



Housing Matters

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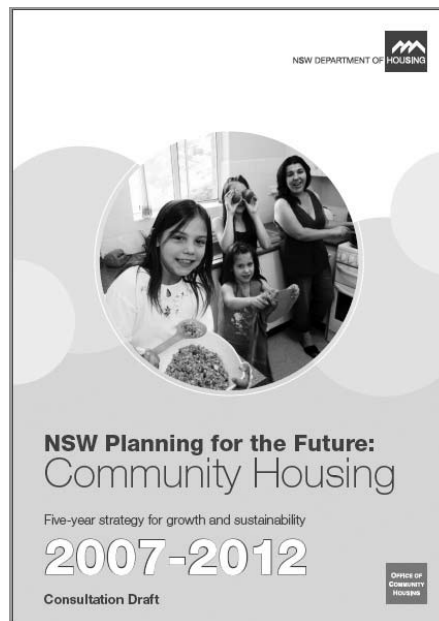
Draft 5 Year Strategy for Community Housing Growth and Sustainability launched

The new Minister for Housing Matt Brown launched the long awaited draft of Community Housing Planning for the Future 5 year strategy on Friday 20th April. The strategy for the first time sets out a future role of community housing within the broader housing sector. The launch, conducted in the Minister's electorate of Kiama, at Shoalhaven Community Housing Scheme, foreshadows the start of a period of consultation over the draft.

While the sector has had an executive summary of the document for some time now – launched by the previous Minister at the community housing conference last year, the full draft describes in more detail the rationale of each objective and includes a range of actions to operationalise them.

Action tables for each of the five objectives – growth; diverse and flexible responses; stronger communities; capacity and confidence; viability and sustainability are divided into sector and government led actions. The outcomes of consultation on these will inform implementation.

As with the executive summary, the strategy contains an explicit target for growing the sector over



the next 10 years – from 13,000 to 30,000. While some of that growth will come from stock transfers from public housing, the challenge of the strategy will be to ensure it delivers considerable new growth in affordable housing.

With over 150,000 lower-income NSW households living in housing stress in the private market, the

need for government to maximise opportunities to grow affordable housing could hardly be greater. Hopefully, the roll-out of this plan will provide the comfort for government to unlock further policy levers to address this.

Consultations on the plan will begin in early May. You can download a copy from: <http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/Office+of+Community+Housing/>

In this edition:

- Shoalhaven's Successful partnership
- Young achievers
- Going Green- Free light globes
- Change in the Inner West of Sydney

And more

CONTENTS

Shoalhaven's successful partnership	pg 3
Affordable housing Summit	pg 3
Sharing services in community housing	pg 4
This months budget was disappointing	pg 5
Change in the Inner West of Sydney	pg 6
Dedicated Aboriginal Positions	pg 6
Young achievers in the Illawarra	pg 7
New resources available	pg 8
Going green: Free light globes	pg 9
<i>Directors' pages:</i> Skills audit and your board	pg 10
The relationship between- The EO and Chair	pg 11
April board meetings	pg 12
Partnership opportunities	pg 13
Regional meeting	pg 13
Tenant network training	pg 14
Social housing breakfast	pg 14
Calender of Events	Pg 16

From the President...

By the time members receive this we will be well into the rounds of consultation I indicated would be coming in my last column.

The Federation was successful in negotiating an extension to submissions on the CHLP funding. One of the main findings of our consultation with the sector to frame the Federation's response is that it would be a major mistake for a funding approach to focus on the costs side.

The most significant influence on whether current associations will make a loss or surplus on their capital portfolio is their rental income – and that varies widely by location, portfolio and target group. That's where the main subsidy effort should go. The other is the areas of major variation in costs structure – small associations, large catchment areas, and high costs tenancies.

The proposed approach, which focuses on purchasing services – that is, on what's the right price to cover the costs – is particularly inappropriate to meeting the real challenge of creating a viable sector as the basis for a major growth phase.

At the same time, while we are critical of the purchasing framework, we very strongly support the development of a broad partnership framework in the options paper. That is a very positive signal and is consistent with the NSW Government's compact with the non-government sector.

Our next big challenge will be to make sure that the implementation of the Planning for the Future strategy is got right and we get the right balance between who takes the lead on key aspects of the sector's development – government, the sector, or a genuine joint effort.



Nick Sabel

I should say that the Federation is very pleased that one of the new Minister's first actions was to release the strategy.

But of course that's not the end of the story. We hope to have the release of the exposure draft of the community housing amendment to the Housing Act very soon. Given the history, this will be very critical.

And we can expect the EOIs for the various components of growth to be called any day now – perhaps some will be out before this newsletter gets to members. The outcome of these will be a pointer to the future shape of the sector.

