

MISSION AUSTRALIA

Housing Annual Report 2015



Together we stand



We are Mission Australia Housing

As a leading community housing provider, our aim is to deliver safe, secure and affordable housing; services that are tailored to individual need; and communities where our tenants are supported in their daily lives and in their longer-term aspirations.

Established in 2009 by Mission Australia – a national community services organisation that has been actively engaged in building independence with individuals and families for more than 155 years – Mission Australia Housing has the scale, reach and expertise to transform lives and create thriving, sustainable communities where people want to live.

Mission Australia Housing works closely with Mission Australia, combining expertise in property and tenancy management with capability in social services delivery.

Wherever we work, we focus on our tenants, increasing the life opportunities available to them.

We seek to inform and contribute to public and housing policy, and find long-term, effective solutions to homelessness and exclusion.

Our goal

To reduce homelessness and strengthen communities across Australia

Our purpose

Mission Australia exists to meet human need and spread the knowledge of the love of God

Our values

Compassion; integrity; respect; perseverance; celebration

Welcome from Chris Bratchford

When I became Executive of Mission Australia Housing at the start of the year, it was clear to me that in order to provide more people with a decent home, access to opportunity, and vibrant communities where everyone has a strong sense of belonging, we had to work together.

Housing need remains acute, widespread and diverse across Australia. An increasing number of people are experiencing homelessness and many low to medium income households are struggling to get by.

As part of the Mission Australia Group, Mission Australia Housing is committed to working with our key stakeholders to shape and influence the housing agenda, informed by our practical day-to-day experience in local communities.

In 2014/15, we continued to contribute to the debate on key political issues affecting the housing sector, our organisation and our tenants. We forged strong relationships at a local and national level, raising awareness about our work through meetings with Ministers, Shadow Ministers, MPs, councillors, government housing authorities and regulators.

We advocated for our tenants on a broad range of housing issues, most notably in our submissions to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Social, Public and Affordable Housing; Social Housing in NSW; the NSW Legislative Council Affordable Housing Inquiry and submissions to the NSW Premier's innovation fund.

Through the efficient use of our financial resources, prudent investment and a renewed focus on collaboration, Mission Australia Housing made good

progress against our objectives this year. Despite a challenging operating environment, we delivered a strong financial performance. The total assets of the organisation now stand at approximately \$329m. We manage over 1,800 properties, and own over 1,350 in Greater Western Sydney and the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales. We have borrowed against the properties we own to deliver more housing and over the coming years, we will deliver an additional 177 social and affordable housing dwellings in New South Wales to help increase supply.

For Mission Australia Housing, a good home is about more than bricks and mortar. Working in some of the most disadvantaged communities in Australia means that we are well placed to reach the most excluded and break down the barriers that prevent some people from achieving their long-term aspirations.

In New South Wales, we continued our work to build healthy, connected and resilient communities. We helped to organise social events such as family fun days, informal morning teas and street parties to promote relationship building between neighbours and foster a strong sense of belonging and social inclusion.

In 2014, with input from our tenants, we finalised the Clarence Plains Master Plan, an innovative, long-term strategy of growth and investment for the communities of Clarendon Vale and Rokeby in Tasmania. Over the next 15 years we will work with our partners, tenants and local people to translate our shared vision of a mixed, economically active and vibrant community into reality.

We believe that with the right support, people can and do recover from the problems that lead to homelessness.

In April we opened the doors of Douglas

House, a 22-unit boarding house in Cairns for chronically homeless people, many of whom are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

Together with Mission Australia, we work with each tenant on an individual level to address issues such as mental health problems or alcohol addiction so that they can make the changes necessary to attain independent, sustainable housing.

Over the past year, we continued to maintain and improve our existing properties, demonstrating our commitment to provide homes that our tenants are happy to live in. In Tasmania, where many of our properties are older, we consulted with our tenants to determine their priorities for property upgrades. As a result of their feedback, we successfully upgraded 157 homes and installed 104 new heating systems, which are important given the chilly Tasmanian winters.

We are determined to work in partnership with local communities, drawing on their strengths, linking people with informal networks of support and creating opportunities for everyone to thrive. Tenant involvement is critical to this.

Tenant survey results revealed that satisfaction with our overall service and tenant engagement rose slightly in 2014/15. However, we still have work to do to meet the high standards that tenants expect and deserve. This is something we are determined to address this year.

In consultation with our tenants, including the Tenant Action Group (TAG) in New South Wales and our Resident Steering Committee in Tasmania, we launched a series of tenant fact sheets this year which, along with our quarterly tenant newsletters, ensure that we provide relevant information in an easy-to-read format. TAG also piloted



“Australia will be short more than 640,000 dwellings over the next 20 years unless policies change.”

Chris Bratchford, Executive,
Mission Australia Housing

a Tenant Outreach Service in several communities in Western Sydney, with volunteers checking in regularly with the frail, elderly or housebound. This has proved so successful that we are now expanding this service across our New South Wales operations.

This year, in partnership with other local specialist organisations, we opened an innovative, new housing facility in Frankston, Victoria for people with a disability living in, or at risk of entering, residential care. The facility will provide the appropriate services, supports and environment for 6 people to live independently and have choice and control over their lives.

We believe that this home will help us to improve outcomes for people with a disability as we transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

These are exciting times for Mission Australia Housing. In partnership with Mission Australia, we have started to measure our impact to build a deeper understanding of the difference we make in the lives of our tenants and their communities. We look forward to sharing the results with you.

Mission Australia Housing’s achievements in 2014/15 would not have been possible without the talent, dedication and commitment of our people.

I commend the shared success of our staff, Board members, partners, investors, supporters and tenants.

By working together, I am confident that we can achieve our goal to reduce homelessness and strengthen communities across Australia. It is with great optimism and confidence that I look to the future.

