

RHHCH NEWSLETTER

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www.housing.org.au

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TENANTS' FORUM

A Tenants' Forum was held on Thursday 8th June 2006. A total of 27 tenants attended the meeting.

The main items discussed were (1) changing the name of the co-operative (2) tenant participation (3) new smoke alarm laws and (4) the procedures governing requests for repairs.

Changing the name of the co-operative

Most tenants thought a name change was appropriate now that the co-operative operates within eight separate local government areas. However there was no clear preference for any one name. The meeting resolved to run a name change competition with the details of the competition appearing in the June Newsletter. Then in September, another meeting will be held. At this meeting the winners of the competition will be announced and an attempt will be made to identify a name that is clearly the most popular. Once this has been achieved, a resolution based upon this choice will be put to the next Annual General Meeting in November this year.

Tenant participation

The discussion on tenant participation was very productive with a lot of tenants contributing ideas. Volunteering and setting up a social club were the main forms of participation discussed. The meeting resolved to establish a social club. Membership of the club was set at \$1.00 per week. A group of six tenants agreed to meet on Thursday 22nd June in order to set the club up. The club will be run by tenants with staff providing advice and support when needed. *A membership form has been enclosed in this Newsletter.* Also a number of tenants expressed an interest in volunteering. It was resolved to include an application form for volunteers in the June newsletter. This form will enable tenants to specify their skills and the amount of time they can contribute as volunteers. Once staff have this information, volunteers can be linked to specific tasks in the office as they arise. *Refer to the volunteer's form enclosed in this Newsletter.*

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Smoke alarms

Staff outlined the new legislation governing smoke alarms. A fact sheet from the NSW Fire Brigade on the responsibilities of landlords and tenants with respect to installing and maintaining smoke alarms was handed out.

Requesting repairs

Staff also outlined the responsibilities of tenants when requesting repairs and distributed the latest edition of the *Tenants' Information Guide*. Copies of the latest *Tenants' Information Guide* are available from the office. It is also be viewed or printed out from RHHCH's website at www.housing.org.au.

Celebrating 22 years

Towards the end of the meeting, a birthday cake displaying 22 candles was brought into the forum. Having being established in 1984, this gesture represented 22 years of our existence as a housing co-operative. After being informed about the origins of Ryde-Hunters Hill Community Housing in 1984, tenants were invited to blow the candles out. This they did enthusiastically and the cake was devoured within minutes.

Overall, the meeting turned out to be one of most successful tenant forums we have held in recent years. ■

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New RHHCH Website

www.housing.org.au

Ryde Hunters Hill Community Housing has developed a new website. It was launched in March this year. The website contains a number of features which are useful to tenants as well as the general public.

Tenants

For example, the 'For Tenants' page contains a link to the most recent version of our *Information Guide for Tenants*. This guide is in pdf format and can be downloaded from the website. The same page also contains an outline of our commitment to tenant participation

Other features of direct interest to tenants include the 'Membership' and 'Volunteering' pages, the link a 'News and Events' page and links to numerous documents including the co-operative's Constitution, Annual Reports, Newsletters etc. All of these documents can be downloaded if desired.

Applicants

People wishing to apply for housing assistance can visit the 'Applicants' page which contains detailed information about the co-operative, eligibility criteria, our Application Form and the Information Brochure. Both forms can be downloaded from the website.

Housing programs and services

In addition, people or organisations wishing to find out more about our housing programs and services would do well to visit our website. For example, service providers who have clients needing to be housed can visit the website's 'Partnerships' and 'Support Services' pages and learn more about our co-operative's involvement with the provision of supported accommodation.

Bequests

Not to be overlooked is the 'Bequests' page. Individuals or organisations wishing to donate to our co-operative can learn how this can be done by visiting the 'Bequests' page!

Staff would like to thank our Chairperson, Alex Maitland, for the major contribution he has made since February in developing our website.

