

# NEWS LETTER

ST GEORGE COMMUNITY HOUSING CO-OP LTD.



JUNE 2008

## Taronga Zoo



### SGCH takes our tenants to the ZOO...

"First we would like to thank St George Community Housing for giving us the opportunity to go to Taronga Zoo. This was the first time for our four children to finally have the opportunity to visit the zoo.

I suffer from thyroid cancer and it has been extremely difficult for us to get out on family occasions. I am always too busy visiting doctors and so my kids always seem to miss out. We really enjoyed the day and it will be a memorable occasion that will be something we will never forget. I am so glad I was feeling well enough to take my children on this day, they have not stopped talking about what a fantastic day they had." **Ms Sahidah Alamaddine, Berala**



"Despite the wet weather we had a fantastic day. Our favourite part was seeing the tigers and elephants. Thank you for such a fantastic opportunity." **Miss Rebecca Geikowski, Ashfield**

"The wet weather did not bother us we were glad we did not choose to stay home. The day was fantastic we were too busy enjoying the environment and watching the fantastic giraffes and chimps, they seemed to amuse us and the children the most." **Ms Teresa Staal Granville**

"It was an enjoyable day and the kids had loads of fun. We are so glad we went and didn't allow the rain to scare us away.

Thanks to all the staff for making the day possible." **Ms Chantal Cootee, Jannalli**



"The day out to Taronga Zoo was our very first family outing, something I will never forget, it was such a special occasion for me and my family. We were extremely fascinated with the bird show which was amazing to watch.

Thank you to all the staff at St George Community Housing for making this opportunity possible, it meant a lot to my family." **Elizabeth Corrigan, Roselands**



"We are a large family of 21 people and it was fantastic to be given the opportunity to visit the Zoo.

It was something we would not be able to do as a family because of the large expenses involved. We are very glad to have St George Community Housing as our landlord as they care for the tenants and make an effort to get to know us as individual people. We are looking forward to enjoying more family occasions together with the staff from St George Community Housing. Thank you" **Najeih Yasmin Wasim Canley Heights**

## Highlights



**Bursary Ceremony**  
31 March 2008

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**Gabrielle Easter Show**  
competition winner

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**Ingrid Grausdelis Rent**  
Incentive Winner

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## Sutherland Grant

On the 7 April 2008 SGCH was awarded a grant from Sutherland Council for a special project as part of the senior's week celebrations. The tenants from some of our large unit blocks will be participating in a 6 month project called "The Active Seniors Project". This project aims to encourage elderly tenants to participate in gentle exercise. SGCH is looking forward to making this project work for the tenants in the Sutherland Area.

## Thanks to TAG for Accreditation

Thank you to all the tenants who attended the accreditation meeting on Tuesday the 18 March 2008. Your assistance and time was much appreciated by the team at SGCH. We hope to see you at the next TAG meeting in August 2008.

**If you are interested in making a difference at SGCH and/or being part of the TAG, please contact Rowa Omari on 9585 1499.**

# Education Bursary Ceremony 2008



**On the 31st of March 2008 St George Community Housing (SGCH) held a ceremony to celebrate the education of the children of their tenants. I was fortunate enough to be invited.**

Nazha Saad, CEO, opened the ceremony welcoming all and explaining that in 2005 (the 20 years anniversary of SGCH) the Board came up with the idea of giving bursaries to promising children of their tenants to help try to make all education expenses a little more affordable. Since then they have given away 76 bursary cheques at a total value of \$54,000. Nazha also explained this scheme is the first of its kind in the public housing industry.

This year 50 applications were sent in and the Board made a decision that 24 were deserving applicants.

Next on the agenda was Les Saxby who is an Aboriginal entertainer who played 'welcome to our country' on the didgeridoo. He then entertained both children and adults alike with 'what's that sound' on his didgeridoo. We all had a great laugh together.

