

BEYOND THE LETTERBOX

Goodbye Winter and Hello Spring!

ISSUE 3: SEPTEMBER 2012



Flowers are blooming and the birds are singing but your home may still have a case of the winter blues. Spring cleaning is a tradition that encourages us to refresh and revitalise our homes and gardens.

One of the biggest spring cleaning jobs is getting rid of unwanted items. We tend to hold on to things we no longer need but there are great benefits in organising the 'useful' and disposing of the 'useless': you feel a sense of accomplishment, your living space feels larger and more comfortable and as a result you reduce the risk of pest infestation and fire.

Items taking up space in your home may be useful to someone else, so consider holding a garage sale or donating them to charity. Local councils are a good resource for getting rid of larger items and garden waste. In this edition of Beyond the Letterbox, you'll find a helpful article on how to reduce, reuse and recycle rubbish. There's another on fire prevention, which points out a few easy jobs that you can do in your garden and ways to keep yourself and your family safer over summer.

If the thought of spring cleaning seems daunting, the best thing to do is to make a list. Walk around your home and garden noting down each area that needs improvement. Here's how your list for the lounge room might look:

- Shoes in piles next to the front door
- Junk mail overflowing the magazine rack
- Dirty windows
- Dusty light bulbs, posters and photographs.

If you have a large amount of work to do throughout the house, do one room at a time.

Although it can be time-consuming, spring cleaning doesn't need to be expensive. There is a lot of information available, both online and in the library, on how to use common household items like vinegar and bicarbonate of soda as effective, environmentally-friendly cleaning products.

The Department of Housing is responsible for the maintenance of the property and you are responsible for maintaining a clean and tidy home. So play your favourite music and put a spring in your step!



Golden Bay

The Department's Golden Bay development has been generating strong interest for some time and since the opening of the first display home at the end of June this has increased substantially.

The development is project managed by Peet Limited. Over the next 10 years it is expected to provide more than 1700 home sites.

Located south of Secret Harbour, and only 55km from the Perth CBD, Golden Bay offers an idyllic coastal lifestyle. Of the 54 homes available, several are already under offer or sold.

For the development of the homes, the Department partnered with BGC Residential to offer high quality homes which people can move right into. The properties offer a range of housing options that are particularly attractive to first and second homebuyers.

A mix of 3x2 and 4x2 homes are available in the first release, priced from only \$240,000 for homes sold under the Department's Opening Doors shared home ownership scheme (SharedStart), and \$300,000 for full home ownership.

SharedStart is one of the key initiatives under the State Government's Affordable Housing Strategy that aims to deliver at least 20,000 affordable housing opportunities by 2020.

Under this scheme, the Department of Housing will retain up to 30 per cent ownership of the property, which will significantly reduce the costs associated with buying a home.

The display home, located at 233 Kalli Street, Golden Bay, showcases the quality that home buyers can expect, such as



WORKERS, SOLDIERS, SUBURBS: 100 YEARS OF GOVERNMENT HOUSING EXHIBITION

Did you know in 1913 inventor Thomas Edison tried to convince the State Government to invest in his failed concrete mould house invention? Or that the Department of Housing built more than 40 per cent of Western Australia's housing in the 10 years following World War II?

Recently an exhibition was held in Central Park, Perth, that explored the 100 year history of government housing in Western Australia.

The *Workers, Soldiers, Suburbs* exhibition, presented by the Department, commemorated 100 years since the first government housing scheme was introduced to Western Australia in 1912.

In 1912, Western Australia became the fourth Australian state to develop a government-assisted housing agency, called the Workers' Homes Board.

As its name suggested, the Board provided homes to workers on low to moderate incomes.

Under the Workers' Homes Act, workers could purchase a home under either the leasehold provision or the freehold provision.

The leasehold provision enabled workers to rent the land on which their home was built from the government. The freehold provision enabled workers to build a home on land they already owned.

In its first full year of operation the Board released land in Fremantle, Midland Junction, Geraldton, Victoria Park, Subiaco, Narrogin, Merredin, Meckering and Beverley to meet the needs of 102 leasehold applications. Proving to be much more popular with workers, the freehold provision attracted 998 applicants in that same year.

Drawing on key moments in history that have helped shape Western Australia's housing landscape, the exhibition featured stories on inter-war migration, post-war reconstruction, Aboriginal housing and regional housing.

Visitors also learnt about the development of Perth suburbs and the changes to housing design over the years, from the days when every house had a 'verandah out the front' to the introduction of high density living.

generously-sized bedrooms, ample bathrooms, a two-vehicle car port with remote-controlled door, an alfresco area perfect for entertaining, gourmet kitchen (including stainless steel appliances), and open-plan dining and living areas.

People purchasing a home in Golden Bay may be entitled to the Federal Government's \$12,823 Housing Affordability Fund (HAF grant, available to eligible home buyers earning less than \$130,000 p.a.).

For more details about purchasing a home in Golden Bay, contact **Now Living Realty** on 08 9214 1144 or go to www.nowliving.com.au.

