



# Housing PEOPLE

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## First Director Appointed for Community Housing Aotearoa Inc.

**Therese Quinlivan has been named CHAI's first Director, based in Wellington. Therese arrives from the UK with a wealth of Community Housing experience and the drive and necessary energy to build a solid structure of support to community housing providers across the country.**

In England she established and managed the Guinness Trust Home Improvement Agency. The agency helps older, disabled and low-income homeowners to maintain and adapt their homes. "Community-based housing is about local people identifying local needs and taking ownership of what's happening within the community. It's about creating a culture. And the skills that I developed in past roles will support my work here in New Zealand."

Therese continues to say, "My role here will be to help community-based housing gain more recognition as a viable option. Inviting everybody in community housing organisations to come together under our umbrella will serve to provide them with one voice and a greater level of support. Some of our members may have half a dozen properties while others will have hundreds of properties. They will all benefit from the support we are able to give them through good practice guides, sample policies, procedures and business plans. Our aim is to assist with the 'hows' and 'whys' of running a community housing group, and translating it into a local need."

"Research to be undertaken by CHRANZ on assessing the current and potential contribution of the community housing sector will assist us to uncover where the needs are and how we can be the most supportive. So far, I consider our obstacles in New Zealand to be affordability, the suitability of housing to

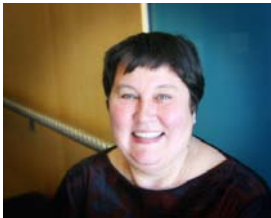
meet cultural needs, overcrowding and sub-standard housing stock leading to poor health. Healthy homes mean healthy inhabitants, and if we can identify what the issues are, we can address them. Gathering the research and lobbying government on behalf of a growing membership base will only serve to improve what we have to offer."

Established in 2004, CHAI now represents over 140 membership organisations including churches, non-profit community groups, Maori and Pacific Island housing providers and others.



Therese Quinlivan, CHAI's Director

# Welcome to the New Year Edition of Housing People for 2007



**Joan Ferguson, CEO of the AHI, speaks to us about the year ahead, the plans and aspirations for the Institute, and how we can meet the needs of our members in a time of changing social housing policy.**

"The AHI, now more than ever, is calling on members to comment and express their opinions on important social housing issues. It is our intention to make a valuable contribution to discussions about the future of social housing. In Australia the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement is due for renegotiation. This is a good time to think about what constitutes a modern housing system which suits people today and in the coming years.

Members will have the opportunity to discuss issues, express their opinions and share ideas in some different forums this year. *HousingWORKS* will continue to be the primary means for individuals to put forward well thought through reflections on housing policy issues. In addition, we will be asking members to express their opinions about aspects of social housing policy. These opinions will become a new feature of *Housing People*, starting in February 2007. Branch Committees will be hosting some short discussion forums on selected issues over breakfast, lunch or the happy hour. These forums will be reasonably informal and will be about hearing from each other.

*HousingWORKS* will now come out three times a year, with the first edition of 2007 in the mail after Easter. Robin Zakharov and the other members of the Editorial Committee are putting together a fabulous issue which looks at some important issues in social housing policy. If you would like to make a contribution to a future edition please let me know. We are hoping to continue the emphasis on policy in the second edition of 2007, with the third edition focusing on social housing in New Zealand. We are always very keen to receive feedback. I would like to hear your thoughts about the November 2006 edition. I know I really enjoyed reading about the work social housing professionals are doing all around the country to sustain tenancies and would be very interested in hearing from members either about the content of *HousingWORKS* or any projects you are working on to sustain tenancies.

Judith Wootton is doing a fabulous job co-coordinating the professional development program. Customers tell

us that last year's program was good – our average evaluation score across all events was 4.29 out of 5. It is our intention to keep up the good work and offer workshops and seminars social housing professionals find useful and interesting. We will continue to run the Mental Health First Aid training and will add a new workshop which provides practical strategies for working with complex clients. Kath Hulse will be the principal speaker in a seminar series looking at issues in social housing allocations in the middle of the year. Panels of local policy and practice experts who will provide a local view of the issues will join Kath. Other seminars looking at issues such as regulation and accreditation in community housing and the differences between the New Zealand and Australian housing systems are in the planning stage.

