



Housing Matters

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Government announces new measures to support affordable housing

On the 20th March the then Minister for Housing Cherie Burton announced new measures to support the development of affordable housing. In total, just over \$230 million will be directed to the initiative over four years, \$30 million of which is new funding.

The main \$120 million component of the package recognises the central role of community housing in delivering affordable housing. Of this, \$49.8 will be directed to an Affordable Housing Innovations Fund - \$39.4 million to debt equity projects and \$10.4 million to deliver 70 new rental properties at St Marys in Western Sydney. The remaining \$70 million will be dedicated over four years to allowing community housing to build new houses.

The remainder - \$111.6 million, will assist people leaving public housing to enter the private rental market. \$2.6 million will be used to expand the Private Rental Options Package from 5 locations to 15 and \$109 million will be spent over 4 years providing people exiting public housing with 6 weeks bond money.

The Minister also announced a program to pilot 600 long term leases of 35 years in community housing which should allow

New Housing Minister



Housing has a new Minister, Matt Brown. The appointment was announced as part of the significant number of changes to the front bench following the elections.

The previous housing Minister, Cherie Burton, resigned from the front bench for personal reasons.

Matt Brown has been member for Kiama for the past eight years. He is a lawyer and over the past couple of years has been Parliamentary Secretary for roads, transport and police. As well as taking on the Housing portfolio, he is also Minister for Tourism.

The Federation would like to welcome the Minister to his new portfolio, and to farewell the previous Minister and wish her well.

for more income security and facilitate private sector investment. According to the Minister, this would raise up to \$11 million in private sector finance.

Overall, the package contains measures that will assist community housing organisations to enter into partnerships with the private sector. Particularly welcome is the development of the Affordable Housing Initiatives Fund and trial of long term leases.

The Federation will continue to pursue the issue of community housing title, especially in relation to the \$70 million allocation to the sector to build new houses.

With around 156,000 households in housing stress in NSW, there is clearly much more to do, but these measures are a step in the right direction.

- **Funding Review back on track**
 - **OCH Restructure**
 - **Developing Affordable Housing - short course**
 - **108 year old tenant**
- And more**

CONTENTS

Funding Review back on Track	pg 3
Confusion reigns on I.R.	pg 3
OCH Restructure takes shape	pg 4
Housing and support initiative (HASI) Evaluation report III	pg 5
Developing Affordable Housing - short course	pg 5
Taking stock of stock transfers	pg 6
Department introduces new tenant repair costs policies	pg 7
Management changes in the sector	pg 8
Tenant Profile: Hume tenant 108 yrs old	pg 8
Farewell Patrick Yeung	pg 9
<i>Directors' pages:</i>	
The courage to be a board member (AICD)	pg 10
Profile: sector director - Michelle Craig	pg 11
February Board Mtg	pg 12
Member Profile: Illawarra Housing Trust	pg 13
Training snapshots	pg 14
New Federation trainee	pg 14
Calendar of Events	Pg 16

From the President...

Things begin to move.

We welcome a new Housing Minister, Matt Brown.

In the days before the State elections we saw an affordable housing initiative released. While we have pointed out, together with NCOSS and Shelter, that funds committed fall way short of what is needed, it is a valuable first step for the sector.

It provides some new ways for the sector to do business. Almost all of this means getting more experience in developing housing, getting access to land for partnerships and taking on debt.

When I met then Housing Minister Cherie Burton she said that this should be seen as a beginning. That is how the Federation will treat it, and we hope with the Government returned we can take the next steps very soon.

The Affordable Housing Development short course that the Federation has brokered with UWS will help build the skills in the sector to take this up. Similarly, we hope to have Estate Master, the commercial package for development feasibility, available to members by the time the course is held.

Recent national initiatives will also build the pressure for a wider strategy. These include the release of a new national affordable rental incentive to boost the supply of affordable rental housing. The proposal was released by the National Affordable Housing Summit group. The Federation has been closely involved in this through ACOSS and CHFA. The other initiative was the campaign, Australians for Affordable Housing, which aims to make housing affordability as big an issue in this year's federal election as health and education.

The Federation has also been very active closer to home, working



with members to broker a better Deed of Agreement for the current stock transfer program. This outcome improves the position of associations – particularly those receiving smaller numbers of transfer and creates more of a level playing field.

