

The Low Cost Accommodation Support News

Community Connections Program | Older Persons High Rise | Housing Support for the Aged | SRS Service Coordination & Support

Winter 2008

Welcome to edition seven of the Low Cost Accommodation Support News, a newsletter for program managers, workers, and regional staff involved in the Low Cost Accommodation Support programs funded through the Aged Care Branch of DHS. **This edition covers -**

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| o Housing Week – September 2008 | o Statewide Forum 2008 |
| o SRS Resource Guide | o DHS - Rental Report |
| o Health time at the Flemington Estate | o Sustainability –tea at Gordon St |

Housing week - September 2008

This year Housing Week will be held between Saturday 8 September and Sunday 16 September. Housing Week provides an opportunity to celebrate the positive contribution made by social housing communities and to encourage and strengthen tenant communities through a wide range of activities.

A highlight of housing week is the Frances Pennington award for community achievement, presented each year by the Minister for Housing to a public or community-managed housing tenant who has made an outstanding voluntary contribution to their local community.

Education scholarships are also a feature of housing week with the provision of up to 50 scholarships valued at \$1,000 each to assist young people living in public and community managed housing to complete their VCE or TAFE equivalent.

To be eligible students must be aged under 20 years of age at 1 February 2008 and attend a Victorian government school or TAFE college.



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Rental Report – March quarter 2008

Trends

The strong upward trend for rents in Melbourne continues. Over the year to the March quarter 2008 the Metropolitan rent index increased by 12.7 per cent. The average annual increase in the rent index over the past eight years is 5.3 per cent. For the past three quarters the rent index has been relatively stable at 12.5 to 12.7 per cent.

In general, rates of increase in rents were highest in inner and middle suburbs and lower in outer and fringe suburban areas. However, significant increases in rents were experienced in suburbs across the metropolitan area.

The rate of increase in rents was much less dramatic in regional Victoria. Over the year to March quarter, the Regional Rent Index increased by 4.7 per cent. This rate of increase is below the long term (1999-2008) average annual rate increase in the Regional Rent Index.

The number of new rental lettings fell by 3.9 per cent in the March quarter in comparison to the same quarter last year. This indicates a continuing tightening of supply of rental accommodation in Victoria.

Estimates for both metropolitan and regional rental markets show that declining turnover (i.e. fewer existing renters ending their tenancies) is leading to longer tenancy periods and is a key contributor to the fall in available supply.

The trend metropolitan rental vacancy rate was a very low 1.0 per cent in the March quarter. In historical terms this is indicative of a very tight rental market.

(Source www.housing.vic.gov.au)

Health Time at the Flemington Estate

Doutta Galla Community Health Service (DGCHS) is six months into the Health Time Project at the Flemington Estate. Health Time is the name given to health promoting sessions that aim to identify the health and welfare needs of residents, and their friends, and links them into relevant services. The people living in the

walk-ups, which are low-rise single and two-bedroom flats, were identified by the Office of Housing and DGCHS as being marginalised, having significant health issues and being unlikely to access health services.



(Veronica Perera doing a survey with a resident)

Most of the tenants are under the age of 50, and are predominantly of Anglo-Australian heritage. People tend to feel isolated from other members of the general community. There are also a number of people who are experiencing homelessness in and around the estate who stay in the area because their friends live there. DGCHS has chosen to concentrate on people from four walk-ups at Holland Court and Victoria Street.

The Health Time sessions, that include a BBQ, are held every second Wednesday and between 20-45 people have attended each session. Whilst the barbecue is running, staff survey people about their health and welfare needs. Appointments with relevant services are made during the session. The people surveyed have identified dental, physiotherapy, housing, counselling, and drug and alcohol as issues that they would like assistance with. These referrals have been made within DGCHS and to external agencies.

Health Time is an impressive example of effective multi-disciplinary and inter-agency relationships. DGCHS Services involved are the Community Connections Program, Community Health Nurses, Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists, Health Promotion Team, Dental Services, Counselling Team, the Outreach Dietician and the Outreach Podiatrist. External agencies that attend regularly include the Office of Housing, RDNS Homeless Persons Program Nurse and the Living Room.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that residents look forward to Health Time and the contact with community health workers. Health Time staff find the sessions to be both rewarding and challenging. Being able to provide a link to people who would not otherwise access services is very rewarding.

Staff who are interested in learning more about Health Time can contact Veronica Perera, the

Project Worker, at Gracie Street, North Melbourne phone 8327 1700 or email Veronica.Perera@dgchs.org.au

Statewide Forum – 2008

Planning is well underway for the 3rd annual Statewide Forum and the organising committee is close to finalising speakers for this year's program. The theme for this years Forum is **'Working Collaboratively Promoting Partnerships'** and I would encourage all managers and staff of the LCA programs to consider submitting an abstract for presentation at the concurrent sessions on day one.

Abstracts will need to be submitted by 1 September and should be no more than 500 words in length. The organising committee is interested in presentations that consider the theme of the forum but that showcase good practice and demonstrate the principles of the programs that you work in.

