Message from the General Manager – Housing Services

Christmas is now well and truly behind us and 2015 has started in earnest. We are continuing to develop initiatives to improve our services and deliver new housing options to support our tenants who are ready to move into the private housing market.

New initiatives include Grounds Maintenance Social Enterprise which provides opportunities for tenants to get a qualification and employment while gaining hands-on experience maintaining the grounds at some of our housing developments. We also have training programs for our tenants, which focus on home maintenance and budgeting in preparation for moving into the private housing sector.

If you are interested in any of these programs, phone 07 3327 1674.

The new Queensland Government and various ministers have been announced and are settling into their new roles. We hope to have an early meeting with the Housing Minister, Leeanne Enoch MP, to discuss the vision for our communities and to have an opportunity to ‘showcase’ some of our housing projects that are delivering excellent outcomes for our tenants.

I am encouraged by the many new tenant-led initiatives that are emerging at our housing developments, with some of these initiatives nominated for excellence awards as part of the Australasian Housing Institute Awards program. I wish them well and hope that some of these initiatives are formally recognised for the difference they are making to local communities.

Frances Paterson-Fleider

Message from the Community Chaplain Team Leader

The actress Anne Hathaway is quoted as saying “Loneliness is my least favourite thing about life. The thing that I’m most worried about is just being alone without anybody to care for or someone who will care for me”.

I think Anne has expressed something that we all think about and struggle with at times. Loneliness and isolation can be really debilitating; but reaching out and seeking to establish a friendship can be difficult particularly if you have relationships that have gone wrong in the past and trust has been broken.

When making friends, it is important that both people act in a trustworthy manner for the friendship to be successful. Loving your neighbour as you would love yourself, or treating others with the respect you would like to be shown, is a great principle to apply when seeking to establish new friendships.

Although some people have proven untrustworthy in the past, I can assure you there are people out there that can be trusted; this is an important thing to keep in mind when seeking out new friends.

An objective of the Community Chaplaincy program, in partnership with Housing Services, is to nurture healthy communities and create safe places where people can get to know their neighbours and start to build trust with each other. It is my experience from talking with many tenants over the past five years that we have lots of genuinely nice people living in our communities and I am confident that if trust can be established then many genuine friendships can begin, leaving the loneliness behind.

Murray Thomson
Hello autumn! Staying healthy in cooler weather

The change to cooler weather impacts our bodies, especially the respiratory system, which is vulnerable to irritation from the colder, dryer air.

Viruses like the flu also survive far better in cooler temperatures and are therefore spread much more easily.

Luckily there are simple things you can do to boost your body's immunity to help keep healthy during the cooler months.

Give your body the food it needs to fight off disease. Raw or very lightly cooked garlic has antibacterial properties, as does honey, while cinnamon has anti-inflammatory properties and fresh ginger can help with fevers.

Apples, figs, lemons and avocados are at their best in autumn, along with vegetables like pumpkins, sweet potatoes, and carrots. Not only is it often cheaper to buy fresh produce when it's in season, it’s also better for your health. The fresher the produce is (having been grown nearby rather than imported), the higher the levels of nutrients and flavour.

The longer you leave fruit or vegetable to sit before being consumed, the lower the vitamin content.

To keep healthy, also consider adopting a simple exercise regime, or if you already have one, modify it for cooler weather, as light exercise is known to strengthen the immune system.

A recently released scientific study found that strenuous exercise can actually be damaging to your health, so keeping your exercise moderate but consistent may be the best strategy, especially on cooler mornings when your muscles take longer to warm up.

Social enterprise

Are you looking for a head start in the job market?

Opportunities are now available for work experience placements and potential part-time employment in landscape maintenance at:

- Ipswich
- Bribie Island
- Mitchelton

- No experience is necessary.
- Achieve a certificate of service.
- Set yourself on a path to further employment.

Places are limited; to register your interest, contact Dean Farnham on dean.farnham@cofcqld.com.au or phone 0419 732 459.

