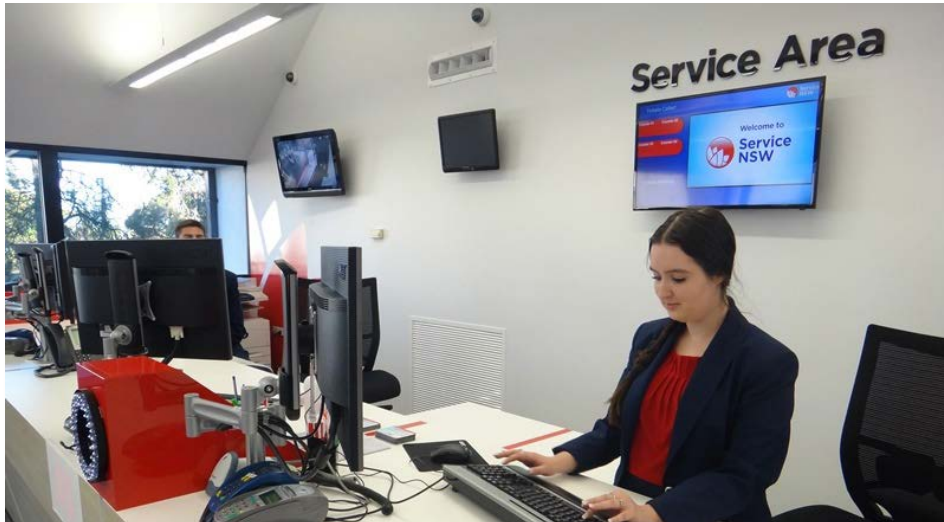


YOUR home



Service NSW Centres are now open

To provide easy access to a range of government services in one location, the NSW Government has opened a network of 'one-stop-shops' across the State.

Currently there are ten Centres in operation – Dubbo, Gosford, Kiama, Haymarket, Newcastle, Orange, Parramatta, Tamworth, Tweed Heads and Wynyard with a further eight to open by year end.

At the Service NSW Centres you can renew or apply for car, boat and fishing licences, as well as birth, death or marriage certificates. You can also make payments and register your car.

Public housing clients will also be able to pay their rent and other accounts including Rentstart Bond Loans. To do this just present your Housing NSW payment card and nominate the amount you want to pay.

Service NSW staff can also answer general housing enquiries however more complex issues will be referred to your nearest Housing NSW office,

Housing Pathways provider, or to the Contact Centre.

Housing NSW's existing payment options, including BPAY, online payment, rent deduction scheme (RDS) from Centrelink, as well as over-the-counter payments at Australia Post are still available should you wish to use these services. For further information and a full list of Centres, please visit their website www.service.nsw.gov.au.

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Your Home is a quarterly magazine published by the Department of Family and Community Services and distributed to Housing NSW tenants.

We welcome your feedback and encourage you to share your handy tips and recipes.



Your Home
Housing NSW Locked Bag 4028
Ashfield 1800

Changes ahead for the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal

The Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT) helps tenants and landlords, consumers and traders to resolve tenancy and other disputes. Last year the CTTT received more than 65,200 applications.

From 1 January 2014 the CTTT will merge, along with twenty-two other tribunals, into a new tribunal called the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT). The CTTT will become part of the NCAT Consumer and Commercial (C&C) Division which means that from 1 January 2014, social housing and other disputes will go to the C&C Division.

Applications can still be lodged via the internet, over the counter or by post, and C&C registries will be available in the same Sydney CBD, metropolitan and regional locations. For more information please visit www.tribunals.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/tribunals/index.html



Minister's message



Family and Community Services has recently taken a major step towards improving our service delivery networks across

NSW by introducing 15 new districts. By bringing together the local Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Community Services and Housing NSW offices and working alongside our partner, NSW Health, we are able to ensure better services for you through more localised planning and decision-making.

These changes do not involve any interruption to services. You should continue contacting the same people in each organisation that you currently do. I'm confident you'll find that localising our services will better support you.

