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ARGYLER
Tenant Newsletter

2019

Winter Edition

WELCOME FROM THE CEO

Hello and welcome to the Winter edition of the Argyle.

Firstly a very big THANKYOU for completing the biannual tenant survey. There are a couple of sites that achieved 100% return. At the end of last week we had a 70% return across Argyle. This is important to us as it means that we can act on your feedback with confidence that the survey represents a wide range of views from tenants across all our locations. Do not forget there is a prize drawn for one lucky tenant to receive a \$1500 voucher from Harvey Norman. Local prizes are also drawn and awarded over the coming weeks. All the results will be published in the spring edition of the Argyle.

Over the last two months I have been meeting with tenants across all of Argyle and having a conversation with them about how the tenancy is going and what the good, bad and ugly topics are. Overall, I have spoken to over three hundred tenants and the main topics of discussion include:

Rent statements:

The frequency of the statements and how complicated they are to read. We need to make them simple so that you know what payments you have made and that it's quick and easy to know where you are with your rent. I have asked the finance section to meet with tenants on a regular basis to explain the statements and take your feedback of how they can be improved.

Water billing:

Water metres, water tanks, the cost of water, the timing of the bills were all brought up and discussed. We again will continue to talk to you to make it easier.

Tenancy officer communication:

I understand that you get frustrated with us for not communicating with you, getting back to you in a timely way and not passing messages on. After property inspections, we do not get back to you with a record of the inspection and a summary of work orders. ASK for it! We are accountable to you so please ask for the documentation!

Maintenance:

Many issues were raised around the maintenance and upkeep of your properties. The main theme for me from you was to make sure that when you raise an issue that you ask for the call Log number so that you and I can track it. The quality card system is now in place so that when you have work done on your property you fill in the self-addressed envelope so that we know if the job has been done to your satisfaction. This is our way of keeping an eye on the contractors.

Tenant Participation:

We have really dropped the ball with providing opportunities for tenants to meet each other, volunteer to help Argyle, have information sessions and connect into community. If, in your area, you want to catch up with each other, talk to the Tenancy Action Worker.

Once again thank you for your feedback and suggestions of how we can better support you and your tenancy. I really appreciate your ongoing support.

Take care of yourself over the winter months



Wendy Middleton
CEO - Argyle Housing



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The Argyle is a newsletter pulled together by tenants, for tenants. We welcome and encourage contributions and feedback from all – to get in touch simply email editor@argylehousing.com.au

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

The Argyle is a newsletter by tenants, for tenants. We welcome and encourage your contributions and feedback and are currently looking for tenants to get involved.

Simply email editor@argylehousing.com.au if you would like to be part of the team that pulls the Argyle together each edition.

WINNERS OF THE COLOURING COMPETITION!

Congratulations to our Easter colouring competition winners from Picton and Eaglevale. A family movie pass is on its way to you.

Thank you to everyone who participated!



ANNOUNCEMENTS - CLOSURES

TAHMOOR OFFICE PERMANENT CLOSURE

Argyle has made the difficult decision to **close our Tahmoor Office as of the 26 April 2019**. This office has been staffed on a part time basis only with our Tenancy Officer Rachael being managed out of our Campbelltown Office since late in 2018. Due to the part time nature of the office it has been difficult for tenants to have a consistent service.

From the 29 April, Rachael and all Tahmoor services are being relocated to our Campbelltown Office at:

**14 Browne Street
P.O. Box 1121,
Campbelltown NSW 2560**

**P: 1300 274 953
E: campbelltown@argylehousing.com.au
Monday – Friday, 9am-5pm**

Please don't hesitate to drop in and meet the Campbelltown team at any time.

ALL ARGYLE OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED FRIDAY JUNE 21

Reason: For an all staff meeting day.

**FOR ANY URGENT MAINTENANCE REPAIRS PLEASE REFER
TO YOUR TENANCY AGREEMENT.**



FRIBA'S JOURNEY TO BECOMING A CHILDCARE EDUCATOR: THE ARGYLE TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP

Friba has been housed with Argyle for 1.5 years and has recently been granted an Argyle Tertiary Scholarship. Friba is studying towards her Certificate III in Childcare and is due to complete her qualification in December this year. Once completed, Friba hopes to find a job as an Educator in the Queanbeyan Area.

