



CEO MESSAGE

Welcome to the summer edition of our Tenant Newsletter.

What a year 2020 was. I am sure we are all looking forward to what 2021 will hopefully bring, a better one where the challenges of last year are behind us and we can keep moving towards a 'new normal' – whatever that is! I understand that many are still facing hard times with loss of jobs and uncertainty about the future. Southern Cross Housing (SCH) is committed to supporting our tenants, so if you feel you are struggling and need some help, please get in touch with us. As the situation with COVID continues to evolve, please keep an eye out on our website for any updates. Despite the pandemic, we have achieved some great things with our tenants over the past year, some of which we have included in this edition of our newsletter.

As part of our focus on improving our connections with our tenant community, we were very excited to announce the commencement of our very first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). We launched this during the re-scheduled NAIDOC week. It was great to do this with tenants and staff in attendance, you can read more about our NAIDOC celebration in this newsletter. In addition to ensuring our tenants get the help they need (there is plenty of really helpful resources and contacts included in this addition), our focus is also to get out and see you more. We are hoping to have some Neighbourhood sessions across the Nowra region in the first half of the year, we are setting up our first Regional Tenant Advisory Committee and our Lawns & Grounds Crew are out and about in an effort to really spruce up the local area. As much as we are keen to get out more, we can't be everywhere all of the time, so we rely on you, our wonderful tenants to be part of the change that you want to see in your community! We did a small trial of the Good Neighbour Program last year in Ulladulla and thought it was so great that we wanted to extend it to all SCH tenants and areas. This is about you in your community, supporting one another, safely socialising and connecting and actively working towards that thriving community that you want to be part of.

SCH may provide the bricks and mortar and opportunity for safe and affordable housing, but we realise, that at the heart of what we do, are our tenants, we are here to serve you in the best way possible. If you have feedback for us on how we could improve things, be sure to let us know.

Keeping you informed

Over the past 12 months Southern Cross Housing has sent you a number of letters, emails and SMS (text messages) telling you about changes to our services due to COVID-19, bushfires and other information.

The recent outbreak of COVID-19 in Greater Sydney is an example of how rapidly situations can change. In these times of rapidly changing situations, it is important that we are able to contact you quickly and easily.

For the most up to date information about our services and response to COVID-19, we ask that you keep checking our website. We will also send you updates by email. To update your email address and/or provide a new email address please call 1300 757 885.

Please continue to read our emails and text messages. If you have any questions, please contact us. Our Team is available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm to help and support you.

Kind regards,



Alex Pontello
CEO



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DO WE HAVE YOUR CURRENT EMAIL ADDRESS?

Southern Cross Housing would like to communicate faster and more efficiently with you and we are working to ensure that we hold your current email address. Email is an easy way for you to receive information about events, activities and opportunities quickly and efficiently. Updating your email address contact is really easy, please phone the office on 1300 757 885.

WHATS ON

SCH NEIGHBOURHOOD POP-UPS



Should we hold Neighbourhood Pop-ups in your local area?

A Neighbourhood Pop-up could be a casual morning or afternoon tea held at a communal space in each SCH location. It would be your chance to talk to our Communities Assist team, Property Services team, and your Housing Officer.

We bring the free barista-made coffee and tasty treats, all you would need to do is come by and bring your feedback and your ideas about the activities or programs that you would like us to run in your neighbourhood.

We would like to host the first pop-up in one of the following locations:

- Jerrinja/Orient Point
- Bomaderry
- East Nowra Precinct
- West Nowra
- Central Nowra

If you would like to see a Neighbourhood Pop-up in your neighbourhood, we want to hear from you!

Please contact the Communities Assist team at communities@scch.org.au or 1300 757 885 to register your interest.

ADULTING 101 WORKSHOPS IN BEGA

Headspace Bega in partnership with a number of other local organisations will be running Adulting 101 workshops for young people aged 18 – 25 years in the Bega Valley area. They will run over 5 sessions in February/March 2021 and include topics such as Health & Wellbeing, Politics, Housing & Rent, Finance, and general life tips & tricks. For more information on registration please contact the Communities Assist team at communities@scch.org.au

BEGA VALLEY YOUNG CARERS WELLNESS CAMP

One Door Mental Health Service in Bega Valley is running a camp for young mental health carers in April 2021. The Carer retreat will be held in Tathra for residents of Bega Valley and will be focused on wellbeing support. To attend, you must:

- Be aged between 12 and 17 years
- Care for a family member that has a mental health condition (live in a home with a parent or family member who has a mental health condition)
- Consent to attend

If you would like further information or a referral form, please contact the Communities Assist team at communities@scch.org.au or on 1300 757 885.

