



Homes Out West

Making a Difference

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A Bi-monthly Insight into Community Housing

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NEW RESIDENTIAL TENANCY ACT

What's in it for you?

The *Residential Tenancies Act 2010* and its associated Regulation came into effect on **31 January 2011**. There are more than 100 areas of reform in the new Act. The main changes include:

- more protection for domestic violence victims
- tenants will have at least one fee-free way to pay their rent
- tenants will be able to make reasonable requests to make minor changes to premises
- Tenants can give 14 days notice to a landlord without compensation on a fixed term agreement even before it ends if they have accepted a social housing property or a place in an aged care facility
- Tenants must give 14 days notice to end a fixed term lease and 21 days notice to end a continuation lease
- A social housing provider can give a Termination Notice when alternative social housing premises have been offered and not accepted by the tenant
- The new Act deals with how tenant information can be put on tenant databases; how it can stay there and when it needs to be taken off. Tenants will have the recourse to take landlords to Tribunal if the information is inaccurate, incomplete, ambiguous or out of date. Landlords and agents can be fined. *(continued on page 2)*



Breakthrough for HOW

Homes Out West (HOW) recently commenced the management of Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) property in Albury under the Employment and Training Related Accommodation Program (ERA). The program provides accommodation in regional centres for Aboriginal people from remote areas who need housing while they undertake full-time study/ training or employment.

ERA aims to assist Aboriginal people to access secure and affordable accommodation for the duration of their education or training or while they are becoming established in new employment.

Funding for the program has been provided through a Commonwealth/State Government initiative known as the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing. The initiative addresses government responsibility in the provision of housing for disadvantaged Indigenous people in remote communities.



Meet Your Board Member

Lindsay has been with the Homes Out West Board of Management since November 2010.

He has been in local government since the age of fifteen years and was Mayor of Deniliquin for a little more than four and a half years. He is currently the Chairman for this region of the Local Government Shires Association.

Lindsay brings to the board a wealth of experience in local government operations and his contributions in that field will add value to the operations of HOW.

During his spare time Lindsay looks after his finches and keeping an eye out for his four grandchildren. His other hobby is restoration and he has just completed an old 1904 cannon which has been mounted on a 1914 trench mortar.



Meet our new staff

Mitchell is our new Housing Worker in Albury.



Mitchell organises and attends property inspections, completes lease sign-ups and renewals, processes rent reviews, conducts application interviews and other housing matters.

Mitchell worked in the real estate business for Raine and Horne Queenbeyan/Jerrabomberra (just near Canberra) where he received a grounding in the real estate field. Back in Albury he did social work (working with high-risk youth in contingency placements, residential units and youth refuges).

Previous to that he worked in customer services roles in retail and bar work and has played the character of Wally the Wombat for West End Plaza (and the mascot for Albury's basketball team).

Favourite food – Thai/Italian/Roast
Favourite Drink – Vanilla Thickshake
Favourite Movie – The 'Kings Speech'

- landlords and their agents will be prohibited from knowingly concealing certain important information from tenants' including: if the premises have been subject to flood or bush fire in the past 5 years; if the premises pose significant health or safety risks that are not apparent and if the premises has been the scene of a serious violent crime within the past 5 year
- Applications can be made to the Tribunal at the same time as serving a Termination Notice
- The Tribunal can take into account the effects of the tenancy on neighbouring residents as well as the history of the tenancy when considering an application for termination for a social housing tenant
- the time to evict a tenant who has stopped paying rent will be cut by up to 18 days
- red tape will be cut for landlords dealing with goods left behind
- landlords will be required to make premises 'water efficient' if they wish to charge tenants for water usage

For further information regarding the tenancy law reform, contact your Housing Worker or visit the NSW Fair Trading website: www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au.

Maintenance and upgrades news

We are sure that a number of our tenants are worried that it has taken some time before their properties are upgraded. This has been work in progress and some of you will have seen some work has been and is being carried out on various properties.

