

# BRIDGE HOUSING April newsletter

## Bridging the Digital Divide



### Your chance to own a computer package for only \$50!

Over 2.5 million Australian households have no PC's or internet access. Bridge Housing Limited (BHL) and Work Ventures are working together to reduce this gap and will begin a computer package rollout to 85 BHL tenants to ensure households in need are not technologically disadvantaged.

BHL has recently received a donation from the Trust Company Philanthropic Services to supply computer packages to households with a low to moderate income, access a personal computer.

Along with WorkVentures, we are offering the opportunity to own a computer package for only \$50 for families that are on a low to moderate income. Package includes:

- A fully refurbished PC (inclusive of software)
- Introduction to computer training
- Minimum 3 months worth of internet usage (Phone connection needed, not included in computer package)
- Delivery of computer package
- 12 month warranty
- Free telephone support (for a limited time).

To be eligible you must meet one of the following criteria:

- Have children under the age of eighteen
- Be enrolled in an education or training course (Minimum course length must be two months, you must provide evidence of this).
- Be on a low to moderate income
- Socially isolated due to infirmity or ill health.

We will also consider applications from tenants who can make a good case for why they would require a PC and for whom the cost of equipment is usually prohibitive.

**To apply, please call Emmanuel Smith-Aspros at Bridge Housing Limited on 02 9699 6055 ext 227 or email [e.smith-aspros@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:e.smith-aspros@bridgehousing.org.au).**

*There are only 85 packages available. Tenants that miss out will be added to a waiting list and may be offered a package at a later date.*

## NSW Community Housing Tenant Network

The Community Housing Tenant Network was started in 2005 as a way for community housing tenants across NSW to learn about tenant participation and to get involved in issues relating to their general communities.

Tenants and staff recently attended the Tenant Network meeting with guest speakers addressing the meeting about housing co-operatives and tenant participation.

The next tenant workshop will be held on the 28th June 2010 at Club Ashfield and will focus on supporting older people in the community.

Pam Pryor (Vice Chair) and John Evans, two Bridge Housing Tenants are current committee members. If you have any questions on how to get involved call Pam on 0409 047 301 or Emmanuel on 9699 6055 ext 227.

For more information on the NSW Community Housing Tenant Network please visit

[www.communityhousing.org.au/tenantnetwork](http://www.communityhousing.org.au/tenantnetwork)

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# Tree Trimming and Powerlines

Energy Australia has an ongoing tree maintenance program to keep trees and their branches free from electrical wires.

This helps to prevent injury to people and damage to property. 75% of blackouts are caused by environmental factors, this includes tree branches. There is a law that requires trees to be trimmed to ensure there is a safe clearance between tree branches and powerlines – EnergyAustralia can do this for free! Typically a 1.5 metre radius is a safe clearance for low voltage overhead wires usually used in residential areas.

If you have any questions or concerned that there are tree branches that are not a safe distance from cables, please call EnergyAustralia on 13 15 35.

## Housing Pathways

Bridge Housing Limited is one of a number of Community Housing Providers working with Housing NSW to implement Housing Pathways.

This is a new single access system for social housing, with one common Housing Register and one shared application form.

The aim of the system is to make it easier for clients to access housing assistance in NSW.

From late April 2010 people seeking housing assistance will be required to fill out one application form and will only need to access one housing provider for assistance with housing.

### What does this mean for Bridge Housing Limited?

From the end of April Bridge Housing will work with Housing NSW to deliver housing assistance using the same application process.

A 'No Wrong Door' approach will be employed. The idea behind this is to ensure clients do not have to tell their story over and over again. Clients will be able to approach any participating provider for housing assistance and the same assessment will be used for everyone.

We will be carrying out some works to our reception area, which will allow us to interview and assess applicants for housing.

### What does this mean for current tenants?

The new NSW Housing Register is for applicants and tenants who have an approved transfer. All applicants on the Housing NSW register will have been contacted in writing regarding the new changes (including our leasehold tenants). If you have been approved for a transfer with Bridge Housing Limited you will be placed on the NSW Housing Register as a transfer applicant. Housing providers will then use this register to shortlist and offer applicants appropriate vacant properties as they arise.

Current Bridge Housing Policy transfers are prioritised on a needs basis, with people with the most urgent need to transfer given priority.

If you have any queries about Housing Pathways please call Emmanuel Smith-Aspros on 9699 6055 ext. 227 or visit:

[www.housing.nsw.gov.au/Changes+to+Social+Housing/Housing+Pathways/](http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/Changes+to+Social+Housing/Housing+Pathways/)

## Update from the CEO

The last six months has been an extremely busy but very satisfying time for Bridge Housing Limited. We were awarded A Class 1 Registration under the new regulatory regime which is evidence that Bridge Housing is in robust shape and ready to take on the risks and challenges.

By the end of April Bridge Housing Limited will have grown by another 250 dwellings through the Property Transfer Program and the Economic Stimulus Package. The Property Transfer Program involves the transfer of Housing NSW dwellings in the Eastern and Inner West area of Sydney to Bridge Housing limited's management.

