

North Coast Community Housing Company Ltd



“When at first you don’t succeed, try & try again”

Sometimes, when you try to do things to assist others, things don’t work out as planned! NCCHC recently found this out when we were advised that we had been unsuccessful in our submission to the Government for NRAS funding, which would have helped us to help others by providing more affordable rental accommodation to those who need it.

What is NRAS? NRAS stands for the “National Rental Affordability Scheme” which is designed to address the housing affordability crisis by increasing the supply of rental housing. The scheme aimed to do this by issuing 50,000 NRAS incentives by June 2012, and another 50,000 if demand remained strong after this date. The Scheme offers an annual tax-free incentive for ten years to each rental dwelling nominated under the scheme.

In addition to this, many State and Local Governments have provided generous planning incentives where NRAS approved dwellings are to be built. Currently, housing affordability is at crisis levels. For society to function people need to live affordably in or around areas where they work. Key workers such as nurses, teachers, police officers, fire fighters, ambulance operators and other members of society need to be able to access housing which is affordable. This generally means that they do not spend more than 30% of their household income on rent. The incentive is available to nearly all dwelling types such as houses, apartments, villas, flats, town houses and the like.

NCCHC recognises the need for affordable housing in our region and will continue to do its best in trying to obtain funding in a bid to address the situation.



Cartoon courtesy of Peanuts

In this Edition:

GM’s Letter to Tenants	Pg 1
Housing Services	Pg 2-3
Housing “Hotspot”	Pg 2-3
Tweed, Grafton & Lismore Updates..	Pg 3
Property & Assets	Pg 4
Smoke Alarms	Pg 4
Tenant Issues	Pg 4-5
Tenant Council & Tenant Forums	Pg 5
Warning to Tenants	Pg 5
Tenant in the Spotlight	Pg 5
Community Noticeboard	Pg 6-7
Improvements to NCCHC website	Pg 6
New SMS Messaging Service	Pg 6
Hints & Tips	Pg 6
Need Transport Info?	Pg 7
Online Medicare Services	Pg 7
Cook’s Corner	Pg 7
NCCHC Staff & Office Directory	Pg 8

To end my article with a few positives ...

- ◆ I would like to congratulate **Ayesha Gough** on her sterling performance at the prestigious *2011 Lev Vlassenko Piano Competition* recently held in Brisbane. We told you about Ayesha in our last newsletter and an update has been included on page 5 of this edition.
- ◆ I would like to welcome a new member of the Tenant Council, one of our tenants from Byron Bay—**Rosalind Gittings**. I’m sure that Rosalind will be an invaluable member of the Tenant Council and would be happy to speak with you about any issues you may have as a fellow tenant. I also welcome back **David Solomons** to the Tenant Council.
- ◆ I also welcome new staff members to the NCCHC Team:
 - **Andrea Loquet**, Maintenance Co-ordinator, who works with Chris Davies in the Property & Assets section
 - **Kris Booby**, Team Leader, Grafton
 - **Lisa Sirl**, Tenancy Manager, Tweed
 - **Terri Pitman**, Customer Service Officer, Grafton
 - **Angela Ward**, Tenancy Manager, Lismore

John McKenna—General Manager

HOUSING SERVICES

Housing “Hotspot”



Transfers

NCCHC has needed to change its policies concerning tenant requests for transfers, to ensure that it meets the requirements of the new Housing Pathways system.

NCCHC now use the same policies and assessment procedures for transfers that are used by Housing NSW for their tenants. An advantage of this for us is that, once approved for a transfer, our tenants become eligible for an offer of alternative accommodation from other local housing providers, including an offer of public housing. This certainly increases the opportunity for most approved transfer applicants to be provided with alternative housing that is suitable for their needs. It is also likely to result in a shorter wait for an offer of housing than may have been experienced by some of our tenants previously.

Any tenant requiring a transfer is required to complete a full Application for Housing Assistance and also complete the Community Housing Transfer supplement. Once the forms are lodged with our office, the application will be reviewed and assessed by the local tenancy team.

Factsheets about the new transfer process are available from any NCCHC office.

Tenant Survey

NCCHC recently distributed two Tenant Surveys. A survey was sent to our tenants in Byron Bay, because we also wanted to gain some feedback about local issues, including from those tenants who had transferred from Housing NSW during 2009-10. The Byron Bay survey was conducted by an external consultant, who was also investigating and reporting back on our general role within the Byron Bay community.

The standard annual tenant survey was distributed to all other tenants.

This year we received more than 250 responses to both surveys. This was well above expectations and we want to thank everyone who took the time to give us feedback this year.

