



Housing PEOPLE

www.housinginstitute.org



The lead up to Christmas and the summer holiday is a frantic time for everyone, but also time to reflect on times past and our hopes and dreams for the year ahead.

This month we celebrated the achievements of social housing professionals in three jurisdictions, with more presentations to come early next year. In social housing there is much to celebrate; our members are doing a great job tackling some very big issues. However, there is also a lot to be done.

Members in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne will have the opportunity to discuss their aspirations for the future of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement during the last week of January. We know some of you will still be on holiday, but we want the Institute to contribute to the broader discussions based on the views of members.

Tackling climate change is firmly on the agenda. Social housing professionals are already making a significant contribution. What more can we do? The Institute will establish a social housing and sustainability working group in 2008. If you are interested in joining this group give me a call.

The National Housing Conference in Sydney (20th–22nd February) provides us with a terrific opportunity to share our experience, catch up with

colleagues and learn about some interesting initiatives in other countries. The Institute will host two conference sessions, one on the implications of targeting and the other about managing demanding behaviours. Both sessions will feature a mix of policy and practice commentators and we will encourage high levels of audience participation in the discussion. We will present the Australasian Professional Excellence in Social Housing Awards just before the opening reception. We will also launch our Social Housing Professionals Exhibition. The first installment of this exhibition was opened during Housing Week in Melbourne, to much acclaim.

There are many people to thank for their incredible work over the year past. The great thing is that this list gets longer every year, with the stalwarts still hanging on and newer faces joining in all the time.

Social housing matters. We are all in this together. The Institute is an opportunity for us all, so do what you can to make your professional institute a success in 2008. For each and every one I give you the task of recruiting one new member by March 2008.

Best wishes to you and yours

Joan

Congratulations!

Professional Excellence Award Nominees

Social housing professionals from around New Zealand and Australia are celebrating their achievements this month with awards presentations in Christchurch, Brisbane and Sydney. The Institute presents these awards to social housing people, nominated by their colleagues. The awards recognise and reward excellence in social housing professional practice.

We will present the Tasmanian and West Australian awards in early February 2008. Victorian awards were presented in September 2007 during Housing Week.

The Institute's purpose in presenting these awards is to

- > reward great work and achievements by individuals and teams
- > recognise best practice and high standards of service
- > promote and celebrate innovation
- > develop and increase the profile of our profession

We will present the overall Australasian awards at the National Housing Conference on 20th February 2008. The judging panel will consider the winners from each jurisdiction to choose the overall winners.

Full details about each of the award winners will be available on the website after the Tasmanian and West Australian awards are presented.

New Zealand Awards

Outstanding Contribution to Social Housing
– Blair Badcock

Inspirational Colleague – Wahid Ahmed

Member of the Year – Judith LeHarivel

Excellence in asset management practice
– HNZA Property Improvement Team

Outstanding contribution to delivery of support solutions – Comcare, Christchurch

Outstanding contribution to community renewal or urban regeneration – Talbot Park Renewal Project Team

Queensland Awards

Outstanding Achievement in Social Housing
– Brisbane Housing Company

Inspirational Colleague – Rod Harbourne

Member of the Year – Robin Zakharov

Resident led initiative – The Community Retrievers Group

Outstanding contribution to delivery of support solutions – Wendy Hovard

Outstanding contribution to community renewal or urban regeneration – Lynn McNeilly



