

# STREETSPORTS

**Summer  
2022**

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**HOUSING  
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WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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# From the General Manager



## Welcome to the summer edition of the tenant newsletter and the end of another pretty extraordinary year for Housing Choices WA.

It has also been an extraordinary year across the community housing space with the federal and state government committed to an unprecedented funding increase for social and affordable housing.

Housing Choices has been lucky enough to receive funding to allow us to build almost 50 new properties in Peel and the metro area and undertake upgrades on more than 300 properties.

We have also done some exciting work with tenants to provide opportunities to engage with our services. Throughout the year, I have been privileged to host the biggest ever annual art show and spend time with members of our Advisory Committee of Tenants (ACT) on a regular basis. More recently, I visited a couple of our fabulous Spring Garden Competition winners and met a lot of new faces at the Rockingham end of year event.

Internally, we have worked through a restructure to streamline the way we deliver services, incorporating debt management into tenancy officer's roles and reducing the size of each portfolio. We have also done a full operational policy refresh, as well as created a supported tenancies team to better address the needs of tenants facing complex issues.

As we head toward the New Year, I am especially looking forward to the **Aboriginal Family Day** scheduled for **Thursday 19 January**, and to working with the ACT to develop our action plan to address the feedback from the tenant survey.

A couple of things to be aware of - **our offices will be closed** over the Christmas and New Year period from **1:00pm Friday 23 December 2022 to 8.30am Tuesday 3 January 2023**.

Our offices will also be closed on **Thursday 26 January 2023** for the Australia Day public holiday and on **Monday 6 March 2023** for the Labour Day public holiday.

When our offices are closed, all calls to our maintenance hotline will be diverted to our emergency maintenance hotline. Please only report emergency maintenance issues during our office closure period.

A reminder for tenants going away for the Christmas period or for extended periods of time, please remember to let your tenancy officer know so we are aware when your home will be vacant and we know who to contact in case of emergencies.

In closing, I wish everyone a safe, happy and well festive season. I hope you get to spend time with people you treasure or do lots of things you enjoy.

**Natalie Sangalli**  
General Manager WA







**Above:** Tenants at our Rockingham Lunch.



**Above:** Housing Choices tenant David with Tenant Engagement Officer Alex.

## End Of Year tenant lunches



**In November and December, more than 130 tenants and Housing Choices WA staff got together to celebrate the end of the year with events in Rockingham and for the first time, Gosnells.**

All attendees enjoyed a hearty two course lunch, and it was a great opportunity for

tenants to get to know each other and for staff to connect with tenants outside of their day-to-day work.

In between courses, guests enjoyed games, quizzes, door prizes and presentations from Housing Choices WA management and Advisory Committee of Tenants (ACT) members. Both events also featured a photo booth,

run by a professional photographer, with photos sent to tenants as a keepsake.

Our end of year tenant lunches continue to be a great way for tenants and staff to enjoy each other's company during the festive season and we hope to continue to include tenants from different areas each year.



**Above:** Housing Choices tenant Cheryl (left) with Tenancy Services Manager Bec (right).



**Above:** Photo booth fun with tenants at our Gosnells lunch.



**Above:** Aboriginal Tenancy Officer Denise (right) at one of our recent yarnning groups.



## Invite to our Aboriginal Family Fun Day

**In January 2023 we will be holding a family fun day for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants at Kwinana Adventure Park.**

We have been working with our Aboriginal tenants to see how we can improve our services and provide inclusive activities and events that celebrate culture and bring families together.

If you are an Aboriginal tenant, you and your family are invited to enjoy a sausage sizzle and a fun day out with Housing Choices.

If you would like to come along, please get in touch with **Alex Kepes** on **0437 887 675** or reach out to your tenancy officer.

## Policy spotlight



### Updates to our appeals policy

**Housing Choices WA has removed the Tier 2 appeal option from our appeals process.**

A Tier 2 appeal was available where a tenant has lodged an appeal but has not been satisfied with the outcome. The Tier 2 appeal included a review of the original decision by a panel of Housing Choices WA staff who were not involved in the first appeal.

To improve the transparency of our decisions, tenants who are not happy with the outcome of their first appeal will now be referred to the Ombudsman, Consumer Affairs, or the Department of Communities to take the issue further.

These organisations are well established and recognised bodies that can provide a completely independent assessment of the issue in order to achieve the best possible outcome for all parties.

Please note that this does not impact our initial appeal process which is available to all tenants who are unhappy about a decision we have made regarding their tenancy.

If you have any questions about this information, please contact your local office and ask to speak to your tenancy officer.

