

the
newsletter for
Housing ACT
tenants

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Message from **Executive Director**

Bronwen Overton-Clarke

Welcome to the winter 2014 edition of *Home Front*.

I write this winter letter during National Reconciliation Week, a time for Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures and achievements, and to contribute to the reconciliation journey.

National Reconciliation Week is held annually between 27 May and 3 June. These dates are significant as they commemorate the 1967 referendum and Mabo Day. National Reconciliation Week is preceded by National Sorry Day on 26 May, which commemorates and raises awareness of the Stolen Generation. In light of this important week, I would like to draw your attention to the article about NAIDOC week on page 3, which takes place from Sunday 6 July 2014. NAIDOC on the Peninsula is a free annual event to launch NAIDOC week. The event brings together Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to share, celebrate and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander cultures, lifestyles and achievements.

This year, NAIDOC week coincides with elections for the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body. The Elected Body represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the ACT, with elections held every three years. The Elected Body directly advises the ACT Government and advocates for the improvement of opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans. This is an important step towards reconciliation. More information about the elections may be found on page 2.

I hope you and your family are able to participate in NAIDOC week events, and wish you a safe and warm winter.



Executive Director

Housing and Community Services



ACT
Government
Community Services

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Election 2014

The Elected Body represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the ACT and is an advocate for their interests.

It comprises seven members elected every three years. Voting for the Elected Body will take place from Saturday 5 July until Saturday 12 July 2014, inclusive.

Contact Elections ACT on 6205 0033 or visit the website at www.elections.act.gov.au for further information and a postal vote application. Additional information may also be found at www.electedbody.com.au.

Key dates for the election

Monday 19 May 2014 (Candidate nominations open)	Election start date
Monday 2 June 2014 12noon	Nominations close
Tuesday 3 June 2014 12noon	Nominations for candidates declared
Tuesday 3 June 2014 (after nominations declared)	Order of ballot paper decided
Monday 23 June 2014	Electoral roll close
Saturday 5 July 2014	Polling start day
Saturday 12 July 2014	Polling close day
Tuesday 22 July 2014	Scrutiny starts
As soon as scrutiny is completed	Election result declared

Polling locations

Saturday 5 July 2014 5.00pm–7.00pm	2014 NAIDOC Ball, QT Hotel, Great Lakes Ballroom 1 London Circuit, Canberra
Sunday 6 July 2014 10.30am–3.30pm	2014 AIATSIS Family Day, Acton Peninsula (next to AIATSIS Building)
Monday 7 July 2014 to Friday 11 July 2014 9.00am–5.00pm	ACT Electoral Commission Ground Floor, North Building, Civic Square
Monday 7 July 2014 9.00am–12.00pm	Winnunga Nimmityjah, Aboriginal Health Service 63 Boolimba Crescent, Narrabundah
Monday 7 July 2014 2.00pm–5.00pm	West Belconnen Child and Family Centre Corner Starke St & Luke St, Holt
Tuesday 8 July 2014 10.00am–4.00pm	Belconnen Library 12 Chandler St, Belconnen
Wednesday 9 July 2014 10.00am–4.00pm	Abode Hotel, 10 Bowes St, Woden
Thursday 10 July 2014 10.00am–4.00pm	Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre 159 Anketell Street, Greenway
Friday 11 July 2014	Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) Luncheon QT Hotel, Great Lakes Ballroom 1 London Cct, Canberra
Saturday 12 July 2014	Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation 1 Grattan Court, Wanniasa



ACT | atsieb

NAIDOC Week 2014

Local celebrations for NAIDOC Week 2014 will commence with the very popular NAIDOC on the Peninsula on Sunday 6 July 2014. Events are scheduled all day from 10.30 am to 3.30 pm on Acton Peninsula.

NAIDOC on the Peninsula is a free annual event open to the Canberra community and surrounding regions that brings together Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to share, celebrate and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, lifestyles and achievements.

The event includes entertainment from local and national Indigenous performers, over 65 market stalls hosted by state and federal government departments, non-government and community organisations, Indigenous arts and crafts outlets and a host of free child related activities.

