

# AROUND THE HOUSE

SPRING 2017



Welcome  
to our new  
tenants

*Seaton resident Craig Sheehan is one of the many new tenants Unity has recently welcomed into our organisation.*



Unity Housing is pleased to welcome more than 2,000 new tenants following the recent transfer to our organisation of the management of 1,100 South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT) properties.

Unity has commenced the tenancy and property management of the 1,100 properties as part of the State Government's 'Renewing Our Streets and Suburbs' initiative to rejuvenate older generation SAHT homes and to build a stronger and more sustainable social housing system.

The project aims to improve the quality of housing for tenants, increase the supply of social and affordable housing, and to create safer communities and healthy neighbourhoods.

Unity has been allocated the management of approximately 780 properties in the Western Metropolitan area of Adelaide and 320 in the Limestone Coast region, and is one of five community housing providers involved in the transfer of housing management.

In total, the property and tenancy management of approximately 4,000 SAHT properties has recently been transferred to five community housing providers.

This will result in the development of new social and affordable housing and the refurbishment of many other ageing social housing properties in South Australia.

Renewal SA is the government body responsible for the oversight of all SAHT assets and for the delivery of these outcomes. They are working closely with Unity and SAHT to support tenants whose homes have been transferred to a community housing provider.

Unity has established dedicated teams of experienced staff for the Western Metropolitan area and Limestone Coast region, and has opened new offices in Mount Gambier and Seaton.

Unity welcomes and looks forward to delivering accommodation services and housing outcomes to our new tenants in the Western Metropolitan area and Limestone Coast region.

A special welcome to those of you who are reading Around the House for the first time. We trust your association with Unity will be a mutually beneficial one.

*Read about the welcome events we held for our new tenants on page 3.*



## Awarded book reveals Giselle's determination and bravery

*Shadows over the Sun*, a published book by Unity tenant Giselle Robin, received the National Association of Book Entrepreneurs (NABE) Winter 2017 Pinnacle Book Achievement Award and featured in expos in London, New York and Germany.

Each year, for the past 35 years, NABE presents some of the finest books published by their members. Giselle's book, an honest and emotional story that details her life growing up in World War II in Germany and a series of tragic events that followed, won Best Book in the Category of Autobiography.

"It's quite an achievement," she says. "I didn't think I would win anything, but you have to be in it to win it. I want people to read it and get hope out of it. You can always overcome obstacles when you have the will to do it."

Writing has been therapeutic for Giselle, who was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 1977.

"People did enjoy reading it," she says. "I had two people who read it in two days. I am very happy that people who read it are getting benefits out of it. Some people have written their own story because of it. "Because I have a mental illness, I had an inferiority complex but I always managed to face my challenges." The stigma and rejection was so hard at times. Now there are no more secrets. I felt so free, so amazingly free."

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Hello there! My name is Giselle Robin. You may remember me from the summer 2016 issue. In that editorial I invited you to share your story, photos and experiences in *Around the House*. This is not happening. What is stopping you? We are a great multicultural family with many different cultures. At our celebrations, you have the best opportunity to mingle and get to know the variety of other cultures.

Unity has an 85 percent rating for communication. That is an A performance. What about you? You can learn so much by communicating with others and be rewarded with acceptance and friendship. Nobody has to be lonely, you only have to make the first move – just by saying "Hello" and ask for permission to join the people you want to get to know better and be prepared with a question for what you want to know about them. After the first contact, you can keep going by phone, mail or using technology.

You can also join groups, communication centres or visit your library for their events. Everywhere you go you can meet new people and then write about your experience. Just do not stay alone. There is so much to discover with communication.

My words of wisdom for this edition are: "Confidence is minimising the negative and maximising the positive."

Take care,  
**Giselle**

Please send your contributions to  
[editor@unityhousing.org.au](mailto:editor@unityhousing.org.au).



*Shadows over the Sun* is available in all libraries and also online as an eBook.

# Unity hosts welcome events for new tenants



Unity is renowned as being a tenant-focused housing provider and we have been proactively engaging with our new tenants whose homes we are now managing on behalf of the South Australian Housing Trust.

In the lead up to the transfer, Unity held a series of welcome and information events for our new tenants in both the Limestone Coast and Western suburbs. The events provided an opportunity for tenants to meet our friendly and professional staff, find out more about Unity as a community housing provider, and understand how Unity will be managing their homes in these areas.

