



WNEWS



Chief Executive Officer's message

This summer/Christmas edition of *WNews* is brought to you with our best wishes - best wishes to you and your loved ones, to your neighbours and to your wider communities.

I would firstly like to pay our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of some of our tenants who have recently passed away. Their passing is a reminder to us all of the fragility of life and the importance of our family, neighbours and community in shaping our lives. I would particularly like to pay my respect to our long term tenant Gordon Blackwell who has recently lost his devoted and much loved wife, Ivy. It was a sad day indeed when Ivy left this life.

I am however heartened to hear about the support that many of our tenants receive from the people around them. Our neighbours are often our life line, and for some, the people we can count on when we have no-one else. As I'm writing this newsletter, I am advised of another tenant who has just died, sadly alone. It was his neighbour who alerted us, who noticed he wasn't around, who had the compassion to ask us to check in with him. This is what being a good neighbour is about – and the impact can be incredibly powerful. I express to you our gratitude for being good people and for caring about those around you.

Unfortunately we have some tenancies and communities in crisis, affected by specific local nuisance and annoyance, crime, antisocial behaviour and violence. For some tenants, the impact is so bad that it is impossible to live peacefully and safely. This newsletter contains information to help you retain "quiet enjoyment".

A key community program that is being offered nationally is called the No Interest Loans Scheme, or NILS, helping people purchase essential items. There are a number of local services that offer this program, with a brief overview and some contacted details provided in this newsletter.

This newsletter also continues to feature our staff, so that you know who you are working with when you contact any our offices. This month we feature our Penrith Customer and Client Service Teams.

Also we received fantastic feedback from you in response to our tenant survey. Some brief findings are included in this newsletter. Please let us know if you would like a copy of the detailed report.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *WNews*, and of course have a safe and happy festive season!

Office Closures over the Christmas/ New Year period

All three Wentworth offices will be closed on: Wednesday 21 December 2011 – staff training all day

All 3 offices will closed for the Christmas holiday period - from 4.30pm Friday 23 December 2011
The Penrith office only will reopen 1.00pm Wednesday 28 December 2011, dealing with urgent matters only – call 4777 8000 during business hours.

All 3 offices will be closed for the New Year period - From 4.30pm, Friday 30 December, and all 3 offices reopening Tuesday 3 January 2012.

We apologise for any inconvenience these closures may cause. **For emergency maintenance when our offices are closed, please call 1300 761 315.**





No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS)

Many low income households face a major problem if they need to buy an essential household item, but don't have savings and can't access affordable credit.

What is NILS? – Established by the Good Sheppard Foundation in Victoria, a typical NILS loan is around \$800 - \$1200 for whitegoods, furniture, medical appliances or any other essential household item. As loans are repaid over 12-18 months, the money is 'recycled' and lent out again to other people in the community.

Who provides NILS? – Community groups, such as Neighbourhood Centres or Charities, run NILS to assist with this problem. Providers operating within Penrith, Blacktown, Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains Local Government Areas include:

Anglicare NILS® Mt Druitt, 91A Kurrajong Ave MT DRUITT NSW 2770, operating for Penrith, Hawkesbury and Blacktown. Call 02 8805 0900 Mon-Fri 10am-4:30pm	Cancer Council NSW 153 Dowling Street Woolloomooloo NSW 2011 For cancer patients & carers in Greater Western Sydney Phone 02 9334 1461 Helpline 13 11 20
Bobby Goldsmith Foundation Inc. Level 4, 414 Elizabeth Street Surry Hills NSW 2011 For people with HIV/AIDS, NSW State wide Phone 02 9283 8666	Barnardos Penrith (Cranebrook) Hosking St CRANEBROOK NSW 2749 Operating for postcodes 2747; and 2749-2750 phone 02 4729 1211
Lower Mountains Neighbourhood Centre 33 Hope Street BLAXLAND NSW 2774 Operating for postcodes 2773-2774 Phone 02 4739 1164	Mid Mountains Neighbourhood Centre New St LAWSON NSW 2783 Operating for postcodes: 2782-2784; 2778 2779 Phone 02 4759 2592
Winmalee Neighbourhood Centre 62 White Cross Rd WINMALEE NSW 2777 For postcodes 2776-2777 Phone 02 4754 4050	NILS® @ Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre Gardner Cres BLACKHEATH NSW 2785 Operating for postcodes 2785-2786; 2780; 2758 Phone 02 4787 7770
Muru Mittigar NILS® Aboriginal Cultural & Education Centre 89-757 Old Castlereagh Road, Castlereagh NSW Operating for Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains, Penrith, Parramatta, Wollondilly, Campbelltown & Blacktown. Phone 02 4729 2377	Salvation Army NILS® Auburn Auburn Community Welfare Centre 5-7 Mary Street, PO Box 342 Auburn NSW 2144 Operating for LGAs of Blue Mountains, Penrith Auburn, Blacktown, Campbelltown, Fairfield City, Liverpool & Parramatta. Phone 02 9749 7150
St Vincent de Paul NILS® Emerton Caroline Chisholm Foundation, PO Box E77, 254 Luxford Road, Emerton NSW 2770 For postcodes 2770; 2760 Phone 02 9835 1583 Wed & Thurs 9am-2:30pm	St Marys Area NILS® St Marys Community Centre, PO Box 889, St Marys 29 Swanston St, St Marys NSW 2760 Operating for postcodes 2747; 2760 (Clairmont Meadows, St Marys, Oxley Pk & Colyton ONLY).Phone 02 9673 2169