The day features live entertainment from hip hop trio Last Kinection, Torres Strait Islander guitar virtuoso Chris Tamwoy (who recently performed at Bluesfest) and celebrated Indigenous singer songwriter Troy Brady and his ten-year-old son Dean Brady (*Australia's Got Talent* Grand Finalist 2013). Local acts include Hung Parliament, Johnny Huckle, Conversation, Stik N Move and The Riverbank Band.

Barbecue and food stalls will provide a range of food options for purchase, from steak sandwiches,



Welcome to Country ceremony



Children learning creative dance at NAIDOC on the Peninsula 2013

sausages and bacon and egg sandwiches to traditional Torres Strait Islander foods.

Free children's activities range from arts and crafts and face painting to amusement rides and jumping castles.

The annual Canberra and District NAIDOC Award Ball will be held on Saturday 5 July 2014.

For more information about the program of events, please visit www.aiatsis.gov.au or www.naidoc.org.au.

Have your say about Housing ACT

Every year a sample of tenants is asked to tell us what they think of their housing and the service they receive from Housing ACT.

The survey for 2014 is currently being completed and several hundred surveys have already been returned. If you received a survey, we would like to hear what you have to say.

Last year's survey gave Housing ACT a valuable insight into the matters that tenants were happy about and those they were not happy about.

In 2013, people in Aged Persons Units were most satisfied. Nine out of 10 people living in aged persons units were satisfied or very satisfied overall with the service they received from Housing ACT. Tenants in these units were most likely to be satisfied with the condition of their home (82%

were satisfied). However, people with children were more likely to have some issues which made them unhappy with Housing ACT services—just 6 out of 10 parents were satisfied overall. Fewer than half of the tenants who are also parents were happy with the condition of their homes (48%). The safety and security of the home and the neighbourhood, and the privacy of the home were important to almost all respondents; however, not all respondents felt that their home met their needs in these areas.

Over three quarters of respondents were satisfied with the way they were treated by Housing ACT staff (77%). The maintenance call centre staff received the most positive feedback—87% of respondents were satisfied with their treatment by call centre

staff. A similarly high proportion of respondents were happy with the information provided to them by Housing ACT on how to report a maintenance problem.

The benefits of public housing were recognised by tenants. Almost all respondents felt that public housing helped them to feel more settled in general (91%) and helped them to manage money better (89%). Public housing also allowed many tenants to live in their preferred area (87% reported this as a benefit for them).

The 2013 survey showed that a key area in which Housing ACT could improve is the provision of maintenance. Almost one quarter (23%) of respondents were dissatisfied with the time it took to get an emergency or day-to-day maintenance problem resolved after reporting the problem.

Seniors' Corner

Seniors e-News

Sometimes it can be difficult to keep track of information about services and community events. To help with this, the ACT Office for Ageing provides a monthly electronic newsletter that aims to keep older Canberrans informed about relevant services, activities and events.

You can subscribe to the ACT Seniors e-News by emailing communitypolicy@act.gov.au, or view it online at www.communityservices.act.gov.au/wac/ageing/e-news

2014 Silver Screenings

The Silver Screenings Film Program is a partnership between the ACT Government and the Arc Cinema to provide a quality cinema experience for mature audiences, in a fully accessible cinema at an affordable price (just \$6 per person).

Silver Screenings will run on Friday afternoons, from 2:00pm, for the period June to October 2014 at the Arc Cinema of the

National Film and Sound Archive, Ellery Circuit in Acton.

Film screening dates, timings and film information can be found on the Arc website at www.nfsa.gov.au/arc or by contacting the booking office on **6248 2000**.

Housing ACT works collaboratively with the Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre

Since the beginning of 2014, a number of Housing ACT tenancy staff members from the Southern Region have been based at the Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre.

For half a day each week, Housing ACT has provided various staff members to work from the centre, including housing managers, client support coordinators, team leaders and the regional manager. This has assisted community partners to become more aware of the services provided by Housing ACT and the Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre.

The Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre offers a range of services, including:

- drop-in parenting information and support
- parenting programs
- a children's behaviour support clinic
- family case-coordination and home visiting
- a range of targeted and universal playgroups at the centre and in the community
- services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and community.

In addition to these services, a number of external agencies also operate from the centre, offering a range of health services, counselling and other assistance.

During the time spent at the Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre, Housing ACT staff members have had the opportunity to meet with clients in a familiar location, supporting them to utilise services that the Community Services Directorate provides in a single location. Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre has provided Housing ACT with a private area in which to liaise with clients of the Tuggeranong region who attend the centre.

Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre is located at 159 Anketell Street, Greenway (across from the Tuggeranong Hyperdome). While this is a relatively new collaboration, Housing ACT will consider other opportunities for working in this way with community centres across the Canberra region.

Spotless operator now located at the Central Access Point in Belconnen

Spotless has a Customer Service Operator at the Central Access Point (CAP) on the ground floor of Nature Conservation House, Belconnen.

The Spotless Customer Service Operator can assist tenants with maintenance requests and is able to raise maintenance works orders from the CAP.

A key cutting service for the Falcon locks used in Housing ACT properties is also provided by the Spotless Operator at the CAP. Tenants wishing to have duplicate Falcon keys cut are required to provide identification to demonstrate that they are the tenant of the property. The key cutting service can only duplicate existing keys. Should a tenant lose their keys or lock themselves out of their

property, they will need to lodge a maintenance request. In this case, Spotless can assist by providing access to the property or supplying replacement locks. Please note that this may be charged as tenant responsible maintenance (TRM).

Requests for all maintenance services can be made through the Maintenance Call Centre on 6207 1500.

Modernising Tenancy Services: improving the way we do business

Housing ACT houses approximately 25,000 people across approximately 11,500 public housing tenancies throughout the ACT region.

Currently, there are 44 housing managers supported by 130 additional staff, who all assist with the delivery of services to tenants.

Traditionally, Housing ACT has operated as a landlord, providing the 'bricks and mortar' for tenants and their families. However, the formation of the Community Services Directorate (formerly the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services) in 2005 led to an increased focus on providing services that more carefully target the needs of clients.

This shift in focus, together with a range of feedback about service improvements, is driving some important changes to the way Housing ACT delivers services. Housing ACT has listened carefully to the feedback provided through the ACT Government's 'Time to Talk' website; staff and stakeholder

consultation; government forums such as the Joint Champions Group; and other general public engagement. Collectively, this feedback suggests that services should reflect the following principles:

- be simple to understand
- be easy to access and navigate
- put people and families at the centre of decision making
- offer choice and control for service users
- be strengths based, holistic and coordinated
- be sustainable, in order to provide an adequate response to current and future demand.

Housing ACT is rethinking the way that tenancy management services are delivered, to ensure that it provides a modern service, responsive to the changing needs of tenants and their families. From 1 July 2014 a number of enhancements are being introduced to the tenancy operations area. New public housing tenants will receive more targeted support from a housing manager very early in the life of a tenancy, to ensure that all tenants are adequately

resourced and supported. Those tenants who have been in public housing tenancies for a long time, who are managing well and do not require support or assistance from Housing ACT, will not require an annual visit to inspect their property. Instead, Housing ACT will start offering some long standing tenants an 18-month inspection. The small number of tenants who require additional supports from Housing ACT or other agencies will benefit from an enhanced, targeted and time limited service response to help them get back on track.

The intent is to provide the 'right tenancy management services, in the right place, in the right amount and at the right time.' As Housing ACT starts to change the way it delivers tenancy management services, this is expected to bring improved outcomes for tenants and their families. This will foster resilience and independence, contributing towards more sustainable outcomes for those in need.

For further information, please contact Mr Mark Williams on 6205 1458.

Joint Champions Group—new members for 2014–16

The Joint Champions Group (JCG) is a consultative group of public housing tenants. The group works together with Housing ACT to enhance public housing by providing feedback on initiatives or suggesting new ones. Each group of JCG members commits to a two-year term.

