



# STORIES FOR HOMES

**Autumn  
2023**

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# From the General Manager



**For those of you who have been feeling the heat this summer, you may be glad that this newsletter heralds the onset of Autumn.**



This is my favourite newsletter as while I write this, we have a whole year of opportunity ahead of us.

You will find a big focus on art in this edition – starting with the announcement of our annual **Tenant Art Show on 24 May**. This is one of the highlights of our year and it just keeps getting better. I would absolutely encourage you to think about submitting your work or just come along and have a look at the outstanding talent we have walking among us. A shout out to Edward who has shared his personal journey through art with us in this edition.

On a more sobering note, I would like to acknowledge the challenges that we face in 2023 working our way through the worst housing crisis that many of us will have seen. You may know that a normal vacancy rate in WA is about 3% of rental properties at any one time – that number now hovers around 0.7%.

This is causing hardship across so many fronts and Housing Choices WA is doing everything we can to sustain the tenancies we have, rather than exiting people to potential housing

stress or homelessness and exacerbating the issue. I would also ask of you during this tough time to be as patient and understanding as you can with our team as they commit to this mission. We are genuinely working as hard as we can – and we appreciate when we are treated with respect and kindness.

Part of our work to tackle the housing crisis is our newly funded *Djuripiny Mia* program, announced and funded by the Minister for Housing late last year. Over the course of 2023, we will be bringing on 100 properties, with referrals from our support partners, for people who have ended up with no home and are sleeping rough. We are very proud of being at the forefront of ending homelessness in WA and look forward to telling you more about the successes of this program as they emerge.

I hope you enjoy the Autumn news. I wish everyone the very best over the Easter Break and hope you get to spend time doing what you enjoy.

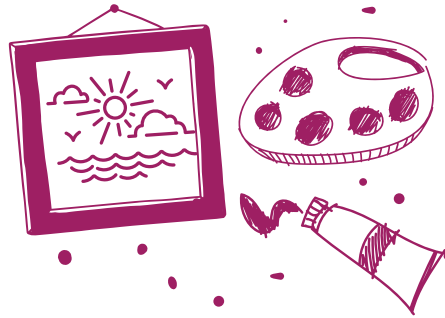
**Natalie Sangalli**  
**General Manager WA**





**Above:** Jay and his painting Egyptian God which won joint First Prize at our 2022 Tenant Art Showcase.

## Our Tenant Art Showcase is back!



### Are you an artist? or do you want to come and see some spectacular art?

Housing Choices WA is once again holding our Tenant Art Showcase on **24 May** at the **Gary Holland Community Centre** in **Rockingham**.

Our Tenant Art Showcase is about celebrating the creative talents of our tenants. All kinds of art is welcome including photography, woodwork, painting/drawing, sewing, crafts, sculptures and more.

Tenants who display artwork will be in the running to win our People's Choices Awards and have the opportunity to sell their art on the day. Housing Choices will also be looking to purchase tenant art for our offices and for digital use.

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

Please contact **Tenant Engagement Officer Alex Kepes** for more details and to register your interest to attend and/or display art.

**M:** 0437 887 675 **E:** alex.kepes@hcau.org.au



## Public Holiday Office Closures

**All Housing Choices WA offices will be closed over the Easter Period from 4:00pm Thursday 6 April 2023 to 8.30am Tuesday 11 April 2023.**

Our offices will also be closed on **Tuesday 25 April 2023** for the ANZAC Day public holiday and on **Monday 5 June 2023** for WA Day.

When our offices are closed, all calls to our maintenance hotline will be diverted to our emergency maintenance hotline.

Please only report emergencies during our office closure period, such as a burst water pipe. If you request non-emergency maintenance during our office closure period, you could be charged a contractor call out fee.

Our maintenance hotline staff will do their best to advise you if what you are reporting is an emergency repair.

### Easter Period - Closed

Thursday <b>6 April</b> 4pm	to	Tuesday <b>11 April</b> 8.30am
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<b>Closed</b> Anzac Day Tuesday <b>25 April</b>
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<b>Closed</b> WA Day Monday <b>5 June</b>
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# Born to Paint

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**From childhood to retirement, Edward has dedicated his life to painting.**

**“Painting is my life. I was born with a paint brush in my mouth I think,” Edward said.**



Edward attended the Sunderland College of Art in the north of England for three years full-time, from 1956.

“When I say full time, I mean full time. It was five days a week plus an alternative

Saturday. It was very intensive training.”

After completing his fine art degree, Edward landed a job as an illustrator with a British advertising studio.

“That’s where I was able to make money initially.

