

HOME STORIES

Summer 2023

Home is Where the Art Is –
resident artists
exhibition and
calendar **P4**

Youth advocate
Reggie shows
the way **P5**

**State-wide
residents**
celebration event
2023 **P8**

**HOUSING
CHOICES**
AUSTRALIA



HChoicesAU



From the General Manager

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Hello all,
**Welcome to the Summer
edition of *Home Stories*,
and the first newsletter
for 2024!**

It was wonderful to see so many of you at our resident end of year party, which we held on 14 December at the Drill Hall in Melbourne. I always look forward to this festive day as it's a great time to connect with friends, old and new, and celebrate the end of yet another fantastic year in the Housing Choices community.

Coralene and Alex, the Community Development Team, have been busy putting together this amazing summer edition of the newsletter, to keep you all informed and inspired during the warmer weather. You'll find some great tips for how to keep cool this season, and a bit of a teaser for upcoming events they have planned.

In this edition is a beautiful story from resident, Reggie, who is a key member of our Victorian Resident Advisory Committee (VRAC). I hope you all enjoy reading their story as much as I did, which showcases the amazing people living in our communities.

I also want to update you on our annual renter satisfaction survey. We'll be sharing the detailed results with you in our next edition of *Home Stories* along with our action plan based on the feedback you gave us.

Overall, we're pleased to see that our services are improving, but we'll continue to work on areas that did not score as high, as we are committed to providing great customer service. I would like to thank our residents that spent the time to give us this feedback.

I hope you're all enjoying the beautiful summer weather, and here's to a joyous and exciting year ahead in 2024.

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



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: Housing Choices resident at the end of year celebration.



Above: Home is Where the Art Is – Resident Artists Work Group award recipients and Homes Victoria representative.



Annual social housing volunteer awards and ceremony

The Social Housing Volunteer Frances Penington Award celebrates an individual public or community housing renter, or a group of renters, who have made an outstanding voluntary contribution to their community.

This year the Community Development Team submitted three nominations on behalf of the following resident groups.

- Eat Well Live Well – City of Darebin – Co-design Participant Work Group,
- Home Is Where the Art Is – Resident Artists Work Group, and
- Housing Choices Victorian Resident Advisory Committee (VRAC).

All three were short listed and invited to a state awards ceremony and luncheon on December 7th. Residents enjoyed the recognition and time together.



Annual garden competition

The Community Development Team have rebooted the Annual Garden Competition!

Our residents cultivate stunning gardens, and we want to highlight how they're growing – in recognition of your green thumbs and hard work. We invite entries from gardens big or small! Our Victorian Resident Advisory Committee (VRAC) will vote on their favourite garden. Their favourite entry will receive a \$100 Bunnings gift card, and feature in an upcoming *Home Stories* edition. Entries received will also go in the draw to be gifted a Vegepod vegetable garden kit.

To find out more and submit your name, address and photos of your garden, please contact the Community Development Team. Call **1300 312 447** or email **communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au**. Entries due end of February.

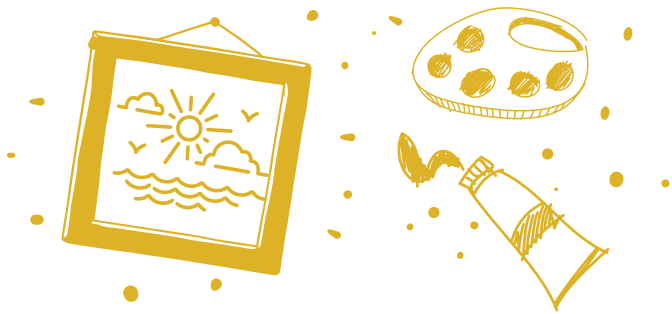




Above: Resident artists Juliette Kent and Margaret Kosey.



Above: Resident artist Jillian Ansett and family.



Home is Where the Art Is – resident artists exhibition and calendar



Above: Resident artist Artypixel.

On 18 October resident artists, residents' families and support networks, service providers, and Housing Choices staff gathered at the City of Melbourne Bowls Club for the Home is Where the Art Is resident art exhibition.

The day was jointly organised by the Community Development Team and the Home is Where the Art Is - Resident Artists Work Group. Combined efforts delivered a spectacular exhibition which displayed the exceptional skills and talents of resident artists.

An added highlight was showcasing the artworks

in a 'Resident Artists Calendar'. Coralene and Alex worked with resident artists, and the Resident Artists Work Group to design and produce an inaugural 18-month calendar. Resident artists received copies of the calendar which was launched at our 2023 resident end of year celebration event.

The Community Development Team thanks everyone who was part of this year's Home is Where the Art Is activities. Our first exhibition was an exceptional day, and we can't wait to kick start next year's!



Above: Resident artist Sam Standaar.



Youth advocate Reggie shows the way

Right: Housing Choices resident
Reggie and pet cat, Celestia.