COMMUNITY FOOD BANKS



Community Food Banks and Pantry's are usually run by local charity/non-profit groups and provide food at reduced prices or for free to people experiencing food insecurity or financial hardship. There are Community Food Banks in a number of locations across the South Coast of NSW, here are a few nearby:

Sapphire Community Pantry – 2 Peden Street, Bega

Tuesdays 11am to 2pm; Thursday 11am to 2pm; Fridays 11am to 2pm and by appointment

Ph: 0490 843 518

Website: www.sapphirecommunity.org.au

Lifegate Community Food Care - 5 Yulin Ave Cooma

Thursdays 10am to 12:30pm

Ph: 6452 5229

Website: www.lifegatecc.com.au

Eurobodalla Meals on Wheels – 6/73 Vulcan St, Moruya

Monday – Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm

Ph: 4474 4464

Website: www.eurobodallamealsonwheels.com.au

Ulladulla Community Resource Centre Food Store – 78 St. Vincent Street Ulladulla

Wednesdays and Fridays 9:30am – 11am

Ph: 4454 0477

Website: www.ulladullacrc.org.au

Nowra Community Food Store - 10/158 Princes Highway, South Nowra

Monday – Friday 9:30am – 3:30pm

Ph: 4423 2334

Website: www.nowra-community-food-store.business.site

FREE ALCOHOL AND DRUG EDUCATION SESSION | NOWRA

Family Drug Support Australia's Stepping Forward program is a free education session that provides useful information and strategies to those supporting someone using alcohol and other drugs. The purpose of the workshop is to increase people's confidence and ability in managing the issues that arise as a result of alcohol and drug use. If you are concerned about the alcohol and drug use of a loved one and would like to attend the free session, register your attendance here: www.eventbrite.com.au/e/nowra-stepping-forward-tickets-131287609775 or call 4782 9222.

When: 12th March 2021, 9:00am – 4:00pm

Where: Nowra School of Arts, 12 Berry Street, Nowra

TAFE NSW COURSES FOR 2021

If you are looking to study in 2021 the TAFE NSW website has a great search tool that allows users to narrow down course opportunities by location and interest. Course topics include University Pathways, Business, Leadership, Finance, Information Technology, Screen and Media, Fashion, Music, Retail, HR & Training, Community Services, Animal and Environmental, Maritime, Tourism and Hospitality, Automotive Trades & Services, Building Construction & Property, Aboriginal Education, Hair & Beauty, and Health & Fitness.

Some other great TAFE NSW resources include:

- School Leavers information about pathways study options and fee-free short courses that assist in developing job-ready skills.
- JobTrainer offers hundreds of fee-free and low-cost courses to eligible school leavers and job seekers to help them gain the skills they need to get a job.
- Mature Age Workers' Scholarships.



TAFE NSW interactive Career Guide

If you are unsure about what to study, this Skills Road Careers Quiz could be a great place to start. The Skills Road Career Quiz is funded by the NSW Government and has been designed to remove the stress of deciding what to study and help you find a career pathway that matches your natural skills and passions. The Career Quiz can be found by following this link: www.skillsroad.com.au/my-account/my-careers-quiz

More information can be found online at the TAFE NSW Website or by calling 131 601 and speaking to a student advisor www.tafensw.edu.au

For information on the Southern Cross Housing Scholarship program and how you can apply for funds to support your studies, head to the Communities Assist News section below!

GET LEGAL GET LICENSED GET WORK PROGRAM

The driver licensing access program helps remove the barriers that prevent people in NSW from entering the driver licensing system.

Students who successfully complete the course receive a letter from the Roads and Maritime Service giving them unlimited free attempts at the learner licence test for a period of 3 months. The aim of the Get Licence, Get Legal, Get Work program is to assist learner drivers improve their literacy, numeracy and computer skills in order to pass the Driver Knowledge Test. The program reinforces and tests knowledge of the Road Users Handbook whilst developing literacy skills.

The course will be offered by TAFE NSW in 2021. The program is set to commence at the Illawarra TAFE campus in Wollongong in February 2021, and further course dates will be set for Shoalhaven and Bega in the coming months. To register your interest for the Wollongong program please contact Kane Wright from TAFE NSW Southern Region at kane.wright12@tafensw.edu.au or 02 4229 0509. Depending on interest numbers TAFE may be able to provide access to transportation for the Wollongong program.

If you are interested in upcoming Shoalhaven and Bega program dates please register your interest at communities@scch.org.au.

For more information on the Get Legal Get Licensed Get Work Program please follow this link: www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roads/licence/driver/driver-licence-access-program/index.html

EUROBODALLA NGAYAGA DJAMA-DHURGA (I SPEAK/TALK DHURGA) PROJECT



This Family Place, Gahdu Family Health and Grand Pacific Health Eurobodalla have partnered to deliver the Ngayaga Djama-Dhurga (I Speak/Talk Dhurga) Project. The project will commence in February 2021 and is intended to:

- To support the revival of the Dhurga language, providing Aboriginal families the opportunity to learn, speak, connect and share their language and culture.
- To preserve and maintain the Dhurga language for future generations in a digital format capturing the journey of the language workshop participants for future generations.
- To strengthen and heal family and community by providing adults the opportunity to be the knowledge holders and custodians of language and culture, and pass this on to their children.