At the Western suburbs events, we collected tenants' details and entered every one into a door prize raffle. The winners were Mr Hammond from Grange and Miss Wilson from Royal Park.

As part of our commitment to ensure successful and sustainable tenancies and provide a sense of community, Unity has employed a Tenant Engagement Officer who attended the events.

A survey was conducted to gather tenants' views and expectations on engaging with their community and their Housing Officer. The information provided by all who participated was valuable. As part of the survey, all participants were entered into the draw to win one of three gift vouchers.

The winners were Mr Caminiti from Findon, Ms Watkins from Woodville West, and Ms Woolford from Kidman Park.

In the Limestone Coast area, welcome events were held at Naracoorte and Millicent. It was a great opportunity to take on board the concerns of tenants and be able to provide answers during this period of change. Special thanks to Newbery Park Primary School and Naracoorte South Primary School for making their facilities available.

Our Limestone Coast staff are now represented on forums across the region and will support community activities that will facilitate relationships with tenants and community members. Unity's Limestone Coast office is currently recruiting a Tenant Engagement Officer and we plan to announce the successful candidate in the near future. This role will aim to build a strong connection between Unity, tenants and their local community.

Two staff teams have been successfully recruited to support our new tenants. Each team has a Team Leader, Housing Officers, an Assistant Housing Officer/s, Maintenance Coordinators, a Tenant Engagement Officer, and an Assets Administration/Support Officer.

## Announcing our new outreach office locations

In the **Western suburbs** the office is located at Shop 4, 177 Tapleys Hill Road, Seaton, and is by appointment only.

In the **Limestone Coast** the offices are located at 23 George Street, Millicent, and 157 Smith Street, Naracoorte (at the Independent Learning Centre).

**Please liaise with your Housing Officer if you wish to arrange an appointment.**



## A WINNING SMILE FROM EAR TO EAR

“It’s completely impacted my life and now I like to smile and am confident talking to people.”

After living with partial plates for many years and not being proud of his smile, Eliot Geddes was thrilled to have the opportunity recently for a set of brand new teeth.

“Dental pain is the worst – it’s debilitating pain,” he says. “Recently, I was talking to a guy I knew and he told me about a place in the city that would take a look at my teeth, so I went and spoke to them. Unfortunately, they had discontinued the free program but after they met me, they hesitated. They made an exception and told me they thought I would see it through so they took a chance with me. This was one, out of nowhere, random impression that someone acted on. All I was doing was just being an Eliot. I was just being me and they saw something in that.”

Before long, Eliot – a tenant of The Terrace Boarding House – was attending a clinic at Marion once a week for appointments. “I was so happy about that,” he says. “It was so great getting out of the city once a week and exploring Marion shopping centre. I loved getting out and around to different places.”

Following the successful procedures, Eliot’s life has changed entirely and he can’t wipe the smile off his face. “This has given me so much back, I just can’t explain it,” he says. “It’s completely impacted my life and now I like to smile and am confident talking to people.”

## Advice, food and giveaways on offer at Health and Housing Expo

Shelter SA’s Homeless Connect: Health and Housing Expo is an annual event held during Anti-Poverty week in October.

This year’s expo will be held on Thursday, October

19 in Whitmore Square. The expo brings together participants and services in an effort to improve health, wellbeing and housing outcomes.



**The expo has been a great success for more than 10 years and it is anticipated an estimated 600 participants will attend this year’s event.**

The event brings together more than 50 services from across the homelessness, health and housing sectors, and is designed to provide free services, giveaways and meals to people who need it most.



# Carrington Street tenants benefit from shared garden

A driven group of tenants in Carrington Street have played a vital role in strengthening relationships with their neighbours, creating a community garden and advocating for increased safety where they live.

Earlier this year, a couple of tenants who live in a complex of 15 properties approached Unity's Community Development Worker, Mel Allsop, about the possibility of creating a community garden in their shared courtyard. Mel suggested to the tenants that they hold a barbecue to get the neighbours together and talk about different ideas and figure out what would work best.

Unity staff and tenants attended the barbecue and consultation with tenants was arranged by Mel. The barbecue was also held as a memorial for one of their neighbours who had recently passed away and whom they wanted the garden to be named after.

The consultation results showed there was a strong desire and need amongst the neighbours for a community garden where they could grow fresh produce. Mel helped the tenants plan what was needed, who would be responsible for specific tasks, and how the ongoing care for the garden would be delivered. Once this was approved, the materials were purchased and installed.



