

# HOIMES STORIES



**Spring 2023**

**Get a spring in  
your step P3**

**Here to hear P4**

**Sprucing up  
your spaces P7**



# From the General Manager

Hi All,  
**Welcome to the Spring edition of Home Stories.**

Once again, we have a jam-packed edition, so sit back, relax, and enjoy reading this latest resident newsletter (maybe even while soaking up some sun!).

In this edition you'll find some wonderful updates from our Community Development and Engagement Team, who have been busy running the art competition, planning for the resident art exhibition and our end of year resident celebration event, helping spruce up communal spaces, and meeting as many of you as possible at community events. You'll find some excellent suggestions from the Team on how to make the most of the lovely spring season and events happening in your local area.

Featured in this edition are amazing resident stories from Ray who is loving his new apartment right next to Queen Victoria Market, and Margaret who has reconnected with her creativity and is pictured on the cover of this edition. Leanne shares with us some great tips on how to cultivate and maintain a beautiful garden on a budget. I know I'll be taking some of these tips on board myself!

I also want to send out a big thank you to everyone who completed the resident survey, which was distributed in August. We're collating and reviewing this important information which will be used to help us improve the way that we deliver our services over the next 12 months.

The Victorian Resident Advisory Committee (VRAC) are still looking to fill one more spot. There is more information on this and the great work VRAC have been doing in the newsletter.

I hope you all enjoy saying goodbye to the frosty weather and instead bask in the sunshine the coming months will bring.

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

# Voice to Parliament Referendum

**The Housing Choices Australia Board and Executive have made a public statement supporting the 'Yes' position on the Voice to Parliament Referendum, which will be held on 14 October this year.**

They are proud to support the Voice to Parliament as a step toward achieving the three key elements of the Uluru Statement from the Heart - Voice, Treaty and Truth Telling.

We are respectful of individual opinions of our residents and colleagues and encourage everyone to seek out information about the Voice referendum to inform your views and personal position on this issue.

Some information and resources on the Voice referendum that may be useful are available on the Housing Choices website.

## Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation Housing Choices Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Victoria and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



**Cover:** Resident Margaret and her puppy, Archie.



## Get a spring in your Step!

---

**Spring is here! For many of us, winter has been challenging. As we all venture into spring, we can start to enjoy more daylight, the warmth, basking in the sun and taking back the day.**

Here are tips to help us enjoy this season:

- Spend time with others. Reach out to someone, in person or over the phone. It's a great way to build connections, share stories and your day, and reinvigorate your social calendar.
- Spend time in the outdoors. As the skies turn from grey to blue, it's important to embrace these changes and move with them. Go for a walk, take a break or drink your cuppa outside, or simply take in a breath of fresh air to clear the mind, improve your mood, and increase your Vitamin D!
- Reconnect with nature. Spring time brings colour and freshness to our natural world. You could plant flowers, cultivate a garden, or take a walk in beautiful surrounds. Connecting to land and country brings us a sense of connection, calm and relaxation. If there's ever an opportunity to connect to nature, go for it!
- Practice mindfulness, meditation, or relaxation. These techniques help us slow down and take account of our thoughts and feelings and be in the moment. There is online information, exercises, courses, and classes for beginners and the more skilled to do at home. Please visit **Smiling Mind** ([smilingmind.com.au](http://smilingmind.com.au)) and **Headspace** ([headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)) for resources.



## Eat Well, Live Well program update

---

**Our Eat Well Live Well program, which is in partnership with Your Community Health, Neami National and DIVRS (Darebin Information and Resource Service) continues to deliver engaging resident activities in the City of Darebin.**

Over the past few months the partnership has met and established strong foundations to support the delivery of the program and activities with our resident participants who have brought amazing ideas to the table.

This includes Housing Choices Australia's Community Development and Engagement Team working closely with resident participants to ensure they're getting absolutely everything they can out of this program and activities. Activities were planned with resident participants, who have brought amazing ideas to the table and include:

- meetings and activities held at CERES with resident participants
- Indian Dahl Workshop event
- Kombucha making tour and workshop
- monthly lunches on the last Friday of each month at Preston Hub

We've also developed a resident participant survey to get feedback on the project about what we are doing well or can be doing differently.

If you would like to know more about Eat Well Live Well, live in the City of Darebin area and might like to come along, please contact **Alex** via email [communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au](mailto:communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au).