Landscape maintenance is physical work and involves lawn mowing and tree pruning. This is a community program initiative of Churches of Christ in Queensland Social Enterprise.

Change of circumstances

Tenants are reminded that you must notify us immediately if there is a change in your household circumstances. You may be in breach of your tenancy if you fail to notify us. In some instances your rent subsidy may be removed and back charged to when the change occurred.

We encourage you to keep us informed of any changes to your household (e.g. change of income or new household members). Further information about reporting changes to your household is available in your Tenant Handbook.

Key safes

Remember, key safes are available for tenants to purchase for $25 plus installation, which can be repaid on a payment plan.
Tenants’ improving services

We have made a number of changes to our services in response to feedback you provided in the latest tenant satisfaction survey.

Moving-in information

You said...it would be helpful to see moving-in information for specific properties and locations, for example, property features (like hot water, isolation switches) and local services.

So we...redesigned our tenant welcome card to include a checklist to assist tenants in becoming familiar with their new home.

We also updated our tenant start-up pack to include a list of local community services and are currently working on the tenant handbook.

Complaint process

You said...the complaint process was unclear and you did not always receive the response you expected.

So we... developed a new Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Brochure to replace the two separate ones we previously used.

The new brochure was reviewed by the Tenant Advisory Group and was issued to all tenants.

We also created a new Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Form and are currently working on updating our letters and information sheets for tenants.

Newsletters

You said...this newsletter should have information that is more current, useful, and relevant to you.

So we...revamped Tenant News, extending it to eight pages. We also requested the assistance of the Tenant Advisory Group to get an understanding of what tenants want. We are still looking for tenant contributions and are currently working on a new look which is more engaging.

Rent calculations

You said... the way we explained your rent calculation was difficult and hard to understand.

So we...developed the Rent and Eligibility Information Sheet with the assistance of the Tenants Advisory Group.

Neighbour issues

You said...there can be issues between neighbours that are challenging to resolve including noise and anti-social behaviour.

So we...clarified our neighbour dispute process in the new Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Brochure with detailed information about how we are able to respond to issues.

We also recently introduced two new Community Chaplains and a dedicated Community Liaison Officer to assist tenants with community issues.

Tenant Advisory Group

The Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) aims to provide opportunities for tenants to be more involved in the services they receive and to have their voice heard. It is also a great way to make new friends and build relationships.

A working lunch is provided at each TAG meeting, and transport arrangements made where required. Meetings alternate between regional group meetings and central full member meetings, as voted by TAG.

There is also an online forum for members to communicate between meetings. If you would like to come but have never been to an event like this before, give us a call and we can tell you all about it and get you registered.

To register as a TAG member please phone 07 3327 1674. Future TAG meetings:

Regional Meeting

Week starting 15 June 2015

Time to be confirmed

Central Meeting

Wednesday 9 September 2015

11am – 2pm
Churches of Christ Housing Services lead the homelessness registry week campaign for the Ipswich area.

Churches of Christ Housing Services led the fight to end homelessness in Ipswich as part of the Home for Good campaign in November last year.

The aim of the campaign is to break the cycle of homelessness for some of Queensland’s most vulnerable people, by building a register of people experiencing homelessness.

Churches of Christ was the lead agency in the Ipswich region, coordinating the planning group of local service providers and a group of volunteers, who conducted surveys from 8 am to 8 pm each day.

The surveyors scoured parks, looked under bridges, visited caravan parks and guest houses, and were out every evening with food vans and emergency relief agencies so they could meet those who were homeless or in unstable accommodation.

The team set an initial target of 150 surveys. At the end of the period, they had 264 completed surveys, from 189 individuals and 75 families.

The information gathered during registry week captured point-in-time data that will enhance existing knowledge and provide a framework for partner organisations to quickly and flexibly respond to the housing, health and support needs of individuals and families.

The planning group was a collaboration of various organisations including Red Cross, Ipswich Independent Youth Service, Ozcare, Evocca, Ipswich Women’s Shelter, Ipswich Regional Advocacy Service, QShelter and Ipswich Housing and Support Service.
Home for Good – Sharon’s story

During the campaign, Housing Coordinator Arlene Lewis interviewed Sharon.