The workshop is taught by Trish Ellis and Kerry Boyena and includes opportunities to attend Language Workshops, Cultural Walks, Women's Camps, Dhurga Song/Rap/Chants, Children's Story Books, and other supportive group activities. These workshops will be held in both Mogo and Narooma and run over a 15 week period.

Language workshop locations and start dates are listed below:

Weekly from 01/02/2021 at the Boomerang Meeting Place, Mogo. 10am – 1pm OR 6pm – 8pm.

Weekly from 02/02/2020 at the CWA Hall, Narooma. 6pm -8pm.

To register, please contact tamara@familyplace.org.au or call 02 4474 2907.

HOW TO ACCESS A MENTAL HEALTH CARE PLAN

In October 2020, the Federal Government announced that the Medicare-subsidised psychology sessions that Australians can access each year will be doubled from 10 to 20.

To access these sessions, people need a mental health care plan from their doctor. A mental health care plan is a support plan prepared by a doctor (usually GP) to help people get the additional help and support they need to manage their mental health. Following a year of difficult and unprecedented challenges, R U OK has compiled essential information about how to access a Mental Health Care Plan for yourself or to refer someone you know.

If you would like to know more, or for 24-hour health advice you can contact Health Direct Australia on 1800 022 222.

Beyond Blue's Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service is providing free counselling during the pandemic. The service will connect you with a trained mental health professional (24 hours 7 days a week), or you can use an online chat at www.coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au, for immediate support contact Lifeline on 13 11 14.

To read more about a Mental Health Care Plan online go to: www.ruok.org.au/how-to-access-a-mental-health-care-plan

COMMUNITIES ASSIST NEWS



SCH CELEBRATES 2020 NAIDOC WEEK

SCH held a small morning tea in November to celebrate NAIDOC Week 2020. In attendance was Southern Cross Housing’s CEO; Alex Pontello, Executive Manager of Housing Services; Adrianna Burnes-Nguyen, Guest Speaker and Aboriginal Elder; Noel Wellington, along with a small handful of tenants and Indigenous SCH staff members.

The event commenced with guest speaker, Uncle Noel Wellington welcoming all attendees to Country, delivering a speech on the importance of NAIDOC week and sharing stories about his family history. At the end of Uncle Noel’s speech, SCH were honoured to receive beautiful carvings of local totems handmade by Noel.

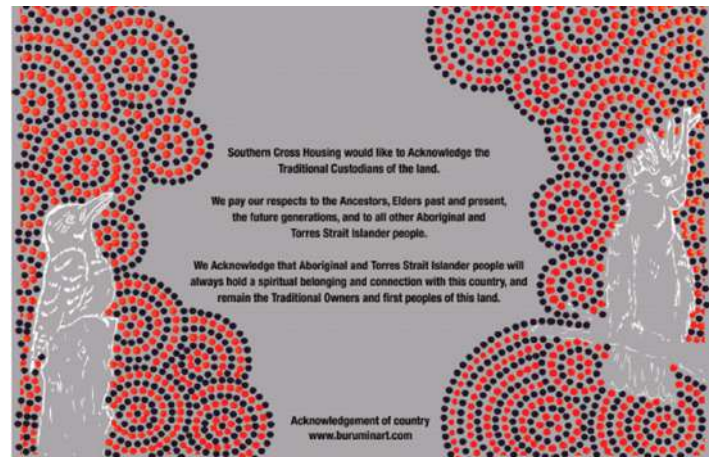
Adrianna, the Executive Manager of Housing Services spoke passionately about the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for Southern Cross Housing. The RAP will assist us to create a workplace culture that understands, values and respects the histories, cultures and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. When complete, it will contain a number of actions that will be developed collaboratively with members of our Indigenous community to increase identified Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander

employment opportunities within Southern Cross Housing, ensure that SCH provides a culturally supportive and safe environment for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who access our services and create a culturally supportive environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

To conclude a successful NAIDOC week celebration, CEO; Alex Pontello unveiled the Statement of Acknowledgement by Southern Cross Housing. The statement proudly acknowledges the traditional owners, our Indigenous communities and their rich culture. The plaque was created by local Indigenous Artist, Troy Lenihan and will be proudly displayed in SCH’s Nowra office.

We would like to acknowledge and thank Cathy Campbell and Anthony Longbottom of the Communities Assist team for all their hard work in putting together such a special event.

“From small things, big things grow” – Anthony Longbottom



Artist: Troy Lenihan | Country: Yuin Nation | Language Group: Dhurga



2021 NAIDOC AWARDS NOW OPEN

Do you know a First Nations person doing amazing work in the community who deserves recognition for their hard work? Why not nominate them for the 2021 National NAIDOC Awards. Nominating someone is easy and your Communities Assist Team can help you to nominate someone if you are unsure about the process.

For more information about the National NAIDOC Awards Program head to www.naidoc.org.au/awards/nominations.



GOOD NEIGHBOUR AWARDS 2021



Neighbour Day is celebrated throughout Australia on the 28th March 2021. It is an annual celebration of community, and Southern Cross Housing would like to join in by encouraging everyone to connect with their neighbours. Knowing your neighbours and other people in your community can help you feel more supported and less lonely.

