



# BEYOND THE LETTERBOX

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## Helen achieves the great Aussie dream

Former Department of Housing tenant Helen has proved that being a grandmother is no barrier to becoming a first-time home owner.

Having lived in public housing for nearly 36 years, Helen didn't think she would ever achieve the 'great Aussie dream' of owning her own home. Then everything changed after a promotion at work took her over the income level for public housing and Helen was no longer eligible to remain in the property she was renting.

Department officer Tracy Copes, from the Housing Pathways Unit (HPU), visited Helen to discuss her housing options.

"It was a very stressful situation, as there were a number of family issues at the time and I didn't think that I had enough money for a home loan," Helen said.

"I really appreciated that Tracy came to see me at work and talk through my options."

With a boost from her income tax return, Helen had enough money for a deposit and started the process of obtaining a loan. Helen secured a home loan through Indigenous Business Australia, which provides Aboriginal people with loans to purchase their own home. She received the keys in late 2013 and soon enjoyed her first Christmas in her own home.

Helen described the news that she had to move out of public housing as "stressful and scary" but acknowledged that it also created the incentive to follow her dreams and buy her own home.

"My cousin did it as well as other family members, and I knew I could do it too," she said. "I finally have the 'great Australian dream'. My



*Helen is enjoying the great Aussie dream of home ownership*

son is so proud. He told me 'you've done it mum'. It really is a great feeling."

Tracy Copes said she was always excited to be able to help tenants transition into their own homes.

"It is a great joy to follow their journey as their dream becomes a reality," Tracy said. "Helen is a lovely lady and a delight to work with and she was so excited about having her own home. Helen has achieved her dream of homeownership. I'm so pleased for her and it is great to see her settled in her new home."

What if you become ineligible for public housing?

If you become income and/or asset ineligible for public housing the Department's Housing Pathways Unit will provide you with information about your options to transition from public housing. The housing options will be dependent on your individual circumstances and could include community housing, renting privately or even buying your own home.

Comments or feedback?

[customerfeedback@housing.wa.gov.au](mailto:customerfeedback@housing.wa.gov.au) or Locked Bag 22, East Perth WA 6892.



## Change for Kleenheat Gas customers using 45kg LPG cylinders

From the 1 April 2014, Kleenheat Gas will charge an annual facility fee to public and community housing tenants who use 45kg LPG cylinders. LPG used in areas of Western Australia where natural gas is not available. The facility fee covers the cost of regular maintenance to ensure the safe condition and operation of the cylinders.

At the moment, Kleenheat Gas customers who are also public and community housing tenants only pay for the gas consumption not the cylinder maintenance. Kleenheat Gas has advised that it is no longer financially viable for them to absorb those maintenance costs.

### How does this affect me?

Tenants are responsible for paying all costs associated with LPG consumption including the facility fee. The annual fee of \$33.00 for each 45kg cylinder installed at your property will be included on your regular Kleenheat Gas billing statement. Most properties have two 45kg cylinders to ensure ongoing gas supply.

Kleenheat Gas is only one of Western Australia's gas suppliers. As a customer, you are entitled to shop around and select the supplier of your choice within your area, however, be aware that most suppliers already charge the facility fee.

If you have any difficulties paying your Kleenheat Gas account, it is important to contact them before the due date.

If you are moving from your property you must contact Kleenheat Gas so they can update your details.

For enquiries about the changes, phone Kleenheat Gas on 13 21 80 or [lpgenquiries@kleenheat.com.au](mailto:lpgenquiries@kleenheat.com.au)

TTY Service 13 36 77 Interpreter Service 13 14 50



## Changes to property access arrangements for water meter reading

The introduction of bi-monthly water billing practices has increased the frequency of water meter reading to six times a year. As a result, the Water Corporation is no longer able to maintain arrangements with tenants to use property-specific keys or contact customers prior to obtaining a reading.

### How will this affect me?

If the Water Corporation cannot access your meter, your water use will be estimated. A card will be left in your letterbox to let you know a Water Corporation officer has visited.

If the Water Corporation has to estimate your water use three times in a row, it will be necessary to obtain an actual reading. You will be asked to provide a self-reading or make arrangements for an officer to come and do it. Your bill can then be adjusted to reflect your actual water use.

For any queries, please contact the Water Corporation by email [customer@watercorporation.com.au](mailto:customer@watercorporation.com.au) or telephone 13 13 85.

### Having difficulty paying your bill?

If you are unable to pay your water bill in full by the due date, please contact your Housing Services Officer at your local Department of Housing office to negotiate a repayment arrangement.