I'd like to encourage you to help recruit new members. As a matter of fact, if you introduce *five* new members, your membership is free. Don't forget that the benefits of membership include entitlement to the National Building and Surveying Alliance Member Benefits Program. We are enthusiastic about the year ahead, and support from our members will help us in getting it right.

I'm off to the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference at Harrogate this June; keeping abreast of what our colleagues in the UK are dealing with. I have two free passes to the conference to offer any of our members, so if you are interested please send an expression of interest directly to me via our website.

Speaking of the UK, we had Sarah Webb from the CIH in the UK, here in November. Sarah and Kath Hulse presented an interesting seminar in Melbourne on UK Housing Policy. Participants enthusiastically commented on the seminar as 'fantastic, very relevant and useful'. Sarah's accessible, relaxed, and informative discussion style outlined the many issues we share with the UK. It was very timely for us to have Sarah share some of the more useful details particularly around looking at new options in the affordable housing debate. All in all, it was an informative seminar to assist us in policy direction here in Australia.

I would very much like to welcome all the new members to the Institute and say good-bye and thank you to those members who are moving on to other sectors.

I'd personally like to thank each one of you for your continuing support, and I look forward to facing the challenges of the year ahead with you."

# Maori visit to the Black Housing Conference in the UK

The Federation of Black Housing Organisations works with black and minority ethnic associations, individuals and key partners to promote and work for a diverse, innovative and dynamic social housing sector in the UK. *Housing People* spoke with Barrington Billings, who is with the Chartered Institute of Housing in the UK and the Federation of Black Housing Organisations, about the recent FBHO conference in November, and in particular, about the influence of a particular group of Maori delegates...



"As a cultural exchange, we are always interested in other country's approaches to either indigenous, black, minority or ethnic groups. And in particular, the benefits of the Maori delegation at this conference was to remind us of our spiritual links with our ancestors, something we have started to lose here in the UK. It was a real reminder of how important our strong spiritual nature as a community has formed who we are today."

"Raewyn Tipene and her group received a standing ovation at the conference, as they shared with us simple life experience, knowledge and ancient wisdom. Teaching us of the importance of respect for our Elders and the contribution that they make to our community."



Raewyn Tipene presents at the Black Housing Conference in the UK

We view our Maori friends as a valuable international link, and one we would like to nurture."

"Our major influence to date has been the African American model, yet we have also drawn from the Native American community as well. I am also very interested in the Aboriginal culture in Australia, and am hoping that next year we will hear more from their community. Looking beyond traditional boundaries will allow us to cement an exchange that focuses on the challenges we all have to overcome. Whether they are economically or culturally driven."

"The conference focused on Transformational Leadership in Diverse Communities; creating leaders for tomorrow. We explored how black housing organisations have contributed to education, health and social care, and I think the premise for the conference appealed to the New Zealand delegates. Particularly surrounding the practical aspects of health related issues."

Raewyn Tipene, AHI's new Board member in New Zealand was equally enthusiastic about her visit to the UK. "The CIH was a real eye opener for me and clearly showed the difference in approaches to housing between New Zealand and the UK. It's not just the scale difference but the level of importance housing has in the UK psyche — something that's clearly missing here in New Zealand. To be honest, housing just doesn't have a profile in New Zealand unless there's a fatality or similar. To see the value placed on having a 'Housing Degree' and the possible career paths in the sector was just amazing. Here in New Zealand, housing is a thing you do on the side of health, welfare and education. So from that perspective alone the trip was worthwhile."

# Australasian Impressions from Sarah Webb, Chartered Institute of Housing UK



*Housing People* spoke with Sarah Webb, who is the Deputy Chief Executive of the CIH, after her recent visit to Australia and New Zealand. Sarah was keynote speaker at the Affordable Housing Conference in Wellington. She also attended the AHI's recent AGM, and combined this with some time spent discovering new impressions on the issues surrounding social housing in our region.