Rod Harbourne



Lynn McNeilly



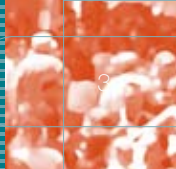
Lisa Flowers and John Chacko



The Community Retrievers



Brisbane Housing Company



Professional Excellence Award Nominees *continued*

New South Wales Awards

Outstanding contribution in social housing

– Vivienne Milligan

Member of the Year – Unis Goh

Inspirational Colleague – Kathy Williams

Housing Management Practice

– North Coast Access Team

Asset Management Practice – John Gregory

Delivering support solutions – Dan Mulvany

and Tarsa Linsdell Mt Druitt Probation and

Parole Homelessness Project

A resident-led initiative – South Western Regional

Tenants Association

Delivering community renewal or urban regeneration

– Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project Team

Increasing environmental sustainability

– The Water Management Unit, Housing NSW

Special Award: Developing Social Housing

Professionals – Aboriginal Mentors Program



Wendy Malycha, Malcolm Downie and John Gregory



The North Coast Access Team



Michelle Stubbs



Lawrence Tiller



The Riverwood Crew



Deborah Georgiou



Kathy Williams

Homelessness, Health and Housing Expo

“I think this expo is the best we have done so far. The stallholders were outstanding,” said Margo Johnson, Sector Development Office with Shelter SA, which organises the annual event.

“They really went to town on their stalls, with opportunities for meaningful interaction between participants and organisations, offering free raffles for items highly prized among mobile populations, such as toiletries and carry bags.”

The Homelessness, Health and Housing Expo is an annual open-air, multi-agency event, designed to provide homeless people with the opportunity to seek advice from a range of health and housing service providers in one place.

However, Margo was alarmed by the enormous jump in the number of housed people on low incomes who attended this year’s event, in Adelaide’s Whitmore Square Park in November.

Last year, just one or two percent of participants were housed people on low incomes. This year, the figure was around 30 percent.

About 260–280 people in total visited the expo – a slightly lower figure than last year, which Margo attributes to the extreme heat, which may have discouraged older people, the disabled and those with young families from attending.

“We have generally seen an increase in need among the housed populations on low incomes – and our experience at this year’s expo supports this trend,” Margo said. “Many services have reported rising demand for support among low-income families.

“We have a new sub-class of people in need – the increase in cost of living (i.e. petrol, rent, groceries) has an immediate impact on the living standards of these low-income families.”

Despite this disturbing trend, the expo remained an “upbeat event”. This year, free hair cuts were available thanks to Adelaide hairdresser, Suzy Ray, along with a free steak and salad lunch, live entertainment, art and sporting activities.

“Simple things like being able to get a hair cut can make an enormous difference to the way people feel about themselves, yet it is usually the last thing on the list to get done because of the cost,” Margo observed.

For further information and about the Homelessness, Health and Housing Expo, visit: www.sheltersa.asn.au

25 Years of Tenant Protection in Christchurch

Helping people to obtain and maintain a roof over their head is Helen Gatonyi’s highest priority – both literally and figuratively speaking!

“Housing is integral to everything,” she said. “No roof, no security whatsoever. Get housing right, and people can start to address other issues in their life.”

As manager of the Tenants Protection Association Christchurch, which recently celebrated its 25th year of incorporation, Helen and two colleagues receive about 6000 enquiries each year to keep a roof over their head – and the figure is climbing.

“It’s going to be up around the 7000 or 8000 this year,” she predicted. “I think that’s because of people’s inability to access affordable housing.”

After 16 years with the Christchurch TPA, which provides advice, information and advocacy services for tenants, Helen is “not altogether convinced” that the housing situation in New Zealand has improved much.

“Indeed for large numbers and sectors of our communities I believe it is actually worse in many respects,” she declared.

“I think that poverty is the underlying issue. In a community such as New Zealand with the high employment rate that we have and the success for many – unfortunately the unemployed and the most vulnerable have fallen much further behind and the division is so much greater between ‘the haves’ and ‘the have nots’.”

Around the time the Christchurch TPA was established, Helen herself was working on behalf of ‘the haves’ – in property management in Wellington – and had been a home-owner since the age of 21. But she didn’t like what she was seeing.

“As a property manager, I saw cases of inequality and discrimination,” she said. “It was blatant in those days, before the introduction of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1986*.

story continued next page

25 Years of Tenant Protection in Christchurch *continued*

"I'm not saying that discrimination doesn't exist now – it does – but it's not quite as overt as it was then – and that's what really drove me into social justice, to pursue it as a work option."

Education is an increasingly important component of the TPA's core services. The organisation organises about 60 education sessions annually, which mainly target young people, but are also available to other service providers.

