

STREETS ahead

SUMMER 2020



A message from our Tenant Coordination Panel

We don't think any of us ever thought we would see a pandemic in our lifetime. This year has been very surreal, almost like watching a movie! Keeping in touch with other tenants has been hard and not being able to see people face to face has been difficult. We've missed the regular connections, but we've been grateful for the phone calls and video calls with SGCH. All the information they have provided has helped many people to feel safe and calm during an uncertain and scary time.

It has been great that we can keep people connected through the online Zoom studio (called CPP studio). It has meant that we could take many of our tenant group catchups and activities like yoga and Zumba online, it's been wonderful.

We have also been proud of the work of the Greenway Tenant Group and our Wellbeing Centre who have supported Greenway residents during the pandemic. The Wellbeing Centre has continued to provide clinical services and an outreach space for community mental health and other service providers. The Greenway Tenant Group has continued to host OzHarvest two days a week, providing food to people who need it most. They also increased the community transport service—taking about 150 additional trips to medical appointments so people who are particularly vulnerable to COVID didn't need to use public transport.

We feel very lucky to live in a community that supports each other at times like this. While things have been tough, we have enjoyed seeing video messages from tenants giving hope to others and we know that the bonds of community will hold. We will one day stand together face to face again. End of year celebrations will look a bit different this year, but we wanted to wish everyone in the SGCH community a happy festive season and good health in 2021.

The Tenant Coordination Panel

With many of our events and activities on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been quite some time since we have published Streets Ahead. We know it has been an incredibly tough and challenging year for everyone and wanted to share some positive news stories with you. Even though we haven't always been able to see you in person, we have found new ways to meet online and provide opportunities for customers to take part in virtual programs and activities. We have also continued to work on a number of projects to provide great places to live.

We wanted to let you know, this will be our last printed edition of Streets Ahead. We are reviewing the way in which we provide you with news and updates and are planning to move to a digital newsletter next year. Keep an eye out for more information on this soon.

The team at SGCH wishes you a happy holiday season and hopes 2021 will be a better year for everyone! Please stay safe and well.

Main image: Wishing all of our customers a happy festive season and a safe and healthy New Year!



Some of our keen gardeners keep the Bonnyrigg Sensory garden looking beautiful.

Bonnyrigg Sensory Garden—a feast for the senses

Our Bonnyrigg Sensory Garden has sprung to life! The newly completed garden, is accessible for everyone with features for people with a physical or intellectual disability. The trees, shrubs and plants appeal to the senses of sight, smell, taste, and touch, while the stone and bench seating and wooden arbour add different textures and provide a quiet, shady place to sit. We also installed a water tank to help when we have water restrictions, a garden shed and a drinking water fountain.

GW Landscapes is working with us to keep our garden looking beautiful. We have also teamed up with Community Greening who are working with our keen community gardeners and are holding some gardening workshops.

For Bonnyrigg local, Katherine and her three children (aged 2, 4 and 6), the garden provides an escape from life's stresses. Two of Katherine's children have autism which impacts the nervous system. Having a sensory garden close by provides a calm space where the children can explore their senses without becoming overwhelmed.

"The garden has already become a big part of our life and we really enjoy visiting it twice a week. It's good to teach the next generation about how to care for the environment and living things and we are very grateful for the opportunity to use the space," Katherine said.

Katherine and the children are also enjoying growing fresh produce in the new garden boxes.

"It can be difficult to get the kids to try new foods and they don't like eating vegies, but will often eat food if they can see where it has come from, so having fresh produce has been good. They also like digging in the dirt, watching the bees and birds and smelling the lavender".

"It's a new experience for them and the garden keeps changing".

The Bonnyrigg Sensory Garden was proudly funded by the NSW Government in association with SGCH with contributions from the Land and Housing Corporation and SR Construction.



During COVID, customers have connected through our CPP Studio.

CPP Studio provides new ways to get involved

Even though our customers have been separated this year, many people have taken to getting involved online!

