

# Tenant Engagement Strategy



**Inclusion | Participation | Connection**



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# *A Message from* **THE CEO**



Our tenants remain at the very centre of Unity Housing's focus and I acknowledge the invaluable contribution they have made together with Unity Housing staff and others, in generously contributing their time, knowledge and lived experience to sharpen our focus and keep improving on the things that matter most to our tenants.

Our new Tenant Engagement Strategy 2023–2027 details four key goals to address the needs of our tenants and to contribute to improving their lives through social and community inclusion.

As a Tier 1 housing provider, we are delighted that our Tenant Engagement Strategy is tenant-centred and, as such, seeks to maximise positive outcomes with and for our tenants.

In addition to our past achievements, we will strengthen our commitment to our tenants by focusing on the following areas:

- Increasing our focus and service delivery to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, people living with disability, and multicultural communities
- Identifying and activating opportunities to support the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals
- Better acknowledging that children and youth are important tenants too
- Increasing opportunities for us to engage with our tenants during times of restricted community access so we can help keep tenants connected with family and friends, and ensuring they can access online information.

Our current Strategic Plan (2021–2024) has 'Empower Tenants' as the first of five strategic pillars. Through delivery of this plan and with empowering tenants as a key strategy, our tenants will have greater opportunities to participate in their community and achieve better positive life outcomes.

It is, of course, essential that all of our people actively contribute and fully participate in this Tenant Engagement Strategy as delivery partners, to ensure we achieve our shared goals.

I look forward to applauding the progress we make against our Tenant Engagement Strategy in the coming years. Unity Housing will continue to provide updates to our staff, tenants and service delivery partners on a regular basis.

**Matthew Woodward**





# Acknowledgement of Country

**Unity Housing operates across many of the traditional lands in South Australia.**

**We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout the lands on which we work and live, and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.**

**We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing relationship with the land.**



*Auntie Yvonne is a Kurna and Narungga Elder, a Unity Housing tenant, and a member of Unity Housing's Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group.*



# 1. Our Strategy and Operating Environment



Unity Housing seeks to support vibrant and thriving neighbourhoods and communities through our diverse social and affordable housing portfolio. We house approximately 4,600 tenants in more than 3,100 properties, including four boarding houses in the inner Adelaide area, community housing, disability housing, transitional housing, Aboriginal housing, NRAS housing, student housing, and fee for service property and tenancy management. We have approximately 3,600 adults and 1,000 children and youth living in our properties across South Australia.

Our core purpose is to provide affordable, safe and secure homes for South Australians on low incomes and we achieve this through building partnerships to create tenancies that promote independence and viable and sustainable communities, supported by our five strategic pillars:

- Empower Tenants
- Develop Housing Portfolio
- Strengthen People and Culture
- Enhance Business Capacity
- Nurture Partnerships

Since 2008, Unity Housing has committed significant resources to engage with our tenants in a meaningful way. This pursuit has always been central to our work and remains a strategic priority for the future.

Our Tenant Engagement Strategy 2023–2027 seeks to build on this rich history with the strategy being strongly supported by four key goals:

1. Tenant Engagement
2. Community Inclusion
3. Diversity and Independence
4. Environment and Sustainable Living

At Unity Housing, our aspiration is for our tenants to thrive, believing that everyone is entitled to live in quality homes; in safe and sustainable neighbourhood environments; and has the opportunity for social and economic participation. Realising this vision is heavily reliant upon Unity Housing forming strong and effective partnerships with our tenants, and support from provider partners and other stakeholders.

Unity Housing staff look forward to continuing our work together with our tenants, community groups, human service organisations and all levels of government to meet our tenants' needs and realise their life aspirations.

At Unity Housing, tenant engagement is more than a 'bolt on' or discretionary activity in the provision of property and tenancy management. To Unity Housing, tenant outcomes are about more than just a roof over a person's head. This ensures we focus on the social, economic and health indicators of improved wellbeing, resilience and quality of life, which is supported by the recognition that safe and affordable housing is an essential social determinant of health.

