



CEO MESSAGE

Welcome to the spring edition of our Tenant Newsletter.

It has been without a doubt, a challenging few months for everyone. The whole team at Southern Cross Housing would like to thank tenants for your cooperation in helping us to continue our work during the COVID-19 crisis. As social distancing laws continue to relax in NSW, most of our activities are returning to normal, while other procedures have been introduced to minimise physical contact.

We have resumed inspections, and as usual you will receive the required notice of your upcoming house inspection by mail. Please note that it can be difficult for us to adjust these times as we have many properties to inspect and catch up on, after our previous break during lock down.

Our contractors continue to follow strict health and safety protocols during the COVID-19 crisis so that they can safely attend to repairs. Please continue to report maintenance through our 1300 757 885 number. Be aware that checking smoke alarms is a legal compliance requirement and tenants are legally obligated to allow these visits to be carried out. We appreciate your assistance in allowing our contractors to perform this important work.

One of the best ways to contact us to aid in social distancing, is email. You can send an email directly to your Housing Officer or our information email address at info@scch.org.au. If you call our office, please understand that our phone lines can get very busy. If you are unable to speak to someone immediately, it is best to leave a voicemail message. Rest assured that our messages are regularly monitored, and we will respond according to the urgency of the matter – so please leave a detailed message with the best number and time to contact you.

We hope you are keeping well and look forward to continuing to assist you throughout your tenancy.

Kind regards,



Alex Pontello
CEO



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DO WE HAVE YOUR CURRENT EMAIL ADDRESS?

Southern Cross Housing would like to communicate faster and more efficiently with you and we are working to ensure that we hold your current email address. Email is an easy way for you to receive information about events, activities and opportunities quickly and efficiently. Updating your email address contact is really easy, please phone the office on 1300 757 885.

WHATS ON

CHRISTMAS IS NOT FAR AWAY



With Christmas being less than two months away, we are starting to think about the holiday period.

COVID-19 and social distancing restrictions have made it difficult for us to plan large events or social gatherings this year, and that goes for Christmas parties too.

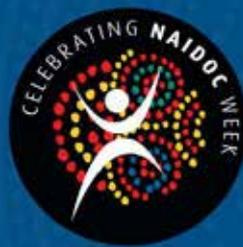
With this in mind we would love to hear feedback and suggestions from Southern Cross Housing tenants for Christmas celebrations in the time of COVID-19. Should we throw a virtual party, postpone it until mid-next year for Christmas in July, or have a Christmas decorations competition?

Contact the Communities Assist Team with your suggestions before 15 November 2020 at communities@scch.org.au

**Always Was,
Always Will Be.**

8 - 15 NOV 2020

#NAIDOC2020



2020 NAIDOC WEEK



This year COVID-19 restrictions saw the national NAIDOC Week celebrations officially moved to November 8th – 15th 2020. NAIDOC Week acknowledges and celebrates that our nation's story didn't simply begin with documented European contact. It celebrates that the very first footprints on this continent were those belonging to First Nations peoples, the oldest continuing culture on earth. NAIDOC 2020 invites all Australians to embrace the true history of this country – a history which dates back thousands of generations.

This year's NAIDOC Week theme is "Always Was, Always Will Be". The theme recognises that First Nations people have been spiritually and culturally connected to this continent for over 65,000 years. SCH will be celebrating First Nation's people by holding a morning tea with local Elders who will be sharing stories of NAIDOC and their connection to the areas in which we work. Unfortunately due to COVID-19 restrictions attendees will be limited, however we look forward to sharing information and invitations to a range of events that are being held throughout the region so that you can get involved too.

SCH SCHOLARSHIPS MAKING A REAL DIFFERENCE!

During the past year, SCH has allocated over \$28,000 in funding to 41 recipients via its 2020/2021 Scholarship Program. The Scholarship Program aims to enable tenants to further their education and reach their employment goals.

Cathy Campbell, Communities Assist Manager said "Our Scholarship Program is a wonderful way to provide financial assistance to Southern Cross Housing tenants. This program assists many tenants to achieve their employment, sporting, health and wellbeing goals".