Kind regards,

Chris Bratchford
Executive, Mission Australia Housing

Housing snapshot:

3,283

Mission Australia Housing tenants housed



1,833

properties owned/managed



128

Homelessness services*



* includes Mission Australia services

Why our goal matters

Rental stress

over 
450,000
low-income households live in rental stress



at risk of falling into homelessness

Source: ABS (2013) Housing Occupancy and Costs, 2011-12, Commonwealth of Australia

on Census night in 2011
105,000
Australians were homeless



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Housing affordability

Housing is unaffordable for jobseekers in all of the 40 regions across the country where they are most likely to find employment



Source: Australians for Affordable Housing (2013). Opening Doors to Employment: Is housing affordability hindering job seekers. Retrieved from <http://housingstressed.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Opening-doors-to-employment-2013.pdf>

Rental dwellings shortfall



Australia had a shortfall of over

500,000

rental dwellings which are both affordable & available to the lowest income households*

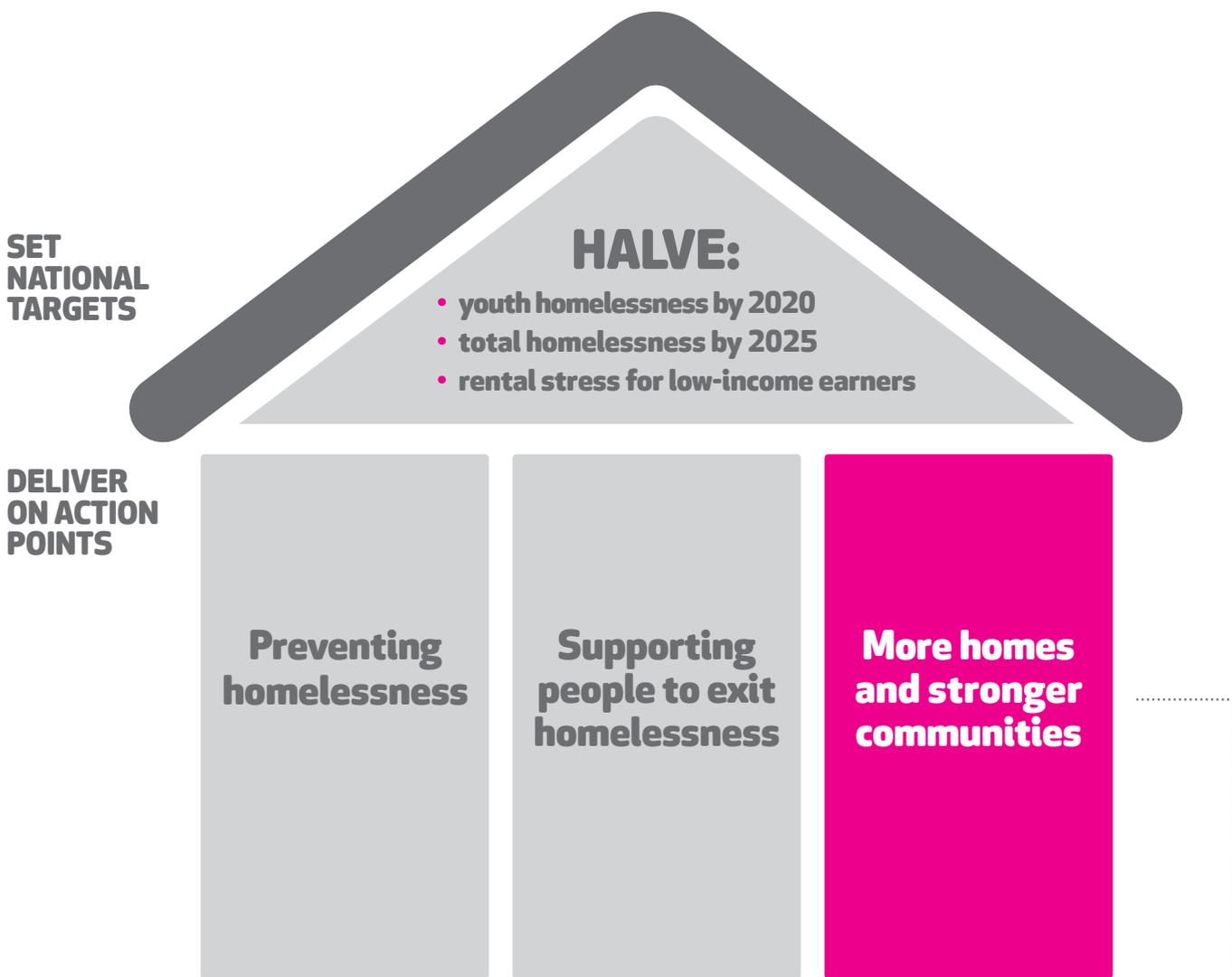
Source: National Housing Supply Council (2012) Housing Supply and Affordability Key Indicators, 2012, Canberra

“We are working to solve the housing crisis by delivering good quality, affordable homes of all types, as well as the flexible and personalised support services people need to lead healthy, independent lives.”

Catherine Yeomans,
Chief Executive Officer,
Mission Australia



Our strategy to reduce homelessness



To prevent and reduce homelessness, Australia needs more housing for people on low and moderate incomes.

Housing is critical national infrastructure. A well-operating housing market is a prerequisite for productivity.

A workforce that is stably and affordably housed is a pool of

people who are able to save for retirement and invest in the future, including providing an education for their children.

For people unable to work, their use of government-funded services – such as the health and justice systems – decreases when they are stably and affordably housed. Housing construction and maintenance also boosts productivity by creating more jobs.

To develop a comprehensive strategy to provide more homes for people on low and moderate incomes, the three levels of government need to come together, with housing experts, the private and institutional investment sectors, the community housing sector, social service providers and customers.

This strategy needs collaborative effort across all levels of government concentrating on four key areas.

