



STORIES FROM STORIES

**Spring
2022**

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From the General Manager



Welcome to the 2022 Spring edition of *Home Stories*.

The big news in the office this quarter is that we have had a bit of a restructure of the team and the way we deliver services.

From September, we will no longer have a dedicated team looking after tenant debt instead, your Tenancy Officer will monitor tenant accounts and will be the one to help if you are falling into arrears or having trouble keeping up your payments.

We have done this to streamline the service, so tenants have one key person to interact with. We have employed additional Tenancy Officers and made the number of tenancies each officer looks after smaller. So, the team can incorporate this new function and have more time to respond to your queries. Please take

a look at the article in this edition of *Home Stories* for more details.

Another highlight was Housing Choices WA staff participation in Homelessness Week. Our staff attended events in Rockingham, Mandurah and Bunbury that brought together specialist services in the community to assist people experiencing homelessness to get their ID, lodge housing applications and access emergency relief, income support, legal advice and more.

Our Bunbury team donated funds towards the running of the first ever IDconnect event in Bunbury and our Mandurah staff provided bags filled with essential toiletries and non-perishable food items for those experiencing homelessness at the events in Rockingham and Mandurah.

It was also that time of the year when we do a policy refresh. We have had a dedicated team review all

our operation policies, in line with feedback from the Advisory Committee of Tenants, and to ensure they are person-centred where possible, accommodating diversity and cultural competency. The reviewed policies will be on our website in the coming months.

Please look out for the things you can get involved in this edition including the End of Year Lunches, the Spring Garden Competition, and the Small Sparks Fund. We would love to see you be part of them.

Lastly, a reminder that all Housing Choices WA offices will be closed on **Monday 26 September** for the Queen's Birthday public holiday.

Stay safe and well,

Natalie Sangalli
General Manager WA



Left: Housing Choices WA staff member Nancy at a Rockingham Homelessness Week event.



Financial support for tenants



We know that people have been struggling with the rising cost of living, so we have re-introduced our Financial Wellbeing groups for tenants to share cost saving tips and meet their local financial counsellor.

This year we have run groups in Kwinana, Success and Cannington and we wanted to share some resources that tenants talked about:



Emergency Relief and Food Access Service

This is a free phone service that can connect you to local services who can support you including the Mobile Foodbank.

The Mobile Foodbank visits suburbs in and out of Perth to make it easier for people to access their service. They offer hampers of frozen and dry goods and fruit and vegetables for between \$5-\$15.

To get a referral, call the Emergency Relief and Food Access Service on **1800 979 777**.



Concessions WA

Concessions WA is an online resource where you can find details on more than 100 rebates, concessions and subsidy schemes you could be eligible for.

Visit **concessions.communities.wa.gov.au** for more information.

Above: Housing Choices WA Tenancy Officer Nicola (left) with tenant Gail (right).

Below: Kwinana Financial Counsellor Lee (left) with tenants Peter (centre) and Michael (right).



What's on for tenants



You are invited to our End of Year Tenant Lunches!

Join fellow tenants and Housing Choices WA staff to celebrate the end of the year at a social lunch. Come along and enjoy a free catered lunch, speeches from staff, games, raffle prizes and more.

Our events this year will be in Rockingham and for the first time, Gosnells. Tenants from all areas are invited to attend their preferred function.



Places at each event are limited so please contact us if you are interested in attending one of the events. Once you have RSVP'd, we will send you a formal invitation closer to the date with more information.



Spring Gardening Competition Now Open

Share your garden with us for a chance to win a \$100 Bunnings voucher!

After the success of last year's competition, we will once again hold a Spring Gardening Competition to recognise the care tenants put into their gardens and to encourage tenants to try their hand at gardening.

We know that not everyone's outdoor areas look the same so all types of flower, plant or veggie gardens can be entered including patio, balcony, backyard, front yard or indoor plant gardens.

All tenants who enter the competition will receive a free seed packet for participating. All winners will receive a \$100 Bunnings voucher.