We will have to be vigilant to ensure that these are not rushed, and that everyone has the capacity
(cont. on pg 4)

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Shoalhaven's successful partnership with the private sector

Shoalhaven Community Housing Scheme (SCHS), in partnership with Bendigo Bank, was approved for one of two successful applications with the Centre for Affordable Housing (CFH) under the Debt Equity program.

The formal partnership is with Bendigo Bank and the CFH, with City West Housing Pty Ltd (the specialist affordable community housing provider) providing technical expertise and advice.

"We were successful in our application for a number of reasons" said Marg Bicskos, executive officer of SCHS. "Firstly we demonstrated a need in the area. We had capital to contribute to the project, and we were able to negotiate a good interest rate with Bendigo Bank."

SCHS was able to negotiate an "off-set" loan, which basically means they were able to borrow funds at no interest because they reinvested the equivalent amount with Bendigo Bank with no interest. "The returns from the project easily offset the interest we would have earned."

SCHS holds title. Bendigo Bank is the first mortgagee, and the Centre for Affordable Housing is the second. This protects the

interests of the bank and the CFH should the project fail, or be sold. However after 40 years the Centre for Affordable Housing relinquishes the mortgage.

SCHS was able to plan for future debt equity programs in 2003. "We knew debt equity was likely, so we invested in land, which is part of our capital contribution to the project," said Marg. "We have developed our relationship with Bendigo Bank over the last three years. The Bank has always been happy to work with us." Bendigo Bank looked at the organisation's turnover, reserves and operations, and identified SCHS as a good risk. SCHS demonstrated the financial viability of the program itself to Bendigo Bank. Marg said the bank would be interested in further loans to the housing association if the opportunity arose.

"We want the capacity to project manage in-house," said Marg. "We want to develop a model for the sector, and provide services to smaller providers to take up these opportunities."

The project consists of twelve two bedroom properties. The architect has been commissioned, and it is expected to be completed in 18 months.

Affordable housing summit group calls for supply incentive

Last month, a national coalition of housing and community organisations called for a new national affordable rental incentive to boost the supply of affordable rental housing by at least 15,000 homes each year.

The National Affordable Housing Summit group is led by the Australian Council of Social Service, Australian Council of Trade Unions, Housing Industry Association, National Shelter and Community Housing Federation of Australia.

The group's new proposal focuses on a joint Commonwealth-State package for investors, developers and others who agree to provide

housing for low- and middle-income people at below specified rent levels.

The chair of the Summit group, Prof Julian Disney, said: "Severe rental shortages around Australia are at record levels and already causing major hardship for tens of thousands of households. The situation will continue to deteriorate unless governments stop blaming each other or forlornly claiming that the market will fix everything."

He said the proposed package avoids inflating rents and targets the assistance effectively. It would also help many renters to save enough for a home deposit.

(cont. pg 11)

Sharing Services in Community Housing

This year the Office has undertaken a project looking at shared services in community housing.

The aim is to identify, and potentially pilot, models of shared service such as backroom or back office functions in community housing or (potentially) with other local agencies. Specifically, they want to determine the extent to which such approaches will in the longer term result in operating and cost efficiencies for providers; improved provider viability; improved client service delivery; and enhanced client service delivery collaboration.

The main focus of the project will initially be on shared service opportunities across non-metropolitan community housing providers (generally being small providers) and/or with other local non-government agencies. The first stage of researching models for shared service has been undertaken with four potential models emerging.

Model one involves a provider adopts a 'lead provider' status and provides back office functions for housing providers within the Region.

Existing providers maintain front line services to tenants but transfer responsibility for all/some back office functions.

Model two is an outsourcing arrangement whereby back office services are collectively purchased from a private sector contractor. A regional group of housing providers would jointly engage the contractor, services with potential for outsourcing include: book keeping and other HR finance functions.

Model three is where two or more existing housing providers form a geographically separate back office delivery centre, transferring staff from existing housing providers.

Model four entails collocation of non-government organisations and has been pursued in the community sector through a range of models. This model would only be viable for pilot where an existing service is

at end of lease or there are other factors prompting a relocation of premises.

While the purpose of this stage of the project was to scope the range of potential models available for sharing services, clearly some models would be more appropriate than others.

The research also highlighted a number of key constraints to undertaking a shared approach. These include IT; governance issues and independence; reporting related constraints that inhibit an organisation's ability to satisfy OCH reporting requirements or conversely, may erode the perception of responsibility for reporting; and distance constraints.

The next stage of the project will be to potentially pilot one of the models of shared service. This will be followed by an evaluation stage.

With increasing pressures on services, particularly smaller services in regional and remote areas, different models of shared service provision may emerge as an option for addressing ongoing viability. Of course any move to a shared service model of service provision will be up to individual organisations to decide. It will only be worth considering where it improves viability and outcomes for applicants and tenants.

From the President *(cont. from pg. 2)*

to put in the best possible proposals, and that they are evaluated transparently.