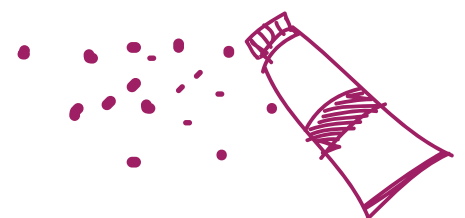
(The illustrations) were used in publications, magazines and newspapers,” he said.

“If you can imagine a townscape, or street scene, but reduced into line form, so less complex.

“I combined also the fine arts side. I kept that going in conjunction, but the illustration side was what was making me money in the early years.”

In the late 1980s, Edward immigrated to Australia, working for the West Australian newspaper before founding a studio of his own.

“But I always wanted to start my own business again, so from 1991 I’ve been fully on my own,” he said. “Unfortunately, everything fell apart financially for me.



"I went back over to England to start over again, but things went pear shaped and I came back here and had no home. Effectively, a lot of the money I earned went by the wayside.

"From being initially very wealthy, as it were, suddenly it was gone. And this can happen in life by making the wrong choice.

"I've always kept in my mind that this is just part of life."

Now a Housing Choices WA tenant, the 81-year-old's paintings were displayed

in our 2022 Tenant Art Showcase, winning the Favourite Artist Award as voted by fellow tenants.

"I entered a painting of the Sunderland town and a painting of a boy playing cricket on the cobble streets in the art show," he said.

"I was born in Sunderland, which is just a quarter of a mile from the shipyards. That's why I have a great affinity for the shipyards and working people. That was my environment."

Edward has also sold his paintings over Facebook. His daughter handles the official side of his work, posting his paintings on Facebook, including prospective UK buyers getting in contact.

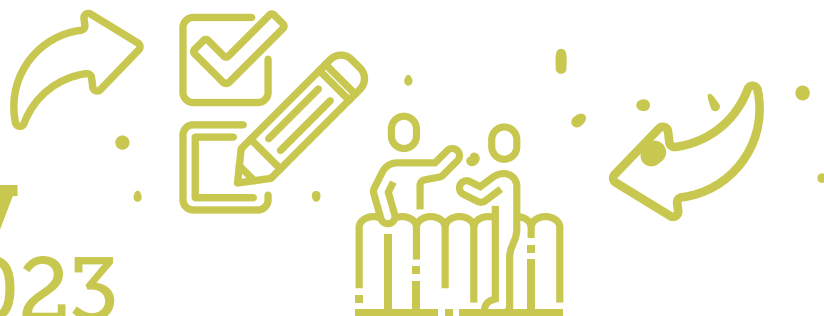
"I have three pieces that people in Sunderland are interested in buying.

"There's a great connection there."

We are excited to have more of Edward's work at this year's **Tenant Art Showcase on 24 May.**



# Actioning tenant survey feedback in 2023



Last year, more than 600 Housing Choices WA tenants completed our 2022 Tenant Survey, and we are excited to share what actions we are taking to address issues you raised in the survey.



## Improving communications

You told us that we could improve our communications by providing more information about maintenance, rent and other tenancy topics, as well as being able to get your queries answered in a timely manner.

### To address these issues, we are going to:

- Continue to review our letters based on the principles tenants developed in 2022.
- Run maintenance and rent information sessions for tenants.
- Upskilling our Tenancy Assistants to answer your queries if your Tenancy Officer is not available.



## Improving complaints handling

You said we could improve how we are handling complaints against our staff and our services. Based on this feedback, Housing Choices Australia has undertaken a national review of our complaints process.

As a result of this review Housing Choices has 25 recommendations to implement to improve our complaints processes including reviewing policy, developing new resources, creating a national complaints management system and more.

In each state, the tenant advisory committee and our broader community of tenants will get the opportunity to be involved in actioning these recommendations to help co-design our national complaints process.



## Addressing anti-social behaviour

You said that anti-social and nuisance behaviour was a big issue, and you were concerned about safety, security and how anti-social behaviour issues are handled.

### Some of the actions we are taking include:

- Trialling a mediation service for tenants who have a neighbour dispute.
- Developing resources on where tenants can go for help to deal with these issues.
- Trialling Police and Council Community Safety Meetings for tenants.
- Reviewing our anti-social behaviour policy nationally.



**Above: (L-R)** Tenancy Services Manager Bec Martin, Tenancy Assistant Sarah Stack, Housing Choices tenant Layton and Tenant Engagement Officer Alex Kepes.



## Aboriginal Family Fun Day

**As part of our reconciliation journey to better engage our Aboriginal tenants, we held our first Aboriginal Family Fun Day and BBQ in January at the Kwinana Adventure Park.**

After talking to tenants, we understood that they were looking for a culturally welcoming space that was suitable for children and extended family so tenants could connect with each other.