Entries close on **Friday 4 November 2022**.



New Small Sparks Fund for tenants

Housing Choices WA has launched a new fund which provides funds for tenants to hold activities in their local community.

Want to start a book club, craft group, regular morning tea or walking group with tenants in your area?

If you have an idea but need a bit of financial help and support to get started we may be able to help.

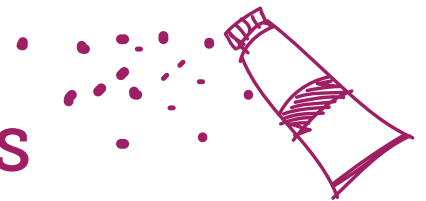
Tenants, carers and household members can apply.

If you are interested in any of these events, grants or competitions please contact our Tenant Engagement Officer Alex Kepes on 0437 887 675 or via alex.kepes@hcau.org.au to find out more.





Tenant art shines on new inspection slips



We are thrilled to be able to celebrate one of our talented Aboriginal tenants Allira, whose artwork is featured on our new inspection courtesy slips.

Housing Choices WA recently purchased the original artwork and digital licence for Allira's painting called *Nidja Boodja* which means 'this country' in Noongar. Allira displayed this piece at our annual Tenant Art Showcase in May this year.

Allira is a Ballardong Noongar woman who has recently been discovering her passion for art and colour mixing inspired by her artistic niece and daughter. Her painting *Nidja Boodja* is inspired by a song about mining and how the land becomes sick when it is stripped of its resources.

Allira paints a hidden heart in each of her pieces because she thinks there is not enough love in the world today.

Housing Choices WA has featured Allira's artwork

on our new inspection courtesy slips. We hope you enjoy the wonderful artwork on these slips, and we look forward to celebrating and supporting more of our tenant artists in the future.

Above: Allira's artwork *Nidja Boodja*. **Below:** Allira and another painting she displayed at our annual art showcase.



Actioning Tenant Survey feedback



While we are busy analysing the data from our 2022 tenant survey, we wanted to let you know how we actioned tenant feedback from last year's tenant survey.



Letting you know when we have been in your home

Based on tenant feedback we have developed courtesy slips for staff to leave in properties when tenants aren't home for an inspection. This is to let tenants know we have completed an inspection and to thank them for their efforts to maintain their home. Our Advisory Committee of Tenants helped design these slips and there is an article in this edition celebrating the artist whose work is featured on the slips.



Improving how we handle anti-social behaviour complaints

We have started a project to review how we can assist tenants in neighbour disputes. We have consulted with our Advisory Committee of Tenants, held workshops with staff, and will involve tenants to review any additional tools we develop to help to handle anti-social behaviour complaints and help build more connected neighbourhoods.



Requests for more social activities and information about community services

We have just launched our Small Sparks Fund which aims to provide funding and support to tenants to hold social and wellness activities in their local area. We have also launched a Facebook page for tenants where we share information about services in the community.



Increased communications about refurbishments

Housing Choices WA has created a new letter which tenants will receive when planned maintenance works are due in their property. This letter clearly explains what works are being done, when they can expect the works to be completed and how tenants can prepare their homes for refurbishment. It includes an infographic explanation to ensure it is clear for a range of audiences.

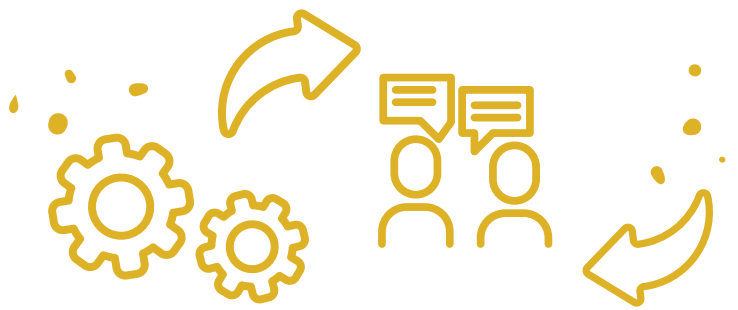


Improving how we involve tenants

We have been holding more tenant consultation groups to better involve tenants in improving our services. Recently, we held consultations in Bunbury, Fremantle and Armadale about improving the letters we send to tenants.

