

# WNEWS

Wentworth Community Housing  
Tenant Newsletter

Issue 30 December 2016



## Message from the Chief Executive Officer



### Office closing times for Christmas 2016

All Wentworth offices will close over the Christmas and New Years period.

Friday 23 December 2016 the Penrith, Windsor and Katoomba offices will be closed from 12.30pm and will then all reopen on Tuesday, 3 January 2017.



Wentworth's renovated & expanded Penrith office is now open.

Welcome to the summer edition of WNews which comes off the back of a busy time for Wentworth, with our 20th anniversary celebrations, Annual General Meeting and the Heading Home – Ending Homelessness Here Project, which has received fantastic support from the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Penrith communities. Heading Home has seen these communities come together to support vulnerable people, and find solutions to homelessness. At the top of the list is more safe and secure housing.

If recent temperatures are anything to go by, it's going to be a very hot summer which means we could experience more bushfires. It's important that you have plans in place to protect yourself, your family and property should there be a bushfire and we've provided some information in this newsletter to help you do that. Please contact your CSO if you have any queries about your bushfire readiness plan.

Also in this edition of WNews, Wentworth's complaints and appeals process is highlighted. From our most recent survey, we found that 72% of respondents know how to make a complaint, but only 47% know how to appeal a Wentworth decision. We want

to improve our tenants' understanding of these important processes, and also our timeliness in regards to responding to any complaints. Please take the time to read this section, and get in touch with your CSO if you have any questions.

Lastly it has been a wonderful year for Wentworth, we have opened new properties and started implementing some important changes in our organisation in order to provide the highest levels of service to you, our tenants. It has also been a fantastic year for me, as I celebrate 12 months in my role as CEO. I have enjoyed meeting many of our tenants this year, and have appreciated your feedback and contributions. I look forward to continuing to get out and about in our Wentworth communities in 2017, and I encourage all of you to come and visit our newly expanded Penrith office.

I hope you all have a happy and safe festive season.



Stephen McIntyre  
Chief Executive Officer



Chairperson Keith Bryant cuts the cake with tenant Sonya Phillips.

## Wentworth Community Housing celebrates 20 years of service to Western Sydney

Wentworth Community Housing celebrated its 20th anniversary at Penrith RSL in October with the Member for Penrith the Hon Stuart Ayres MP as special guest, and some of our tenants featuring in special video stories.

In addressing the 20th anniversary gathering, CEO, Stephen McIntyre reflected on Wentworth's deep connection to the community. "Wentworth takes great pride in its depth of relationship with local communities, and the strength of its partnerships.

"It is these special connections and the services we provide that makes Wentworth unique. We are

one of a handful of organisations in New South Wales who provide specialist homelessness services in addition to social and affordable housing. This means we are actively involved in providing a full range of services, across the spectrum of housing need."

Wentworth also showcased some of our projects and properties and reflected on how much we have grown over 20 years from 58 properties in 1996 to over 2,100 today. We also celebrated the great talent of one of our tenants Barry whose band Country Plus entertained guests with some wonderful music.

### Community Christmas celebrations

Riverstone Community Christmas will be on **Wednesday 7 December**.

### Reminder to pay your rent and water for a chance to win!

Tenants who continue to pay their rent and water on time until 30 January 2017 will go into the draw to win \$500. Wentworth will have four prizes – one going to each of our LGAs.

If you would like to find out where your rent account is currently paid to or what you need to pay to get your account up to date please call us on **(02) 4777 8000**.

### Affordable new homes coming to Ropes Crossing

A number of brand new two, three and four bedroom homes will be available in Ropes Crossing from December, with rents at 75% market rate. For affordable housing applicants, you must be able to meet certain criteria. Please email [ropescrossing@wentworth.org.au](mailto:ropescrossing@wentworth.org.au) if you are interested in receiving more information.



# Heading Home – Ending Homelessness Here conducts registry week across the region

Heading Home – Ending Homelessness Here led by Wentworth Community Housing in partnership with Platform Youth Services, Mission Australia (Kingswood) and supported by the Mercy Foundation, surveyed 78 individuals and families as part of registry week.

“The Heading Home project has identified the challenges facing people experiencing homelessness, and now we will be calling on the broader community, from business owners to community service providers to help us find solutions. In particular we will be working towards a Housing First solution, with wrap-around support services for those who need it,” said Jenny Ranft, Wentworth Divisional Manager, Community Services.

Heading Home enlisted 75 community and staff volunteers to find, talk to and survey people experiencing homelessness in over 70 locations across the region including cars, parks, riverbanks, grandstands, drop-in centres, train stations, refuges, stairwells, carparks and bushland.

The specialist survey tool called a Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) assessed the needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness and identified which people are the highest priority.



## Key VI-SPDAT findings:

- › There were 78 survey respondents including 66 individuals and 12 families, totaling 136 people.
- › There were 44 people identified but not surveyed, either because they refused to be surveyed or couldn't be woken up.
- › Penrith had the highest number of people experiencing homelessness at 49, with the Hawkesbury at 16 and the Blue Mountains at 13.
- › Across the LGAs 54% were rough sleepers, 15% were with friends or family “couch surfing”, 22% were in temporary accommodation and 9% other.



