

AROUND THE HOUSE

AUTUMN 2018



Welcome event held for new Strathalbyn tenants

A welcome event was held in Strathalbyn on January 16 for tenants from St Andrew's Cottage Homes Inc., whose property management has been transferred to Unity.

On March 1, Unity took on the property management of 11 properties in Strathalbyn, comprising one and two-bedroom units.

At the welcome event, staff from Unity's South office met with the tenants of St Andrew's Cottage Homes Inc., as well as several members of the Board. The event took place in the Soldiers' Memorial Gardens on a beautiful and sunny Tuesday afternoon. It was the perfect environment for staff to get to meet the new tenants. Local business, The Appleseed Café, catered the event with a fantastic selection of sweet and savoury food.

Overall, the event was a huge success. Between the chatting and laughter, Unity staff were able to provide information about Unity and answer any questions the tenants had about their tenancy and the organisation. It was a fantastic start to what we hope will be a long and mutually-beneficial relationship with the tenants and Board members of St Andrew's Cottage Homes Inc.

Braving the shave for a good cause

For the fourth consecutive year, Unity tenants participated in the World's Greatest Shave to raise funds for and highlight the work of the Leukaemia Foundation.

The tenants involved wanted an opportunity to help a charity that does so much for some of the 60,000 Australians living with blood cancer or related disorders.

At the shave event held at The Terrace Boarding House on March 14, tenants Frank, Steven, and Kingsley all shaved their heads and some beards for a good cause.

Frank and Kingsley even took it a step further by either colouring their shaved head or beard – now that's commitment! When Frank was asked what it meant to him to be involved he said, "It was a good day shaving and dyeing my hair. It's a good cause we do it for and hopefully the money raised will really help. So far we have raised close to \$300, which is a great team effort. I would like to personally thank everyone who contributed as we really appreciate all your support."





Ruth thanks Unity for positive transfer experience

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Welcome to Around the House Autumn Edition.

This edition is a reflection of Unity's great versatility and outstanding service.

We are hearing from tenants, who were transferred from Housing SA, about how happy they are to be with Unity. There was also a very successful welcome event in Strathalbyn.

In Peterborough, tenants collaborated with the neighbours and received 'The Best Spirit of Christmas Display' award from Mayor Ruth Whittle for their impressive display of Christmas lights.

Another outstanding effort was made in the community garden at Mitchell Park. It is admirable how they started from scratch with unique ideas and have vegetables and herbs growing now. An exchange with other community gardens will be very beneficial. Maybe even new gardens will pop up.

Sam – one of our great talents in the south east – is thriving as a musician with Unity's help after his tough past.

Another great talent is our poet, John, who is developing his talent in a peaceful surrounding of Unity accommodation. I believe there are quite a few other talents hidden in Unity and hope that our new Community Development Manager, Justyna, will find more through tenant engagement.

Take note of the tips for preparing your home for winter.

I am looking forward to your contribution for the next edition.

Take care,
Giselle

Please send your contributions to editor@unityhousing.org.au.



Tenant Ruth Moore at her Hendon home, which is now being managed by Unity.

The staff at Unity's Central office recently received a 'thank you' card from tenant Ruth Moore who wanted to express her gratitude to the team for being so helpful and supportive during the time when the management of her property was being transferred from Housing SA to Unity.

Since becoming a Unity tenant in September 2017, at the Hendon home she has resided in for five years, Ruth has been delighted with the service and support she has received.

"When we first found out about the change of management we thought, 'Oh no what's going to happen? I've got to admit – there was a lot of anticipation,'" she says. "I called up Unity and the staff said if anything is worrying us or we don't understand something then to ring them up, and I did on a few occasions. I couldn't believe how quick they were to respond. Unity staff spent time explaining the different processes."

As someone who has experienced difficult landlords in the past, Ruth knows what genuine customer service is and the difference it can make.

"Unity staff have treated me like a human being, not a human doing," she says. "You're not just a number, you're a person and I know I'm going to be looked after."

