



Your Home issue 65 September 2013

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.

Please contact us:

Your Home

Media and Communications

Housing NSW Locked Bag 4028

Ashfield BC 1800

You can send us an email at
yourhome@facs.nsw.gov.au

Visit www.housing.nsw.gov.au

New incentives to house more families

Are you living in a large home with more bedrooms than you need?

We are introducing new incentives so we can provide more homes for families who are waiting for public housing.

There are many reasons bedrooms become vacant, for example, kids grow up and leave home or relationships end. When this happens, it's an opportunity for single tenants, couples and small households to move to smaller, more manageable homes.

This will free up these large properties for families in need.

This new approach involves two key things:

- giving priority to transferring tenants who are not using all bedrooms – this means
that current tenants will be moved into more suitably sized homes more quickly,
and
- placing a vacant bedroom charge on tenants who choose to continue to live in a

property with a number of vacant bedrooms – this means that tenants will pay extra for their vacant bedrooms if they decide to stay in their large property.

Tenants will generally be offered a property in the same area, unless they need to live in a different location.

If you are asked to move because you have vacant bedrooms, you will be offered two offers of suitable alternative housing. If you refuse these two offers, a vacant bedroom charge will be applied to your tenancy. The same charge will be applied if you refuse to move outright.

The vacant bedroom charge will be \$20 per week for a single person and \$30 per week for two or more people.

For more information on this new approach to filling vacant bedrooms, please see the fact sheet *A better approach to filling vacant bedrooms* available on the Housing NSW website, www.housing.nsw.gov.au or contact your local Housing NSW office.

Minister's Message

In recent editions of *Your Home*, I have been urging tenants with vacant bedrooms to consider transferring to a smaller, more suitable property so larger homes could be freed up for families waiting for housing.

Some tenants have done this, but there are still thousands of homes across NSW with vacant bedrooms.

I want to see more homes available to large households, including families with children, while making sure that current tenants are helped to move to smaller, more suitable housing.

Recently I announced a new approach to filling vacant bedrooms. There is more information on this approach on the fact sheet *A better approach to filling vacant bedrooms* on the Housing NSW website.

I have heard many stories about tenants who were happy to have moved to smaller homes. I have also heard many stories about families living in temporary accommodation and shelters who are waiting anxiously for housing. This is why this new approach to filling vacant bedrooms is so important.

A couple recently moved to a two-bedroom home in Bankstown after living in a three-

bedroom cottage for 33 years. Initially worried about the move, they are now settled in their new home which is easier to maintain. Most importantly they're happy and enjoying living in a small complex and being part of a great social network.

We have many families from across NSW who are waiting for larger homes to become available, such as the family with six children from the Eden-Merimbula area currently living in a three-bedroom property. They have been living in transitional housing for the past three years as there is no suitable vacant accommodation in the area. They are keen to move to a larger home when one becomes available so they can have stable long-term housing as well as the space they desperately need.

These changes are a fair and reasonable approach to making sure that as many bedrooms in public housing are being used.

Housing NSW will work very closely with tenants who choose to move to smaller accommodation and help with relocation.

I encourage tenants with a number of vacant bedrooms to talk to your local Housing NSW office about moving to a smaller property.

Pru Goward MP

Minister for Family and Community Services, Minister for Women

Making extra rent payments

You can now pay an extra amount on your rent account each fortnight via the Centrelink Rent Deduction Scheme.

By paying a little extra each fortnight you can build up a credit on your rent account. You could then use this rent credit in holiday periods when other expenses are higher than usual.

To enquire about making extra rent payments, talk to your local Housing NSW Client Service Officer.

If you are not already paying your rent automatically from your Centrelink payments, it is easy to join the Scheme. Simply complete an 'Authority for Rent Deduction form' available from the Housing NSW website www.housing.nsw.gov.au or talk to your local Housing NSW Client Service Officer.

Staying active into spring

By Nick Petrunoff, Physical Activity Program Manager, South Western and Sydney Local Health Districts.

It's easy to lie in bed a little longer when it's cold, or to avoid a walk after dark, so here are some ideas for getting active now spring is here.