Neighbour Day is officially celebrated each year to raise awareness of the importance of social connection and neighbourly actions. We know that many of our tenants are great at looking out for their neighbours, whether it's by checking in from time to time, sharing a cuppa or a meal, and even mowing each other's lawns. That's why Southern Cross Housing are running the Good Neighbour Awards again in 2021. Do you have a neighbour that you want to share your appreciation for? Why not nominate them for a Good Neighbour Award.

There are a number of categories that you can nominate under:

Senior Neighbour Award - For a Senior citizen 65+ (45+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) who actively engages in your community.

Young Neighbour Award - For young people 24 years and younger who actively engage in your community.

Outstanding Contribution to an Inclusive Community - All ages. This category acknowledges nominees who have made an outstanding contribution to making the community they live in a more inclusive community for people of all abilities, ages and/or culture.

Gardening and Property Care Award - That person in your neighbourhood whose garden you always notice.

Good Neighbour Award - This is a broad category, for that neighbour who is 25 years or older, friendly, welcoming, or helpful.

To obtain a copy of the nomination form please head to the Southern Cross Housing website or speak to your Housing Officer.

www.scch.org.au/community/good-neighbour-2020/

Nominations will close at 5pm on Friday 12th March 2021

Award winners will receive vouchers to their choice of either:

- A Local café
- Local restaurant
- Local leisure facility

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

This year Southern Cross Housing would like to encourage community connection. We are offering our tenants the opportunity to host a BBQ in their neighbourhood during Good Neighbour Week. The Communities Assist team will help with set up and supplies, you just have to help us select a location, invite other Southern Cross Housing residents, and run it on the day. Please note there will be one BBQ in each region, and the events will be for Southern Cross residents only. For more information please email the Communities Assist team at communities@scch.org.au or contact on 1300 757 885.

SCH KEYS2RENTING TRAINING PROGRAM

During October 2020, SCH team members Keryn and Cathy delivered the Keys2Renting Training program to approximately 10 young people in our local community. Keryn developed an informative new workbook for the program. The purpose of our Keys2Renting Program is to provide information that will assist people of all ages to obtain and sustain a private rental property. The short (3 hour program) covers a range of topics including:

- Budgeting
- Tenant rights & responsibilities
- Financial support to initiate and sustain tenancy
- How and where to apply for a tenancy
- Property maintenance during a tenancy
- Maintaining relationships with neighbours and real estate agents
- How to end a tenancy

The course is designed for people that want to enter the private rental market. Every participant that completes the course receives a certificate that may be used to support rental applications.

As an offshoot to reinvigorating this program, SCH has re-registered as a support organisation for the NSW State Governments Work Development Order Program. If you are interested in attending a Keys2Renting course or finding out more about using a Work Development Order to pay off debt please contact the Communities Assist Team on 1300 757 885 or email us at Communities@scch.org.au



APPLIANCE REPLACEMENT SCHEME

In the SCH Spring edition of the tenant newsletter, we shared information about an energy saving opportunity that our Tenancy and Communities Assist teams had recently completed training in. The Appliance Replacement Scheme is a NSW Government program that provides 40-50% discounts on selected energy efficient appliances. This initiative is helping households to lower their energy bill, increase energy savings and bring affordability to their cost of living.

If you would like to find out more about the eligibility criteria for the Appliance Replacement Scheme please contact your Housing Officer or the Communities Assist team at communities@scch.org.au. For more information about the Scheme please go to www.energysaver.nsw.gov.au/households/rebates-and-discounts/appliance-replacement-offer



APPLICATIONS FOR THE SCH 2021 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM ARE NOW OPEN!



The Southern Cross Housing Scholarship Program provides support for our tenants by assisting with the cost of education, sports activities or special interests like cultural learning and arts that help them achieve their full potential. The program supports Primary and High School students, and tenants that are studying at TAFE and University.

HOW MUCH CAN YOU APPLY FOR?

The maximum amount residents can apply for depends on what the scholarship will be used for:

- Primary School up to \$400.00
- High School or TAFE up to \$800.00
- University up to \$1,200.00

WHAT CAN THE SCHOLARSHIP BE USED FOR?

You can use the funding to pay for things such as:

- Course fees, for example TAFE or university
- Textbooks, workbooks, study guides
- Computer equipment
- Uniforms
- Sports kit/ equipment
- Special equipment
- Excursions
- Specialist skills development e.g. writing courses or football academies
- Outside-of-school activities such as sports or playing an instrument
- Courses in arts, crafts and other areas of interest for adults
- Tutoring
- Courses in employment related skills for example, driving lessons

WHO CAN APPLY?