Finding a decent, affordable home for Cliff

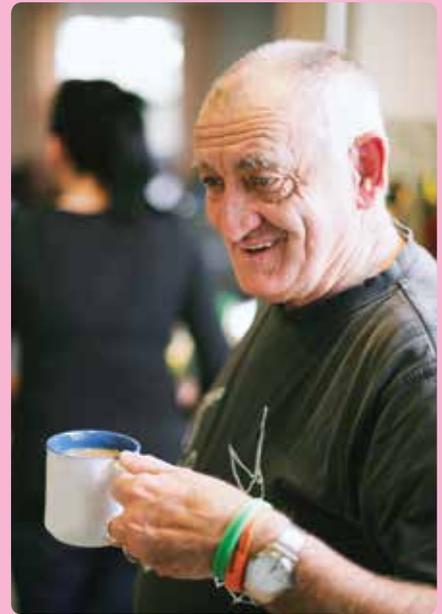
When Cliff turned 80, he moved from Melbourne to Sydney to be closer to his son. Living on a pension with few savings, Cliff struggled to find a rental property in his price range.

All he could afford was a rundown flat, with a leaky toilet and appliances that didn't work properly. He put up with it for 12 months, too scared to complain, but then his rent was increased by \$200 a week. This left Cliff with just \$35 a week to pay for food, medication and heating. A retired social worker, Cliff had spent his career supporting

people who were struggling with poverty or disadvantage. Now, to his horror and humiliation, he was on the verge of homelessness.

In desperation, Cliff turned to Mission Australia Housing for help. We offered him a place at one of our independent-living units in Western Sydney. Cliff is delighted to be in a safe and secure space with access to care and support if he needs it. More importantly, he loves feeling part of a community once more.

* Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the person we helped



Our 4-part strategy to incentivise capital flows to deliver new homes:



Building vibrant communities in New South Wales

We play a much wider role in communities than just housing people. Taking a place-based approach, we seek to make people, families and communities more engaged, connected and resilient.

Pride of place

The environment in which we live plays an important role in our wellbeing. Mission Australia Housing is fully committed to maintaining and improving the living environment of our tenants by maintaining properties and ensuring that open spaces and communal areas are safe, attractive and fit-for-purpose. We own more than 70 unit complexes in New South Wales and take pride in making sure that the common landscape areas are well maintained throughout the year. This includes regular lawn-mowing, pruning and weeding, as well as an annual mulching program to retain water and minimise weeds. Working Bees are a great opportunity to enhance the local environment and create a sense of community spirit among local residents. We are grateful to all our tenants who have helped to clean up common areas, remove rubbish and plant flowers so that everyone has an attractive space to spend recreational time together.

Easter school holiday fun day

Young people in today's society face many challenges and it's difficult

for some of them to achieve their potential without early intervention and ongoing support. We believe that all young people deserve the chance to succeed, regardless of their background or family circumstances. As part of our commitment to young people, we hosted a fun day during the school holidays with a particular focus on youth participation and community development that supports their safety, growth and wellbeing. More than 300 residents came together at Blacktown International Sportspark in Western Sydney to enjoy a day of sunshine, activities and entertainment. Run in partnership with Evolve Housing, the event was hailed as a great success, offering enriching personal experiences for all involved.

Helping older women at Yaralla

In 1897, Dame Edith Walker provided Yaralla Cottages in Sydney's North Strathfield for "gentlewomen in straitened or necessitous circumstances."

This year in collaboration with our partners, Mission Australia and the Perpetual Trustee Company, we performed an extensive refurbishment of the 24 self-contained cottages, which offer a safe haven for vulnerable women aged 35 years and over, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Older women in Australia have emerged as a group that are increasingly at risk of homelessness. Many of these women face housing insecurity due to poor superannuation savings, divorce

and domestic violence, along with a chronic lack of affordable housing.

Since 2010, Mission Australia Housing has been responsible for the tenancy and asset management of the cottages while Mission Australia has provided the dedicated case management, support and advocacy these women need to turn their lives around and secure permanent, affordable housing.

28,000 
people are experiencing homelessness in New South Wales, which is more than any other state.¹

National Annual Tenant Survey results

Mission Australia Housing tenants said:

83% 
are happy with the condition of their home

76% 
are satisfied with Mission Australia Housing services (up from 73%)

1. ABS, 2012, Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness 2011

A sense of belonging through volunteering

For 40-year old Alba*, becoming part of a Mission Australia Housing community has given her more than just a safe and secure place to live. Alba came to Australia as a refugee from Eastern Europe.

With no family or friends to support her, Alba felt very vulnerable and lonely. One of our Community Engagement Officers encouraged Alba to join a local volunteering group who visit people with dementia. The social stigma, depression and anxiety associated with dementia

can dramatically affect people's lives, leading to a withdrawal from community life and less access to the outside world. Without support, these people can become disconnected from life outside their front doors. Volunteers visit people in their own homes to offer them companionship and help with their daily living activities. This includes hand massages, reading the paper to them or simply sharing a cup of tea and listening to music together. For Alba, volunteering with the

group has helped her to regain her sense of self-worth and confidence. With new friends and interests she no longer feels alone and she is proud to be making a positive difference in her local community.

"I learn about my own self. One day I could be like this with dementia with no one around. It is good for me as I feel useful again." Alba, Mission Australia Housing tenant

* Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the person we helped

Strengthening communities: Clarence Plains

In 2013, Mission Australia Housing took over the management of 500 social homes in the suburbs of Clarendon Vale and Rokeby in Hobart, Tasmania. Through intensive research and community engagement, we learnt what it's like for residents living here and also, what their hopes and dreams are for the future of their community.

Mission Australia Housing is committed to delivering efficient tenancy and property management for Housing Tasmania, but our long-term goal is to enable community members to work together to transform their community and foster a sense of pride, wellbeing and belonging.