The 2014–16 term for the JCG commenced in May 2014. Following an expression of interest process, a group of 22 members was chosen by a selection panel comprising a senior officer from Housing ACT, a representative from a community organisation and an independent consultant. The panel chose

members for the new term based on a Selection Framework, to ensure a diverse membership for the group. The new members will be invited to attend several sessions of induction training during June 2014.

ACT moves closer to a Common Ground

The ACT Government, with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government, is building a 40 unit Common Ground dwelling which will house up to 20 people experiencing chronic homelessness and 20 individuals on a low income, in appropriate and affordable accommodation.

The building is located on a site near the Gungahlin Town Centre, close to public transport and amenities.

Common Ground is an assertive intervention model which addresses homelessness by providing safe, secure, supported accommodation for people who have experienced homelessness.

It does so in specifically built or modified accommodation, provided in a form which mixes people who have experienced homelessness with low income working tenants who pay affordable rental.

The Common Ground model began in New York, USA; similar models have been developed throughout the world, including Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Hobart.

A key theme of the Common Ground model is its linkages to the local and extended community and a focus on social interaction for its residents.



Images courtesy of Collins Caddaye Architects

Benambra Intentional Community



Minister Burch and some of the residents tour the houses



Residents enjoying Good Neighbours Day



Residents and other locals with music groups 'Pocket Fox' and 'The Cashews' on the lawns of the complex

Imagine this: live music events; barbecues; a Christmas party; an Easter egg hunt; Clean up Australia Day; afternoon teas; dinners with neighbours; friendly faces; a helpful community.

Where is this great place to live? It's Benambra Intentional Community in Phillip, where 25 new dwellings were completed in 2013, providing homes for 25 families. Eleven of these families are part of a core intentional community which has been created around three young men with disability: Jackson, Dan and Ben.

These young men have settled in well to their new homes and new lives away from the family home. Jackson and Ben each live with a co-resident who attends to their daily living needs and contributes to the development of a supportive community.

Part of the co-resident's role is to foster relationships within the community. Jackson and his co-resident, Adam, are generous hosts who enjoy inviting others to their home for a friendly meal. Jackson and Adam share their herbs and tools with others, and also tend to the communal vegetable garden. Jackson particularly likes to host a meal when one of his brothers or a friend or relative is visiting Canberra. Adam and Jackson's mother try to create a musically rich environment in Jackson's home. Their first house concert was a great success, as was the 'Guerilla Gig' event, which featured two local bands.

Ben's transition into his new home has been a fairly smooth process

and his mother believes this can be attributed to the fact that Ben and his co-resident get on so well. In Ben's words, his co-resident is 'a brother from another mother'. Ben also has a team of dedicated support people who work with him in all aspects of daily life. Friends and family members will often phone or drop in to visit Ben in his new home, or invite him out. This maintains rich connections with people in the wider community.

Since the move to Benambra, Daniel's life has expanded considerably. He lives with his brother, who provides both assistance and companionship. Daniel also receives some paid support from Disability ACT and Home and Community Care (HACC)

funding. Daniel's parents visit him every day to provide additional support and guidance. Daniel's network of friends has increased enormously and he has benefitted not only from the support and friendship of Intentional Community members, but also from the other residents in the complex. This new social network has increased Daniel's self-confidence and supported his ability to live as independently as possible.

Daniel has also received considerable support from the co-residents living with Jackson and Ben, and in a very natural way has been included in their activities. This has modelled inclusive behaviours for others in the community, assisting them to better

understand how to include people with disability in their everyday lives.

The other tenants also moved in a year ago and the community spirit and feeling of togetherness has continued to grow. All the residents have settled in and many are active in involving others in events, social gatherings and working bees. There is a great sense of pride in the shared community.

If you would like to join this diverse and inclusive community, please visit the Central Access Point at Nature Conservation House in Belconnen, to register your interest. Current residents are keen to invite other friendly people to join them and add to the rich sense of community at Benambra.

