



# STORIES FOR AUTUMN 2023

**Autumn  
2023**

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**HOUSING  
CHOICES  
AUSTRALIA**

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# From the General Manager



Hi All,

**Welcome to the Autumn edition of *Home Stories*.**



Our Team have had a busy summer, and I hope some of you had the opportunity to see them out and about at our 'Meet and Greet' events. These get togethers are a great way to meet residents, both old and new, and connect with local community. Featured also in this newsletter is a recap of our End of Year Resident Party at the Drill Hall. Due to the limitations of COVID-19, this was our first End of Year party since 2019, and it was wonderful to see so many of you there. I hope you enjoy the photos from the party as much as I did.

This edition also includes a staff profile on Nana Lafolua, Housing Services Team Leader. Nana has been with Housing Choices for over six months and wanted to introduce herself to our residents.

As we move towards reconciliation, I also ask you to consider the quickly approaching **Reconciliation Week (27 May – 3 June)** and **NAIDOC Week (2 – 9 July)**.

Our Winter *Home Stories* Edition will include some more info about these two very important weeks, stay tuned.

Thank you also to those who completed our Resident Communications Survey towards the end of last year. We did not have a huge response but appreciated all those who provided feedback.

I hope you all make the most of the last few weeks of daylight savings and wishing you all a wonderful Autumn.

**Best,**

**Melissa Palframan**  
**General Manager of**  
**Housing Services**



**Cover:** Neighbours Laurel and Susan at the community get together.





# Being neighbourly



**Residents of Housing Choices represent a diverse range of people who are situated together, with different lifestyles, interests, cultures, and family compositions.**

We know being a good neighbour positively impacts on residents in many ways, including health, wellbeing and mental health, feeling connected, living in healthy safe and vibrant communities, and sustainable tenancies.

An example of how Housing Choices boosts and recognises this, and how this forms inclusive and harmonious relationships and neighbourhoods, is the Good Neighbour Recognition Program which includes the Good Neighbour Awards and Good Neighbour Policy.

The Good Neighbour Awards are a way for residents to recognise each other, make social connections, participate in inclusive and

healthy communities, promote pride, look out for each other, and contribute to a secure and peaceful enjoyment of their home.

In 2022, 10 residents nominated 10 good neighbours. Awarded residents and those who nominated their neighbours received a certificate, gift voucher, and an invite to a celebratory luncheon.

**There were many great reasons residents nominated their good neighbours:**

- taking initiative in keeping common areas and shared spaces clean and inviting,
- maintaining friendly conversations and relationships and social companionships,
- checking in on one another, and offering an ear when times are tough,

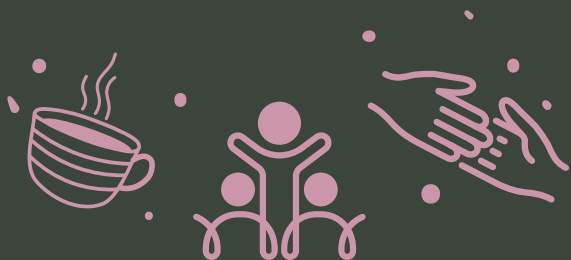
- taking neighbours shopping or on errands, and helping with cooking and things fellow residents need,
- having trusting, generous, patient, and kind neighbours.

On 23 January, the Community Development team held a luncheon for residents to mark the 2022 Good Neighbour Awards. It was a great day and gave nominated and awarded residents the chance to meet and chat.

Boronia resident Polly nominated her resident, Kerri last year. This is what she had to say about Kerri:

"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.

**Any resident can nominate a good neighbour. To find out more visit:**  
<https://www.housingchoices.org.au/victoria/being-a-good-neighbour/>  
 Community Development Team on **1300 312 447**  
[communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au](mailto:communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au)



## Celebrating Community Connections

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**With Summer in full swing, Housing Choices' staff continued to visit residents and neighbourhoods across Victoria and ran social activities to promote the uplifting and sprucing up of homes and neighbourhoods.**

This also strengthens social and community connections while helping residents to get to know their neighbours and gives time to the Housing Choices team to listen to residents' ideas and feedback.