From the outset, it was clear that we would need to work together to address social and economic issues, but what the community wanted above all was to address the negative stigma associated with living here.

In collaboration with local residents, we developed The Clarence Plains Master Plan. This long-term plan for change incorporates new homes, improved roads and amenities, but it

also focuses on projects to achieve economic, educative, environmental and physical change. These include:

Improving safety

Our aim is to improve safety both inside and outside the home. We will work in partnership with the community, government and business sectors to provide new lighting and better footpaths, as well as exploring options for a trail bike facility for local youth.

Upgrading local homes

In partnership with Lake Maintenance, we have designed and delivered a new way of managing repair and maintenance of our social homes.

Not only are tenants more satisfied, but we have successfully upgraded 157 homes on budget, with 104 of these receiving a new heating system, which is vital in chilly Tasmania. As a result, we've received funding for a business mentoring consultant for the local Men's Shed, which we hope will lead to business opportunities.

“How do we strengthen a community? We listen and we commit for the long term.”

Amy Hayashi, Manager Development and New Business, Mission Australia Housing



“I can see that people are ready for change and that they are ready to stand together as one.”

Local Clarendon Vale & Rokeby resident

Giving Peter a decent quality of life

Living in squalor has a huge impact on people. They can become withdrawn and socially isolated as personal relationships break down. They may fear eviction from their rental property and are at increased risk of health problems. Financial problems are also common.

Peter* lives in one of our properties at Clarence Plains. When our Tenant Engagement Officer first met him, he had a poor quality of life. Peter also had a serious health concern, which was exacerbated by the piles of clutter inside his home.

Peter felt deeply ashamed about the state of his home. He wouldn't let anyone visit him and had little contact with the outside world, leaving him socially isolated and depressed.

Our Tenant Engagement Officer worked with Peter to organise a major clean-up of his home.

Peter was so excited to see the cleaners arrive that he couldn't stop shaking their hands. When they had finished and Peter saw his home clean and tidy for the first time in years, he was thrilled and could not stop smiling.

Getting rid of the clutter has had a dramatic effect on Peter's self-esteem and wellbeing. We've also organised for a cleaner to visit his home every week. Peter is now much more willing to engage with other community services and has started to interact with his neighbours.

Working with Peter to resolve his hoarding issues has helped us to gain a much better understanding of the complex issues behind this behaviour and develop strategies to support people so they can maintain their tenancy.

* Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the person we helped

Seed to plate

In 2014, we received a \$20,000 grant from Church Communities Australia to implement a gardening and nutrition project at Clarence Plains. The aim was to:

- Improve health, wellbeing and nutrition through healthy eating
- Promote food security by growing fruit and vegetables locally
- Encourage the creation of public and private edible landscapes
- Build skills, increase knowledge and create opportunities for employment in horticulture
- Bring people together and foster a lively, connected community

The project was divided into three parts: Melting Pots: Marketplace; and Mission Possible.

Melting Pots

Food habits that are formed during childhood have a big influence on health outcomes in adulthood. The main focus of this community-guided education program was to improve the health, skills and knowledge of local residents through a series of highly interactive cooking and gardening workshops.

In conjunction with Sustainable Living Tasmania and Food in My Back Yard, local residents were given the opportunity to cook healthy, affordable meals using fresh ingredients.

Local schoolchildren were also able to enjoy the health benefits of physical activity in the great outdoors, through a series of engaging gardening workshops. Learning how to plant herbs, fruit and vegetables in their school garden gave them an opportunity to connect with nature, build awareness of the effort

that goes into producing delicious, home-grown produce, and learn more about healthy eating options.

Marketplace

Greening the urban environment and promoting a sustainable lifestyle helps to develop gardening skills, improve environmental outcomes and create opportunities for local people to learn new skills.

The aim of this one-day community engagement event was to promote gardening and sustainability to local school children and other local people, with a focus on learning how to recycle waste through composting, worm farms and permaculture.

The event, called Paddock to Plate, was held at the Rokeby Neighbourhood Centre in June. It brought together local partners including Sustainable Living Tasmania, Food in My Back Yard, Youth Beat and the local Community Shed at Clarence Plains.

Healthy cooking competitions, healthy barbeques, seasonal planting calendars, hands-on worm farm and composting demonstrations helped to make this a fun event for the children. There are now plans to make this an annual event, with local farmers and growers involved.

Mission Possible

Regular access to nature increases health and wellbeing, reduces crime and fosters community cohesion. Children from Clarendon Vale Primary School helped to build a raised garden bed – which is important for older residents as it reduces bending – to test community appetite for edible landscapes.

It has been embraced by a group of local residents who love having a genuine choice about where their food comes from and greater control over their food supply.

The plan is to expand the community garden, including working with a group of tenants to build fruit and vegetable gardens in their homes.

We are excited about the future of this project. After all, there's no easier way to cause positive change in the world than to nurture a plant from seed to fruit-bearing and then eat it with your neighbours.

In January 2015, the Department of Social Services gave us a \$234,000 grant to expand our work. The Steering Committee have renamed the project G.R.O.W. (Gardens & Recipes for Our World). It will run a series of workshops and construct a community garden and outdoor classroom.

Mental health has increasingly been identified as a key national issue by young people:*



* Source: Mission Australia Youth Survey 2014

“The teachers who attended the Paddock to Plate event said it was well organised and the children were interested and engaged. We really enjoyed being involved and would do it again.”

School Principal, Clarence Plains





Tackling the root causes of homelessness

When 38-year old Jason* and his 36-year-old partner, Natalie* arrived at Douglas House, their life had spiralled out of control.

Problematic drug and alcohol use coupled with escalating domestic violence incidents meant that for Jason, prison was a revolving door. The couple lived in insecure accommodation and frequently struggled with homelessness. After their two young children were taken into care, Jason and Natalie hit rock bottom.