Finally, despite the big flurry of activity, I have to note how far behind other states we are in terms of investment in community and affordable housing. The most recent cab off the rank is Victoria with an announcement of \$300 million investment in their sector, and we can expect similar announcements from other states. We still have a lot of convincing to do with many in the NSW Government. Clearly we will need to ratchet up the pressure – and demonstrate the success of the measures already announced.

Recent budget was disappointing for anyone who cares about housing

The \$293.6 million in additional Indigenous housing funding for remote communities is cautiously welcomed. But the Budget did not deliver any additional funding to meet the housing needs of the three-quarters of the Aboriginal population living in urban and regional areas.

Moreover the additional funding comes with a big catch: the recommendations of the Review into the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP) completed by Price Waterhouse Coopers in February 2007 were adopted by the Government and funded in this month's budget.

This means that the Government will now shut down the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program. It means the loss of funding for Aboriginal-specific community housing. These Indigenous Community Housing Organisations manage about 21,758 houses across the country according to a recent Australian Bureau of Statistics report. The loss of CHIP funding here in NSW puts the NSW Aboriginal community housing sector and NSW the Aboriginal Housing Office at risk.

Not surprisingly the implications of this funding loss will also impact heavily across the wider social housing system. In fact these changes will only pour fuel on the fire of an already ailing public housing system.

Over the last three successive Commonwealth State Housing Agreements (the current one running to June 2008) the Federal Government will have ripped a total of \$3.1 billion out of public and community housing. Over the last few years State Housing Authorities have been faced with funding the shortfall or cannibalising their stock. Either way it is not sustainable.

Now, without funding to compensate for the Federal government's mainstreaming agenda demonstrated by its adopting the

recommendations of the CHIP Report it is difficult to see how the mainstream social housing sector will survive.

It doesn't make sense to take money from poor urban Aboriginal communities to give to poor remote Aboriginal communities. This is simply not a solution to the Indigenous housing crisis.

Meanwhile housing remains less affordable than ever before in Australia's history. Despite the tireless work of housing advocates, punishing rents, chronic overcrowding and high levels of homelessness the Federal Government continues to neglect housing policy. A Rudd Labor government, by contrast, has committed to having a Housing Minister whose job will be to work with the Treasurer on housing affordability issues and will ensure that Indigenous people do not go without basic housing and services that other Australians take for granted.

(Article contributed by Tanya Plibersek)



Tanya Plibersek

Change in the Inner West of Sydney

Members of Marrickville Area Community Housing Co-op voted to change the name of the co-operative to Metro Community Housing Co-operative at a Special General Meeting held in February this year.

The name change and a number of rule changes were put to the MACH membership to facilitate the merger of services with Resamen Men's Housing. One of the rule changes was intended to provide confidence to former Resamen tenants and applicants that their interests would be protected by adding an added object to MACH's Articles of Association to confirm the new organisation would operate with an agreed target of 30% of its properties dedicated to single men's housing.

After exploring a number of options to facilitate the merger the members of Resamen voted to voluntarily liquidate the organisation and transfer its assets and

leases to MACH at an Extraordinary General Meeting held on 28 February. This followed a lengthy and often frustrating amalgamation process.

In preparation for the merger MACH and Resamen had co-located and moved their offices from Enmore and the City to Petersham in August 2006.

Metro Community Housing now manages more than 280 properties, primarily in Sydney's inner west. This includes the tenancies previously managed by Resamen Housing. The new contact details are:

Metro Community Housing Company (*still operating as Marrickville Community Housing until the Registry of Co-operatives officially approves the changes*)

Shop 3, 89 – 97 New Canterbury Road,
Petersham or PO Box 516, Petersham 2049
PH: 02 9560 5331, Fax: 02 9560 8027
E-mail manager@metrohousing.org.au

Dedicated Aboriginal Positions Exemption from the Anti-Discrimination Act

The community housing sector in NSW is committed to improving Aboriginal access to mainstream community housing. One of the most effective strategies identified by the sector is to increase Aboriginal employment through traineeships, encouraging Aboriginal people to apply for all jobs, and the creation of targeted positions for Aboriginal people.

The Anti-Discrimination Board (ADB) advises that if you have a dedicated position, such as for an Aboriginal person, you must seek exemption from Anti-Discrimination Act under Section 126 or 126A. There are some circumstances where you will not need exemption – for instance, where being Aboriginal is a 'genuine occupational qualification.' This must be explicit on the job advertisement. But it is always best to check if this is the case through the ADB.

If the job does not specifically require an Aboriginal person, but is designated to redress past or present injustices, unless you get exemption you may be breaking the law. It's easy. You just need to apply to the ADB for exemption and explain the reasons why you want exemption.

