



HOMES FOR THE STORIES

Winter
2023

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From the General Manager



Welcome to the Makuru edition of the newsletter.

For those that may not know, Makuru is one of the Noongar six seasons and indicates that the weather is about to get wet and cold. I find the Noongar six seasons to be such a valuable example of the intricate knowledge of the land and the environment that First Nations people hold.

In May we celebrated National Reconciliation Week, which is even more important this year as we will all be voting on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament. We have featured one of our tenants, Esther, who has been heavily involved in local and national conversations about this and I thank her for sharing this knowledge with our staff in June.

Our team has celebrated the theme of 'Be a Voice for Generations' by attending a national breakfast to hear words of wisdom from First Nations leaders, and a Walk for Reconciliation through Kings Park, where we took time out of our day to reflect on how we contribute to a nation strengthened by respectful relationships between the broader Australian community and First Nations peoples.

As part of our commitment to diversity and inclusion, a committee of staff have been busily developing a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy which is intended to hold us accountable for making sure we provide an environment that is welcoming, respectful, and inclusive of everybody. We look forward to bringing more news about this once the strategy is launched.

Some other important news is that we will be welcoming our new CEO, David Fisher, in June following the

departure of our long-term leader Michael Lennon. David joins us from an organisation called Housing Plus and has many years of experience in leading housing and homelessness services, so we think he is going to fit right in.

I hope you enjoy the feature in this edition on the Housing Choices WA art exhibition, our favourite day of the year, which was again, bigger and better than ever. I think you will agree that the standard of artwork exhibited was outstanding and I congratulate all the artists for their talent and courage in being part of this wonderful day.

Finally, a huge welcome to Sheryl, our newest Advisory Committee of Tenants member – we are looking forward to having a Bunbury voice in the room to make sure we are being the best we can be in the South West.

Natalie Sangalli
General Manager WA

Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation Housing Choices WA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Noongar boodja (land) where we are based. We acknowledge their connections to land, sea and community and pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Cover: Tenant artist Ben and Dean Baylis
Memorial Prize Custodian Ursula.





Above: Esther with General Manager Nat Sangalli.



Staff hear from Elder about the Voice to Parliament

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Following on from Reconciliation Week in May and its theme of being a voice for generations, Housing Choices WA welcomed tenant and Aboriginal Elder, Esther, into the Rivervale office to talk to staff about the Voice to Parliament.

Later this year all Australians will be asked to cast their vote as to whether Australia should change the constitution to establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament.

The Voice would be an independent and permanent advisory body that would give advice to the Australian Government on matters that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Esther is an Aboriginal Elder who is passionate about addressing social justice issues and the lack of equity for Aboriginal people in Australia. Esther is involved in national committees including the World Pride Committee, Human Rights and Diversity Committee and Racism and Oppression Awareness Committee.

As a volunteer for the Yes23 campaign, Esther has been having local and national conversations about the upcoming referendum and what a Voice to Parliament means for First Nations people. "For me, it's about elevating Aboriginal voices in a way we've never been able to" says Esther.

Esther says the most important thing is for all Australians to move forward and work together, not going over old hurts and events from history.

She says for the Voice to be effective; it will need quality people put forward and she would like to see these fed up from the regions, including the Pilbara where she is from.

Esther says we need to be having conversations with each other about the Voice so everyone can make an informed decision. For her, she will be voting "yes" so that her people will have a mechanism for providing feedback on issues that directly affect them.

It was a privilege to have Esther talking to staff in an open and non-judgemental environment and for Esther to share some of the amazing work she has been doing as a leader, advocate and activist in her community.



Pen your story for a chance to win!

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Housing Choices is on the hunt for any tenants who enjoy writing from across the country to feature in our 2023 Annual Report and other Housing Choices communications.

We're looking for all kinds of stories, including subjects of your choosing such as; a short tale, a story of your life, interviews, or pieces highlighting a particular hobby, interest, or a passion of yours.

Stories need to be between either 150-200 words or 350-500 words with selected writers receiving a \$100 voucher for 150-200 words or a \$200 voucher for 350-500 words.