For more on SharedStart, go to www.openingdoorswa.com.au or call Keystart on 1300 578 278.



FIRE PREVENTION

It may not feel like it yet but summer is fast approaching—and with summer comes the threat of fire. Most fires are preventable and there are some easy ways to help keep your family and home safe in the coming months.

Start now by looking for potential hazards and ways to remove them:

- Cut grass to a height of not more than 10cm and clear fallen branches, leaves and dead undergrowth within 20 metres of the home.
- Prune lower branches less than 1 metre above the ground to help prevent ground fires from spreading into trees.
- Remove any mulch and woodpiles to at least 1 metre from any dwelling wall.
- Bin any flammable matter including boxes, cartons, paper and rubbish.

Local rangers carry out inspections between October and May and they can issue fines to householders for not complying with the council's fire regulations. To reduce the risk of fire around your home ensure it is clean and well maintained. More importantly, your actions may save lives.



BE WATER WISE

Water is one of our most precious resources, yet every year millions of litres go down the drain. The good news is that most of us are now aware of the problem and willing to make the effort to save water. Reducing our water consumption is good for the environment AND our wallets.

Practical tips

There are plenty of practical ways that you and your family can reduce water use:

1. Limit your showers to four minutes or less
2. Keep containers handy near your sink and shower and use the water you would usually waste on indoor plants or in the garden
3. Don't leave the tap running when brushing your teeth
4. Put the plug in the sink while you wash vegetables or rinse plates
5. Use a bucket to wash and rinse the car (or leave it dusty!)
6. Sweep the paths and paving rather than hosing them down
7. Check for hidden leaks (see below).

Remember that the watering roster for your garden is now a PERMANENT measure. You can only use sprinklers and reticulation on days that are determined by where you live, the time of year and your street number.

Detecting drips

It is common to have a water leak and not be aware of it. One of the first indicators is a significant increase in water consumption. Some leaks are well hidden but there are ways that you can investigate a possible leak before calling the Department.

Check for obvious drips and leaks to;

- kitchen, bathroom and laundry taps
- toilet cistern
- washing machines
- garden taps, hoses, sprinklers and their connectors
- any exposed reticulation
- hot water systems.

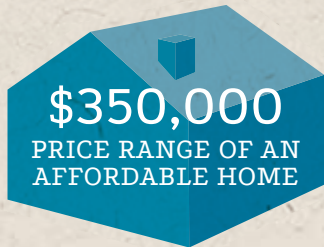
Also look for damp patches on walls, damp and unstable brick paving or concrete and garden areas that may be moist and greener than expected.

If you find a leak report it as soon as possible to Housing Direct on 1300 137 677.

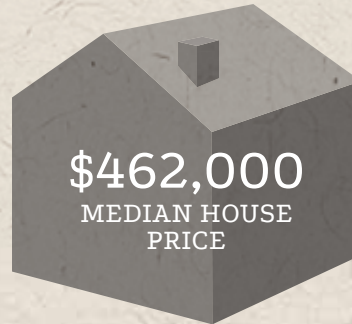
To get more information on water saving tips and the Watering Roster, phone the Waterwise Helpline on 13 10 39 or visit www.watercorporation.com.au.

CAN YOU AFFORD TO OWN A HOME?

WHAT A PERTH HOUSEHOLD CAN AFFORD



HOUSEHOLDS WITH AN INCOME OF \$82,100 FACE A STRUGGLE TO BUY A HOUSE ABOVE \$350,000.



MANY FAMILIES WILL STRUGGLE TO AFFORD A HOUSE AT THE MEDIAN PRICE OF \$462,000.

*FIGURES ARE ROUNDED

ALL FIGURES BASED ON: AVERAGE PERTH METROPOLITAN HOUSE PRICES AS OF 6TH MARCH 2012; 30% GROSS INCOME; 10% DEPOSIT; 7.55% INTEREST RATE

SHARED HOME OWNERSHIP

THE FIGURES

MEDIAN HOUSE PRICE
\$462k

SHARED OWNERSHIP AS LOW AS
\$200k

SHARED OWNERSHIP AVERAGE COST
\$270k

THE MEDIAN HOUSE PRICE IN PERTH IS ABOUT \$462,000

A HOME BOUGHT THROUGH A SHARED HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME CAN BE AS LOW AS \$200,000

DON'T HAVE TO PAY FULL MARKET VALUE FOR A HOME THROUGH SHARED HOME OWNERSHIP

THE AVERAGE COST TO BUY A HOME THROUGH A SHARED HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME IS ABOUT \$270,000 - WELL WITHIN THE RANGE OF THOSE EARNING LESS THAN THE MEDIAN INCOME.

THE BENEFITS

ONLY
\$2,000
DEPOSIT REQUIRED

REDUCED MONTHLY HOME LOAN PAYMENTS

REDUCED UP-FRONT COSTS

OPPORTUNITY TO BUY OUT THE GOVERNMENT'S SHARE

THE FACTS

INNER CITY & SUBURBAN HOMES AVAILABLE

1-4 BEDROOM HOMES AVAILABLE

NOT LIMITED TO FIRST HOMEBUYERS

GOVERNMENT PAYS UP TO
30%
OF HOUSE PRICE

ELIGIBLE INCOME RANGE
\$50k-\$90k

Open your mind to the possibility of home ownership - with Opening Doors.