I would like to thank the Federation and other associations for their good work on progressing this agreement. It demonstrates what can be done by working together and utilising the Federation in these types of policy/ practice issues

Finally, we will have to use all this sector co-operation over the next few weeks when the sector considers its response to the options for CHLP funding and not long after, the full Planning for the Future strategy.

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Funding review back on track

A new funding approach for housing associations is now back on the table, and an options paper has just been released to seek sector input.

Following strong pressure from associations, who at the last Housing Associations Meeting voiced their dismay at the failure to engage with the sector on such a fundamental issue, OCH has reconvened the sector Reference Group. The Reference Group will assist OCH to consider the responses from the sector.

One important decision is that the interim funding arrangements for this year will be continued into 2007-08, since a longer term change will not be possible by July 1. The current funding bands will be increased by an appropriate index.

Most associations will not move into a higher band (with lower funding), including those whose portfolios increase slightly over the maximum number of properties for their current band. Only four associations are expected to grow well outside their current band due to amalgamations or stock transfers. The funding rates for these will be negotiated separately.

The future funding options have been presented in a wider context. This includes major changes in the sector; a proposed

set of funding principles (which include both partnership and financial sustainability); and it then goes on to identify a number of principles for a partnership approach.

The specific options for future funding are based on two significant proposed changes: first, that capital and leasehold portfolios are treated separately, and second, that funding becomes fee for-service payments linked to relevant performance *outcomes*.

There are two main parts to the funding options themselves.

The first for the capital portfolio to generally pay for itself; which means OCH would no longer fund management of capital properties (except in some circumstances where the costs are higher), but there would be no capital contributions.

The second is to consider how to meet the cost of managing leasehold properties. The three options for discussion are to make payments based on: benchmark pricing, tendering, or a hybrid of these two.

The Federation will be holding a workshop to allow members to discuss and work through the implications of the options.

The deadline for comments on the Options Paper is 11 May 2007.

Confusion reigns on IR

Housing associations' responsibilities under the new industrial relations environment are still unclear, although it is hoped that the employer body, Jobs Australia, will soon be providing some advice on a number of very difficult issues.

One of the most important is associations' responsibility to pay wage increases under the Minimum Wage decision brought down by the Fair Pay Commission, which applied from December last year. That decision applies to all employees of statutory corporations – that is, organisations covered by the Work Choices legislation.

Until recently, like most community sector organisations, housing associations were uncertain what their status was. Now that seems much clearer, with at least one NSW housing association being ruled to be a corporation by the NSW Industrial Relations Commission. It is very likely that housing associations will be covered by the decision. However, this still doesn't make clear who will be covered by the increases. These provided for an additional \$27.36 a week for workers on pay scales of \$700 a week or less and \$22.04 for those on pay scales above \$700 a week.

(cont. pg 4)

OCH restructure takes shape

With the recent ads for the Directors' positions in the Office of Community Housing, its new structure has started to go public.

The structure of government offices isn't usually of much interest, but this restructure may signal some rebalancing of OCH's view of its role. The fact that it includes some new positions may also be a measure of the growing importance of community housing.

At an early glance, there seem to be four main developments.

First, the new position of Director of Business Performance will provide a new attention to the consistency and transparency of OCH business relationships. This should mean that the process around EOIs, contracts and funding agreements improves significantly.

The new area will also be responsible for collecting the data needed to manage programs, largely to be drawn from the quarterly reports. Once again, the hope is that this will mean quarterly returns are rationalised, rather than growing!

The largest area is Service Development. Probably the two biggest changes here are the structure of regional service development teams and expanded operational programs area. Service development teams in Metro and Northern regions have a line of positions up to a regional manager. Southern and Western regions, however, only have a service development co-ordinator reporting through operational programs.

But the other part of Operational Programs seems to be the big growth area, with four project officers dealing with new models, amalgamations and intensive support, as well as two positions covering stock transfer. In effect this seems to be a sector development team, and it will be very interesting to see how this shapes up. It is possible to imagine this team also becoming the implementers of new models developed by the Strategic Project team in Housing Strategy.

The other big change could be in Performance Management. The future of
(cont. pg 7)

Confusion Reigns on IR

(cont from pg 3)

However, it is unclear how these apply to those paying over the rates in the Notional Agreement Preserving a State Award or on Preserved State Agreements (which seem to be exempt from the decision). A further issue is whether both the next 3.5% increase to the SACS/NAPSA rates and the increases under the Fair Pay Commission would have to be paid.