To submit your story or if you have an idea you'd like to discuss or would like more information, please contact **communications @hcau.org.au**.

Submissions close Friday 4 August.



Above: General Manager Nat Sangalli (left) with Second Place winner of People's Choice Award Bharti (right).



Above: The Kalidescoat by tenant artist George.



Tenants shine at our 2023 Tenant Art Showcase

An explosion of colour and talent was on display at this year's Tenant Art Showcase on Wednesday 24 May.

Family, friends, local tenants, staff, and partner organisations gathered at the Gary Holland Community Centre to celebrate the talents of 53 artists from the Housing Choices WA community.

The room was full of excitement as tenants enjoyed the opportunity to appreciate each other's work and catch up over afternoon tea and a cuppa in a relaxed setting.

In its third year, the art show has continued to

grow, with more than 150 visitors on the day, 13 new artists and 167 works of art on display. Once again, we were astounded by the diversity of art works on show including painting, drawing, crafts, woodwork, knitting, metalwork, and photography.

Red sold stickers were dotted all over the gallery space with art sales on the day tallying close to \$4000 for our tenant artists. We also had the pleasure of giving away several prizes to



Above: Selection of art on display featuring work by amazing artists Ebru, Edward, Simon and Jay.



Above: ACT Chairperson Suzanne and her Key Stories artwork.



Above: Tenant Engagement staff Amy (left), Alex (right) and tenant artist Stephanie (middle).



Above: First Place winner of People's Choice Award Susan.

our artists on the day. All attendees had the opportunity to vote for their favourite artwork for the People's Choice Award. First prize went to Susan and her piece "She is Strong" and second place went to Bharti for her handmade clay ornamental bird hanging. The prize for Favourite Artist went to digital remix artist Quillum and Tenant Engagement staff Alex and Amy were thrilled to award

a Packer's Prize to Hodette for her amazing book art installation (see more about Hodette on page 6). We were honoured to award the 2023 Dean Baylis Memorial Prize to two amazing artists - woodworker and pyrography expert Ben (see cover) and 19-year-old photographer Lilli. This special prize honours the life and work of one of our tenant artists who passed away in 2021. Dean's mum Ursula raised funds

from the sale of Dean's art to donate to Housing Choices for the award. Ursula, who attended the art show, selected winners based on which artist she thought had captured Dean's spirit. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this year's art show, it continues to be an event that brings so much joy to our artists, staff, and our broader tenant community.



Above: David with a selection of his artwork.



Above: Davina and her handmade soy candles.



Above: Favourite Artist Award winner Quillum.



Above: Hodette with her book art.

Hodette's Upcycling Artistry

When Housing Choices WA tenant, Hodette, moved into her home seven years ago she said it felt like heaven.

"I noticed Housing Choices were more caring. I just felt very different not just like a number."

After going through some challenging times with the loss of many of her close family members, Hodette admits she was a hoarder when she first moved in.

"I had about five sheds full of stuff, it was hard because I was lugging this stuff around."

"Then one day when I was sitting here it was about six months after I moved in, I got up and looked at everything and I just thought where is me?"

Hodette realised she had held onto so many belongings of family members, but nothing belonged to her. She woke up one day and decided she needed to make a change.



Above: The scarecrow in Hodette's front yard.

"I slowly started going through it, and going donate, keep, donate, keep... after a while I got down to two sheds, it was hard to part with.

"I was keeping all this stuff because it was my brother's or my sister's, or my mum's but there was nothing of me in there and that is what hurt me, after a while I woke up to that."

Hodette's place is hard to miss now that it's imprinted with her own personality and creativity. Her amazing, recycled creations include a very colourful piano and scarecrow in the front yard. She puts so much time and attention to detail and each

piece has a story to tell.

At this year's Tenant Art Showcase, Hodette was the winner of the Packer's Prize with her incredible book folding art inspired by Alice in Wonderland and Beauty and the Beast. Some pieces included the Mad Hatter's hat, the March Hare, and Mrs Potts and Chip. Over 20 pieces of her book art were on display, with each piece taking around 3-4 hours to complete.