To apply for a scholarship, you must:

- Have completed and submitted a feedback form (if you have previously received funds under the program in 2020)
- Live in a Southern Cross Housing Property or be receiving support services from one of Southern Cross Housing's formal partner organisations including:
 - Caresouth
 - The Disability Trust
 - Southern Youth & Family Services
 - Supported Accommodation & Homelessness Services Shoalhaven – Illawarra
 - St Vincent De Paul
 - Uniting Care
 - Waminda

HOW DO I APPLY?

1. Simply fill in an application form available from the SCH [website](#) or pick up a form from one of our offices in Nowra, Ulladulla, Batemans Bay, Bega and Cooma. You can also call the office to have an application form posted to you.

2. You will need to send in documents to support your application. This might include a course acceptance letter, copy of course fees, and quotes for any equipment costs or sporting activities.

3. Supporting information is important and helps our assessment panel to better understand how the scholarship could help you to achieve your goals.

Filling out application forms can be a daunting task. To assist you we will be holding a number of information sessions in Nowra, Batemans Bay, Bega and Cooma. Dates for the workshops will be announced shortly. To register your interest in attending please contact the Communities Assist Team on 1300 757 885.

Applications must be returned by the 19th March 2021 by post or email: Communities@scch.org.au. Applicants will be notified of the outcome in late March 2021 and funding will be paid to successful recipients in early April 2021.



POLICY UPDATE



Our Corporate Services Team regularly review our Policies to ensure they are always up to date. Below is a summary of some of these policies, each can be found on the SCH website here: www.scch.org.au/social-housing/policies-2-2

T1 - UNDER OCCUPANCY

Under occupancy refers to properties where there is more than one extra bedroom than required by tenant. We are committed to housing tenants in the most suited dwelling, according to your household need. Under occupancy can occur when there is a change in circumstances such as a child leaving home. Where an under occupied property is identified and additional rooms have not been approved, SCH may request tenants move to a new property more suitable to your household size. A tenant in an under occupied property will be given 2 reasonable offers. Should a tenant decline those offers, SCH may exercise our right to terminate the tenancy. Tenants have a right of review of decisions under this policy.

T15 - WATER CHARGES

Tenants are required to pay for personal water usage. SCH is responsible for meeting all other water costs such as connection charges, sewerage and water usage in common areas. A common area is an external garden, lawn or driveway which is available for the use and enjoyment of all tenants.

Tenants may elect to pay water usage in advance by instalments over the billing period based on an estimate of the usage or in one lump sum. Should tenants choose to pay in one lump sum, it must be paid within 21 days from receipt of the water bill from SCH.

For properties that have separate meters, tenants will be charged for all water usage. For properties with shared meters, tenants will be charged a proportion of the total water usage based on the number of people living in the unit, the total number of people living in the complex and after deducting an allowance for the Common Area which is payable by SCH.

Any tenant experiencing payment difficulties should contact their local SCH branch to discuss payment options. There is no exemption from water usage charges for tenants temporarily absent from their property.

T2 - ABSENCE FROM PROPERTY

An absence from property is any period that a tenant will be away from the property in excess of six weeks. Long periods of absence from a property can indicate that a tenant does not have a genuine need. The maximum period a tenant may be absent from a property is three months. Tenants are advised to inform SCH of absences in excess of two weeks.

Examples of acceptable reasons for absences up to three months include, caring for sick and frail family members, hospitalisation, holidays, and employment or escaping domestic violence.

SCH will approve an absence from the property where SCH is satisfied that arrangements for payment of tenancy charges such as rent and water usage have been made, that the property is adequately cared for whilst the tenant is away and importantly that the tenant has an acceptable reason for being away.

A tenant may apply for a decision on minimum rent, however this will only occur where a tenant or household member is not eligible for Centrelink benefits because they are in custody, or is required to enter a nursing home, respite care or rehabilitation centre and is required to pay for that accommodation.

T8 - RENT SOCIAL HOUSING

The maximum amount payable for a Social Housing property by any tenant will be Market Rent; this is the amount shown on Residential Tenancy Agreements. SCH reviews all Social Housing Market Rents at least annually.

Social housing tenants may be eligible to pay Rebated Rent, based on their household income. Rebated Rent for social housing is reviewed every six months, or when a tenant advises a change in household members or incomes. In order to be assessed for a rent rebate, a letter will be sent advising of the need to provide proof of income within 14 days. If a tenant fails to provide proof of income by the end of the notice period stated in the letter, but subsequently provides proof later, their rebated rent will only be backdated to the date that proof of income is received.

Tenants are informed of the level of their rebated rent at the start of a tenancy and each time there is a change during the tenancy.

SCH advises tenants about rent assistance payments you may be entitled to claim at the start of your tenancy. Rent assistance is included in the first calculation based on the amount you would receive.



REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE



PROPERTY SERVICES

During your lease sign up and routine inspections you may have heard your Housing Officer talk about property maintenance and care. It's a good idea to talk to your Housing Officer if you are having any issues with property care so that they can link you to assistance or support services that can help you with your particular situation. This assistance could include support to access NDIS, My Aged Care or other local support services.

Any damage to a property that is not considered general wear and tear will be your responsibility to repair as per the Residential Tenancy Act 2010. If you are unsure of where to view the Act, please contact your Housing Officer.