People who experience homelessness often need access to specialist services and an intensive package of recovery support in order to address their multiple needs.

Jason and Natalie were referred to Douglas House through Mission Australia's Going Places program. Here they were given stable accommodation for 6 months and an

opportunity to address their drug and alcohol problems.

The couple received intensive counselling from both Relationships Australia and the Wuchopperen Social Health Team. This has helped them to develop the practical and emotional skills necessary to foster strong and healthy relationships. They've also started to build resilience, life skills and support networks through activities such as cooking, fishing, art and craft.

Jason and Natalie have made so much progress together that they are now able to have unsupervised visits with their children. Their caseworker is also helping them to make long-term plans, which includes job opportunities and securing safe and secure accommodation. Finally, the future is looking bright for the couple.

* Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the people we helped

Douglas House, Cairns

No two people lose their home for the same reason. They all have different life stories. For some it's a dramatic change such as a job loss. For others it's a problem with drugs or alcohol, family breakdown or mental illness.

For people at risk of homelessness, social and affordable housing provides an all-important safety net.

For the chronically homeless, safe, secure housing with essential on-site support services is pivotal in helping them to address the mental and physical health problems or social issues that are barriers to independent living.

Mission Australia Housing is committed to social inclusion. We seek to create strong, vibrant communities within our properties and to strengthen the neighbourhoods in which our properties are located by promoting a sense of belonging and an opportunity for people to connect.

We know from experience that the most successful action to tackle homelessness is rooted in local communities. By working collaboratively with our partners, and providing decent housing and the critical supportive services necessary

to create stable, independent lives, we can prevent people from falling into a cycle of repeat homelessness.

Stronger together

"The commitment to a community development approach is highly significant. I like the 'can do' attitude and the inclination to try and make things happen rather than block things."

Local community service provider

Owned by the Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works, Douglas House is an innovative 22-unit supported housing facility in Cairns that offers safe and secure housing with essential on-site support services.

It opened in April as part of the Queensland Government's state-wide strategy to tackle homelessness by helping people off the streets and into affordable, long-term housing.

Mission Australia Housing provides the tenancy and property management of Douglas House, with Mission Australia delivering the caring, individually tailored services each tenant needs.

Together, we provide a safe and stable environment for vulnerable people, many of whom are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, empowering them to address issues

such as drug and alcohol abuse, family breakdown or domestic violence and turn their lives around.

Support and opportunity

Mission Australia's trained recovery workers know and understand the complex reasons that lead to homelessness, as well as the challenges to stability posed by severe and persistent mental illness, chronic health conditions and alcohol and substance abuse.

We work closely with our tenants and take time to gain their trust. Working in partnership, we deliver the physical, mental, emotional and psychological care our tenants need to successfully secure and maintain permanent housing in the future.

"Douglas House reflects our commitment to fight homelessness and support the most vulnerable people in our community. We are confident that it will provide better long-term outcomes and reduce the social and economic cost to society."

Chris Bratchford, Executive, Mission Australia Housing

Homelessness in Queensland:

19,831
people homeless
in Queensland¹



For every
\$1
invested



The Government saved:
\$5.10
in public services
no longer required²



1. ABS (2015). Estimating Homelessness, 2011. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2. C Change Sustainable Solutions & Andrea Young Planning Consultants (2013). Rapid Cost Benefit Analysis of "Going Places", June 2013. Cairns, Mission Australia.

Common Ground, Sydney

Based on New York's innovative Breaking Ground program, Mission Australia Housing manages 104 affordable housing units at Sydney's \$32 million Common Ground development in Camperdown.

We work in close partnership with Camperdown Support Services to deliver and coordinate on-site support to our tenants. We collaborate with a wide range of external support agencies, government agencies and community organisations to deliver clinical services, training and education programs, life skills and recreational activities. We also actively engage with nearby public housing tenants and the local community.

Chronically homeless

Traditionally, the chronically homeless live in a cycle of surviving on the street, being admitted to hospitals, shelters or prison, and then going back to the street. The stress of surviving each day in this cycle puts a tremendous amount of pressure on people's mental and physical health. We offer permanent supportive housing, with 52 units allocated to long-term homeless people. We work closely with a range of partners to offer a tailored package of supportive services to each tenant to help them achieve housing stability, connection to care, and improved health and social outcomes.

General housing

Rising rents and a lack of low-cost homes are pushing a growing number of people out of the inner city. Common Ground offers general housing to men and women on a low income who have received priority approval for social housing in New South Wales. Providing general housing is critical to

our commitment to foster inclusive, mixed-income communities. It enables men and women who could not afford to live in the inner city, to contribute to the unique character of Sydney.

Affordable housing

The cost of housing in Sydney is reaching a crisis point, making it difficult for police officers, nurses, hospitality staff and other key workers to continue living

in the city close to jobs. Some face the unenviable choice of forgoing other essentials in order to pay for housing or living in overcrowded conditions to reduce their housing costs.