Neighbours connect at Fulham Gardens

By Ramune Haughey, Unity Tenant Engagement Officer



Fulham Gardens tenants Merna, Lorraine, Graham, Kathy, Ronda, Emiliya, Claire and John at the neighbour meetup day in February.

Everyone brought a plate of food to share and even the unsettled weather did not spoil a positive and happy mood on the day.

Building a community from scratch can be a daunting and challenging activity. Yet in February this year a group of Unity tenants, alongside Unity staff, organised a neighbour meetup event to see whether they can start building a strong community on their own doorstep.

Everyone brought a plate of food to share and even the unsettled weather did not spoil a positive and happy mood on the day. This event gave an opportunity for neighbours to take some time to share food and conversations with each other and with Unity staff.

To us at Unity, it was satisfying to see neighbours sharing their experiences and local knowledge through serious and not so serious discussions. To say thank you to tenants for actively participating and contributing to making the day a success, Unity had

two fantastic prizes up for grabs – congratulations to the two lucky winners!

After such a successful day, neighbours made a decision to meet again in May for a barbecue and to invite a speaker to talk about My Aged Care services and help available for those in need.

On behalf of Unity, I would like to thank all of you who participated and volunteered your time to help Unity make the neighbour meetup a successful day.

If you too have an idea for your neighbourhood or would like to speak to us about setting up a neighbour meet up like this, please do not hesitate to give me a call on 0439 310 434. I hope to see you soon in your neighbourhood.

Calling all artists to join the 2018 SALA Festival

The South Australian Living Artists (SALA) Festival is recognised as the largest and most innovative community-based visual arts festival in Australia. If you would like to be involved in this year's SALA Festival, now is your opportunity. After the success of their exhibition in 2016, a group of Unity tenants are planning to hold another one

and invite anyone who would like to be involved to register their interest. People of any skill level can be involved and you can sell your artwork. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact Unity's Community Development Worker, Mel Allsop, on 0417 291 389 or email m.allsop@unityhousing.org.au.

Community garden blooms in Mitchell Park

By Kym Shaw, Tenant

We are grateful to Marion Council and a grant of \$5,500 to use towards our community garden project that enabled us to employ and have the expertise of organic landscape gardener Steven Hoepfner to bring this project to life. His knowledge and expertise have been instrumental in getting us to this point.

The foundation was laid and we painted shipping containers that became our planters.

We decided to build our vegetable garden using wicking beds, which are a revolutionary way of watering. A water reservoir sits under the soil at the base of each bed. This helps save time, water and produces healthy and robust veggies.

Our planter boxes were made from recycled shipping crates and were painted and assembled on site.

We sourced recycled materials wherever possible, keeping costs down and reducing our carbon footprint.

In February, we begun planting and chose to without the use of chemicals. To date we have lettuce, black kale, beetroot, rocket, cauliflower, capsicum, zucchini, eggplant, marjoram, oregano, thyme turkey, sage, lemon verbena and lemon bergamot.

We hope to connect with other community gardens to swap seeds and share information. This project has brought tenants together and everyone is excited at the thought of harvesting and eating the food that we have grown.



A huge thanks once again to Unity's Community Strategy Manager, Michael White, and Steve Hoepfner.

From The Tenants of Olive Heart Community Garden.



**UNITY
WELCOMES
COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT
MANAGER**

To meet the increasing growth of our organisation, Unity is pleased to announce the appointment of Justyna Rosa to the newly-created position of Community Development Manager.

Justyna joins Unity with more than 10 years' experience in the not-for-profit sector in positions with Feros Care and Life Without Barriers in roles including community development and engagement, programme coordination and direct service delivery. Justyna's professional experience is supported by qualifications including a Diploma

of Community Service Development, Certificate of Engagement (IAP2), and she is currently studying a Masters in Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

Justyna will assist Unity in improving tenancy and social outcomes for our tenants. This management role will oversee a small team of staff responsible for the delivery of tenant engagement, community development and related services.

Justyna will have the hands-on responsibility for service delivery and to develop and implement strategic growth and change.

Register for parenting workshop

The Sturt St Children's Centre, Housing Choices SA and Unity Housing together, are holding a men's and a women's six-week reflective parenting workshop for parents and carers to learn and share in a non-judgemental space.