"The biggest difference between the issues in the UK and those in Australia and New Zealand, seem to be the scale of social housing and the impacts this has on what we do

and how we do it. If you only have three percent of your stock as social rented, then it's much harder to have an impact. It's also harder to make a profession out of social housing; I think we have far more support mechanisms and infrastructure in place to support professionals because we have so many more of them. Contrast CIH with AHI!" Having said this, Sarah was also quick to point out that she felt "inspired to hear what great things people are doing despite the organisation (AHI) being so small compared to CIH and the real appetite for people to connect up with one another more and share experiences."

"On one level, we are all facing the same broad problems; in particular the lack of affordable housing. House price increases are extremely high in all three countries, with particular hotspots in London, Perth and Auckland. When I was in Melbourne there was a news story about a 46 per cent house price increase in one month in Perth. At the heart of this problem is economic success; which is a paradox, as the lack of affordable housing then begins to have a negative impact on economic growth."

"Comparing the balance between home owning and home renting was also interesting. The UK government is worried that home ownership isn't high enough and is trying to promote a big increase in low cost home ownership. So successful has this been that we now have higher owner occupation rates than you; which I think came as a bit of a culture shock to some of your people. It begs all sorts of interesting questions about the future of social housing. I think you may be realizing the values of social renting at the same time we are think of moving away from it."

"Our housing association movement is also much more advanced; we have 2,000 associations and many now

own and manage thousands of properties. They are big enough to have significant borrowing capacity and can therefore fund a wide range of extra services."

"I was also really struck by what we would call in the UK, the community cohesion issues. We have a much larger number of different ethnic groups in the UK, and housing organisations that specialize in housing and employing these groups. We have equality and diversity targets for a wide range of things from employment to lettings, and a whole sector of housing associations that specialize in employing and housing people from ethnic minorities. In contrast I saw very little evidence of similar approaches with Aboriginal and Maori communities. There is, however, a parallel between how we treat our native gypsy / traveller population and how you treat Aborigines and Maoris; all equally badly I suspect."

"Another issue that was fascinating to me was the different attitude to planning control. In the UK, we are constantly complaining that planning regulations are not tight enough but we take a far more command and control approach than you do. We specify what percentage of affordable homes need to be included in any new development of private housing (you don't get planning permission if you don't do this) and in London the level is 50 per cent. We also have tighter controls on the housing mix.

Something else I noticed was that some of the many high-rise blocks of welfare housing I saw in Melbourne looked in relatively poor condition. I don't know what they were like on the inside, but we have learned the hard way that not investing in proper maintenance programs ends up costing you far more in the long run."

Sarah started her housing career working in front-line housing management in Scotland, has been involved in a number of homelessness research projects and has worked for a wide range of housing organisations including housing authorities, Scottish Homes and Scottish Council for Single Homeless. She has a particular interest in housing strategy, is a Board Member of Black Country Housing Association and sits on a number of national working groups.

# News from the Board...

## from Malcolm Downie, our President...

The Board travelled to Wellington and held their October meeting on the 26th and 27th in the building adjacent to the New Zealand Parliament known as the Beehive. The Hon Chris Carter MP Minister for Housing kindly hosted our visit and was the first of a number of guest speakers who came to meet with the Board and discuss issues relevant to workers within the New Zealand social housing system.

The Minister discussed the key thrust of the New Zealand Government's housing policies which were to increase the available housing options through greater diversification of the housing system — with involvement of the non government and private sectors in the provision of affordable rental housing and by increasing the access to home ownership through financing options for low income households. Minister Carter also reviewed the role his Government were playing in supply side interventions through projects such as Hobsonville, that are about creating housing opportunities and building the capacity of local communities.

The discussion highlighted the similarities and differences in the Australian and New Zealand housing systems and provided the Board with a very useful baseline for discussion later in the meeting on how the AHI can focus its products and services to best meet the needs of our New Zealand members.