Some of Benambra's community artwork



Need advice to reduce your energy and water bills?

Receive a **free home visit** through the Outreach Energy and Water Efficiency Program by contacting one of these organisations

Belconnen Community Service	6264 0200
Communities @ Work	6126 9000
Northside Community Service	6257 2255
Society of St Vincent de Paul	6234 7424
YWCA of Canberra	6173 7100

LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS*

*Conditions apply

ACT Government This Program is funded by the ACT Government

ACTSmart for your household Visit www.actsmart.act.gov.au

Winter energy saving tips

These winter energy saving tips could help you save money and reduce your energy use.

- Make sure that your home keeps in as much heat as possible. Use door snakes and door and window seals to stop cold air coming in and warm air leaking out.
- Open curtains and blinds during the day and close them at night. For every 2 square metres of window, the sun's rays shining through the window is like having a one-bar radiant heater running.
- Wear extra clothes to stay warm. Keep room temperatures comfortable between 17–19°C and use a hot water bottle or heated throw rug if you need extra heat.
- Only heat the rooms you are using and close off rooms that are not being used.
- Set a timer rather than having a heater run all day and night. Turn it on 30 minutes before you get up or get home.

Low income households can receive a free home visit through the Outreach Energy and Water Efficiency Program*. An energy efficiency officer will visit your home and provide advice and education on how to save energy and water.

For more information or to see if you are eligible, please contact one of the following organisations:

Belconnen Community Service	6264 0200
Communities@Work	6293 6500 or 6126 9000
Northside Community Service	6257 2255
The Society of St Vincent de Paul	6234 7424
YWCA of Canberra	6173 7100

For information about other programs, visit www.actsmart.act.gov.au/

*The program is funded by the ACT Government.

Free energy saving house calls providing door seals, standby power controllers and energy efficient light bulbs are also being offered to all residents in the ACT. To find out more, call 1300 789 002 or visit www.actewagl.com.au/energyefficiency



Combating condensation and mould

The arrival of the colder winter months can lead to condensation and mould growth within our homes. Condensation and mould can occur in any type of construction and will grow and spread if left untreated.

Ways to prevent condensation and mould:

- Ensure that clothes and shoes are dry before storing them.
- Wipe dry any areas affected by condensation, e.g. windows and walls.
- Ensure that ventilation is adequate by opening windows whenever possible.
- Clean the bathrooms and laundry regularly.
- Use the exhaust fan or open a window while showering or bathing.
- Extract steam when cooking by opening a window or using the kitchen exhaust fan.
- Let the sun into the home during the day by opening curtains.
- Dispose of any wet, musty smelling items.
- Hang washing outside to dry.
- If a water spill occurs, dry the area quickly (preferably within 24-48 hours).
- Do not stack items up against walls.
- Clean exhaust fans regularly.

Ways to eradicate mould:

- Eradicate mould as soon as it occurs, as it is much harder to remove if left to grow.
- Do not dry brush the area as this may spread airborne mould spores.
- Areas infested with mould should be washed down with a solution of 20% water and 80% white vinegar (best used from a spray bottle).
- All surfaces should be wiped down with the mould remover and a clean cloth.
- Avoid using bleach as it has a high pH which is ineffective in killing mould.
- The cloth should be changed frequently to avoid spreading mould spores—any cloths used should be placed in a plastic bag for disposal.

If after following the suggested prevention and cleaning processes mould continues to occur, or you suspect that there may be an

issue with the building contributing to the cause, please report these issues to the Maintenance Call Centre on 6207 1500.

Tenants should be aware that repairs will be at their own cost if Housing ACT or the Total Facilities Manager identifies that the cause of the mould in the property has resulted from tenant activity, which may include but is not limited to the following:

- a humidifier in use
- a kerosene heater in use
- blocked exhaust fans
- moisture occurring due to lack of maintenance the tenant is responsible for
- damp items being left in living rooms by the tenant.