By implementing our new Tenant Engagement Strategy and with support from our community partners, we will enable our tenants to achieve:

- long lasting and sustainable tenancies through increasing positive engagement between tenants, Unity Housing staff and support agencies; and
- increased participation in community life.



For children and younger tenants, Unity Housing will seek to find meaningful ways for them to participate and make a contribution within their communities. Other indicators of successful tenancies include reduced evictions, rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, intergenerational disadvantage and risk of homelessness.

We acknowledge the incredible impact COVID-19 has had on our communities and recognise that our operating practice has indelibly been influenced by ongoing COVID-19 safe practices required for the life of this strategy and beyond. We are confident we can successfully meet this new challenge in collaboration with our tenants and service delivery partners.

## 2. Our Commitment



Unity Housing will ensure the strategic commitment and resources necessary to deliver the Tenant Engagement Strategy will be made available, and will provide value for money with clear and achievable outcomes. We will deliver high quality services and projects where we have relevant expertise.

We will not duplicate effort or resources for initiatives or projects that are already being provided by other more appropriate providers and, from time-to-time, we may purchase or build the capacity to deliver required outputs and outcomes.

We will ensure our actions and tenancy management decisions promote social inclusion and independence, and we encourage and support the preferences and individuality of people living in Unity Housing properties and surrounding neighbourhoods.

We will achieve this through creating a culture and environment for increased tenant empowerment and through fully embracing and supporting our tenants to both lead and become involved in the co-design of ideas and bringing these to fruition.

We will develop and implement initiatives sustainably with a wider financial and value-for-money perspective to support our business and service delivery activities, ensuring we follow a social and environmental impact agenda.

This will be achieved by working closely with our communities and partners to share resources and expertise to co-deliver plans to achieve these desired outcomes.

# 3. Our Tenants



Childhood and teenage years are an important time for healthy development, learning, and establishing the foundations for future wellbeing. With children and youth representing approximately 20 per cent of our tenant population, through collaboration with our support partners, Unity Housing aims to facilitate positive change to improve the longer-term outcomes of young people who experience homelessness, overcrowding and housing stress through stable housing and access to health and education. This focus will lead to improved neighbourhood and social connections and optimistic future employment prospects.

In the next three years, our engagement with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander tenants will be strengthened through the implementation of Unity Housing's 'Reflect' Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) through which we will identify and implement practical actions to improve the way we connect with our Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander tenants and their communities.

The RAP and tenant engagement initiatives will help to shape Unity Housing's culture and the way we do business so that our services are culturally appropriate and more accessible for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Unity Housing's tenants have always been at the heart of what we do and we work hard to ensure we connect with and deliver quality housing and services for our tenants. Tenant feedback through regular satisfaction surveys enables us to continuously improve our actions as we constantly review our policies and procedures. Results and findings are communicated to tenants who are regularly invited to participate in feedback surveys and face-to-face discussions.

## 4. Our People



Unity Housing's workforce of more than 100 people includes employees, volunteers and students who, as a collective, are committed to activating our Tenant Engagement Strategy over the coming years. We are active across South Australia and passionate about contributing to improving the lives of our tenants.

When asked what meaningful tenant engagement means to them, the following comments encapsulate the spirit of our team:

*"We all come from different backgrounds and have unique levels of experience and interests which can be a huge benefit to our tenants."*

*"This plan extends beyond just providing housing and holding tenant events. It's about building relationships through tenant engagement and provides space for tenants to be heard, listened to and involve tenants every step of the way."*

*"Together with our tenants and other key stakeholders, we will continue to identify additional ways to highlight, promote and celebrate tenant achievements within the community."*

# 5. Our Partners



Over many years, Unity Housing has established a successful service delivery model built on partnership and collaboration with a diverse group of agencies to facilitate sustainable tenancies for some 4,600 tenants.