Information about the 15 districts, including maps and contact details can be found at www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about_us/contact_us.

Housing NSW has recently published updated information on the expected waiting times for social housing. If you are thinking of applying for a transfer (which you should do if you have vacant bedrooms) you can use this information to see the waiting time for a property in your chosen area. If the wait is too long, you may decide to apply in another area with a shorter waiting time.

Being able to access this information means you can make a more informed decision about where you apply to move to. To view the waiting lists go to www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au and search for 'expected waiting times'.

Finally, with the festive season nearly here, I would like to wish you all a happy holiday and a very safe and happy new year.

Pru Goward MP

Minister for Family and Community Services, Minister for Women

Paying rent over Christmas



The holidays are a great time to relax with family and friends to enjoy the fun of the season, but it can also mean extra expenses. During this time a small number of Housing NSW tenants stop paying their rent or cancel their direct deductions. We strongly advise against doing this as it results in rental arrears which can be difficult to repay. Housing NSW will be monitoring rental payments over the holidays and will take action quickly if you stop paying your rent.

Now is the time to take action to ensure a worry-free Christmas and New Year. You can check your rent is up-to-date, and you can also make extra payments in advance to your rent account online at www.housing.nsw.gov.au, through BPay or at any Australia Post outlet. If you need more information about these payment options, please visit our website www.housing.nsw.gov.au or talk to your Client Service Officer.

Requirement to register your swimming pool

All swimming pools in NSW were required to be registered by 29 October 2013. If you have a pool which has been approved by Housing NSW, you need to register it otherwise you may be fined \$220 or up to \$2200 if the matter is referred to court. You can register for free at www.swimmingpoolregister.nsw.gov.au or your local council can also do this for you for \$10. Once registered, you need to provide the pool registration certificate to your local Housing NSW office.

A swimming pool is any structure that can be filled with water to a

minimum depth of 30cm that is used for swimming, wading and other water activities. It includes in-ground, above ground, portable, inflatable and spa pools. The only pool type that Housing NSW may approve is an above ground permanent swimming pool.

If you have a pool which Housing NSW hasn't approved, you are in breach of your residential tenancy agreement and it must be removed. For more information please see the 'Swimming Pools in Public Housing' fact sheet available on the Housing NSW website www.housing.nsw.gov.au, or contact your local Housing NSW office.

Helping your child develop



By **Sherly Halim**, Public Health Registrar, South Western Sydney Local Health District and **Tracey Popham**, Families NSW Coordinator, South Western Sydney Local Health District

Being a parent can be one of the most rewarding but challenging roles people experience. Providing your child with the best developmental and health support early can set them up for the best start in life.

Babies begin learning as soon as they are born. It is amazing to think that between birth and three years, children grow and develop faster than at any other time in their lives.

To help promote their development you could try:

- talking to your baby or child, smile and respond when they make sounds to you
- singing songs, reading nursery rhymes or making up stories together
- telling your child what you are planning to do, like “I am going to pick you up now” or “We’re going shopping”

- reading to your baby or child, even when they’re small and it seems like they may not understand
- playing together with toys and everyday objects, like making a shaker with rice in a plastic bottle (with the lid glued on)
- taking your baby or child out – make trips to the supermarket an adventure, go to the park and lie on the grass
- making time every day to spend individually with your child and just have fun.

We know the more we talk and respond to children, the quicker they will learn. Positive experiences like being hugged regularly or playing together will help them feel safe and comfortable.

If you have any concerns about your child’s development speak to your Child and Family Health Nurse or GP. They can put you in contact with playgroups and other learning environments to help your child’s development. For more information please visit www.families.nsw.gov.au/resources/love-sing.htm

Survey results show customers supportive of technology



Housing NSW recently conducted surveys with customers and community housing providers regarding the ways they use technology. The survey results show support for increasing and improving the ways that we conduct business with our customers.