To add to the confusion, discussions are being commenced with the NSW Government about funding the next stage of increases under the SACS Award. NCOSS is about to meet with the Government to discuss whether this funding will include increases under the Minimum Wage decision. Finally, the effect of Section 146A Referral Agreements is also unclear.

These have been strongly promoted by the ASU to provide workers in statutory corporation with access to the State Commission. First, there is a strong view that they only provide for the State Commission to arbitrate disputes – they don't in any sense "take corporations out of the Workchoices system".

There is also a view that they may only be able to operate as common law agreements, and there is a question as to how effectively non-union members could enforce such an agreement made between the union and the employer. Some organisations are considering whether individual agreements with each employee might be a useful approach. Hopefully there will be more advice available soon on all these matters from Jobs Australia, the union, NCOSS and the government.

Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative Evaluation Report III (HASI)

The third of four reports on the fieldwork for the evaluation of the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative Stage One (HASI) has been released by the Social Policy Research Centre UNSW.

A number of providers are now managing properties allocated for HASI in partnership with local Area Mental Health Services, and NGO accommodation support providers.

This report presents the findings from the final phase of fieldwork (conducted in February and March 2006) based on over 600 interviews with HASI stakeholders, including 219 client interviews. This report complements the first two evaluation reports (Morris et al 2005, Muir et al 2005).

Selected findings from the report may be of interest to providers. The most prevalent group of people in the program are Australian born males under 34 with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. Almost all HASI clients live alone in 2 bedroom accommodation. Clustered accommodation has been successful where the cluster is kept to a maximum number

(three or four) of tenants and the tenant mix is carefully considered. HASI clients property care is as good or better than other tenants. Only 17% of tenants were in rental arrears – most for less than a month. Over 70% of tenants who started HASI remained in the same home by the end of March 2006. An improvement in the mental and physical health of the majority of HASI clients was identified.

Findings re the relationship between Housing Providers and Accommodation Support Providers are reported as overwhelmingly positive. However a key tension in the partnership was reported as the lack of disclosure of information affecting tenancies until a crisis or an inspection or neighbours complained. Accommodation Support Providers are anxious about privacy and confidentiality in relation to client information while Housing Providers are also concerned about legal issues, OHS and their Duty of Care to their employees and other tenants.

A copy of the report can be downloaded from http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/reports/HASI_Report_III.pdf

Developing affordable housing: a short course for housing associations

More opportunities for the development of affordable housing by non-government agencies are expected to emerge in Australia over the next few years. For housing associations to take advantage of these opportunities some capacity building is required.

The Federation has therefore brokered a 3 day course that involves participants working on the development of a real site into an affordable housing project. The course will be delivered by AHURI Sydney and University of Western Sydney and aims to:

- Provide participants with the necessary skills to initiate and develop affordable housing projects

- Convey an understanding of affordable housing concepts and models operating in Australia and overseas

The course will be held on Monday 30th April, Tuesday 1st May, and Thursday 10th May.

For more information about the course or to register please contact Andrew Meehan at the Federation:

Phone: 9281 71 44 (ext 203)

Email: andrew@communityhousing.org.au

Taking stock of stock transfers

This year we have seen a considerable increase in the numbers of properties being transferred to housing associations under the Stock Transfer Program. The Program has a target of 2500 to be completed by July 2008 – the end of the current 5 year CSHA. With relatively few completed in the first few years of this CSHA period, transfers are now ramping up to reach that target.

Providers report a range of experiences to date. The number of properties being transferred, current size of the organisation, the rate of transfer, the age and condition of properties and the relationship with the local department of housing office are all key factors that will influence how the transfer process rolls out for providers.

In some cases, organisations are managing considerable growth both in terms of number of properties being transferred and the proportion of provider's current stock this figure represents. A number of providers are taking on over 30 properties per month and will continue to do so for most of the year. In one case this represents around two thirds of their current stock portfolio.

Issues such as when to employ new staff, what roles they should have, whether current roles and responsibilities support the level of growth, will need to be considered. Some providers have reported difficulties in this area particularly as the rate of transfers can be sporadic or delayed for some reason. This can result in a costly exercise if providers have increased their staffing levels based on assumptions on the rate of transfers.