Reggie is a person who wears many hats: social justice volunteer, housing advocate, child welfare worker, tertiary student and last but not least, singer in a pop choir.

"I love doing different things," Reggie said.

"The other big part of my life is online. The friends I hang out with the most are part of the gaming community."

A dedicated station with multiple screens and speakers set-up in the study nook of Reggie's South Melbourne apartment tells the story of a passionate gamer.

Reggie shares the Housing Choices apartment overlooking the city with pet cat, Celestia.

After a childhood in foster care and years of housing insecurity and homelessness, Reggie feels lucky to have a home.

"I fell through the cracks in the system, as lots of young people do.

"I was on the streets of Melbourne and I was using youth refuges ... and experiencing the worst mental health of my life."

Reggie said a call from the not-for-profit mental

health, homelessness and suicide prevention service led to secure and stable accommodation through Housing Choices.

"A Neami worker called me out of the blue one day and said she hadn't heard from me in a while. I said I was homeless, I had nowhere to go, it was the end of the line for me," Reggie said.

"A few weeks later she had found a home for me to move into.

"It was like winning the lottery because there was no way that I would have been able to get that without that person's help – I wouldn't have known."

Reggie has since advocated to increase the age of out-of-home care in Victoria to 21 years old, a change which has now been implemented.

"We're trying to raise it to 25 to make it less likely that young people end up homeless," Reggie said.

"I feel like I've recovered from the trauma of being homeless, but I think these events leave traces on you."

Part of Reggie's healing journey was to find a name they identified with.

"I use they/them pronouns and changed my name officially in 2021 - to Reggie – after deciding that my old name was no longer suitable for what I want to go with and the trajectory of my life," they said.

Reggie's advice is if you don't know or unsure what pronouns to use, just ask the person, or use they/them pronouns until told differently.

"It's hard to be an outlier," Reggie said.

"You face a lot of criticism from people ... sometimes it's just easier to try and fit in ... it's hard to constantly tell people, 'please don't misgender me or mis-pronoun me'.

"Our society hasn't grown to the stage where it fully understands people's differences ... there is a lot of work still to be done ... but I'm enjoying being part of communities and in a space where I can really enjoy being myself."



Above: Residents and staff at the FRV & VICPOL event.

Residents learn from **Fire Rescue Victoria and Victoria Police**



The Community Development Team hosted its first, 'Fire and Crime Prevention and Safety Session' for block building residents at the City of Melbourne Bowls Club.

Fire Rescue Victoria and Victoria Police – Proactive Policing Unit were welcomed and presented practical information about how residents can prevent fires in the home and keep their home and community safe. The day kicked off with a delicious lunch, followed by interactive presentations and question time. We were all reminded about the extraordinary work and help first responders provide us and listened to a few important things we can all do to prevent fires and keep safe. Both organisations referred to their following online resources and provided tips, handouts and checklists. You can get copies of these by contacting the Community Development Team. Call **1300 312 447**, or email **communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au**



Victorian Police. Crime Prevention.

How can we help prevent home burglaries, and what should we do if our home is broken into?

Go to:
<https://www.police.vic.gov.au/your-safety>

- Secure your property
- Secure your valuables
- Make it look like someone is home when you are out or away
- Make it harder for people to enter without being seen



Fire Rescue Victoria. Fire Prevention and Safety.

Home Fire Safety Booklet.

Go to:
<https://www.frv.vic.gov.au/home-fire-safety-booklet>

- Have a working smoke alarm and test it regularly
- Look out for and prevent fire hazards in the home
- Have a home fire escape plan and practise it regularly
- If a fire occurs in your home, get out, stay out and call Triple Zero **(000)**

Each resident attending the session was also gifted a take home pack filled with helpful information, resources and goodies. This event will be held annually for more Victorian residents.



Above: Property Team Leader Ben McDonald.



Above: Resident Robbie playing guitar at the BBQ.

Getting out 'n' about



Throughout 2023, the Community Development Team was busy visiting residents in their neighbourhoods and communities.

Many cuppas were shared, and many snags were cooked on the BBQ. Time was spent on resident meetings, BBQs, gardening working bees, spruce up your neighbourhood days and more. These events fostered connections between residents and

Housing Choices staff, neighbours, built residents knowledge about what the Community Development Team does, and further encouraged resident participation and engagement in activities.

This year, we'll provide place-based approaches to the work we do. What are place-based approaches? This is about us providing resources and services within your neighbourhoods and communities. We aim

to better connect and understand your interests and needs to improve your wellbeing and quality of life while sustaining tenancies. You'll see us onsite (place-based) through the coming year in your neighbourhoods. Come and say hi! We'll also be visiting residents in regional areas and across the east and southeast of Melbourne and look forward to meeting you.

Don't forget about our Resident Community Fund. This is a great resource that lets you start or reboot anything, from a garden to a community activity.

To find out more about our upcoming visits and the fund, please contact the Community Development Team.

