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## Introducing the 2011 Annual Tenant Survey

We're delighted to announce the launch of the 2011 Annual Tenant Survey which will reach your mailbox during the first week in November.

Bridge Housing has been conducting Annual Tenant Surveys since 2008 but we want to make this one the best yet. We aim to continuously improve the services we provide and by completing this survey you can help. The more responses we receive the more feedback we can act on, and the more we can accurately gauge the satisfaction levels of our tenants.

You will receive one survey per household. This should be completed by, or on behalf of, the head tenant and returned to Bridge Housing in the accompanying reply paid envelope by 2 December 2011.

If you require help filling out the survey, you can call the Telephone Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask to speak to Bridge Housing on 9699 6055. You can also contact Bridge Housing in person at the Redfern office, where someone will gladly run through the survey with you.



Bridge Housing held a workshop last month to ask tenants for feedback on how we had put the Survey together and to check the questions that we ask tenants. We also wanted to ensure that there were questions that reflected the services that Bridge Housing provides, so the Survey is broken up into the sections on General Information, Housing and Services, Repairs and Maintenance and Communication, as well as a section for you to write anything you like.

It is important that you fill the survey out – this helps us to assess which services are working well and which services need to be improved. The results of the survey will be published in the Autumn issue of the BHL Newsletter, along with any recommendations that come from the feedback you provide.

We look forward to hearing from you and don't forget... if you return your survey by 2 December you will also be entered into a prize draw to win one of 3 x \$150 vouchers.

In response to last year's Tenant Survey, Bridge Housing decided to launch a series of Tenant Workshops to seek feedback on issues that affect them.

In the winter edition of the newsletter, tenants were asked to register their interest in the Tenant Survey workshop and were invited to a working lunch at our Redfern office.

The meeting was chaired by Hayley Austin, (General Manager - Housing and Community), and asked the group what aspects of last year's survey worked well and what didn't. Participants were then asked what they thought about the proposed 2011 Annual Tenant Survey and to recommend any improvements.

The focus group provided a lot of valuable feedback that was used to fine tune the 2011 Annual Tenant

Thank you

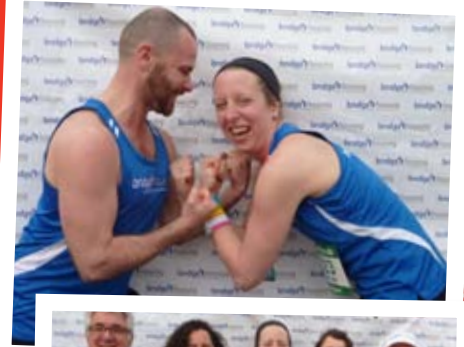
# Congratulations to the Bridge Housing Harriers

The City to Surf is the largest Fun Run in the world, with a gruelling 14 kilometre run against a backdrop of some of the most beautiful scenery Sydney has to offer. Staff from Bridge Housing have entered the event before, but this year we entered a team aptly named the 'Bridge Housing Harriers'.

The team met early on Sunday 14 August 2011 in Hyde Park for some pre-race photos opportunities and some inspirational words from CEO John Nicolades. We had some seasoned runners in the team who ran all the way to the finish at the iconic Bondi Beach while others power walked to complete it their way.

Personal bests were beaten and all enjoyed taking in the atmosphere and excitement generated from being one of the 69000 participants. But the highlight, and the congratulations, go to the team for their charitable efforts. Fundraising for the event meant they raised an impressive \$1631.00 for the Australian Red Cross and Weave ([www.weave.org.au](http://www.weave.org.au)), a charity based in Redfern that provides a range of services to socially excluded young people, women, children and families in the Sydney Metropolitan area.

The team is looking forward to competing again next year, with the challenge of trying to raise more money and to beat this year's times!



## Bridge Housing to Launch first in a series of Neighbourhood Audits

In November, Bridge Housing will be launching the first of a series of Neighbourhood Audits. Housing Managers will be contacting tenants that live in our larger Bridge communities to invite them to a local meeting to look at where they live.

We've identified those homes where there are a number of properties in the same street or block, and selected a sample to be included in this Neighbourhood Audit trial.

A full list of audits will be available on our website. If your area has been selected then you will receive a letter two weeks before the date of the Neighbourhood Audit from the Housing Manager inviting you along. The letter will also introduce who will be attending, such as the Community Development Officer, Assets Officer

or any other interested stakeholder.

As well as discussing repairs and maintenance affecting common areas, it is also a great time to discuss other issues that may be affecting you in your neighbourhood. This could include work around urban gardens, improvements to the common areas or general community development.