On this issue, one provider stated that:

“(because there was)...no fixed date for transfers, it makes the allocation of resources and therefore achieving best value difficult.”

Another reported that they had:

“...employed additional staff in preparation for the process...and there has been little progress (in terms of properties transferred)”

Similar issues were described by another provider as:

“...very time consuming, labour intensive and incredibly costly on staffing budgets... information sharing is also difficult”

Other key concerns by providers were the age and condition of the stock (in some cases), delays in getting scopes approved, waiting for nominations on vacant properties and protracted delays in negotiations over the backlog of maintenance, including fire safety. Ensuring that the Stock Transfer Deeds of Agreement reflected the objective of improving viability was also a concern.

Some areas working well include relationships with partner organisations; the positive outcomes for tenants once the upgrades have been completed; and face to face meetings (along with OCH) with all tenants to explain and answer questions.

The last year has seen a considerable increase in the number of properties being transferred to community housing. Further sizable growth is foreshadowed for the sector over the next 10 years. Careful monitoring and evaluation of the stock transfer program can inform some of the issues associated with that growth.



Department introduces new tenant repair costs policy

The Department of Housing recently launched a new Tenant Repair Costs policy. The policy deals with tenant damage and the circumstances when tenants are responsible for paying for damage that the tenant is responsible for. It also emphasises tenants' rights to appeal damage charges.

Many Housing Associations report that incidences of tenant damage are increasing in the community housing sector. Whilst the Boards of each individual housing association will set their own policy on tenant damage and when tenants should be recharged, the Department's new policy may provide a more detailed framework than Association's current policies and some new issues for Boards to consider.

The key elements of the new policy are that tenants can expect the Department to meet its responsibilities under the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) and maintain the property in a reasonable condition. Tenants are also expected to abide by the terms of the RTA and to 'restore the premises to the condition they were in at the start of the tenancy, after allowing for fair wear and tear'. Tenants are responsible for the cost of repairs due to intentional damage or neglect that is caused by the tenant or a visitor who enters the property with their permission. The Department will charge tenants for the costs of these repairs only if the tenant accepts liability or if they have sufficient evidence of the tenant's responsibility for the damage. The Department will provide tenants of written notice when they consider a tenant is responsible for Tenant Repair Costs and when they claim repayment for these costs.

The new policy lists an number of incidents where the tenant may be responsible for Tenant Repair Costs, including broken windows; punctured internal cabinet doors and walls; burns or other damage to carpets that cannot be considered fair wear and tear; broken and damaged clotheslines and hoists; broken locks; damaged doors and security screens;

damage to toilets and basins; sewer chokes caused by items flushed down the toilet, such as sanitary pads, nappies or toys; or abandoned furniture or vehicles at the end of the tenancy.

If the Department has enough evidence that a tenant is repeatedly causing tenant responsible damage, they will immediately take action before the Tribunal to obtain a specific performance order. In certain circumstances, the Department will take action to end the tenancy.

Tenants can request an internal review of the Department's decision to charge Tenant Repair Costs, not to waive Tenant Repair Costs on the grounds of ill health, domestic violence or the criminal activity of a third party, or that the tenant is ineligible for further housing assistance due to an outstanding tenant repair debt from a former tenancy. Some decisions to do with Tenant Repair Costs may also be appealed to the Housing Appeal Committee if an internal appeal is not successful.

The new policy can be viewed in full at the Department's website: www.housing.nsw.gov.au - in the policy and fact sheets section, policy number EST0090A.

OCH Restructure *(cont. from pg 4)*

this area is entirely up in the air. The possible appointment of a Registrar to manage registration once legislation is in place, and any decision about moving accreditation services outside government, could see this area substantially cut back.

We can only wait to see whether this signals a significant shift from an earlier priority on supporting (and assuring) the quality and standard of providers' operations, to a new focus on monitoring program outcomes and leading sector development. Any such change of emphasis would surely need a lot more discussion with the sector.

Management Changes in the Sector

The Federation welcomes a number of new managers to the sector this year. The board of Homes North Community Housing Company has recently employed a new Executive Officer. Maree McKenzie has worked with the Department of Housing in the New England area for the past 11 years. She was team leader at the Tamworth Office and was the project officer with the New England Social Housing project. She brings extensive social housing experience, including managing stock transfers and working with Aboriginal clients, to the position.

