

NEWSLETTER

ST GEORGE COMMUNITY HOUSING LTD



SEPTEMBER 2009

WINNER OF 2008 NSW AWARDS IN COMMUNITY HOUSING FOR OVERALL EXCELLENCE

Meet Charles from the SGCH Property Transfer Program

Location: Marrickville

How long have you been a tenant at St George Community Housing?

Approximately seven months.

How long were you a tenant of Housing NSW?

I have been in the same property with housing HNSW for 19½ years.

What kind repairs/maintenance have SGCH done on your property since you've transferred your tenancy?

I have had my kitchen and bathroom replaced and the unit has been re-painted. All the work was completed to a satisfactory standard and I am very happy with the workmanship and the professionalism of the contractors.



Charles, tenant of SGCH

Why did you want to transfer from HNSW to SGCH?

My neighbour encouraged me to transfer my tenancy to SGCH, as the water rates are lower and they offer a more personalised service. At first I wasn't sure about transferring but now I am glad I listened to her.

Is there anything SGCH can improve on?

No, I am very happy to have transferred over to SGCH and it's been great so far. But I will let you know as soon as something comes up!

Would you recommend the transfer to others?

Yes, I already do.

What is the Property Transfer Program?

The Property Transfer Program, previously known as the Stock Transfer Program, is a major NSW Government initiative to have Community Housing associations, such as SGCH, to manage public housing properties on its behalf.

Being community based, SGCH is able to work closely with local communities and service providers. SGCH can usually arrange a quicker response time for tenants' maintenance requests and can provide a more personalised service.

Over the past six years, SGCH has successfully transferred and managed more than 300 Properties. Under the new Property Transfer Program, Housing NSW has nominated over 600 properties in the Sydney metropolitan area which will be transferred to SGCH by April 2010.

Highlights



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Mutual Exchange

The Mutual Exchange list is available at the SGCH office, on the web page or by telephoning our office and asking for one to be mailed to your home. This list provides information regarding properties that are available for mutual exchange.

For details on how to list your property on the Mutual Exchange list, please call our office on 9585 1499.

White Goods Loans Scheme

SGCH knows that it is difficult to find the cash to replace white goods when they break down or need replacing. To help purchase these essential items, an interest free loan of up to \$500 is available to eligible tenants. White goods include fridges, freezers, washing machines, dryers and microwave ovens.

The closing date for 2009 applications is 12 October 2009.



EcoWise Project



a local traditional artist, Darren Ritchie, created an Indigenous inspired artwork to bring even more beauty into their newly established community garden.

On 29 July 2009, the garden was officially opened by the residents and a special guest. Thank you to all the tenants who worked on the project, it was so nice to see so many keen and enthusiastic participants.

On Saturday 13 June 2009, the team from Bunnings Villawood cleaned the rear garden area at 64–70 Walpole Street and constructed two veggie beds. They installed a picnic table with two in-built chess boards and chairs. Bunnings also donated a 600 litre rainwater tank so the residents can water their new gardens.

The tenants then participated in a planting workshop with Elizabeth from the Botanic Gardens Trust's Community Greening team. Elizabeth helped the residents to plant vegetables, herbs and flowering plants.

The children from Walpole Street worked with



Student Education Bursary 2010

Applications for the 2010 Education Bursary are open and we would like to invite all those interested in applying to an information session to be provided by SGCH staff. All SGCH tenants who are studying or have children attending school, university or TAFE/college are welcome to apply.

The information session will be held:

On: Thursday 8 October 2009

At: Level 5, 8 Crofts Ave,
Hurstville (SGCH Building)

Time: 11:00am to 1:00pm

If you have any questions, please contact Rowa Omari 9585 1499.

Tenant's Forum

As a result of tenant survey's findings, SGCH has arranged a Tenant's Forum with support from Kogarah Council, NSW Fire Brigade, Department of Ageing, Disability & Homecare and Southern Sydney Tenants Advice & Advocacy Service. This will be an opportunity for you to introduce yourself to other tenants and also receive important information regarding matters that concern social housing tenants. The forum will be held:

Date: Wednesday 30th Sept 2009

Time: 11am – 2pm

Cost: Free – Lunch provided

Venue: St George Community Centre, Premier St, Kogarah.
(Entrance via St George Bank),

If you have any questions, please call 9585 1499.