Connecting over BBQ lunches, morning teas and bring a cuppa' days, it's been a great way to spruce up neighbourhoods and connect. While enjoying some nibbles and filling skip bins.

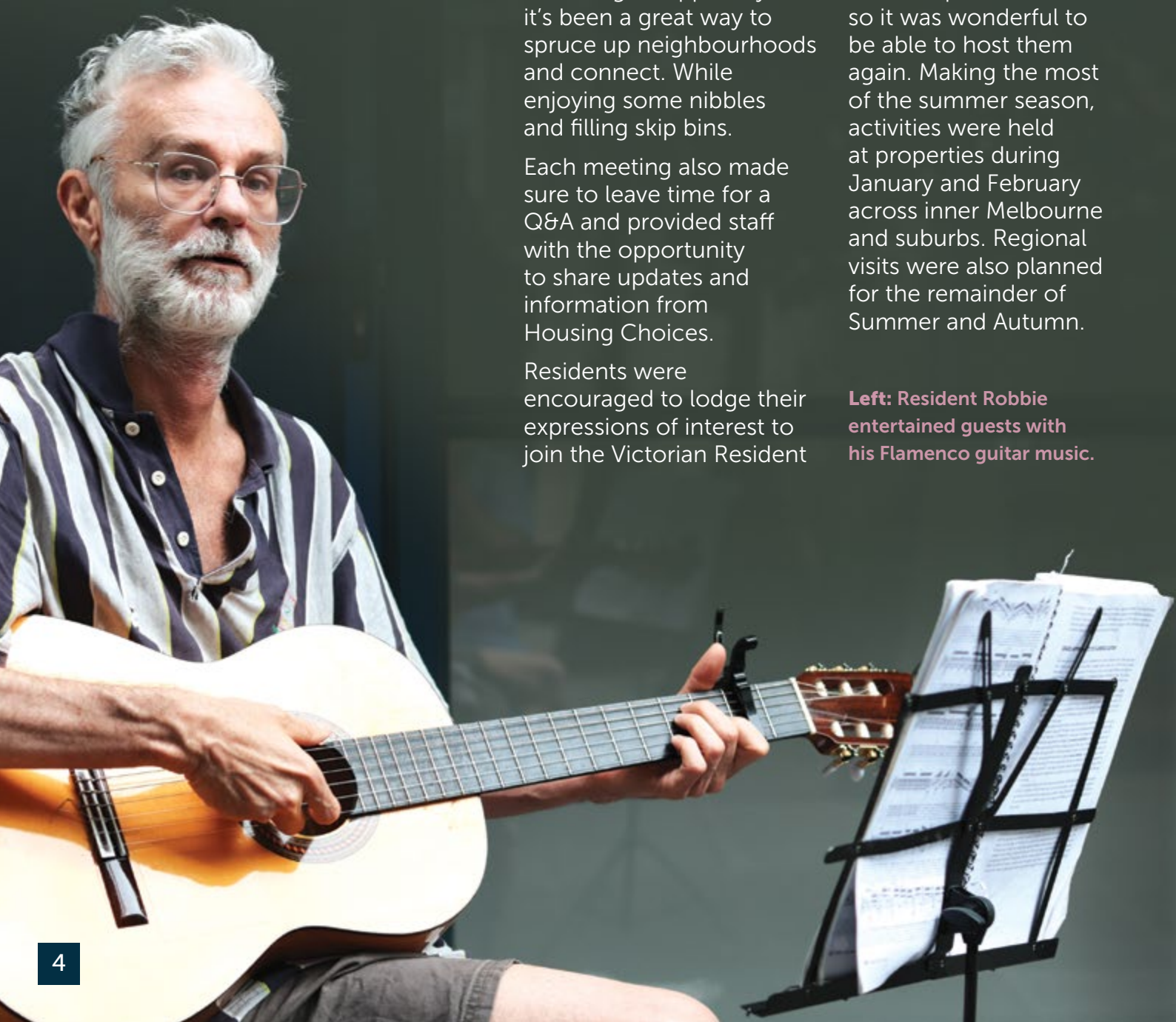
Each meeting also made sure to leave time for a Q&A and provided staff with the opportunity to share updates and information from Housing Choices.