Monaro Community Tenancy Scheme has a new coordinator. Ruth Stanbury has taken up the position as coordinator in the Cooma office. She worked as a registrar in the courts at Bombala and Cooma over the past 8 years so brings a solid background in understanding local social and community issues to the role.

Brian Woods has been appointed by the board of Eastern Suburbs Rental Housing Association to the position of manager of Housing Services. Brian previously worked with the Salvation Army in inner Sydney so has strong experience in working with homelessness. Brian will also be acting in the role of Executive Officer while Renee Davidson takes a year off from 4th April. Renee is to be married on 31st March and will spend a year traveling overseas before returning as EO to ESHRA in February 2008.

A new manager is to be appointed to Burwood Area Community Housing in the near future.

We look forward to working with all new staff and wish them every success in the future

Tenant profile: Hume Tenant... 108 years young



Mrs Warina Youkhanna has just become a tenant in Hume's Berryman Gardens, Senior Citizens complex. We know she is our oldest tenant and feel she could be the oldest Community Housing tenant in New South Wales.

Mrs Youkhanna was born in Iraq in 1899. Her family consists of 3 children, a son and a daughter living in Australia and a son living in Germany, she has 9 Grandchildren and 2 Great Grandchildren.

Although her sight is poor, her mind is fine and her memory is quite sharp, she enjoys reliving her life experiences with any one who speaks her language. She freely brings to life her memories as a 14-year-old girl in Iraq during the World War 1, or any other topic of interest to herself or her listeners. She is able to live independently with a little help from her family, she enjoys mixing with the other tenants, particularly those with whom she has a common language.

Hume is very pleased to have Mrs Youkhanna as one of their tenants.

If you would like to profile one of your tenants, please contact Andrew at the Federation: (02) 0281 7144 (ext. 203), email: andrew@communityhousing.org.au

Farewell Patrick Yeung

After nine years as CEO of St George Community Housing, Patrick Yeung has resigned.

Patrick was appointed the first CEO of St George Community Housing (SGCH) in April 1998. When Patrick joined there were 122 properties under management, although by the end of that financial year, the portfolio had increased to 226 properties because of pre existing allocations. Deborah Georgiou was the chairperson at the time.

Under Patrick's management, SGCH has flourished. Patrick used a simple yardstick to measure organisational growth – that the number of properties under management doubled every two years. Indeed the organisation has grown to become the largest community housing provider in NSW, currently managing approximately 2,500 properties with revenue exceeding \$12 million (2006 Annual Report figures).

Patrick says that, "Growth has been all about providing additional services for St George clients. I have been proud to lead a social justice oriented organisation which provides quality services and business efficiency with no compromises", adds Patrick. "It has always been a challenge to overcome the psychological barrier of increasing in size as well as balancing the realities of growth."

Organisational achievements during Patrick's leadership include numerous awards, including two national and two state awards for overall excellence in community housing, 'A' grade registration and ongoing Accreditation status. St George Community Housing, in a private partnership with Becton, recently won a major tender to provide redevelopment, community renewal and tenancy management services to Bonnyrigg Housing Estate. Tenant participation is strong with an active Tenants Advisory Group. A wide range (over twenty) of support partnerships are maintained, and SGCH became the manager of the Port Jackson Supported Housing Program in April 2006. As part of their 20th Anniversary celebrations, SGCH set



up an ongoing bursary fund to help SCGH tenants pay for continuing education costs of education for their children. Patrick leaves SGCH confident that the organisation is at its peak.

"St George Community Housing will continue to grow and there will be further growth spurts under new leadership", predicts Patrick.

Patrick is recognised by his peers in the sector and OCH as a leading social housing professional. He has been a deeply committed, highly competent CEO who has initiated innovative programs to support continuing service growth, and steered the organisation through major changes while maintaining a strong community sensibility.

"I treasure every bit of my time working with St George Community Housing. Success has been due to a proactive whole of organisation approach and I have valued working with the staff and board over the last nine years," says Patrick.

Patrick will continue to work in the social housing sector. He is currently in a temporary position at the Office of Community Housing. The Federation wishes him every success for the future and wishes to appreciate his significant contribution to the community housing sector.

The courage to be a board member

One of the big issues for directors of Housing Associations, particularly in regional areas, is the level of responsibility required for the role. The following extract from the editorial of the "Company Director" journal highlights the seriousness of being a director on a not for profit board and reminds directors of the courage needed to fulfil the role.