Hodette says, "How many places put on a Christmas lunch, or an art show for their tenants? It makes you feel a bit special."

Have an issue with a neighbour? Our new mediation service could help



Housing Choices WA, in partnership with Circle Green and Gosnells Community Legal Centre, is trialling a mediation service for tenants to help you manage neighbour issues.



What is mediation?

Mediation is designed to help you and your neighbour come to an agreement on neighbour disputes by understanding each other's perspectives. Mediation is a voluntary process carried out by an impartial professional mediator at Gosnells Community Legal Centre.

What will it cost?

We will subsidise the cost of mediation for the tenant, and if the neighbour is also a tenant of Housing Choices WA.



How can mediation help with my neighbour issues?

A mediation service may be useful if you feel you can't resolve the issue with your neighbour on your own but would like someone's assistance.

Mediation might not be suitable if people are violent, the conflict is too far gone, or your neighbour does not want to attend mediation.



What are the steps to access mediation?

Talk to your Tenancy Officer – they will approach your neighbour to see if they are also willing to try mediation.

Assessment – the mediation team at Gosnells Community Legal Centre will conduct an assessment with you to see if mediation is likely to be helpful for you.

Advice session – Circle Green will offer advice over the phone to ensure you understand your rights prior to mediation.

If you are interested in trying out mediation, **contact your Tenancy Officer** and they can provide an information flyer or can help you fill out a form to apply for the mediation service through Housing Choices WA.



Sprinkler Switch-off Season

As a reminder, the winter sprinkler switch-off came into effect on **Thursday 1 June** and will end on **Thursday 31 August**. By not using our sprinklers we can save 5 billion litres of water this winter in WA.

Please note, the Water Corporation can issue warnings and \$100 fines for ignoring the sprinkler ban. Most reticulation controllers are very simple to turn off and will either have:

- a dial that you move to the off position; or
- a tap timer that can be turned off at the tap.

Complexes will have their common area reticulation turned off automatically.



Meet Sheryl – Tenant Advisory Committee member from Bunbury

We are excited to introduce Sheryl, our newest member of the Housing Choices WA Advisory Committee of Tenants.

Earlier this year, Housing Choices put a call out to all our tenants in the South West to join the committee to make sure we had representation from tenants in our regional areas.

Sheryl has a long history of involvement in committees including a Little Athletics committee and a few golf club committees where she served for many years in a variety of roles.

In her spare time Sheryl is an expert sewer creating a variety of wall hangings, blankets, bags, scrubs and more. Over the past few years Sheryl has participated in our tenant art showcase as well as other Housing Choices groups and events.

As a Housing Choices tenant of 10 years, Sheryl is looking forward to being on the committee to try and help other people and be a representative voice for regional tenants.



Police and Community Safety meeting



Above: Police Sergeant Simon Rimmer and Housing Choices tenant Fiona.

Earlier this year we ran our first Police and Community Safety meeting for tenants in Armadale and Gosnells. We invited WA Police Sergeant Simon Rimmer and Tenancy Services Manager Rebecca Martin to talk to tenants about community safety and anti-social behaviour.

Tenants were able to ask questions, learn about police priorities, and get a better understanding of who to call when faced with issues in their neighbourhood.

During the meeting we highlighted that as a landlord we don't have the same powers as the police or council, so it is important to always report issues to the appropriate authority in the first instance.

In cases of anti-social behaviour our role is to work with tenants so they understand when their behaviour breaches their tenancy agreement and when their tenancy may be at risk.

If a situation ever occurs where you feel unsafe or a

crime has been committed, you should always call the Police. Having police reports also helps us deal with the tenancy aspects of the issue.

Below are some of the key police numbers mentioned in the meeting that may help you if there is an issue in your neighbourhood.

**Crime Stoppers:
1800 333 000**

Report information about any crime or suspicious activities to Crime Stoppers and remain anonymous.

**WA Police Assistance
Centre: 131 444**

The non-emergency police number where you can report suspicious behaviour and incidents to the police including those that require police attendance.