Together we facilitate housing and support referrals, enabling tenants to receive both housing and support services. This collaborative service model builds capacity for our tenants and strengthens the neighbourhoods and communities in which they live.

We actively collaborate with tenants and other partners who share our willingness and passion to deliver localised services that support the development of sustainable, self-reliant communities with high levels of active citizenship, pride and wellbeing.

## Our Community Partners and Networks

- Community Housing Council of South Australia
- Community centres
- Community service organisations
- Inner Adelaide Southwest Community Working Together Group
- Kaurna Football and Netball Club
- Local councils
- Local libraries
- PowerHousing Australia
- Reclink
- SA Housing Authority
- State Government departments
- The Big Issue
- Universities, schools and training providers

# 6. Our Impact



As active members of the community, our tenants contribute economically and socially to their neighbourhoods in a range of roles such as consumers, volunteers, employees, students, and neighbours.

We know that our tenants, the communities in which we operate, and Unity Housing will all benefit from the implementation of this plan and includes:

## Benefits to Tenants

- Empowering individuals and families
- Supporting tenants living with disability to enjoy a more independent life and to connect and engage with their local communities
- Increasing participation in neighbourhoods and communities
- Co-designing new responses to identified needs in the community
- Increased opportunities for tenants to participate in decision making

## Benefits to Unity Housing

- Increasing our understanding of local needs and issues
- Building on local assets and strengths
- Building social cohesion by working in a collaborative and inclusive manner
- Increasing professional capacity and capability

# 7. Our Model of Engagement



Unity Housing's Model of Engagement has tenant outcomes at its centre. The framework links our housing programs with the how, what and why of what we do. We aim to provide comprehensive, tenant-centred services that are open to scrutiny and can be measured and assessed over time.

Unity Housing will draw on a range of best practice principles from five acclaimed engagement models in addition to Unity Housing's own Tenant Communications Plan and includes:

- Asset-Based Community Development
- Reconciliation Action Plan 'Reflect'
- International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)
- Outcomes and Impact Measurement
- UN Sustainable Development Goals

Our tenant engagement model will demonstrate and maximise:

- Responsiveness and flexibility
- Building partnerships and connections to facilitate a tenant's meaningful participation in social and community life
- Co-design of tenant initiatives for people who are vulnerable and/or socially isolated
- Independence and connections for our tenants

# 8. Impact Measurement and Evaluation



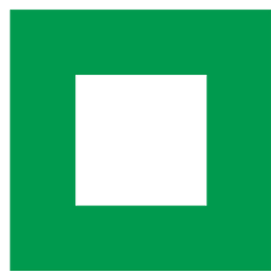
Unity Housing is committed to meaningful impact measurement and evaluation across our organisation to determine the value of the work we do and the outcomes we deliver through better understanding our tenants' needs, and to use this information and feedback to improve our services and the way in which we connect with our tenants.

We will continue to explore impact evaluation and measurement best practice while we broaden implementation across our organisation, resulting in the future planning of sustainable and impactful tenant engagement initiatives.

This will be achieved through:

- measuring the positive change in our tenants' lives resulting from the services and tenant engagement activities that we deliver;
- assessing our outcomes to enable us to improve the way we deliver our services and tenant engagement activities; and
- demonstrating value for money to our funders, stakeholders and supporters.





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# Tenant Engagement Delivery Plan 2023-2027



**Inclusion | Participation | Connection**

As part of our commitment to include, engage and connect with our tenants and local communities, Unity Housing has created the Tenant Engagement Delivery Plan 2023–2027 as a companion document to our Tenant Engagement Strategy 2023–2027.

In partnership with local community organisations, Unity Housing will use this plan as our guide for successful engagement.

Both documents are accessible from  
Unity Housing's website:





# Tenant Engagement

**Definition:** Tenant Engagement means local people having a real say and stake in the decisions that affect their lives, homes and communities.