A follow up letter will be sent to tenants two weeks later, summarising the outcome of the Neighbourhood Audit along with any actions and allocated tasks that BHL need to arrange.

If you have any questions about the project or are interested to see if your property is included in the initial phase of the project, please phone your Housing Manager on 9699 6055.

### Tenant Survey

Continued from page 1

Survey. Changes we made included:

- Simplifying the covering letter that will accompany the Survey to make it easier to read and understand,
- Changing the way we ask certain questions to make them clearer
- Providing space so that you can make additional comments of your own
- Introducing tick boxes in order for some questions to be answered more easily
- Adding questions into the comments section at the end of the survey to help prompt tenants to reflect on certain aspects of the service the Bridge Housing provides

Bridge Housing would like to thank the tenants that were involved in the 2011 Annual Tenant Survey Workshop. Due to its success, Bridge Housing will be organising workshops each quarter. For your opportunity to get involved keep reading your Bridge Newsletter for further details of the next event, or come along to the next Tenant Advisory Group meeting.



## CEO Update

I was very pleased to participate with BHL staff in this year's City to Surf fun run. This event provides a great opportunity for team building and it was fantastic to be able to raise \$1,700 for Weave and the Australian Red Cross. The run provided me with time

to reflect on what a great team of people we have at Bridge Housing who give their time to run in City to Surf under the BHL banner and also their commitment to deliver our services.

This is also reflected in Bridge Housing securing its second Class 1 Registration following our successful compliance assessment by the Registrar of Community Housing in September 2011. Registration is a very important process as unless a Community Housing provider is registered, it cannot receive funding from Housing NSW. More importantly, it makes us continually look at the way we do things across the organisation and not rest on our laurels, particularly as Bridge Housing grows and branches out into new areas such as property procurement, development and undertake borrowing, which expose the organisation to more risk. The registration process required a commitment by all staff to work together to produce this very positive result.

Our capabilities have been further recognised through securing tender to redevelop a public housing estate in Seven Hills. This project will deliver 160 units in 2015-16 and includes a successful NRAS bid enabling Bridge Housing to contribute \$13 million to the project.

As I write this we are in the middle of Anti-Poverty Week (HYPERLINK "<http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au>" [www.antipovertyweek.org.au](http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au)) and one of the key ways people are lifted out of poverty is through secure and affordable housing. Bridge Housing is pleased to be a member of Australians for Affordable Housing (HYPERLINK "<http://www.housingstressed.org.au>" [www.housingstressed.org.au](http://www.housingstressed.org.au)). This is a national coalition of Community Housing Providers, welfare and community organisations who have come together to campaign for more affordable housing and to raise the profile of this issue with the State and Federal Governments. Bridge Housing will keep you updated on the progress of the campaign.

**John Nicolades, CEO**



Bridge Housing is currently running its rent review and has written to all tenants asking to provide income details for all household members. It is important that you return the relevant information as soon as possible so that we can assess your potential rental subsidy. Failure to provide this information will result in full market rent being charged to your account.

This year the NSW Government has decided that the one off pension increase that was awarded to single pensioners in 2009 (up to \$30 per week) will now be classed as assessable income for rent calculation purposes. This change will only affect tenants who are single and in receipt of one of the following payments / allowances from Centrelink: Age Pension; Disability Support Pension; Carer Payment; Bereavement Allowance; Widow B Pension, or Wife Pension.

As a consequence of this change there will be an increase in your weekly rent. To lower the impact, Bridge Housing will phase in the increase in your rent over the coming year. The first half of your pension increase (up to \$15 per week) will be assessed in rent in this November 2011 rent review. The impact of this change will be an increase of \$3.75 per week in the rent charged, for tenants in receipt of the full increase of \$30 per week. The second half of your pension increase (i.e. the remaining \$30 per week) will be assessed in the May 2012 rent review, which will result in a further rent increase of up to \$3.75 per week.

If you are affected by these changes, your rent change letter will contain a factsheet providing more information. You can also request a copy of the factsheet by contacting the BHL Office on 9699 6055.

The Community Housing Rent policy is available at [www.housing.nsw.gov.au/policies&factsheets/rentpolicy](http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/policies&factsheets/rentpolicy) or by contacting the Bridge Housing office.

## Platform 70 A housing first approach

In one of the most ambitious projects to address homelessness in the Sydney Metro area, Bridge Housing has launched 'Platform 70' – an initiative funded by the NSW Government to assist 70 rough sleepers from the Woolloomooloo area of the city into secure and permanent housing. Bridge Housing will work in partnership on this project with the support provider NEAMI, a non-government organisation that will work with clients to help them sustain their tenancies.