Cleaning of gutters in Housing ACT dwellings

The lead up to winter can bring increased rainfall, so it is important to ensure that your gutters are clean and free from leaf debris. If gutters become blocked, this could result in an overflow of water into your home and may lead to the deterioration of the gutters.

For single storey houses and single storey stand-alone townhouses (including those in a body corporate managed complex), it is the tenant's responsibility to maintain the gutters. Tenants may be liable for any damage caused to guttering or downpipes due to a lack of regular maintenance.

In flats, multi-storey houses and townhouses (including those in body corporate managed complexes), multi-storey unit complexes and older persons' accommodation, Housing ACT will undertake gutter cleaning when required, as identified by Spotless. If you have any questions or concerns about gutter cleaning,

please contact the Maintenance Call Centre on 6207 1500.

In attached units/flats in a body corporate managed complex, the body corporate is responsible for the maintenance of gutters. If you have questions about gutter cleaning for this type of dwelling, please contact Housing ACT on 13 34 27.

Type of dwelling	Cleaning responsibility single storey	Cleaning responsibility multi-storey
House	Tenant	Housing ACT
Detached townhouse	Tenant	Housing ACT
Flat/duplex	Housing ACT	Housing ACT
Older persons' accommodation	Housing ACT	Housing ACT
Body corporate detached townhouse	Tenant	Body corporate
Body corporate attached townhouse/flat	Body corporate	Body corporate

RECIPE CORNER — ROASTED PUMPKIN SOUP

This warming winter soup is a perfect make-ahead dinner for a busy evening. You can roast the vegetables a day in advance and store them in a sealed container in the fridge, so that it is quick and easy to finish off making the soup the next day. The soup can have leftover cooked vegetables added, such as potato or parsnip — just add these with the stock when you are cooking the soup. This recipe serves 4 people.



- 1 large brown onion, coarsely chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, peeled
- olive oil
- 1kg peeled pumpkin, chopped into 2cm pieces
- salt and pepper (or other seasonings)
- 700mL chicken stock (approximately)
- 250mL milk
- sour cream/natural yoghurt and bread, to serve

Line a large baking dish/roasting pan with non-stick paper and preheat oven to 200°C.

Place the onion and carrot in the prepared baking dish and press the garlic clove into the centre of the vegetables. Drizzle with a splash of oil.

Place the pumpkin in a clean plastic bag and season with salt and pepper (or other

seasonings to taste). Add a generous splash of oil. Toss the pumpkin with seasonings and oil, so that all the pieces are lightly coated. Tip the pumpkin out of the bag on top of the vegetables in the pan. Cover with foil and bake for 45 min, or until pumpkin is very soft.

To make the soup, place the cooked vegetable mixture in a large stockpot with the chicken stock and bring to the boil. You can slightly reduce the quantity of stock if you prefer a very thick soup. Cook for a few minutes, then remove pot from heat and allow it to cool for about 15 minutes.

Blend the soup until smooth (you can do this in a blender or by using a stick blender). Add the milk and blend again briefly, then taste and add salt/pepper if desired. Reheat soup gently over a low heat before serving with a dollop of sour cream or natural yoghurt and some crusty bread.

Property condition assessments

Spotless, in partnership with Housing ACT, is conducting property assessments to record property condition information.

The Condition Assessment process is important and assists Housing ACT to make sound decisions regarding the maintenance needs and future of the property. The condition information is also used by Spotless to identify any planned maintenance that may be required in the future.

To perform a Condition Assessment, an inspector will require access to all parts of the property, including all rooms and the front and back yards. If you have pets, please ensure these are contained to ensure that the inspector has safe access to your property.

You may receive a letter requesting a Condition Assessment at your property with an appointment time. Housing ACT requires participation in the Condition Assessments by as many tenants as possible, to ensure that Housing ACT properties are maintained to an acceptable standard.

If you are unable to keep a Condition Assessment appointment and wish to reschedule for another time, please contact the Maintenance Call Centre on 6207 1500.

Please note that the Condition Assessments do not replace the need for you to report any maintenance issues at your property to the Spotless Maintenance Call Centre.