Visit openingdoorswa.com.au



Government of Western Australia
Department of Housing

OPENING DOORS
To Affordable Housing



Interest-free loans for household items

WA No Interest Loans Network Inc (WANILS) is funded by the State and Federal Governments to deliver interest-free and fee-free loans to people experiencing financial hardship. The alternative for many clients is to fall into the trap of using pay-day lenders, loan sharks and credit cards to purchase essential household items.

WANILS has been in operation since 2001 and issues about 1000 loans worth approximately \$1.4 million every year.

How does it work?

- Loan amounts are from \$200 to a maximum of \$1500 and may be used to purchase up to two essential household items such as fridges, washing machines, beds and mattresses, lounge suites, computers, microwaves, lawn mowers and more;
- WANILS does not issue cash loans or loans for electricity, gas or water bills, bonds, rent or rent arrears, debt repayments or credit card bills, lay-by payments, second hand goods or living expenses such as food and clothing;
- Eligible applicants must have a healthcare card or pension and have been in stable accommodation for at least three months;
- WANILS has a network of over 110 community service organisations as members who conduct interviews with applicants and assist them to complete loan applications;
- Loan repayments are usually arranged through Centrelink deductions and the loan term is 16 months on average;
- When the person pays off their loan they can apply for another one;
- The loan process usually takes 2 to 4 weeks.

How can I apply?

Contact WANILS directly on 9354 7611 or 1300 365 301 (higher charges apply from mobiles) to be put in touch with a local member agency who will assist you with the application.

Further information is available online at www.wanils.asn.au or email: wanils@wanils.asn.au.

Maintaining Your Home



With more than 42 000 properties throughout Western Australia, the Department of Housing has a big job on its hands providing maintenance to every tenancy.

High maintenance costs reduce the amount of money available for the Department to build and buy more social housing to help people access accommodation. The Department asks you to do your best to care for your home so that maintenance costs are kept to a minimum.

Most tenants do the right thing by taking care of what they can in and around their own homes. Looking after general house cleaning and the garden are the tenant's responsibility. However, there are always going to be

occasions when a contractor is required to make a repair or a replacement and, in that case, call Housing Direct on 1300 137 677. It is best to deal with small problems before they become big ones.

When faults occur due to normal wear and tear, the Department provides maintenance and repairs at no charge. Faults caused by neglect, misuse or willful damage are charged to the tenant.

If the problem **poses a danger**, repairs will be commenced within three (3) hours for metropolitan areas and within four (4) hours for non-metropolitan areas.

If the problem is **serious**, such as no hot water, it will be attended to within 48 hours.

Other **everyday problems**, with some exceptions, will be attended to within 14 calendar days.

The Department does its best to respond to your maintenance issues in a timely manner but your cooperation in helping to maintain your own home is important too – and appreciated.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Waste management programs run by local councils are more sophisticated than ever. Their focus is on sustainability and their strategies aim to reduce the amount of household waste deposited in landfill sites.

Combining leading technology with a simple, community-friendly collection system has already reduced the amount of household material sent to landfill by over 70%.

Councils provide these collection services so you can easily dispose of your waste in the most responsible way. Better yet, they are free. So next time you're throwing your rubbish in the bin, ask yourself these questions:

Can this be REDUCED?

To reduce the amount of waste you produce, consider buying products with the least amount of packaging. Look at what alternatives are available when you are shopping.

Can this be REUSED or RECYCLED?

Local councils provide various options:

- Green-topped waste composting bin - food, organic and general household waste.
- Yellow-topped recycling bin - glass, plastic, cans, tin foil and all paper products.
- Brown-topped vegetation bin - grass clippings and small prunings.
- Green waste verge collections - tree and shrub prunings.
- Junk verge collections – white goods, scrap, timber, furniture and general junk.
- Skip bins - scrap, timber, furniture and general junk.
- Drop 'n' shops and recycling yards - clothes and furniture which only need minor repairs to make them usable.
- Hazardous household waste (HHW) collection depots – safe disposal of batteries, paint, asbestos and chemicals.



There is a surprising number of ways your local council can help you deal with your rubbish. For further information on these services, phone their waste management section or visit their website.

There is also excellent information to be found the State Government's Waste Authority website: www.zerowaste.wa.gov.au.

RCD/MCD and Smoke Alarm Testing

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

These are combined Residual Current Devices/Miniature Circuit Breakers (RCD/MCBs), which provide protection against electrocution and overloading circuits, and smoke alarms.

RCD/MCB TESTING

- 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.

SMOKE ALARM TESTING

- To test your smoke alarm turn your power and light circuits off, press the **TEST** button; 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 and light circuits back on.



DO TEST



**DO NOT
remove or
cover up**

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