

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

We welcome your feedback and encourage you to share your handy tips, recipes and take part in competitions.

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Visit www.housing.nsw.gov.au.

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Tenant Connect – peace of mind

For older tenants living alone, Housing NSW and the Australian Red Cross provide a reassuring service which has the potential to save lives.

Through Tenant Connect, Red Cross volunteers make a daily phone call to older tenants who may not have regular contact with friends or family, to check on their safety and wellbeing. Currently over 950 older tenants receive this free service.

Since its launch in 2008, there have been some 28 instances where the service found that a client required emergency assistance. How does it work?

Participating tenants receive a daily phone call from a Red Cross volunteer at an agreed time. It's a lovely way of keeping in touch and ensuring the well being of older tenants.

One tenant, Dulcie, has faced many challenges in her life including successfully overcoming cancer. She has been registered with the Tenant Connect program since it started and enjoys the social contact she receives through the daily phone call.

“I have a bad heart and if something were to happen, I know they would get in touch with my daughter,” Dulcie said.

“It makes me feel really good as they are such happy people who call. There is one volunteer who rings me and her daughter was going on holiday to see snow for the first time. I’m waiting to hear from her again to ask how her daughter liked the snow.”

If you are 70 years and over, or an Aboriginal tenant aged 45 years and over, and live alone in public, community or Aboriginal housing you can register with the Red Cross on 1800 827 677 to receive this free service.

Housing NSW recognised at sustainability awards

Our environmental initiatives were recognised at two major award ceremonies, with Housing NSW taking out the 2011 Green Globe Award for Sustainability in the Public Sector as well as a bronze medal at the 2011 Government’s Sustainability Advantage program.

These awards recognise Housing NSW's role as a leader in 'green' social housing projects that help to reduce our carbon footprint and, importantly, help tenants reduce their energy costs.

Minister's message

Since taking office in April, I have been busy visiting staff working in the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) and the communities in which they work – including meeting many Housing NSW tenants.

As Minister, one of my main aims is to look at opportunities for FACS divisions – including Housing NSW, Community Services, Ageing, Disability and Home Care, the Aboriginal Housing Office and the Office for Women's Policy – to improve the way they work together to provide better, more streamlined services to clients.

I look forward to working closely with the other Minister responsible for Housing, the Hon. Greg Pearce, Minister for Finance and Services.

I welcome you to the new look *Your Home* newsletter. The fresh new design will provide you with more of the information you need to make sure you maintain a successful tenancy with Housing NSW.

The Hon. Pru Goward MP

Minister for Family and Community Services

Minister for Women

One Minto – building a new community

Couples, families and older people are building a new life in Minto as the area is transformed into a vibrant community featuring a mix of new private and public homes through the One Minto project.

Housing NSW together with Landcom has now completed seven new public housing homes as well as 60 units for older people, with a further 20 new dwellings to be built over the next year.

Over 350 blocks of land have been sold to the private market and around 120 new private homes have been constructed since the beginning of the project.

One Minto is about building a strong new community through a mix of new private and public housing and open spaces. Around \$10 million will be spent on community facilities which will include six new parks and a new \$2 million community centre for all to enjoy.

Green Streets in Moree

Thanks to the help of local young people, tenants and the community, Moree is going green with the local launch of the Housing NSW Green Street Program.

Planting trees along local streets has many advantages for the whole community, including reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, improving the look and feel of the area, providing shade and encouraging birds and wildlife.

The Salvation Army runs the program, which employs local tenants and residents to plant trees in public housing areas, community gardens and parks.

The Green Street Program was launched at Cooee Park with a tree planting ceremony and a sausage sizzle. Locals agreed it

will be a great place to gather in summer under lovely cool, shady trees.

For more information about the Green Street Program, please visit www.housing.nsw.gov.au.

Paying rent on time

While the majority of tenants pay rent and water on time, some tenants pay late and some have arrears.

Housing NSW rents are set at affordable levels for people on low incomes and, just like in the private market, tenants must pay their rent on time.

If tenants don't pay their rent, Housing NSW may take action in the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT) which may see these tenants evicted from their home. This happens to a small number of tenants each year who do not take their obligation seriously.

To make payment easier, tenants may join the Rent Deduction Scheme (RDS) where Housing NSW payments are automatically deducted from your pension or allowance, or

tenants can pay through the secure online site at www.housing.nsw.gov.au. Other payment methods include BPAY, or in person at any Australia Post Office by cash or EFTPOS.

Your rent payments support Housing NSW's maintenance program to the benefit of all tenants.

Are you having problems with mould in your home?

For advice on how to treat and prevent mould – see the *Treating Mould in Your Home* fact sheet on our website at www.housing.nsw.gov.au.

Visitors in your home

From time-to-time you may have visitors stay with you in your home. While visitors are allowed to stay in your home, you must ensure they respect the rights of others in the neighbourhood. Under your tenancy agreement you are responsible for how visitors treat the property as well as how they behave.