Successful recipients under the 2019 – 2020 round have included mature aged students that are studying at University, High School Students and Primary School students. These residents are located across the Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla, Bega Valley and Snowy Monaro Local Government Areas. Here are a few comments from some of the recipients.

TRACY DAVIS

Tracey Davis received funding to assist in the purchase of a laptop that is being used to help her with course work associated with her Bachelor of Creative Arts, which is being undertaken at the University of Wollongong.

Tracey said "The assistance that has been provided by Southern Cross Housing through the Scholarship Program is much appreciated. My new laptop has helped my study, making remote learning so much easier! My studies have increased my self-esteem and sense of self-worth. The laptop helps with my artwork as well".

LEVI LOWE

Levi Lowe is in Year 5 at Nowra Public School. Levi received his scholarship for a new school uniform. Levi has said "I feel like I fit in, so I have more confidence".



JASMIN WILMOT

Jasmin Wilmot received a laptop for her scholarship. Jasmin's mother Amy said "Jazz can now work from home and do homework and assignments, Jazz will get many years school use from this, it helps many families in need, not all families can afford a computer for education, thank you Southern Cross Housing".



JACK & MILLIE BIHLER

Jack and Millie are twins that attend Pambula Primary School. They struggle with their reading and writing and their scholarship has helped them to obtain professional tutoring. Jack & Millie's mother Kellie said "Jack has more confidence and he is approaching reading and learning with a much better attitude".

The next round of our Scholarship Program will open for applications in February 2021. In the meantime, here is another scholarship opportunity that is being provided by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ).

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES AND JUSTICE (DCJ) SCHOLARSHIP

DCJ Scholarship opportunities are now open, offering successful applicants \$1,000 to help with school expenses and secondary support services. To be eligible you must:

- Live in social or community housing
- Be enrolling in education or training in 2021 (Year 10, 11 or 12 at a NSW High school or TAFE equivalent; school-based apprenticeship or traineeship; a VET subject at a NSW High school)

Applications for the 2021 DCJ scholarship Close at 5:00pm on the 19 February 2021 and must be completed on a desktop computer or laptop to ensure the online application can be accessed fully.

For more information head to the FACS NSW website: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/support-programs/all-families/dcj-scholarships>

TENANCY TIPS

PROPERTY CARE TIPS



By keeping on top of cleaning and yard care you can take the stress out of your house inspections.

Here are some suggestions to help you prevent the stress of routine inspections:

1. Regularly vacuum and mop floors – and clean up spills when they occur.
2. Wipe down kitchen benches and cupboards at least weekly.
3. Clean the bathroom regularly, treat mould early.
4. Report damage to maintenance straight away to arrange for repairs to be carried out. For example taps, ovens or any damage to walls or doors.
5. Pull out garden weeds as soon as you spot them, mow the lawns and trim all edges at least each fortnight in warm weather and each month in winter.
6. Clean the oven every 2 months (this prevents extensive build up).
7. Clean the grill and stove top after use to avoid build up. Clean the stove drip tray weekly.
8. Clean Range hood above the stove every 2 months.
9. Clean exhaust fans monthly – these can be removed and hosed clean.
10. Vacuum or wipe skirting boards monthly.
11. If you have a pet – collect and dispose of faeces weekly.

POLICY UPDATE



ROUTINE INSPECTIONS

Routine home inspections are undertaken by our Tenancy Housing Officers at least twice a year. We provide tenants with a minimum of 7 days' notice of an upcoming inspection as well as information to assist in preparing your property for the inspection. If you have a support agency assisting you, your support agency will also be invited to attend.

Your Housing Officer may take photos of your property during the inspection. Should excessive wear and tear or damage be identified, written advice will be given to you regarding the required repairs.

Inspections are conducted to:

- Ensure that properties are being maintained to an appropriate standard
- Determine if there are any repairs required
- Assessing the causes of any damage and to discuss repair options
- Discuss any other concerns that you may have as a tenant

Your Housing Officer has information about a range of programs that could benefit you including referrals to Employment and Training Programs, Mental Health Programs and ways to save money on energy bills. Please ask your Housing Officer about these programs during your house inspections.

Under NSW Legislation, SCH is required to undertake routine inspections, if we are unable to access a property, SCH will then be required to take action through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal to obtain access.

MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR MANAGEMENT

Southern Cross Housing engages a range of maintenance contractors to undertake work at the properties that we manage. It is important that these contractors undertake their work in a professional manner and that the work that they undertake is of high quality. We rely on your feedback to gain this information.

Every time a maintenance contractor is sent to a property the tenant at the property will be sent an SMS advising that maintenance work has been scheduled. You will also be asked to provide feedback regarding the quality of the work that has been undertaken. Your feedback is important to us and is taken very seriously. You can also provide feedback regarding maintenance services by completing the annual Southern Cross Housing Tenant Satisfaction Survey or by submitting a Feedback form to your local SCH Office. Forms are available from <https://www.scch.org.au/social-housing/draft-12/>

REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE



SPRING TIPS

Spring can wreak havoc for allergy sufferers. Here are a few simple tips you can use to clean the most common areas in your home.

TIP 1: Bedrooms - Your bedroom is the most common area that allergens like to hang out. Therefore you should, rotate/flip mattresses, wash blankets and sheets, wash mattress pads, bed skirts and pillows and clean your carpets thoroughly.

TIP 2: Bathrooms - You may clean your bathroom every week, but it's now time to eliminate clutter and toss old and expired items. Go through medicine cabinets and safely discard of any outdated products. Also, replace or wash bath mats, shower curtains and liners.

TIP 3: Kitchen - Just like in the bathroom, it's time to toss any expired or old products. Wipe out cabinets, sell or store equipment you no longer use and clean out the fridge/freezer to eliminate odours and unwanted mould in your home. It is also recommended that you vacuum the cooling coils under or behind your refrigerator.

REPORTING A REPAIR

If you need something repaired in your home, there are a few different ways to get in touch with your local Southern Cross Housing office.

- Call the SCH maintenance line on 1300 757 885
- Visit your local SCH office
- Write to SCH at PO Box 2351 Bomaderry NSW 2541
- Online by completing the Maintenance Request form that is available at www.scch.org.au/social-housing

REPAIR TIMEFRAMES

Southern Cross Housing Tenants

- Emergency 4 Hour
- Urgent 24 Hour
- Priority 14 Days
- Priority 28 Days

Housing Transfer Tenants

- Emergency 4 Hours
- Urgent 8 Hours

After Hours Emergency

For emergency repairs required outside of normal business hours, please call the relevant hotline:

- Southern Cross Housing Tenants – 1300 757 885
- Housing Transfer Tenants – 1800 422 322

BUSHFIRE SAFETY



Bushfire season is here and it is a good idea to be prepared early. It has been a huge year of fires on the South Coast and we know that many people in our community are still rebuilding and recovering from the fires that occurred last summer. All of our local Councils have bushfire recovery teams that have been working with their communities to help people recover as best they can. If you need to speak to someone about the effects of the last season on yourself or your family, please do reach out to your local Council, or Housing Officer to find out more about what support services are available in your area.

Some ways you can get ready for the upcoming fire season are by engaging with your local Rural Fire Service Brigade, finding out about the bush fire risk in your area and to plan and prepare for the coming bush fire season.

If you are on Facebook, you can follow your local brigade's page to learn more about your community specifically. Some local brigades even host online or in person meetings to teach their community how to prepare for bushfire season.

Here are some ideas for bushfire preparation:

Make a plan – talk to your family/housemates about what you would do if there is a fire near you. Starting this conversation early is never a bad thing.

Know your risk – do you live close to bushland? This can also include areas such as scrub, grassland, crops, woodland, and farmland.

Prepare your home – Clean up around the house, particularly outside. Even if your plan is to leave early, the more you prepare your home the more likely it will survive fires or embers.

Prepare yourself and your family – Consider the physical, mental and emotional preparation. Tell someone where you are going if you are leaving.

Keep an eye on weather and fire danger ratings over summer.

Neighbourhood safe spaces – where are they, if you aren't sure you could ask the local Council or look on the RFS website <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/neighbourhood-safer-places>.