# Low-cost computers expand your horizons

There are moments in life when the world is at your feet, then as we get older it can feel that the summits have all been reached. But what if the world could be at our feet once more—or even better, at our fingertips?

That's a feeling that Cassandra Cooke knows well.

At 65, she lives with chronic back pain and a health condition that requires her to be on oxygen 24 hours a day. It's hard to leave home for long periods of time and everyday errands can be a struggle.

But Cassandra is still stocking her own pantry, living independently, and seeing her family and friends all the time.

What's her secret? A home computer. With email and online shopping, the power's all in Cassandra's hands.

"Being able to email my friends and talk to my Dad with a web camera via the internet is very important to me," Cassandra says. "Since it's not easy for me to leave the house, it really keeps my spirits up."

So when Cassandra's computer broke down in late October, there was no time to spare. A friend gave her the number for WorkVentures, a not-for-profit enterprise offering low-cost computers.

"I wasn't sure if I would be eligible to purchase a computer from WorkVentures, but when I phoned them they were absolutely wonderful," Cassandra says. "I explained that I needed to order groceries online and they were so understanding of the urgency that they built a computer and had it sent over within 24 hours."

Cassandra applied for an advance on her Age Pension to cover the cost of the computer, which she will pay back in \$30 fortnightly instalments. "I borrowed the money right away so I could get the computer as soon as possible. Everyone was so helpful."

Now WorkVentures wants to spread the word to seniors.

"Our goal is to help those who've traditionally been on the wrong side of the digital divide to take charge of their lives through



technology," says WorkVentures CEO Arsenio Alegre. "Our affordable and user-friendly computers are important; but so too are the friendly staff on the free WorkVentures hotline and the video tutorial package."

WorkVentures offers refurbished computer packages, including delivery, from \$249. For more information contact WorkVentures on 1800 112 205 or collect a Low Cost Computer flyer from any Centrelink Service Centre.

*This article was first published in News for Seniors in April 2013. Reprinted with the permission of the federal Department of Human Services*

## Water concession for Newstart recipients under 60

On 1 January 2013, a number of people receiving Centrelink's Parenting Payment were moved to Newstart Allowance. As a result, tenants under the age of 60 who hold a Centrelink Pensioner Concession Card were not able to be identified to receive a concession from the Water Corporation.

Tenants on Newstart Allowance over 60 years are not impacted by this change.

### How will this affect me?

If you receive **Newstart Allowance**, are **under the age of 60** and have a **Pensioner Concession Card**, your Housing Services Officer will request to see your card so it can be copied. You may be required to provide your Pensioner Concession Card during your annual property inspection or at another time when you are with your Housing Services Officer.

Alternatively, you may choose to attend a Department office to show your Pensioner

Concession Card. An officer will take a photocopy and forward it to your Housing Services Officer to enable your water concession entitlement.

### Why?

A copy of your Pensioner Concession Card must be sent to the Water Corporation for you to receive the water concession. Your Housing Services Officer will contact the Water Corporation to request that the concession entitlement you have not received is backdated and credited to your water consumption account.



# Safety device testing

The Department of Housing has installed a number of safety devices in your home.

The first one is a combined Residual Current Device/Miniature Circuit Breaker (RCD/ MCB), which provides protection against electrocution and the overloading of all circuits in the property.

The second is a smoke alarm, which alerts you to smoke presence in the property.

## How to test your RCD/MCB

- Press the **TEST** button on the RCD/MCB; you should hear a click.
- The lever will flip downwards in the 'off' position.
- If the RCD/MCB doesn't flip downwards, you need to contact Housing Direct on **1300 137 677**.
- If the lever does flip downwards, then it works.
- Flip the lever upwards to 'on' and this will turn the power on.



## How to test your smoke alarm

- To test your smoke alarm turn your power off at the mains. Press the **TEST** button on your smoke alarm (as illustrated); you should hear the alarm activate.
- The smoke alarm will automatically reset once the button has been released after testing. If you are unable to reach the test button, please use a broom handle.
- **DO NOT use a screw driver or put tape over the alarm.**
- If you don't hear a sound, contact Housing Direct straight away on **1300 137 677**.
- Once the test is complete, remember to turn your power back on at the mains.



**DO TEST**



**DO NOT paint,  
remove or cover up**

If you notice a problem with your RCD/MCB or  
smoke alarm please call  
**HOUSING DIRECT on 1300 137 677.**