

HOME NEWSLETTER Issue 1 March 2011

Affordable Community Housing Ltd



Welcome to our first news letter for 2011. I hope the New Year brings much happiness to you all.

This year we are very focused on improving services to you and listening to your ideas about new services you feel we should introduce. The stand out services for the past year included; No Interest for White Goods loans, Oz Harvest (free supply of some basic food and grocery items to needy tenants). School scholarship programs providing financial support for children of tenants engaged in academic, sporting, music and artistic activities.

The Tenant Satisfaction Survey has been posted out to all tenants and please take the time to complete the survey if you already have not done so as this determines how we will go about improving our services. The survey is completed and posted back to us in the reply envelope that accompanies the survey, no one will be able to identify who has made the comments.

The 4 new regional Tenant Councils present a very good opportunity for you to have your say with the Councils meeting areas being conveniently located near the major clusters of our houses, please see our web site for details.

I urge you to regularly have a look at our web site www.achl.org.au as this will keep you up dated with programs and opportunities to assist you and your family.

Bernie Murphy
Chief Executive Officer



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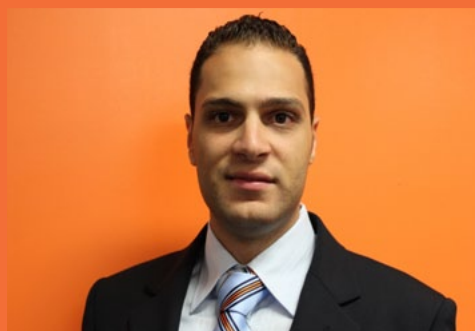
**"To be a major contributor to the relief
of housing stress"**



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!STAFF UPDATE! STAFF UpDate !



We at ACHL would like to introduce you to two new staff members who joined our team recently.

Greg Locke: (top) and Sam Salam (bottom)

Greg and Sam join the ACHL team as Housing Managers. Greg will be based at the Silverwater office while Sam will be based at the Banks-town office.



PAY WAY CARDS

At ACHL we have come up with a new and simpler way of paying your rent, water and maintenance charges. We have introduced the Pay Way Cards which will be replacing tenant deposit books. You will receive two cards. one for your rent and the other for water and maintenance charges.

You can pay using the following ways:

1. Using BPay from your bank account
2. Online using a credit card via www.payway.com.au
3. Over the phone with a credit card calling 1300 885 175
4. Presenting your card at any Australia Post office

Some of you have already received your cards. For others, to get your card, when you are almost nearing the end of your deposit book please call the office and we will order the cards for you.

For more information call our main office on 8622 1500

TENANT SURVEY

Last month we rolled out our tenant survey as a way to find out from you what you think about our services. We asked tenants to comments on a variety of issues and services including maintenance, activities and of course this newsletter.

We would like to express our thanks to all tenants who participated in the survey and provided feedback. The survey which was completely confidential will benefit us greatly and your thoughtful answers will help us do an even better job.

One lucky tenant, Linda of Wentworthville has won a \$500 shopping voucher as an expression of our thanks.

A lucky number of other tenants who were the first to return their surveys have won double movie passes. These tenants will all be notified by phone for their win.

From ACHL a big THANK YOU to all of you



**MAKE FRIENDS.
HAVE FUN.
KICK GOALS FOR YOURSELF.**

Street Soccer

Do you want to get out and be active? Everybody's welcome at Street Soccer. It doesn't matter if you're new to the game or a budding player. It's at the same time each week, its free, friendly and you don't have to be mega fit. You must be 16 or above, both males and females welcome.

Thursdays, 3.30 - 5.30 at Robin Thomas Reserve,
Cnr Harris and Parkes Street, Parramatta.

NO INTEREST *LOANS*

Rosemount Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services are offering individuals & families on low incomes NILS loans to use on items such as whitegoods, computers, furniture, education expenses, health aids or essential repairs.