We are currently collating the responses, but, at this time, we can report that generally tenants gave our staff very high ratings for their service, particularly in Grafton and Tweed Heads. Other (early findings) are:

- Tenants in the Tweed Heads area require our local office to be open Monday to Friday
- Our maintenance services have improved from last year, but many tenants still expect a higher standard of service than currently experienced
- We need to visit our properties more often
- The staff shortages that we experienced within our Lismore team at times this year were noticed by our tenants. Clearly, they expect a higher standard of service than we were able to deliver
- There has been a significant increase in the number of our tenants who are aware of how to make complaints and how to appeal decisions

Our job now is to compile a full report and to develop a plan to respond to all the issues raised in both surveys.

Once again, we sincerely thank all of our tenants who provided feedback.

A Place to Call Home Properties

NCCHC is pleased to announce that it has reached a partnership agreement with the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) to provide long term housing for families at risk of homelessness.

A total of 12 units of accommodation, located in Tweed Heads and Ballina, have been provided under the A Place To Call Home program. A Place to Call Home (APTCH) is a joint initiative by the Australian and state and territory governments to build 600 new homes for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The Australian Government is investing \$150 million in this program, with state and territory governments also contributing funds. A Place to Call Home commenced in July 2008, and will operate until 30 June 2013. The new properties will be used to provide housing for vulnerable families. Some properties will be allocated to parents who are at risk of homelessness and are seeking to have their children restored to them by FACS. So this is a venture that we're proud to be involved with.

The APCTH arrangements will ensure that all new tenants receive an initial 12 months of support from FACS. At the end of their first year of a successful tenancy, the families will remain in their home as permanent tenants of NCCHC.

NCCHC already works in formal partnerships with a range of local organisations to ensure that tenants, who require support to sustain a tenancy, get the assistance they need. 10 per cent of all properties managed by NCCHC are currently subject to these supported housing arrangements. The NCCHC Housing Partnerships Program, which commenced in early 2011, seeks to double the supported housing component over the next 3 years.

Tenant Handbook

NCCHC is pleased to announce the release of its new handbook for tenants. The booklet will be particularly important for new NCCHC tenants, as it provides a lot of information for our tenants about our range of services, procedures and policies.

Amongst its many sections, it includes sections on repairs, rents and other charges, tenants' rights, appeals and complaints, transfers, living in headlease properties and supported tenancies.

The long process of getting the handbook to its final version has come about as a result of the efforts of all of the NCCHC staff. The initial draft of the booklet was prepared by our Tweed Heads Team Leader, **Lynne Marlow**. All staff then had the chance to suggest changes or add new sections...to the point where we actually lost count of how many different versions of it had been written!

HOUSING SERVICES

Housing “Hotspot” continued ...

Most importantly, the staff's final version was then given to the Tenant Council, who also suggested more changes or that new sections to be added and generally helped get the Handbook to a point where it was given the Council's seal of approval.

A copy of the Handbook will be distributed to all current tenants with this newsletter.

Rent Reviews

NCCHC is currently finalizing the second of its required rent reviews for 2011. Many tenants will already have been notified of their new rental assessment.

A few quick reminders:

- Those tenants who pay rent by Centrelink's Rental Deduction Scheme (RDS) need to advise Centrelink of their new deductions. NCCHC is unable to change your deduction amount ourselves
- All tenants should carefully check the “CRA” (Rent Assistance) amount we have calculated for you. This is our assessment of what you should receive from Centrelink. If you are not receiving this amount, please call either our office or your local Centrelink office so the matter can be resolved
- Tenants who have yet to return their rental subsidy applications are reminded to do so immediately. If we are unable to process your application (because it is missing the required information or the application has not been returned at all), you will not be eligible for a subsidy. Once you have lost your subsidy, we have no choice but to then ask for additional information from you in order to get your subsidy returned.

Colin Jones, Housing Services Manager

Grafton Office

Staff at North Coast Community Housing participated in National Homelessness week from 1—7 August 2011. We held a stall along with other service providers to provide information to the community about different types of homelessness, and what services we can offer to assist. It was a successful week, with a sleep-out to conclude the week.

Amanda, Grafton's Access Co-ordinator, participated in the sleep out and found it to be a very uncomfortable but eye opening experience. Homelessness can effect all facets of a persons life, and being unable to have a decent nights sleep can affect a persons attitude and outlook on life, especially when they are facing a crisis such as homelessness. We were proud to be a part of such a meaningful event.

Introducing our new staff in the Grafton office

We have two new members of staff in our Grafton office—

Kris Booby is our new Team Leader and
Terri Pitman is our Customer Service Officer.