It is time this column turned its attention to the not-for-profit sector, which is hugely important for Australia and for the AICD. Not-for-profit organisations employ about 600,000 people and attract voluntary work equivalent to a further 285,000 full-time jobs.

Many AICD members who are corporate directors also serve on not-for-profit boards. For some, these boards provide experience and a stepping stone to corporate boards. Directors and staff of not-for-profits take up a significant number of places on all of our director and board development programs.

There is huge variety among not-for-profit bodies. At one end of the scale are universities, and hospital groups such as those run by the Catholic Church, with turnovers in the billion dollar class. At the other end are tiny associations and non-government organisations or 'NGOs', which may have few full time employees.

What these organisations have in common, and the reason why they are important to the AICD, is that they have boards of directors. These boards operate in an analogous fashion to corporate boards. They meet regularly to discuss an agenda of items and to approve accounts and make financial decisions. They are responsible for the overall conduct and strategy of the bodies they govern. They are likely to employ a CEO and, through him or her, the other people who work in the organisation.

Being a director of a not-for profit organisation can be as challenging as a being on a for-profit board. In a landmark case, Justice Tadgell of the Victorian Supreme Court said:

"There is nothing in the (Companies) code to suggest that the standard to be expected of a part-time non-executive director of a not-for-profit company is different from the standard expected from a profit-making company."
(Commonwealth Bank of Australia vs Friedrich & Ors (1991))

While many do not realise it, not-for-profit directors – even if they are working unpaid for noble causes – face serious personal liability if the bodies they govern become insolvent. In a recent speech, David Gonski, a member of AICD's Corporate Governance Committee, proposed a more lenient framework for not-for-profit directors to attract more skilled people to volunteer their time. Gonski knows both sides well, with a university chancellorship and the chair of a large listed company board among his many hats. His idea was put down firmly by Elaine Henry of the Smith Family, who said: "It is an extremely retrograde step to even suggest a lower standard for the not-for-profit sector, which should have the same rules and high levels of governance that apply to other sectors."

Directors of not-for-profits face certain challenges that are different from those with for-profits, but the solutions are often analogous. The law requires the directors of a business to "act in the best interests of the company". This can be interpreted as being the same as acting in the interests of shareholders who hold the shares in perpetuity, the formulation of Sir John Dunlop, the doyen of Australian boards 40 years ago. What is the equivalent for non-profit directors? I think they have to act as far as they can in the interests of the purpose or ideals for which the body exists. If there is any lack of clarity or consensus about what this purpose is, establishing clarity would be a very good place for a board to begin its strategic planning deliberations.

Not-for-profit boards are not absolved from good governance principles, such as the

(cont next pag)

Profile of a sector director - Michelle Craig

Michelle Craig is a Director on the Coastal Community Tenancy Scheme board.

Michelle Craig works for the Bungree Aboriginal Association Inc. which provides housing for Aboriginal people on the Central Coast. She has considerable community and housing experience. In her seven years at the Association, she has worked primarily in the housing program.

Michelle had worked with the Coastal board during her time at Bungree, and decided to join when she was approached by another director on behalf of the Coastal board two years ago. Since joining the board, Michelle has become actively involved in the governance of the organisation, from staff appraisals and interviews to accreditation.

When Michelle joined the Coastal board, she was the only Aboriginal director. Michelle says she was not concerned by being the only Aboriginal person on the board as the organisation, and especially the coordinator, made her feel very welcome. Her background

and knowledge of housing made her confident to face the challenge.

Coastal have since appointed another Aboriginal director who works for a Local Aboriginal Land Council. Michelle believes that with two Aboriginal directors now on the board Coastal will now have a wider knowledge of the needs of the local community.

Michelle feels that having Aboriginal directors on the boards of community housing organisations can help to break down barriers in Aboriginal people's access to community housing. Through her connections with local inter-agencies and networks, Michelle has been able to promote Coastal's services more widely, and increase awareness of the organisation.

Michelle suggests that community housing organisations that would like to appoint an Aboriginal director should contact local Aboriginal community organisations or Local Aboriginal Land councils.

courage to be a board member (cont.)

need for proper management of conflicts of interest, just because the directors are volunteers. Directorship is a serious role. The consequences of failure in a director's duties and responsibilities, or of failure to take the right action, are much the same as a for-profit organisation. Because taking the right action can be unpopular among fellow directors who see themselves as representing special interests, being a not-for-profit director can sometimes take a good deal of courage.