# Here to hear



**There are a few important mental health and wellbeing observance days coming up this spring. This includes 'World Suicide Prevention Day' on 10 September and 'R U OK? Day' on 14 September.**

These observance days focus on raising awareness about suicide prevention to combat social stigma, champion hope and promote ways to take meaningful action that could make a difference to someone.

Suicide is a complex issue, and no one factor leads to someone taking their own life. Talking about mental health or illness can be difficult, especially when there are often negative, incorrect and unfair beliefs associated with mental ill-health. **'World Mental Health Day' on 10 October** is an international day for global mental health education, awareness and advocacy against social stigma which further helps to make talking about mental health and illness a little easier.

You don't need to be an expert to reach out - just a good listener.

R U OK? has created a four-step tool known as ALEC to help with our conversations:

- A** – Ask
- L** – Listen
- E** – Encourage Action
- C** – Check in



**You can visit the Suicide Prevention Australia or R U OK? websites for more information.**

- Suicide Prevention Australia [www.suicidepreventionaust.org](http://www.suicidepreventionaust.org)
- R U OK? Day [www.ruok.org.au](http://www.ruok.org.au)

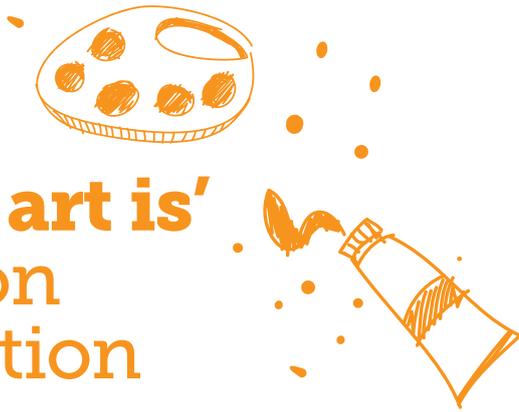


**If reading this article has impacted you or someone you care for in any way, please reach out to any of the services listed below that you think best meets your needs:**

- Lifeline Australia **13 11 14**
- 13YARN (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific) **139276**
- SuicideLine VIC **1300 251 651**
- Headspace (Youth 18 to 25 years) **1800 650 890**
- Beyond Blue Support Service **1300 224 636**



# 'Home is where the art is' competition and exhibition



**Our 'Home is where the art is' competition is officially closed for entries! Thank you to all residents who submitted their gorgeous artworks.**

We are proud to announce that we have received more than 70 pieces of art to showcase in our first Victorian Resident Art Exhibition, and to select our art competition winners from. It was amazing to see the variety of pieces ranging across sculpture, drawing, painting and photography.

The Community Development and Engagement Team and Resident Art Working Group have been hard at work planning the exhibition. Coralene and Alex are collecting and storing artworks that are going to be exhibited at our 'Home is where the art is' exhibition on **Wednesday 18 October, 12:30pm to 3pm** at the **City of Melbourne Bowls Club, Flagstaff Gardens**. Come along and marvel at our amazingly talented residents and enjoy a cuppa and light lunch.

If you're interested in coming, please RSVP to **Alex, Community Development and Engagement Officer** via email **communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au** or ring **1300 312 447** and let reception know you'll be popping over!



## Peter now dreams

**Resident Peter S first applied for the Mixed Equity housing program in 2011 and Housing Choices was happily able to secure a home for him that met his needs and life goals. He has a wonderful support network and is close to his family.**

Below Peter shares his story.

### Moving into my home

"I lived in two community residential units in Melbourne for fifteen years. I hated it and I was hurt in the units. I was given the chance to move out. There wasn't a place for me in disability accommodation in my town. Housing Choices rescued me. They helped me to buy my own place and now they manage it for me. I LOVE my home. I have been here ten years. Housing Choices helped me make changes. I now have a wonderful place to sit outside and relax. I used to get scared a lot but I feel safe in my home. I love coming home. I am so grateful that I learned about Housing Choices. I never dreamed that I could get a life in the community residential units. I just wanted to survive. Now I dream."

**- Pete**



**Above: VRAC and the Community Development and Engagement Team.**



## Victorian Resident Advisory Committee

**Our Victorian Resident Advisory Committee (VRAC) have had a busy 2023. This year, we've seen an extraordinarily near full committee, with only one spot left!**

It's has been an honour to continue to welcome and work alongside longstanding members and welcome and meet several new members, who bring such diverse professional and personal lived experience.

