



Issue 3: March 2009

Welcome to the third edition of the Community Housing Information Bulletin for 2009.

New Minister and portfolio announced

Premier Anna Bligh announced Karen Struthers MP as Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women.

Ms Struthers was first elected into Parliament as the State Member for Algester in 1998. She holds a Bachelor of Social Work with Honours from the University of Queensland, and prior to entering Parliament, was the Assistant Director at the Queensland Council of Social Service.

At the time of issue of this bulletin, more detailed information regarding the new portfolio of Community Services and Housing was not available. Further information will be provided in the next edition.

Housing stimulus package update

Under the Australian Government's Nation Building and Jobs Plan, \$1.206 billion has been allocated for new construction of social housing in Queensland over the period 2008-09 to 2011-12.

The stimulus package aims to increase the supply of social housing, increase the opportunities for people who are homeless to obtain long-term accommodation and stimulate activity in the building and construction industry.

The funding will provide an historic rapid increase in the number of social housing properties in Queensland. The Australian Government is explicitly seeking projects which support the growth of the not-for-profit sector.

Funds will be primarily targeted at projects which support the transition of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to long-term accommodation, improve housing for Indigenous Australians, and offer new and innovative approaches that support more effective and efficient provision of social housing. Projects may also need to adhere to universal design principles.

Through a Request for Offer advertised on 21 February 2009, the [Department of Public Works](#) is seeking proposals from property developers for the development and delivery of social housing projects through house and land package solutions. This offer closes on 30 April 2009. Assessment of submissions received after this date may be considered as this is an ongoing program. If you know of any developers with suitable projects, please encourage them to apply.

The Department of Housing would like to thank those community housing providers who submitted projects for consideration under Stage One of the housing stimulus package at very short notice. Some of the projects submitted by providers may be considered by the Australian Government for Stage One funding. The bulk of Stage One funding will be capital works projects and will include turnkey projects submitted by the department.

Remaining suitable projects will be considered for Stage Two capital grants funding. For Stage Two, the Queensland Government is required to recommend projects to the Australian Government by 30 June 2009, with the Australian Government approving projects by 30 August 2009. Information about how to apply for Stage Two capital grants for the construction of social housing will be available very **soon**, including the Australian Government's guidelines for Stage Two funding. Information sessions are being planned around Queensland.

More information: If you have any enquiries, please contact your organisation's Service Officer or Sandra Cuthbert, Principal Project Officer, Department of Housing on 3872 0958.

Community-managed Housing – Studio Units projects

Through the department's Community-managed Housing – Studio Units program, capital funds are provided for the purchase, construction and furnishing of properties for low-income households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The program aims to increase the availability of accommodation that is appropriately designed, affordable, secure and located close to local services and amenities.

Through this program, the department is building five new complexes and upgrading a former motel, due for completion by the end of June 2009.

Location	Type	No. of units of accommodation
Capalaba	Purpose built complex	28
Mackay	Upgraded motel	22
Toowoomba	Purpose built complex	26
Townsville	Purpose built complex	24
Windsor	Purpose built complex	24
Woodridge	Purpose built complex	24

The department will be seeking applications from existing registered providers of Community-managed Housing – Studio Units and Community Rent Scheme programs that can demonstrate capacity to manage these properties.

Organisations will need to demonstrate:

- capacity to deliver project milestones, such as allocation of the new units within agreed timeframes to applicants from the housing register
- active participation in one social housing system
- effective governance and service delivery practices
- financial viability
- quality outcomes for clients, and
- no outstanding compliance issues.

Application kits will be distributed to eligible organisations in the coming weeks. Timeframes for responses and assessment will be tight, as construction for some of these projects is scheduled for completion before the end of April 2009.

This assessment process may also be used in the short term to allocate additional properties acquired in these locations under other social housing programs to registered providers.

A further statewide process will be undertaken in the near future to seek community sector management of properties delivered under the Nation Building and Jobs Plan. Guidelines relating to this initiative are still being negotiated with the Australian Government, and information will be provided in future editions of this bulletin.

More information: For further information on the Community-managed Housing – Studio Units program, please contact Stuart Wright, Senior Program Officer on 3225 2313 or stuart.wright@housing.qld.gov.au

Community Housing Federation of Australia Capacity Building Strategy workshops

The Community Housing Federation of Australia has received funding from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs to establish and manage a Capacity Building Strategy Clearinghouse.