We will continue to work on projects that have been led by your feedback and we look forward to sharing the results of this year's survey in our Summer edition of *Home Stories*.

Changes to our services



Housing Choices WA has restructured our Tenancy Services Department to streamline our services and improve your experiences with us.

Housing Choices WA no longer has a separate Tenant Accounts and Debt Team.

Your Tenancy Officer is now looking after your tenant accounts and will be responsible for helping when:



you have trouble paying rent or are behind with your payments.



you need to change or set up a repayment plan for rent, water or other charges.



you want to check your accounts balance or request a rental statement.

This change will make our services more efficient and reduce the number of people you speak to about your tenancy.

We have also added to our tenancy staff to reduce the number of properties our Tenancy Officers manage, so they have more time to manage your payments and respond to your queries.

Due to having more tenancy staff, your Tenancy Officer may have changed. We sent a letter to every household last month detailing your Tenancy Officer's contact information.

If you want to check who your Tenancy Officer is, you can contact your local office and speak to our friendly reception staff.

When you call our offices, you will notice our automated menu options have changed. We no longer have a tenant payments option. If you have a tenant payment query press the general enquires option and ask to be put through to your Tenancy Officer.

Our specific tenant payments email address is also no longer in use.

If you need to email us about tenant payments or debt, please email your Tenancy Officer or email **info-wa@hcau.org.au**.

Please note that questions regarding eligibility, rent reviews and rent calculations will continue to be handled by our specialist staff in our Eligibility and Rent Review Team.

We ask that you are patient with our tenancy staff as we adjust to a new way of working.

What do I need to remember?

- ☒ Tenancy Officers now deal with all debt and tenant payment issues and enquires
- ☒ Your Tenancy Officer may have changed
- ☒ Our Rent Review team still deals with eligibility and rent reviews
- ☒ Please be patient with tenancy staff as we adjust to this change



Join our Advisory Committee!

We are always looking for new members to join our Advisory Committee of Tenants.

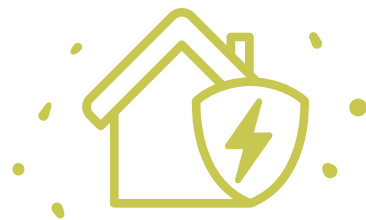
If you are interested in joining the committee, you can attend a meeting as an observer to meet the committee members and see what it's like.

Tenants can join at any time and will receive training and support to be involved. The advisory committee discusses issues that affect all tenants including communications, maintenance, tenant activities and more.

If you have any questions or want information about the committee, you can contact Amy Kidner at **0429 858 127** or email **act@hcau.org.au**.

We can also put you in touch with our Chairperson, Sue if you would rather speak to a fellow tenant about the committee.

Electrical safety in the home



Testing your residual current devices

A Residual Current Device (RCD) is a safety device that prevents electrical shocks by automatically cutting off the power in your home.

At least once a year, we will test your RCDs to make sure they are working, but you can also check the RCDs yourself.

How to test your RCDs

1. Turn off all your electronic equipment (computers, TV's etc.)
2. Find your RCDs. They are usually located in the outside meter box or in the switch board inside. All the RCDs should be in the ON position.
3. Press the TEST (T) button on each RCD and release. You should hear a click.
4. Each of the RCD levers should flip to the OFF position. This means the RCDs are working.
5. If any of the RCD levers don't flip to the off position, there is a fault and you must report it to the **maintenance hotline** as soon as you can on **1800 203 383**.



What should I do if I have an electrical issue in my property?

If you experience a loss of power in the home, it may be an outage and will therefore affect your whole home and often others in the street. If you experience a loss of power in part of your home, then you can check your RCDs to see if it was caused by a faulty appliance.