### Assessable income changes for carers

**Housing Choices WA has updated our assessable income list and no longer considers the carers allowance as assessable income when calculating your rent.**

We have made this change to acknowledge that the carer's allowance is provided to assist with the additional costs of caring for someone, not general living expenses. This also will better align WA with Housing Choices Australia's national assessable income list.

Our Rent Review Team has identified the tenants whose rent will be impacted by this change.

We have notified these tenants in writing, detailing whether the change has resulted in a decrease to their rent or and/or a credit to their account.

If you think you may be impacted by this change and haven't heard from us or have any questions about this information, please contact a member of our Rent Review Team. You can get in touch with Denise on 9534 0412 or Jackie on 9534 0403.





## From ACT Chairperson Sue Newman

### Wow, where has 2022 gone!

The ACT has had another productive year where we have been able to voice our concerns and opinions on a range of issues brought to our attention by Housing Choices WA and through the 2021 tenant survey.

Some of the issues we have worked on include reviewing the rent review forms and letters, having input into how Housing Choices handles complaints, and importantly for tenants, changing the wording of our inspection letters which hopefully will be updated very soon.

Earlier this year we also helped develop the Small Sparks Fund to enable tenants to host activities for other tenants in their own community to foster inclusion and relationship building.

Next year we are excited to let you know Housing Choices will be working with tenants to develop



communications training for staff. If you are interested in being involved in this, please let the Tenant Engagement Team know.

I would like to personally thank all the members of the ACT for their dedication, time and input. It's been an absolute pleasure to have shared this past year with you. I also want to thank Housing Choices for acknowledging our ideas and concerns and the fantastic communication skills of Amy, Alex and Natalie.

All tenants are welcome to sit in with us at a meeting, see what we do and join the committee. If you are interested, please talk to a member near you or contact the Tenant Engagement Team.

Wishing you all a healthy and exciting 2023 from the ACT.

**Suzanne Newman**  
ACT Chairperson



## Renting With Confidence workshops

**We know that tenants can sometimes be unsure of their rights and responsibilities and need some help navigating their tenancy.** To help with this we want to share some information about the Renting with Confidence workshops run by Shelter WA for people with disability.

These workshops aim to better support tenants to manage their tenancy and understand their rights as a tenant. The workshops were designed by tenants and are open to renters with disability across WA to share renting tips and experiences.

### 2023 Renting with Confidence workshops:

Thursday  
**19 January**  
online

Wednesday  
**8 February**  
Rockingham

Wednesday  
**8 March**  
Mirrabooka

Wednesday  
**29 March**  
Mandurah

If you are interested in any of the above workshops, please get in touch with **Donna from Shelter WA** on **0456 162 897** or via **[renting@shelterwa.org.au](mailto:renting@shelterwa.org.au)**.



1.



2.



3.

# Spring Gardening Competition winners



**We had more than 25 tenants enter our Spring Gardening Competition this year and we were once again blown away by the hard work tenants put into creating beautiful outdoor (and indoor) spaces.**

We had nine winners and three highly commended gardens this year. As we can't do all the gardens justice in the newsletter, we will feature the photos of each winner on our Facebook page over the coming weeks.

We encourage you to like our Facebook page so you can see all our winning gardens. You can find our Facebook page by searching for 'Housing Choices Western Australia' in your Facebook app or by typing **facebook.com/HChoicesWA** in your web browser.

Each winner has received a \$100 Bunnings voucher and our highly commended gardeners have received a \$50 Bunnings voucher and some gardening gloves to help keep their gardens growing.

Although we can't feature all our winners in the newsletter, we would like to give you a sneak peak of our overall garden winners for each region.

Thank you to everyone who participated in our 2022 Spring Gardening Competition, and we look forward to holding the competition again next year.

## HIGHLY COMMENDED

Noy from Kelmscott

Marie and John from Bertram

Rosemary from Willagee

## WINNING GARDENS

**Best Garden - South-West**  
Dale from Capel (Image 1)

**Best Garden - Peel**  
Trish and George from Greenfields (Image 2)

**Best Garden - Metro**  
Sharron from Wellard (Image 3)

**Best Garden Transformation**  
Alan and Wendy from Bertram

**Best Unique Garden**  
Margaret from Armadale

**Best Verge Garden**  
Patricia from Greenfields

**Best Front Garden**  
Tamara from Waikiki

**Best Indoor Garden**  
Ronnice from Nollamara

**Best Flower Garden**  
Maria from Hilton



# Results from the 2022 Tenant Survey



Earlier this year more than 600 Housing Choices WA tenants completed our 2022 Tenant Survey, and we are excited to share a snapshot of the results.

## Our top results

Satisfied with condition of home



86%

Satisfied with repairs and maintenance



84%

Satisfied with communication



86%

Satisfied with information provision



84%

## How we have improved since 2021

Last year you told us we could improve our maintenance response times and how we involve and listen to tenants. We are excited to say we have seen improvements in both areas in our 2022 survey results.