Comments on the design and content of the website are most welcome. ■

2006 Census of Population & Housing

The national **Census** will be held on **Wednesday 8th August**. Tenants are encouraged to fill out the Census form since Census data is one of the best sources for identifying housing needs in the community. Make sure **questions 56** and **57** are answered. For question **56**, tenants should mark the box next to 'Being Rented'. For question **57**, tenants should mark the box alongside 'Housing Co-operative, Community or Church Group'. **Note that all Census information supplied remains confidential**. For more information about the Census, contact staff at the RHHCH office or log on to www.abs.gov.au/census.

RENT CERTIFICATES

Centrelink periodically contacts tenants to confirm income information including the level of rent you pay. They ask tenants to complete a Rent Certificate which must be signed by RHHCH and returned to Centrelink by a given date. **If you fail to provide Centrelink with the required Rent Certificate, you will lose your Rent Assistance.** RHHCH can provide you with a rent certificate at any time if you call us. We will complete the certificate and send it to you. You must then sign it and submit it to the local Centrelink office. **Please note that over the counter Rent Certificates are also available from the RHHCH office, but ONLY on a Tuesday or a Thursday.** Staff are unable to provide Rent Certificates on other days due to our other commitments.

RENT SUBSIDY REVIEW

The last Rent Subsidy Review which concluded in April 2006 was completed in record time due to the prompt return by most tenants of documents requested. We appreciated the efforts that most tenants went to in getting their paperwork back to us. The next Rent Subsidy Review will be held in **September 2006**. Remember, if you have had a **change in income, you are required to advise RHHCH within seven (7) days** of that change to your income status.

WE'VE MOVED...BUT NOT FAR!!!

Due to the need to expand our office space, we are pleased to announce that we have taken over the premises directly beneath our old office in Ryde. The new office is at street level and is located at **38 Church Street in Ryde**.

Combined with our old premises, the expanded office has effectively doubled our work-space and will allow us to set-up additional work-stations to accommodate future growth. Our new combined premises also provides for a private interview room and, most importantly, there are no narrow doors or steep stairs for tenants to negotiate.

We invite all tenants to come and have a look at our new office.

NSW COMMUNITY HOUSING CONFERENCE 2006

The NSW Community Housing Conference is on again! It will be held at the **Newcastle City Hall** on **Wednesday 16th & Thursday 17th August**.

Who should attend?

- Housing workers & providers
- Tenants/advocates of social housing
- Peak non-government organisations
- Government policy, planning & housing workers – state/local
- Supported accommodation providers
- Academics with an interest in social & affordable housing
- Community organisations who work in partnership with housing providers
- Others with an interest in community & affordable housing

One Director and three staff from the co-operative are planning to attend the two day conference.

If you would like to learn more about the conference, you call our office on (02) 9808 3545 and speak to a member of staff.

Alternatively, a provisional program and registration information can be found on a conference webpage located on the Hotelnetwork website www.hotelnetwork.com.au.

The NSW Federation of Housing Associations, Association to Resource Cooperative Housing (ARCH) and Churches Community Housing auspice this biennial event. ■

TENANTS' SOCIAL CLUB PLANNING MEETING

Following the decision by tenants at the recent Tenants' Forum (see page 1) to establish a Tenants' Social Club, six tenants met on 22nd June at the RHHCH office in order to plan the setting-up of the club and to discuss a range of activities that the club could promote.

A number of possibilities were explored, ranging from cultural events and sporting activities to holding an End of Year Party for tenants and their families in late November.

To ensure the success of the Social Club, funds need to be raised. At the recent Tenants' Forum, tenants voted to address this challenge by charging a modest **membership fee of \$1.00 per week per member**. Payment of membership fees will be based on the existing debit note system. Following receipt of a membership form, a debit note will be issued. Tenants will then be able to use their Westpac Bank deposit books to pay off their social club debit notes.

The next two meetings of the Social Club Planning Committee are scheduled for **20th July** and **10th August** at the RHHCH office starting at 10.00am.

**A Social Club Membership Form is enclosed.
Help make the Tenants' Social Club a success by
becoming a member today!**

MEETING WITH JOHN WATKINS MP



(L to R: Jane McNeil, Alex Maitland, Cathy Sinclair, JulieAnne Anderson, John Watkins, Jon Atkins and Nazir Gul Daawar)

Directors and staff spent one hour with the Member for Ryde, John Watkins MP (Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport) in our new office on 21st April 06.