A faulty appliance can make an RCD trip to the off position and cut the power supply. By testing for a faulty appliance, you can avoid calling the maintenance hotline or Western Power.

To test for a faulty appliance, unplug all your electrical items from their power points where you experienced the power loss. Reset your safety switch and plug in your appliances one at a time until you have found the faulty appliance. When the faulty appliance is plugged into the power point, it will trip your safety switch again indicating which appliance has the issue.

Please remember, if you ever experience an electric shock or tingle, please call Western Power on 13 13 51.



Resident profile: **Greg's action against homelessness**

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Left: Greg at one of the locations of his protests in Fremantle.

Greg has been involved in community work almost as long as he can remember.

"I just like helping people" he says. It's a simple explanation for the years he's spent helping to improve the lives of people in his community who have, for many reasons, found themselves without stable and secure accommodation.

Greg recently became a tenant at one of Housing Choices WA's lodging houses. However, his interest in helping the homeless began many years ago, when he started volunteering with the Salvation Army. Greg would help out with their 'mission beat' - driving around Sydney handing out food and rugs to people experiencing homelessness and going to the parks where people were sleeping rough.

His motivation gained serious momentum in 2021 when he was living out of his car which ended up being confiscated. This experience gave Greg the impetus to start organising

protests to support people experiencing homelessness on the streets of Fremantle. In June 2022, he got a permit from the local council and with permission from the police.

34 people attended to show their support for the cause, which Greg says was to "bring awareness to the organisations and charities who help people experiencing homelessness, who are working on very little budget."

Greg is filled with ideas for how the safety and quality of life for people living rough could be improved, which he hopes to one day be able to pitch to Ministers:

"I want to sit down with the council, with the local government, and lay out my ideas. One of my them being a locker system to give people sleeping rough somewhere safe to store their sleeping bag and other valuables during the day".

"It needs to be easier for them to get access to healthcare,

so they can get their eyes, teeth, and hearing checked."

Despite the rain washing away the turnout at his most recent protest, Greg's spirit has not been dampened. "I'm thinking about where I can hold the next protest and aiming for one of the larger suburbs."

Greg's aim is to be seen – to remind the public and decision makers that that people experiencing homelessness can't and shouldn't be ignored.

When asked what keeps him going Greg says, "I know what it's like, I know what they're going through. I've got so many people who support me and love me, and it's knowing that I can make a difference for other people.

It doesn't matter what happens to me, it's about putting the changes in place for the future – in 10, 20 years from now".

Maintenance matters



Got a maintenance issue?

When you have a maintenance issue, let our property services team know straight away. Please don't wait for a property inspection to report a problem.

Maintenance that is not reported such a leaking tap could get worse and cause further damage to your property. This may result in you being liable for the costs of repair and it could also put your safety at risk.

You can report maintenance by calling our maintenance hotline on **1800 203 383** or by emailing **maintenance-wa@hcau.org.au**.



It's time to turn your sprinklers back on

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. For more information about watering days, visit the Water Corporation website **www.watercorporation.com.au** or call **13 13 85**.

Policy spotlight on pets



We have recently reviewed our Pets Policy, which will soon be available on our website, and want to share some reminders for tenants who are thinking of getting a pet.

In WA, tenants need to ask a landlord for permission to keep a pet, so please ask us before you bring a pet into your home.

We know pets are important companions and we will always approve pets where we can, but there are some things we need to consider before we can approve a pet.

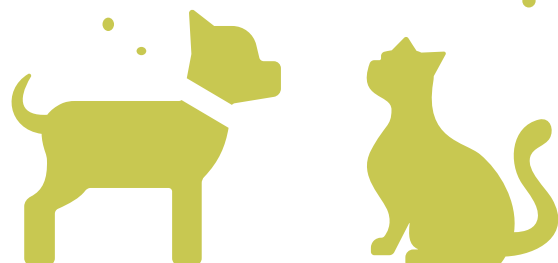
These include:

- the type of pet and number of pets
- the suitability of your property
- local council regulations and where applicable, strata by laws
- potential impact on your neighbours and community
- tenants' willingness to be a responsible pet owner.