**Goodbye Graffiti:
1800 442 255**

Anyone can report acts of graffiti or vandalism against public assets, community facilities or private property and the State Graffiti Taskforce will respond.

Please remember in a **life-threatening emergency** always **call 000**.



Answering your rent questions



We asked our Rent Review team to answer some of your most frequently asked questions about how we set and review your rent.



What formula do we use to calculate my rent?

Your rent is calculated in line with the Community Housing Rent Setting Policy set by the Department of Communities.

We calculate rents based on your household income and assets to make sure your rent is affordable in relation to what you earn.

BASE RENT

25% or 30% of your net assessable household income



100% of your Commonwealth Rent Assistance entitlement



TOTAL RENT

Up to 74.99% of market rent (known as Housing Choices Maximum Rent)



My income has decreased, but why has my rent not decreased?

This is most likely to be because you are paying maximum rent for your property due to reaching the 74.99% market rent cap.

Community Housing tenants will never pay more than 74.99% of market rent (the rent you would pay in the private rental market) – even if 25% of your assessable income is more than 74.99% of market rent.

Even if your income decreases, 25% or 30% of your assessable income may still be more than 74.99% of market rent which means you will continue to be charged Housing Choices WA maximum rent.



Do I need to tell you when my Centrelink payments change?

Yes, if the type of Centrelink payment you receive changes, or you start receiving new payments you need to let us know.

If your existing Centrelink payments increase (like the usual CPI increase), you do not need to notify us as this will be picked up in your next rent review.



Why am I not receiving as much Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) as you said I was entitled to?

The first step is advising Centrelink of the amount of rent you are being charged to ensure you are getting your full CRA entitlement. If you have signed an Electronic Verification of Rent (EVoR) consent form, we can let Centrelink know on your behalf.

It is also important to note that your CRA entitlement may not increase until your new rent has taken effect. If you are still not receiving the right amount of CRA please contact the rent review team and we will investigate the issue.



How much can I earn before I become ineligible?

This depends on how many people live in your household and if there is anyone in your household living with a disability.

If you would like to discuss what the income limits are for your household, or have any other questions about rent, please call your local office and ask to speak to a member of the Rent Review team.

Managing mould in the home



As we head into the cooler months of the year, it's important to be on the lookout for mould in your home. Hot showers, use of tumble dryers and cooking can create the perfect environment for mould to grow if your home isn't ventilated properly.

Mould can grow in bathrooms, kitchens, cluttered storage areas, roof spaces and behind furniture. If left untreated, mould can cause structural damage to the property and can damage your belongings. Mould can also have a serious impact on people's health.



Who is responsible for addressing mould?

Housing Choices WA is responsible for addressing mould caused by structural issues such as a leak in the roof, a faulty pipe or malfunctioning gutters.

Tenants are responsible for mould caused by poor ventilation in the home, so it is important to know how to avoid the build-up of mould during your day-to-day activities.

If you have this type of damp or mould in your home, please contact the **Maintenance Hotline** on **1800 203 383**.



Ventilation matters

Often, we think having our bathroom door open while we shower will help ventilation, but it actually makes your exhaust fan less effective. Keeping your door closed while you shower will help create a vacuum for your exhaust fan to cycle air better.

It is also important to leave the exhaust fan on for a little while after you finish showering and open the doors and windows to help dry out any leftover moisture and condensation.

If you are using a tumble dryer or drying your clothes inside during winter – always make sure you open doors and windows to create airflow to avoid creating damp environments in the home.



Keeping an eye out for water damage

We ask tenants to keep an eye out for water penetration into ceilings, walls or floors because of a leak or poor drainage.

Signs of this kind of issue include peeling paint, rotting wood or a damp smell.



Routine inspection scheduling

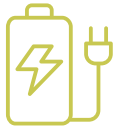
When scheduling times to carry out your routine property inspection, we will always try to fit in with your preferred days and times where we can. However, with more than **1,800 properties and preferences to take on board we are not always able to arrange your inspection at a time that is convenient.**

It's important for us to be able to maintain our inspection schedules so we can check on the condition of the property and test the safety devices in your home like smoke alarms.