I interviewed Sharon at 5.30 am in the Ipswich Showgrounds, where she had been living in a tent for about three months.

Sharon had been moving between different family members for about five years but the breakdown of relationships and a rental blacklisting led to her becoming homeless.

But she was making the most of her situation and did not complain. After talking with her for awhile, I realised she was very motivated to change her circumstances.

Sharon disclosed that she had taken steps to make a claim to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) to remove her unjust TICA listing so she could rent a property with her daughter.

I reviewed the application for her and gave her some information she would need to ensure her claim was successful, and also referred her to the local advocacy service to support her in her court appearance.

Sharon attended QCAT and was successful in having the TICA listing removed to address this barrier to renting in the private market.

With the TICA listing removed, Sharon and her daughter started house hunting and found a property that was affordable and suited their needs. They made an application and Sharon was able to secure a bond loan and rental grant, and they signed a lease on their new home.

Sharon and her daughter were able to move into their new home just in time for Christmas. Sharon was very pro-active during the whole process to change her circumstances and, with a little support from Churches of Christ and our networks of support agencies, she was able to achieve her goal of renting a home to share with her daughter.

Fire and emergency procedures

House fires are more frequent in the cooler months as we rely more on heating appliances. If you live in a unit complex make sure you are aware of the fire safety procedures for the complex, the location of fire extinguishers and all available exit points. It is advisable to always keep a fire blanket in the kitchen just in case. Fire blankets can be purchased from hardware stores or online from a variety of retailers. If you are buying online, ensure the product complies with the Australian standards.

Recipe

White Chocolate and Coconut Nests

Ingredients

- 200g white chocolate, melted
- 100g glace cherries (chopped into small pieces) or 100g of finely chopped nuts
- 85g (one and a half cups) shredded coconut
- Packet of small chocolate Easter eggs or jelly beans
- Vegetable oil (for greasing)

Method

1. Mix chocolate, coconut and cherries or nuts in a bowl and spoon mixture into each muffin pan making sure to coat sides as well.
2. Press the mixture down in the centre of each pan to make an indent (like a nest).
3. Pop in the fridge and allow to set for at least an hour.
4. Remove the nests from the pans. Place a chocolate egg or two or some jellybeans in each nest.
Cleaning only $10 for three hours
Home and Community Care available for eligible Ipswich residents over 65.
Includes living areas, windows, blinds, fans, hard to reach spots in the cupboard!
Get in fast as the calendar is filling up quickly.
Join ComLink for free by phoning 3280 7600.

Tenant of the season awards
For your chance to win a $20 gift voucher and a ‘tenant of the season’ award, ensure your rent account is two weeks in advance, and you have no outstanding charges or ongoing tenancy issues. The lucky winners will be selected from these eligible tenants.
This season, we would like to thank and congratulate the following tenants:
**Brisbane – Stan**
Stan has gone above and beyond in his community by cleaning out the bins after they were left in a very poor state over Christmas. He also contributes to maintaining a vegetable patch in the community garden.

**Ipswich – Gayle**
Gayle regularly removes junk mail dropped in the letterbox area and returns mail for previous tenants at her unit development. She also assists to dispose of items inappropriately left in the communal bin area.

**Brisbane – Ted**
Ted is has been going above and beyond in his community by taking the initiative to clean out the communal bins at his unit complex.

Queensland electricity rebate
Eligible customers can receive a rebate of up to $320 per year, paid as a daily rate. The rebate is available to the following card holders: Pensioner Concession, Veterans’ Affairs Gold (widow/er) and Queensland Seniors. Contact your electricity provider to find out more.

Renters at Home research
The experiences of people who rent have not often been captured, but a Griffith University research project, supported by Churches of Christ, aims to make sense of renters’ experiences.

The ‘Renters at Home’ research project investigates how ‘at home’ or comfortable people feel in their rental properties and why they feel that way.