Some of these include sending SMS text messages to contact customers, using Facebook and Twitter, posting information videos on YouTube and creating Housing NSW apps for mobile phones. These methods will offer tenants more options for communicating with Housing NSW.

We had a fantastic outcome with over 8600 responses split between tenants and applicants on the social housing waiting list. Results showed that nearly 85 percent of clients have the internet at home and that 75 percent use it daily. A total of 86 percent are happy to receive information via SMS and 81 percent are willing to receive emails.

Participants in the survey went into the draw for an iPad mini, and we are delighted to announce the winner was Linda Hayes of Maroubra. Linda said, “I’ve wanted to upgrade my computer for such a long time – this is just fantastic!”

Linda is a regular internet user. “I use it for accessing emails and Facebook and I know I can lodge my housing maintenance requests on eRepair – but I didn’t realise I could pay my rent online too.”

Congratulations Linda and thank you to everyone who participated in the survey.

Housing Appeals Committee

The Housing Appeals Committee (HAC) hears external appeals from Housing NSW tenants. The panel is made up of Minister and Cabinet appointed members who are independent of Housing NSW.

If you have received an unfavourable decision from Housing NSW and have been through the internal appeal process, you can apply to the HAC for a review. The HAC will reassess your case and may offer a new hearing to see if the decision made by Housing NSW needs to be changed.

The HAC appeals process is fair, quick, informal, easy and free of charge. Some examples of issues you might take to the HAC following an unfavourable decision include requests to transfer, requests to add a household member (additional occupant), requests to be absent from your dwelling (for more than six weeks), disputes about the amount of rent you are paying and backdating adjustments on your rental account if you are receiving a rental subsidy.

It's very simple to lodge an appeal; simply ask for a HAC appeal form from your local Housing NSW office, complete your details and sign the form. You can mail it directly to the HAC or ask your Client Service Officer to send it for you. For a more detailed list of issues you can appeal about and for information on the appeals process, please go to www.hac.nsw.gov.au or call the Housing Appeals Committee directly on freecall 1800 629 794.

Recipes

Thank you to everyone who sent in their favourite recipes! The winner of this edition, with a perfect recipe for Christmas, is Dawn Cheetham from Merimbula. Congratulations Dawn! You have won a \$25 voucher.



Marshmallow logs

In a large bowl, mix together 250g crushed plain biscuits, 1 cup chopped mixed nuts, 200g chopped marshmallows and 200g chopped dried apricots. Add 1 can of condensed milk and mix together with your hands. Shape the mixture into a log and roll in coconut to coat. Wrap the log in foil and refrigerate then cut into slices to serve.

Winners of the 'Spot the difference' competition

We had such a big response to the 'Spot the difference' in the last edition

that we're giving away two prizes. Congratulations to Stella Rees of Bellingen and Patrick Moutou of Rydalmere, you have both won a \$25 voucher.

Handy hints

Do you have a handy hint you would like to share? For a chance to win a win a \$25 voucher send your hints to: Your Home, Ministerial and Communication Services, Locked Bag 4028, Ashfield BC 1800. Make sure you include your name, address and telephone number so we can contact you.

Your Contacts

1300 HOUSING (1300 468 746)
24 hours/7 days

Maintenance, general enquiries,
Home Purchase Advisory Service

Other services (Monday-Friday
8.30am-4.30pm)

Rentstart, reports of fraud or
corruption.

Aboriginal people can ask to speak
to an Aboriginal staff member.

Feedback

Fax feedback **9612 6099**
email feedback@facs.nsw.gov.au

eRepair For non-urgent
maintenance request online 24 hours
a day, seven days a week www.housing.nsw.gov.au

Housing Appeals Committee
(Monday-Friday 8.30am-4.30pm)

1800 629 794
www.hac.nsw.gov.au

Translation and Interpreting Service (TIS)

Call **13 14 50** if you need help
understanding English and TIS
will phone Housing NSW for you
at no cost.

Website www.housing.nsw.gov.au

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