Katrina Bach, Chief Executive, Department of Building and Housing joined the board meeting and presented an overview of New Zealand housing system issues from the perspective of her Department. Graham Bodman, Regional Manager Central Auckland HNZC



Katrina Bach, Chief Executive, Department of Building and Housing, with Malcolm Downie (centre) and Gary Williams



Members of the board meet with Hon Chris Carter, Minister for Housing (second from right)

also provided a presentation to the Board with insights into his two month exchange during 2006 with Fran Hylton, Regional Manager Elizabeth Housing SA and the issues confronting his workers in a rapidly expanding city region experiencing unprecedented growth in new migrants and property prices.



Board members visited a number of Housing New Zealand sites in Wellington, including this property in Porirua

On Monday 30 October the Board attended the National Housing Conference on Affordable Housing, followed by our AGM, which was well attended by our New Zealand members. Speakers at both the conference and the AGM highlighted the issues surrounding the provision of sufficient low cost housing to meet demand in a rising property market. There were many good examples of social housing and home financing schemes operating effectively — Including the time it takes to get these projects off the ground, due to planning delays and the additional contributions required for new infrastructure.

## Mark Groote reports from South Australia...



**Planning is underway by the AHI SA Branch for a busy 2007! A number of events have been scoped for consideration including a series of breakfasts for members with key housing speakers.**

A review of the past 12 months in South Australia highlights a range of activities and changes to the social housing sector. Significant housing reforms announced by the Minister for Housing provides an exciting opportunity to effect generational change to service delivery, and work is underway to develop a new service delivery model. AHI members are keen to understand what the benefits of this will be, and will participate in consultation in early 2007. South Australia continued its successful seminar series on *Supporting Families, Sustaining Tenancies*. This was delivered across Australia and New Zealand and provided an opportunity to showcase and

debate some of the successful tenancy models being implemented across social housing in South Australia. We also hosted a well-attended Affordable Housing forum in October.

The AHI Board Meeting and AGM held in Wellington provided an excellent opportunity for the Board to meet with a wide number of New Zealand members of the Institute, as well as with the Minister for Housing. A tour of local HNZC developments provided AHI Board Members with many new ideas and innovative ways of providing housing and related services. Attendance at the Wellington Council's Affordable Housing forum also highlighted many new innovations in the affordable housing agenda, and their applicability to the Australian housing sector.

## Career Profile on Western Australia's Nola Kunnen

**The warmth and enthusiasm come beaming down the line. Nola Kunnen sounds like a woman in exactly the right place at exactly the right time because she knows she can make a difference to people's lives through her work. As Deputy Director at Alcoa Research Centre for Stronger Communities, Nola has extensive experience in research and practice. Her work includes research and consultancy for government and community organisations. This she combines with teaching undergraduate and postgraduate community practice and social policy and social research at Curtin University.**



Nola says, "There are two things at the moment which fascinate me. The first is the Department of Housing and Works (Western Australia) review of housing service delivery. It has significant review scope in terms of housing services and a wide scope direction of housing in WA. For me, this is an engaging and challenging process.

"The second one I consider a small, yet important project, and it's one I am working on with a couple of colleagues, it involves research into the 'Big Issue Magazine' in Australia. 'The Big Issue', which you may be familiar with, is an example of smart press as a social enterprise. The people publishing the magazine are from a variety of backgrounds, and likely to have experience

themselves with homelessness."

"I'm interested in what makes a difference to people in helping them to 'get back on their feet'. The work that I've done so far leads me to a place of looking at services that work and what good service looks like — adopting awareness about what best practice looks like by having the voices heard of the people who use and provide the services."

Reflecting on 20 years of social housing, Nola's emphasis has been on good practice and responsive service delivery. She promotes the involvement of community stakeholders, service providers and service users in research with the aim of ensuring that research is informed by experience and practice.

## Rhonda Phillips talks to us about Common Housing Registers

Rhonda Phillips has been involved in post graduate research into access to social housing in multi providers systems, which has included a study of common housing registers in the UK and Canada. Increased policy attention in Australia, including the Queensland Government's policy commitment to introduce common housing registers, has seen Rhonda recently sharing her research and discoveries.