The occasion allowed Directors and staff to meet John Watkins over lunch during the first half hour and to discuss community housing issues during the second half hour.

John Watkins expressed his support for Ryde Hunters Hill Community Housing in its endeavours to expand its housing portfolio and housing services.

Thanks to Alex Maitland, Jane McNeil (and grand-daughter), JulieAnne Anderson, Nazir Gul Daawar and Catherine Sinclair for attending the luncheon. Thanks also to Wendy Edwards and Liz Breden for assisting. Special thanks are extended to Filomena Leone for her contribution in organising all of the catering on the day.

When leaving the office, John Watkins said that the cuisine provided was a cut above what was usually dished up at similar social occasions! ■

RHHCH OFFICE HOURS

Tuesday & Thursday	9.30am – 4.30pm
Mon, Wed & Friday	By Appointment Only
Public Holidays	Closed

FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICES

In previous Newsletters we have referred to Financial Counselling Services that are provided free of charge to people who are experiencing financial difficulties or who need information relating to credit and debt.

Creditline, a branch of Wesley Mission, provides Financial Counselling Services. According to Creditline, its services:

- **Equip** the vulnerable and disadvantaged in financial crisis
- **Provide** short term crisis management and long term prevention strategies
- **Include** counselling, educating, analysing, advising, providing options, negotiating, advocating, mediating, cash flow management, personal financial management and referring.

Creditline describes its **work with clients** in the following way:

1. Most work is done face-to-face.
2. Income and total basic living costs are calculated in the form of a **Personal Money Plan** and options given regarding possible expenditure reductions, designed to establish a margin to offer creditors.
3. Initially Credit Line and/or clients may approach creditors seeking a moratorium on payments together with a freezing of interest. This approach enables clients to stabilize a financial situation while preparing a repayment scheme for the creditor's consideration.
4. If the creditor has commenced legal action, Credit Line can advise and assist the client in preparing and lodging appropriate documents and/or, if necessary, accompany the client to court in order to provide moral support and assistance in an intimidating setting.

Creditline's describes its **philosophy** as "a combination of counselling, assistance and self-help, providing support for the client to be as independent as possible and enable them to ultimately take charge of their own financial affairs."

Contact details:

Address: 15 Belvoir Street, Surry Hills 2010
Phone: (02) 9951 5544
Fax: (02) 9951 5511
Email: creditline@wesleymission.org.au
Web: www.wesleymission.org.au

For help in preparing a Money Plan go to:

www.wesleymission.org.au/centres/creditline/factsheet5.asp

Name Change Competition

As reported on page one, tenants at the recent Tenants' Forum discussed the desirability of changing the name of the co-operative to better reflect its geographical expansion. As pointed out during the discussion, RHHCH now operates within eight local government areas.

While the majority of tenants supported a name change, there was no clear preference for any one name. As a result, tenants resolved to re-visit the issue in September this year.

In order of popularity, names put forward at the forum included:

1. Ryde Community Housing Co-op Ltd*
2. Macquarie Community Housing Co-op Ltd
3. Network Community Housing Co-op Ltd
4. North Western Community Housing Co-op Ltd
5. Centro Community Housing Co-op Ltd

* *This vote specifically favoured the retention of the name 'Ryde' in any name change.*

Given the absence of any clear preference, the meeting voted in favour of holding a competition between now and early September in order to encourage input from a greater number of tenants on the issue.

Extravagant prizes will be awarded to the best three entries at the next Tenants' Forum in September (*date and location to be arranged*).

Recognition will be given to entries that are **well researched** and that **capture a crucial aspect** of our co-operative's activities.

SUBMIT YOUR ENTRIES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND BE IN THE RUNNING TO WIN A FABULOUS PRIZE.

SHARE ACCOMMODATION

Share with: Share with one other person
Property: Three bedroom house (Depart. of Housing)
Facilities: Use of main bedroom with built-ins
Rent: \$170 per week
Bond: \$660
Location: Ryde
Duration: Initially share for six months. Extension of lease likely.
Contact: Call Patricia on 0411 516 408