Most modern companies are serious about director and board evaluation, some form of which is required by Principles of the ASX Corporate Governance Council. The need for such evaluation and for continuous renewal of talent may be even greater in not-for-profits, although its take up has been slower.

Not-for-profit organisations are numerous, varied and often complex. They are large users of the AICD's development programs.

Ralph Evans FAICD
CEO
Australian Institute of Company Directors

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Our advice to all involved in not-for-profit boards is to ask the question, "Do I know what I need to know to do this well?" If the answer is "no" or "I'm not sure", we recommend you seek external advice. The Federation provides support and training in governance as does the AICD.

Board Report

February board meeting

The February Board meeting was focussed on business planning and risk assessment.

It considered external and strategic risks for the Federation and the sector. The following new risks were discussed: the sector grows, but loses the important community sector values and focus; access to CSHA funds is lost; further reduction in the number of housing associations; marginalisation of small associations (and the change in definition of small associations); increasingly disparate needs between small and large associations; a lack of proportionality in OCH's expectations of associations; viability of smaller organisations; new funding approaches don't cover core business costs; increased fee-for-service work distracts from core business; and excessive diversification undercuts success in core business.

The board also discussed the strategic priorities for the coming year. The highest priorities were: the sustainability of associations (with a focus on small associations and the impact of stock transfers); IT ; working closely with members; proactively engaging industry partners; resourcing the sector in new specialist areas; advocating for a reduced regulatory compliance burden.

The board also discussed the implication of current changes in the environment . It considered the implications of the OCH re-structure. This included the role of the OCH

regional positions. The board agreed it would be useful to have these positions, and their responsibilities, more clearly defined. The board also discussed the possible implications of any changes in the Aboriginal Housing Office.

Nationally, the board heard that the Commonwealth is hinting there is the possibility of no CSHA, or having individual contracts with states, or by-passing states and having contracts directly with housing bodies. This would undermine states, and in the worst case could cause the collapse the public housing system which is dependent on the CSHA funds.

At a state level, the board noted that the Federation had written to the Premier urging the release of the affordable housing strategy. The board also discussed the current sector issues arising from problems with the stock transfer deed of agreement and new allocations arrangements. It particularly noted that in areas in which all social housing is being transferred to the sector, the Department is pursuing a common housing register.

Finally the board approved the revised second half budget projections for the Federation. These have been revised up based on projected work arising from a renewed contract to train DoH staff. However, it is also noted that the contract has not yet been signed.

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Director	Mohammed Ibrahim	(02) 9790-3093	mohamed@chcl.org.au
Director	Ern Phang	(02) 9896-6966	ern.phang@phanglegal.com.au
Director	David Matthews	(02) 6621-8644	david@ncchc.org.au
Director	Coral Garratt	(02) 9439-1399	chlns@tpg.com.au

More than just a House - Illawarra Housing Trust



Jenny Stewart
EO, The Housing Trust

Providing services for clients with complex needs, particularly mental health problems is not new for the Illawarra Housing Trust.

The Federation recently talked with Jenny Stewart, the Executive Officer of The Housing Trust, about their current service provision.

“A majority of our priority applications go to clients with mental health problems”, says Jenny Stewart who has been the EO for the past 24 years. While the Housing Trust manages over 100 supported tenancies the type of support available, does not always match the needs of the tenant or the housing provider.

According to Jenny, “We find ourselves working with some tenants with mental health problems who refuse to be labeled and accept support from other agencies. In other situations the support available does not match the situation, for example a client may get drop-in support but need recreational activities or even just a cleaner.”

The Housing Trust is working through the local Joint Guarantee of Service (JGOS) to build strong links with Mental Health services to intervene in what Jenny calls “...the revolving door cycle for people with mental health problems.”

The Housing Trust also has a strong focus on working with the Aboriginal community to provide housing.

“We work with a range of local Aboriginal services to provide generalist and targeted programs for indigenous people”, says Jenny. “We are excited at the possibility of new funding to review our policies and practices to further improve feedback from Aboriginal Tenants and applicants. Our experience is that we need to take the lead from our tenants and be much more creative in developing avenues for regular feedback that are culturally appropriate.”

