gosnells

Independent Living Program Representative:

Lynda from Greenfields

General Members:

George from Greenfields,
Margaret from Armadale,
Adrienne from Rockingham,
Bob from Cannington, and
Melanie from Riverton.



Resident Profile: Pauline is Keeping the Community Spirit Alive



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Tucked in Hilton are 19 brick units that are home to a group of Housing Choices WA tenants aged over 55 years. One of the youngest residents, Pauline Culshaw moved into the complex after waiting a number of years on the Department of Communities Joint Wait List. The mother of two says since being allocated her Housing Choices property, five years ago, she feels a sense of security and stability.



Pauline, who lives with a number of health conditions, says scaling the stairs to get to the third floor of the multi-storey apartment she previously lived in each day was a struggle.

On seeing her first-floor Housing Choices WA unit Pauline says she was sold.

"I absolutely love it.

"I've been putting my own touches on it."

Pauline explains that in her one-bedroom apartment she has not only found a stable, secure and affordable place to live but a community who care for one another.

"Peter who lives next door to me goes around each morning and knocks on everyone's door and ... calls out 'morning'. And if the blinds are open that's a sign they're up.

"As a neighbourhood, we just generally look out for each other."

The 59-years-old says many of the older residents don't have family or support networks. Instead, they rely on each other to foster community spirit.

"The complex is not a nursing home; it's not a retirement village. The apartments are our individual homes. And the complex is very multicultural.

"You get lots of different things happening throughout the year. For example, on ANZAC Day each year I hold a dawn service out the front. Last year, I crocheted some poppies and gave them to my neighbours.

"We've held barbeques for birthdays, and I do a Christmas get-together in the amenities room where we all bring a plate and maybe have a few drinks.

"We had a game of cricket in the car park a couple of times when we had lockdown ... Just to keep everyone active and make sure they're getting out of their units."

Pauline (pictured left) holds a picture from the Housing Choices WA end-of-year celebration.

Right: (back row) Peter, David, Doug, Colin, (front) Pauline, Maria and Ladda.

She says while the majority of residents enjoy participating in the mix of activities, there are a few who prefer to keep to themselves.

"We respect that, but they still get an invite in the post box whenever I arrange something like a morning tea or Christmas.

"Some of the residents we've lost in the last year, so we'll do a memorial morning tea for them. We're also doing a memorial garden in one section near the car park for the people who've lived here in the past and we're putting a rose, not a plaque just a rose, to represent each person.

"One of the residents, Terry, recently died suddenly with some medical issues. But he got his wish - he wanted to die at home. They don't want to die in a nursing home or in hospital.

"We've got some benches outside in the car park and we're actually going to dedicate one of them to Terry because that was his favourite spot."

The dedication to Terry is just one of a handful of ways the community pays tribute to one another, and Pauline's hope is that his bench will become a meeting place for future residents to congregate.

The seat will occupy a corner of the property where residents are naturally drawn.

"There's about four or five of us who tend to meet out there at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I don't know why it happens at that particular time, maybe because the cool breeze is in.

"We don't have a formal meeting as such, we just talk about what's coming up.

"It's just chit chat but it's nice."





Helps You Deal with Drains

Some tenants have had issues with blocked drains and toilets, and been charged tenant liability as a result. So, we have brought back our Queen of Clean, staff member Maria Em, to provide tips to help avoid this issue.

What is your advice for tenants worried about blocked drains, sinks and toilets?



Prevention is always your best bet. You can get a sink strainer to prevent debris from going down the sink and causing blockage issues. You can find ones for kitchen sinks and shower drains at shops like Kmart and Bunnings.

Toilet blockages are easy to prevent, just follow this rule: if it's not toilet paper, don't flush it. Even though you may see wipes advertised as flushable, they will cause blockages as they absorb water and do not break down. Even tissues do not break down like toilet paper.

What can tenants do to deal with blocked drains and toilets?

Regularly cleaning your drains is the best way to dislodge any build up that may occur.

My solution is to pour 1 cup of bicarbonate soda, 1 cup of warm water and 1 cup vinegar in and around the drain and leave for 20 minutes. Once it has had time to do its magic, pour a kettle full of warm water down and around the drain.

For toilets, a weak toilet flush often indicates a clog is forming in your toilet drain. Small clogs can also be caused by flushing too much toilet paper at once. Use a plunger to try and release clogs or small blockages before they become a more serious issue.

Please note that hot water is not suitable for use on ceramic sinks. If you are unable to deal with a blockage issue yourself, please call our maintenance hotline on **1800 203 383**.



Calling all Creatives



Housing Choices WA is holding a Tenant Art Showcase on 18 May in Rockingham to celebrate our tenants' talents.

We are seeking Expressions of Interest from tenants who would like to display their artwork.

All forms of creative expression are welcome including photography, painting, sculptures, ceramics, woodwork, drawings or knitting.

Based on feedback from our previous showcase, tenants who display artwork will have the opportunity to sell their art on the day. Housing Choices WA will also be looking to purchase tenant art for our offices and for digital use.