Loans are available for up to \$1200 and loans do not cover recurring expenses such as: bond or rent money, rent arrears, food or utility bills.

Rosemount NILS loans are specifically for:

- Individuals or families on a low income, including people receiving Centrelink benefits, hold a current Centrelink Health Care Card or Pension Card;
- Residents of Canterbury, Bankstown or Marrickville local govt. areas.

For an application kit or more information, please contact Cathy Rood, NILS® Officer at Rosemount on (02) 8571 7800.

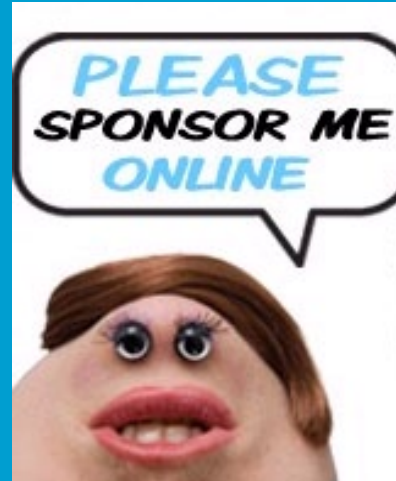


The World's Greatest Shave

Our very own Peter Malone, General Manager of Assets and Infrastructure is taking part in this year's Greatest Shave to raise funds for the Leukaemia Foundation.

We are asking for your support and you can donate as little as a dollar which be used to support blood cancer patients and to fund important research.

To donate please go to <http://my.leukaemiafoundation.org.au/petermalone>



Tenant Feedback

"On behalf of my family I would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude for your help in securing new tenancy for my Mum. We are extremely happy with new place, and as previously mentioned look forward to new start for Mum, and all of us as a Family. Thanks to all who have extended their sympathy to us and Mum in relation to late Joseph. Your help is greatly appreciated" - Kenneth

Rent Review

Rent Review letters are being sent and there are some **IMPORTANT** dates to remember.

Deadline to return forms if there is any changes is 30 May 2011.
New rent will start on the 30 June 2011.

For more information please contact your Housing Manager.

!! YOUTH WEEK COMPETITION!!



The first week of April is Youth Week running from the 1st of April till the 10th. This is a week celebrating the achievements and dreams of young people all across Australia. Youth Week is the only young people-organised and managed mass participation event in Australia. It is organised by local young people, for local young people in communities across the state.

There will be hundreds of events held across NSW throughout Youth Week celebrating the positive contributions young people make to our society and providing opportunities for young people to organise their own events.

Here at ACHL we are holding a writing competition for all you aspiring writers out there. The theme of this years Youth Week and the writing competition is 'Own it'.

You can write in any style you like, poetry, fiction, essay, drama, tv/film scripts, journal article as long as it relates to the theme of 'Own it'. This competition is open to young people between the ages of 12-18 and the lucky winners will receive some awesome prizes!

Send your entries to:
C/O Samira Ibrahim
6/75 Parramatta Road
Silverwater NSW 2128

So what are you waiting for it? Start **WRITING!**

For more information or to find out the exciting youth events happening in your neighbourhood contact your local council and visit <http://www.youthweek.nsw.gov.au/>



Bankstown's annual Youth Week Soccer Cup will be running on the 2nd of April. All beginners, male and female, are encouraged to play for some great prizes! Registrations close 28th March. It will be held 10am at Amour Park, Marco Ave, Revesby, contact Justine on 9707 9605

FAMILY PICNIC IN THE PARK!

Come join us for a delicious picnic in the park.

This family fun day will be held in Parramatta park on Wednesday April 20th. There will be children's activities, refreshments and a chance for you to catch up with other families.

Find us at Shelter 23 Pavilion flat, we will be there all day from 9am till 5pm.



MOVE IT

Are you a young person that loves to get PHYSICAL? Do you enjoy participating in sports? During the next School Holidays join us in order to Move It!