Housing associations may encourage Aboriginal people to apply for all or specific positions as a strategy to increase Aboriginal employment; and to develop a diverse staffing base to improve service. You may even include being Aboriginal as a desirable criterion for the job. This does not require exemption, as it is within the law. However you may be at risk of complaint if someone believes that the successful applicant got the job solely based on their race. Its important in this situation to ensure you use a merit

(cont. next pg)

Young Achievers in the Illawarra

Four tenants of the Illawarra Housing Trust were recently recognised at the inaugural 2006 NSW Housing Youth Achievement Awards.

Hundreds of nominations were received statewide from Community Housing and Department of Housing tenants. The Illawarra Housing Trust tenants were among the thirty finalists who attended the Award ceremony at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney where Marie Bashir the NSW Governor made the awards. The new Housing Minister, Matt Brown and Mike Allen, Director General of the Department of Housing were also on hand to congratulate the young achievers.

According to Mary Peard, from the Illawarra Community Housing Trust,

“The nominations were phenomenal. These young people have overcome huge barriers and worked incredibly hard to make these outstanding achievements.”

The successful nominees included David Wassink who was a finalist in two categories, a tenant with the Housing Trust for five years. He attended the Conservatorium of Music in Wollongong. David produced and directed music for a jazz musical called “Things are swinging” which was performed at the University of Wollongong in 2006. David is now studying to be a primary educator and is on the board of Southern Youth Family services. He also provides support and direction to homeless and disadvantaged young people.

Christine Chamberlain, a tenant with the Housing Trust for almost a year, left school early and developed a mental illness from drug abuse. She has shown incredible determination to complete studies at TAFE in hospitality, admin and hairdressing and is now

planning to study childcare. She is currently working in two jobs.

Elwyn Roberts, whose family has been tenants with the Housing Trust for 9 years, is a talented AFL and NRL football player who achieved recognition in the Dapto Eagles under 12 side, was selected in the Illawarra Storm under 13 representative side and was awarded the season’s Best & Fairest award. He also played in an NRL senior team. Paul Roberts, Elwyns younger brother was also highly commended for sport achievements.

David’s house unfortunately burnt down one week prior to the award ceremony.

“These young people are outstanding achievers,” says Mary. “It is fantastic that social housing tenants can be recognised for their success. These awards really help to dispel negative stereotypes of our tenants.”



Christine, Mary, Elwyn and David

Exemption *(cont. from previous pg)*

based recruitment process. It must be documented well to show that the best person got the job. In other words it is a matter of managing the risk. Part of risk management would be identifying how being Aboriginal is desirable because of the nature of the position, even though it is not essential.

Before you apply for exemption you should contact an officer at the ADB to discuss whether you need exemption and how to go about it. You need 6-8 weeks to get the exemption. The ADB is very helpful: (02) 9268 5555.

Refer to the ADB website: http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/adb/ll_adb.nsf/pages/adb_index

Click on Employers and Managers, and click on Exceptions and Exemptions.

Aboriginal housing in NSW threatened

The provision of Aboriginal Housing in NSW is under serious threat as a result of the recommendations made by the Review of the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP review). The CHIP review, conducted by Price Waterhouse Coopers, was damning of the provision of Aboriginal housing across Australia and has recommended that any new funding is redirected to remote communities.

In the recent budget, Mal Brough, Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs announced the ATSIC-run community housing and infrastructure program will be scrapped and replaced by a new strategy, the Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation program. The changes to funding will be from July 2008 in a move that signals that the Australian Federal government is abandoning Aboriginal community housing in NSW. The new program will be given a kick-start of \$293.6 million and is being promoted as an increase in funding for Aboriginal housing.

However the financial implications in NSW are huge with the potential loss of \$13.2 million in funding for Aboriginal Housing. The NSW government is sympathetic and a joint submission has been made in response to the review.

Intensive talks are still taking place, with the Aboriginal Housing Office seeking clarity on a number of issues. It seems that despite plenty of evidence to counter claims made in the CHIP review and demonstrate the critical housing needs of Aboriginal people in NSW, there is little room to negotiate.

NSW arguments may persuade Canberra that continued funding is provided for maintenance of properties. However the trade off with any continued federal funding appears to be that community managed properties are handed back to government control. It seems that growth funding will not be available for NSW. Aboriginal people who have for some time been concerned about the mainstreaming of Aboriginal housing are now facing the real possibility of this.

CHIP, along with the Federal government's other Indigenous housing program, the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program (ARHP), currently provides funding of over \$380 million per annum. These funds are currently channeled through a complex mix of state government departments, state housing authorities, private contractors and Indigenous Community Housing Organisations.

The review also recommended that public housing for indigenous Australians is funded through the CSHA from July 2008. With the CSHA up for review at the same time as the proposed loss of CHIP funding, the hope is that CSHA can be negotiated to replace the funding shortfall for NSW Aboriginal Housing.

Price WaterHouse Coopers February 2007
Living in a Sunburnt Country Indigenous Housing – Findings of the Review of the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program, Department Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
[www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/via/indighousing/\\$file/chip_reviewreport.pdf](http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/via/indighousing/$file/chip_reviewreport.pdf)

New resources available to implement the JGOS

New resources are now available on the Department of Housing's website to assist government and non government agencies to implement the expanded Joint Guarantee of Service (JGOS) across New South Wales.