Platform 70 is also another first for Bridge Housing because of the way that the project will be run. Bridge Housing has employed a full time Project Coordinator, Erin Fearn, who will coordinate the project internally and will also engage with other Community Housing Providers and provide funding to them to enable them to house some of the rough sleepers in the areas where Bridge do not currently operate.

The project was officially launched in August, during National Homeless Person week, by the Minister for Family and Community Services, Pru Goward. Erin (pictured) says, "Having spent the last couple of months setting the project up, its great to see the first person housed."



# Update from TAG and the NSW Tenant Network

This year is flying by, and I cannot believe that it is time for another TAG and BHL representative update! Firstly, I would like to welcome Clive Mathews, who in August was elected by the TAG to the position of Vice Chairperson and alternate Representative for the NSW Tenants Network. Clive is a tenant from Sydney's Western suburbs and I'm pleased that he's taken this position.

At the August meeting we discussed the upcoming 2011 Tenant Survey and also had a presentation from the Redfern Fire Brigade. They came and spoke to the group about fire safety, demonstrated what they wear when they attend a fire and also gave out useful information in what to do in the unfortunate event of a house fire. In keeping with the theme the lucky door prize was a fire blanket!

In order to attract more tenants to the TAG meetings, the group decided to trial holding the meetings on days

other than Fridays. The 2011 Tenant Survey will ask what barriers there are to people attending but we are seeing if a change of day helps.

I am also pleased to announce that I have been given permission from the Bridge Housing Board to attend two Board meetings per year and report on the activities and achievements of our tenants group. The first one that I will attend will be in October.

I am also obligated to attend various meetings as the NSW Tenant Network Representative, which since the last newsletter has included: the Homelessness conference run by shelter, (with a focus on how it affects children), a mental health talk through Randwick Council and also a workshop on Tenant Participation at the NSW Federation of Housing Associations, with my peers and other workers from the sector.

Pam Pryor, Chairperson

## Tenant Advisory Group Future Events:

TAG would like to invite you to the final meeting for the year. To celebrate the great work that has been achieved by TAG, Bridge Housing will be putting on a BBQ to thank tenants for their valuable input and feedback during 2011.

### Redfern Park BBQ

(Corner of Chalmers & Redfern St, Redfern)

Saturday 3 December 2011

11am - 2pm

The BBQ will be held in the BBQ area next to the playground, off Chalmers St, opposite Woolworths (look out for the Bridge Housing sign).

It is important to RSVP to this event, please call Emmanuel at Bridge Housing on 02 9699 6055 or email [e.smith-aspros@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:e.smith-aspros@bridgehousing.org.au).



## Your Invite to The Bridge Housing 2011 AGM

Bridge Housing would like to invite tenants to the 2011 Annual General Meeting to be held at 11am on 16 November 2011 at Platform 10, Tower 1, 1 Lawson Square, Redfern.

The AGM is an important function in the governance of Bridge Housing and tenants that are members are permitted to vote on the following:

- Approval of New Directors
- Approval of the BHL Financials for the 2010 - 2011 year
- Appointment of Auditors

Members and non members will also be entitled to a copy of the Bridge Housing Limited Annual Report, which will detail the growth and achievements of Bridge Housing in the last 12 months.

To register your attendance please contact Bridge Housing Reception on 9699 6055 or email [reception@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:reception@bridgehousing.org.au)

## Your chance to get involved...

Sign up here to help us with the future of tenant involvement!

We want to involve tenants more in what we do and want to ask our tenants what is the best way to do this?

Bridge Housing would like to invite interested tenants to a working group to help shape the future of our tenant involvement at Bridge Housing. We will be asking tenants for their views on what they think the barriers are to people becoming

involved and what can Bridge do to address this?

A working lunch will be provided and assistance given towards transport costs.

If you are interested in attending this workshop or would like further information, please call Emmanuel Smith-Aspros on 9699 6055 or email [e.smith-aspros@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:e.smith-aspros@bridgehousing.org.au).

"Bridge has just received some sad news that one of our longest serving handymen, Harry Mifsud, sadly passed away on Thursday the 13th October 2011. Harry had been working with Bridge for many years and knew many of our tenants. Harry lost his battle with cancer and leaves behind a loving family and will be sorely missed by the entire Bridge team. Thank you Harry for all your commitment and you have touched many lives"