Residents were encouraged to lodge their expressions of interest to join the Victorian Resident

Advisory Committee (VRAC), tidy up homes and shared spaces, and consider rebooting residents' gardens and community gardens.

A significant amount of time has passed since the beginning of the pandemic and when staff were last able to run these in-person events, so it was wonderful to be able to host them again. Making the most of the summer season, activities were held at properties during January and February across inner Melbourne and suburbs. Regional visits were also planned for the remainder of Summer and Autumn.

**Left: Resident Robbie entertained guests with his Flamenco guitar music.**

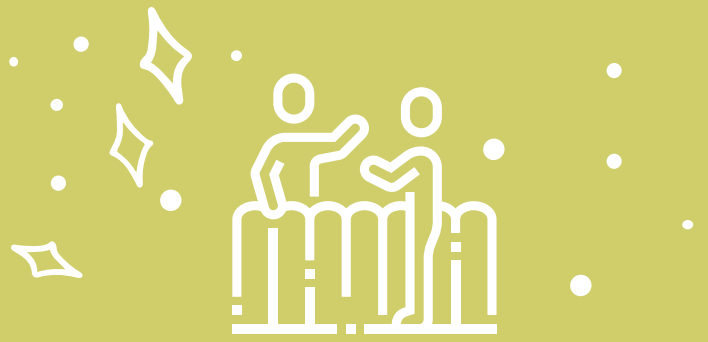






**Above:** Housing Choices Property Team Leader Ben cooked up a storm on the BBQ; residents in North Melbourne made the most of the communal garden for their celebration.

# Social Enterprise Cleans Up



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**Housing Choices recently teamed up with a social enterprise that aligns closely with our values, *Goddess Cleaning Group*.**

Earlier this year, the organisation put a callout to social enterprise – businesses to be contracted as a cleaning service for Housing Choices properties. *Goddess Cleaning Group*, was one of five organisations that applied for the tender – and commenced cleaning services for Housing Choices as of **1 November 2022** at 18 properties in Victoria.

Stacey, the owner of *Goddess Cleaning Group*, built her business after “lived” experience of faced housing insecurity.

“I am a solo parent of three boys who are now 13, 17 and 21. I came out of a domestic violence relationship 12 years ago, so they were all quite young then. I was looking for some work that was flexible enough to work around my kids, court appearances, police interviews, and the rest of it,” said Stacey.

As a social enterprise the business dedicates a portion of profits to supporting, training and upskilling people from disadvantaged and domestic violence backgrounds.

“I started cleaning during the day and the business just grew really through word of mouth, and today we support men and women (mostly women), from disadvantaged and domestic violence backgrounds and provide an ethical platform for them to be able to move forward,” she continued. Before taking on the contract, Stacey checked to be sure that Housing Choices aligned with the values of her business.

“For me it was about doing a bit of investigation work around Housing Choices and what their values are, to find out if the two businesses were aligned. And it was pretty easy to find out we’re very much aligned,” she said.

While *Goddess Cleaning Group* has other major contracts, Stacey said the new partnership with Housing Choices is particularly exciting.

“It’s certainly the most exciting one (contract) for us because we’re so aligned with Housing Choices and what we both hold dear to our hearts around values.”

“It’s not just about putting money into our business, it’s about giving people opportunities to provide cleaning services across 18 properties. That was the key for us.”

“This has a big impact in giving people an ethical work platform, and to give them a sense of pride in getting up and going to work everyday and giving back to the community through their cleaning. It just makes my heart sing,” she said.

Not only is Stacey’s business providing employment to those who will clean Housing Choices properties, but Stacey is also putting call out to our residents to work with her.

“For us it’s about providing an empathetic understanding and inclusive workplace. We’ve all walked our own path, and our path doesn’t determine our future. As an employment opportunity, we can provide the flexibility to support and encourage and help rebuild some self-esteem in individuals so that they



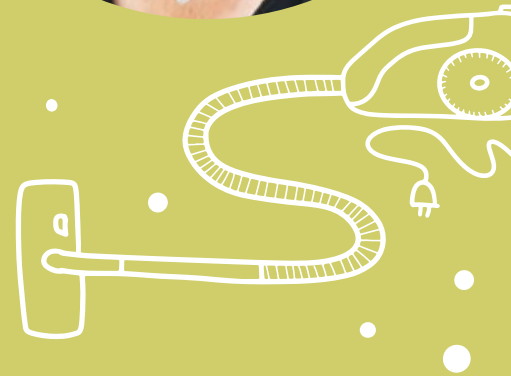


can live their best life and flourish in an environment that accepts them coming to work as their whole self," she said.