The JGOS is a whole of government approach to providing services to people with mental health problems and disorders living in or

applying for public, Aboriginal or Community Housing. It is a way of strengthening the working and partnership between NSW government and non-government agencies to deliver mental health and housing services.

Under the JGOS local committees are established to bring together key service providers. Through the committee, *(cont. next pg)*

Going Green – Free light globes

Have you had energy saving light globes and or water efficient shower heads installed in the properties you manage? Now, more than ever, the need for energy and water conservation is being recognised and subsidised. For example under the NSW government's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Scheme (GGAS), free light globes have been made available since 2003.

Energy conservation in the interests of lowering CO2 emissions to reduce the impact on climate change is now an urgent issue. Community Housing Associations have, in general, been open to supporting energy and water efficient households because it also assisted tenants to manage the cost of their energy and water use and makes sense from a housing management perspective.

Various companies have been accredited under GGAS to offer or install energy saving light bulbs and water efficient showerheads.

Shoalhaven Community Housing Scheme (SCHS) has been working with Fieldforce Services who is offering to install free light globes and water saving shower heads. Glen Scott, property manager at SCHS explains that:

“They also provide a free energy audit of each household and their appliances to identify other energy and water saving measures. This information is then provided to us, so we are getting a free energy audit of participating households.”

Glen says that “Letters have just been sent out to all tenants, and participating households will be contacted by Fieldforce who will arrange directly with the tenants to visit their homes and install light globes and water saving shower heads. This will cater to about 350 – 360 households.”

Further information about Fieldforce services can be found at www.envirosaver.com.au

One company who has also been proactive in approaching Housing Associations and the Federation has been Easybeinggreen. Easybeinggreen is accredited under the GGAS to install free energy efficient light globes across NSW. The company was started by two former Greenpeace activists and is keen to ensure that the benefits of the free light globes reach everyone. Hence they have been in touch with a number of Housing Associations to promote their program, and appear sensitive to the needs of social housing tenants.

More information about this company and free light globe installation is available at www.easybeinggreen.com.au. Easybeinggreen also provides an option to housing associations to claim the lightglobe subsidy for each lightglobe installed rather than this going directly to the tradesperson.

For more information about the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Scheme go to: <http://www.greenhousegas.nsw.gov.au/>

New resources available to implement the JGOS *(cont from prev pg)*

service providers work together to develop approaches that support clients with mental health problems and disorders.

Community housing providers can refer clients with mental health problems and housing issues to a local committee and then work in partnership to address the issues. If there is not a committee available in a local area any partner agency can initiate a JGOS local meeting.

To assist in establishing new local committees and support those that are already operating, a range of resources have been developed and are now available on the Department of Housing's website: www.housing.nsw.gov.au/help+with+housing/housing+needs/JGOS.htm

If you require any additional information please contact the Department of Housing's Homelessness Unit on 02 8753 8000.

Skills audits & your board

Having the right people on your board is central to the board's effective and successful functioning. A skills audit is one tool that boards can use to make sure they've got the right range of skills, experience and expertise, and is useful in planning for the future.

Directors play a vital role in understanding and shaping the strategic future of their organisations. They carry considerable responsibility, and need confidence in their capacity to perform their roles effectively.

Good governance is assessed as part of the Performance Based Registration System, and is a precondition for developing a range of partnerships.

As the business that associations take on becomes more complex, so too do the responsibilities of board members. Board members must have the skills to satisfy themselves that all external and internal probity requirements are met.

Skills Audits

A skills audit can identify the skills (including experience and expertise) best suited to your association. It will also identify areas for future training, and assist in recruiting new directors. It is critical in assessing and enhancing director competencies.

It is important to regularly reassess the skills required for the board to remain effective, and to ensure skills reflect the current and future business development requirements of the organisation.

Strategic planning and risk management are key elements of good governance, and your skills audit will assist both of these processes.

The first step in the skills audit is to use the organisation's strategic plan priorities to identify the skills and expertise that are likely to be required.

You will then need to assess what skills are already present on the board, and where

the gaps are. You will also need to consider succession planning to address any skills loss that will occur when directors retire from the board.

The skills audit should consider the board's strength in: core skills (such as understanding the organisation's business, and the ability to ensure that the organisation remains viable); general skills (for example, legal and financial skills); and special skills (such as budget preparation, or complaints handling).

You will then need to decide how to address these gaps, for example through recruitment or training. Boards should consider their capacity to contract in expertise as required.

Sector-wide Skills Audit

Boards across the sector are made up of dedicated professionals from a variety of backgrounds, bringing with them diverse experiences and skill sets. The Federation is looking to identify this range of skill and experience, and to use this information to inform future governance initiatives.