We all know studying can be challenging at times. To make things harder, Friba is a single mother of three young children and didn't have a laptop or computer at home. She was finding it difficult to find time to get to the library to study and look after her beautiful children.

After receiving the scholarship, Friba bought herself a second-hand laptop so she can study from home. This has made a huge difference for Friba and she can now easily apply for childcare jobs, as well as having more free time.

Friba has always wanted to work with children. She loves their fun and playful nature and hopes to work with toddlers. She has lots of experience as she has raised three children and loves the idea of different cultures coming together as a community.

We cannot wait to see Friba succeed in all her goals and progress in her career as a Childcare Educator.

Friba's scholarship was made possible by a generous sponsorship from the Energy Industry Super Scheme (EISS). EISS Super has sponsored 10 Argyle scholarships in the current financial year and we cannot thank them enough for their support of Argyle's tenants.

If you are currently studying or would like to get started, chat to your local Tenancy Action Worker about The Argyle Scholarship.



GET TO KNOW ME

TWO NEW DIRECTORS FOR ARGYLE!

Argyle is pleased to welcome two new Directors to its Board. Julian and Tracey bring a wealth of experience to the organisation and are looking forward to joining the Argyle team.



JULIAN SAWICKI

Julian Sawicki joins the Board of Argyle Community Housing Ltd after a long career in executive management and membership of boards over some twenty five years. This experience covers financial management, strategic planning, risk management, human resources and culture, quality and compliance with a strong understanding of board governance principles arising from completion of the Company Directors course via the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Julian has a degree in Economics, is a Chartered Accountant and a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. His passion for community services is reflected in his senior and Chief Executive Roles with values based organisations providing a wide range of community and personal support services throughout South Australia. His experience in community housing policy and practice arises from significant involvement with community housing companies such as Westside Housing and Unity Housing. This practical experience coupled with knowledge of government policy adds to his board experience in the superannuation, community services, community housing and disability services sectors.

Julian believes that access to safe, secure and affordable housing is essential for a fair community if its members are to participate fully in the life of their community. Recently relocated to Sydney from Adelaide to be with family, Julian is keen to give back to community and is excited to join the Argyle board.



TRACEY WADSWORTH

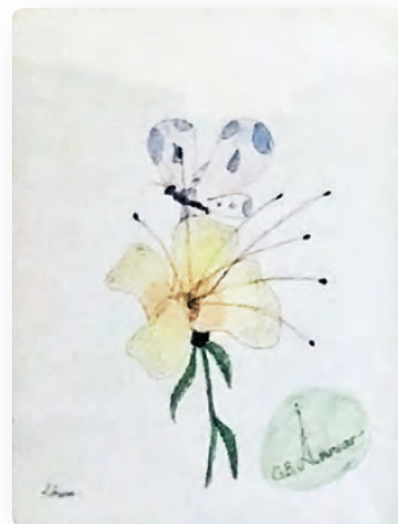
Tracey has over 25 years in the property and finance sectors in strategic property and financial advisory, development and project management as well as asset and property management. Tracey has held senior executive positions in both the public and private sector nationally and internationally this has included Landcom, Royal Bank of Scotland, CRI and Tamaki Regeneration Company.

Throughout this time, Tracey has been involved in a number of large scale social and urban renewal projects including most recently the Tamaki Regeneration Programme in Auckland, New Zealand. This is the largest social regeneration project in New Zealand seeking improve the social and economic well being of a key area of Auckland.

Tracey's property and commercial background is coupled with a strong understanding of the social and community housing sector.

ART EXHIBITION AT AINSLIE VILLAGE, ACT

Ainslie Village Art Haven Art Exhibition April – May 2019
All artworks were created by Ainslie residents.



NSW STATE ELECTION NEWS

Change of Ministers and Departments for Social Housing in NSW

The NSW Election has seen a big shake up of responsibilities for social housing with Melinda Pavey becoming the new Minister for Water, Property and Housing, which includes responsibility for the Land and Housing Corporation (LALC) which owns a significant portion of social housing assets in NSW. The Water, Property and Housing portfolio will become part of the new Planning and Industry cluster. The senior Minister for this cluster will be Robert Stokes and the Secretary will be Jim Betts, previously Chief Executive of Infrastructure NSW. The new arrangements will come into force on 1 July 2019.