AIDER – this stands for Assistance for Infirm, Disabled and Elderly residents. This is a free service to support people who may need it in our community. Support may be able to be provided to help tenants clear gutters, mow lawns and thin vegetation around the home. To access it call 02 8741 4955.

Have a look at the RFS Fire plan website <https://www.myfireplan.com.au/>, or download the free RFS app Fires Near Me NSW.

If you have any other questions about preparing for the bushfire season, contact your local Rural Fire Service, Council, or speak to your Housing Officer.

TENANT OPPORTUNITIES

GET ACTIVE: GET INVOLVED!

There are a number of ways you can get involved at Southern Cross Housing and we want to make sure that all residents have the opportunity to be involved in the way that we deliver our services.

One of the best ways to be involved and have your say is to join a Tenant Advisory Committee (TAC). Our TACS are made up of tenants and generally meet every two months. They provide an opportunity for tenants to discuss issues, exchange ideas and provide feedback to Southern Cross Housing about our services.

We currently have a Nowra based TAC and are in the process of starting up a TAC in Bega Valley. We are currently seeking expressions of interest to join both the Nowra and Bega Valley TACS. The Bega Valley TAC will

be suitable for tenants that live in the following areas:

- Bega
- Bermagui
- Cobargo
- Eden
- Merimbula
- Pambula
- Tura Beach
- Quaama

If you are a tenant in one of these areas or Nowra please get in contact with the Communities Assist Team on 1300 757 885 or communities@scch.org.au. We would love to hear from you!

2020 SCH TENANT SATISFACTION SURVEY

By now you should have received our annual Southern Cross Housing 2020 Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Those without email addresses will be sent hard copies of the survey.

It is really important that as many tenants as possible complete the survey. The survey is very important for Southern Cross Housing as it provides us with key information about the services we are providing to you. The information collected from the survey helps us to understand our strengths and the areas where we need to improve.

The survey should be completed by the head tenant and include information on all household members. The information that you provide will be completely anonymous.

Completing the survey is incredibly quick and easy. There are a number of ways to do this.

- Visit www.scch.org.au/feedback/2020-tenant-survey/. If you don't know your password and unique ID ring the Communities Assist Team on 1300 757 885 and we will give it to you.
- Fill out the hard copy survey that has been sent to you and return it to CHIA NSW in the reply paid envelope that was provided to you with the survey.
- If you are in Nowra you can call into the SCH Office located at 69 Kinghorne Street in Nowra and fill out a survey. You will receive a free coffee voucher in exchange for completing the survey.

We really appreciate you taking the time to complete the survey. By completing it we will enter you in to a prize draw where you could win one of 12, \$25.00 gift cards for purchase of books and one of three Woolworths Gift Cards worth \$200.00.

If you have any questions about completing this survey please call the Southern Cross Housing Communities Assist Team on 1300 757 885.



ENERGY AND WATER OMBUDSMAN NSW (EWON)

EWON provides a free, fair and independent dispute resolution service for all electricity and gas customers in New South Wales, and some water customers. They review and investigate complaints from energy and water customers, advocates and community workers, and small businesses.

If you have an issue with your energy or water account, the EWON recommend that you try to resolve it with your provider in the first instance, but if you are not happy with the response, contact us by phone or submit a complaint online for free and independent advice.

EWON deals with complaints and provides support to people on a range of energy and water account issues including:

- High bills and disputed accounts
- Payment difficulties and managing debt
- Service Connection
- Marketing or transferring your service to another provider
- Quality or loss of supply

If you have been disconnected, or are at risk of being disconnected, contact EWON. They are here to help.

Free call 1800 246 545 during business hours or email complaints@ewon.com.au.



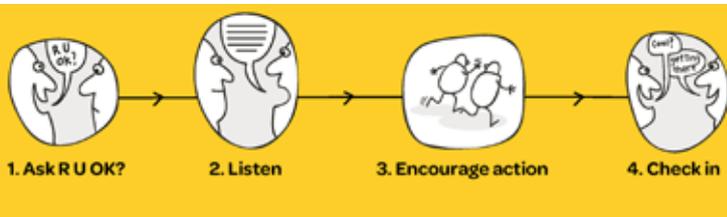
R U OK DAY

The 10th of September was R U OK Day, and this year Southern Cross Housing staff stopped work to have a cuppa to check in on each other.