This year, VRAC has discussed and explored many topics. With key recommendations being fed back to Housing Choices management for consideration and implementation.

In June, VRAC joined the Community Development and Engagement Team for lunch at The Mint, where we enjoyed each other's company without the need for an agenda! It was a wonderful time for VRAC members to get to know one another, share stories, and have a laugh.

Upcoming plans include an induction workshop, the actioning of working groups, development and printing of a VRAC Handbook, a national advisory committees meetup, and an end of year luncheon.

*I have thoroughly enjoyed participating in high level talks amongst my fellow VRAC members who are also residents of the Housing Choices portfolio.*

**Reggie**

*I am enjoying taking part in VRAC; meeting with likeminded people (residents) with diverse and similar experiences and having the opportunity to give back.*

**Leah**

If you would like more information about VRAC or are interested in filling our last Committee spot send an email to the **Community Development and Engagement Team** [communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au](mailto:communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au).



# Sprucing up your spaces

Over the past few months, the **Community Development and Engagement Team**, in partnership with **Housing Choices' Housing and Property Teams**, have been hard at work sprucing up several block building spaces!

All activities are guided by resident consultation and participation.

Staff and residents have uplifted:

- Beavers Road, Thornbury
- Chetwynd Street, North Melbourne
- Eastbourne Road, Rosebud
- Hodgkinson Street, Clifton Hill and
- Peel Street, Kew

A few more spruce-up activities are planned once the warmer weather starts.

It was lovely to enjoy a BBQ lunch and banter together. Thank you to those who volunteered on the day with their sweat, time, and effort into sprucing up their spaces.

If you or your community have ideas on ways to spruce up your space, there is the opportunity for residents to apply for a 'Resident Community Fund'. The Resident Community Fund is a \$2,500 grant that can go toward organising a community outing, a group art or cooking class, spruce ups, any other environmental initiative and more!



Applications are assessed by our Victorian Resident Advisory Committee (VRAC) and Community Development and Engagement Team. If you're interested in applying, please email the **Community Development and Engagement Team** [communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au](mailto:communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au) for an application form.



# Resident Leanne shares her tips for gardening on a budget



## Think having a nice garden is not in your budget? Think again.

Let me share with you some ways you can have the best garden for next to no money.

My main tip is to score plants for free! If someone you know, whether it's a relative, a friend, a neighbour or even a garden you walk past every day... ask for a cutting. Literally thousands of plants can grow from cuttings.

Almost every suburb has a 'buy nothing' group on Facebook. I cannot stress enough how many established plants, tools and sprays are gifted. Join up today, score great stuff, reduce landfill and meet others in your community.

Gumtree free items... for example, I have big, beautiful rocks along the perimeter of my garden. It took a lot of trips in a little Kia to collect. I'm pretty sure I got \$400 worth of rocks for no money. It just took effort and lots of trips back and forth.

Verge collections are like Christmas for me. From lattices, pots, plants

and discarded garden ornaments that need a bit of love. All can transform your garden. For example, I have a metal slat bed base that I got off the kerb that my passionfruit is currently covering.

All Bunnings stores have a discount trolley in the garden section. Plants are marked down daily because they're looking too haggard to sell at full price. Most times, they only need a trim and some water and some loving. Score plants cheap and nurture them at home.

Swap meets are also good for the odd bargain. Make sure you ask the seller the best spot to plant i.e. shade or full sun. Be careful of hicks though. I once bought a plant and when I went to put it in the garden, there was no root, no nothing.

As for fertilisers, you can make your own at home just using everyday bits and pieces. For example, put your banana peels in warm water in a jug... the next day give your plants a massive health kick when you water them. I also throw in used teabags,

peels from carrots and cucumber and my favourite – egg shells. Do not use potato scraps unless you want potatoes sprouting everywhere.

The only real expense is mulch, potting mix or soil. Look for broken bags in Bunnings. I've scored big bags of potting mix and mulch for \$2 just because the bag was ripped. Also, think about having a small compost container. Your garden will love it and thrive.

Another tip to save money and potting mix/soil – if you have a big pot to fill with potting mix/soil, use broken pots, tiles, even sticks and leaves to fill the bottom half of the pot. You'll be amazed how much potting mix/soil you save.

I hope these tips help. Gardening is a fantastic way to calm your farm and help with mental health issues. I cannot put into words the pride you have in yourself while enjoying what you have created.

My last tip, think outside the square.