She is excited to welcome interested Housing Choices residents to the Goddess Cleaning Group, and we are thrilled to be working with Stacey and her fantastic business.

Housing Choices held information sessions with staff and our partner agencies in November 2022 about our partnership with Goddess Cleaning.

**For residents interested in potentially securing employment with Goddess Cleaning please see below.**



## How to Apply:



**1.** Residents contact their respective Housing Choices Housing Officer.



**2.** The Housing Officer will then have an initial conversation with residents and recommend residents to *Goddess Cleaning*.



**3.** *Goddess Cleaning* will then contact residents individually to introduce themselves. Stacey will give you some information on the application process and engage potential employees in skills training and employment pathway opportunities.

This is an exciting opportunity for Housing Choices residents. Not only does this provide employment, but also a number of other positive contributions to residents' lives. This includes improving health and wellbeing, financial hardship, social and community connections, and personal and professional development.

**To find our more information, please contact your respective Housing Officer on telephone number, 1300 312 447.**



## Staff profile: **Nana Lafolua**

**Originally from Dunedin, New Zealand, Nana started working at Housing Choices in July 2022 and joins the organisation as Housing Services Team Leader.**

With a background in property and projects across both the public and private sectors, Nana brings a wealth of experience to her role.

### **What do you do in your role?**

"We have a few different functions in the team I manage. We have two staff in the Allocations team, and they manage the vacancies within the affordable portfolio of Housing Choices. Then we also have one staff member who manages the rent review process and another team member who works on the Housing Establishment Fund (HEF). Then we also have two staff on reception.

I pretty much oversee all the different areas and often fill in when we have gaps, and that's what I'm doing currently," says Nana.

### **What do you like about Housing Choices?**

"Prior to working for Housing Choices I worked for another community housing provider, so I'm quite familiar with the community housing industry. When I first moved to Melbourne from New Zealand and was being interviewed to try and find employment, they actually mentioned Housing Choices as the leading community housing provider to work for.

But now that I'm here and I'm in the role, what I really like is it resonates with me in terms of the services we provide. I actually grew up in public housing for part of my life, so being able to provide housing to applicants and to be able to play a part in that service, I feel like it's a privilege," she says.

### **What is a something you're working towards in your role?**

"In terms of vacancy management, improving the processes and procedures on how we manage our vacancies. Also, we're reviewing the rent reviews, because at the moment it's quite a manual process and we're wanting to making it more automated, efficient and transparent for residents.

Often that's an area that's quite confusing to residents in terms of timeliness, documents, paperwork and all of that. We're working towards more transparency and to be user friendly from a resident perspective," says Nana.

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

"One of my hobbies is CrossFit. I can deadlift 165kgs and I back squat 140kgs!" she says.





# Fire awareness

**A fire in your home can be devastating, even fatal. Once a fire starts it can spread rapidly putting you and your loved ones at risk. While the dangers of fire are very real, there is a lot you can do to protect yourself, your family and your home.**

- Check your smoke alarm/s are working and call the maintenance team on **1300 321 185** as soon as possible if it needs repair.
- Look out for fire hazards in the home: remove rubbish, clutter and flammable items.
- Keep looking when cooking: check that heat sources are turned off before leaving home or going to sleep, never use water to extinguish an oil or grease fire, and always supervise children in the kitchen.
- Stick it, don't flick it: do not smoke in bed. Smoking in bed is one of the leading causes of fire-related deaths.
- Keep hallways and balconies clear to avoid obstructing occupants needing to exit the building.
- Keep items one metre from air conditioning units, including clothing that is on the balcony. Do not cover air-conditioning units with clothes or other materials.
- Do not use barbecues and heaters or any open flames on balconies near potentially combustible material.
- Do not store gas bottles on balconies.
- Always keep fire doors clear, closed and unlocked at all times.
- Familiarise yourself with your building evacuation procedures.