Minister Burney, who is the Minister for Fair Trading, Youth and Volunteering, was the guest of honour. She not only handed out the bursaries and certificates she also stayed for the whole ceremony and made the children feel very at ease which was very special.

Two of the 2007 recipients who happened to be brother and sister spoke of how the bursary had helped them not only with text books but also with daily expenses and how grateful they were to be chosen. I am particularly proud of the two speakers as they are my children. We also heard from a year seven girl, Denise Jin, on how excited she was to be chosen.

After a wonderfully special and entertaining morning we were treated to a great lunch where students, parents and staff chatted and enjoyed each others company. A splendid day was had by all!!

As a single parent I know how difficult it is to afford a good education for my children. The St George Community Housing Bursary Scheme selected my children as well as many others to receive a bursary; it has helped make the load a little lighter indeed.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all the parents and student recipients to thank the Board of St George Community Housing for giving our kids this opportunity, To Sally Mannering who is an instrumental part of the procedure and Rowa Omari for organizing such a great function. Thanks again to all.

**A grateful mother.**

## Easter Competition

Thank you to everyone who entered the Easter Show letter writing competition held in Feb 2008. All the letters and pictures were so beautiful it was very hard to choose a winner.

**Congratulations to Brooke from Hurstville, Gabrielle from Roselands & Adeline from Carlton. We hope you enjoyed your day at the Easter Show.**





## Rent Incentive

If your rent is paid to date at the end of every month you will automatically qualify to go into a draw to win a \$200 Gift Voucher. Congratulations to the following winners: Peter from Allawah, Lesley from Botany and Glenn from Miranda.

**Winner for the month of February 2008 Ingrid Grausdelis has been a tenant since 1998 She resides in a group home at Barden Ridge and is supported by the Sylvanvale Foundation.**



## Bonnyrigg

SGCH recently held a number of Morning Tea feedback and information sessions in the local Bonnyrigg neighbourhoods. The idea behind the event was to offer the opportunity for tenants to provide formal and informal feedback, raise concerns and discuss with tenants the possibility of a Bonnyrigg Advisory Group, over coffee and cake.

The Morning Tea events were held in five smaller precincts, with numerous tenants attending and expressing their interest in a Bonnyrigg Advisory Group. A Bonnyrigg Advisory Group will enable the tenants of Bonnyrigg to participate in decision making processes, offer feedback at a higher level and advise SGCH on community concerns and needs that can then feed into our community development practices.

## Stock Transfers

Welcome to all of our new stock transfer tenants who have recently signed over from Housing NSW. The stock transfer program involves the transfer of tenancy and property management from Housing NSW to SGCH and other community housing providers. The stock transfer program aims to grow the community housing sector and provide improved housing options for public housing tenants. SGCH has transferred over 30 tenancies from Housing NSW in the past two months alone and continues to welcome more tenants to our organisation each week!

## Keys To Your Property

Tenants please be advised that given the number of properties SGCH now manages we can no longer keep copies of keys at our office. To reduce the storage and administration of key management SGCH will only keep keys to the following; common areas, electric meter boxes, keys to all supported accommodation and vacant properties.

If you are unable to access your property due to misplaced keys you will need to organise your own locksmith. SGCH may be able to assist in contacting a locksmith but all costs involved will be passed on to you as the tenant.

## From the Chair

The recent special postal ballot by members to convert our organisation to a "Company limited by Guarantee" was overwhelmingly supported and approved by members. On behalf of the board, I thank members for their vote of confidence and support of the board's recommendation and of the vision for SGCH. We are waiting for the final formalities to enable us to drop the name "Co-operative" from the organisations name.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will read of the successful family day out at Taronga Park Zoo. A big thank you to Rowa El Omari, our Community Development Worker, with assistance from the TAG for organizing this outstanding event. More events are planned by Rowa and her team for the year ahead. Watch this space.

March 2008 was a historic month as St George Community Housing (SGCH) acquired our first freehold property. The property at Ashbury was purchased with the assistance of a grant from Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC).