Common housing registers have emerged in a context of increased targeting to high need clients and an expanded role for non-government social housing providers. They have the potential to significantly impact on client access arrangements and work practices within public and community housing organisations.

Rhonda talks to us about her work in helping the policy process and the possibility of informed outcomes. "I like to think that we can encourage 'real' discussion on how common housing registers will apply in a variety of context throughout Australia. I've tried to take a reasonably controversial approach, in an attempt to clarify the benefits and the issues, and to get people to think carefully about the implications of such a system here in Australia."

Rhonda recently presented a well-attended seminar in Perth, Brisbane and Townsville. Additional events are planned for Sydney and Melbourne in 2007. "Evaluation ratings are high on these seminars as attendees are finding them useful, practical and relevant. Participants are learning about the different overseas approaches and experiences in implementing common housing registers as well as hearing about the outcomes of Queensland research. An open discussion that explores their purpose and role in a changing policy and service

delivery environment encourages participants to understand the risks and the benefits for both clients and housing providers."

"These seminars should attract a broad range of people including social housing and public policy professionals with an interest in the policy, program management and practice implications of common housing registers. Client service managers and frontline workers from public and community housing sectors will also find value, as well as workers in support services with an interest in the access of their clients to social housing."

Rhonda Phillips is currently a researcher with the Housing Policy and Research Group at the University of Queensland Social Research Centre. She is completing post graduate research and working on AHURI funded research. Rhonda has 30 years community and public sector experience in social policy roles including seven years as a senior executive with the Queensland Department of Housing. Rhonda has extensive social housing policy and service delivery knowledge and is recognised nationally for her contribution during twenty years in the areas of homelessness, community housing, public housing and Indigenous housing.



## The Emphasis on Service to Our Members

**Growth, change and an eye for the future means that the AHI has stepped up its capacity as a member-driven organisation. We are delighted to announce that Penny Mitchell and Donna Davis have joined our Head Office in Bega, NSW as our new Administrative Assistants. Penny's role will focus on Office Management and Donna is in charge of Membership Administration.**

Penny moved to the pristine beauty of the Far South Coast thirteen years ago. She had previously been a professional city girl, until the lure of a natural lifestyle and time to ride her horse became a priority in her life. The idea of utilizing her skills and remaining close to home is

a bonus to Penny as she finds her way around the new office.

"We really are very lucky to live in such a beautiful part of the country. The national parks and beaches

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particularly, make it a very special place to be. I guess as any rural or regional centre has its downsides, it's been the chance of a good job that's been missing – until now. I've had previous roles in both Sydney and Melbourne as a Personal Assistant in a corporate environment, so I can see that my skills are well suited to what's happening at the AHI", says Penny.

Penny continues to say, "A career highlight for me was working with the Commonwealth Rehab Service, working with people in need. It was a great job because we always had a caring attitude towards our clients and their particular needs. It's very satisfying to assist people who are either injured or disabled return to the normal activities of daily life."

With an enthusiastic and caring attitude, Penny is a definite asset to the future of the AHI. Welcome Penny!

Donna is presently completing her studies in Business Administration (Certificate III), and is combining her part-time role with the AHI with being a mother too! She is excited to be part of the AHI team and feels that this job is the pivotal change in career direction that she needed.

"This year has been a big one for me", says Donna. "I love working with computers and feel privileged to be working with Joan Ferguson and the AHI. It seems that everything I've wanted to do is becoming possible



Penny Mitchell (left) and Donna Davis – our new admin team

this year. I like the idea of working in social housing and being service-oriented. I particularly like the idea of supporting those service providers who are helping people with the basic needs of putting a roof over people's heads."

Donna is learning to play the violin, after many years of wishing she could. She's doing work she has only dreamed of in the past, and is excited and grateful for her new direction in life. Donna's enthusiasm, willingness to learn, and great new skills are very welcome in our new office!

## AHI membership financial benefits

### National Building and Surveying Alliance Member Benefits Program

As a fully paid up to date member of the AHI your membership entitles you to many benefits, including the member benefits program for The National Building and Surveying Alliance. Have a look at what's available now:

|               |   |                              |                             |
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