We hope that you will help Kris and Terri to settle in well to their new positions.

Until next time from the Team in Grafton

Kris, Helen, Chantelle, Amanda and Terri

Tweed Office

We would like to thank all our tenants for their patience during the rent review period. The new rent payments start from the 19th of September so if you haven't already submitted your Centrepay form to Centrelink now is the time to do this in order to change your rent deductions.

We congratulate Ayesha Gough for coming 4th in a prestigious piano competition held in Brisbane in August. Ayesha worked very hard and achieved a great result. We wish her all the best for her future (*see article on page 6*).

New Tenancy Manager for Tweed office

We have a new staff member in our Tweed office. A big welcome to **Lisa Sirl** who is our new Tenancy Manager, taking over from Arian Schaap, who is now working in our Lismore office.

It is lovely to see the warmer weather approaching and everything coming into flower in Spring. Don't forget to slip, slop and slap for summer. Take a little time to enjoy the outdoors.

From all of us in the Tweed office

*Lynne Marlow, Team Leader
Gianna Rea and Lisa Sirl, Tenancy Managers
Helaine Hebb, Housing Assistant*

Lismore Office

Congratulations to **Isaiah Daley** who will be competing in the state athletics carnival to be held later this year at Homebush in Sydney. He has qualified in the 3 events for under 10's 100m, 200m & 800m.



We have had some staff changes to our Tenancy Team in our Lismore office.

- **Angela Ward** has commenced as a Tenancy Manager, taking over from Jade Lister who is now on maternity leave. *Our best wishes are extended to Jade and her husband on the impending birth of their first child.* Angela will be looking after tenants in the Goonellabah and Lismore areas and will be available on Wednesdays, Thursdays & Fridays.
- **Arian Schaap** has relocated from our Tweed office and is our new Team Leader in Lismore.

*Arian Schaap, Team Leader
Sue Wicks, Ross Knox & Angela Ward, Tenancy Managers*

PROPERTY & ASSETS



Smoke Alarms

Over the next couple of months, NCCHC will be arranging for the annual check of smoke alarms. All tenants will be advised by mail the name of the electrical contractor who will be assigned to do the check of the smoke alarms in their area. Tenants can expect a contact call from the contractor to arrange a suitable time for this check to be carried out.

Some helpful hints to keep your smoke alarm in good working order:

- Carefully vacuum the smoke alarm several times a year to remove dust, cobwebs or insects
- Test the alarm by simply pressing the test button gently and hold for five seconds.
- Do not test the alarm with a flame
- Do not attempt to open the alarm as it is connected to the main power supply of the house and could give you an electric shock
- It is against the law to remove or interfere with the operation of a smoke alarm

Tenants who are experiencing any problems with their smoke alarms can contact NCCHC for assistance.

If you would like further information on smoke alarms you can visit www.fire.nsw.gov.au for handy tips and fact sheets on fire safety including home safety checklist, home escape plan, and keeping fire safe in all seasons.

TENANT ISSUES

Attend a Tenant Forum—Share your views, have your say!

If you would like to raise a tenancy issue, why don't you come along to a Tenant Forum when it is in your area? Our last Forum for 2011 was held on 12 October in Grafton and we would like to thank all those who attended.

Tenant Forums will resume for 2012 and dates will be published in the December newsletter.

How do I contact a Tenant Council Representative?

Contact telephone numbers for the Tenant Councillors are as follows:



Dolores CLOSE (Secretary)	(02) 6643 1209	(Grafton)
Barbara WATERS	(02) 6672 1660	(Tweed)
Peter HARRIS	(02) 6624 2619	(Lismore)
Ros GITTINGS	(02) 6685 8849	(Byron)
David SOLOMONS	(07) 5524 9210	(Tweed)



We are pleased to welcome **Ros Gittings**, our newest Tenant Councillor. Ros lives in the Byron Bay area and would be happy to discuss any issues you may have. We would also like to welcome back one of our former Tenant Councillors, **David Solomons**, who is from the Tweed area.

Tenant Council Representatives are happy to discuss any tenancy issues that are of concern to you and, if required, they can take your issue to the Tenant Forum on your behalf. Representatives from NCCHC attend these meetings, so your issue can be brought to their attention and hopefully a satisfactory result achieved.



Dates for 2011 NCCHC Tenant Christmas Parties



The festive season is approaching at a rapid rate! This year's Tenant Christmas Parties will be held as follows:-

Grafton

Wednesday, 23 November
11:00am to 2:00pm

Grafton New School of Arts Neighbourhood House
Cnr Spring & Skinner Streets, South Grafton

Tweed

Wednesday, 14 December
11:00am to 2:00pm

The Salvation Army Centre
Cnr Woodlands Drive & Leisure Drive, Banora Point



TENANT ISSUES



Warning to Tenants re Door Knocking Surveys

Recently we have received reports that some tenants have strangers call at their homes and telling them they were from “Community Housing”. Our tenants were told that a survey was being conducted and the people asked to be let in to their homes.