SCH staff work to address property care issues including hoarding and clutter. Significant clutter can become overwhelming and a real hazard. It can threaten the health and safety of those living in or near the home causing health problems, structural damage, fire dangers, and pest infestations. If you think you might have an issue with Hoarding and Clutter please talk to your Housing Officer. There are ways we can help.

Garbage or waste products can accumulate quickly, in large quantities it creates the perfect opportunity for germs, bacteria and other harmful micro-organisms to grow. To eliminate this, your home should be cleaned at least once a week and deep cleaned at least once every month. Each local Council has different regulations regarding waste disposal, garbage collection and Tip access. If you are unsure about the process in your local area you can ask your Housing Officer or contact the local Council.

Homes with excess clutter expose the building, its occupants and nearby homes to increased fire risk. A pile up of clutter may provide more fuel for a fire to burn and potentially block passageways and exits. Discard waste and garbage regularly and ensure household items are not covering vents, heaters or cooking appliances.

Restricted access due to clutter can hinder regular maintenance to your property. It is important to us to ensure our tenants live in housing that upholds the best possible standards and we want to work with you to not only maintain the homes integrity, but also the health of you and your family.



HELPING TO KEEP OUR COMMUNITIES CLEAN

If you are a resident of the Shoalhaven area, you may notice the Southern Cross Housing Lawns and Grounds Team around your community in the coming months. The team is on a mission to clean up our streets and would like to encourage members of the community to do the same. The Team will be working on a Streetscapes Program that aims to clean up street verges, overgrown road gutters, footpaths and overhanging trees. These photos were taken in Kameruka Crescent, Nowra. If you notice the Team in your area, please say hello and let them know they're doing a great job.

We have been really encouraged by many members of the community who have been inspired by this program and made a commitment to get out into their own yards and make a difference too.



Some communities have Tool Libraries, which are just like a regular library except you can borrow household tools instead of books. This can be a useful way to avoid unnecessary clutter or costs associated with maintaining tools that you only need once a year.

Currently there is a tool library located in Cobargo, Bega Valley. Yearly membership is available for \$40 and includes all tools and items. If you live in the Bega Valley and would like to know more about the Triangle Tool Library, their inventory is listed on the website:

www.triangletoollibrary.org.au



WARM WEATHER EQUALS SNAKE SEASON

Snake season is upon us, and you may come across a snake in your backyard. It's important to be aware and do what you can to prevent a snake encounter around your home.

1. DECLUTTER

Remove clutter or unused objects from around your yard and house frequently throughout summer, this will create fewer places for snakes to hide.

2. DON'T PROVIDE INVITATIONS FOR RATS AND MICE

Rats and mice are attracted to food scraps. Be sure to clean up food scraps in and around your house. If you have pets, ensure their food is kept in sealed containers and out of reach. Rodents tend to be a hotspot for snakes to hunt.

3. MAINTENANCE

Keeping your lawn maintained is vital to creating a snake-free environment. Snakes are naturally attracted to long grass, not to mention it also decreases visibility. Frequently rake up leaves, sticks and other debris from around the yard, this will also help manage other critters like spiders.

4. KNOW THE LOCAL SERVICES

Living in Australia means snakes are part of the territory, if you do encounter a snake around your property this summer do not touch or try to handle it yourself. It's a good idea to be aware of your local snake handling service, if you can't find them on google contact your local Council. It can be handy to keep their number on your fridge or contact list in case you need it in a hurry!



TENANT OPPORTUNITIES



NOW IS YOUR CHANCE TO JOIN A TENANT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC) IN NOWRA OR BEGA VALLEY



Our Tenant Advisory Committees (TAC) provide an opportunity for tenants to discuss issues, exchange ideas and provide feedback about services and programs that are delivered by Southern Cross Housing.

We are inviting nominations for the Bega Valley and Nowra TACs.

Our TACs will meet every three months. The meetings will be run by tenants and focus on themes, issues, or concerns for tenants in the area who live in Southern Cross Housing properties. An important aspect of our TAC meetings is to provide opportunities for tenant representatives to raise issues or identify concerns about various Southern Cross Housing processes. TAC members review the issues or concerns, help to identify solutions and provide these ideas to Southern Cross Housing.

Each year we also run a Tenant Survey. This annual survey is a great opportunity for you to give your feedback about your satisfaction as a Southern Cross Housing Tenant. As a member of the TAC, you can help us to analyse the results of our survey, develop a plan to improve our services and monitor the implementation of improvements for your area.

If you would like to join a TAC in either Shoalhaven or Bega Valley, please email communities@scch.org.au with your contact details, a bit about you, and why you would like to join a Southern Cross Housing TAC.



REPORTING MAINTENANCE ISSUES

Please call **1300 757 885** to report any maintenance issue with your property

For maintenance enquiries, **press 2**

If your property is part of the **2018 Tenancy Transfer**, **press 1** to be transferred to Lakes Maintenance.

