



Nobody ever knocks

After a hugely successful pilot of the Tenant Action Group (TAG) Outreach Program last year we are now starting 2016 with an expansion of the program.

For those who haven't heard about the TAG Outreach Program, this was set up by a group of tenants who saw the need for others around them to feel connected. Feedback from tenants in a recent survey showed that regular phone contact with someone, even with a stranger, could really lift your day.

This year, 44 tenants responded to the Expressions Of Interest sent out to gauge tenant interest. Most are elderly and sometimes feel isolated from their family and friends. One tenant commented "My daughter is busy with her family which is understandable but sometimes

I feel lonely. I just want contact with someone regularly", while another said he "would like a phone call every now and again because nobody ever knocks".

Quita Cox who is part of the TAG committee and managed the pilot last year said that "I would call tenants weekly just for a social chat but they can talk about anything. In this program they are not just a tenant, not just a number. The Outreach Program provides a sense of being part of a community." This year Quita will be joined by 3 more passionate individuals who will regularly check in on tenants- David (retired teacher/counsellor), Amy (Social Science student) and Louis (nursing background).

If this sounds like something you would like to be involved in, either as a volunteer caller or to have a chat, please call Stella on 8886 4906.



From our Executive



A very warm welcome to 2016 to all our tenants. I hope that you had an enjoyable festive season spent with family, friends and neighbours. And warm is what is has been over the past month or so! Despite all the unseasonal rain and storms nationally, January was still the hottest it has been in 30 years for NSW, while Tasmania experienced an unusually warmer Christmas period.

As we move in to the New Year, Mission Australia Housing is committed to providing more people with quality, safe and secure homes, access to opportunity, and creating vibrant communities where everyone has a strong sense of belonging. For Mission Australia Housing, a good home is about more than just bricks and mortar.

Across Australia more and more people are experiencing homelessness and many low

to medium income households are struggling to get by. We are determined to work in partnership with local communities, drawing on their strengths, linking people with community supports and creating opportunities for everyone to thrive. Your involvement is critical to this and I encourage all of you to share your thoughts, concerns and feedback through our local tenant groups, tenant forums and more importantly, through our annual Tenant Survey that will be released in March. It is your knowledge that will make sure that Mission Australia Housing is providing the best possible housing services and options for you.

By working together, I am confident that we can achieve our goal to reduce homelessness and strengthen communities across Australia. I look forward to continue working with you closely throughout the year.

Kind regards,

Chris Bratchford
Executive,
Mission Australia Housing

Contact us



Mission Australia Housing hotline: **1800 269 672**



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missionaustralia.com.au

Letter from tenant

"Dear Crew,

I attended your Christmas Day event out at the Powerhouse Museum on Sunday with my friend and her daughter Jemma. What a wonderful day was had by everyone there and there was so many people and millions (I think) of happy children.

The organisation was brilliant and so well run. The sausage sizzle was brilliant with loads of onions, so good. The Powerhouse of course was so good. I had not been back since I first came from New Zealand to Sydney, but we won't go in to how long ago that was.

But to me, the most outstanding thing was the way the children were looked after, the look of absolute awe on their faces when Santa came, the bag of goodies on arrival, and the huge bag of Christmas presents befitting their age. Jemma is age 10 and got things that befitted a young lady. She was beside herself with joy.

This letter is actually to say what a wonderful brilliant day we three had. This was my first of these days and I can't speak more highly of the day. From me especially, and the three of us collectively. Thank you so much it was wonderful."

Western Sydney
Mission Australia Housing Tenant



Evolve Housing brought together more than 400 tenants and their children at the Power House Museum where everyone was treated to the sensational Global LEGO exhibition! See how much one tenant really enjoyed her day with her friends at the Sydney Powerhouse Tenant Christmas Party!!