In coming weeks, the Federation will be contacting directors with a survey to collect data for a sector-wide skills audit.

This survey will provide individual boards with an opportunity for self review. It will also provide the Federation and the sector with valuable data on the sector's strengths, and highlight areas for future work.

The outcome of a sector wide skills audit will also provide a snapshot of the current governance capacity across the community housing sector.

Please contact Ellen Adele at the Federation for more information about this survey, or download the skills audit survey from the Directors' pages on the Federation's website:

<http://www.communityhousing.org.au/DirectorsNetwork/Sector%20Skills%20Audit%20Survey.doc>

The relationship between the EO and the Chair

This relationship is vital to the successful performance of an organisation. The Executive Officer (EO) is the staff's representative to the board, and the staff and board communicate through the EO.

To ensure that the relationship between the chair and the EO is a productive one, there must be clear communication, an explicit understanding of each other's roles, and procedures in place to resolve conflicts.

Communication

Effective communication is the first key to maintaining this relationship. Communication must be based on trust and mutual respect, and should be open and collaborative.

Explicit communication guidelines should be established. These guidelines should outline the kind of information that should be shared, and when and how it should be shared.

Clearly defined roles

The EO provides the primary interface between the board and the staff. The Chair manages this relationship on behalf of the board.

A successful partnership between the EO and the board hinges on the clear understanding of, and support for, the division of management responsibility. Clearly defined roles will minimise confusion and potential conflicts.

The board's role is to govern the organisation. This governance role includes providing leadership, longer term strategic issues, policy establishment, as well as responsibility for the organisation's financial and legal situations.

The EO's role is to manage the staff and the operational side of the business. It is the EO's job to keep the staff up to date with the board's decisions and instructions.

The board will draw on the EO's operational knowledge when developing the organisation's strategic plans, purpose and objectives.

The board, through the Chair, should provide the EO with supervision and guidance, as well as reasonable performance targets and appraisal.

The board is responsible for appointing the EO, and it is critical that the board trust the EO. The level of autonomy granted to the EO by the board will depend largely on the age and size of the organisation.

Conflict

If the relationship between the Chair and the EO is unfailing sweetness and light, there is probably something wrong.

While differing ideas and robust discussion between the EO and Chair can be of benefit to an organisation, there needs to be clear conflict resolution procedures in place to ensure that a strong partnership is not threatened.

A clear and common sense of the purpose of the organisation, its mission statement, and its long term strategy are a good starting point.

In addition to clear communication, and understanding of the two roles, training sessions can be of assistance.

Affordable Hsg summit *(cont. from pg 3)*

The National Affordable Rental Incentive (NARI) Scheme would focus especially on providing a new national incentive for developers, investors and landlords to provide new housing at below-market rents or to commit existing housing for that purpose. It could be complemented by measures.

Dr Ron Silberberg, Managing Director of the Housing Industry Association said: "All levels of government need to work together in tackling the housing affordability crisis. Better incentives for private investment in affordable housing are essential. They will help to reduce hardship and strengthen the economy."

The Summit group has been promoting the proposal to both Commonwealth and State governments.

Board Report

April Board meetings

Two teleconferences were held in April as well as the scheduled board meeting.

The main business of these meetings was to finalise the 07-08 business plan which is the basis for the negotiations with OCH on next year's funding agreement for the Federation

The teleconferences also dealt with a request by a member for Federation assistance with a registration appeal. This is a new area for the Federation and the board agreed to a number of principles as a basis for considering the request: that the Federation does not necessarily support all such requests; the Federation must feel confident that the case is supportable; the Federation must not have any financial interest in providing such support.

It was also agreed that a draft policy and discussion points on such assistance would be considered at the next board meeting.

The board also granted Patrick Yeung a two-month leave of absence during his period of employment in the Office of Community Housing.

Scheduled April meeting

The board noted correspondence relating to a number of government initiatives. These included: stock transfer deed of agreement, CHLP review options, a response from the Premier on the affordable housing strategy and a letter to the new Minister, to set a meeting, and also inviting him to the HAM.

The board discussed a number of strategic issues including: progress on sector IT; OCH Strategy on Aboriginal access to mainstream housing; industrial relations and implications for the next round of interim funding, and sector representation on the Community Housing Advisory Committee.

Major discussion Items

One of the main items for the board was its twice yearly discussion with Maura Boland. The discussion included the early initiatives of the new Minister, legislation, rents, and the implementation of the growth strategies.

Maura stressed the importance of meeting stock transfer program targets. There was discussion of the targeting of growth and the need to maintain diversity in the sector.

The board later agreed to hold a discussion with the sector at the HAM on the diversity and preferred providers.

The other major discussion for this meeting was the CHLP Review paper. The board considered the main issues raised in the paper. It also proposed that we seek an extension of time for the sector to respond to the Options Paper.