Where possible, we do encourage tenants to be home for inspections so we can say hello and discuss any concerns you have in person, but we can also carry out the inspection when you are not home. If this happens, we will always leave a note to say we have visited, and you can give us a call if there is anything you want to discuss.

We also acknowledge that inspections can cause anxiety and sometimes you may not feel ready or prepared for us to visit. Please know that we will always provide 7-14 days' notice of our intention to inspect your home, and we will work with you around any issues or concerns you have with the property for your upcoming inspection.

Fire safety risks of lithium-ion batteries



Did you know that everyday household electronics and appliances can pose a fire risk?

Lithium-ion batteries are found in almost all rechargeable appliances including mobile phones, vacuum cleaners, e-cigarettes, laptops, electric wheelchairs and e-scooters. These batteries have been linked to an increase in home fires in recent years.



How can lithium-ion batteries cause a fire?

Lithium-ion batteries are packed with cells that store significant energy and if the battery is damaged or overheats it can trigger what is known as a thermal runaway. The battery can explode and cause a dangerous chain reaction with temperatures reaching 500 degrees Celsius setting alight a home in minutes.



What to do in case of a fire caused by lithium-ion batteries?

In case of a fire from a lithium-ion battery evacuate and call **000** immediately, do not try and put the fire out yourself.



How can I reduce the risk of lithium-ion battery fires in the home?

- Following proper charging and battery usage guidelines.
- When charging an e-bike or e-scooter, do not block a fire escape or exit route.
- Store devices in a cool, dry place out of the sun to avoid overheating.
- Do not leave items charging for too long or while you are sleeping.
- If you notice the device feels hot while charging, unplug it.
- Inspect batteries making sure there is no cracking, bulging, or leaking and try to always use the charger that came with the device.
- If you charge items in the garage and they become overheated and resulting in a fire, be aware a smoke detector won't detect the fire if it starts in a garage.



Following these tips can help reduce the risk of a fire but it is also important to think about reducing the impact fires can have on you financially. Housing Choices WA building insurance does not cover tenant belongings in the event of fire.

We recommend tenants obtain contents insurance to cover the financial cost of replacing personal possessions in the event of a fire and other circumstances.

If you need to dispose of old or damaged lithium-ion batteries, visit recyclingnearyou.com.au/batteries for a list of recycling drop-off points.

Home Stories Winter puzzle

Win a \$50 Bunnings voucher!

Find all the words in the word search except for one, which is not actually in the grid. Words may be forward, backward, up, down or diagonal.

In celebration of Reconciliation Week in May and NAIDOC Week in July, this word search is themed around Noongar words. We have included the meanings of each word in the word list, but it is only Noongar language in the grid.

Please note that there are often different ways to spell Noongar words. We have sourced this word search from the Noongar Language Centre.

FIND THE NOONGAR LANGUAGE WORDS IN THE GRID:

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

YONGKA (KANGAROO)	BILYA (RIVER)
WORL (SKY)	MIKA (MOON)
WETJ (EMU)	NOONGAR (PEOPLE)
NYINGARN (ECHIDNA)	BOODJAR (LAND)
MOORT (FAMILY)	NOP (BOY)
MIYA (SHELTER)	YOK (GIRL/ WOMAN)
KAYA (HELLO)	


Congratulations to **Elaine from Maddington**, last edition's puzzle prize winner.

Tell us the remaining word by emailing info-wa@hcau.org.au, messaging us through our Facebook page or posting it to us at *Home Stories Winter Puzzle*, **Housing Choices Western Australia, PO Box 105, Burswood WA 6100**. Competition **closes Friday 8 September 2023**. The winner will receive a \$50 Bunnings voucher. Only one entry per household. Good luck!

Useful contacts


 National Debt Helpline: **1800 007 007**


 WA Connect: waconnect.org.au/


 Carers Gateway: **1800 422 737**

 Lifeline: **13 11 14**

 Mental Health Emergency Response Line:

 **1300 555 788** (Perth region)

 **1800 676 822** (Peel region)

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

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