All of our tenants need to know that NCCHC staff will not visit you without an appointment or written notice being sent of our intended visit. We certainly do not conduct surveys of tenants in their homes.

Also, all of our staff carry photo-identification, so if they are unfamiliar to you, you should ask to see their ID.

If you are in any doubt as to the identity of (supposed) NCCHC staff seeking access to your home, you should not let them enter. We also suggest that you consider calling the Police if this happens to you.

NCCHC TENANT IN THE SPOTLIGHT



CALM AND RELAXED: Ayesha Gough at the Lev Vlassenko Piano competition in Brisbane on Saturday.

In our previous issue of *Housing News*, we mentioned that one of our tenants, **Ayesha Gough**, would be competing in the prestigious 2011 Lev Vlassenko Piano Competition in Brisbane at the end of August.

We would now like to congratulate Ayesha as she achieved 4th place in the Competition.

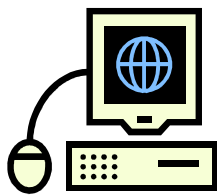
It was reported in the Tweed Daily News that “locals who attended (the concert) were excited to see Ayesha with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. She was calm, relaxed and utterly magnificent”.

Ayesha also won Best Performance of an Australian Work for her virtuosic performance of Michael Kieran Harvey’s Toccata DNA. This prize was donated by Oleg Stepanov and Natasha Vlassenko. At the Tyalgum Festival of Classical Music which was held on the first weekend of September, Ayesha was fortunate to be the guest student of Natasha Vlassenko in conducting a Piano Masterclass. Ms Vlassenko is the Head of Keyboard Studies at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University. Many of her students have become prize winners of major international and national piano competitions. In 1999, Ms Vlassenko and Mr Stepanov became the founders and artistic directors of the Lev Vlassenko Piano Competition, which has become the most significant national piano competition in Australia.

Well done, Ayesha and may you do well in future performances and your studies! We’re sure your grandmother, **Janet**, is very proud of you too!

COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

Improvements to NCCHC Website



We are in the process of updating the NCCHC website. The new and improved form has recently gone “live” and whilst it is operational, we are still working on it, so please be patient while we continue to smooth out any issues.

It is hoped that the improvements made to the website will assist in keeping you up to date with current and informative content.

Check it out at www.ncchc.org.au and let us know what you think!!

Calling all mobile phone users



We are introducing a new SMS Messaging Service

As a way of reducing postage and paper-related costs, NCCHC is looking at using an SMS messaging system to send reminders to tenants regarding upcoming events (such as Tenant Forum meetings, etc).

For this system to work properly, your contact details on our records need to be up-to-date.

Having correct and current contact details for our tenants is vital for providing our service on a day-to-day basis. It means that we can contact you easily when we need to, and it will make this new service operate more efficiently.

Please contact your local office by email or phone to update your mobile phone number.

Save paper ... Save the environment!



Keep up with the latest news in full colour by receiving your copy of *Housing News* via email!

To be added to our email distribution list, simply email your details to info@ncchc.org.au.

Or, read *Housing News* online by visiting our updated website www.ncchc.org.au.

Have Your Say

A tenant from Byron Bay, Phoebe Havyatt, writes in response to Barbara Waters' environmental suggestions which appeared in the last newsletter.

Firstly, let me say I'm into sustainability and think it's great to discuss these matters in our newsletters.

My own experience with turning off the HWS for a few nights over the spring months left me with not enough hot water by day 3! I am a one-person household, and on average my daily hot water usage amounts to one shower, occasional hand washing clothes, one load of dishes, and washing my hands or the odd utensil a few times. I only use cold water in the washing machine. Recently, I was informed by an electrician that the amount of power required to re-heat the HWS after a few days outweighed the savings. And my power bill was not remarkably different that quarter. Does anyone else have a comment?

With regard to the suggestion that we take advantage of the off peak times from 10pm to 7am to do our housework - unfortunately this is inappropriate in a block of flats - which is where many of us live. I can hear my neighbour's vacuum cleaner loud and clear during the day, when there are more external noises present that would mask appliance noises than after 10pm at night! Washing machines and dryers can also be noisy at night and in the early morning when some of us prefer to be asleep rather than disturbed by noise from a neighbouring flat.

