



BEYOND THE LETTERBOX

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Former tenant gets the keys to her own home



Evelyn with one of her four children in front their Kununurra home

A former Department of Housing tenant who never dreamed of owning her own home is a proud new home owner today thanks to the Department of Housing's East Kimberley Transitional Housing Program.

After joining the program in November 2012, Evelyn was the first participant to receive her keys earlier this year.

"I'm a single mother with four children and the biggest battle I've had to face is to really believe that I could do this," Evelyn said.

"I am so thankful for the program and the support it provided that has helped me to get to this stage in life."

The Transitional Housing Program was launched in September 2012 with 40 homes in Kununurra. It provides affordable housing and support services for Aboriginal people to help them gain independence, create personal wealth and hopefully attain home ownership.

Participants must be engaged in employment or training, ensure children attend school regularly and participate in the associated support program.

Evelyn was a public housing tenant for 16 years before becoming over-income. After being employed by the Ord Valley Aboriginal Health Service for the last 13 years, she was able to transition into the program and become a home owner in less than two years.

Program Manager Ruth Charles said Evelyn was a model participant, both motivated and focused.

"Evelyn has always paid her rent on time, looked after the house extremely well, been very proactive in terms of maintenance and made sure her children attended school," Ruth said

"The Department is very proud of what she has accomplished for herself and her children."

Evelyn grew up on a station where her family worked and there was never any talk of home ownership.

"Becoming a home owner was a really big step and quite a journey but I am so happy to finally have a place to call my own," Evelyn said.

"With the help and support of the program and by educating yourself, it can all come true."

Comments or feedback?

customerfeedback@housing.wa.gov.au or Locked Bag 22, East Perth WA 6892.



Department and tenants celebrate community housing success



Tea for two: Minister for Housing Bill Marmion shares a cuppa with new community housing tenant, Pieta

The Minister for Housing, Bill Marmion, visited a new community housing complex in Coolbellup recently for morning tea with tenants, many of whom had struggled to find or afford private accommodation.

Community housing organisations (CHOs) are non-profit agencies that provide affordable rental housing for people on low-to-moderate incomes across Western Australia.

The Department of Housing is working in partnership with CHOs to achieve its vision of opening more doors for Western Australians.

The Department assists CHOs with funding and policies that support their growth. This helps the CHOs to develop a wider range of affordable housing.

The Department and the State Government recently celebrated construction of the 150th home under the Community Housing Growth strategy, in Waverly Road Coolbellup.

The strategy has seen CHOs like Access Housing increase the supply of affordable rental properties in the state. The new \$7.2million 38-unit social housing project in Coolbellup was built under Access Housing's agreement with the Department.

For great-grandmother and new tenant Pieta, community housing has been a lifeline. Despite a 30-year career in broadcasting, she had little superannuation and was renting in a share house in East Fremantle.

"It was very hard. I knew I had to keep working, otherwise I couldn't pay the rent," Pieta said. "Also, I didn't feel I had a secure place for myself or the grandchildren and great-grandchildren I look after regularly."

When Pieta applied for public housing she told the Department she was also keen to go into community housing, where rents are capped at a maximum of 30 per cent of tenants' incomes.

Three months ago she got the call from Access Housing, offering her a new apartment in Coolbellup.

A new lease on life: the units are being rented to a broad mix of eligible households including younger singles, small-to-medium families and seniors.

"I was amazed at the quality of the homes and when I saw inside I was even more impressed. It is really beautifully finished," Pieta said.

"It has changed my life. It's safe and secure and just across the road is a beautiful big park—and now I'm paying less rent than in the share house."

More than 8,000 properties are managed by CHOs, representing almost 20 per cent of all social housing in WA.

Heat Stress and Heat Stroke

Extreme heat events are expected to become increasingly common in WA due to climate change. Any increase in frequency and intensity will also produce an increase in heat related illnesses. The State government has an Emergency Management Plan to cope with the large scale effects of heatwaves but we can also play our part.

