



Haleh Homaei, CEO HousingFirst

## Welcome to our latest tenant newsletter

As we are diving further into the rough waters of 2020, the resilience of our HousingFirst community is tested continuously.

The wild and damaging natural disasters over the past few months has left us with lasting effects. But hopefully it will make

the need for climate action impossible for either major side of politics to ignore, and this will be a top issue in 2020.

Most recently the Coronavirus (COVID-19) has created great uncertainty at many levels. As Australia and the rest of the world consider the next phase of dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak, HousingFirst continues to monitor the situation and is putting in place further measures to safeguard the well-being of all our tenants and staff while effectively manage any disruption to our services.

To date, there has been no confirmed cases of COVID-19 involving any staff members at HousingFirst. Regardless, we are exercising a high degree of caution.

Ensuring that we observe the advice of the Australian Government is very important. We strongly recommended that you keep an eye on updates from:

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/coronavirus-update-at-a-glance>

We will continue to monitor all available information and provide updates, as and where relevant.

We have also included in this newsletter the **“HousingFirst Care Plan”** outlining what we are doing during this virus outbreak.

**If you are concerned you can call the Coronavirus Health Information Line for advice on 1800 675 398. For interpreting services please call 131 450.**

At the end I do encourage you to stay calm, informed and support each other and please contact us and let us know how we can support you through this challenging time.

*Haleh*

## How to protect yourself and others against Coronavirus

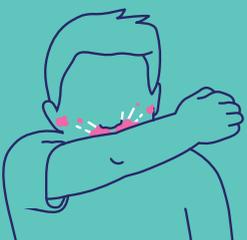
**Everyone must practice good hygiene to help protect against infection and prevent the virus spreading.**

For more detailed information please visit [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

### Good hygiene includes:

- Covering your coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue
- Disposing of tissues properly
- Washing your hands often with soap and water, including before and after eating and after going to the toilet
- Using alcohol-based hand sanitisers
- Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces
- If you are sick, avoiding contact with others and staying more than 1.5 metres away from people

**Cough or sneeze into your arm**



**Use a tissue**



**Bin the tissue**



**Wash your hands**



We are still running our services; however, these will be different to what we normally do so we but this will be through telephone and email rather than face to face and we strongly encourage

## HousingFirst Coronavirus Care Plan

Like many other organisations, we're closely monitoring the spread of COVID-19 'Coronavirus' in the community. With people of all ages and stages living in our properties, we wanted to let you know what we're doing.

Based on the advice available to us, **prevention is best.** We will continue to ensure that common areas in our properties are cleaned effectively. In our properties we're undertaking the following:

- Installing hand sanitiser dispensers at the entry to all Rooming Houses and older Persons units
- Minimising non-essential attendance to properties by staff and contractors
- Cleaning staff are being advised to give particular attention to disinfecting hard surfaces and heavily touched areas (doorbells, intercoms, handles, lift call buttons, lift floor buttons, light switches, door handles, hand rails, etc.) Areas that may have only been dusted or polished will also be disinfected (any wooden handrails, etc.)

We are still running our services; however, these will be different to what we normally do so we don't participate in spreading any risk to you. We will still communicate with you, but this will be through telephone and email rather than face to face and we strongly encourage you to contact us by phone or email rather than coming into the office(s).

If the risk of COVID-19 increases we may have a reduced workforce due to illness and close our reception areas, but we will keep you up to date with any further changes that are made.

Our community programs bring large numbers of residents together, and often in open, public spaces. Until 1 June 2020, we're changing the way we're delivering these programs to better support your health and wellbeing.

- **Fun Food Fridays** (Ashwood), **Social Meals** (St. Kilda properties), **Art Programs**, **Community BBQs** (across Melbourne) and our **Community Excursions program** will be postponed until 1 June.
- Our **Pocket Park** and **Fruit and Vegetable Box Deliveries** will operate differently during this time. We won't be operating our markets at Ashwood or Box Hill. Instead, you can call us on (03) 9534 5837 and place an order or purchase one of our great value \$5 Fruit and Vegetable boxes. All orders will be delivered to your door between 1-6pm.
- Our **Tenant Advisory Groups** will also operate differently, with meetings taking place over the phone and via Skype. We'll be sending out regular updates to members and to you about their work.

As we all learn more about this complex situation, it is more important than ever to show compassion and ensure we take care of each other. Please keep in touch and let us know how we can support you if you become ill or have to self-isolate because of COVID-19. We may be able to assist for example with food services from our Food Bank and Pocket Park Fruit and Vegetable Box Deliveries.

If you have concerns we are available to discuss any questions you may have. Please call us on (03) 9534 5837 or email us at [community@housingfirst.org.au](mailto:community@housingfirst.org.au)

## Pocket Park's Commendation

Our amazing Pocket Park fresh fruit and vegetable market has been recognised, receiving a High Commendation at the PowerHousing Australia Awards – and we couldn't be prouder.

What started out as feedback from tenants wanting more convenient and cheaper access to fresh produce has grown into an amazing multi-faced program that goes from strength to strength each year.



Pocket Park operations are currently modified (due to Coronavirus), but you can still place an order for fresh fruit and vegetables or order one of our \$5 fresh produce boxes. Find out more by calling (03) 9534 5837 or by emailing [community@housingfirst.org.au](mailto:community@housingfirst.org.au)

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## Federal Minister for Housing visits HousingFirst

Late last year, we were pleased to welcome the Federal Minister for Housing Michael Sukkar to our Chapel Street property and meet with tenants and hear first-hand about the positive impact good social housing has had on their lives.