TENANT OPPORTUNITIES (CONT.)



RETURN TO WORK GRANTS FOR WOMEN

The Return to Work Program is a NSW Government initiative that is designed to provide tailored support to women seeking to re-enter the workforce after a period of absence. There are so many costs involved in starting up again, one-off grants of up to \$5,000 are available to cover the costs involved in:

- Education and training
- Support material for courses
- Work necessities such as specialist clothing, equipment, IT
- Transportation costs
- Childcare

Any female NSW resident who has been out of the workforce for at least a month and is intending to return to work within six months of receiving a Return to Work Grant is eligible to apply. Successful applicants will be given a Return to Work Coordinator to develop a Return to Work Plan, which will set out the resources that will assist them getting back in the workforce. To register your interest: www.service.nsw.gov.au/register-interest-return-work-program or contact the Communities Assist team at communities@scch.org.au if you would like some assistance.

ENERGY & WATER OMBUDSMAN NSW (EWON) RESOURCE KITS

There are many things we can do around the house to save Energy and Water such as ensuring taps, hoses, lights and air conditioners are turned off when not in use. If you are having issues with your energy or water bills/services, the Ombudsman may be able to help by providing fair and independent advice. The Energy and Water Ombudsman has provided Resource Kits to Southern Cross Housing offices for our tenants. The Kits include information, contact details and some handy resources.

Kit quantities are limited so if you would like one please drop by your nearest Southern Cross Housing office or contact Communities Assist at communities@scch.org.au to organise collection.



SCH NEWS



GOOD NEIGHBOURS IN ULLADULLA

We recently learned of the sad passing of Peter Delbridge from one of our complexes in the Ulladulla area. Peter's daughter Rebekah travelled from Melbourne to clean out his unit. While Sarah was in Ulladulla, she met with some local tenants who knew her father and together they organised a small farewell at Mollymook Beach.

Rebekah said, "I would not have been able to find this little spot which was dad's favourite, without Mary, Lee & Ricky & it was a lovely moment to say good bye to dad & share with his follow flat mates of the past 9 years".

SCH are keeping Rebekah and Peter's loved ones in our thoughts during this time.

Pictured: Lee Murray, Rebekah Whittaker, Mary Curran, Ricky Pennisi and Josh Van Dyke



WHAT'S COOKING IN COOMA?

Frances Mary is a Southern Cross Housing tenant in the Cooma area whose kitchen recently had an upgrade! Frances Mary has patiently awaited the renovations and expressed her happiness with the new kitchen that she has really enjoyed using.



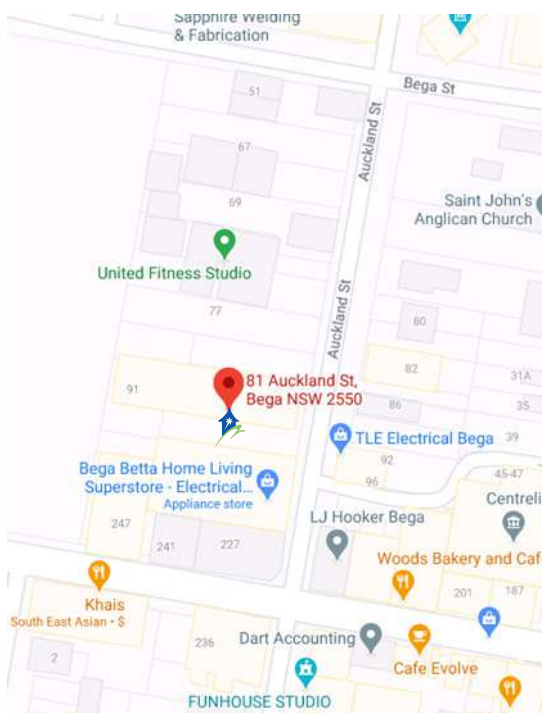
She has acknowledged the support from the lovely Cooma team in helping her with the kitchen arrangements – we can't wait to hear more about what's cooking in your kitchen Frances Mary.



OUR BEGA VALLEY OFFICE HAS MOVED!

Our Bega Valley team have said GOODBYE to Unit 9 at the Bega Valley Regional Learning Centre in Merimbula, and HELLO to **9/81-85 Auckland Street, Bega**. The new office is more accessible, in a great central location, and closer to many other local service providers. We are planning to launch an official opening day soon, in the meantime if you need assistance or would like to speak to one of our friendly team there, come by and say hello.

Bega Office hours are 8:30am – 4:30pm Monday to Thursday.



Our Bega Valley team includes Emma (Regional Community Development Officer), Ingrid (Housing Officer), Anthony (Assets Officer), and Sarah (Southern Tenancy Manager).