A working bee to install, fill and plant the garden beds took place, which saw six of the 15 tenants join in. A new tenant, who the rest of the group had not yet met, came and helped and was introduced to his neighbours. The team of six worked

together to position the beds and transport soil from the trailer and plant and water the seedlings. A lot of preparation was done by tenants in the lead up to this. They made up healthy compost to go at the bottom of the garden beds to provide healthy soil for the new seedlings.

The tenants took the lead in managing this project. They provided Mel with lists of resources they felt were the most appropriate for their needs.

They liaised with the company that delivered the garden beds and did the shopping for all of the tools and seedlings.

Since the beginning of the project, a number of tenants have strengthened their connections with each other and there is a really strong sense of community within the complex. Although there are some tenants who do not participate in the garden project, they are reaping the benefits from the project. A great example of this is the recent Crime Prevention Through Environment Design assessment that was recently conducted at the complex as a result of the neighbours giving feedback about safety and security concerns where they live.

**If you live in the Adelaide CBD and have an idea you would like to see happen in your local community, call Mel Allsop on 0417 291 389, email [m.allsop@unityhousing.org.au](mailto:m.allsop@unityhousing.org.au) or ask your Housing Officer to get Mel to contact you.**

# Mitchell Park tenants receive grant for community garden



A group of Unity tenants from Mitchell Park have been successful in winning a grant for \$5,500 from the City of Marion to use towards a community garden project.

The aim of the project is to create a location where tenants can come together around a common interest. Unity Housing will sponsor the tenants to build and maintain the community garden. It will be a gathering place that strengthens networks through cooperation. In time it will become a source of pride among tenants and provide a healthier urban environment. The project will involve individual gardening plots which tenants will share and care for together.

The cheque was presented at a ceremony on June 19 at Marion Cultural Centre. Unity was represented by tenants Astra and Kym and Community Strategy Manager Michael White (pictured).

"We are very appreciative to have Michael on board and his help thus far," Kym says. "We also feel very grateful upon receiving this generous grant and now we look forward to getting the project started."

## Check out our new-look website

We are proud to announce our updated and refreshed website.

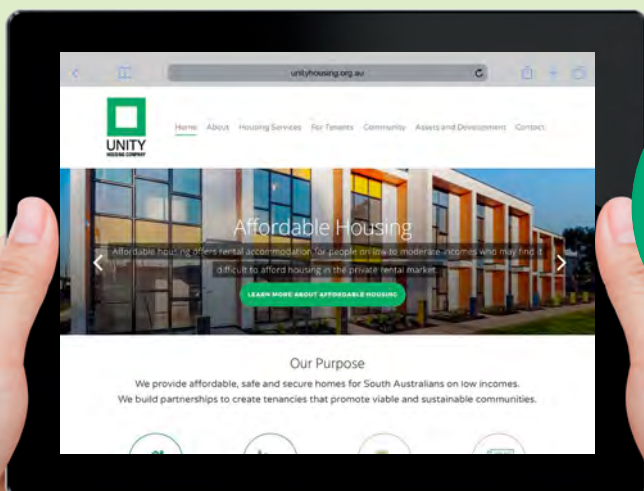
One of Unity's key strategic commitments is to be 'recognised as a leader in professional practice, infrastructure and housing provider of choice'. Developments to the new site will assist Unity to improve information to current and prospective tenants and partners; increase opportunities for tenant engagement; publically acknowledge and support current partnerships and stakeholder relationships; and increase awareness of Unity to secure future corporate sponsorships and partnerships.

Our new website provides a clear message of who we are, what we stand for and where our values lie.

It showcases a clean and refreshed design and is also fully responsive with mobile devices, making it easy to navigate on a wide range of web browsers and portable devices.

The upgrade has improved the look, feel and interactivity of the website for site visitors but also for the back of house processes, such as updates and data collection. A refreshed look and improvements to content will promote a clear focus, further building Unity's brand and improving information and education about who we are and what we do.

We're really proud of the new website and feel it will create the experience you're looking for when you pay us a visit. We haven't changed the URL; it's still **[www.unityhousing.org.au](http://www.unityhousing.org.au)**.



We are extremely keen to hear your feedback

What do you like or dislike about the new site? What would you like to find here in future? What other ways can we use the site to enhance your experience of Unity Housing? Your input would be much appreciated and we encourage you to tell us what you think.

Email us at **[feedback@unityhousing.org.au](mailto:feedback@unityhousing.org.au)** or phone Alexandra on 8237 8750.