After a lifetime in the private market Ray found himself unable to afford to keep up with rental prices when he had a workplace accident 10 years ago and had to stop working.

"Most of my life I was boiler making or in welding ... I was never without a job. Then I discovered maintenance and handyman work and the first four or five years I loved it. I worked my way up to middle management in maintenance and that's where I stayed until I had to retire," he said.

"I was happy as Larry working but once I stopped and the financial freedom was gone I had to make a lot of arrangements and adjustments. The first two or three years were pretty horrible.

"I do still have pains but I've accepted it and learnt to live with them. It's not debilitating, so I get by. I just take things slower.

"Situations in life change and especially after 40 it's hard to start all over again, and here I am."

Recently Ray joined the Victorian Housing Choices Resident Advisory Committee where he has enjoyed meeting fellow residents.

He said he hoped to use the meetings to develop ideas that would foster community within his building and other Housing Choices communities.

"I have some lovely neighbours," he said.

"Hopefully I can payback some of the gratitude I feel for this place."

## Ray's city home is for life



### **Housing Choices resident Ray's light-filled apartment overlooks the Queen Victoria Market across the road.**

Inside the one-bedroom dwelling Ray displays his eclectic mix of musical instruments and homemade furniture. His three Canaries – Chuckle, Bonny and Fantom – are housed either side of a clock Ray has created from a battery and numbers he picked up online. Hanging beside the entry door are Ray's "house rules".

"I got into some arguments with friends about politics... So now we don't talk about these things unless you have a degree in the topic."

Before moving into his new home, Ray said he didn't envision himself living in the city but after viewing the apartment he jumped at the chance.

"I love the high ceilings," the 59-year-old said.

"The bathroom is very roomy ... and the bedroom has plenty of room, even in

the cupboard. It's close to the city, there's lots of public transport options and it has this balcony - that is one of my favourite things about this apartment.

"I really like that I've been able to make this place into what I want. I can cook and watch TV at the same time in the kitchen and living room. Having a home is a person's biggest security in life ... it gives you the opportunity to do all of these things as you like and as you need."

Eighteen months ago, Ray's life looked different.

He was caring for his aging mum in her two-bedroom Carlton home, where he's resided for the past seven years.

"Mum needed the care, so the situation suited me and her. She's still aware – she can speak and ask for what she wants, and she still does a lot of things for herself that are not essential. But she does need help," he said.

"Now my sister has taken over the post."



## A blessing in disguise

**After getting discharged from a psychiatric unit, Margaret was faced with nowhere to go and in need of housing. Then social workers referred her to crisis accommodation.**

"It was horrible... It was one of the most awful experiences of my life, I would never wish it upon anyone to be in that situation," Margaret said.

After several weeks, Margaret moved to temporary housing with the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) while she waited for a long-term home. Then Margaret's support worker at YWCA let her know a two-bedroom unit had become available with Housing Choices.

Margaret was initially a bit hesitant, as her new home in St Kilda would be about an hour away from her family in Cranbourne East. Despite this, she finds the distance manageable.

"Some people live even further away from their families," she said.

While St Kilda is not in an area Margaret initially pictured herself in, the comfort she's found there is something she's forever grateful for.

"Having found a stable home in a good area where everything is local and close by has been a blessing in disguise. Like I said, I wasn't looking for it, but I guess some sort of divine intervention came in place and I found it."

Living in secure accommodation has also allowed Margaret to reconnect with her creativity.

"I'm grateful to Housing Choices. Not only have they provided housing for me, but they've also given me an

outlet to work towards in being able to paint and win prizes."

Margaret has entered the annual 'Home is Where the Art is' Competition several times and received three prizes for her entries.

"I've come first once and third twice. I wouldn't have known I was able to compete for something like that if it hadn't been for Housing Choices. It's given me a sense of value in myself."

Prior to becoming a Housing Choices resident, it had been a long time since Margaret painted.

"When I was a child, I used to paint and dabble in a little bit of art. But it wasn't until I was an adult and started doing it again that I realised okay, I'm not bad at it, I'm actually pretty good at it.

"It makes me happy and puts me in a state of

bliss when I'm painting. Anything like that is a good thing so I've maintained doing that."

Beyond supporting her creative passion, Margaret likes that Housing Choices maintains consistent communication with her.

"There's always going to be problems that arise from time to time, and my Housing Officer's been really great in communicating back and forth and coming up with solutions."