The Economic Stimulus package properties involve the transfer of 50

dwellings in Greenacre and Bondi.

In late 2009 the government made a significant decision to transfer title on the 5,000 properties built through the Economic Stimulus package and up to 100 currently managed properties to community housing organisations.

The significance is that Housing Associations will now move from housing managers to undertake property procurement or development as they will now have a significant asset against which to borrow.

For example one package is worth \$120m. Bridge Housing, like all Community Housing Providers, was required to tender for these properties. Consequently January and February were extremely busy months. The outcome of the tenders will be known by late April 2010.

The growth in our property portfolio

is not an end in itself but provides BHL with the ability to improve its services delivery to our applicants and tenants.

We have an increased focus on improving our asset maintenance services through the roll out of the substantial backlog maintenance program worth \$11m and also involves the upgrade of 230 capital dwellings.

We also recently introduced an 'After Hours Emergency Maintenance Service' for capital tenants and this will be made available to leasehold tenants in the near future.

To assist our older tenants we are negotiating with the Australian Red Cross to introduce its Tenant Connect Program to assist with isolated older tenants.

Another significant community development initiative is our Bridging the Digital Divide project (see page 1).

# Property Transfer Program

The Property Transfer Program (PTP) is a partnership between Community Housing Providers and Housing NSW and is intended to grow and strengthen Community Housing Providers across NSW. Over three thousand dwellings will be transferred to community housing management in 2009/2010.

In November 2009 Housing NSW and Bridge Housing Limited commenced their first Property Transfer Program with 127 Units in South Coogee. Many residents understandably were anxious about the change in management and landlord arrangements. The most common concern was that South Coogee tenants would lose the security of tenure or would have to move.

Through community consultation and joint working between Bridge Housing and Bridge Housing NSW staff, tenants were assured that they would continue to enjoy the same security of tenure and conditions that they currently held with Housing NSW. At the end of March 89 tenants, 70% of Wauhope Crescent have transferred.

Bridge Housing will continue to work with Housing NSW to encourage the remainder of tenants not yet with Bridge Housing to transfer to ensure they also experience the many benefits of being a tenant with Bridge Housing.

## Emergency Maintenance Service

As part of its continuous service improvement, Bridge Housing Limited is pleased to announce an **After Hours Emergency Maintenance Service** to our valued tenants

- burst water service
- blocked or broken lavatory system
- serious roof leak
- gas leak
- dangerous electrical fault
- flooding or serious flood damage
- serious fire or storm damage
- a failure or breakdown of gas, electricity or water supply to the premises
- a failure or breakdown of any essential service on the premises for hot water, cooking, heating or laundering
- any fault or damage that causes the premises to be unsafe or not secure.

At this stage, the After Hours Emergency Repair service is for Capital properties only, leasehold tenants (properties that are leased through a real estate agent) will continue to follow the current system and refer to the bottom of the front page of their leases.

**If you require a contractor to attend to an after hours emergency repair, call Bridge Housing Limited on 02 9699 6055 and follow the directions to be transferred to an operator who will assist with your emergency repair.**

**For repairs and maintenance problems that are not classified as emergencies, please continue to contact your Housing Manager during business hours 9.00am–4.30pm Monday to Friday on 9699 6055.**

## Bridge Housing wins Federal Government Economic Stimulus Package Properties



Bridge Housing Limited CEO John Nicolades with Hannah Arja, Housing Manager with Jason Clare and Tony Stewart.

Under the Federal Government's Economic Stimulus plan, Bridge Housing Limited has been allocated 50 properties. The first 24 properties are in Greenacre. These properties include 7 x 2 Bedroom properties, 3 x 3 Bedroom properties, 2 x 4 Bedroom properties and 12 units for people aged 55 and over, some adapted to accommodate wheelchair access.

The properties are located only half an hour from Bankstown Square Shopping centre and are located in a quiet suburban street.

"One tenant moved into a four-bedroom, two-bathroom villa in Wentworth St with her three children aged two, six and seven in September so she could look after her grandmother.

For this Tenant, who is a full-time carer, the transfer has eased the stress of

commuting daily from Eagle Vale, near Campbelltown, to Marrickville where her grandmother used to live in a two-bedroom unit"

We have successfully housed tenants in all of these properties and to welcome our new tenants to the community we organised a BBQ on 18th February 2010.

Mr Jason Clare, Federal Member for Blaxland and Mr Anthony Stewart, State Member for Bankstown attended the BBQ to highlight the success of Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan.

The BBQ itself was a tremendous success and the tantalising food reflected the multicultural background of our tenants, Indian, Fijian, Lebanese, Chinese and South African.

The remaining 26 Economic stimulus package properties will be built in Greenacre and Bondi.



# Rent Incentive Scheme

## Your Chance to Win \$150

Bridge Housing has a rent incentive scheme for tenants who keep their rent two weeks in advance and non-rent account (this includes water and other bills) up-to-date.

