



STREETSPORTS

**Spring
2022**

In this issue:

.....
Victorian Government
Power Saving Bonus P3

Resident profile:
Lisa Kondor (cover) **P4**

Resident Communications
Survey P9

HOUSING
CHOICES
AUSTRALIA

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 www.housingchoices.org.au

 facebook.com/HChoicesAU

From the General Manager



Hi All,

Welcome to the Spring edition of *Home Stories*. As COVID-19 cases continue to swell across the country, please all take this as a reminder to continue good practices of mask wearing, hand washing and social distancing.

This newsletter features a wonderful update from the Drill Hall Community Garden, which has been made into a sanctuary thanks to the efforts of many local residents. Martin, Drill Hall Residents Association (DHRA) President gives a rundown of recent upgrades to the garden and what new projects are planned for the space.

I am also very pleased to welcome new Housing Choices residents who have moved into our South Morang property. Situated with beautiful views of the Dandenongs, these stunning apartments are a wonderful place to call home and I look forward to meeting all the new residents, (if I haven't met you already!).

The Communications Team at Housing Choices have recently developed a survey they are seeking your participation in. This survey will help the team better

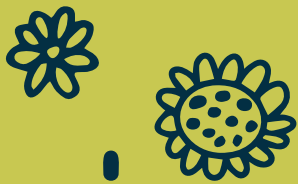
understand how residents engage with the *Home Stories* newsletter, Housing Choices website, and our social media channels, to make these communication channels better for you. Your feedback is welcome!

Featured also in this newsletter is a results summary of the Renter Satisfaction Survey, which some of you provided feedback through earlier this year.

As the weather slowly starts to warm, take some time to enjoy the beautiful blooms that will pop up in spring. Maybe even take your *Home Stories* out with you, and give it a read in the garden or a park?

Best,

Melissa Palframan
General Manager of
Housing Services



Victorian Government Power Saving Bonus



The Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning have released a NEW \$250 Power Savings initiative for Victorian Households available for applications from 1 July, 2023, to 30 June, 2024.

This program aims to ease cost-of-living pressures and help Victorians get a better deal on their energy and save money. The \$250 Power Savings Bonus is available to all Victorians households who visit the Victorian Energy Compare website.

To find out more, and apply for the \$250 Power Savings Bonus, go to <https://compare.energy.vic.gov.au/>

You will need a copy of a recent, residential electricity bill to apply. You can attach a file or enter details from your bill manually into the online form. These details will include your energy retailer, your account number with your retailer and your national meter identifier (NMI). You can elect to receive the bonus via cheque or direct to your bank account.



If you require assistance to apply for the \$250 Power Savings Bonus you can access support over the phone from the following services:

- Good Shepherd, who can be contacted on **1300 026 500**.
- The National Debt Helpline - Consumer Action Law Centre, who can be contacted on **1800 149 689**.
- The Brotherhood of St. Laurence (and partners Australian Energy Foundation, GV Community Energy and Uniting Vic. Tas), who can be contacted on **1800 830 029**.



Should you require in person support you can:

- Drop into your local Neighbourhood House centre for more information or call Good Shepherd on **1300 026 500** to find the closest Neighbourhood House that is currently offering support.
- The Ethnic Community Council Victoria – in-person events, call **9354 9555** to get more details.



Resident profile: **Lisa Kondor**



Lisa's balcony is easily distinguished from the street view of Gallagher's place. Adorned by bright pink geranium plants and lush green foliage, it's a welcoming pathway into Lisa's world.

Lisa spent the first four years of her life in a United Nations displaced persons' camp. She was born on 9 May, when the last bomb dropped, and the Soviets declared victory over Germany in WW2.

"We came to Australia as Polish immigrants. The United Nations camp was in Germany, and we stayed there as there was no place to go. The choice came up of going to either Canada or Australia, and my folks chose Australia," says Lisa. The family moved in to a migrant hostel in Maribyrnong.

Lisa started working at age 15, and also taught herself how to write. In her early 20s, Lisa spent a year in the UK working as a secretary where she got a taste for travel and decided she wanted more of it.

"When I got to London, I thought jeez, the world is such an interesting place, I can't go back yet to Australia! I went to an employment bureau and asked them to send me somewhere, and they sent me to Zambia."

Living "a true African adventure", Lisa dedicated a large portion of her life to travelling and living across Africa. A woman of many talents, her ten-year writing career was accompanied by an interest in archaeology and anthropology, as well as many creative hobbies.

Lisa speaks fondly of her African explorations. From time spent in Namibia's forbidden diamond area of the Skeleton Coast, to singing in Zimbabwe to make ends meet, and her run in with an angry elephant.

"I spent three and a half years in Zambia, and we used to all do our shopping in Salisbury (now known as Harare, Zimbabwe's capital). Nearly everybody that did this trip – at some point or another – had a car accident due to elephants in the Zambezi Valley. We came around the bend and there was the elephant, and we hit the brakes and rolled three times. I thought I was going to die. The elephant was cross because it had a calf," she says.