HousingFirst CEO Haleh Homaei and Chair Frank O'Connor were delighted to show the Minister over the award-winning, modern, social housing development which is home to 81 tenants and their families, who have created a supportive and vibrant community with the help of HousingFirst.

The Minister had the chance to hear stories, like Jan's, one of our tenants for over 25 years. Jan is an active volunteer and a giving member of her community and has been foster Mum to over 40 children.

The Minister then enjoyed afternoon tea while mingling with tenants and hearing more about their stories.

Minister Sukkar's visit was punctuated by the announcement that we've been the proud receiver of \$72M in financing (via NHFIC the National Housing and

Investment Corporation). This is the largest loan to a Victorian Community Housing Provider to date.

NHFIC is vital to help provide cheaper and longer-term secured finance for community housing organisations. Having access to low cost finance through NHFIC will jump-start our projects and enable us to build homes that will take people off the streets and into homes, where they can be safe and plan for their future.



L-R : HousingFirst tenant Jan, Minister Sukkar, HousingFirst Chair Frank O'Connor, HousingFirst CEO Haleh Homaei, HousingFirst tenant Roxanne



Minister Sukkar meets HousingFirst tenants

## Tenant Advisory Groups Update

A huge thank you to our tenants who put in an application to be part of our Tenant Advisory Groups (TAGs). Our TAGs are the proud voice of our tenants and a very important part of our organisation.

We commenced our membership drive late last year, with the application process running from December, 2019 to January, 2020. A number of new applications were received and interviews with applicants have now been held.

We have finalised our groups and elections of the chairs will take place shortly, as well as induction and training for new and existing members.

The TAGs will then go into planning the 2020 schedule and themes for meetings for the upcoming year.

## 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](mailto:community@housingfirst.org.au) or speak to your Housing Officer for more information.

# Hearing our Tenants

Tenant voices are critical to shape our services. We listen to you via a number of avenues, including block meetings, at events, via phone and website, face to face, via our TAG meetings and of course via our annual tenant satisfaction surveys. We completed our latest tenant satisfaction survey late last year.

**Overall satisfaction was 75%.**

Here is your feedback and how we are responding.



## Your feedback

## How we are responding

### *Good locations with high amenities, public transport, medical, shops, employment*

Location of Property  
**88%**

Anti-social behaviour and noise

Broader choice of locations

Noise reduction options will be reviewed as part of design guideline reviews this year.

Working with our Tenant Advisory Groups to review our anti-social behaviour policies.

We are working with local councils, community groups and police to address neighbourhood concerns.

Working towards increasing our stock of housing in middle-outer Melbourne so tenants have greater choice and actively supporting tenants choice of location.

### *Properties are clean and modern*

Quality of Property  
**82%**

Heat in summer and insufficient cooling

Security

We have been busy upgrading several of our older rooming houses, making sure they are modern and fit for future – where possible – this includes air-conditioning.

A security audit of common areas of our housing portfolio has been conducted to remedy vulnerable areas. We've increased the number of CCTV cameras at our properties.

### *Friendly, helpful, open and receptive*

Customer service  
**70%**

Sometimes, need to be more consistent and timelier in our responses

Increased resources have been introduced, including a "back-up" duty worker model, so there is always someone here to help you during working hours. We've also set up a call/email monitoring system so that all general phone calls and emails are answered within 24 hours. We are also undertaking additional training for staff.

### *In general, improvement in response and quality of maintenance*

Quality of maintenance  
**72%**

Improvement in response times

We have appointed a full-time Building Compliance and Quality Assurance person and implemented a quality assurance and audit program.

# Tenant Christmas Party

Thank you to the 220 tenants that joined us for our annual tenant Christmas party. This year we had a new venue, the South Melbourne Town Hall and what a wonderful venue it was.

The Main Hall, where we gathered, truly is one of our city's most beautiful municipal halls and was decked out in lots of Christmas decorations, with a massive Christmas tree, a photo booth with quirky props that kept us entertained, as did the face painter, games, prizes and a few hilarious rounds of pass the parcel.

Delicious food filled our bellies and even the sweetest of tooth would have been in awe of the dessert offerings.

Our tenant Christmas party really is a lovely event that gets more popular year on year. Laughs were had, friendships forged, bonds strengthened, and memories made.

Thanks to all our volunteers and to our sponsors: City of Port Phillip, South Melbourne Town Hall, City of Kingston, Cinema Nova, Southern Star Catering, Motto creative, Little Print, Luna Park Melbourne, Melbourne Museum and Palace Cinemas.





## People's Choice Award Winners

Congratulations to our wonderful tenant artists – Kim, Adam and Stef for winning our People's Choice Awards for their artworks that exhibited as part of our Annual Tenant Art Exhibition. The Exhibition was held at Gasworks Arts Park as part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival.

The exhibition ran for a whole month and the public voted for their favourite pieces.

3rd place went to Stef, 2nd place Adam and 1st place Kim.

Special congrats also go to Kim who won this year's photography competition as well.



HousingFirst Chair Frank O'Connor, HousingFirst's Roy, Tenant Artist Adam, HousingFirst Board Director Emily Masters, Tenant Artist Kim and HousingFirst's Kim.