With our programs and activities on hold, our Communities, Place and Partnerships team (CPP) found a new way to provide the activities we know our customers enjoy.

Each week, we offer a range of activities and classes suited to all ages and interests through Zoom. Participants have learned skills to be active and healthy, through exercise, cooking and gardening and have connected with their community through our language groups, Bingo and trivia. They've also had the opportunity to meet members of the SGCH team and ask questions. Our younger customers have even enjoyed learning some new dance moves in the Lil Lil Rigg Dance Class!

We asked some of our Zoom regulars what they enjoy most about CPP studio:

"The joy of defeating the feeling of isolation. Just being able to see familiar faces every week is enough to defeat loneliness"—**Aeisa**.

"CPP Studio has been good for our family especially for my daughter who is 5. She enjoys participating in the garden workshop with Darren. My other daughter who is 19, likes to participate in the games online, it's a moment to sit down and laugh and enjoy the moment. I like the communication between the people in the studio. Seeing the same people in each of the classes and talking to each other, you start to learn about your neighbours and other people in SGCH"—**Shirley**

"Enjoying the gardening and cooking, have been a benefit to me and connecting with other people"—**Mark**

Once we are able to run more programs face to face, we plan to keep CPP studio as just one way we can deliver our programs to you. If you would like to participate in the Studio, you will need access to the internet and an email. All programs are free. For more info on how to get involved go to: www.sgch.com.au/cpp-studio or call our CPP team on 9585 1499 or email getinvolved@sgch.com.au.

CPP Studio will take a short break over the Christmas/New Year period. Our last session will be on Wednesday 23 December 2020 and our programs will start again on Thursday 7 January 2021. We will have an additional program of school holiday activities.

Introducing Tabatha

The City of Sydney Council is funding an Aboriginal Affordable Housing Engagement Coordinator, Tabatha D'antoine who recently joined the SGCH team. Tabatha will collaborate with our project partners Bridge Housing and City West Housing to showcase affordable housing options to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and build organisational cultural confidence.

Tabatha is a proud Kamilaroi woman from the north western region of NSW who has grown up in the Redfern community. We interviewed Tabatha to learn a little more about her:

What led to you applying for the role?

I was working with the Department of Communities and Justice—Housing Services when I saw the role advertised and it looked like a great opportunity for me to use my skills and to help my community.

What are you most looking forward to in your role?

I'm looking forward to making connections in the community for SGCH and I'm really excited about seeing the results and outcomes that we will achieve for Aboriginal people and learning more about community housing and how it operates.

What difference do you think the Gibbons Street property will make to the community?

I think it will give people hope and motivation to achieve and support the community to live and work in the historical heart of the community which will build pride.

What is one thing you love about the Redfern community?

Redfern is a strong and proud community with true leaders and so much potential.

What is one thing you would like to share about yourself?

I am a single mum who loves her kids more than anything. My 'boys' are 17 and 25 and are both working, which they are proud of.



New properties take shape

Right now in Sydney, there is limited support for young people leaving Out-of-Home Care when they turn 18, often placing them at risk of homelessness. Without this support, young people can find themselves with the overwhelming challenge of finding a job, starting their tertiary education and paying rent when they are particularly vulnerable.

Throughout, this year, we have been excited to see a new property in City Road Chippendale, take shape called Foyer Central. The new five-storey building will open to students (aged 18-22 years) in March 2021 and provide 53 self-contained and furnished studios, as well as affordable housing apartments.

More than providing accommodation, the Foyer model will support young care leavers move into independent housing options.



Artist's impression of Foyer Central.

Our partners in this project are City of Sydney, NSW Department Communities and Justice, NSW Office of Social Impact Investment, Uniting and Social Ventures Australia.

Uniting will employ specialist case managers to mentor each student in building new skills and support them with their work and study and transition to independence, while SGCH will provide a 24 hour on-site tenancy manager.

Close by, an 18 storey building in Gibbons Street, Redfern is also progressing. Gibbons Street will include 160 new social and affordable 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units (with a number of adaptable units), an open customer terrace area, a retail and commercial space, a local SGCH office and a community hub. We are also installing some large scale Aboriginal art.