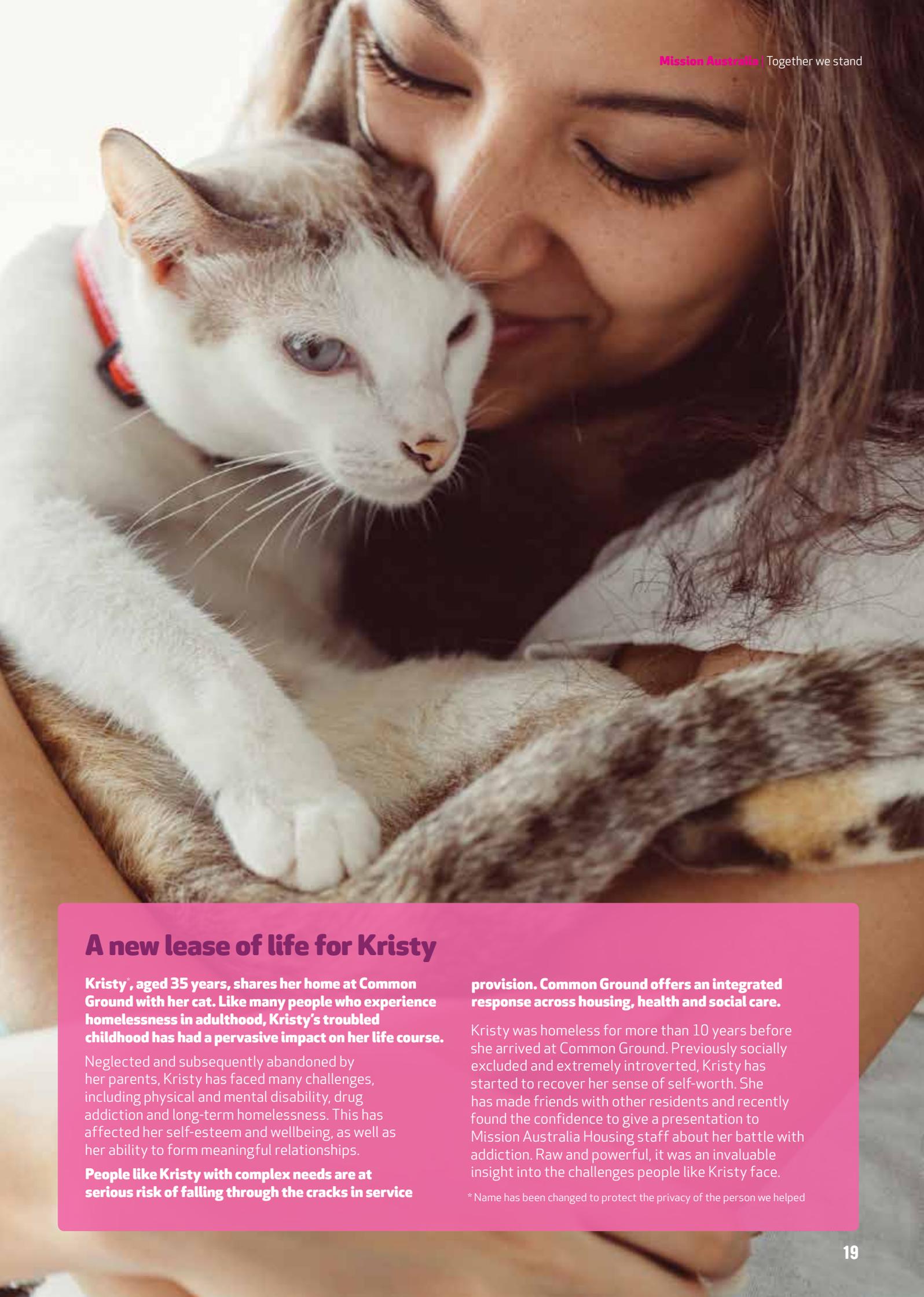
The affordable housing program at Common Ground is geared towards key workers on moderate incomes, who are not eligible for social housing. Rent is set at approximately 75% of the market rate.

About the building



- Built by Grocon, this innovative 6-storey development was designed and constructed to a 5-star green rating.
- The 104-unit property has 88 self-contained studios. The remainder are 1 or 2-bedroom apartments.
- There is a 24-hour concierge service in the secure access lobby and on-site tenancy, support and community services are also located on the ground floor.





A new lease of life for Kristy

Kristy, aged 35 years, shares her home at Common Ground with her cat. Like many people who experience homelessness in adulthood, Kristy's troubled childhood has had a pervasive impact on her life course.

Neglected and subsequently abandoned by her parents, Kristy has faced many challenges, including physical and mental disability, drug addiction and long-term homelessness. This has affected her self-esteem and wellbeing, as well as her ability to form meaningful relationships.

People like Kristy with complex needs are at serious risk of falling through the cracks in service

provision. Common Ground offers an integrated response across housing, health and social care.

Kristy was homeless for more than 10 years before she arrived at Common Ground. Previously socially excluded and extremely introverted, Kristy has started to recover her sense of self-worth. She has made friends with other residents and recently found the confidence to give a presentation to Mission Australia Housing staff about her battle with addiction. Raw and powerful, it was an invaluable insight into the challenges people like Kristy face.

* Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the person we helped

“I joined TAG because I like helping other tenants and being involved in the community.”

Sue Forrester



Working together with our tenants

Tenant satisfaction continues to be Mission Australia Housing's main focus, reflecting our commitment to put tenants at the heart of everything we do.

Tenant Action Group

Set up in 2014, the Tenant Action Group (TAG) is a forum for tenants to influence and guide the way we deliver our services.

It also helps Mission Australia Housing to gain a greater understanding of their needs and preferences so that we can improve our services accordingly.

TAG is made up of, and led by our tenants, with an elected chairperson, secretary and treasurer. Membership is free and on a voluntary basis.

A Mission Australia Community Engagement Officer is available to support TAG, helping to organise agendas and preparing minutes.

TAG is an opportunity for our tenants to:

- Challenge and influence Mission Australia Housing's direction, operations and service delivery
- Share local insight and knowledge with key sector professionals
- Forge strong relationships between Mission Australia Housing, tenants and the wider community
- Have input into future government housing policy
- Organise social activities to foster strong community connections and reduce social isolation
- Provide a voice for tenants in engagement with government housing agencies, community groups and council services
- Ensure that tenants are provided with relevant information in an easy-to-read format in Mission Australia Housing quarterly newsletters and tenant fact sheets

Key achievements of TAG this year include:

- Successful creation of a Tenant Forum facilitated by TAG, so tenants could discuss issues and concerns
- Attended NSW Community Housing Conference to better understand the big issues facing community housing providers and low-income renters
- Helped to organise social events, including a tenant Christmas party, a School Holiday Fun Day and a Harmony Day celebration
- Launched a TAG Outreach Program across Penrith and the Blue Mountains, which has been so successful it will be rolled out across all Mission Australia Housing's operations in New South Wales
- Participated in a learning and development workshop to improve the way TAG meetings are facilitated

Brian Perry, Chair of TAG

Being part of TAG has completely changed my life and has helped considerably with my self-confidence. TAG is a friendly, supportive and inclusive group. Everyone has an opportunity to have their say and that is what is so great about it.