# A perfect day for the City-Bay

On Sunday, September 17, a group of tenants from The Terrace Boarding House and one community housing tenant took part in the Sunday Mail City-Bay Fun Run on a very sunny Adelaide morning. The walk started outside the Adelaide Festival Centre on King William Street and finished in Glenelg.

It was a fantastic effort by the group who all participated in the 12km walk and were across the finish line within two-and-a-half hours of starting. The walk itself is a lot of fun with a number of bands, choirs, and groups cheering participants along the way. There were also a couple of organisations positioned along the road high fiving everyone who came by, which lifted everyone's spirits and kept our minds off our aching bodies.

Many of the group had been preparing for the walk by coming along to The Terrace walking group every fortnight. When asked what it felt like to be involved in the event, tenant Kingsley said: "Participating in the City-Bay was partly about promoting the Unity walking group, as well as healthy exercise. More importantly, it's about my own self continuing to achieve. Age may be catching up with me, but I refuse to let it stop me. Maybe I can't run anymore but I can walk! I even have plans for next year's City-Bay 12km walk. I aim to better my time and get sponsorship to raise money for Reclink Australia."



"Participating in the City-Bay was partly about promoting the Unity walking group, as well as healthy exercise."



## ARE YOU BUSHFIRE READY?

The bushfire danger season occurs annually in South Australia between the months of November and April, and the duration of the danger season varies each year between regions. Some Unity properties are classified as being located in an 'At Risk' bushfire zone, based on the Country Fire Service (CFS) defined risk areas. Specific dates are published on the CFS website [www.cfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.cfs.sa.gov.au).

Unity wants to ensure that you and your family are prepared and safe in the event of a bushfire, as your safety will depend on how prepared you are.

Through our ongoing schedule of routine inspections, Unity is already well-advanced in the assessment of high-risk properties using the CFS Asset Protection Zone Fuel Management guidelines. If action by you is required as the tenant, Unity will send a written request to you (and a copy to the relevant support agency if you have one) outlining what you need to do and by when. Your Housing Officer will then contact you to discuss this request with you.

As the property owner, Unity conducts property risk assessments as recommended by the CFS/ MFS (Metropolitan Fire Service) to ensure your home is prepared for a potential bushfire in your region, however if you have any concerns or wish to report any property maintenance that needs completing, we request that you contact your Housing Officer immediately.

If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact your Housing Officer or Support Worker.

For additional information, please refer to the Bushfire Information Hotline 1300 362 361 or visit [www.cfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.cfs.sa.gov.au).

# TENANTS AND STAFF WALK A MILE

Five Unity tenants and eight staff participated in Hutt St Centre's annual fundraiser 'Walk a Mile in My Boots' on August 11 in support of people facing homelessness.

More than 2,000 people came out at 7am on a very mild winter's morning to support Hutt St Centre and help raise awareness of homelessness in Adelaide. The Adelaide walk begins at Victoria Park/Pakapakanthi (Wakefield Road entrance), along Hutt Street and past Hutt St Centre, and finishes in the South Parklands at Hutt Road to an egg and bacon sandwich breakfast kindly supplied by BADGE.

More than \$200,000 was raised, which will ensure people experiencing homelessness can access vital services that allow them to rebuild their lives.

One tenant said that by walking on the day it was their way of giving back to an organisation that does so much for them.

HUTT ST CENTRE  
**WALK A MILE**  
IN MY BOOTS

STEP UP FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S HOMELESS



walkamile.org.au     /huttstcentre #walkamile



## Get AROUND THE HOUSE straight to your inbox



Would you prefer to receive **Around the House** electronically rather than in the mail?

If so, please email **editor@unityhousing.org.au** with your full name and preferred email address and we will add you to our electronic mailing list.



## Got what it takes to be editor? Get in touch!

Unity is committed to increasing opportunities for tenants and encouraging participation in many ways, especially through Around the House. If you would like to contribute your ideas and skills and make a difference as editor of Around the House we would love to hear from you.

Please email **editor@unityhousing.org.au** or phone Alexandra on **8237 8750** to discuss this role in further detail and find out how you can get on board. Whether it's just for one edition or on a regular basis, all tenants are welcome to contribute.

### Key dates for the next edition

The deadline for content submission for the next Around the House is

**Friday, November 3.**

Please email your ideas, articles and photos to **editor@unityhousing.org.au** or phone **8237 8750**.