These workshops may also be helpful to parents who do not have care of their children but want to understand children's development and how parenting styles impact on relationships with children.

The sessions will explore

- what you want to take from your childhood and what you want to leave behind,
- what to expect as children's brains develop and understanding how it is different to adult brains,
- what you do well as a parent and what you could build on, and
- knowing your rights as a parent and how to navigate the family legal system.



The men's group is now open for bookings and will commence on **Tuesday, May 8** from 1pm until 3pm at the Minor Works Building (22 Stamford Court, Adelaide SA 5000) and will run weekly for six sessions.

We are seeking expressions of interest for the women's group, which starts in term 3.

BOOKINGS

To book for either group, please contact Unity's Community Development Worker, Mel Allsop, on 0417 291 389 or email m.allsop@unityhousing.org.au. Preference will be given to Adelaide CBD residents.

Unity helps Sam make a fresh start

Since fleeing persecution, torture and imprisonment in Pakistan, Sam has adjusted to a safer and more peaceful life in the state's south east, specifically Naracoorte, where he has been a Unity tenant for the past four years.

"Before I came to Australia I had too many problems in Afghanistan and Pakistan," Sam says. "I was put in jail for about six months because I'm a musician, a singer. The Taliban says you cannot sing."

To show his love and appreciation for his new home, Sam penned a love song for Australia, which he released with a film clip to coincide with Australia Day this year. The clip was filmed in Mount Gambier, Naracoorte, Adelaide, Canberra and Sydney. "I love this country and Australian culture," he says. "I hope everyone helps and supports this country. It's a very good life here and the best place in the world. I like singing for Australia."



Image courtesy of Naracoorte Herald.

Despite facing a daily reminder that he is separated from his children, who live in Pakistan, Sam has been active in immersing himself in his community and appreciating the opportunities he has been given. "I volunteer in the second hand shop, selling clothes and other things," he says. "Sometimes I don't like my life, thinking I am not a good father for my children but I pray that one day my kids will be here too and we can be together."

Go-kart day brings out the competition

By Simone Bright, Tenant



Kingsley Lewis, Simone Bright, Mel Allsop and Michael Plessnig.

On January 5, Unity joined up with Reclink Australia for a day of go-karting at Kart Mania in Gepps Cross. The cost for go-karting is usually \$55 per head but we only had to pay a discounted fee of \$10 thanks to Reclink.

Four of us from Unity drove there in the Unity van and we joined up with a group of people from a youth service who were with Reclink. The event turned out to be fantastic; all drivers had an amazing time with 3x8 laps around the course. We were all pumped and the adrenalin was definitely present.

The track was set up well and the go-karts are made to be very safe so getting up to around 40km per hour is lots of fun.

By the end of the race, we all were pretty excited and the feedback was positive all round. Everyone I talked to said they would definitely do it again.

Thank you again to all those who organised this event.

Unity extends a huge "thank you" to Reclink Australia for their support.

Prepare for winter – how to draught-proof your home

Even if your home is well-insulated, heated or cooled air can leak in and out through gaps and cracks and even exhaust fans.

Draught-proofing (or weather sealing) your home is one of the easiest and cheapest ways of reducing your energy bills and improving comfort levels with little or no fuss.

- Save up to 25% on your heating and cooling bill
- Easy and affordable to implement
- Noticeable improvements to household comfort levels

Draught-proofing at a glance

Seal gaps and cracks

Look for gaps and cracks and block or fill them. They are often found around doors and windows. Check floorboards, architraves, skirting boards, skylights and cornices – anywhere there are joins. If you are concerned about gaps around window and door architraves, your Housing Officer is the first point of contact so please phone or email them.

Install draught stoppers

Put draught stoppers at the base of doors to help keep warm air in during winter and cool air from escaping in summer. There are a number of different products on the market including flexible strips that attach permanently to the bottom of your door to the humble fabric sausage.