Where can I get more information on NILS? – visit <http://www.nilsnsw.org.au> or phone the NSW NILS State Coordinator on phone 02 4754 4050.

Where can I get budget management advice? – If you are not eligible for a NILS® loan or have other credit and debt issues, contact the **Credit and Debt Hotline** on **1800 808 488** for help and assistance. There may be other options available, such as talking to a free and confidential financial counsellor to get your finances sorted. Other advice avenues include:

Centrelink www.centrelink.gov.au	Family Assistance Office www.familyassist.gov.au
Financial Counsellors Association of NSW (FCAN) http://www.fcan.com.au	Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services http://www.goodshepvic.org.au
Indigenous Money Mentor Network, Western Sydney Muru Mittigar Aboriginal Cultural and Education Centre 02 4729 2377	St Vincent De Paul and Salvation Army and other church based and/or charitable organisations providing emergency and other material aid. (various)
Moneysmart www.moneysmart.gov.au/	NSW Fair Trading http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au



Working with us

In the July newsletter, we gave you a brief overview of responsibilities in terms of **Paying your rent** (rent should be paid in advance), **Rent arrears** (paying off rent (and non-rent) arrears so that your account is always up to date, including entering into a repayment plan, and keeping to it) and **Rent Reviews** (providing us with accurate income details within the set timeframe and letting us know if your circumstances change).

In the last newsletter (October 2011), we stressed to you the importance of working with us so you have a successful tenancy. We had to tell you that if you didn't pay your rent, or didn't work to with us in regard to your arrears, we would have to take action in the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT). We told you that this action may see you evicted from your home.

Unfortunately, and very recently, we have had to terminate a small number of tenancies through the CTTT. This was absolutely not our preference but in the end, because these tenants would not work with us after repeated attempts, we saw no other option. We don't want to contribute to homelessness, especially when we know it can be prevented by just working together. If you are in arrears, please work with us - we don't want to evict you.

Repairs and Maintenance

Reporting maintenance – Our dedicated and experienced maintenance line staff are available to take your calls on 4777 8000. After Hours emergency maintenance can be reported to 1300 761 315. We will then either contact our tradespeople or the agent/owner (for a leasehold property) to get the work completed. We will give your contact details to the tradesperson or the agent/owner so they can make an appointment with you to do the work. Our tradespeople are bound by the same code of conduct and ethics as our staff. You should expect a professional and respectful service.

We have prepared a document called "The Maintenance Line Guide", which we aim to issue to all tenants in early in 2012, to assist you to identify and report issues. It will cover issues like timeframes for Emergency repairs (attended to within 24 hours), urgent repairs (in 5 working days) and normal repairs (within 28 days, unless part of planned works.) Repairs in leasehold properties may take longer. Maintenance staff will tell you how long you should expect to wait. Please let us know if you would like a basic copy of this document, before its official launch.

Winners of the Tenant Survey Gift Vouchers

The following four (4) tenants were randomly drawn out of the hat (well, a box) at the Wentworth Board meeting on Friday 19 November 2011. Congratulations to these lucky tenants and happy shopping!

1. Julieta Miguel of St Marys
2. Maureen Peterson of Riverstone
3. Susan & Robert Lucock of St Marys
4. Dianna Burman of Penrith

Annual General Meeting 2011

Our AGM this year was a huge success. The event was themed "Walking beside Aboriginal people and communities". We commenced with a smoking ceremony, dancing and drumming (with audience participation of course). We then moved briefly into the formal part of the proceedings. At the end of the event, and for days after, we received comments like "best AGM I have ever been to", "most entertaining and heart warming", "I've never been to anything like it" and "Congratulations Wentworth!" Thankyou to everyone involved and who participated.