COMMON AREA PARKING

Housing ACT receives a number of complaints each year regarding parking at complexes. Tenants are asked to park only in designated parking areas and are expected to be considerate of visitors, neighbours and contractors attending the site.

Housing ACT tenants can avoid complaints about parking by observing the following guidelines. Vehicles should not:

- be parked in an area where signage clearly indicates that it is a 'no parking' area;
- be parked in an area that may obstruct access to buildings, garbage collection areas, foot-

paths, mailboxes, utility services, community rooms, other tenants' vehicles or common areas;

- be parked on grassed areas;
- be left in a designated 'visitor' car space—vehicles that appear to be abandoned may be removed at the tenant's expense; or
- be parked in 'Disabled Parking' spaces unless a disabled parking permit is displayed.

Please note that for safety reasons, all vehicles should not exceed a speed of 10 kilometres per hour (unless signposted otherwise) whilst driving through a complex.

Winter safety

Heaters, fire places and electric blankets help to maintain a comfortable temperature in homes during the colder months, but they can also increase the chance of a fire.

Here are a few tips to stay fire safe in your home:

- At this time of year, Housing ACT recommends that all tenants perform a simple check to ensure that smoke alarms are in good working order. You can test your smoke alarm by pressing the 'test' button. Your alarm should be hard wired (connected to mains power) so do not remove the cover or touch the battery.
- Check electric blankets for visible damage or frayed cords and never leave them on when no one is home.
- Keep curtains, tablecloths and bedding away from portable heaters.
- Never leave cooking unattended.
- Make a fire escape plan to ensure that every household member knows how to safely exit your home if there is a fire.

If you have any concerns about the operation of your smoke alarm, please contact the Maintenance Call Centre on 6207 1500.

Do good fences make good neighbours?

In Canberra, we batten down the hatches as winter approaches, with its shorter days and chilly winds. People tend to scuttle indoors during winter, which means that neighbourly interaction may not be as frequent or apparently friendly as it is during the summer months when we are outdoors more often.

Sometimes a lack of contact will be welcome, particularly if neighbours have been in conflict. A break in contact may give everyone a chance to cool off, in keeping with the weather! If you are someone who avoids conflict or confrontation, withdrawing may be your customary way of dealing with it. If a neighbour's behaviour is aggressive (whether real or perceived), this is probably a wise decision. If you tend to be a person who confides in or complains to neighbours, you may find it is not as easy to 'catch' the person while they are out in the yard.

Face to face discussion can be very helpful in resolving misunderstandings and disagreements between neighbours. However, if you have tried this and matters are still unresolved, or if you are wary about approaching your neighbour at all, it's fine to avoid confrontation.

Think about whether *your* actions may be having an impact on your neighbour. Are your drains

overflowing due to leaves in the guttering? When there is a lot of rain, does the runoff flow into your neighbours' yards? Are there piles of wet leaves creating a slip hazard on the footpath outside your place? Check whether your trees or shrubs are encroaching upon your neighbours' yards: winter may be a good time to prune off these stragglers.

If you invite friends over to visit, this will most likely take place inside, so noise from entertaining outside won't be an issue. This could also be a good way of connecting with neighbours during the cooler months when you don't see each other very often. Perhaps you could consider arranging a soup and bread get-together for the residents who live nearby? One of your neighbours may be interested in helping you to organise it. This type of gathering doesn't have to be costly: a large pot of soup and some bread is plenty for a shared meal. If a neighbour offers to contribute, perhaps they would be prepared to bring something sweet for afterwards? This can be a warm way to welcome a new resident, setting the tone for friendly neighbour interactions. Try to be inclusive, even if you think another neighbour is an 'odd' or unfriendly person. Perhaps he/she just has trouble connecting with others and would respond well to a friendly invitation.

Either way, by avoiding likely confrontation or going out of your way to promote some neighbourly connection, winter provides a good excuse for staying indoors.