Social housing will continue to be a FACS Ministerial responsibility under Minister Gareth Ward who will be Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services. FACS will sit in the 'Stronger Communities' cluster alongside Justice and be led by Michael Coutts-Trotter as Secretary. Mark Speakman, the Attorney General will be the senior Minister for the cluster.

In a nutshell, this means that Community Housing providers like Argyle now have two government departments and four Ministers to deal with and report to rather than one Minister as has been the case over the last 6-7 years.

It is unclear how this will all work and it will certainly depend on the willingness of all Ministers and department heads to work together to help solve the affordable housing crisis in NSW – it will certainly make life interesting for Argyle and other social housing providers!

We will be looking to meet with the relevant Ministers and new Department heads as soon as possible to clarify how the new arrangements will work and to identify how we can work with Government to provide more social and affordable housing across all Argyle locations.



The Hon. Gareth Ward



The Hon. Melinda Pavey



The Hon. Rob Stokes



ARGYLE OLDER WOMEN IN HOUSING PROJECT

MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR OLDER WOMEN IN OUR REGIONS

In June 2018, Argyle was approached by the NSW Government to apply for funding to provide housing for older women in Regional areas.

Argyle was successful in obtaining \$2 million in Grant funding, to which Argyle added \$800 000 in surplus funds to acquire 8 properties across Queanbeyan, Griffith and Wagga.

The 2016 Census showed that homelessness amongst older women had increased by nearly 31% in the previous 5 years. Homelessness Australia last year reported the number of older women 'couch surfing' had increased 83 per cent and the number of older women sleeping in cars rose 75 per cent in four years.

The Older Women in Housing Project provided Argyle with an opportunity to make a small difference in our regions and to provide older women with quality, two bedroom housing at an affordable rent in a good location.

UPDATE

Queanbeyan:

3x two bedroom units were purchased in December 2018 and are currently tenanted.

Wagga:

Two new, 2 bedroom units have been purchased and will be tenanted by the time this newsletter comes out.

Griffith:

Three new, 2 bedroom units are under construction in Griffith due to be completed in June 2019.



AINSLIE AUTUMN ANTICS

On 11th of April the Ainslie Village office organised a lovely afternoon tea to engage with all residents of Ainslie Village. There was popcorn, cheese & biscuits, lollies, music, bingo, trivia and karaoke. Residents are encouraged to complete the Argyle Tenant Survey while enjoying the sun and good company. More than 80 people attended the event, 30+ people completed their survey on the day.

The Ainslie team received very positive feedback after this event with many residents saying how much they had enjoyed the day.



Photo: Greg and Cherie



Photo: Paul and Lauren



ARGYLE LETTERS AND POLICIES COMMUNICATION GROUPS

In January 2019, Argyle began hosting Communication Groups in Queanbeyan and Bowral. The aim of these groups is to improve the way Argyle is communicating with tenants. We have been focusing on reviewing frequently used letters and policies.

A small group of tenants has been getting together on a regular basis for a cup of tea, biscuits and to have a look over a different letter/policy each session.

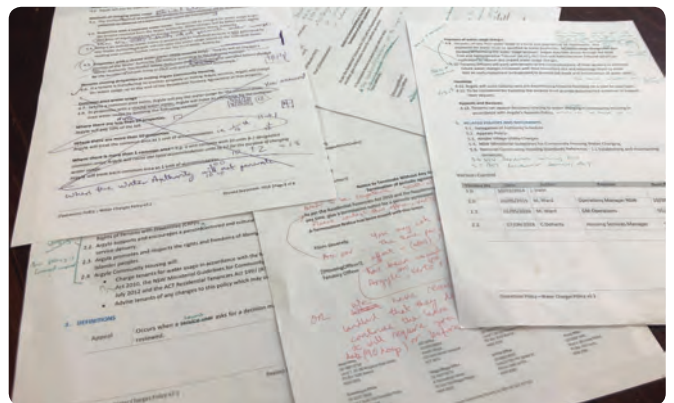
“What makes the groups so effective is the variety of people who attend. We have one person who is excellent at picking up grammatical errors, another who has limited reading and writing skills and somebody who knows a lot about policy. This helps us to cover as much ground as possible and not get too focused on any one aspect of the document” – Sally (Tenancy Action Worker).