If a fire occurs in your home, get out, stay out and call **Triple Zero (000)**.



For more information, please visit Fire Rescue Victoria at **frv.gov.au** or Country Fire Authority **cfa.vic.gov.au**.



# Eat Well, Live Well in Darebin

**Housing Choices, Your Community Health (funded agency), NEAMI National, and Darebin Volunteer Information and Resource Service (DIVRS), are seeking to improve the health and wellbeing of residents by increasing their knowledge and access to fresh food.**

The team of agencies received grant funding from the City of Darebin Council, and want to work with you, Housing Choices residents, to plan, codesign and deliver the Eat Well, Live Well Project from **February 2023 to June 2025**.

First, staff will work alongside a small group of residents to co-design the program to ensure the project's activities are relevant to participants' ideas and needs. We further welcome residents' ideas and participation by being part of the project's activities. The activities may include cooking demonstrations, trips to markets and community gardens, cooking and sharing meals together, training in food handling, organising food deliveries or growing food. We want your ideas!

The overall aim is to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. We know that eating nutritious food and socially sharing a meal together makes us feel better and more able to manage what life brings us.

Keep an eye out for more information about this exciting new project.

If you would like to know more or to participate, please contact **Deb** or **Alex** at Housing Choices Australia on **1300 312 447**, or **Annie** at Your Community Health on **0439 203 950**.



**Above:** Brian Nankervis from Rockwiz made a great MC; while resident Dorian was presented with a Good Neighbour Award from Lord Mayor of Melbourne Sally Capp and Michael Lennon from Housing Choices.

## Resident Christmas Party



**On 15 December 2022, Housing Choices was thrilled to once again host its annual Resident Christmas Party.**

Due to COVID-19 and lockdowns, this was the first resident party that could run in person since 2019. Held at the Drill Hall in Melbourne's CBD, residents from across Victoria made their way to celebrate the Festive Season together.

Over 250 residents attended lunch, with Rockwiz's Brian Nankervis MCing the festivities. A delicious roast was served by Housing Choices staff,

special guests included Lord Mayor of the City of Melbourne, Sally Capp, Managing Director, Michael Lennon and Deputy Chair, Fabienne Michaux of Housing Choices.

A working group of Housing Choices staff and a member from VRAC put months of planning into making it the best celebration possible. Formalities included presentation of the Good Neighbour Awards, Angela Grasso played some beautiful music on the piano, and the talented Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Choir sang Christmas Carols while residents dined.

A fun photo booth was a popular destination, and children enjoyed circus workshops before Santa got into the fun part – distributing presents.

It was wonderful to have so many of our resident community under one roof.

If you have any feedback about the event or what you would like to see at the next one, please contact the Community Development Team on **1300 312 447** or email **[communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au](mailto:communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au)**.





**Above:** Christmas 2022 was one to remember with so many Victorian residents coming together after two years of separation.

# Home Stories Autumn puzzle

## Win a \$50 Bunnings voucher!

Find all 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.

In celebration of Harmony Week in March, this word search is themed around the different countries our tenants are from.

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

### FIND THESE WORDS

AUSTRALIA	UNITED
NEW	KINGDOM
ZEALAND	CHINA
SUDAN	ETHIOPIA
SOMALIA	CONGO
IRAN	EGYPT
AFGHANISTAN	BRAZIL
PHILIPPINES	

Please tell us the remaining word before **Friday 19 May 2023** 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 winner will score themselves a \$50 Bunnings voucher and will be drawn from the correct entries. Good luck!

### Hidden Meaning Brain Teaser

1.	2.	3.	4.
SPOT	BUSINES	VISION VISION	RAKED

Answers: 1. X marks the spot 2. Unfinished business 3. Double vision 4. Half baked.

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**HOUSING  
CHOICES  
AUSTRALIA**

#### Head Office

Level 3, 350 Queen Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000

#### Preston Office

137 High Street  
Preston VIC 3072

#### General Enquiries

1300 312 447

#### Maintenance

1300 321 185

info@hcau.org.au

housingchoices.org.au