With wonderful weather and plenty of food we had a great time getting to know our tenants and their mob. Housing Choices staff enjoyed taking on

new roles for the day as lead temporary tattoo artists and bubble blowers.

One of our Aboriginal tenants, Layton (**pictured above**) shared information and stories about the history of his mob with other tenants and was able to find connections between families.

Housing Choices is committed to providing culturally safe environments for tenants to connect and we look forward to holding more of these events in the future for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

## Call out to our culturally diverse tenants



**Did you know that almost half of Australians were either born overseas or have a parent who was?**

Housing Choices WA acknowledges that we have many tenants from diverse backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities.

We house people from over 70 different countries with the top 10 countries of birth being Australia, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Sudan, Somalia, Iran, Afghanistan, Philippines, China and Ethiopia.

### Call out to our culturally diverse tenants

We are holding some focus groups for our culturally and linguistically diverse tenants to get their feedback on how we can better include and involve tenants from multicultural backgrounds.

Whether you were born in another country, speak a language other than English or come from diverse backgrounds, nationalities, traditions and religions we want to hear from you.

Tenants who attend will receive reimbursement for their time. If you are interested, please contact Tenant Engagement Officer **Alex Kepes on 0437 887 675** or via **alex.kepes@hcau.org.au**.

# Avoiding tenant liability charges



**Tenant liability occurs when items in the home must be repaired or replaced because of the actions of a tenant, member of the household or a visitor.**

This damage isn't always caused deliberately, it can occur over time and is often avoidable. We received feedback that tenants want more information about their responsibilities around their property and how to avoid tenant liability.

## Prepare for being locked out



Locking yourself out of your home can result in being charged for calling out a locksmith. Have a spare key in a lock box or give a spare key to someone you trust – like a family member to avoid lockout charges.

## Avoid toilet blockages



Don't flush tissues, paper towel, sanitary products, or baby wipes down the toilet as they do not break down like toilet paper. This often leads to blockages which tenants would be charged for fixing.

## Protect yourself from third-party damage



If someone has broken into your home or caused damage to your property you must report this to the police and get a Police Report Number to avoid being charged for the repairs.

## Don't wait to report repairs



Please don't wait until an inspection to report repairs. Maintenance issues that are left unreported could get worse and you could be charged for any additional damage as a result.

## Keep pests away



Pest issues can result in tenant liability if the actions of the tenant cause the problem. Avoid pest problems in the home by keeping your property clean. This includes storing food in airtight containers, using sprays or baits, disposing of rubbish and wiping down countertops and stovetops.

## Keep drains clean



Blocked shower and kitchen drains are another common source of tenant liability. Please be mindful of what you are putting down drains, for example pouring cooking fat down a drain can cause a blockage. Buying drain covers can also help prevent hair going down shower drains and can catch food debris in your kitchen sink.

## Don't smoke inside



Smoking inside can lead to tenant liability charges because it causes nicotine staining on walls and surfaces. Smoking inside can also increase your risk of fire in the home.

## Make sure you are home for contractor appointments



If you have agreed to a time and day for a contractor to attend and you are not home, you will be charged a call out fee. If you can no longer make an appointment, please call our maintenance hotline on 1800 203 383 to reschedule.



# Maintenance how to's

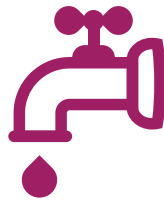


## How to check for gas leaks in the home

Gas is a flammable substance with a smell similar to rotten eggs. The egg smell is added to natural gas to help you detect gas leaks as they can be a serious threat to your safety.

If you can smell rotten eggs, it could be a gas leak.

- Leave the area immediately and don't use anything that could cause a spark such as a lighter, matches, mobile phone or electrical appliances.
- Call the **ATCO Faults and Emergencies** number on **13 13 52**.
- ATCO will come and investigate the issue for free and if a repair is needed tenants can contact our maintenance hotline on **1800 203 383** for an emergency repair to be arranged.

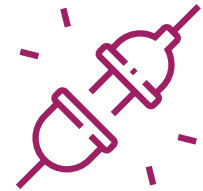


## How to find and turn off your water main

Knowing how to turn off your water at the mains can prevent damage to your home and your belongings when dealing with water leaks and burst pipes.

Water mains are usually located near your water meter, outside at the front of your house, near the boundary of your home or sometimes in the close vicinity to a garden tap.

The water main may have a knob or a nut for turning on and off. In most cases you need to turn the knob clockwise **(to your right)** to turn the water off. If you can't find your water main, please call your local office or ask your tenancy officer at your next inspection.



## How to report electric shocks or tingles

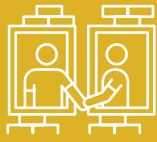
If you ever experience a zap or tingling sensation when touching an electrical appliance or power point at home, it could be a sign of an electrical wiring issue.