Call **1300 312 447**, or email **communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au**



State-wide residents' celebration event 2023

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Since June 2023, The Community Development Team and the Resident EoY Event Work Group worked tirelessly to bring together the annual resident end of year celebration event which was held in December.

The venue was dazzled with an extraordinary Christmas ambience. Including a 12-foot Christmas tree and decorations not seen before! The day's activities were emceed by Rockwhiz's Brian Nankervis and The Right Hon. Lord Mayor of Melbourne Sally Capp gave a heartfelt message to kick off the festivities.

An array of performances and activities enjoyed, including the Melbourne Contemporary Choir, Melbourne Georgian Choir, a surprise performance by talented resident Christinae and Coralene and Alex, a scrumptious Christmas lunch, Santa, memorable photos placed in a magnet frame to take home, raffles, a message wall, gifting, and even an Italiano gelato and sorbet stall! Another highlight of the day was the launch of our 2023 Home is Where the Art Is – Resident Artists Calendar.





Specialist Disability Accommodation

Our Specialist Housing Group Team deliver high-quality services in collaboration with our partners to ensure meaningful outcomes for individuals living with disability.



Accessibility available for

> High support

> Improved Liveability



1300 312 447



sdainfo@hcau.org.au

Tips to help you over the festive and summer period



Rent payments

It's important that residents do their best to pay their rent during the festive and summer period. It can be a tough time for many, and if you're finding this difficult due to the cost of living, time of year or otherwise, please know that you can reach out and contact your Housing Officer. Call **1300 312 447**.



Struggling with the cost of living?

The Community Development Team has resources and information about where to find help and support. This includes booklets, information sheets and contact details about specific support services. If you would like copies of these, please contact the Community Development Team. Call **1300 312 447**, or email **communitydevelopmentvic@hcau.org.au**

Keeping cool and electricity costs down.

Look at this website: **<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/hot-weather-risks-and-staying-cool>**

Summertime can be hot, and this can generally mean we use more utilities to keep cool. Whilst fans and air-conditioning are great ways to cool down, the price to run these is expensive and can increase our cost-of-living stressors. **Here are some ways to keep cool and minimise our utilities costs.**



- ✓ Close your blinds throughout the day to block the sun's heat.
- ✓ Dress light.
- ✓ Keep a damp face washer to use on your face and neck for a quick cool-down.
- ✓ Keep a spray bottle with cool water to spritz your face.
- ✓ Only cool the rooms you need to, and close doors and curtains to keep the cool air in.
- ✓ If you can, open windows at night to keep air flowing.
- ✓ Set your air conditioner between 23-26 degrees.
- ✓ Stay hydrated, drink water.
- ✓ Take a cool shower or bath.
- ✓ To save energy and money, set your fridge between 3 to 5 degrees, and your freezer to -15 degrees. Fridges are one of the most expensive items in the home.
- ✓ Visit cool public places i.e., shopping centre, library.



BBQs in the park and food and wellbeing sessions: in partnership with Wintringham and CoHealth



The Community Development Team received a City of Melbourne food subsidy grant and together with Wintringham and CoHealth staff planned and delivered four social capacity building activities for Housing Choices residents living in the municipality of the City of Melbourne; aged 55 years and over.

Throughout November to December, BBQs in parks, outdoor games of bocce, a CoHealth dietician facilitated Cook to Connect class, and a Veggie Tribe dining experience and presentation were offered. Residents learned about the connection between healthy eating and health and wellbeing, healthy food choices, food preparation and cooking, food accessibility and security and support services.

Residents were also provided take home packs filled with practical resources and information about where to access affordable and healthy food, where to socially connect, food preparation and cooking items, and more. Residents loved being outdoors, the BBQs and food, and connecting socially with neighbours, residents, and staff.

This was the first time Wintringham and Co-Health joined Housing Choices like this, and the Community Development Team are already exploring how these agencies can work together again to provide similar activities soon.





Home Stories Summer 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.



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

FIND THESE WORDS



**Summer
Fishing
Beach
Sunglasses**

**Vacation
Celebration
Jolly
Sand**

**Camping
Ocean
Sprinkler
Rest**

Please tell us the remaining word before
Friday 1 March by emailing
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!

Slip Slop Slap Seek Slide



Keeping cool over summer

The Bureau of Meteorology has announced an El Niño event for Australia this summer.

What does this mean, and how can we keep cool? El Niño is a weather pattern that leads to less average rainfall and a greater chance of hot temperatures.

Days have also become hotter in Australia due to decreased clouds. This can mean that the Ultraviolet (UV) levels can be higher. When UV levels are high, the sun's rays are more powerful, and you are more likely to get sunburnt. Keep yourself protected from the sun by slipping on a shirt, slopping on sunscreen, slapping on a hat, seeking shade, and sliding on some sunglasses! In extreme heat, stay indoors.

Over summer it's important to keep our fluids up. The recommended amount of water for adults is about 2 ½ litres per day. This ensures that you don't get dehydrated, and potentially unwell from the lack of water.

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Maintenance



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