



## Issue 4: April 2009

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Community Housing information bulletin for 2009, which includes details about **information sessions being held from next week (21 to 29 April)** for the Nation Building – Economic Stimulus Plan.

### Departmental changes

On 26 March 2009, Premier Anna Bligh announced a new State Cabinet. The Honourable Karen Struthers MP has been appointed as Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women.

Complementing the new Ministry is a significant reform to the Queensland Public Service, with the Premier approving a reduction of the number of Queensland Government departments from 23 to 13, organised around six key areas of government priorities and responsibilities: Policy and Fiscal Coordination; Employment and Economic Development; Environment and Sustainable Resource Management; Social Development; Law, Justice and Safety, and Government Services.

The functions of a number of former departments will come together to form a new Department of Communities. The former departments that have been combined are:

- Department of Communities
- Department of Child Safety
- Disability Services Queensland
- Department of Housing
- Sport and Recreation and the Queensland Academy of Sport, and
- Indigenous Government Coordination Office.

There is a high level of enthusiasm about the opportunities this new department will bring. These changes represent a significant reform which will encourage joined-up government, with an emphasis on maintaining and improving client service delivery.

The former Department of Housing is now referred to as the Department of Communities (Housing and Homelessness Services).

## Nation Building – Economic Stimulus Plan Social Housing Initiative – stage two

The Social Housing Initiative aims to expand the supply of much-needed social housing in Queensland and maximise the involvement of the not-for-profit housing sector.

Queensland will receive nearly \$1.3 billion from \$6.4 billion committed nationally for the Social Housing Initiative. This funding will be spent on repairs and maintenance to existing social housing, and construction of approximately 4,000 new properties between 2009 and 2012.

The Queensland Government will direct investment under this initiative to the not-for-profit sector through capital grants and head-leasing arrangements to support:

- the growth of a small number of providers to become significant developers of affordable housing, with plans to develop 500 to 1000 dwellings or more, and
- the growth of specialist tenancy management organisations capable of managing large portfolios of 500 or more tenancies.

### Applications

Under stage two of the Social Housing Initiative, applications will be sought from not-for-profit community housing organisations that:

- wish to apply for capital grant funding for the development of social housing, can contribute land or other resources to the project and can demonstrate capacity to manage an increased supply of social housing, and/or
- are interested in expanding their portfolio of leased social housing properties under management.

The closing date for development submissions is **2.00pm on Monday 1 June 2009**, however early submissions are encouraged.

The closing date for tenancy management expressions of interest by not-for-profit organisations is **2.00pm on Monday 6 July 2009**.

The Queensland Government will manage the application process; however the Australian Government will be responsible for the final decision on all applications. The stage two Social Housing Initiative requirements will be made available on the [Queensland Department of Communities \(Housing and Homelessness Services\) website](#) where applicants can find:

- information on the Queensland Government's proposed investment in the not-for-profit Social Housing sector under stage two
- application forms for stage two capital grants and tenancy management expressions of interest, and
- a schedule of information sessions for not-for-profit organisations.

These documents will be made available on the website very shortly.

**More information:** For more information on this initiative in Queensland, please refer to the [Australian Government website](#).

## Public information sessions – 21 to 29 April 2009

Public information sessions will be held in Brisbane, Cairns, Mackay, the Sunshine Coast and Townsville to explain how not-for-profit providers can become involved in Nation Building projects. The two-hour sessions will provide information about the requirements and guidelines for construction projects and the tenancy management application process for registered community housing providers.

Date	Location	Venue	Time
21 April	Brisbane	Rydges Hotel 9 Glenelg Street Southbank, South Brisbane	10am -12pm
24 April	Cairns	Shangri-La Hotel The Marina Pierpoint Road Cairns	10am -12pm
27 April	Mackay	Windmill Hotel and Reception 5 Highway Plaza North Mackay	11:30am -1:30pm
28 April	Sunshine Coast	Rydges Oasis Resort Landsborough Parade Golden Beach, Caloundra	6pm - 8pm
29 April	Townsville	Jupiters Townsville Hotel and Casino Sir Leslie Thiess Drive Townsville	10am -12pm

**RSVP:** To register your interest in attending a session, please email the Housing and Homelessness Services Call Centre at [csnet@housing.qld.gov.au](mailto:csnet@housing.qld.gov.au), or telephone 1300 880 882.