I enjoy advocating on behalf of tenants and I am proud of the difference we've been able to achieve as a group. We provide an important link between Mission Australia Housing and the tenants. TAG comes with a fair bit of responsibility, but being part of something that is so hands-on also brings a lot of enjoyment.

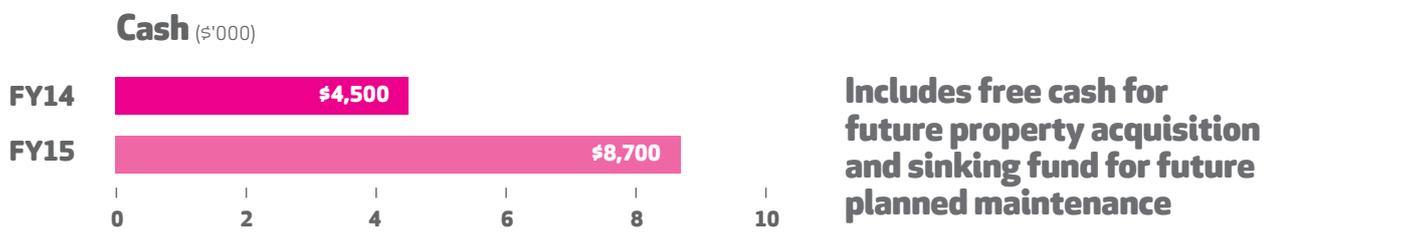
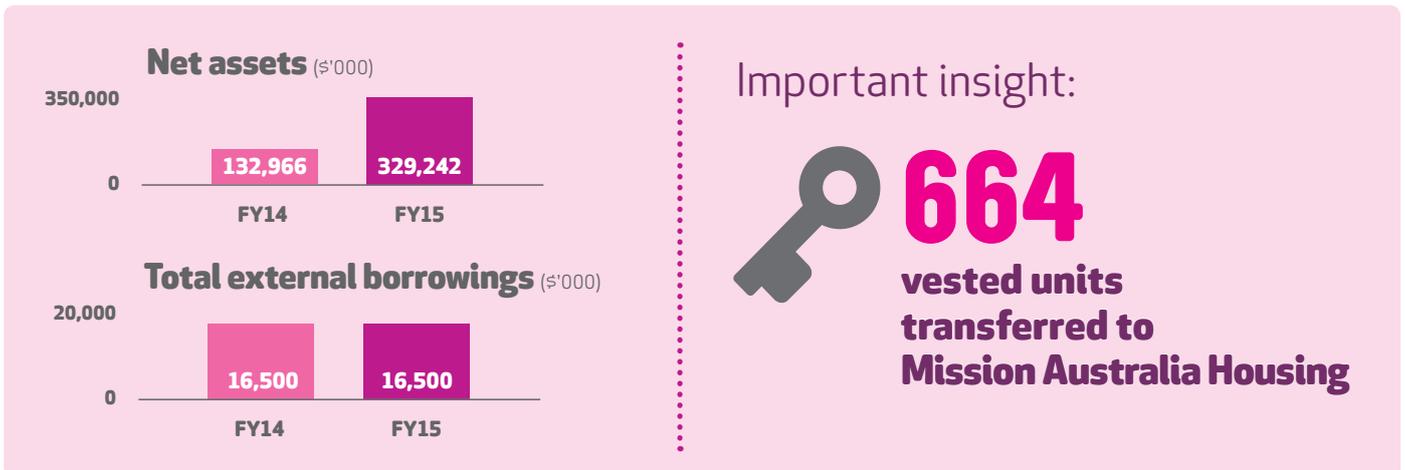
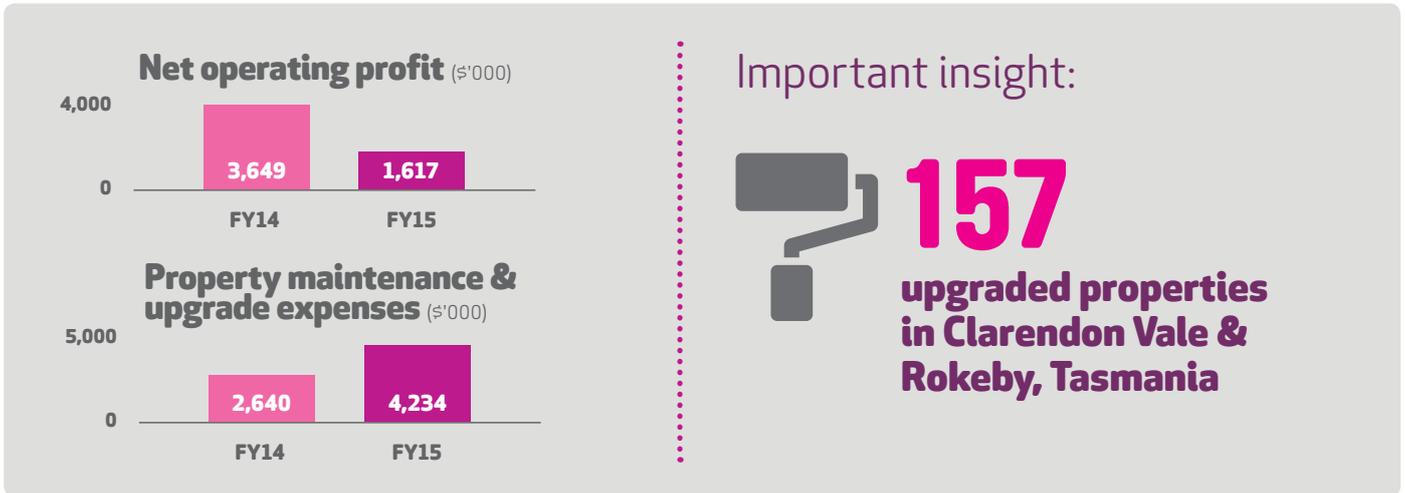
I would like to thank everyone for their ongoing support and commitment. Tenant-to-tenant support is vital. It connects us to each other and the wider community, providing a rewarding experience for everyone involved.