The property is dedicated to the provision of housing services for clients of DADHC.

SGCH continues to strengthen our executive management and on behalf of the board, I welcome Trevor Wetmore as our new Chief Financial Officer. Trevor is a chartered accountant and was previously a partner of PricewaterhouseCoopers in Sydney. His wealth of professional and corporate financial management will guide the commercial affairs of the organisation as we further forge operating alliances with private sector companies and government agencies to grow our housing stock, both in community and affordable housing. The objective at all times is to reduce our long waiting list and to uphold the superior housing services that we are reputed for.

John Dorrian who has served on the board of directors for the past 5 years has stepped down from the Board because of his increasing work commitments in Asia and Europe. During the past 5 years, SGCH grew from around 700 properties to the current 2,500 properties under management. John was our treasurer and latterly, chaired the Audit and Compliance Committee during this period of rapid growth. We thank him for his guidance and counsel which will be sorely missed by the Board.

Your directors are currently seeking a replacement non-executive director with general management and financial skills to fill the casual vacancy created with John's resignation.

Best Regards,  
**Tony Ho, Chairman**



## White Goods Loans Scheme

Seven loans were approved in March 2008 with tenants purchasing goods including refrigerators, washing machines and dryers. The loans are expected to be repaid by September 2008 when the next round of applications will commence new applicants will be invited.

If you would like more information on the White Goods Loan Scheme, please contact Rowa Omari on 9585 1499



## Calls from Mobile Phones

Please let our reception staff know if you are calling our office on a mobile phone so that we can call you back. That way you can take your time to explain your situation to us without worrying about the phone bill.



## Australian Red Cross

THE POWER OF HUMANITY

Telecross is a service that provides elderly and housebound tenants with a reassuring phone call to ensure that they are safe and well. This is a free service offered by the Australian Red Cross and is provided 365 days of the year to people who have no regular services checking on them.

The phone calls are made by trained volunteers at an agreed time that suits the recipient of the call. If this call goes unanswered an agreed emergency procedure will be activated and help arranged if necessary. This service allows the elderly and housebound tenants to maintain their independence for as long as possible. It also has the added benefit of providing a degree of companionship and contributes to a decrease in the sense of isolation.

If you are interested in receiving this service, please contact Rowa Omari on 9585 1499 for more information.

## House Fires

Fires can very quickly cause serious injury or even death. Your home and your most beloved possessions can also be destroyed if you have a fire in your property. Children, the physically impaired, the elderly and others not prepared are most at risk of death or serious injury in house fires. The areas of the house where most fires occur are the kitchen, bedrooms and lounge areas.

The key to reducing the risk of fire occurring in your home and to surviving a house fire is being prepared. Everyone in your household should understand what risks there are in your home and what to do to minimise them.

- Never leave cooking unattended
- Always keep clothing at least one metre away from all heaters
- Have a fire blanket and extinguisher in the kitchen
- Ensure the exhaust fan above the stove is clean and free of grease and fat build-up
- Ensure your smoke alarm is working

## Calling all tenants caring for children 12 years and under.

We are looking for tenants who are currently caring for their own children or possibly looking after grandchildren occasionally who may want to consider participating in a free Caring for Kids Senior First Aid course run by St Johns Ambulance.

St George Community Housing is offering an opportunity for 23 tenants to participate in this free course. All you need to do is write a letter explaining why you would like to do this training course. Spots are limited so letters must be submitted before the 4 July 2008.

Any questions please contact Rowa Omari on 9585 1499.

## Tenant Survey

By now you should have received your tenant survey.

Please complete and return by 4 July 2008. To go into a draw for a \$100 Westfield's shopping voucher, please put your name on the survey.



## MUTUAL EXCHANGE SWAP PROPERTIES

Mutual Exchange list is available in the SGCH office, web page or by phoning the office for one to be mailed to your home.

For details on how to list your property on the mutual exchange list please call Rowa Omari on 9585 1499.