Federal MP Susan Templeman with Stephen McIntyre CEO of Wentworth & State MP Trish Doyle.

## Listening to our Aboriginal elders and tenants

**Wentworth is focused on strengthening our cultural competency to work better with our Aboriginal tenants, families and communities.**

One of the ways we have been listening to our local Elders is the naming of our newly built rooms for meeting with tenants and families. Aunty Edna provided us with local Darug names and their meaning. These are listed below:

- › Yenu Allawah means Walk Together
- › Carriberre means Gathering
- › Ngallu Wal means We Care
- › Ngara means Listen

We would be interested in hearing from people about other ways we can best involve Aboriginal people in shaping the services we provide.

If you have something to say on how Wentworth could be more culturally sensitive please talk to Cheryl Barnes (Aboriginal Community Coordinator), who can come and have a yarn with you. You can reach Cheryl on **0434 497 928** or [cherylb@wentworth.org.au](mailto:cherylb@wentworth.org.au)



This art was completed during a staff cultural awareness bonding day at Muru Mittigar. The art represents a meeting place and all Wentworth staff contributed to the artwork by adding a symbol that represents their cultural learning journey.

# Compliments, complaints & appeals

We welcome your compliments and any positive feedback you have about our service and people. However, if you are unhappy with some aspect of your dealings with Wentworth you can make a complaint or appeal a decision made by us.

## Complaints

There are two types of complaints that you can make — verbal and written.

### Verbal complaints

If you contact us with a complaint, Wentworth will try to resolve the complaint informally wherever possible. Many complaints are caused by misunderstandings and can be easily resolved. To this end we will:

- › ask you to explain the problem and what you would like to be done;
- › direct you to the appropriate Asset or Client Service Officer to address the issue.

If you are dissatisfied with the response or uncomfortable discussing the matter, you can lodge a complaint in writing or through the complaints form.

Staff can assist you with this process or will direct you to a Tenant's Advocacy service if required.

## Written complaints

A written complaint can be lodged if you are unhappy or dissatisfied with the outcome of the verbal complaint. To lodge a written complaint you will need to:

1. Send a letter or email [admin@wentworth.org.au](mailto:admin@wentworth.org.au) or complete Wentworth's Complaint form (available online or at our offices)
2. Wentworth will acknowledge the complaint within three (3) business days of receiving it
3. Your complaint will be investigated and you will receive a written response within twenty eight (28) days

If you are still unhappy with the action taken you have the right to approach the Registrar of Community Housing (RCH). You can check if the RCH can investigate your complaint by calling them on freecall **1800 330 940** or alternatively the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT). The NCAT is also a way you can seek to resolve any disputes. For more information call **1300 006 228** or visit [www.ncat.nsw.gov.au/ncat](http://www.ncat.nsw.gov.au/ncat)

## Appeals

If you disagree with a decision made by Wentworth, you have the right to lodge an appeal. The decisions that can be appealed are generally made under Wentworth's housing policies. You can access these policies via our website [www.wentworth.org.au](http://www.wentworth.org.au)

The type of decisions you can appeal include (but not limited to):

- › not being eligible for community housing
- › removal from the waiting list
- › rental subsidy assessment
- › application for housing transfer (rehousing)
- › property modifications relating to medical needs
- › absence from a dwelling
- › offers of accommodation

If you are unsure whether you can appeal a decision please ask us and our staff will be happy to help.

## FACS High School Scholarships – would a \$1,000 scholarship help with your child's studies?

### Will your child be studying in Year 10, 11 or 12 in 2017?

If your child is living in social housing, out-of-home-care or crisis/supported accommodation, receiving private rental assistance or on the NSW Housing Register, they may be eligible.

Applications will open in early 2017.

Find out more at [www.facs.nsw.gov.au/education](http://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/education)



## RENT STATEMENTS

Your rent statement included with this newsletter was printed as at **25 November 2016**. If you have made payments after this date they will appear on your next rent statement.

For the fastest service call (02) 4777 8000



Respected Darug elder Aunty Edna provides a welcome to country.



Wentworth Chairman addresses the AGM on the topic of housing first.

## Wentworth says housing first approach is key to ending homelessness across region

Housing solutions to help end homelessness across the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Penrith was the key theme of Wentworth Community Housing’s 2016 AGM, where Chairman, Keith Bryant, called for a Housing First approach to address this important issue, and for the community housing sector to become more involved in homelessness services.

Drawing on his recent US experience where Housing First has become a model for resolving homelessness, Mr Bryant said “as a start we should be comfortable we can and should end homelessness and insist we have better data on how we are progressing towards that outcome.

CEO, Stephen McIntyre noted a number of potential housing solutions suitable to the region, including tiny homes and secondary dwellings or granny flats. He also said that a housing locator will be important in helping find suitable housing for people experiencing homelessness.