"One of the things that is very clear is how uninformed people are about tenancy and what that means," she observed.

"I sometimes think people don't see a tenancy agreement as a legal contract and one of the things that we have mooted – because I'm involved in both regional and national tenancy councils – is that we actually start changing the language around tenancy leases and agreements, and call them what they are – contracts."

While legal requirements are an important issue, they do not dominate the workshops, which take an holistic approach to the subject of tenancy and employs "a very participatory model" of learning.

"We talk about home and homelessness as an opening gambit," Helen said. "We talk about 'home' as opposed to 'housing', because it gets people, particularly young people, to think about what home means to them and the choices that they make around creating a home and keeping a home."

"While the workshop discusses what you need to know about a tenancy, including the rights and responsibilities of tenants under the legislation, the more important thing is what you need to know in terms of living well in your community and how you make choices around it. That's really what the education is focused on."

The workshop, which is usually held at schools, training organisations and other tertiary institutions, had proved popular with young people, "because you are not standing up there preaching to them", Helen added.

While Helen and her colleagues at the Christchurch TPA spend most of their time supporting and advising tenants and would-be tenants, they have not developed a 'them' and 'us' attitude towards landlords.

On the contrary, for the past six years the TPA has run a housing forum every six weeks, where private property developers and members of the real estate institute rub shoulders with government and non-government social housing providers. The forum currently boasts 300-400 members.

"The main goals of the forum have been networking, trust-building and the sharing of information," Helen said. "It is not a lobbying group as such, however it is powerful in its own right, because it is such a good source of information and looked upon as that by government."

Helen is keen to draw more landlords into the TPA's orbit. The organisation will soon take on an additional fulltime staff member to coordinate the TPA's newly upgraded Supporting Vulnerable Tenancies Program, which aims to educate and recruit private sector landlords to provide accommodation for a number of people who could currently be on the waiting list for social housing.

"Many of the people sitting on waiting lists for social housing here in New Zealand are people who are not necessarily unable to access private sector accommodation," Helen observed.

"However, they want security of tenure, and because they find it difficult to retain tenancies, they believe the only way they will obtain security of tenure is through social housing with the government or the city councils. Sometimes you see families that have moved four or five times within a couple of years."

"We are targeting private sector landlords to come onboard with us to implement the SVT program," Helen said.

"It really is all about selling the idea to landlords: showing them the benefits, such as receiving rent on time 'direct from source' – the employer/social welfare. TPA will monitor this, and having a third party who can also assist during any tenancy hiccups."

"All these measures will help to protect the landlord's interest in the property. Everything we do at TPA is about seeking a win-win outcome. With SVT, keeping tenants in the private sector will free up social housing for those who most need it."

Ironically, Helen, who received a Queen's Service Medal in the New Year's Honours List, has spent the last eight years in rental accommodation – and she hates it.

"I hate it because there is no stability in it," she said. "I am a home-maker and although I have created a beautiful home out of the four tenancies I've been in during that time, I still feel afraid when I put another nail in the wall."

"When we ask the question at our education workshops – what is your life's dream around home? – without exception, people say they want to own their own place Helen said. "They still want home ownership – a place to call home."

Meet the Board



Wendy Malycha



Therese Quinlivan

This year we welcome six new Directors to the team

Neil Sandall
Andrew MacGregor
Lynden Pennicott
Wendy Malycha
Sheila Shenton
Therese Quinlivan

The Directors of our company for 2008 are

President

Shane Edmonds, Western Australia

Branch Committee Representatives

Nicole Randall, Queensland
 Neil Sandall, New South Wales
 Andrew MacGregor, Victoria
 Lynden Pennicott, Tasmania
 Roger Jameson, New Zealand
 Wendy Malycha, South Australia
 Sheila Shenton, Western Australia

Community Housing Representative

Therese Quinlivan, New Zealand

Indigenous Representative

Garry Gardiner, Northern Territory

Volunteer Representative

Garry Mallard, New South Wales

Rural Representative

Lawrence Tiller, New South Wales

This is a great new team to govern the organisation during the year ahead.