Of all the amazing places Lisa has ventured to,

Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) "has a special place" in Lisa's heart because "it has everything."

"I spent quite a few years there. I won't say how many." She winks.

After the controversial Robert Mugabe was elected as Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, it became "impossible to survive."

"No food, no electricity, no water. It was so ingrained to have water saved up, that here I have over 40 litres of water in the laundry just in case the water goes off. When I go shopping, I buy two of everything," she says.

As the economy continued to worsen in Zimbabwe, Lisa knew it was time to come back to Australia. When back in Melbourne, she found a private rental in Bentleigh. Yet soon, the landlord doubled her rent and Lisa was forced to find alternative housing.

"I was having a very hard time finding a place to live. I was desperate, going from one end of Melbourne to the other. Not finding anything suitable," Lisa recalls.

That's when she found a Wintringham flyer through a community centre, a specialised welfare company that provides housing and care to elderly, frail men and women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Wintringham helped Lisa find her Housing Choices unit.

"What I like about Housing Choices is when something goes wrong, they come and fix it."

Now living as a Housing Choices resident for over a decade, Lisa has created her

own paradise within her urban apartment. The walls of Lisa's unit are filled with images of African scenery, clippings of articles she has written, and photographs from her African adventure and beyond.

"Each picture has a story."

Dozens of red folders are lined neatly on a shelf – where Lisa has documented her travels and musings. She channels her creativity through a variety of mediums. Sitting boldly in her living room are two majestic model sailboats she handmade

from recycled materials. Lisa's next project is a glass mosaic peacock made from coloured glass, which she has foraged from op-shops.

"I was so disorientated after coming back to Melbourne, that I needed something to relate to, something to ground me. I've created my world, it makes me feel good," she says.

When asked what Lisa wants residents to know about her, she decisively says "travel is the best educator. That's sincere."





Drill Hall Garden Update



Nestled between city skyscrapers and a stone's throw away from the Queen Victoria Market, is where you'll find a space of "organised anarchy," the Drill Hall Community Garden.

Martin Mulvihill, the president of the Drill Hall Residents Association (DHRA) proudly gives a tour of the community garden, but gives credit to the Drill Hall Community Garden Association (DHCGA) for making it what it is.

While the garden is located at Housing Choices' Drill Hall building, it's run by both affordable housing residents, and private market residents from nearby apartment buildings who love to channel their green thumbs and care for this urban oasis.

Martin says he loves to see social housing residents and the wider community all working collectively in the garden, and watching "all the different people bring something different" in their contribution to the space.

After a complex process liaising with the Federal Government, the Drill Hall Community Garden Association recently received a \$4,000 grant

from the Federal Government to put towards improvements in the garden.

Using this money, new planter boxes were put in on the side of the Drill Hall building – working to extend the community garden outwards – in October 2021.

"It's about wherever you see the opportunity," says Martin.

The newly secured funding is working to fill in the gaps within the space, and Martin says long-term plans include getting a barbeque and barriers for the planter boxes to prevent vandalism.

"This is our community, that's the way we look at it.

We are local citizens first, renters second," he says.

Affectionately called "guerrilla gardeners" by Martin, the green thumbs who frequent the community garden make sure the space is filled with herbs, flowers, various plants, and even a worm farm.

There's a Housing Choices resident who is an expert on worms and has taken to caring for the two worm farms. Happily, the worms are doing well, and the soil is then used to nourish the plants in the garden.

"In such a built up, densely contested space, to have something like this, is special. We love it."



Annual Renter Satisfaction Survey results



Every year, Housing Choices undertakes the Renter Satisfaction Survey to hear directly from residents about how we can continue to improve our service delivery.

The 2022 results are:



The Management Team have met and discussed the results with key areas that require improvement, and are organising consultation work groups with all Housing Services staff to workshop areas for improvement.

We also have plans to table the survey results with the Victorian Resident Advisory Committee (VRAC) and set up resident consultation groups, so residents can contribute recommendations and endorse an action plan. These consultation groups will occur around September.



New build: South Morang residents move in

Under a general lease from Homes Victoria, Housing Choices have secured 39 apartments in a beautiful new building in South Morang. Residents have started moving into their apartments and enjoying their new surroundings.

The apartments are spacious and have generous sized balconies, well-appointed kitchens, and large light filled windows, some with great views of the Dandenong Ranges. Housing Choices is delighted to be able to offer such wonderful homes for residents.

The property is well situated to shops, public transport, schools, community amenities, and wonderful walking tracks.

Housing Choices is organising a meet and greet luncheon and invitations will be sent out soon to new residents. This will be an opportunity for residents to meet staff they have not met yet, including members of our Community and Engagement Team, some Managers and also for staff to meet the residents. This is also a great opportunity for residents to meet each other if they have not yet done so.

Renee Jabbour is the Housing Officer and David Blake is the Property Officer for the building.