While the editing process is time consuming and a little bit tedious (as you can see from the image), we all learn a lot and have fun along the way. The work these groups are doing is very important

and will make a big difference to the way Argyle communicates with tenants.

Argyle would like to extend a huge thank you to all the tenants who have given their time week after week to give feedback on Argyle’s communication. Special thanks goes out to Queanbeyan tenants John, Kath and Darlene and Bowral tenants Melissa, Grace, Peter, Frances, Jeremy and Lyndall who have shown up nearly every session.

If you would like to have a go, get in touch with your local Tenancy Action Worker to see what is happening in your area!



TENANT PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE ALIVE AND WELL IN BOWRAL

A very successful Tenant Participation meeting and information session was held in Argyle’s Bowral Office on 11 April. Ten tenants attended the meeting with Tenancy Action Worker, Simone and CEO, Wendy to discuss how tenants can have a voice and contribute to Argyle in a positive and proactive way. Many of our tenants have valuable experience, expertise and ideas to share and discussion was lively, entertaining and enlightening!

Some of the topics discussed included:

- tenants volunteering at Argyle
- how tenants can contribute with feedback and suggestions on our policies and letters
- future activities to be held throughout the year i.e. helping out with community events

Thank you to all the tenants who attended. We look forward to working with you in the future.

If you are interested in being part of this Committee Group, please call Simone our Tenancy Action Worker on 4861 2753.



APPEAL A DECISION MADE BY ARGYLE

The decisions Argyle make are based on a set of policies and procedures that aim to be fair to everyone. These policies and procedures are designed to meet agreed standards of service for community housing and to comply with the law.

What decisions can be appealed?

Decisions that can be appealed include rent charges, non-rent charges including water usage, transfer decisions, refusal to make changes to your property or to keep a pet.

You may not always agree with a decision we make. If you do not, it is important that you use your right as a tenant to ask us to review our decision in one of the following ways:

Online: Argyle Appeals Form on the Argyle website www.argyle.com.au

In person: To any Argyle office

Email: complaints@argylehousing.com.au

Post: Complete the Argyle Appeals Form, or write a letter and return via mail to:

**Complaints & Appeals Officer,
Argyle Housing
PO Box 1026, Bowral NSW 2576**

What happens next?

- The appeal will be reviewed by an Argyle Team Leader or Manager who was not involved in the original decision
- After the information has been reviewed we will either:
 - Change our decision; or
 - Reject your appeal
- A written summary will be sent to you to inform you of the decision, including why your appeal was rejected if applicable
- Argyle's policy states that we will make a decision in regard to your appeal within 28 days of the receipt of the appeal. If we can't do this for some reason we will contact you to let you know what is happening
- If Argyle rejects your appeal, you have the right to seek a further review from an independent (external) agency.

For further information:

**Housing Appeals Committee (NSW):
1800 629 794**

**Housing Review Committee (ACT):
133 427**

CURLY QUESTIONS FROM TENANTS



Common Q&A's that we get asked a lot. This is new page that we are hoping to include in all future Argylers.

Q. If the tenancy officer goes on leave or holidays can someone let all the tenants they look after know the date they are going and when they will be back? It would also be good to know who to contact while the tenancy officer is away.

A. We understand how frustrating it must be when our tenants are unable to make contact with their regular tenancy officer. Wherever possible we will try and let tenants know ahead of time that their Tenancy Officer is on leave but sometimes this is unexpected. There will always be someone at Argyle who can help you out so if your Tenancy Officer is away ask to speak with the Team Leader or another Tenancy Officer who will help you to resolve your issues.

Q. What do I do if I am unsure if a person coming to my property is from Argyle?

A. All Staff and contractors from Argyle should either be in uniform or have some form of ID with them when they visit a tenant. We would recommend contacting your nearest Argyle office to check if you are uncertain prior to giving them access to your home.