## Affordable and social housing capacity building workshop

A capacity building workshop will be held to assist aspirational affordable housing providers from the not-for-profit and private sectors, and other interested parties, to participate in the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) and other affordable and social housing initiatives. Supporting the growth of the not for profit housing sector in delivering social and affordable housing is particularly important in light of potential funding opportunities.

The workshop is supported by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs through the National Rental Affordability Scheme's Enabling and Capacity Building Strategy. The Community Housing Federation of Australia has been funded to develop and deliver the workshop to ensure that organisations have considered, and are equipped to develop partnerships, apply for funding, and deliver increased numbers of affordable dwellings.

The workshop will provide staff with decision-making skills and governance tools that will help increase the sector's business development and systems capacity, and cover:

- decision-making and project management tools
- governance and prudential arrangements
- business acumen
- financial planning
- risk assessment
- brokerage and legal assistance, and
- increasing development capacity.

The workshop will be delivered in Brisbane from 9:30am to 4:30pm on 29 April 2009, at a cost of \$30 per person. RSVP for this session by 24 April 2009.

**More information:** For further information, please contact the Community Housing Federation of Australia on (02) 6232 5043.

## Rent assessment of the Australian Government's one-off Stimulus Package Bonus Payments

As part of the Australian Government's \$42 billion Nation Building – Economic Stimulus Plan, announced on 13 February 2009, bonus payments will be paid to low and middle income households. Households may be eligible for more than one bonus payment. These payments will be made by Centrelink and the Australian Taxation Office.

Providers which are required to follow the [Community Housing Rent Policy](#) should ensure the Government's one-off Stimulus package bonus payments are not included in rent or income eligibility assessments.

**Centrelink<sup>1</sup> payments include:**

Payment	Who will get it?	How much?
Single Income Family Bonus	Recipients of Family Tax Benefit Part B	\$900 per family
Back to School Bonus	Recipients of Family Tax Benefit Part A with a child aged 4-18 years old (inclusive)	\$950 per eligible child
	Recipients of Carer Payment or Disability Support Pension, who on 3 February 2009 were aged less than 19 years old	\$950
Farmer's Hardship Payment	Recipients of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payment - farmers and small businesses</li> <li>• Transitional Income Support</li> <li>• Interim Income Support - farmers and small business, or</li> <li>• Farm Help Income Support</li> </ul>	\$950
One-off Training and Learning Bonus	Recipients of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Allowance (Students and Australian Apprentices)</li> <li>• Austudy</li> <li>• ABSTUDY Living Allowance (if aged 16 and over, or independent)</li> <li>• Sickness Allowance</li> <li>• Special Benefit (who were under the aged-pension age on 14 October 2008)</li> </ul>	\$950
One-off Training and Learning Bonus - Family Tax Benefit	Recipients of Family Tax Benefit Part A with a child aged 21-24 years (inclusive) who is a full-time student	\$950
Education Entry Payment (EdEP) Temporary Supplement	People who would normally qualify for Education Entry Payment, plus Youth Allowance recipients looking for work.  (The requirement for people to be receiving a payment for 12 months before being eligible for the Education Entry Payment has been reduced to 4 weeks.)	\$950 - in addition to the existing EdEP of \$208

The Australian Taxation Office will also make payments to low and middle income households of up to \$900 for eligible households who have lodged a tax return in 2007-08. These payments should not be included for rent assessment or income eligibility purposes. The payments include:

- a \$900 bonus for people with a taxable income up to and including \$80,000
- a \$600 bonus for people with a taxable income exceeding \$80,000 but not exceeding \$90,000
- a \$250 bonus for people with a taxable income exceeding \$90,000 but not exceeding \$100,000.<sup>2</sup>

**More information:** For further information about the Stimulus Package Bonus Payments, please refer to the [Commonwealth Treasurer's website](#), the [Centrelink](#) website or the [Australian Taxation Office](#) website.