The forum will once again be held at the **St Vincent's hospital conference centre** in Victoria Parade Fitzroy. A program outline and details of the process for registration will be provided in late September.

See you at the Forum - 25 & 26 November 2008 !



SRS-focused Community Support Services Resource Guide recently published

May, 2008

Inner South Community Health Service has recently published an updated version of *A Guide to Community Support Services for SRS Residents*. The revised fourth Edition has been revamped with a new title: **Working with Residents of Supported Residential Services: A Resource Guide to Community Support Services in the Cities of Port Phillip, Stonnington, Glen Eira, Kingston & Bayside**. The Guide has been extended to cover Inner South and Coastal areas and takes in the Cities of Port Phillip, Stonnington, Glen Eira,

Kingston and Bayside. The most recent inclusion of the Kingston and Bayside areas takes into account the growing number of Agencies that provide supports and services to SRS Residents in this area, and aims to raise awareness of local services for Residents, and strengthen inter-agency service networks.

A key *raison d'être* for the Guide is to focus on the needs, and often unmet needs, of the Residents of pension-level SRSs. Many of these residents are challenged by disadvantage in many areas of life and can experience disproportionate access to mainstream community services and social outlets, and community involvement and participation.

Originally funded by the HACC Program, the Guide is now published by Inner South Community Health Service. The booklet comprises 76 pages and contains References and Service details for more than 75 agencies and service providers.

The Resources listed include a wide range of community services and supports, including SRS Worker and Proprietor Groups, Mental Health Services, Recreational and Social Support Services, Transport Services, Specific Disability Services, Assertive Outreach Supports Services and Dental Services. Five hundred copies of the Guide have been printed.

The publication of the Guide has several important aims: to provide easily accessible information about services which are specifically oriented towards SRS Residents, to be a source of sector-specific information and key knowledge to Community Workers, Proprietor/Managers of SRSs and Service Providers, and to raise awareness within the sector as a whole, with a view to improving equality of access to community involvement and participation for SRS Residents as a group.

As an advocacy tool, in bringing together many diverse Supports Agencies and Service Providers, the publication of the Guide is aimed at raising the profile of disadvantaged and often vulnerable community members who reside in Supported Residential Services.



For further information about the SRS Guide, contact John McMillan HACC Access & Equity worker at Inner South Community Health Service. Ph 9520 3131.

Sustainability-Tea at Gordon St

Older People's High Rise programs continually strive to provide a service that contributes to a tenants' sense of safety, independence and security. Group activities or programs are one important way in which OPHR programs can achieve this by enhancing the social and community involvement of residents.

One ongoing challenge is to ensure that the activities that are run are identified by the residents themselves as being important – and that they are sustainable.

With changes in staffing, competing priorities for funding and reliance on external agencies to provide a service, this is not always easy.

The Western Region Health Centre OPHR program faced this challenge recently when a well attended weekly Morning Tea session looked like it was no longer going to be able to operate.

Fortunately a small group of dedicated residents realised the value behind this activity and, with the support of the OPHR team, have assumed responsibility for the group themselves.



One of the driving forces in the kitchen, Fred, reports "We used to have a morning tea last year, but the lady and group who helped before could no longer do it and tenants started to drop off. So we decided to get it going ourselves. So we cooked cakes, then pizzas and interest started to come up. We started the year with about half a dozen people and now over two dozen come down each Friday. It has brought tenants together more and it brings tenants together from different cultures. It's going real good."

Fellow tenant and partner in the kitchen revival, Gerry, was also eager to point out the group is mindful of the tenants health "Many people who come have diabetes and we're trying to make it more healthy than it was too."

Four gentlemen have taken key responsibility for the promotion, food preparing and cleaning associated with the group and they have recently extended their input to more casual tea & coffee gatherings in the community room each morning and afternoon.

Certainly if the growing number of attendees are anything to go by their efforts have been much appreciated by OPHR staff and tenants alike.

Perhaps the final word should be left to a Friday morning regular "The food is excellent, it's in pleasant surroundings- it's a joy. All done by the gentleman and on own initiative. We ladies don't have to do a damn thing- & it's wonderful!"

Article provided by Brett Murphy (Older Persons Hi Rise Support program) at WRHC Footscray.

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Useful Information

Need help with implementing the MDS V2.01?

Contact the HACC Help desk on Ph: 9096 7255
E-mail – haccmds@dhs.vic.gov.au

Victorian HACC Website

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc>

Office of Housing Website

www.housing.vic.gov.au

Contacts

If you have a story, event or a program you would like to share with colleagues from other Low Cost Accommodation Support Programs please let us know and it can be included in the next edition of this newsletter (word limit 500 words or less).

All correspondence to Shane McDonald at Department of Human Services, SRS & Accommodation Support Unit, Level 12, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne 3000.

Ph: 9096 7227

Email: shane.mcdonald@dhs.vic.gov.au

Low Cost Accommodation Support Programs Webpage

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/services/lowcost/index.htm>