Resident Communications Survey

To find out more about the unique needs of Housing Choices residents we are keen to find out how you use our communication channels.

The Housing Choices resident survey was developed capture to your thoughts and insights on how you use the website, social media and how frequently you read the resident newsletter *Home Stories*. The information from the survey will help us to produce content that is relevant, interesting and engaging for all residents.

The survey will be distributed to residents

of all Housing Choices entities and will help us to continue with the work toward a national approach for our communications that meets the needs of all.

Those who do not have internet, or smart phone access are able to submit a paper version of their survey responses via post. All survey responses will be anonymous and kept confidential. A summary of the results will appear in *Home Stories* following analysis of the resident feedback.

Please send all survey responses back to us by 7 October 2022.

To submit the survey, via:



Post:

Remove this page of *Home Stories*, fill it out with a pen, and post to **Housing Choices Australia, 3/350 Queen Street, Melbourne, 3000.**

OR



Online:

Simply follow the URL provided here:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/hcacommssurvey>

1. Do you visit the Housing Choices website?

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Every few months
- ☐ Never

2. What is your most common reason for visiting the website?

- ☐ Information about repairs and maintenance
- ☐ News and updates about Housing Choices
- ☐ Register a compliment or a complaint
- ☐ Find and read or download our policies
- Other (please specify)

3. What would you like to see more of on the website (select all that apply)?

- ☐ Understand more about my and Housing Choices rights and responsibilities
- ☐ Learn more about Housing Choices
- ☐ Stories about residents, their homes and neighbourhoods
- ☐ News and updates about Housing Choices
- ☐ How I can be more involved in Housing Choices
- ☐ Community engagement and development opportunities
- ☐ Housing sector news
- Other (please specify)

4. Do you use social media?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

5. Why do you use social media (select all that apply)?

- ☐ News
☐ Advocacy
☐ Social and community connection
☐ Photo or video social sharing
Other (please specify)

6. Have you used the Housing Choices social media platforms (select all that apply)?

- ☐ Instagram (@HChoicesAU)
☐ Facebook (Housing Choices Australia, Housing Choices South Australia or Housing Choices Tasmania)
☐ Twitter (@HChoicesAU)
☐ LinkedIn (Housing Choices Australia)
☐ None

7. How often do you visit the Housing Choices social media platforms?

- ☐ Daily
☐ Weekly
☐ Monthly
☐ Every few months
☐ Never

8. Do you read our resident newsletter *Home Stories*?

- ☐ Yes, every edition
☐ Sometimes
☐ Not at all

9. How would you prefer to receive *Home Stories*?

- ☐ Digital/Email
☐ Hard copy/ Delivered to mailbox
☐ Social media

10. What would you like to see more of in *Home Stories* (select all that apply)?

- ☐ Understand more about my and Housing Choices rights and responsibilities
☐ Learn more about Housing Choices
☐ Stories about residents, their homes and neighbourhoods
☐ News and updates about Housing Choices
☐ How I can be more involved in Housing Choices
☐ Community engagement and development opportunities
☐ Housing sector news
☐ Learn more about Housing Choices staff and who does what
Other (please specify)

11. Would you be interested in contributing to *Home Stories*? If yes, please specify.

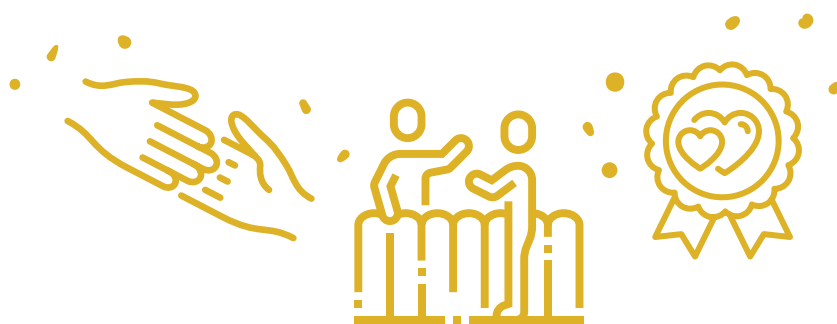
- ☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, what would you like to contribute? (e.g. neighbourhood story, photos, artwork, recipes, regular column, creative writing) and provide your contact details.

12. Do you have any other comments about the Housing Choices' website or social media accounts or *Home Stories*?



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' Inclusive Communities Team.

Remember to tell us:

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

Mail:



Housing Choices Inclusive Communities Team

Level 3, 350 Queen Street, Melbourne 3000

Email:



communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au

Phone:



1300 312 447



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.

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

FIND THESE WORDS IN THE GRID

SPRING
GROWTH
BLOSSOM
SPROUT

GARDEN
BUTTERFLY
PICNIC
POLLEN

FLOWERS
LEAVES
FRIENDSHIP
SUNSHINE

OCTOBER
NEST
WALKING
SINGING



Please tell us the remaining word before **Friday 14 October 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!

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