Business and strategic planning

The board discussed the results of the member survey. The survey provided a number of the KPIs for reporting to OCH, but also to allow the Federation to review its performance. The board agreed that the overall results were pleasing, but discussed a number of areas which identified a need for further action.

This included the finding that while small associations found our training pricing fair, it was still not affordable. The board suggested exploring options such as establishing a special scholarships fund for smaller associations. The board also suggested that we consider setting benchmarks for members' perception of the Federation.

The board continued its review of the Federation's 5 year strategic plan, based on the findings from the survey. Among other things, it agreed to reconsider the Federation's mission statement.

Business items

The board considered the Federation's business plan exceptions report. It was noted that we face some capacity issues with delays in appointments and a number of staff taking parenting leave this year. However it agreed that the broad outcomes of the full reporting year had been achieved.

(cont. on pg 14)

Partnership opportunities: housing people living with HIV/AIDS

People living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and the Gay Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) communities continue to need access to safe secure housing. ACON is keen to develop partnerships with community housing providers for the provision of short term tenancies for these marginalised and often vulnerable people.

ACON Housing Project works with a range of agencies to help support a client in their tenancy and to achieve longer term housing outcomes.

We also provide limited short term housing options for up to six months for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Please contact us for our eligibility criteria and simple referral process. We are happy to discuss our process with you and will send you a copy of our Nomination Form on request.

Please call Fred Oberg (02) 9206 2039
(foberg@acon.org.au)

Regional meetings – a snapshot from South East region

With meetings held every two months, South East region's associations (Housing Trust, Argyle, Eurobodalla, Monaro, Queanbeyan, Sapphire Coast, Shoalhaven), value meeting with colleagues in their region.

Meetings of associations in various regions have occurred for some time now. Some regions meet regularly, some semi-regularly and others rarely, if ever. Factors such as the diversity of the regions (and organisations within them), the distance between organisations, levels of staffing and time constraints play a part in this.

The time and resources taken to organise, travel to, attend and follow up meetings, will be weighed against the benefits of meeting and discussing issues with colleagues. An important consideration is what organisations want to achieve by having meetings. For example, South East region uses the meetings for training, lobbying, swapping ideas, discussing concerns and for keeping themselves informed. They have a guest speaker and representation from the Federation and OCH at each meeting. An agenda is produced with input from all

associations, minutes are recorded and passed at each meeting and a report from both OCH & the Federation is tabled and discussed. Other regions might choose a different approach based on what they want to achieve.

Each organisation and region makes an assessment of whether to hold regional meetings and if so, how often, based on what is best for their organisation. Circumstances vary in each region and each organisation - priorities for some may not be the same for others.

In the case of South East, the positives of holding regular meetings (networking, lobbying as a group, being kept up to date with changes in the sector, joint purchasing of training and peer support), outweigh the negatives (time out of office, particularly for one person organisations and travel costs).

Understanding these trade-offs will inform whether your organisation and others in your region hold regional meetings.

Thanks to Lesley Oatley for providing information for this article.

Tenant Network Training up

The tenants on the community housing metropolitan tenant network are getting ready to take on more responsibility for running the network. The network has now been around for almost two years, and the Federation has been active in helping to get the network up and running. The longer term goal has always been that the network should be run 'by tenants, for tenants'.

To assist the steering group and other active tenants to build their skills, the Federation has been working with the Central Sydney North Regional Tenants Resource Service. They recently provided a full day's training for tenants on 'meeting skills'. The event was delivered by Charmaine Jones, who is herself a tenant at the Department of Housing's Northcott House. One further tenant training day is planned for June this year.

Elections to the steering group will be held shortly and the group are working on some simple terms of reference to guide how they run their organisation and a representative

structure to let tenants from all the metro associations have a say.

In the next financial year we will be exploring the options for expanding the network into other parts of the state. If you have a group of tenants who you think might be interested in joining a state wide network, please contact Adam West on 9281 7144 ext 211 or at adamwest@communityhousing.org.au



Tenant training with Charmaine Jones (*centre*)

Social Housing Breakfast

The Australasian Housing Institute (AHI) will be hosting a social housing leader's breakfast on August 8th. Nick Sabel, Chair of NSWFA, Mike Allen, Director General of the Department of Housing and Russell Taylor EO of the Aboriginal Housing Office will address the breakfast.

Put this date in your diary – AHI members will be sent personal invitations and the event will be widely publicised.

Laurel Draffen, NSW branch member says: "This will really be a special event for social housing professionals across the state to come together to share their experiences and build on cross sector relationships."

AHI welcomes new members. As Laurel reports "So many people say to me they can't afford to join, or they don't get anything out of their membership.

Since becoming a more active member I'm really surprised at how valuable the AHI is from a professional development viewpoint."

For more information about the leader's breakfast contact Laurel on 9218 7144 x 206.

Board Meetings (*cont. from pg 12*)

The board agreed to seek advice from Jobs Australia on the registration of the Federation's Workplace Agreement.