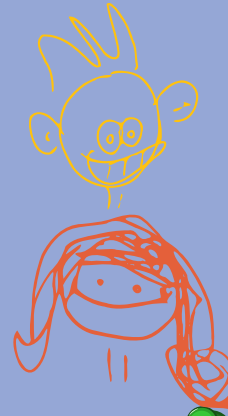
(200 Meters from Kogarah Train St)

Colour In and WIN!

Enter our colouring in competition for children aged up to 12 years and you could win a Toys R Us voucher valued at \$50.

Simply colour in the picture, fill in your details and send it back to SGCH by Monday 19 October 2009 — there are five prizes to be won!

If you require more colouring templates, please contact the office on 9585 1499 and ask for more to be mailed to you.



Ramadan Mubarak

Ramadan is a special and holy month for Muslims. Prayers, fasting, self-accountability and charity have a special association with Ramadan and SGCH staff would like to wish all Muslim tenants a happy Ramadan and best wishes for the Eid celebrations.

Rent Review 2009

A friendly reminder to provide your household income details to SGCH on or before Wednesday 30 September 2009. This year, SGCH has provided each household with a Rent Review booklet to make the process easier so please ensure that all sections are completed. A Reply Paid envelope has also been provided so that you can return these documents at no cost to you. All new rents will take effect on 1 November 2009. Any tenants who do not submit their income details will then be charged market rent. **Please contact your Housing Manager if you have any questions.**

From the CEO



SGCH has had a busy few months since the last newsletter. These are indeed exciting times for community housing with the announcement of more funding and properties

under the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan (NBESP) and the long awaited chance for community housing providers such as SGCH to hold title to properties managed for Housing NSW. Owning title to properties means that housing providers can use assets to generate funds to build or purchase more properties. As you can imagine, with SGCH having a waiting list of almost 1500 families, this is a fantastic opportunity for us.

The NBESP means that Housing NSW sites will be redeveloped and new properties passed to community housing for management. Because so many sites are being redeveloped very quickly, SGCH is assisting Housing by relocating some tenants into our properties. At one property in Parramatta 11 former HNSW have moved into new properties alongside 5 applicants from SGCH. This block have already held a morning tea and commenced a gardening competition. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the residents to Webb Street, Parramatta and thank them for their great contribution to the SGCH community.

I would also like to formally welcome our new tenants to Bankstown. Towards the end of May and early June 50 families moved into a new complex that has been purchased by SGCH to offer affordable housing to people who are employed and earning low to moderate incomes. Properties in the Euro complex are offered at a 25 percent discount to market rent and are close to local schools, shops and shopping.

As you will appreciate these are examples of significant changes to our organisation and the Community Housing sector with considerable growth expected over the coming six months.

Another change for SGCH has been with our Board of Directors. At a recent General Meeting of SGCH several new members were appointed to the Board as casual vacancies until the AGM in November. We welcome Joan Ferguson, Wayne Carter, Dennis Cafe, Ike Ellis, Salah Kahil, Trevor Wetmore, Graham Millett and John Slender. Each



Pictured below are the members of the board, together with Nazha Saad, CEO and Company Secretary: Ms Joan Ferguson, Mr Trevor Wetmore, Mr Wayne Carter, Mr Salah Kahil, Mr John Slender, Ms Karen Walsh, Mr Dennis Cafe, Mr Ike Ellis, Professor Graham Millett (absent for photo)

of these individuals brings specific skills and expertise in the areas SGCH requires to make the most of the opportunities available in the growing sector. Director profiles can be viewed at www.sgch.com.au. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Directors, particularly Leslie Fuller who was our tenant director for the past two years. Leslie was also the SGCH representative to the Community Housing Tenant Network for several years. I am now pleased to welcome Martha Szabo as SGCH's new representative, elected by the Tenant Advisory Group in June 2009.

As many of you will be aware, our Community Development Officer, Rowa Omari will soon take leave for a big change of her own. Rowa and her husband are expecting their third baby in December. Congratulations Rowa! We have employed a new Community Development Officer, James Kim, who comes to SGCH with noteworthy experience in working in the community, mental health and disability support areas. If you have not already met him, you will have the opportunity to meet James at the upcoming tenant forum scheduled for 30 September 2009.

As you can see, our organization continues to grow and change. This has been a real pattern for the past two years. With this in mind, the SGCH team has decided to make the theme of

this year's annual report "Transformation". I would like to invite anyone who has stories of transformation that they would like to contribute to our report to contact me or Sally Mannering on 9585-1499.