Griffith University PhD researcher, Angela Ballard, with the support of Churches of Christ’s Community Chaplains, are collecting anonymous ‘rental tales’ of past and present experiences of renters that are significant to them. The aim is to build a substantial picture of the factors that help and/or hinder the feeling of being ‘at home’.

This research is important as ultimately it aims to inform and support community engagement in planning for better housing policies, services and practices for people in the rental market.

If you would like to take part in the research by telling your story of renting, please go to https://sites.google.com/a/griffithuni.edu.au/renters-at-home/home, and follow the instructions. On the website you can also download an app for your phone or tablet to complete the survey.
Office hours
Please note that all Churches of Christ Housing Services’ offices will be closed on Good Friday, 3 April and Easter Monday, 6 April.
Remember, the 1800 446 604 after-hours phone service is turned on when our offices are closed and is for emergencies only.

Office hours are: Monday to Friday
Brisbane 3327 1674 8.30am - 4.30pm
Ipswich 3436 8900 8.30am - 4.30pm
Gold Coast 5503 0974 8.30am - 4.30pm

Public holiday closures
3 April 2015 CLOSED
6 April 2015 CLOSED

New staff members
We would like to welcome our new team members Naomi Laws, Rodney Holmes and Julie Currie to the housing team.
Naomi is in the Housing Officer role for the Brisbane region. Rodney has been appointed as our Senior Service Support Officer for Quality and Compliance, and Julie Currie is the new Housing Administration Officer for Bribie Island.

Tree of Life
Poem by Gold Coast tenant S. Stallwood
Meandering through the valleys of a leafy other-world,
Where majestic timbers rise up to the sky,
Came swift the running horses with their riders,
Who, not seeing, very quickly passed me by.
They ranged on every mountain with their bugles,
And the sound it echoed long into the night,
They rode ‘till all were weary by the blowing,
Then fell when none remained with any might.
Anew the morning broke with distant thunder,
The trees were plundered all and in their glory,
Were laid out for the fellers wagon,
To be cut up, sold and made into a story;
Into books that have a shelf life for a moment,
Into tracts designed to entertain the idle;
Some to everlasting life in living memory,
Appear on shelves entitled always ’Holy Bible’.

What’s on near you this season free community events

Brisbane
Costumes from the Golden Age of Hollywood - 10am – 5pm daily until 24 May, at the Museum of Brisbane
Gives visitors a glimpse into Hollywood of the 1920s to 1960s through a collection of costumes and props connected to the cinema’s most iconic stars, studios and designers. For more information go to: brisbane.qld.gov.au/whats-on/venue

Ipswich
Handmade Expo Market – 8am – 2pm Wed 15 April, at the Ipswich Turf Club
A market with stalls of handmade goods and craft supplies. Artisans and craftspeople are local and from outside the area. The Qld Pioneer Steam Train runs in conjunction with the market every month. For more information go to: ipswich.qld.gov.au/about_ipswich/community-events

Gold Coast
ANZAC Poppy Art Project – 9am - 6pm 17 to 25 April, at Currumbin Beach
Elephant Rock will be clothed in red handmade poppies as a remembrance piece and backdrop to the Dawn Service whose reverence captivates its audience and whose tides symbolise the shores of Gallipoli. For more information go to: goldcoast.qld.gov.au/events-118.html

Sunshine Coast
A Concert for Peace to Commemorate the Anzac Centenary - 7pm 18 Apr to 3pm 19 April, at The J Theatre, Noosa Heads
As a prelude to the landing on Gallipoli 100 years ago, Noosa Chorale is presenting an Anzac tribute – ‘The Armed Man’ by Karl Jenkins. For more information go to: community.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/event/
Easter colouring competition
The winner of each age category will receive a $10 gift voucher. Maximum of one entry per child. Competition closes 30 April 2015 and winners will be announced in the next edition of Tenant News. **Age categories:** a. 6 years and under b. 7 - 9 years c. 10 - 12 years.
Entries can be submitted at any of our offices or mailed to:
Churches of Christ Housing Services
PO Box 508
Kenmore QLD 4069

Name: [ ]
Address: [ ]