So far we have replaced a number of kitchens, bathrooms and carpets, while our painters and builders have been busy with roofs, walls, doors, screens, and so on across the towns we operate in. A number of our tenants have had their properties upgraded to date with the rest being rolled out over the next eighteen (18) months.

The electricians have completed all of the safety switches in fuse boxes to ensure tenants are electrically safe in their homes. The focus so far has been on the properties that are in most need of attention, as well as vacant properties that have become available.

During the upgrades we have taken the opportunity to involve tenants in choosing colours and styles (where possible), as well as trialing different features such as energy efficient heaters and Lamipanel shower cubicles, in order to deliver a more sustainable product for our tenants.

If you believe you need work done on your property for safety reasons, or if there is a functional problem at your property, please contact the assets team so they can investigate and respond to your concerns. Your patience while we progress through the upgrade process of such a large number of properties is appreciated.



Homes Out West and The Hub staff had a joint staff development workshop in Albury.

Harmony Day celebrated in style

Harmony Day is celebrated around Australia on 21 March each year. It's a day where all Australians celebrate our cultural diversity. The day is also the United Nation's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Harmony Day began in 1999 and since then, a wide variety of groups including sports organisations, community groups, local government, schools and businesses have staged more than 25 000 Harmony Day events.

Harmony Day gives people the opportunity to celebrate what makes each Australian unique and share what we have in common. The continuing message for Harmony Day in 2011 is that **Everyone Belongs**, which means all Australians are a welcome part of our country, regardless of their background.

It's a time to reflect on where Australia has come from, recognising the traditional owners of this land. It's also about community participation, inclusiveness and respect – celebrating the different cultures that make Australia a great place to live.

Over the years, Harmony Day has grown in popularity as Australians have made the day their own. HOW tenant, Salah gave a talk on Iraqi food as part of Harmony Day activities in his community.



HOW Iraqi tenant :Salah

YOUTH CONNECTIONS

Youth Connections supports young people who are at risk of disengaging from education. It offers flexible case managed support and services that focus strongly on achieving outcomes that are prioritised toward personal development and a successful transition through education and onto further education, training or work.

The Youth Connections program is available for eligible young people, 11-19 years of age residing in the Far West and Murray Darling region of NSW.

For further information contact Vinnies Services— Deniliquin 03 5881 7411; Mission Australia—Broken Hill 08 8087 6838 ; YES—Albury 02 6058 6200.

Gardening Tips Vegetables for Spring

Now is the time to start sowing seeds for your Spring vegetables, you can harvest earlier by planting seedlings from your local nursery but you will not get as much for your money as if you sow seeds.

Select an area that is North facing so that it will get the most sunlight and is protected from wind. The soil should be dug and broken finely with as much of the weed material removed as possible.

Dig to turn over the top soil, usually 25cm to 30cm , you do not want to dig into clay levels. Add fertilizer (cow or sheep manure and mushroom compost is best) and dig through.

Shovel the soil up to raise the beds above the garden so that water drains and does not gather around the seeds or seedlings.

In April, May and June: herbs, winter varieties of lettuce, onions ,peas, radishes, shallots, spinach, broad beans, broccoli and cabbage. Most seedlings will emerge in 7 to 28 days and will need protection overnight from frosts with plastic or shade-cloth.

Expect to pick in 3 to 4 months.

Rodent outbreak



Rats and mice carry many diseases and love setting up in homes as they can be close to warmth and food. They often come indoors during the cooler months, and make their nests inside wall cavities and roofs. Because of the past heavy rains and the bumper harvest, most households have been invaded by rodents. Here are a few tips about rodents.

Identifying Rodent Activity

- Droppings - found near shelters/nests, feeding areas, travel paths.
- Travel Paths - greasy markings found on surfaces in continual contact with dirty rodent fur.
- Burrows - found outside, along walls, under buildings, in creek banks, roof insulation, and in stacked materials.
- Gnawing - rodents gnaw a wide variety of material including woodwork, electrical cables and food containers.
- Noise – scratching, fighting, squeaking, clawing and gnawing often heard during the night time.