Q. If tenants get a new tenancy officer can they please be notified of the new tenancy officer's name, photo, contact numbers and working hours – before the change happens?

A. When there is a change in your tenancy officer we will let you know as soon as possible and provide you with a letter notifying of the change and the details of the new Tenancy Officer if known.

**If you have a question you would like us to answer please send your query to:
editor@argylehousing.com.au OR**

**The Editor,
PO Box 1026 Bowral NSW 2576**

ARGYLE SAYS 'NO' TO DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Cheese for Change - The Journey to White Ribbon Accreditation

White Ribbon Australia is an organisation standing up to SAY NO TO VIOLENCE. It provides prevention education programs, encourages women to speak up and men to lead by example. White Ribbon engages community services and lobbies for law reforms through its advocacy work.

On 28th March, all Argyle teams participated in 'Cheese for Change' - an opportunity to share stories and learn more about the impact of Domestic Violence in today's society'.



PROPERTY INSPECTIONS EXPLAINED

All Argyle Tenants have a range of Inspections undertaken from time to time and it can become confusing what each of these Inspections are for, in summary, the general Inspections we undertake are;



Tenancy Inspections

Your Tenancy Officer undertakes these inspections at least twice a year. They are to ensure the property is being cared for and provide you with an opportunity to discuss any issues you may have that you have not already raised.



Asset Condition Inspections

These Inspections are carried out by Argyle's Maintenance Officers once every 3 years and they are to determine what works are expected on the property in the long-term. This helps us plan and budget for replacing items such as floor-coverings, re-painting, windows, roofs, bathrooms and laundries.



PAS Inspections

If your property is owned by the NSW Government, but managed by Argyle, a PAS Inspection may also be carried out. These inspections are conducted, on a random basis, by a Contractor engaged by NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC). PAS Inspections provide information to NSW LAHC about how we are managing their assets. These inspections are not an opportunity to raise maintenance issues. These need to be raised directly with Argyle.

MENTAL HEALTH - IT'S IMPORTANT

Mental health affects how we think, feel and act.

If you struggle with mental health issues, you may find it difficult to manage your emotions, handle stress, relate to others or simply make choices. When things are not going well for you or someone you know, it is important to remember that you are not alone and there are people and services that can give you the help, support and the assistance you may need.

NSW

The Mental Health Line is a 24-hour telephone service operating seven days a week across NSW.

Call Mental Health Line:

1800 011 511

CANBERRA

The Crisis Assessment and Treatment Team is a seven day 24 hour outreach service. Their role is to provide a highly accessible and responsive acute mental health assessment and treatment service in the most appropriate setting.

Call CATT:

1800 629 354

THINGS ARE IN FULL SWING AT COMMON GROUND IN THE ACT

The Cooking Circle and the Art Group are running again. The wonderful cooking smells coming from our beautiful Common Room kitchen makes everyone want to join this amazing group with dishes from the four corners of the world!!!

Currently the Art Group are busy making sculptures for our Common Ground gardens. We certainly have some very artistic and imaginative people in this group.

The gardening group are busy organising what will be planted for the winter season. We are hoping to source some donations for the more expensive items needed for the garden.

The tenants held a dinner with dishes made from the produce from the gardens. By all accounts the food was delicious and everyone enjoyed getting together. They are hoping to have more of these events.

On the 24th January Ikea held a BBQ for the tenants at Common Ground and on 16 April they hosted a trivia/bingo night. Both these events were a great success. Our sincere thanks and appreciation go out to the absolutely amazing staff from Ikea, to the Common Ground Board members for their time and to NCS for the help in organising this wonderful event.



TENANT SURVEY THANKYOU

A HUGE thank you to the over 1700 tenants who recently completed Argyle's Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

We expect to receive the Survey Report from CHIA in June and will publish a summary of the results in the next Argyler newsletter.

Tenant forums will also be held in all locations to discuss the survey results and plan with you how we can improve our services.

The survey prize draw is scheduled to take place during the week of 20 May 2019. We will notify winners immediately and will share news of the winners with you on our website and in the next Argyler.

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