A visitor is someone who stays less than 28 days. If they stay longer you will need to apply to have them approved as an

additional occupant. When making the approval, Housing NSW will consider previous behaviour and possible nuisance and annoyance to your neighbourhood.

If there are problems with your visitor, including ongoing antisocial behaviour or if you have not informed Housing NSW about the additional occupant, a visitor sanction may be placed on your tenancy. If this occurs, you will receive a letter advising you of this.

When a visitor sanction is in place, you will need approval from Housing NSW for any visitor to stay in your home for more than three days.

People staying without approval

Someone staying without approval for more than 28 days, or more than three days if there is a visitor sanction, is known as an unauthorised occupant.

You will need to ask unauthorised occupants to leave or apply to have them approved as additional occupants, otherwise Housing NSW may cancel your rental subsidy.

Keeping kids safe

Housing NSW and Kids Safe are working together to increase awareness of child safety. With the weather getting warmer, we all like to open the windows, so to keep your kids safe remember to:

- use a window lock or latch so that windows can't open more than 10cm
- make sure that cots and beds are not placed under, or next to, windows
- keep other furniture and toys away from windows so that children aren't tempted to climb up.

If you have concerns about your windows or have an enquiry about the installation of key window locks, please contact Housing NSW on 1300 HOUSING (1300 468 746).

To keep your children's bedroom safe:

- never leave a baby alone on a change table to avoid falls
- make sure vertical cot railings are between 50mm and 85mm wide to stop a child's head or limbs being trapped
- make sure bunk beds are not near ceiling fans, light fittings, electrical outlets, windows or blind cords

- don't allow children to play with toys with small parts as these could be swallowed or cause choking.

Community Greening – how we can help you

Community Greening is a partnership between Housing NSW and the Botanic Gardens Trust that has been operating since September 2000. Currently we are working on over 200 garden projects across NSW.

Community Greening supports Housing NSW residents to create community gardens. They provide free resources such as plants, pots, gardening magazines and seeds to the gardeners. This is only possible because we have some very generous sponsors, such as Eden Garden Centre, Oasis Seedlings, Alpine Nursery, Ryde TAFE, Gardening Australia Magazine, Yates Seeds and Northcott Pots.

Community Greening can run workshops on a variety of topics such as natural pest control, vegetable boxes, composting, worm farming and pruning. We also organise school holiday community garden activities for kids, which are always very well attended.

If you think a community garden would benefit you and your neighbours, speak with your Housing NSW Client Service Officer. Once your project gets the green light, we can help to develop garden groups and activities for your community. For more information please contact the Community Greening Coordinator on 02 9231 8363.

Handy Hints

Julie-anna from Girraween has a couple of great hints. Soak five or six cotton balls in lavender essential oil and place throughout the linen cupboard. Your sheets will smell wonderful and the lavender will help you to have a restful sleep.

Bicarb soda is cheap and non-toxic. Place $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of bicarb soda and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of white wine vinegar into a bucket of hot water. Add a few drops of scented oil such as peppermint or orange and swish it around for a fantastic floor cleaner.

Maggie from Merimbula has emailed some excellent suggestions. Cut a lemon in half. Boil it in your electric jug. When cool pour out, rinse and you will have a nice clean jug. For a quick car clean, leave your car outside and the next

morning when there is dew on the car, use a cloth or sponge to wipe clean any dirt.

Congratulations Julie-anna you have won a \$25 gift voucher, and congratulations to our Kids Corner winner from June 2011 Aaron Dries, you have also won a \$25 gift voucher.

Your Contacts

1300 HOUSING (1300 468 746)

- Maintenance (24 hours, 7 days)
- General enquiries (24 hours, 7 days)
- Home Purchase Advisory Service (24 hours, 7 days)
- Feedback – suggestions, compliments and complaints (Monday to Friday, 8.30 am – 4.30 pm) or
 - fax 9612 6099
 - email feedback@dhs.nsw.gov.au
 - post PO Box 7150 Liverpool BC NSW 1871
- Rentstart (Monday to Friday, 8.00 am – 6.00 pm and Saturday, 10.00 am – 3.00 pm)
- Mortgage Assistance (Monday to Friday, 8.30 am – 4.30 pm)
- Reports of fraud or corruption (Monday to Friday, 8.30 am – 4.30 pm)

Note: If you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, you can request to speak to an Aboriginal staff member (Monday to Friday, 8.30 am – 4.30pm).

Housing Appeals Committee

An independent appeal system for public housing clients

- 1800 629 794 (Monday to Friday 8.30 am – 4.30 pm)
- fax 9715 7966
- www.hac.nsw.gov.au

Translation and Interpreting Service (TIS)

13 14 50 (you can call TIS if you need help understanding English, and they will phone Housing NSW for you at no cost).

Website

www.housing.nsw.gov.au

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