It really only takes one person to start to turn things around. The Conflict Resolution Service (CRS) often hears from people who feel that they have already 'extended the olive branch', and it is often the case that a one-off pleasantry is a positive step. However, what CRS often sees is that if a neighbourly relationship has been poor for some time, trust has broken down so people may be suspicious of even the 'olive branch'. Keep trying different ways of trying to bring peace and civility back into the neighbourhood. With these efforts, everyone benefits, including you. Ask yourself the question: do you want to win, or is peace and contentment more important?

Look out for another CRS article in the next edition of *Home Front*, with a focus on springtime – outward looking, full of renewed energy and hope. In the meantime, **if you would like to discuss a neighbourhood issue, please contact Susan Rockliff, Healthy Neighbourhoods Project Officer, on 6207 2373 (Mondays and Tuesdays) or the Conflict Resolution Service, every day on 6162 4050.**



**Conflict Resolution
Service**

National Disability Insurance Scheme—**ACT trial**

The ACT National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) trial starts on 1 July 2014.

Around 5000 people with disability in the ACT are expected to be

eligible. However, not all eligible people can enter the scheme on the first day, so people will need to gradually enter the scheme over the next two years. The next edition of *Home Front* will provide further details about the NDIS and

will include an update on the first months of the trial. In the meantime, if you or someone you know under the age of 65 has disability and requires support, more information may be found at www.ndis.gov.au/my-access-checker.

Kids' Competition: 'When I Grow Up'

Win a voucher to spend at Westfield Shopping Centres! There are three \$50 vouchers and three \$20 vouchers to win.

This competition is open to children of Housing ACT and Community Housing tenants, as well as children living in homelessness services. Children aged up to 15 are eligible to participate.

You can enter by using the form that is enclosed with this newsletter. On the form, there is space to describe what you imagine you will be like when you grow up. This could be some writing about what you hope to be like as an adult, or a picture, or both.

Your entry should include details about yourself as a grown-up, such as where you are living and what your home is like; what your job is; or the people and pets in your family. The grown-up version of

yourself can include anything you dream of for the future!

Remember to fill in your contact details at the bottom of the form. Entries must be received by Friday 1 August 2014.

It was great to receive some wonderful entries for the kids' competition in the autumn 2014 edition! Congratulations to Jacey, Phebe and Freya, who each won a \$50 Westfield voucher, and Sisi and Alyssa, who each won a \$20 voucher. Well done!



Need help?

You may be able to get help to manage the cost of living.

Find out about concessions, rebates and more at **assistance.act.gov.au** or call Canberra Connect 13 22 81

From the Editor

We would like to receive:

- your handy tips or recipes
- feedback on services
- matters you would like covered or addressed.

Remember, *Home Front* is for you, so we would like to cover issues you and your family are interested in hearing about.

Please send to:

E karen.baumgart@act.gov.au

or write to us at:

Editor, *Home Front*
Business Development
Housing & Community Services
Community Services Directorate
Locked Bag 3000
Belconnen ACT 2616

Please include your full name, address and telephone number.

Note: Inclusion in the newsletter does not imply endorsement of any group, product or service. Housing ACT accepts no liability for losses of any nature resulting from the use of information contained in these articles.

Accessibility

The ACT Government is committed to making its information, services, events and venues, accessible to as many people as possible.

If you have a problem reading a standard printed document and would like to receive this publication in an **alternative format**—such as large print or audio—please telephone **(02) 6205 0619**.

If English is not your first language and you require the **translating and interpreting service**—please telephone **131 450**.

If you are deaf or hearing impaired and require the **TTY typewriter service**—please telephone **(02) 6205 0888**.

Important contacts — Housing ACT

General enquiries	Phone 13 34 27	Web www.communityservices.act.gov.au	
Maintenance Call Centre	Phone 6207 1500 24hrs, 7 days	Email 62071500@act.gov.au	SMS 0438 100 500
Maintenance complaints	Phone 6207 1500 24hrs, 7 days	Email dhcs.complaints@spotless.com.au	
Housing and Community Services Complaints and Information Unit	Phone 13 34 27	Email housing.customerservice@act.gov.au	