On the 15th of April we are holding a fun day in Wiley Park from 9:30 am to 2:30pm for young people to get involved and Move It! The AFL will be running activities as well as a variety of other sporting activities and even a special guest appearance!

There will be free lunch and prizes. RSVP by Friday 8th of April by contacting Rob Costa on 8622 1500

MOVE IT!



TENANT MARKETS



Tenant Markets are back and bigger than ever in 2011. The markets will continue to run on the first Saturday of every month with the next running on the first Saturday of April.

So if you have things you want to sell even second hand things you can come and sell them at the market. You may have hobbies where you make things out of wood or metal, you might even make craft items which you can sell at the market. If you need we have opportunities for tenants to take out a small no interest loan to help you get started. Tenants only have to pay \$15 for a stall every month and anything you make at the market will not affect your rent. Even if you don't have things to sell you can still get involved on the day by helping to set up and pack down. Contact Rob Costa on 8622 1500 for more Information and we look forward to hearing from you.

- Oz Harvest -

In 2011 we are continuing our partnership with Oz Harvest. Oz Harvest is an organisation that collects food from supermarkets and restaurants that otherwise would be thrown out and gives it to those most in need. We started our partnership with Oz Harvest late last year and will continue to run this service.

The program runs twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays is run by the local tenant group and volunteers from the Bankstown Local Tenant Group on Leonard Street. We are currently assisting up to 40 people a week who live within 30 minutes from the Bankstown location. We are able to provide a variety of products such as fresh fruit and vegetables, bread, some meat products and a variety of non perishable items. This program aims to make a difference in the weekly budget for many of our tenants and assists by supplementing their nutritional well being.



Digital TV: Are You Ready?

Between 2010 and 2013, analog free-to-air TV signals are being switched off and replaced with digital-only signals.

What do I have to do?

To keep receiving free-to-air TV you'll need a tv that is capable of receiving digital signals. You do not have to buy a new TV if you do not want to, because virtually all current analog TVs will be able to receive digital TV by adding a digital set top box or a digital TV recorder.



Either:

1. Convert your existing analog TV using a digital set top box or digital TV recorder or
2. Upgrade to a television with a built-in digital tuner

What is a set top box?

A set top box converts digital signals back to analog, so you can see digital free-to-air TV on an analog set. Set top boxes range from basic standard definition (SD) models to more advanced high definition (HD) models.

With an SD digital set top box you receive SD digital versions of all the current analog channels available in your area, plus any new SD channels. Only with an HD digital set top box will you be able to receive both the SD and HD channels available in your area.

Where do I put my set top box?

Your set top box does not have to sit on top of your TV. It can be placed next to, or underneath it.

For more information visit www.australia.gov.au/digitalready or call the Digital Ready Information Line on 1800 20 10 13

Youth of the Streets Scholarship

The Youth Off The Streets Scholarship Program gives young people throughout Australia the opportunity to make their dreams a reality.

Nominations for the Youth Off The Streets Scholarship Program are not restricted to a specific study or training path. Nominations are invited from young people with genuine talent, ability and determination in any field, including (but not limited to) education and training; visual or performing arts; sport; trade skills; and music. The wide-ranging vocational goals pursued by the scholarship recipients will encourage other disadvantaged young people to follow their dreams.

Nominees must be between the ages of 14 and 21 on 6 May 2011.

Nominations close 6 May 2011

For more information please contact 02 9330 3537

Residential Tenancy Act

As of the 31st of January 2011 there has been a new tenancy law in force, the Residential Tenancy Act 2010.

What does this new law mean to you as a tenant?

- * Longer time to move out
- * System in place to save tenancies
- * New process for goods left behind
- * Bonds, 4 weeks is the maximum that can be charged
- * Water efficiency

For more info please contact the Fair Trading website at www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au

Parramatta & Holroyd Tenant Zone is looking for you!