Check fans, vents and other outlets

To avoid heat loss from evaporative cooling ducts during winter you can cover them with a specifically designed cover or, for a cheaper option, simply clean the vent and cover it with clear plastic contact that you can remove when the weather warms up again.

Remember to heat and cool only the rooms that are being used – shut off areas of the home that you are not in and save on the cost of heating/cooling the whole house. You can also use blinds and window furnishing to block out the sun or keep the warmth in.

Source: <http://yourenergysavings.gov.au>



Avoid being fined for hard waste dumping



UP TO \$1,000 FINE

Some local councils offer tenants free at-call hard waste collections. Your Housing Officer can provide information about what can and cannot be collected as part of your free hard waste service. They can also advise how much hard waste you can place out for collection. Elderly tenants, or people with a permanent disability, may be eligible for free assistance moving items onto the footpath.

You are encouraged to utilise this service as illegal dumping can attract a fine of up to \$1,000.

Peterborough tenants' Christmas lights delight

Unity tenants in Peterborough, in the state's mid-north, received a certificate of recognition from the Mayor for their impressive display of Christmas lights during the 2017 festive season.

Mayor Ruth Whittle acknowledged the effort the tenants went to and awarded them 'The Best Spirit of Christmas Display'.

The collaborative effort put the tenants in touch with their neighbours and brought them together to achieve this great outcome.

John's creativity shines through poetry

Since writing his first poem at the age of 18 "just out of the blue", John Ranford has since amassed a large number of works and, to this day, continues to pen his prose.

John, a tenant at The Terrace Boarding House, moved to South Australia in 1982 after experiencing a difficult start to adulthood.

"I was born in Perth, brought up in New South Wales then left New South Wales when I was 19 to live with my father," John says. "That didn't work out too well so I went to a boarding house then moved to South Australia in 1982. This is the longest I've stayed in any state."

John's poetic ideas come to him at any time of the morning, afternoon or night. "It's very creative, just comes out of nowhere," he says. "Sometimes there are large poems and sometimes just a one-liner or couple of lines.

"I've written a few spiritual poems, a few romantic ones and ones mainly based on humour. I like to share my works with people. I think we have all been given gifts by God and this is the gift I was given."

This whole world just keeps spinning round til we're all caught out of time.

Meet you all in the middle of the floor
Can you tell me more
Just waiting to hear that knock at the door

Our future looks bright.
Great big sunny day and afternoon delight.

We all have our freedom of choice and we're all on separate journeys until our paths cross and the twain shall meet.

THANKS FOR HAVING YOUR SAY

Here at Unity, we want to know more about you and how you feel about the services we provide.

Every two years, we survey tenants to find out what you think we do well and what we could do better. Based on what you tell us, we make a plan of action to address our weaknesses and improve on our strengths.

This year's survey was posted out to all tenants during March.

Your feedback is completely anonymous. An independent organisation – NSW Federation of Housing Associations – collects and analyses the results for us so we do not see who has said what. They will randomly select the names of five tenants who will each win a \$100 gift voucher for completing the survey. Winners will be announced in May. Good luck!

Tenancy advisors available to meet by appointment

The Tenants' Information and Advisory Service (TIAS) is a state-wide service that provides free and independent information, advice and advocacy to help people on low incomes to sustain their tenancies in private rental, community housing and public housing.

TIAS is now available at SACAT every Monday and Thursday to offer advice and assistance to people attending hearings.

Tenancy Advisors can be available for face-to-face enquiries by appointment at a number of Job Prospects' sites:

Adelaide Metro: Monday 9am – 4pm
Christies Beach: Tuesday 9am – 4pm
Port Adelaide: Wednesday 9am – 4pm
Elizabeth: Friday 9am – 3pm

To make an appointment please call 1800 060 462. TIAS can provide:

- Education, information and advice on tenant rights and responsibilities
- Representation at and assistance with SACAT hearings
- Assistance to access internal avenues of appeal with relevant housing providers
- Referrals to and information on financial counselling and other services

For a list of Frequently Asked Questions regarding how TIAS can assist tenants visit <http://www.syc.net.au/tias/frequently-asked-questions/>.

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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, May 11.

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

