

# Housing PEOPLE



www.housinginstitute.org  
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Australasian **Housing** Institute

## A message from the CEO

Dear Members

I'd like to warmly, though rather belatedly, welcome you all to your first issue of *Housing People* for 2009.

The Australasian Housing Institute has had a busy and tumultuous start to the year. Three of our staff have departed in just three consecutive months – that's no small amount of upheaval for an organisation with just five part-time workers.

Paul Price, on secondment from Housing NSW, has begun some important work for the AHI by supporting the work of our Maori, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

working group. Jude Ridinsky, the freelance editor of *Housing Works* and *Housing People*, leaves the institute with our gratitude to continue her career.

Lastly and mostly, Angela Lemon, our much valued Personal Development coordinator, departed for greener pastures in March. Angela's tireless work in finalising a training calendar covering the next six months underlines the team's determination to keep the ship steaming ahead even in rough waters.

The professional development program for 2009 is well underway, with a dozen events already held

by mid-March, including breakfasts with the Ministers for Housing in NSW and New Zealand, and many more on the way (see *Diary Dates* later in this edition).

We also have a new communications officer and billions of dollars of new investment in social housing to debate and implement. All this spells a lively year for housing professionals and an exciting one ahead for the AHI.



Best Wishes  
Joan Ferguson

## Introducing ... the Institute's new communications all-rounder



A big hello to all members... and allow me introduce myself. My name is Martin Blaszczyk and I am your new communications officer.

When I first saw the position advertised last year I immediately thought 'The hours suit me well, the sector is hot on the agenda – this could be just the ticket.' Having now worked with Joan for a few weeks, I am more enthusiastic than ever about the scope of both my own position and the institute's future potential.

Having had experience across social policy development, advocacy, writing, editing and communications, I am really looking forward to all the varied aspects of the role. Apart from editing *Housing Works* and *Housing People*, I'll

be having a long fresh look at our website and these publications, as well as dabbling in some policy work.

As you may expect, I'm the kind of person constantly on the look out for story ideas (or any other ideas for that matter) – and especially for contributions. I am based in my home office in Canberra and would be happy to meet any of you with ideas to share. My contact details are below. Please – do get in touch!

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## AHI photo exhibition opens in Canberra



Photographer Naomi Mawson with the Hon Tanya Pilbersek MP, Minister for Housing

### The Institute's travelling photographic road show has finally hit the national capital.

Graciously launched by The Hon Tanya Pilbersek MP on Tuesday 10th March, 46 portraits of the AHI's members are now on show in a busy thoroughfare of Parliament House.

As she invited the minister to open the exhibition, AHI CEO Joan Ferguson said that these are the faces of those at the forefront of delivering the social housing component of the Rudd government's stimulus package.

"We wanted to debunk the myth of 'faceless bureaucrats'. These portraits capture the passion and individuality of volunteers, housing workers, public servants, academics and community builders," Joan said.

"We are proud of the hard work and dedication of our members. At a time when affordable housing has hit the peak of the national agenda, our aim was to create a lasting visual image of social housing professionals."

Minister Pilbersek noted her gratitude for the policy advice she has received from many of the exhibition's subjects and congratulated photographer Naomi Mawson (who was on hand to snap more pictures) on her achievement in corporate portraiture.

The exhibition – *Facing up to the challenge: Images of social housing people* – will be open daily from the 11th to the 27th of March, between the hours of 9am and 5pm, in the Presiding Officer's exhibition area at Parliament House, Canberra. All members who are able to are strongly encouraged to attend.



## AHI NOTICES New Feature – Engage!

Welcome to the institute's newest interactive communications initiative – Engage!

**Engage!** is a new mechanism for the AHI's members to become involved with hot housing issues, the current policy agenda and the key policy makers of our time. Your feedback will directly shape the institute's activities. It's an innovative way to take your views to the right people at the right time.

Our very first topic for Engage! is capability and capacity within public sector housing departments. During Q&A on ABC Television recently, Scott Morrison, Shadow Minister for Housing, suggested

that state governments could not deliver the social housing elements of the stimulus package within the two year timeframe.

Below is an excerpt from the programme. Click here to view the full transcript.

SCOTT MORRISON: "The Government's also put \$6 billion out there for new social housing projects. Now, it took eight years last time for the states and territories to spend that much money to build new housing in the public sector. They want to now do

that in less than two years. Now, I wouldn't trust Nathan Rees to take out the bins, let alone achieve that sort of target."

**Poll Question:** *Do you believe that state housing authorities will deliver on the target for social housing dwellings within the timeframe set out by the Rudd Government's stimulus package? Why / Why not?*

**Send your replies to:** martin.blaszczyk@housinginstitute.org



The Hon  
Phil Heatley,  
Minister for  
Housing

## NZ Housing Minister breakfasts with AHI members

On 12th March New Zealand's new Minister for Housing, The Hon Phil Heatley, spoke at a breakfast with members of the institute in Wellington. By all accounts both the participants and the minister enjoyed the encounter, with the latter staying half an hour longer than anticipated.

"After just over 100 days in office, I am happy to report that the government has already made some significant steps in ensuring secure, healthy and affordable housing for all New Zealanders," Minister Heatley announced.