The organisation also has a focus on providing accommodation for young people , particularly working with those who are exiting crisis accommodation. There is high youth unemployment in the area – the closure of the steel mills in the 1980s has left a legacy of few employment options.

Covering 3 Local Government Areas – Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama, the Housing Trust has been operating for over 25 years. They currently manage a portfolio of over 650 properties, including 11 properties for which the Housing Trust holds title or has a partnership arrangement with local councils. The current rental market is tight, reflecting trends in Sydney – Wollongong is close to Sydney and the coastal lifestyle has attracted in-fill development and population growth in the last ten years.

Jenny is the first to admit that much of the success of the Trust is due to the skills and contacts of the Board of Directors. “Our board composition reflects local government support, in addition to representing a broad range of community and consumer interests. We were thrilled this year to expand the board to include directors with property development skills and expertise in mental health. The board has an excellent balance of local knowledge, skill based experience and commitment to the aims of community housing, making it well placed to take up the challenges relating to growth and increased targeting of higher needs clients.”

Training

Recent Events . . .

Certificate IV Participants Introductory Session, Feb. 2007



(L to R) back: Brodie Johnson, Inverell CTS; Julia Coleman, Metro CH; Liz Breden, Ryde Hunters Hill CH; Ruth Stanbury, Monaro CTS; Stewart Pitt, North Shore CH (L to R) front: Roseanne Farrant, Homes Out West; Warren Welsh, Burdekin Assoc; Lyndall Katz (Fed. trainer)

Certificate IV Participants



Susan Aujard, NSWFHA and Toni Comber, Homes North Community Housing - Cert IV, March 2007.

North Shore Community Housing Business Planning, Feb. 2007



(L to R): Stewart Pitt, Chris Hannan, Rachel Healey, Michael Bacon, Coral Garrat



Graciela Nogues, Women's Housing Co. and Silvana Guerra, Cumberland Housing - Cert IV, March 2007.

New Federation Trainee

The Federation recently filled the administrative assistant position through an Aboriginal Traineeship. Sarah Bradshaw joined the Federation in early March, and is a welcome addition to the team.

Hi my name is Sarah Kathleen Juanayra Lena Bradshaw, I have just started an Admin Traineeship with the NSW Federation of Housing Associations. I am currently working 4 days per week, and go to TAFE 1 day to study Certificate III in Business Administration.

Before this I was living in Coffs Harbour and working for Yarrawarra Aboriginal Corporation at Enterprise Training Company, for 6 months. I applied for this job/traineeship as I wanted to work full time and get into Community and Aboriginal Housing to help in any way I can, I also wanted to move to Sydney.



I am a descendent of the Gumbaynggirr and Dunghutti tribes on the Mid North Coast of NSW. My interests include playing netball, shopping and painting Aboriginal dot paintings which my uncle taught me.

If anyone wishes to contact me my email address is: sarah@communityhousing.org.au and my phone is: (02) 9281 7144 (ext 207).

Having been through the process, the Federation encourages any associations interested in creating opportunities through Aboriginal traineeships to contact us.

NSW Federation of Housing Associations Inc



HOUSING MANAGEMENT HOTLINE

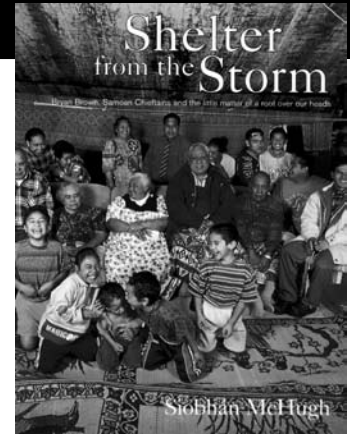
Non-Metropolitan
Telephone
1800 652 877

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

Legal & Ethical Framework

CHCCS301A

18 April 2007

OHS - Workplace Safety procedures

CHCOHS301A

19 April 2007

Housing Associations Meeting

27 April 2007

Developing Affordable Housing - a short course for housing associations

Mon. 30th April

Tue. 1st May

Thur. 10th May

Middle Management Training

11 May 2007

Cert IV in Social Housing

Work with other services CHCNET4A, and Provide support services CHCCS9A

23 May 2007

Manage housing applications CHCCH11B, Manage housing allocations CHCCH12B,

24 May 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