CONNECTING YOU TO YOUR COMMUNITY

Glen Stewart has been a tenant of Southern Cross Housing for several years, and first met his Housing Officer Emma when she commenced her role in October 2020. During a routine inspection Emma noticed Glen's great care and pride in his property. Emma identified that Glen was appreciative of the assistance SCH provided him but would benefit from extra support in other aspects of his life. Through further discussions Glen advised Emma that he was happy for her to initiate My Aged Care on his behalf and arrange an assessment of his needs. In addition, Emma introduced Glen to Anthony Longbottom from the Communities Assist team. My Aged Care is now supporting Glen with some aspects of everyday living, meal delivery, and social support.

During a recent visit, Glen shared that he has joined a local fishing group who meet every week. The fishing group has been a great way for Glen to form new friendships and Glen says he is looking forward to catching his first fish and cooking it!

If you would like to hear about social connection opportunities in your local area, please speak to your Housing Officer or contact the Communities Assist team at communities@sccch.org.au or 1300 757 885



OUR PLACE OUR PEOPLE



In each issue of our Newsletter, we will introduce one of our team members to help you get to know us a bit better. In this issue we profile Tiegán Cosgrove, one of our Access and Demand Team members.

Tiegán was recently awarded a National Award for Innovation in Workplace Resilience and Scholarship under the prestigious 2021 PowerHousing Awards Program and we are incredibly proud of her achievement.

Tiegán was successful under the Power Housing Australia Awards program because of the wonderful work that she undertook during a very difficult 2020. Over the past 11 months Southern Cross Housing's, Access and Demand Team have been at the front line of response due to Bushfires, Floods and COVID-19 as well as conducting Assertive Outreach for people that have been experiencing homelessness. Tiegán also worked hard to ensure the successful implementation of the Together Home Project (Rough Sleeper Program).



Tiegán was part of the SCH response to assist those affected by bushfires and worked as a frontline worker in the Ulladulla evacuation Centre, 2 days per week for over 2 months. Tiegán provided Temporary Accommodation, Private Rental Brokerage, assistance with Bond Loans, client assistance referrals and much more. At one stage, Tiegán was evacuated from her own home, only to go home, collect some of her belongings and then return to work to assist others. Tiegán is a selfless, committed and resilient individual.

As a Social Housing Management Transfer (SHMT) Community Housing Provider, SCH was given responsibility to deliver Assertive Outreach, engaging with rough sleepers and then the development and implementation of the new Together Home Program. Tiegán was one of the Access and Demand Team who put her hand up to assist with this project. This has involved working in an outreach capacity and forming working partnerships with local Homelessness Services and long-term rough sleepers. Tiegán learned her new role quickly and was integral in assisting Rough Sleepers into accommodation in a quick timeframe, despite dealing with very challenging circumstances. Tiegán has taken the challenges of working in the field with very vulnerable people in her stride and kept clients who felt disconnected from the service system, some for many years, engaged, and walking them through the process to being housed.

Through all of this, Tiegán has shown great compassion, professionalism and resilience. Tiegán has never sought anything for her commendable work effort but has always considered what is best for the clients she works for and the team she is part of.

“Thank you to all staff for helping to keep a smile on my face – even during the testing times”



INCOME REVIEW LETTERS



Depending on your lease, you will receive 6 or 12 rent monthly review letters. In January 2021 we send out letters to some of our tenants about the next reviews which will cover a 6-month period.

If you disagree with your rent review, it's really important that you contact our Rent Review Team on 1300 757 885. The team will ask you to provide payslips to verify your income.

If you have experienced a change in income or feel that the rent review documentation that you have received is incorrect, please contact your Housing Officer on 1300 757 885. For more information about how Southern Cross Housing manages our Rent Review Process please head to:

www.scch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Rent-Social-Housing-FINAL-Nov-2020.pdf

At Southern Cross Housing (SCH), we recognise the inherent dignity of every person and the importance of demonstrating this in all that we do and say.

We are committed to providing high quality housing, excellence in tenancy management and access to support for those who need it and do so by:

- Giving you courteous, respectful and efficient customer service.
- Acting with honesty and integrity.
- Listening carefully to help you in the best way we can.
- Ensuring individual's rights will not be discriminated against on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, marital status, ability, religion or sexual preference.
- Ensuring full compliance with privacy legislation and carefully managing your personal information.
- Ensuring equitable access to all eligible people seeking social and affordable housing.
- Providing secure, affordable, appropriate and safe housing to tenants.
- Conducting regular review of policies and procedures, organisational structure and management information systems to ensure a high quality of service provision.
- Ensuring we provide easy-to-understand information that can be understood by applicants and tenants.
- Keeping you informed of any changes to our policies or procedures that may affect you.
- Responding to your requests of feedback within the timelines included in our policies.
- Communicating all our decisions to you in writing, unless you have asked us to communicate with you in another way.

WE WELCOME FEEDBACK ON OUR PERFORMANCE

SCH welcomes feedback about your customer service experience. We take any complaint seriously and are committed to continually improving our services.

For any feedback about our service or to make a suggestion, please contact us.

E info@scch.org.au

P 1300 757 885

W www.scch.org.au

**'EVERYONE HAS A
HOME IN A THRIVING
COMMUNITY'**





SOUTHERN CROSS
HOUSING

building real community futures