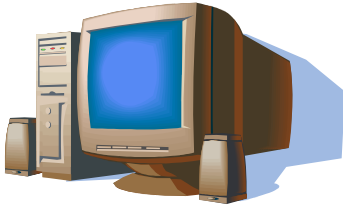
I think we need to work collectively to find ways to have solar power or other new technologies available in blocks of flats.

Your other comment about growing strawberries along the footpath is great -however, I've had mostly negative responses to my suggestions of food growing in the common garden areas here at our flats. Is it only acceptable to grow “attractive” foods like strawberries? Personally I find there's nothing better than the sight of fresh green lettuce, sprouting carrot tops or snow peas in bloom amidst the existing garden plants! And what on earth is wrong with a vegie patch? These days they're considered an asset, not a liability.



Contributions to the “Have Your Say” column can be emailed to info@ncchc.org.au.

COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD



Expressions of Interest for Ex-NCCHC Computers

Does your child need a computer for study and homework?

Would you like a computer to be able to access information online?

Then this could be your chance!

NCCHC has five (5) superseded computer packages which we are offering to NCCHC tenants via the submission of Expressions of Interest.

The computer packages consist of the following components:

•1 x hard drive •1 x monitor •1 x keyboard •1 x mouse •Basic operating software

Please note that successful applicants will:

- be notified in writing
- be required to arrange for collection of the computers and
- have to provide their own software (as the computers have only basic operating software)
- have to organise any internet access they may wish to have.

Expressions of Interest can be submitted by email to info@ncchc.org.au, or by post or in person to any NCCHC office.

Submissions close at 5pm on Thursday, 1 December, 2011.

Special Offer

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6621 3188 6651 8484

*Rural addresses may attract extra charges

www.babybella.com.au

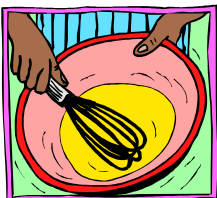
Need transport information for your area?

Visit the www.goingplaces.org.au website for timetables, maps, routes, etc. as well as information on travel concessions or any other transport-related issues.



If you have any concerns regarding local transport or you are unsure of which transport option best suits your needs and finances, you can also contact Kate Geary and Linda Wirf, Transport Workers with the Northern Rivers Social Development Council, by phoning **(02) 6620 1800** or by emailing kate.geary@nrsc.org.au or linda.wirf@nrsc.org.au.

COOK'S CORNER



Easy Pineapple Cake

Ingredients:

- 2 cups self-raising flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 450g can crushed pineapple

Method:

- Sift flour into a mixing bowl and combine with sugar.
- Add pineapple and mix well.
- Pour into a greased cake tin and bake at 180C for 40 minutes.



Recipe courtesy of "4 Ingredients" by Kim McCosker & Rachael Bermingham

NCCHC STAFF DIRECTORY



LISMORE OFFICE

(02) 6627 5300

John McKenna	General Manager	(02) 6627 5310
Lydie Boyd	Finance & Business Manager	(02) 6627 5311
Colin Jones	Housing Services Manager	(02) 6627 5312
Chris Davies	Property & Asset Manager	(02) 6627 5303
Julie Dukes	Executive Assistant	(02) 6627 5315
Andrea Loquet	Maintenance Co-Ordinator	(02) 6627 5302
Robyn Lewis	Senior Finance Assistant	(02) 6627 5309
Linda Hovan	Finance Assistant	(02) 6627 5308
Arian Schaap	Team Leader	(02) 6627 5313
Ross Knox	Tenancy Manager	(02) 6627 5305
Sue Wicks	Tenancy Manager	(02) 6627 5304
Angela Ward	Tenancy Manager	(02) 6627 5307
Naomi Worrall	Housing Access Coordinator	(02) 6627 5306
Ann Lees	Housing Assistant	(02) 6627 5300 / 301
Catrina McCaghern	Housing Assistant	(02) 6627 5300 / 301

TWEED OFFICE

(07) 5523 0337

Freecall 1800 197 588

Lynne Marlow	Team Leader	(For Mullumbimby & Brunswick Heads tenants only)
Gianna Rea	Tenancy Manager	
Lisa Sirl	Tenancy Manager	
Helaine Hebb	Housing Assistant	

GRAFTON OFFICE

(02) 6642 6244

FAX NUMBERS

Kris Booby	Team Leader	Lismore	(02) 6622 4261
Helen Maher	Tenancy Manager	Tweed	(07) 5513 0337
Amanda Hottes	Access Officer Grafton	Grafton	(02) 6643 2569
Chantelle McGrory	Housing Assistant		
Terri Pitman	Customer Service Officer		