Look out for an extended interview with Phil Heatley in the next edition of *Housing Works*. The full transcript of the minister's speech to members is also available on the institute's website at <http://www.housinginstitute.org>

## Meet a new member...

**As the Section Manager for Housing Research and Data at FAHCSIA, Helen Fletcher is the sort of person who feels right at home working at the heart of the federal government's housing policy think tank.**

"It's a golden period for housing at the moment," she says. "When you talk about all the issues at the forefront of social policy – housing, accommodation security and affordability are always at the forefront of the equation – it's a plank that people build their lives on."

Helen's career in housing spans 18 years, beginning in financial management for the former ACT Housing and Community Services Bureau. After six years, Helen made a huge transition when she became manager of a major regional office in Woden.

"That would be good for you, they said – go and do some tenancy management!" Helen says. "That was quite confronting initially; when you're doing financial management housing tenants are not your direct clients and stakeholders. Thankfully I had a really terrific staff."

Through some further movement within the organisation, Helen's career made a stellar progression

when she became Director of Housing ACT, a job she did for a total of seven years (including an acting period).

Helen's present role is firmly grounded in housing research and data, working with AHURI and oversighting economists.

"Our primary focus is feeding the evidence basis into policy. And our minister is possibly the most evidence-hungry I've ever met!"

So why did she join the AHI? "I've been involved with the Institute right since its inception and have always been in contact. More recently I told Joan I just can't get around to writing the cheque – put it up on the website. When it happened – I joined!"

**If you're like Helen Fletcher, and simply haven't gotten around to signing up for membership of the Australasian Housing Institute, it's now easier than ever. Click here to download the simple one-page application form – and pay online!**



## March 29 is Neighbour Day!

**Neighbour Day is Australia's annual celebration of community, bringing together the people next door or across the street for a beer, a barbie or just a cuppa.**

"Since Neighbour Day began in 2003 it has been the catalyst for closer, friendlier relationships between neighbours right across the country," said Neighbour Day founder Andrew Heslop.

"The very idea behind Neighbour Day – encouraging residents to know each other and develop friendlier relationships – is critical to having healthy, happy suburbs and towns," he added.

AHI CEO Joan Ferguson said: "Social housing estates are some of the most closely-knit and vibrant communities in our society. I encourage all tenants and the organisations that support them to get involved in this worthwhile initiative."



On Sunday 29th March 2009, Andrew Heslop recommends that you:

- Say G'day to your neighbours
- Make a special effort to introduce yourself to older residents in your street and anyone who lives alone
- Leave your mobile and home telephone number for their use in an emergency
- Agree to keep in contact



## For the Diary

Event	Location	Date
Working with Clients with Drug / Alcohol Dependency	ALICE SPRINGS	27 March
Working with Complex and Demanding Clients	ALICE SPRINGS	26 March
Effectively Engaging Customers	DEVONPORT	1 April
Effectively Engaging Customers	DEVONPORT	2 April
Working with Complex and Demanding Clients	DEVONPORT	3 April
Mental Health First Aid Training	ADELAIDE	7 April
Working with Complex and Demanding Clients	CANBERRA	21 April
Working with Clients with Drug / Alcohol dependency	CANBERRA	22 April
Breakfast with Minister Rankine	ADELAIDE	22 April
Advanced Communication and Interview Techniques	BRISBANE	27 April
Working with Complex and Demanding Clients	HOBART	7 May

To register online visit the Events and Seminars home page at the AHl website

## The AHl Awards – Building on success

Last year, the Australasian Housing Institute Awards reached a new height of success, receiving around 200 nominations (check out the winners – see below). The institute is establishing a small working group, chaired by our Tasmanian Director Lynden Pennicott, to review the awards system and take it to the next level.

The institute welcomes any feedback from members on the awards as part of this review. Please contact Joan Ferguson at [joan.ferguson@housinginstitute.org](mailto:joan.ferguson@housinginstitute.org) to offer your comments.

## The AHl Professional Excellence in Social Housing Awards 2008 – The Winners

Award Category	NSW	VIC	TAS	NZ	SA	WA
OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT	Lynden Esdaile	Debra Shortis	Peter Willans	Blair Badcock	Doorways to Construction	Nadeem Khan
INSPIRATIONAL COLLEAGUE	Khoder (Karl) Saleh	Andrew McGregor	Mercia Bresnehan	Rosie Gallen	Molly Wakely	Garry Ellender
MEMBER OF THE YEAR	Mark Singer	NONE	Angela Percy	Judith Le Harivel	Shirley Trebilcock	NONE
HOUSING MANAGEMENT	Interim Common Access St George CH	OOH Wodonga Team	NONE	NONE	Matthew Woodward et al	Vincentcare
ASSET MANAGEMENT	Phillip Bockos	NONE	NONE	Christchurch City Council	Doorways to Construction	NONE
SUPPORT SOLUTIONS	Jenny Stewart (Illawarra Housing Trust)	NONE	Centacare	Whangerei Accessible Housing Trust	Philippa Aston	Vincentcare
RESIDENT-LED INITIATIVE	Silvana Guerra	NONE	Michael Maher	NONE	Marlene Littlewood	NONE
COMMUNITY RENEWAL	John Paszek	Christine Ferguson	NONE	NONE	Afton Housing Re-development Team	South Hedland New Living Program
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	Housing NSW	NONE	Youth Futures Inc	NONE	John Keipant	NONE
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	NSW FHA	OOH Service Improvement Team	None	Christchurch City Council	Lea Rebane	Neila Penny