If you experience a shock or tingle, call **Western Power** immediately on **13 13 51**.

Western Power will send someone out as soon as possible to investigate the issue. Depending on the cause of the issue, Western Power will fix the problem for you or will give you advice on who to contact to rectify it.

It is important for your safety that once an electric shock or tingle has been experienced, you do not touch or 're-test' the location of the incident again.





# Understanding anti-social behaviour

**We understand that getting along with neighbours can be challenging sometimes, but in any community, there needs to be a level of tolerance between neighbours.**

It's important for tenants to understand if their neighbour's behaviour has potentially breached tenancy law as this determines if and how Housing Choices can assist with neighbour issues.



## What IS anti-social behaviour?

Anti-social behaviour is behaviour by a neighbour that breaches the Residential Tenancies ACT (WA) 1987 and can include:

- violence, assault or harassment
- intimidation or offensive behaviour
- illicit drug dealing, theft or vandalism
- arson or graffiti
- verbal abuse or domestic violence
- continual trespassing
- ongoing excessive noise.



## What is NOT anti-social behaviour?

Sometimes tenants experience neighbour issues that are not a breach of tenancy which can include:

- annoying or unusual behaviours that are different to your own behaviours or standards.
- noise or activity associated with daily life (children playing, televisions or radios, power tools or lawn mowers).
- differences with your neighbours that are unrelated to your tenancy (friend or family disputes).

## What to do if you have a neighbour issue

**Before you contact us, we encourage you to follow these steps:**



### If safe to do so, talk with your neighbour first

- Remain calm and explain what the problem is so they are aware.
- Ask for alternative options or solutions that both of you can agree to.
- Do not escalate the issue or retaliate if you can't agree.



### Report the incident where appropriate

- In an emergency or life-threatening situation **call 000** immediately.
- For non-emergency matters that need police attendance **call 131 444**.
- To report criminal activity or suspicious behaviour anonymously call **Crimestoppers on 1800 333 000**.
- If the issue is pet or noise related you can report your concerns to your local council.



### Keep written records

- Write down each incident when it occurs.
- Stick to the facts when describing the event, include where, when, and who was involved at the time.
- Note how it affected you and what actions you took in response at the time e.g., reported incident to Council or Police.

A complaint can then be made to Housing Choices with the evidence of the issue (police or council report number and incident diaries), and we can investigate whether the issue is a breach of tenancy.

**If you are still unsure how to manage your neighbour issue, please contact your Tenancy Officer so we can support you with ways to manage the problem.**

# From the ACT Deputy Chairperson, Trish Tamms

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**Hello all! I am Trish Tamms, and I am the Deputy Chairperson of the ACT Committee. Welcome to 2023 and what an amazing start of the year it has been for the committee.**

We had a great training session in February and have gained 5 new members to the committee giving us an incredible force of 15 ACT members. Combined our committee members have over 164 years of tenancy experience - that's a lot of knowledge to work with!

Welcome all new members to the ACT and what an amazing amount of diversity we now have to share.

I was personally overwhelmed by the enthusiasm at the training session we had. The training was inviting, relaxing and very informative. It was great to see current and new members contributing.

While we do have tenants on the committee from a range of areas across the city and Peel region - this year - the committee wants to focus on making sure we can better include our tenants in the South-West.

We would like to put out an invitation to tenants in the South-West who would be interested to join our meetings online or be involved in another way. The Tenant Engagement Team will be in Bunbury more often this year, so this

will give our South-West tenants a chance to chat about any issue they may have and raise them at our ACT meetings.

I am really looking forward to the year ahead and wish everyone a wonderful 2023.

**Trish Tamms**  
ACT Deputy Chairperson



**Below:** New ACT members Rosie (middle) and Doug (right) with existing member Bob (left) at the ACT training.



# 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	

Congratulations to **Soumaya from Willagee**, last edition's puzzle prize winner.

Tell us the remaining word for the wordsearch by emailing [info-wa@hcau.org.au](mailto:info-wa@hcau.org.au), messaging us through our **Facebook page** or posting it to us at **Home Autumn Puzzle, Housing Choices Western Australia, PO Box 105, Burswood WA 6100**. Competition **closes Friday 19 May 2023**. 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!



## Useful contacts

National Debt Helpline: **1800 007 007**

WA Connect: [waconnect.org.au/](http://waconnect.org.au)

Carers Gateway: **1800 422 737**

Lifeline: **13 11 14**

Mental Health Emergency Response Line:

**1300 555 788** (Perth region)

**1800 676 822** (Peel region)

Rurallink: **1800 552 002** (rural/regional WA)

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