***“The task is going to be big, but with community connections and partnerships, ending homelessness across the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Penrith is an achievable goal.”***

In joining Wentworth at their AGM, Federal Member for Macquarie, Susan Templeman, acknowledged the Heading Home – Ending Homelessness Here initiative. “This is a really valuable initiative and I commend all those involved. The fact that it is being done at a very local level means that the different, quite diverse circumstances can be factored in, and logic tells me we are going to see some creative but practical solutions.”

The AGM also featured special entertainment by Bligh Park Public School, who we would like to thank for their wonderful performances.



### Getting to know Wentworth people

Introducing Vanessa Tomas, Wentworth’s new Sustainable Communities Officer

#### 1. How long have you been with Wentworth?

I joined the Wentworth team in November 2015 as a Community Services Case Worker.

Having worked 12 months in this role really assisted me to get to know what we do at grass roots working with families and individuals that are facing crisis and homelessness.

#### 2. This is a new role for you, what does a sustainable communities officer do?

As a sustainable communities officer it is my role to engage our tenants in good community projects.

Community projects create valuable opportunities for building communication between neighbours, and can help develop and foster trust within the community. I am going to

be looking at education initiatives and supporting tenants into training and employment.

#### 3. Are there any projects that you are working on now?

Yes we have a current project happening in Cranebrook. Wentworth was able to secure funding from the government to create a gathering place for local residents that is safe for children and parents to meet and where local organisations can deliver support services.

#### 4. If I have an idea for a project in my community, how do I get started?

If you have an idea for a project in your community or you think that you would love to be involved in an initiative please don’t hesitate to give me a call. I am always open to good ideas and would be very happy for our tenants to get involved in working with us.

## HEAD OFFICE

### Penrith

**Address:** Borec House, Suite 1002, Level 1  
29–57 Station Street, Penrith 2750  
PO Box 4303, Penrith Westfield 2750

**Phone:** (02) 4777 8000  
**Fax:** (02) 4777 8099  
**Email:** admin@wentworth.org.au

### Opening hours:

8:30am–4:30pm Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri  
1:00pm–4:30pm Wed

 **Twitter:** @Wentworth\_CH

 **Instagram:** Wentworth Community Housing

 **LinkedIn:** Wentworth Community Housing

## BRANCHES

### Hawkesbury

**Address:** 409A George Street  
South Windsor  
**Phone:** (02) 4777 8000

**Opening Hours:** 8:30am–4:30pm Mon, Tue,  
Thu, Fri (closed Wed)

### Blue Mountains

**Address:** Shop 2, 23–27 Cascade Street  
Katoomba  
**Phone:** (02) 4777 8000

**Opening Hours:** 8:30am–4:30pm Mon, Tue,  
Thu, Fri (closed Wed)

**OUT OF HOURS EMERGENCY  
MAINTENANCE LINE  
1300 761 315**

## Next WNEWS

Our next edition of WNEWS will be out in March 2017 and will be mailed and displayed on Wentworth's Website [www.wentworth.org.au/resources-newsletters](http://www.wentworth.org.au/resources-newsletters)

If you would like to see an article on a specific topic please email [admin@wentworth.org.au](mailto:admin@wentworth.org.au)

## Making your bushfire plan a priority

**Are you and your home prepared for an emergency? The Bushfire season is upon us and if you don't have a bushfire survival plan in place, now is the time.**

The NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) has many online resources to help you develop your Bushfire Survival Plan at [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/resources](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/resources).

The best way to survive a bushfire is to prepare yourself and your home, and to get out early.

Things to do around your house and garden:

- › Keep lawns short and gardens and shrubs well maintained
- › Keep your gutters clear of leaves and branches
- › Clean up fallen leaves, twigs and debris around your house
- › Check your home contents insurance is adequate and up to date
- › Prepare an emergency kit that you can quickly grab if you did need to evacuate – ensure important documents, medications, first aid kit and a torch are included
- › Get out early!

- › Plan where you will go, how you will get there and what you will take
- › Know the daily Fire Danger Rating in your area and what it means
- › Have transport organised for all members of the family, including pets
- › Actively seek information on the fire situation and weather conditions from the resources listed here
- › Have a back up plan in case you aren't able to leave early enough
- › Make sure everyone in your household is aware of the plan
- › Talk to family, friends and neighbours about your plan to leave early

If you are concerned about how you would evacuate in an emergency due to health or mobility issues, please contact your Client Service Officer now.

There are a number of useful resources that can give up to date information about local hazards:

### Rural Fire Service

Bushfire Information Line:  
1800 679 739  
[www.rfs.gov.au](http://www.rfs.gov.au)

### Fire and Rescue

[www.frnsw.gov.au](http://www.frnsw.gov.au)

### Police Assistance Line

131 444  
[www.police.nsw.gov.au](http://www.police.nsw.gov.au)

### State Emergency Service

132 500  
[www.ses.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au)

### Smartphone apps

Fires Near Me  
Disaster Watch  
Emergency + Storm Safe  
Australian Early Warning Network

### Media and radio

ABC local radio station:  
702 AM in Sydney  
[www.abc.net.au/news/emergency/state/nsw](http://www.abc.net.au/news/emergency/state/nsw)