Artists will also go into the running to win prizes during the showcase.

All Housing Choices WA tenants are welcome to attend on the day to enjoy the art and get to know our tenant artists over some food and drinks.

Please contact our **Tenant Engagement and Capacity Building Officer Alex Kepes** on **0437 887 675** to register your interest in attending and/or displaying art.

Unhappy with a Decision We Made?



Through the 2021 Tenant Survey you told us you wanted more information about our appeals process. We spoke with our Advisory Committee of Tenants about how to best share the information with you in this edition of Home Stories.

If you are unhappy with a decision we made you may be able to appeal that decision. When you lodge an appeal, Housing Choices WA will review the decision and how it was made. The pictorial on the right shows our appeals process.

Examples of decisions you can appeal include housing transfer applications being declined or being charged for damage that you don't believe you are responsible for. You may also choose to appeal a decision if we declined a request and you believe we haven't considered all of the relevant information.

While you can make a complaint about our policies, you can't appeal against our policies. For example, you can't appeal the way we calculate your rent, but you can appeal if you feel the rent we charged is based on incorrect information.

Before lodging an appeal, feel free to speak with us about why you are unhappy. Our staff can explain why the decision was made and give you an opportunity to provide any other information you think is relevant.

Lodging an Appeal

Ask for an Appeal Request Form by phone, email or in person.



You must appeal within six (6) months of the decision.

Provide as much information and evidence as you can.



A senior staff member will review the decision.

You will be notified of the outcome within 21 days.



If you are unhappy with the outcome, you can request a Second Tier Appeal.

Successful Appeal Example

A tenant reported a broken window that needed replacing. This kind of damage is a tenant's responsibility, so the tenant was charged for the repair.

After receiving the bill, the tenant appealed the charges. The tenant advised us that someone had attempted to break into his home through the window and that he had a Police Report Number (PRN) as evidence.

With this new information, the tenant's appeal was successful and the tenant liability charge was withdrawn.

Although successful, this example highlights that the charge for the repair could have been avoided if the tenant had provided the PRN and more information when reporting the damage. However, the appeals process did help this tenant achieve a fair outcome.



End of Year Tenant Celebrations

In December, more than 130 tenants and Housing Choices WA staff got together to celebrate the end of the year with events in Rockingham and Hilton.

Tenants and staff shared stories over a hearty two-course meal. In between courses, guests enjoyed games, quizzes, door prizes and presentations from Housing Choices WA General Manager Natalie Sangalli and Advisory Committee of Tenants (ACT) members.

Both events had some eye-catching tenant art on display. They also featured a photo booth, run by tenant photographer Phillip Day, with photos sent to tenants as a keepsake.

Natalie said the End of Year Tenant Lunches were a great way for tenants and staff to reflect on the year and enjoy each other's company during the festive season.

"We had our inaugural end of year event in 2020 and it proved so popular that we held two this year so more tenants could attend," she said.

"It was very important to us that we were able to celebrate the year with tenants in a relaxed, enjoyable setting and the feedback we have received tells us we did just that.

We look forward to these being annual events in the years ahead."





How to have a Cup of Tea Online

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**Would you like to join us
online for a catch up with
other tenants?**

Our tenant engagement team is committed to finding new ways for tenants to connect. Given WA's ever-changing COVID-19 situation we would like to try an online group.

This is an opportunity for all tenants with digital access to get together from the comfort of their own home. No matter whether you are a tech whiz or looking to learn more about connecting online – everyone is welcome, but you will need a computer with a camera and microphone to take part.

As part of the group, we will share some tricks to make Zoom fun, play some games and chat with people in small groups.

If you are interested in being part of our online group, please contact our Tenant Engagement and Capacity Building Officer Alex Kepes on **0437 887 675** or via **alex.kepes@hcau.org.au** to register your interest.



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.

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

FIND THESE WORDS IN THE GRID

AUTUMN
LEAVES
FALL
DRAINS

TOILET
APPEAL
TRAINING
WEBSITE

UPDATE
COMMUNITY
SPIRIT
CELEBRATE

ONLINE
CONNECT
CREATIVE
ARTISTS

.....

Please tell us the remaining word before **Friday 27 May 2022** by emailing info-wa@hcau.org.au or posting your answer to: **Home Autumn Puzzle, Housing Choices Western Australia, PO Box 105, Burswood WA 6100.**

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!

Congratulations to **Marilyn from Dardanup**, last edition's puzzle prize winner.

Autumn Brain Teasers

In response to requests for more puzzles, we have introduced Brain Teasers.

Answers to the below can be found in the content of this newsletter.

1. How many years of tenancy experience does our 2022 Advisory Committee of Tenants have?
2. What does PRN stand for?
3. How much funding did Housing Choices WA receive from the WA Government to complete refurbishments in our properties?

1. 90
2. Police Report Number
3. \$6.75 million

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P (08) 9722 7200

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