## Where we can improve for 2023

This year you have said we could continue to improve how we handle complaints including anti-social behaviour and service complaints. You said we could also improve some of our communication around repairs and refurbishments.

We are now working on an action plan to address areas of improvement and we look forward to sharing these actions in the next edition of *Home Stories*.

## Which areas of our services are most important to tenants?

1. repairs and maintenance
2. condition of your property
3. communication with Housing Choices
4. listening to tenants' views.

## What activities do tenants want to be involved in?



Social and wellness activities



Learning about local services



Help dealing with anti-social behaviour



Understanding more about rent



Providing feedback on services



**Congratulations to the winners of our 2022 Tenant Survey prize draw**

**\$200 Coles/Myer voucher winners:**

Gary from Bunbury  
Michael from Hilton

**\$50 Coles/Myer voucher winners:**

John from Fremantle  
Tanya from Mandurah  
Graeme from Bunbury  
Paul from Victoria Park  
Rene from Kelmscott  
Sue from Melville  
Kay from Bunbury  
Kristi from Pinjarra  
Chris from Mandurah  
Kevin from Australind

Above: Michael. Winner of one of our \$200 Coles/Myer Vouchers and his dog.



## Smoke alarm safety

**As the weather heats up, it is important to think about safety in the home. Smoke alarms need regular testing to make sure they provide effective protection.**

Housing Choices WA has at least one smoke alarm in each of our properties and we test them every time we do a property inspection at your home.

In addition to the testing we do, we recommend tenants test their smoke alarms occasionally. Testing your smoke alarms is a quick and easy job that could make a big difference to your safety.

### How to test your smoke alarms

All smoke alarms have a test button. Press the test button until you hear a loud alert tone, then release.

1. Use a broom handle if you cannot reach but be careful you do not damage the smoke alarm.
2. The alert beeping tone should stop after a few seconds. If it doesn't, press the test button again.
3. If your smoke alarm doesn't beep at all, please ring the Housing Choices WA maintenance hotline immediately on **1800 203 383** so we can investigate the issue.

We also wanted to remind tenants to never modify, cover or paint over smoke alarms as this stops them working properly, compromises your safety and you could be charged for the cost of their repair.



## Fire safety in the home

**Most household fires start accidentally and can be prevented by taking additional safety measures in the home. Here are some fire safety tips to help keep you and your belongings safe.**



Keep Christmas decorations away from lights and candles and make sure to switch Christmas lights off when you leave the house or go to bed.



Ensure cigarette butts are extinguished before putting them in a bin and avoid smoking in bed.



If using a barbecue this summer, make sure it is kept away from flammable materials, is not left unattended and turned off after use.



Be mindful not to overload power points or power boards.



Mow lawns regularly, rake up leaf matter and remove shrubs under trees to reduce risk of bushfire.



Check your gutters for leaf matter or overhanging branches and call our maintenance hotline on **1800 203 383** if you are concerned about fire risk.



Never light a fire on days where a total fire ban is declared.

If a fire starts in your home, do not try to put it out. Get everyone safely out of the house and call **000**. If a fire starts outside your unit and it is not safe to leave, close all the doors and all the windows and call **000**.

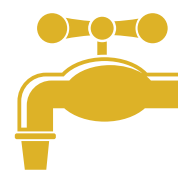
For more information on fire safety please visit the **Department of Fire and Emergency Services** website **dfes.wa.gov.au** or call their general emergency information line on **13 3337**.





**Above:** Bunbury tenants at our first Maintenance Matters group at their complex.

# Talking Maintenance Matters in Bunbury



**After multiple delays due to COVID-19 we were finally able to head down to the South-West to run some Maintenance Matters Information Sessions with tenants in Bunbury.**

In September 2022 we held two groups for Bunbury tenants. Property Services Manager Chantal Swanepoel and technical services staff member Paul Milbourne travelled down from Perth to attend alongside staff from our Bunbury office.

The first group was held in the community room of one of our large complexes and our second group was held in Bunbury library with tenants from all areas of the South-West.