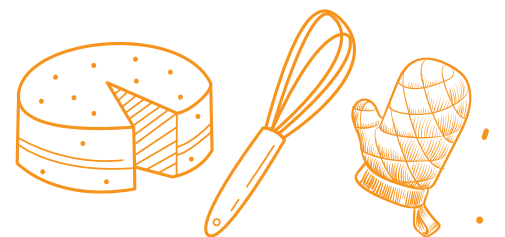
You can apply for a pet by completing a Pet Request Form. Please do not get your pet until you have received written approval from us.

Depending on the type of pet, you may need to pay a pet bond which will be used for fumigation at the end of your tenancy.

For more information, please speak to your Tenancy Officer directly or call your local office.



Cooking competition winners



Thank you to the tenants who entered our recipe competition. We had very diverse entries which is represented by our two winners – Lucy and George who both received a \$100 Coles/Myer gift voucher as their prize.

We are excited to share their winning recipes and encourage you to have a go at making them at home.

Lucy's Eggplant Bruschetta



Lucy's recipe celebrates her migrant heritage. With her mother born in Greece and her father born in Italy, Lucy grew up eating a wonderful mixture of Mediterranean food. She chose this recipe because it is a modern twist on the classic Mediterranean ingredients used by her family.

INGREDIENTS

One large eggplant
Baby beetroot, cooked
Feta cheese
Prosciutto
Balsamic glaze
Baby herbs, like basil
Olive oil
Salt

METHOD

1. Slice the eggplant into 1cm thick slices and lightly salt them.
2. Brush or spray them with olive oil.
3. Cook eggplant in the oven at 200 degrees for 20 mins. They should be cooked through but still firm.
4. Meanwhile, chop the baby beetroot into small chunks.
5. Arrange eggplants on a serving plate.
6. Scatter the beetroot over the cooked eggplants and crumble feta on top.
7. Tear up the prosciutto and place on top.
8. Finish off with the balsamic glaze drizzled over and scatter the baby herbs.

George's Spaghetti Scones



George is passionate about cooking and camping. Over the last few years, he has developed a quirky campfire cookbook called Gimme Some Oven. George's spaghetti scone recipe is a twist on a classic - one of many unique recipes in his cookbook.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups of self-raising flour
Pinch of salt
1 tablespoon of butter
1 can of Heinz / SPC tomato sauce spaghetti
½ teaspoon of Worcestershire sauce
½ cup of grated cheese
Water or milk

METHOD

1. Sift the flour and add a pinch of salt.
2. Soften the butter and rub it into the flour until it looks crumbified.
3. Add the can of spaghetti and ½ teaspoon of worcestershire sauce.
4. Add a dash of milk or water until it forms a good dough that doesn't stick to the sides of the bowl.
5. Knead lightly and spread out with fingers to 40mm thickness (be careful not to squeeze the air out of the dough).
6. Cut into shapes with a scone cutter or knife.
7. Sprinkle cheese on top of the scones.
8. Place scones in an oven (or camp oven) and cook like damper until golden brown.

Home Stories Spring 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.

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

FIND THESE WORDS IN THE GRID

SCONES
BRUSCHETTA
FINANCIAL
WELLBEING
GARDENING
PLANTS
SMALL
SPARKS
FUND
FEEDBACK

NIDJA
BOODJA
RESIDUAL
CURRENT
DEVICE



Tell us the remaining word for the wordsearch by emailing info-wa@hcau.org.au or posting it in to us At Home Spring Puzzle, Housing Choices Western Australia, **PO Box 105, Burswood WA 6100**. Competition closes **Friday 11 November 2022**.

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 **Margaret from Armadale**, last edition's puzzle prize winner.

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