

Tenant Art Exhibition Wrap Up



Our fantastic tenant art exhibition has wrapped up for another year.

This year's exhibition themed "Our Place" saw 24 of our truly talented tenant artists exhibit over 50 pieces of artwork, from photography, to sculpture, ceramics, painting, sketching, multimedia and weaving.

The exhibition ran as part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival with over 150 guests attending opening night. Opening night guests rated the exhibition 4.5 stars out of 5.

Nearly half of all the artworks sold, with proceeds going back to the tenant artists.



Artwork by tenant artist Coral



Artwork by tenant artist Graham

Tenant Excursion

A group of 50 tenants were taken for a wonderful day to the Yarra Valley Chocolaterie. The highlight of the day was the chocolate making workshop, followed by the chocolate tasting. Great times were had, lots of laughs enjoyed, friendships forged and a fantastic day was enjoyed by all.



Tenant excursion at the Yarra Valley Chocolaterie



Haleh Homaei, CEO HousingFirst

Welcome to our last tenant newsletter for the year

Our Annual Report for 2018-19 is now complete. Reading through many inspirational stories from our tenants, we are reminded that our tenants are at the heart of everything we do at HousingFirst.

In this year's Annual Report, we have also focused on our organisational values - Integrity, Respect, Inclusiveness, Collaboration and Accountability - which support and underpin how we deliver our services each and every day.

I invite you to please take a look online at www.housingfirst.org.au/news/annual-reports

It's been over a year since we changed our name to HousingFirst. Proudly our tenants and staff have embraced the change and everyone has been incredibly positive. We know the fundamental base for creating a healthy society is that everyone has an affordable and safe place to call home. Housing people safely and affordably is and always will be our first priority. Hence our name 'HousingFirst'.

Our approach is also about people and place management. Our ever-expanding community development program, now encompasses 16 different programs some of which have been nominated and won awards in the past year. These programs of course would not be possible without our tenant volunteers who are the cornerstone of our vital community development work and are an absolute inspiration to all of us.

A special thanks goes to our TAG and ATAG members for their hard work and dedication this year. We are

particularly grateful for the openness and communication you've helped to facilitate between our organisation and our tenants.

We also just held our tenants' Christmas party on 5th December at the South Melbourne Town Hall. Thank you to all who were able to join us and we hope to see more of you attending next year. We will cover the Christmas party news and pictures in the next newsletter edition. So stay tuned!

Christmas means different things for different people - for some the best traditions are not the presents or gifts, but about family and all the personal traditions we build over the years. No matter what you are doing or how you are celebrating, I hope you have a happy and safe time.

Take care till next time...

Haleh



2019 HousingFirst Christmas Party, South Melbourne Town Hall

Be part of our tenant newsletters

We would love you to contribute to our newsletter. Whether it's writing, photography, artwork or telling us your story. Please email community@housingfirst.org.au or speak to your Housing Officer for more information.



“I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to HousingFirst for giving me a wonderful home , a sense of security, an opportunity to become meaningfully involved in the community and a sense of direction.” - Elee, HousingFirst Tenant and ATAG Chair



The TAGs chairs presenting to the HousingFirst board

Tenant Advisory Group update



We are so lucky here at HousingFirst to have such a close and collaborative working relationship with our Tenant Advisory Groups (TAG and ATAG Ashwood Tenant Advisory Group). This relationship helps us keep the lines of communication open between our tenants and our organisation.

Recently, both Elee and Jan, the chairs of both our TAGs had the opportunity to speak to our Board about their experiences as tenants. This was a great chance for our Board to get to know them better. Both Jan and Elee are remarkably generous and selfless, and always happy to volunteer their time to help others - so we thought you may like to get to know them a little better too. *Read their stories to the right.*

Key messaging workshop

Key members of both our TAGs also had opportunity to help us with a key messaging workshop, to come up with communications messages on behalf of our tenants and for our organisation.

As we work on our new Communications Plan, we wanted to ensure our tenants had input on messaging relating to them and community housing.

We brainstormed ideas around: reducing stigma associated with community housing, the importance of real people and talking face to face, people working with people, there is no us without u (you), the importance of stability and putting down roots, the importance of community and belonging to long-term neighbourhoods, independence, sustainability, inclusivity and the powerful idea that home is where you nurture yourself.

The TAG's input has been invaluable and we are working to incorporate feedback.



Members of the TAGs at HousingFirst key messaging workshop

Want to be a TAG member?

We are always looking for new TAG members, so if you are interested in joining and would like to represent your local area and be a voice for tenants, apply now by emailing community@housingfirst.org.au

Getting to know your TAG chairs: Elee & Jan...



Elee



When I first arrived at HousingFirst I had come from a very traumatic situation and was emotionally in a very dark space. As the realisation that I was safe and had a secure beautiful apartment, without the prospect of being asked to move or having to deal with difficult landlords, rising unaffordable rent and a lack of reasonable rental properties , I started to heal. The care and approachability of HousingFirst staff, friendly tenants, the fact that I was allowed to have my beloved pets with me all helped me to relax and start to enjoy my new life.

My first community activity was a Trivia night. What a lot of laughing and fun that was. I then became aware of the very early ATAG group and was encouraged to join. Since then I have very happily been involved in ATAG , Pocket Park , our developing Fun Food Friday's, Ladies who Lunch and Food

Bank programs .These involvements have made me not only aware of the needs of others, but have given me great satisfaction that I can help with communication between tenants and HousingFirst.

I now feel very much a part of our community and have made many new friends. I am impressed at the way that HousingFirst staff care and try their hardest to help with our issues and can clearly see the genuine interest in our welfare from their lovely staff.

“I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to HousingFirst for giving me a wonderful home , a sense of security, an opportunity to become meaningfully involved in the community and a sense of direction.”

Jan



I have been a long-term tenant with HousingFirst and over the years seen many changes and projects offered to tenants to build a strong, cohesive community. We get so many positive comments from tenants about our programs, it's wonderful to hear the positive outcomes for tenants. I myself have enjoyed the Art exhibition which has encouraged me to pick up art again.

The community gardens have brought lots of tenants together. I have really enjoyed the garden, giving me the opportunity to make friends and provided fresh fruit and vegetables.

“I live in a beautiful unit surrounded by friendly tenants and I feel fortunate to have my home, which provides me with security. It's my safe, warm place.”

I often think how lucky I am when I get into bed on a cold night that I am not homeless, which is becoming more and more prevalent with older women. I strongly believe that HousingFirst work hard to meet the needs of tenants, and we truly have a mutual respect for each other.