National Volunteer Award

Last year, Brian received a Chifley National Volunteer Award from MP, Ed Husic, for his tireless efforts in giving back to the local community.

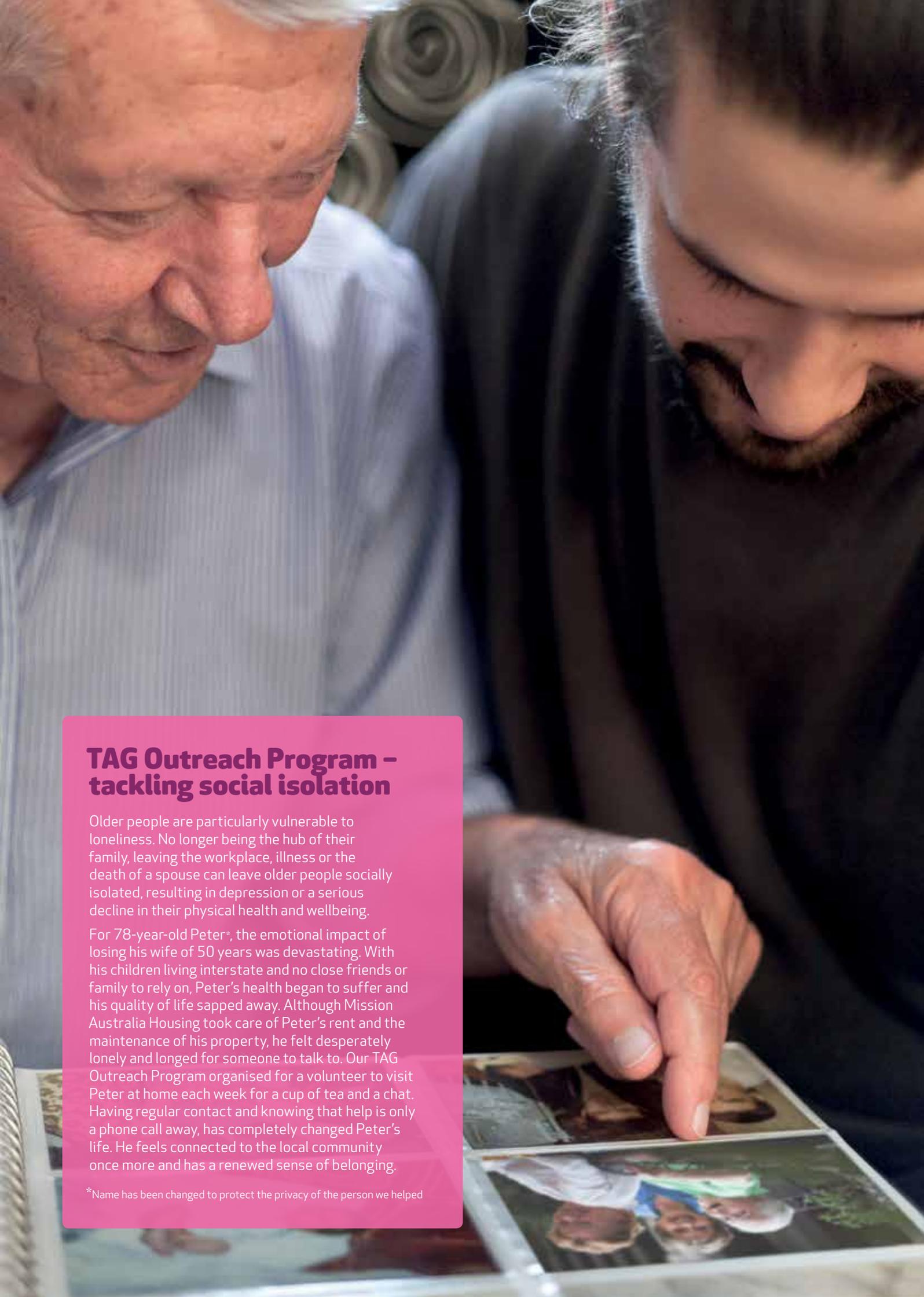
"Brian is a shining example of the difference one individual can make to the lives of so many others." Stella Jean-Louis, Community Engagement Officer Mission Australia Housing

Financial summary



Housing at a glance:

- 1,833** properties owned/managed 
- 3,283** residents housed 
- 35** full-time employees 



TAG Outreach Program - tackling social isolation

Older people are particularly vulnerable to loneliness. No longer being the hub of their family, leaving the workplace, illness or the death of a spouse can leave older people socially isolated, resulting in depression or a serious decline in their physical health and wellbeing.

For 78-year-old Peter*, the emotional impact of losing his wife of 50 years was devastating. With his children living interstate and no close friends or family to rely on, Peter's health began to suffer and his quality of life sapped away. Although Mission Australia Housing took care of Peter's rent and the maintenance of his property, he felt desperately lonely and longed for someone to talk to. Our TAG Outreach Program organised for a volunteer to visit Peter at home each week for a cup of tea and a chat. Having regular contact and knowing that help is only a phone call away, has completely changed Peter's life. He feels connected to the local community once more and has a renewed sense of belonging.

*Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the person we helped

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