A conversation could change a life. It's been a tough year between the bushfires, floods and COVID. Taking the time to talk and listen to each other can make a big difference to someone's life. The theme this year was "There is more to say, after Are You OK".

You don't need to be an expert to reach out – just a good listener.

Use these four steps and have a conversation that could change a life:



For more resources and information you can go to www.ruok.org.au

Here's the team in Ulladulla sharing morning tea:



APPLIANCE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

WHAT IS THE APPLIANCE REPLACEMENT OFFER?

It can be hard to work out what's using the most energy in your home. The Appliance Replacement Project is a NSW Government initiative that offers a 40-50% discount on selected new energy efficient fridges and TVs when you replace your old model. The idea behind the project is to help households to reduce their energy bill, increase their energy savings and have a more affordable cost of living.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

If you have an old, inefficient fridge or TV, you can replace it by choosing from a selected range of energy efficient fridges and TVs. The Project's website has video footage of the range available to help you make the right choice of appliance.

The Appliance Replacement Project offer is available through The Good Guys, and the delivery fee is a capped price NSW wide.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible:

- You must have old appliances to replace
- The fridge you own must be at least ten years old
- The television you own must be a plasma or cathode ray tube (CRT) television. LCD\LED TV models are not eligible for replacement through the offer
- You must be a NSW resident, over the age of 18 years and hold one of the following:

1. Pensioner Concession Card
2. Health Care Card or Low-Income Health Care Card from Centrelink
3. Veterans' Affairs Gold Card

You are not eligible if you hold a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card.

TO APPLY:

If you are unsure about your eligibility or would like some help to apply, please contact your Housing Officer or the Communities Assist team communities@scch.org.au who can assist you.

If you would like to find out more information or apply, head to: <https://energysaver.nsw.gov.au/households/rebates-and-discounts/appliance-replacement-offer>

GOOD NEWS STORIES



GOOD NEWS STORY - SCH CLEAN UP CREW

During September our wonderful Clean – Up Crew attended Mrs William’s property at Jerrinja. Mrs Williams was very pleased with the work that the Crew did and wanted to express the following words of thanks.

“Can you pass on my heart felt pleasure to the clean-up crew for the removal of my waste. I now have a clean yard where I can walk around with a smile on my face and not fall over the waste and was worried about snakes. I cannot thank them enough”

Mrs Williams is an Elder from the Jerrinja Aboriginal Community located at Orient Point.

The Southern Cross Housing Clean-up Crew provides free rubbish removal and yard clean-up service. With your permission, our Clean-up Crew can come into your yard and remove all of your unwanted items. To book your free rubbish removal and yard clean-up service please contact your local Housing Officer or phone 1300 757 885 .

Photo – Mrs Williams, tenant Southern Cross Housing and Jason Mercer (Tenancy Specialist).



SCH OUTREACH TIMES & LOCATIONS

Southern Cross Housing in collaboration with Specialist Homelessness services and other partnering organisations are delivering outreach services to people experiencing street homelessness.

The Assertive Outreach team provide help to people that will assist them to gain a pathway to long term accommodation with support to sustain tenancies.

Upcoming Outreach times and locations are as follows:

- SALT Care (5/19 Birriley Street, Bomaderry) – Wednesdays on a fortnightly basis from the 14th October 2020 – 10am-12pm or on a more flexible basis depending on client needs
- John Purcell House (11 Lawrence Avenue, Nowra) – Tuesdays on a fortnightly basis from the 13th of October 2020 from 10am – 12pm
- Nowra Homeless Hub (27 Junction Street, Nowra) – Tuesday’s on a fortnightly basis from the 6th of October 2020 from 10am – 12pm

A GOOD NEWS STORY FROM ULLADULLA

Melanie is a single mum who came to Southern Cross Housing last year fleeing a domestic violence situation. Melanie secured a tenancy with Southern Cross Housing and moved in to the property with nothing more than a mattress, fridge and the clothes on the backs of her and her children.