<sup>1</sup> Centrelink 'Household Stimulus Package', Australian Government [Centrelink](#) 25/03/2009.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Taxation Office 'Tax bonus payment', Australian Government [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au) 25/03/2009, pg 2.

## Residential Tenancies Authority of Queensland to host 8th Australasian Residential Tenancies Conference

The Australasian Residential Tenancies Conference will be of interest for all those involved in the residential tenancies sector. The conference theme 'Rental Realities – Under the Spotlight' will explore the challenges currently facing the residential tenancies sector in Australasia, and discuss new ideas and approaches.

Conference delegates will be able to choose workshops from several specialty streams including:

- Tenancy Tribunals and Dispute Resolution
- Tenancy Information and Community Education, and
- Tenancy Policy and Legislation.

The conference will be held at the Sheraton Mirage on the Gold Coast from 9 to 11 September 2009. Registrations are now open, with early-bird rates ending on 31 May 2009.

**More information:** For further information about the conference program and registration process, visit the [conference website](#).

## Rural Non-Government Organisations Workforce Access to Education and Training Initiative

The Rural Non-Government Organisations Workforce Access to Education and Training Initiative aims to provide rural non-government organisations with resources to improve efficiency by enhancing workers' skillsets. This initiative is part of the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations strategy.

There are two major components to the project: workforce planning and development, and flexible subsidy program.

### Workforce planning and development

This component brings rural non-government organisations and the education and training sectors together to:

- identify, develop and prioritise strategies and plans to increase the capacity of their staff
- identify what is required to overcome barriers to implementing these workforce plans, and
- identify where the Flexible Subsidy Program can be best used to meet the organisational workforce needs.

### Flexible subsidy program

This component provides flexible funding subsidies to organisations to implement workforce development plans that increase staff capacity. These funds include, but are not limited to:

- assistance with fees for TAFE, university or other accredited training or education providers
- support and assistance for staff to complete recognition of prior learning to gain qualifications
- expenses to support student placements in rural areas
- assistance to backfill or meet overtime requirements to support workers who are accessing education and training
- assistance with tutoring and supervision of studies
- assistance with succession plans
- assistance with expenses associated with tertiary studies such as residential fees, accommodation and travel, and
- childcare costs to support training.

**More information:** For further information about this initiative, please refer to the [Community Door website](#).

## More social housing dwellings for Queensland

The department has been active in identifying and progressing funding for new social housing opportunities across a range of program areas. An additional 624 community housing dwellings, located across Queensland, are expected to be available by 30 June 2009.

This significant increase in housing will assist in meeting some of the current need for social housing throughout the state.

These properties will be managed by community housing providers registered under the *Housing Act 2003* and allocated to clients who are listed on the housing register managed by the department.

### New community housing dwellings by program type and location

Program type	Dwellings acquired
Affordable Housing	87 (Gold Coast) and Brisbane (111)
Long Term Housing	37 (Charters Towers, Chinchilla, Roma, Aramac, Texas, Augathella, Edmonton, Clinton, Gympie, Coopers Plains, Nambour, Cooktown and Mitchell)
Community Rent Scheme	7 (Hermit Park, Rosslea, Edmonton, Bentley Park, Rockhampton and Gympie)
Crisis Accommodation Program	26 (Greater Brisbane region) 3 women's shelters 1 men's shelter
Community-Managed Housing – Studio Units	352 (Yeppoon, Moorooka, Maryborough, Two Mile, Norman Gardens, Kawana Waters, Bundaberg, Spring Hill, Margate, South Toowoomba, Woodridge, Windsor, Pimlico, Mackay and Capalaba)

Grants have also been provided to registered providers for the purchase of furniture and white goods for 352 Community-Managed Housing – Studio Units.

Approximately 444 new social housing dwellings will be built in Queensland by July next year at a cost of \$138.6 million under the Nation Building – Economic Stimulus Plan social housing initiative.