Set a goal. Think of a goal that motivates you. It might be training for a walking or running event, or joining a friend once a week for an activity. For ideas on events and group activities, visit your local council website. Whatever your goal is, work towards 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week.

Build activity into your day. While every step counts, regular activity gives you the most benefit.

You could try:

- walking the dog before dinner
- parking the car further away then walking, or getting off the bus one stop earlier
- walking, cycling or using public transport or a combination of these to travel to work
- walking or cycling to the local shops instead of driving
- using the stairs in shopping centres rather than taking the lift
- splitting your walking/exercise into 10-minute sessions adding up to 30 minutes for the day
- playing with your kids in a local park.

Keep moving – as the weather warms up, you can increase the frequency and time spent being active, this way we'll gear up for a fit and healthy summer.

eRepair

The **eRepair** online service has been running successfully for over 12 months now with many people taking advantage of the 400 repair issues that can be lodged, with up to five non-urgent items at a time.

We have received nearly 11,000 individual requests through the service and clients have been very satisfied with how quick and easy eRepair is to use.

So why not use **eRepair** for your next non-urgent repair request. Just click on the eRepair -logo on the Housing NSW website www.housing.nsw.gov.au which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Swimming pools in public housing properties

Do you have a swimming pool at your home? If you do, there have been some changes to the laws about swimming pools that it's important for you to know about. It's now a requirement of the *Swimming Pools Amendment Act 2012* that all pool owners register their pool with their local council by 29 October 2013.

What counts as a 'swimming pool'?

A swimming pool is any structure that can be filled with water to a minimum depth of 30cm that is mainly used for swimming. It covers in-ground, above ground, portable and inflatable pools.

What do I need to do if I have a swimming pool?

From 29 October 2013 all pools must be registered with your local council and it is tenants' responsibility to do so. You can register your swimming pool online for free at www.swimmingpoolregister.nsw.gov.au, or you can contact your local council directly which will cost you around \$10.

If you don't register your swimming pool by 29 October 2013 you may incur a \$220 fine. If a council inspector refers your matter to court you may have to pay a fine of up to \$2,200.

If you have already registered your pool, please pass on a copy of your registration certificate to your local Housing NSW office immediately.

For more information on swimming pools, see the *Swimming Pools in Public Housing* fact sheet available on the Housing NSW website www.housing.nsw.gov.au.

Handy hints

We received a very well-timed handy hint from Kenneth of Eastlakes who has a great suggestion for removing musty smells from carpet. Kenneth suggests mixing a packet of bi-carb soda with two tablespoons of talcum powder, then using a sieve to sprinkle

over the carpet. Leave the bi-carb mix for 20 minutes (or overnight if you can) then vacuum, and your carpet will smell fresher. Thanks Kenneth for your great hint! You have won a \$25 voucher.

Recipes

Do you have a favourite recipe you would like to share? If so, great! Send it to us for a chance to win a \$25 voucher: Your Home, Communication Services Group, Locked Bag 4028, Ashfield BC 1800. Make sure you include your name, address and telephone number so we can contact you.

Me-POWER: empowering young people

Around 40 people recently gathered at the Campbelltown Civic Hall for the launch of the Me-POWER Program, a life skills training program for 12 to 18 year olds. Me-POWER aims to assist young people to develop life skills and self help strategies as they transition to adulthood.

The Me-POWER Program was created by a dedicated team from UnitingCare Burnside and included representatives from Mission Australia South West Youth Services – Drug and Alcohol Awareness Program, Traxside Youth Health Service (Macarthur) and YWCA NSW – Youth and Mentoring Programs. It was funded by Housing NSW under the Building Stronger Communities initiative.

The Me-POWER Program has been piloted in several schools in the Campbelltown area in South Western Sydney with great success. A range of topics that meet local students' needs can be selected including bullying and cyber-bullying, healthy and unhealthy relationships as well as alcohol and other drugs.

As Jenny Chate, a teacher from one of the pilot schools – Thomas Reddall High School said, "The program has been an outstanding success. For many students it was the first time they had been asked what their goals were and we have found that students are also teaching their parents these lessons," she said.

From here the program will be expanded, with more facilitators completing the training.