As your Residential Tenancy Agreement states you need to keep your rent at least two weeks ahead. If you are having difficulty, it is important that you contact your Housing Manager as soon as possible. A payment plan can be arranged to avoid adding too much stress on your household budget. At the end of March, June, September and December, one tenant will win \$150. All tenants who are up-to-date with their rent (two weeks in advance) will be entered into the draw. The lucky tenant will be contacted by Bridge Housing then sent a cheque within two weeks of the draw – it's that simple!

**Congratulations to Joanne, who was the most recent winner of the \$150.**

## Red Cross Tenant Connect

Tenant Connect is a community program for older tenants living in social housing across NSW. Tenants living in public, community or Aboriginal housing can receive a free reassuring daily phone call daily, to confirm they are safe and well.

Tenants who live alone and are aged 75 years or over and Aboriginal tenants 50 years or over not in daily contact with someone can apply to receive this service. Joining Tenant Connect means you will receive a short friendly daily phone call from a trained Red Cross volunteer at an agreed time.

If you don't answer the call, the volunteer will wait 10 minutes and call again. If there is still no response, your Tenant Connect Coordinator will be notified and a key contact person (nominated by you) will be contacted to come to your home to check if you are OK.

If you do not have access to a landline phone the Red Cross can help you gain access via a service provider free of charge.

If you would like to receive this service, please contact Emmanuel Smith-Aspros at Bridge Housing Limited on 02 9699 6055 ext 227 or email [e.smith-aspros@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:e.smith-aspros@bridgehousing.org.au).

Your details will be recorded and Red Cross will contact you to arrange the following:

- Arrange a home visit assessment
- Arrange a time to visit you at home
- Gather all the necessary information to help complete your application
- Provide information about this service
- The Red Cross will then assess your application to see if you are eligible
- Start receiving your daily calls.

Once your application is approved you will start receiving your morning calls from a Red Cross volunteer.

## Mutual Exchanges

The Mutual Exchange Program helps Bridge Housing tenants who want to exchange their Bridge Housing dwellings with other Bridge Housing tenants. Tenants seeking a mutual exchange must meet the requirements of the Mutual Exchange policy which can be found on our website [www.bridgehousing.org.au](http://www.bridgehousing.org.au) or is available from your Housing Manager or Reception.

**1. For exchange** - 4 bed house in Concord, 15 minutes to station & shops. Looking to swap for a 3 bed property, any area, close to public transport.

Please contact Fred on 0449 105 709.

**2. For exchange** - 1 bedroom unit in Chippendale. This flat is light and breezy, has a separate bedroom, is newly carpeted and has a veranda facing a quiet lane. Secure block of units with communal laundry. Chippendale is situated in the inner city. Great links to public transport. (Central, Redfern station and buses). It is a 20 minute walk into the middle of the city. Looking to swap for a one bedroom unit out of the city.

For more information contact Tracey Hughes, Housing Manager on 02 9699 6055 ext 210, 04340336 981 or [t.hughes@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:t.hughes@bridgehousing.org.au)

**3. For exchange** – 4 Bedroom Semi detached House in Greenacre

This property is brand new and located in a quiet street 30 minutes travelling distance to Bankstown Shopping Centre

For further information contact Housing Manager Hannah Arja on 9699 6055 ext 208, 0434 336 990 or [h.arja@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:h.arja@bridgehousing.org.au)

**4. For Exchange** – 4 Bedroom freestanding House in Concord 15 minutes from station and shops – Looking to swap for similar in the Ashfield area.

For Further information contact Housing Manager Hannah Arja on 02 9699 6055 ext 208, 0434 336 990 or [h.arja@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:h.arja@bridgehousing.org.au)

**5. For Exchange** - Large 4 bedroom freestanding House in Botany. Polished floorboards throughout, 2 bathrooms, back garden, double garage.

For Further information contact Housing Manager Tracey Hughes on 02 9699 6055 ext 210, 04340336 981 or [t.hughes@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:t.hughes@bridgehousing.org.au)

**6. For Exchange** - 1 bed unit in Mosman – Spit Road, 2nd Floor with fantastic water views through the heads.

Needed 1 bed - ground floor, lift access or first floor in the central eastern suburbs.

For further information contact Emmanuel Smith-Aspros phone 9699 6055 ext 227, 0434 336 990 or [e.smith-aspros@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:e.smith-aspros@bridgehousing.org.au)

**7. For Exchange** – 3 bed Brick home – Rosebery

Very large grassed yard, Driveway, renovated kitchen & bathroom, near parks, Buses to city and surrounding areas. I would like to stay in the same area but need a smaller yard due to health condition.

For further information contact Housing Manager Lorna Cook on 02 9699 6055 ext 202 or [l.cook@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:l.cook@bridgehousing.org.au)

**8. For Exchange** – 2 Bedroom Unit – Annandale

Newly renovated, ground floor with front access. Close to public transport, Johnson St shops and cafes and Parramatta Rd.

For further information contact Hannah Arja, Housing Manager on 9699 6055 ext 208, 0434 336 990 or [h.arja@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:h.arja@bridgehousing.org.au)