## 1.1 Monitoring Continuous Improvement

We will establish ways for tenants to be involved with us to monitor progress against our tenant engagement delivery plans.

## 1.2 Tenant Satisfaction Surveys

Undertake ongoing tenant satisfaction surveys and create continuous improvement plans in accordance with organisational and contractual requirements to better meet the needs of tenants.

## 1.3 Side by Side with Tenants

Identify and provide opportunities for tenants to use their lived experience through providing feedback and opinion, being actively involved in decision making and participating in broader Unity Housing initiatives.

## 1.4 Social Enterprise

Identify and implement opportunities to support, participate in or create social enterprise initiatives resulting in improved social, economic and environmental outcomes.



# Community Inclusion

**Definition:** Community inclusion and participation is a human right for all people to have the same opportunities to create a home, develop relationships, connect with family and friends, find a job or study and be a part of their community.

## 2.1 Community Participation

Enable and encourage tenants to engage in their local community by providing timely, appropriate and relevant information about local opportunities and activities, presented in a manner that is easily understood.

## 2.2 Co-designing and Tenant Led Initiatives

Enable tenants to co-design improved shared spaces through creative and contemporary site design, accessibility and aesthetic improvements at identified Unity Housing sites; and through including tenants and other key stakeholders in the co-design of tenant engagement and community inclusion initiatives and events.

## 2.3 Tenant Skillshare

Explore localised tenant opportunities to share knowledge and skills with each other to maintain successful tenancies, and increase hobbies and leisure pursuits, socialising and community participation.

## 2.4 Digital Inclusion

Facilitate access to digital training provided by key community partners.

## 2.5 Celebrate Achievements

Identify additional ways to highlight, promote and celebrate tenant achievements within the community.



# Diversity and Independence

**Definition:** Unity Housing supports a diverse tenant group including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, people living with disability, older people, multicultural tenants and children and youth.

## 3.1 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander tenants

We will work in partnership with Aboriginal services in a meaningful and collaborative way to ensure cultural authenticity and safety when responding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenant needs.

## 3.2 People living with disability

Enable choice and control for tenants so they can live independently and enjoy an independent life through maximising community participation and self-determination.

## 3.3 Older People

With our older tenants and partner agencies, we will create opportunities to reduce the impact of social isolation and loneliness through supporting disability access, age friendly neighbourhoods and communities of common interest. Our focus will include community-based activities and interpersonal interactions, resource sharing, active engagement and individual satisfaction.

## 3.4 Children and Youth

With key partner agencies, we will tailor and assess our service offerings “through the eyes” of children and youth. We will create and support opportunities for children and youth to engage socially, educationally and actively participate in local neighbourhood and community activities.



# Environment and Sustainable Living

**Definition:** Sustainable living aims to reduce personal and societal environmental impact by making positive changes to counteract climate change and other negative environmental concerns by reducing our carbon footprint.

## 4.1 Social Sustainability and Inclusion

With our community partners and in consultation with tenants, we will expand opportunities for knowledge transfer, neighbourhood restoration, more inclusive communities and enhancing the empowerment of tenants through creating their own solutions.

## 4.2 Environmental Sustainability

With our tenants, we will create and activate long-term ecological balance by reducing harm to the environment, protecting natural resources, increasing sustainable lifestyles and increasing sustainable consumption patterns.

## 4.3 Food Security

A key determinant of health is ready access to food and nutrition. Unity Housing will facilitate information and access for tenants to affordable food through Foodbank and other localised initiatives such as edible gardens, verge gardens, community gardens or excess produce sharing schemes.

## 4.4 Placemaking Strategy

In consultation with tenants, we will create, implement and evaluate a placemaking strategy to identify localised and shared neighbourhood spaces through which reactivation will bring about improved engagement and cohesion for tenants, local residents and the broader neighbourhood. A key factor will be accessibility and appeal for people with visual, sensory and physical disabilities.