Rodent Treatment

- Rat/mouse traps to eradicate existing rodents
- Rodent poisons can be effective but may have ecological disadvantages.
- Fill any gaps under doors with wire-gauze.

Energy saving tips

Here are some **winter energy saving tips** to help you reduce your energy consumption during the colder months:

- Keep the heat inside - make sure your ceiling, floors and wall spaces are well-insulated and cover bare floors with rugs where you can. If you're confident with 'DIY' projects, you might be able to tackle the insulation yourself, otherwise you'll need to bring in the services of a contractor.
 - Open curtains during the day to let in the sun's heat, and close them at night to keep out the cold.
 - Set your thermostat to the lowest comfortable temperature. If you're feeling cold, try putting on a jumper or wrapping yourself in a blanket before turning up the heat.
 - Seal gaps around doors and windows, unused chimneys and chimney dampers and turn off rangehoods and exhaust fans to keep warm air leaking out.
 - Close the door to cold and unused rooms.
 - Maintain and clean heating equipment regularly and replace filters in heating vents.
 - If you spend most of your time in one room, use a space heater to heat this room only.
- While a long, hot shower in winter is tempting, aim to keep your shower time no longer than around three to four minutes
(*Courtesy of www.goswitch.com.au*)

Care Assist Workshops

Carer Assist will be holding a free education program commencing in May 2011 for families and carers of someone with a mental illness.

The program will give participants the opportunity to meet some people in the same situation, develop strategies to help you manage the effects of the illness and to increase your understanding of mental health.

Enquiries: call (02 6021 5882)

Tenant Participation Resource Service (TPRS)

'Giving tenants a voice'

Intereach's TPRS can provide you with access to information, advice and opportunities to participate in processes related to your housing.

Through TPRS, tenants are involved in:

- the upgrade of Townsend Park, Deniliquin.
- a tenant advisory group in Wagga Wagga.
- arts project in Griffith.
- bingo groups – Wagga Wagga and Albury.
- World's Biggest Morning Tea in Wagga

TPRS can support you with:

- starting a tenant group or committee to achieve projects in your area.
- preparing funding applications for community projects.
- developing social activities in your neighbourhood
- ideas for improving your community.
- advocacy or referrals to other support services.

If you have questions or would like to know more about TPRS, please phone, email or check out our Facebook site.

The TPRS team, Diane, Rose, Leo and Howard hope to hear from you.

Phone: 1300 488 226

Email: tprs@intereach.com.au

Testing Smoke Alarms

Please be advised that our smoke alarm procedure has been completed and testing is due. Whenever a Homes Out West worker visits your home your alarm will be tested (once every year or as necessary). A sticker with the employee's initials and the date tested will be placed in your meter box.

NATIONAL SORRY DAY – May 26

On 26 May 1997 the Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families was tabled in Federal Parliament. The Bringing Them Home Report revealed the extent of forced removal policies, which went on for 150 years into the early 1980's. The Report revealed the devastating effects of these policies in terms of spiritual, emotional and physical trauma, as a direct result from the broken connection to traditional land, culture and language, the separation of families and the effect of these on parenting skills. It also revealed the trans-generational impact and damaging effects that these forced child removals continue to have on the Indigenous families and communities today.

The release of the findings of the Report had a profound effect on the Australian public. The Report detailed unquestionable evidence about the forced removal of thousands of Indigenous children from their families and communities. The most shocking finding of the report was that to day, not on Aboriginal family had escaped the effects of the forced removal policies. When the knowledge of these policies became public the National Sorry Day Committee united the Australian public in a grass roots movement that shifted the Nation.

The first Sorry Day was held in Sydney in 1998, it is now commemorated nationally with thousands of Australians from all walks of life participating in memorial services, commemorative meetings, survival celebrations and community gatherings to honour the Stolen Generations.