Up on **NSW's Mid North Coast** over 75 tenants enjoyed their first Christmas party on the banks of the Manning River. A bit drizzly with rain but this didn't stop tenants travelling from as far as Forster and Port Macquarie to enjoy a game of cricket, quoits and Tin Can Alley.



It really did look a lot like Christmas!!!

Fun filled days celebrating Christmas with each other were enjoyed by all our housing communities!

Last year in **Sydney**, Mission Australia Housing and

In **Camperdown**, residents from Johanna O'Dea and Alexandria Gardens enjoyed a day of carol singing in the lead up to Christmas followed by a Christmas Festival brunch on Christmas day for our Common Ground tenants.

Together with the Resident Steering Committee in **Tasmania** the planning of a Street Christmas Party was in full Zumba style swing with one local tenant picking up the hat of event organiser! From co-ordinating people, troubleshooting problems, organising promotional fliers and food, plus a local singer and Zumba demonstration, no task was too big or too small! Meanwhile, another tenant supplied small gifts to over 40 community members that were given out by none other than the bearded man in the red suit! Our most successful Christmas party to date!

And a big thank you to Hillsong and Kmart for helping us to make these days really special for our tenants with their Christmas gift donations.

Have your say - 2016 annual tenant survey!

Every year, we ask tenants to complete a tenant survey to help us know how you think we are doing, how we can improve services we provide and learn about what is important to you.

As a result of the feedback in the 2014 and 2015 surveys, we have:

Created fact sheets on important housing topics (e.g. Lift Safety)

Held our first tenant forum in Western Sydney

Updated and developed new policies

Made more information available on our website

Worked with tenant groups and councils to manage key issues (e.g rubbish dumping at complexes)

In March you will receive a copy of the 2016 tenant survey in the mail.

By completing the survey you will go in the draw to win one of five \$100 Coles or Woolworths gift vouchers.

Results of the survey will be published later in the year.

Here comes Easter!

Easter eggs, also called Paschal eggs, are decorated eggs that are often given to celebrate Easter or springtime. The oldest tradition is to use dyed and painted chicken eggs, but a modern custom is to give chocolate eggs, or plastic eggs filled with sweets such as chocolate. Eggs, in general, were a traditional symbol of fertility, and rebirth.

This Easter, take your boiled eggs one step further with this easy to do decorating technique.

Put metallic or patterned tape to good use with this cute no-dye egg-decorating option. Cut tape into various shapes and stick to egg surfaces.

If you don't have metallic or patterned tape, simply use sticky tape to create

shapes and patterns and then paint your egg with a bright and festive craft paint. When the paint dries slowly peel off the tape to reveal all your artistic designs!

These are a lot of fun to do with the kids, cheap to create, and all supplies are available from the supermarket and craft store. Even better, they have less calories than chocolate eggs and are healthy for you too!



Household rent review

Within our social housing program, Mission Australia Housing aims to undertake general income and rent reviews of households every six months to make sure tenants are paying the correct amount based on their household income. This meets the Community Housing guidelines.

Next rent review

The next Social Housing Household Rent Review will happen in April 2016. Letters will be mailed out to tenants in early April and tenants will be required to complete a household declaration form and provide income details for all household members.

Key dates:

11 April – We will write to you letting you know of your income and rent review. We will describe what will happen next.

29 April – Tenants will have to return requested information to the rent review officer.

17 June – Any increase takes effect from this date. Decreases take effect from the date all income details are returned.

What do you need to do?

It is really important that you return the household declaration form and all income details by the due date, otherwise your rental rebate may be cancelled and your rent will be increased to Market Rent.

Providing income details

If you or any household members receive a Centrelink income, you can sign the Centrelink consent form which will allow Mission Australia Housing to contact Centrelink directly to get up to date income details.

If you are working you will need to provide 6 weeks' payslips, one after the other.

If you are self-employed, you will need to provide your completed and submitted Australia Tax Returns for the financial year (2014/2015) or a profit and loss statement from a registered accountant to confirm your income and expenditure.