She's also appreciative of the community events Housing Choices offer.

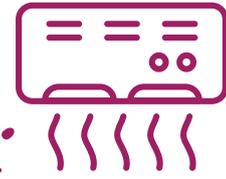
"I like the Christmas event every year. Doing that for the community and residents, I think is a really grand thing to do. Not everyone's got family or friends, so they need something like that to bring them together... especially at Christmas time when people can get very lonely."

Now Margaret is busy training her new Dachshund puppy and socialising him with her niece's dog. It's safe to say he's adorable.

For fellow residents who may see Margaret around, know that she's always happy to say hello and have a chat.

"I'm an approachable person, I'm friendly and I'm not that hard to get along with. I come from a very diverse background and having been in this situation has been quite a journey."

# Keeping cool

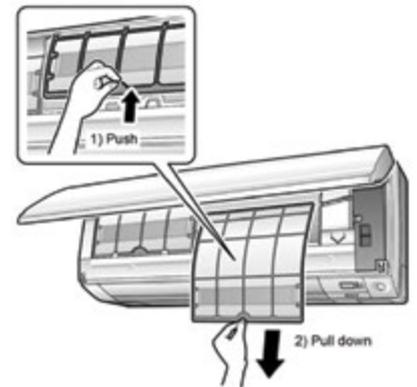


**Our Maintenance Team have been working hard rolling out our Home Heating and Cooling Upgrade Program to applicable properties. Thanks to a grant from the Victorian Government, we were able to replace numerous gas heaters with new split systems.**

These split systems are environmentally friendly and safe. Thank you for your patience during this time. We hope you are enjoying the benefits of your new split system! To keep these systems running at full speed, however, the filters do require regular cleaning.

**Here are the steps you need to take to clean the filters on your split system to keep the air fresh.**

1. Pull out the air filters
  - > Open the front panel of your air conditioner.
  - > At the centre of each air filter, gently push a little upwards to loosen it and then gently pull it down.



2. Vacuum the dust from the air filters or wash with water.
  - > If the dust does not vacuum off easily, soak and gently scrub the air filters with a natural detergent and lukewarm water, then dry them in the shade.



3. Put the air filters back in the machine and close the front panel.
  - > To close the front panel, press the panel at both sides and in the middle.
  - > Do not use your air conditioner until you've put the filters back in place.



If you would like to know more, please contact your respective **Property Officer**.

# Home Stories Spring 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.

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

### FIND THESE WORDS

Spring Gardening Sunshine  
 Flowers Blooming Nest  
 Butterfly Picnic Tea  
 Pollen Home Birds

Please tell us the remaining word before **Monday 13 November** by emailing [communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au](mailto:communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au)

or posting your answer to:

**Level 3, 350 Queen Street, Melbourne VIC 3000.**

Only one entry is allowed per household. The winner will score themselves a \$50 Bunnings voucher and will be drawn from the correct entries. Good luck!

# 2023 Residents end of year celebration event

Our 2023 end of year residents event is fast approaching. Housing Choices staff and resident volunteers are in the planning stage and a great day for everyone is coming to fruition.

We confirm our event is being held at **Drill Hall, 26 Therry Street Melbourne** on **Thursday 14 December from 12pm.**

We are excited to announce that Rockwiz's Brian Nankervis is once again the Master of Ceremonies for our end of year event.

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback in the 2022 survey. Your ideas and feedback are important and have been considered in our planning.

This day will be a wonderful opportunity for residents, staff and community to come together, connect and celebrate. Invites will be sent out closer to the date, so keep an eye out in your letterbox and RSVP. If you would like to know more, please reach out to the Community Development and Engagement Team by emailing [communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au](mailto:communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au).



#### Head Office

Level 3, 350 Queen Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000

[info@hcau.org.au](mailto:info@hcau.org.au)

[housingchoices.org.au](http://housingchoices.org.au)

#### Preston Office

137 High Street  
Preston VIC 3072

**General Enquiries**

1300 312 447

**Maintenance**

1300 321 185

**Disclaimer:** To the best of Housing Choices Australia's knowledge (Housing Choices), this information is valid at the time of publication. Housing Choices makes no warranty or representation in relation to the content or accuracy of the material in this publication. Housing Choices expressly disclaims any and all liability (including liability for negligence) in respect of use of information provided. Housing Choices recommends you seek independent professional advice prior to making any decision involving matters outlined in this publication.