Marrickville gets a face lift



Marrickville customers enjoying their new garden with our CPP Team.

Residents at Illawarra Road and Glenn Street, Marrickville have seen their block transform over the last three years as we have worked with them to improve the facilities, safety and security, and overall appearance of the site.

In 2018, residents helped us develop a play space with play equipment, pergola, barbecue and basketball hoops. We also refurbished the community room where we were holding weekly and monthly activities up until COVID hit. Other works included roof repairs, painting and paver cleaning, installing LED lighting and a community garden.

In response to the impact of COVID-19, the Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) provided funding and worked with us to accelerate a planned maintenance program to benefit our customers.

A big part of the program involved trimming and removing some of the trees which were

too big, dead or injured, and were causing significant property damage. As the trees were important to our customers, we replaced them with ones that are more appropriate to the area and that provide food and shelter to native birds.

In response to customer feedback, we installed security cameras in the common areas as an extra security measure and improved the design of the bin bay which now includes a rotating system. Additional work included weeding; replacing the fence, balconies, screen and garage doors; removing gutters and drainpipes; installing new floors and more painting.

In consultation with our customers, our CPP and handyman teams have built the 'Marrickville Community Garden' with raised beds, potting benches, seating and a lock up area. We have reserved some of it for communal gardening and there is one special bed for all the children who want to get involved.

"I have been living here for 33 years when the units were first built and these improvements are great for everyone who lives here.

"The security cameras mean that we can use our garden and garages and feel safe," said Marrickville resident, Vai.

We have appreciated everyone's input and hope that our Marrickville residents enjoy the results for many years to come.



Christmas and New Year opening hours

SGCH offices are usually open 9 to 5, Monday to Friday except for public holidays. Over the Christmas and New Year period our office opening hours change. Our Bonnyrigg, Hurstville and St Leonards offices will:

- close at 3pm on Thursday 24 December 2020
- open from 28-31 December 2020, but will close at 3pm on Thursday 31 December 2020
- re-open on Monday 4 January 2021.

The Greenway Wellbeing Centre which is normally open two days a week, will open on Tuesdays only for two weeks in December (on Tuesday 22 December and Tuesday 29 December) from 9.30am-11.30am.

As part of our response to COVID-19, our Fairfield, Riverwood and Sutherland offices will remain closed until further notice.

If you need to report an urgent repair while we are closed and live in our West or Metro Regions, please call **9585 1499** and press option 1 for our after-hours service. If you live in our Northern Region please continue to call the Housing Contact Centre on **1800 422 322**.

We are here to support you

We continue to monitor the situation with COVID-19. The health and safety of our customers, the wider community and staff is our highest priority and we continue to follow NSW Government Health advice.

We know this is an uncertain time and many are feeling anxious. We wanted to remind you that we are here to support you and we are working to keep you safe during this time. We know with Christmas and summer holidays coming up, there can be a lot of expenses and the last thing you need is the worry of falling into rental arrears.

We invite any SGCH customer who struggling to keep up with their rent payments to call our Support Coordination team who will put you in touch with services to help.

If you are in financial distress and unable to meet your commitments due to COVID-19, please call us on **1300 137 265**. We have a Financial Hardship Policy and will work with individual households to tailor an affordable repayment agreement based on your needs.

COVID updates

For updates on COVID-19 health and social distancing measures go to www.health.gov.au or call **1800 020 080**. For SGCH updates, visit www.facebook.com/SGCHGroup or www.sgch.com.au

GIVE US FEEDBACK!

At SGCH, our aim is to ensure that you receive excellent customer service and genuine care from us. We have a Customer Feedback Representative, Amanda Anders, who can be contacted on **9585 1499** if you have any feedback or concerns about our service delivery.

If you would like to suggest an improvement or feel we have not met the service standards outlined in our Customer Service Charter, please let us know. You can also email coordinator@sgch.com.au