Rent changes

Mission Australia Housing will notify you in writing of any changes to your weekly rent. It is important that you understand the rent change and date of change, and make sure you start paying your new rent amount. If you pay your rent by Centrepay, Mission Australia Housing can inform Centrelink of your new rent payments if you have signed a consent form.

If you need any help completing the rent review forms or have any questions about your rent, please contact your local Mission Australia Housing office.

We are making our policies better

Over the past couple of months we have been reviewing our policies to make sure they meet any legal requirements and provide the best possible services to you, our tenants.

The updated set of policies will look different and will have more information. We will let you know about our updated policies in a number of ways:

Tenant Fact Sheets – “easy to read” information on important tenancy policies. Fact Sheets are available on our website, displayed in our offices and given to you.

Tenant newsletters – we publish four tenant newsletters a year which contain information on new and updated policies.

Tenant groups – both Tasmania and NSW have tenant groups who will be told about these changes.

Tenant forums – we may hold tenant forums to discuss important tenancy topics.

Letters to tenants – we will write to you to explain policy changes if the changes will affect you directly.

You can always contact us if you would like more information and keep an eye on our website and upcoming newsletters too.

Mission Australia Housing is working closely with our TAG to create a calendar of family fun filled days! Watch this space!

Upcoming events:

Harmony Day concert – Tuesday 22 March 2016: stage performances, lunch at the Wentworthville Community Room

Seniors week celebration: Nan Tien Temple bus trip – Wednesday 6 April

Mother's Day pampering – Saturday 7 May

Tenant Forum – Wednesday 15 June

For all events please register your interest in advance by calling Community Engagement on 8886 4906 or email jeanlouiss@mahousing.com.au

Christmas one day, Easter the next!



If you enjoyed decorating your boiled egg for Easter then send us a photo by email jeanlouiss@mahousing.com.au or send it by mail to Community Engagement, PO Box 8052, Blacktown NSW 2148 to be in the draw to **win 2 tickets to the Premier's Gala Concerts.**

Mulberry pie

Curl up on the couch and enjoy a slice of this yummy pie.



Recipe ingredients

3 cups mulberries

1 and 1/4 cups white sugar

1/4 cup plain flour

2 sheets short crust pastry, thawed

2 tablespoons butter

1 tablespoon milk

Directions:

1. In a large bowl, mix berries with sugar and flour.
2. Place one sheet pastry at the bottom of a large pie dish. Place mixture on top of pastry, dot with butter. Cover buttered fruit with second sheet of short crust pastry. Crimp edges, cut slits in upper crust and brush with milk. Let pie rest in refrigerator for 30 minutes.
3. Preheat oven to 200C (400F).
4. Bake pie in preheated oven for 15 minutes. Lower oven temperature to 175C and bake for an additional 30 minutes. Remove pie from oven and cool on a wire rack. Serve with fresh cream and ice-cream.

Staff profile: Kayla

Kayla began employment with Mission Australia Housing on the 5 January 2016 and currently has her sights set on completing her Business Administration Traineeship.

Kayla gained this opportunity through a job agency that helps young adults who are looking to develop their skills and also award them with qualifications to pursue a career in their chosen field of work. Kayla was extremely excited when she was offered the position with

Mission Australia Housing as she has always wanted to work helping people. Kayla's interest spouted from when she was a child and moved into housing commission at the age of 10. Kayla comes from a working class family consisting of a single mum with 2 young children, so she understands, has seen and even lived some of the difficulties families face on a day to day basis.

As a new member of the client service team at the Blacktown office, Kayla is now getting stuck in to her new study modules such as:

- Delivering and monitoring a quality customer service
- Designing and producing documents

- Accounting, Time management
- Business communications

Over the last month Kayla has settled in nicely and has extremely enjoyed taking on these interesting yet challenging new responsibilities and is looking forward to what the future has to bring.