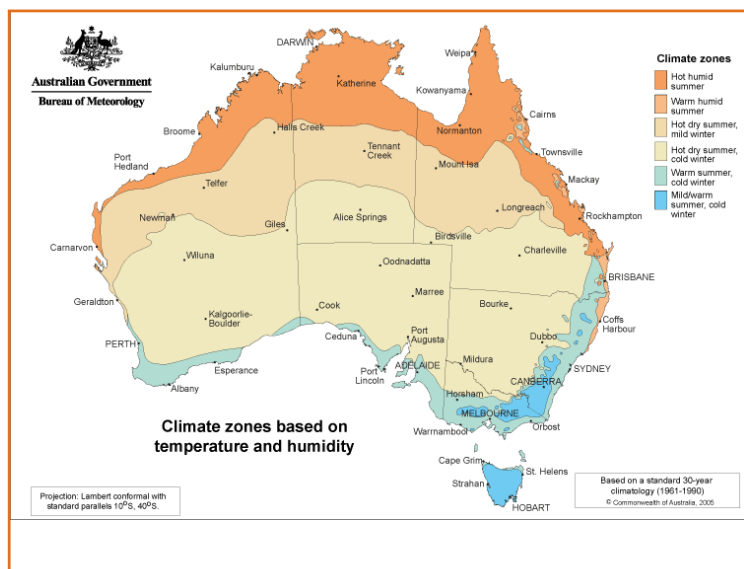
To reduce the risk to ourselves, our families and friends, we can become better informed about the effects of heat and the appropriate action to take.

Heat Stress

Heat stress is a serious condition that can develop into heat stroke. It occurs when excessive sweating in the heat reduces blood volume. Warning signs may include:

- paleness
- sweating
- rapid heart rate
- muscle cramps, usually in the abdomen, arms or legs
- headache
- nausea and vomiting
- dizziness or fainting.

Changes to Room Heater Hire Fees



Most tenants were already paying \$1.30 per week with their rent. Some tenants experienced a change in their rent because they were paying slightly less or slightly more. Those tenants who were paying more than \$1.30 per week had their rent adjusted downwards. Those who were paying less than \$1.30 per week had their rent adjusted by the difference between what they had been paying and \$1.30. These tenants were contacted by a Department officer to explain the situation.

Am I entitled to a heater?

The Department will install a room heater in designated seniors and disability accommodation within cold winter climate zones as determined by the Bureau of Meteorology.

Room heaters are not installed in other accommodation types unless the tenant applies for one and it is approved. Priority will be given to applicants with a proven need such as a medical condition.

What type of heater is supplied?

A gas room heater is supplied wherever possible. In country areas where there is no reticulated town gas, the use of solid fuel heaters (such as slow combustion stoves) is dependent upon tenant request and management discretion.

Do I have to sign a contract?

Every tenant who has a Department installed heater is required to sign a Room Heater Hire Agreement.

If you have any further questions please call your Housing Services Officer at your local Department office.

The Department of Housing has hired out room heaters to tenants for many years. The Room Heater Hire Fee helps to cover the cost of maintaining and replacing the heaters so tenants can continue to enjoy the benefits.

What has changed?

The fee has recently changed to a flat rate of \$1.30 per week. While the fee has always been kept to a minimum, it could vary depending on the type of heater and the year a tenant occupied the property.

Why has it changed?

The Department is standardising the fee to ensure transparency and fairness. This ensures our tenants are paying the same fee for the same service.

Does this affect me?

Other than tenants in designated seniors' accommodation, everyone with a Department installed heater is required to pay the fee.

What can I do to help someone with heat stress?

Treatment options vary according to the type of heat-related illness. Apply first aid and seek medical advice if the condition does not improve. Phone Healthdirect Australia (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) on 1800 022 222, contact your own doctor or attend the emergency department of your local hospital.

Heat Stroke

Heat stroke occurs when the core body temperature rises above 40.5°C and internal systems start to shut down. This may result in hallucinations, coma and seizures.

As well as effects on the nervous system, there can be liver, kidney, muscle and heart damage. Symptoms may be similar to heat exhaustion but can be worse. The skin may feel dry and hot. There will be no signs of sweating. A person may stagger, appear confused, have a fit, or collapse and remain unconscious.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency and requires urgent attention.

The Department of Health's website contains advice on how to care for babies, children, the elderly and even pets in the event of a heatwave. Visit http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/3/1299/2/heat_events.pm to read the articles online or phone freecall on 1800 020 103 to request them by post.

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.