Would you like a copy of our tenant focussed annual report 2011? Call us on 4777 8000 or visit our website.

Who are your Penrith Client & Customer Service Staff?

Penrith Customer Service Team

Team Leader: Lauren Harris – Lauren has a background in customer service and marketing, and has been the Team Leader since the establishment of the team.

Allocations Officer: Gulay Cevher – Gulay is responsible for allocating our vacant properties using Housing Pathways, the common social housing register/waiting list.

Customer Service Officers: Debra Clark and Karen Brown – They are responsible for assisting people to access social housing products and services. They both have long standing experience in customer support and getting the best possible outcome for people.

Customer Service Support Staff: Fennis Merkouris and Amanda Merriman – They are your first point of contact when you access our Penrith office. They also assist with accessing temporary accommodation for people who have nowhere safe to stay.

Penrith Client Service Team

- Covering Penrith and Blacktown LGAs (excluding Riverstone), plus lower Blue Mountains.
- Managing some 600 properties and tenancies.

Team Leader: Tim Cooling – Tim is a long standing Wentworth member, with a strong background in social housing. Tim has been the Team Leader for 12 months

Specialist Client Service Officer: Leonnie Carroll – Leonnie was one of the original Client Service Officers in the Penrith team. The role of the Specialist is to work with tenants to help them get in the services they need to stay in their homes.

Client Service Officers: Alex Thomas, Wes Peters, Heather Mitchell and Jane Manners – CSOs are your key tenancy staff in Wentworth. They are the ones to contact when you need to discuss anything about your tenancy.

Tenant Survey outcomes

We had a fantastic response to the 2011 survey, with 595 tenants (or 31.4% of all our tenants) having a say in how Wentworth is run and providing us with guidance on areas for improvement. So firstly thank you for your time and honesty. So what did you tell us?

You told us overwhelmingly that your overall experience with Wentworth is good to excellent. You also told us that we had improved in our delivery of repairs and maintenance, tenant participation and property transfer process. You also said a very clear “yes!” to the establishment of a Tenant Representative Panel. This is good news.

Unfortunately, you again highlighted repairs and maintenance as an area we still needed to do more improvement. In the last couple of months we have restructured this part of our business, increased the number of contractors we have to do the work and strengthened our quality contractor performance checking process. We are confident you will experience some big improvements, if you haven't already!

This year you again highlighted the need for clearer written communication, including a better explanation about how rent is calculated, including Commonwealth Rent Assistance. You said you would also like easier to read rent statements. Some of this is limited by legislation and our current computer system but we also know we can do better.

You also highlighted problems with our new phone system, and the difficulties you are experiencing making contact with our staff. We value good customer service and we again see this as a priority to sort out. This is balanced with our commitment to get out of the office and into your communities, to see first hand the great work that you are doing and address issues you raise.

In completing the survey, a number of tenants wrote detailed comments about their specific tenancy issues, however we cannot identify you. To discuss any matter raised please contact your client service officer.

SEASONS GREETINGS & BEST WISHES FOR A SAFE & PROSPEROUS 2012!

The next edition of *WNEWS* will be sent out in February 2012. If you would like *WNEWS* emailed to you and/or you would like an article on a specific topic for a future newsletter, please contact us on 4777 8000 or email admin@wentworth.org.au



HEAD OFFICE

Penrith

Address: Borec House, Suite 1002, Level 1
29 - 57 Station Street, Penrith 2750
PO Box 4303, Penrith 2750
Phone: 4777 8000
Fax: 4777 8099
Email: admin@wentworth.org.au

Opening hours

8:30am–4:30pm Monday to Friday
1:00pm–4:30pm Wednesday

OUT OF HOURS EMERGENCY REPAIRS LINE

1300 761 315

BRANCHE OFFICES

Hawkesbury

Address: 409A George Street, South Windsor
Phone: 4777 8000
Opening Hours: 8:30am–4:30pm Monday, Tuesday,
Thursday, Friday (closed Wednesday)

Blue Mountains

Address: Shop 2, 23-27 Cascade Street, Katoomba
Phone: 4777 8000
Opening Hours: 9am–4:30pm Monday, Tuesday,
Thursday, Friday (closed Wednesday)