The board considered the selection process for appointment to its new Aboriginal Advisory Group. It was agreed to ask for a representative from AHO to work with the President to make the selection.

Next meeting:
Wednesday 13 June

NSW Federation of Housing Associations Inc



HOUSING MANAGEMENT HOTLINE

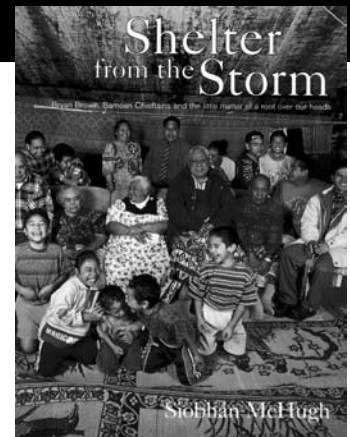
Non-Metropolitan
Telephone
1800 652 877

Sydney Metropolitan
Telephone
(02) 9211 8420

The **HOTLINE** will give
information on:

- ◆ Tenancy Management
- ◆ Maintenance and Repairs
- ◆ Policy and Best Practice

Operating Hours
Monday to Friday
10.00 am to 1.00 pm



Shelter from the Storm

*Bryan Brown, Samoan
Chieftains and the little matter
of a roof over our heads*

Author: Siobhan McHugh
Publisher: Allen & Unwin

Public housing has provided millions of Australians with much more than just a roof over their heads. In recent years, public housing has attracted more than its fair share of criticism.

The NSW Federation of Housing Associations decided to do something about it and commissioned a book that would tell the stories of former and current tenants of public and community housing. We wanted to show, in a non-threatening way, the pivotal role of social housing in the lives of a range of people.

Shelter from the Storm promotes a positive view of social housing and personalises the experience of social housing. Like all true-life stories, there are the occasional brickbats as well as bouquets. Bryan Brown, Jennie George and Mark Latham are three of the better known stories in the book.

Shelter from the Storm
\$15.00 (inc P&P & GST)
(\$11/\$14 for Assoc/Full members)
Available from:

NSW Federation of Housing
Associations
Suite 301, 64-76 Kippax Street
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010
Phone: (02) 9281 7144
Fax: (02) 9281 7603
Email: nswfha@communityhousing.org.au

Subscription for 'Housing Matters'



Housing Matters

Federation Members receive a free subscription to Housing Matters newsletter. Additional subscriptions are \$55 per year for members (or 1/2 price for Housing Association Board Members, \$27.50 each). Non-member subscriptions are \$66 per year for 6 issues.

Organisation

Name

Address

Phone Fax

<input type="checkbox"/>	Type	# of subscriptions
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Member	_____ (\$66each)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Member	_____ (\$55each)
<input type="checkbox"/>	HA Board Member	_____ (\$27.50 each)

Please send this form and payment to:

NSW Federation of Housing Associations
Suite 301, 64-76 Kippax Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010
Ph: (02) 9281 7144 Fax (02) 9281 7603
Email: nswfha@communityhousing.org.au
Website: www.communityhousing.com.au



Calendar of Events

Cert IV in Social Housing

Property management

CHCCH16B
CHCCH24A
PRXPD33A
25 July 2007

Respond to property maintenance & enquiries

CHCCH17B
26 July 2007

Contribute to policy development

CHCPOL2A
22 August 2007

Rent units

CHCCH13C
CHCCH14B
23 August 2007

Board meeting

13th June 2007

If you would like to organise additional training, on a fee for service basis, please contact the Training Co-ordinator Estelle Lohman, at the Federation on (02)9281 7144 Ext. 205 or estelle@community-housing.org.au

COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTRES

HELPING SOLVE PROBLEMS BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS

If you are having a disagreement with a neighbour that you just can't settle, it may be best to get some help.

Community Justice Centres have trained mediators who can help you solve your problems quickly and fairly. Mediation can help solve problems between neighbours on issues like:

- pets
- children
- noise
- garbage
- unreasonable behaviour
- family disputes.

What is mediation?

Mediation is where people voluntarily get together with mediators to settle their conflict in a way which is fair and acceptable for everyone involved.

How can Community Justice Centres help?

Mediators are trained to help people to settle their disagreements by:

- Listening to each person talk about their concerns;
- Helping people talk to each other about their problems; and
- Helping people to come up with their own solutions.

If you think mediation can help you, phone a Community Justice Centre. Mediation is free, voluntary and confidential. Community Justice Centres can be contacted on the following numbers:

Bankstown	(02) 9790 0656
Campbelltown	(02) 4629 9715
Penrith	(02) 4732 1933
Wollongong	(02) 4228 0433
Newcastle	(02) 4929 1211
Wagga Wagga, Bourke, Moree	- Free Call: 008 671 964

Website: www.cjc.nsw.gov.au

Email: info@cjc.nsw.gov.au