Finally, and also on the theme of transformation, I would like to thank Holroyd Council, Housing NSW and the residents of our complex at Walpole Street, Merrylands for their engagement and hard work to build a community garden. The project involved a series of workshops to assist tenants to understand the environment and work towards creating a sustainable garden. It is amazing to see a patch of dirt turned into a garden and seating area, complete with a rainwater tank, compost bin and worm farm that is both beautiful as well as sustainable. Under the watchful eye of the Botanic Gardens Trust, Bunnings Villawood and Ularai Indigenous Arts Group, children from the neighbourhood spent time painting and planting in the school holidays. Apart from the garden which was officially opened in June, new friendships between neighbours have blossomed which is another great outcome of this project. The project came runner up in the recent Keep Australia Beautiful Awards – congratulations to all involved.

Warmest wishes
Nazha Saad, Chief Executive Officer



Looking to return to work?

SGCH is looking to offer tenants wishing to return to work the opportunity to join our staff team at Hurstville.

Two tenants have already recently joined our team.

If you are interested, please email your resume to sally.mannering@sgch.com.au or give Sally a call.

St George Community Housing Limited Rent Incentive

How to win — If your rent is in advance at the end of each month, you will automatically qualify to go into the draw to win one of two \$100 food vouchers. Congratulations to the following winners for May, June, July and August 2009: **Astero and Lambros of Canterbury, Rania of Canterbury, Carmel of Hurstville, Pierre of Maroubra, Vereia of Yagoona, Jakub of Narwee, Sheryl of Blakehurst, Javorka of Sutherland**

healthdirect Australia

healthdirect Australia is a free 24-hour telephone health triage, information, advice service and health advice line staffed by Registered Nurses to provide expert health advice and is available to residents of NSW. healthdirect Australia is not a replacement for your doctor or the 000 Emergency Service so in the event of a health emergency, you should always call an Ambulance on 000.

Anyone in the NSW who needs health advice or information can call healthdirect Australia at any time of the day or night to speak to a Registered Nurse who will provide safe and consistent assessment and advice.

No matter where you are in NSW, the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, Western Australia or the Northern Territory, you can access healthdirect Australia through a single number 1800 022 222. Callers with a speech or hearing impairment are able to use healthdirect Australia through the National Relay Service on 1800 555 677 and Interpreter services are also available.

Please note that calls from landlines are free but mobile phone charges may apply.



Tenant Network

The Community Housing Tenant Network is a group of tenants who are working together to represent the interests of all Community Housing tenants in NSW. They share ideas on good practice, support and promote learning, education, volunteering and employment opportunities for tenants.

In June 2009, elections for SGCH's representative at the Tenant Network meetings were held and Martha Ghaly Szabo was appointed to the position. Martha will take over from Leslie Fuller and we would like to thank Leslie for her work and involvement with the Tenant Network.

All tenants are welcome to become members of the Tenant Network — for more information or if you have any questions, please contact Rowa Omari on 9585 1499.

Advanced Personnel Management (APM)

SGCH is happy to announce that they have formed a partnership with Advanced Personnel Management (APM). APM provides Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) assisting people with injuries, disabilities or health related concerns to optimize their social and economic participation in the community. APM works with job seekers to overcome barriers and assist

them in returning to work. Services include vocational counseling, job seeking skills training, retraining and work training as well as conducting workplace assessments to ensure jobseekers are placed into safe and sustainable employment. APM have offices throughout Sydney, contact the Hurstville office on 9585 0074 to make an appointment or to find an office close to you.

Support Partnership Consultation day

SGCH is hosting a Support Partnership Consultation day open to all the support organisations currently in partnership with us and to those who are interested in participating with us in the future. The day is being facilitated by a representative from the Federation of Housing NSW with the aim of strengthening the partnerships, networking and updating guests on changes within the housing sector.

The consultation day is part of SGCH's commitment to continuously improve and deliver the highest standard of service to our tenants and business partners.

Date: 25 September

Time: 11:00am to 1:00pm

Location: Hurstville Entertainment Centre
Hurstville City Council, 14-16 MacMahon Street, Hurstville NSW 2220

NAIDOC Week 2009



On 7 July 2009, staff from SGCH, Housing NSW and the University of NSW co-ordinated a tenant BBQ to celebrate NAIDOC Week for all residents of the Namatjira Estate.

It was also an ideal opportunity for Housing NSW to unveil the plaque dedicated to Albert Namatjira. The plaque was presented [in September 2008] to the Namatjira Social Housing community by the Hon. Linda Burney MP (NSW Minister for Community Services) and the Hon. Michael Daley MP (NSW Minister for Roads and the State Member for Maroubra) at the launch of the Namatjira BBQ and recreation area.