Are you currently living in Parramatta or Holroyd? In that case, why not join your local tenant group. Local tenant groups are tenants just like you that come together to chat and discuss issues that are relevant to them and their tenancy. They also plan and run a variety of activities and events. This group meets on the 3rd Monday of every month at the Oakes Room in Westmead.

Employment Opportunities!

Do you want to earn some extra money or get some full time work?

At ACHL we have a number of exciting employment opportunities for you. We are currently looking for tenants who are interested in doing common ground maintenance work involving things such as cleaning and mowing.

You can work either part or full time. So if you are motivated and looking for a way to expand your self, contact ACHL.

For more information about Local Tenant Groups or employment opportunities contact Rob Costa on 8622 1500.



FACTSHEETS, FACTSHEETS

Here at Affordable Community Housing Ltd, we have a variety of factsheets available to provide you with more information on different topics. These factsheets tell you more about maintenance, applying for housing, issues with your neighbours and many more.

The list of factsheets are:

- **Absence from property 2010**
- **Educational Financial Assistance**
- **Fire Safety 2010**
- **Locating Housing 2010**
- **Physical Activity**
- **Repairs Maintenance 2010**
- **Security in the home 2010**
- **Supported Housing 2010**
- **Tenant Council**

All of our factsheets are available from our office receptions, you can also download them from our website at www.achl.org.au

ACHL WEBSITE

Have you looked at our website recently? If not, do it now! The best way to stay in contact with ACHL is through our website. If you have ever been unsure of an ACHL issue, the website has a list of all our forms, factsheets and policies that will answer your question.

You can also stay up to date with all our activities and events that will be running throughout the year.

So make sure you take a look at our website at www.achl.org.au

Did you know?

Each newsletter we will discuss a tenants topic - This time we will look at Absence from Property. When ACHL provides a property for a client, they are expected to live in the property. ACHL will approve an absence from the property if it is satisfied that the tenant has an acceptable reason for being away. Acceptable reasons for being absent from property for up 3 months are; Caring for sick/frail family members, Hospitalisation, Escaping domestic violence, harassment or threats of violence, Assisting with immigration matters in the county of origin, Holidays, Employment, education or training.

The tenant must obtain written approval from ACHL to be away from their home for more than six weeks. ACHL may approve for a tenant to be absent from their dwelling in excess of six weeks and up to three months, under certain circumstances.

If a tenant is away without approval, or has stayed away for longer than the time approved, ACHL may decide to: charge market rent from the time the tenant's absence is discovered, or terminate the tenancy.

For more info please go to our website at www.achl.org.au for a list of our factsheets.



Educational Financial Assistance

In the last newsletter we told you about the introduction of the Educational Financial Assistance (EFA) program which aims to support our tenants in providing their children the necessary equipment, tuition, textbooks, uniform and other school related expenses. The assistance is available to primary, secondary and TAFE or university students. The primary students can receive up to \$500 while the secondary and TAFE or university students can receive up to \$1,000 in assistance.

Application forms are available at any ACHL offices and the cut off date for the EFA will be the end of June 2011.

Physical Activity & Sporting Fund

While the **Physical Activity & Sporting (PAS) fund** which promotes the children of tenants being involved in sporting activities will roll out twice a year for summer and winter sports. PAS aims to help household members of ACHL aged 18 years and under who cannot meet the costs of participating in sporting or other physical activities.

What is the fund for?

Up to \$250 will be able to be applied for per child to cover the cost of registration fees, clothing, footwear and equipment necessary to participate in a chosen activity.

No Interest Loans Scheme

While our No Interest Loans Scheme is still running for eligible applicants. The program aims to enable tenants to purchase white good that they would not otherwise be able to obtain. The loan can assist with up to \$1200 depending on tenants individual requirements and the type of white goods needed.

For any information on the EFA, PAS or NILS programs please contact the Community Development Officer Rob Costa on 8622 1500, or to get a form please visit our Silverwater office.

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