Having staff from our maintenance team in the room for both groups meant tenants could have many of their questions answered on

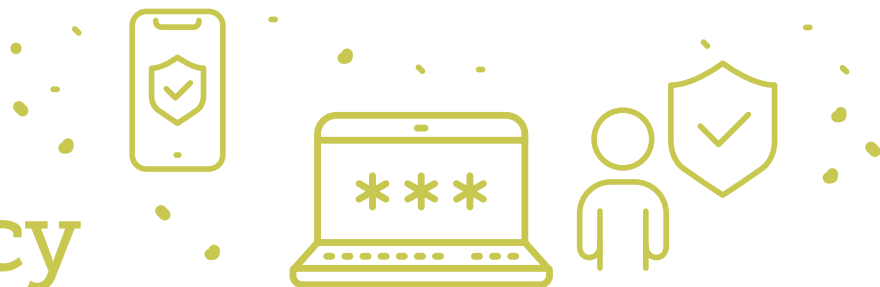
the spot, but also allowed Chantal and Paul to provide some important information about how our maintenance and repairs services operates. This is also the first time we have run a maintenance

group in one of our complexes and it was a great way to hear tenants' shared questions and concerns and have many of those issues investigated in person on the day.



**Above:** Bunbury staff member Lauren, property services staff Chantal and Paul and a local tenant at our second group of the day in Bunbury Library.

# How we protect your privacy



**Considering recent events in the news regarding privacy breaches in Australia, we thought it was timely to reassure tenants about how we collect and protect personal information.**

Protecting your privacy is important to Housing Choices WA. You can expect that personal information collected by us will be handled in accordance with our policies and the Australian Privacy Principles under the Privacy Act 1988.



## **What kinds of information we collect**

By consenting to receive our services, you are also consenting to us collecting your personal information.

We aim to only collect your personal information where necessary to enable us to deliver effective housing services. Examples of the types of personal information we collect can include your contact details, household circumstances and income details.



## **How we collect and use your personal information**

We collect and use your information for purposes related to our housing services which includes, but isn't limited to getting in touch with you, assessing your eligibility for housing, calculating your rent, identifying your individual needs or for evaluation purposes.

We do not share your personal information or discuss your tenancy with any individual or organisations without your consent. We will only share personal information without your consent if we are required by law or other government obligations.



## **How long we keep your information**

We will only keep your information for as long as we need it, or as long as the State Government requires.

Once your information is no longer required to be stored, we will archive and securely destroy or de-identify that information.



## **How we keep your personal information safe**

Housing Choices WA will store your information securely either electronically or in paper form.

We keep your data secure via website protection measures, access restrictions to our computer systems and restricted access to our office premises. Housing Choices WA staff have also recently received additional training regarding managing your privacy.





**Above:** Tenants at our Fremantle Letters Consultation group.

# Tenants have their say on letters



## In response to tenant feedback, Housing Choices WA has started a project to review the letters we send to tenants.

A few months ago, we held focus groups and phone consultations with tenants in Bunbury, Fremantle and Armadale to get tenant feedback on how to improve our letters.

Tenants had many great ideas and suggestions around what good communication looks like and we have incorporated their feedback into a set of principles for letter writing.

These principles will guide the Tenant Engagement Team in a review of our existing letters and will

be a helpful tool for all staff when writing new letters. The principles have recently been endorsed by the Advisory Committee of Tenants and our letters review is officially underway.

While this review will take a significant amount of time, we hope these principles will make sure our letters are clear, kind and helpful. If you would like to see the full set of principles please contact the Tenant Engagement Team by calling **9430 0900**.



**Above:** Hilton tenant Davina at letters group.

## Snap Shot of our Principles for letter writing



### Tone and content

Having a professional, respectful, and courteous tone regardless of what the letter is about.



### Layout

Use headings, clear formatting, or additional tools like infographics to make letters easier to read and understand.



### Language

Make sure all letters are written in plain English and are written in a way which acknowledges the diversity of people we house.



### Follow up

Letters need to have reasonable timelines for follow up, be clear about what tenants need to do and provide options for help or assistance.



# Home Stories Summer 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.

Tell us the remaining word for the wordsearch by emailing [info-wa@hcau.org.au](mailto:info-wa@hcau.org.au) or posting it to us at Home Summer Puzzle, Housing Choices Western Australia, PO Box 105, Burswood WA 6100. Competition closes **Friday 17 February 2023**.



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

### FIND THESE WORDS

LETTERS	SUN
PRINCIPLES	BEACH
PRIVACY	FIRE
APPEALS	SAFETY
FAMILY	SMOKE
FUN	ALARMS
DAY	SAVE
SUMMER	LIVES

Congratulations to **Julia from Balga**, last edition's puzzle prize winner.



### Facebook Quiz – win a \$50 voucher

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

To enter the competition, visit our Facebook page on [facebook.com/HChoicesWA](https://facebook.com/HChoicesWA) and send us a message with the answers. Competition **closes Friday 27 January**.

1. How many tenants won a \$100 Bunnings voucher in our 2022 Spring Gardening Competition?
2. In what region did we run our latest Maintenance Matters group?
3. In the 2022 tenant survey, what did tenants say was their most important area of service?

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P (08) 9534 0400

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