Since then Melanie has worked really hard, and recently upon carrying out a routine property inspection the Ulladulla tenancy team observed that she has fitted out all the rooms with furniture, installed curtains, and made the property look like a home. Melanie has also spent a considerable amount of time and money tending to the front gardens. Melanie is very proud of the work she has done making her house into a home.

Melanie says she is thankful to Southern Cross Housing and the team at Ulladulla for assisting her, and that she is in a much better place than she was 2 years ago, attributing part of this to being in stable accommodation.

GOOD NEWS STORY FROM MERIMBULA - DONNA AND 'BUB'

Donna says she thought it was too good to be true when she read the tenant newsletter and realised Southern Cross Housing was supportive of tenants having pets if their lease agreement allowed.

Being a cat lover, Donna said homes can feel lonely and cold without one. Through her volunteer work Donna came in contact with an RSPCA pet foster carer, who shared a story about April (now named Bub). Donna said straight away she knew this cat was right for her and is so thankful to Southern Cross Housing Officer Tracey for her support in gaining real estate approval to have the cat.

Donna says she feels blessed to work with a Housing Officer like Tracey and feels she has had blessing after blessing since moving into a Southern Cross Housing property in Merimbula. With good neighbours and Bub, she said that her house now feels like a home.

*Unfortunately, not all properties are pet friendly. Please speak to your Housing Officer before acquiring a new pet.



GETTING STARTED WITH VOLUNTEERING



In 2010, the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that over 6 million Australians volunteer. The figure is closer to 40% today. People volunteer for many reasons and in many different ways. You can learn new skills, meet new people, try something new, and make a difference to your community. SEEK Volunteer and Go Volunteer are two popular places that make it easy to find opportunities to suit your interests and location. See below for an example of the current opportunities that are available around our region. To find out more about these opportunities head to their websites or give our Communities Assist Team a call on 1300 757 885.

If you want to volunteer directly with Southern Cross Housing there are a number of projects that you can get involved in, from joining our Tenant Advisory Committees in Nowra and Bega Valley, to becoming an Ambassador for our Good Neighbour Program. If you are interested in joining one of these groups please call the Communities Assist Team on the number above.

HOW IT WORKS

There are two main ways that people choose a volunteer role. One is to choose an organisation or cause that is close to your own heart and you want to help. The second is to choose a volunteer role based on the skills you want to use or gain. Think about your own motivations for volunteering, how much time you can commit and what you hope to get out of it. This will help you to choose a role that is a good match for you.

SHOALHAVEN VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- **Volunteer Retail Assistant for Salvos Stores (NSW)** - Use your customer service skills to make people's shopping experience the best it can be. Nowra Ph. 02 4421 7475.
- **Volunteer Learning Club Tutor for The Smith Family - Education & Training** Use your skills to support young people. Nowra Email: tsfmktg@thesmithfamily.com.au
- **Ulladulla Safe Waters Community Shelter** are seeking volunteers with skills or interests in cooking, serving meals, cleaning, setting up and packing beds, social support (playing games, group meals, a cuppa and a chat). Ulladulla NSW Email admin@safewaterscc.org

EUROBODALLA VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- **Community Transport Driver for Eurobodalla Shire Council** - Community Transport Drivers use The Shire Council cars to transport older people in the community to doctors, shopping and events. Ph. (02) 4474 1000.

BEGA VALLEY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- **Volunteer Visitors for Residential Aged Care Facilities** - Volunteers will be providing companionship and social connection for our residents in aged care. Opportunities in: Tura Beach, Eden, Merimbula Ph. 1300 232 564

SNOWY MONARO VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- **Donation Sorting Volunteers for St Vincent de Paul Society** - Volunteers will assist with retail duties, sorting donations and customer service. Regular or once-off, anything helps. Cooma Ph. 02 6234 7420



FINANCIAL ADVICE



If you have concerns about finances or legal issues, there are support services available that can help you.

Lifeline South Coast provides a financial counselling service that is free and confidential. Lifeline's Financial Counsellors can help you explore your financial options. The Financial Counselling service offers:

- Free Financial counselling
- Confidentiality
- Impartial advice
- Assistance with personal and family budgets
- Advocacy and support
- Assistance with bankruptcy
- Money management education

Appointments can be made by calling (02) 4421 5365