The Clearinghouse will provide a range of resources and information related to governance, legal issues, management and development, as well as a number of topics aimed at increasing the capacity of businesses, organisations and partnerships engaged in the National Rental Affordability Scheme, and the supply of affordable housing.

The Federation will be delivering a series of workshops across Australia to support the resources provided on the Clearinghouse. A workshop will be held in Brisbane on 29 April 2009 – venue to be confirmed.

More information: For further information about this workshop, please contact Shelly Forceville from the Community Housing Federation of Australia on (02) 6232 5043 or by e-mail chfa@chfa.com.au

Update from the Standards and Accreditation Unit

The department is pleased to announce that Churches of Christ Queensland (Care Housing) and Allamanda Adult Autistic Accommodation Association have both been successful in achieving accreditation. Congratulations to both organisations on their commitment to quality service delivery and continuous quality improvement. Their hard work has resulted in being awarded full accreditation for three years.

Achieving and maintaining accreditation by **31 January 2010** is a requirement under the *Housing Regulation 2003* for registered organisations funded under the Community-managed Housing – Studio Units program, Affordable Housing program and the Community Rent Scheme, and for long-term community housing providers managing more than 100 tenancies. New providers must become accredited within 18 months of becoming registered under the *Housing Act 2003*.

In Queensland, accreditation under the National Community Housing Standards is awarded by the Queensland Community Housing Standards and Accreditation Council. After an on-site accreditation evaluation, an evaluation report is prepared and considered by an accreditation assessment panel consisting of three members of the Council.

The department's Standards and Accreditation Unit recently completed on-site evaluations with five registered housing providers. The evaluation reports and recommendations are being reviewed by the assessment panels.

This year is shaping up as a very busy one for both for the Standards and Accreditation Unit and organisations seeking accreditation, with 14 evaluation visits scheduled.

More information: For further information about the standards and accreditation process, including the National Community Housing Standards, please contact Jill Hayes, Administrative Officer, on 3406 7591. The unit's fax number is 3235 9257.

Update on the not-for-profit Business Development and Innovation Unit

The not-for-profit Southern Business Development and Innovation Unit is now in place and implementing a number of projects as part of the department's [Strengthening Social Housing Strategy](#), including:

- coordinating the department's roll-out of the housing stimulus package for community housing providers
- leading a national project on the review of the National Community Housing Standards
- convening the Strengthening Social Housing Reference Group. To date, the group has made substantial progress on draft terms of reference for Housing Area Networks and the Queensland Social Housing Forum
- exploring shared training opportunities between Department of Housing staff and not-for-profit housing organisations. Some initial progress was made in 2008 when the department convened three, two-day workshops facilitated by the Australasian Housing Institute titled 'Advanced Communication and Interview Skills'
- coordinating the content of the regular Community Housing Information Bulletin
- working with organisations through all stages of the community housing accreditation system, and
- supporting providers who are undergoing organisational consolidation activities.

More information: For further information on the role and functions of the Business Development and Innovation Unit, please contact: communityhousing@housing.qld.gov.au.

Review of the National Community Housing Standards Manual

The National Community Housing Standards were developed in 1998 to establish common national standards for community housing, a system to assess organisations against the standards, and a structure to accredit community housing providers based on the standards. A second edition of the National Community Housing Standards Manual was published in May 2003 after an independent review. Since that time, considerable changes have occurred in the provision of social housing, the environment in which housing providers operate and in good practice in community housing.

The department is leading a national project to review and revise the National Community Housing Standards and publish a third edition of the manual. A steering committee, comprising representatives from the Community Housing Federation of Australia, New South Wales Federation of Housing Associations and government representatives from Queensland, Western Australia and New South Wales, has been established to guide the project. In December 2008, JPX Consulting Pty Ltd was engaged to complete the project and develop the third edition of the manual.

Consultation with stakeholders from across Australia is essential to gather feedback on current practices and accumulated learning in relation to the standards and quality improvement activities. In April 2008, State and Territory Governments established consultation processes within their jurisdictions to seek stakeholder feedback on the standards. A summary [report](#) outlining the results of the Queensland consultation is available on the department's website.

In February 2009, a practitioner's workshop was held in Adelaide with community housing sector representatives from across Australia. The workshop provided an opportunity to gather information on stakeholders' experiences and ideas about using the standards and how they might be improved.

A draft of the updated National Community Housing Standards Manual is expected to be available by June 2009. Each State and Territory will then undertake further consultation within their jurisdictions to seek stakeholder feedback. The department encourages all stakeholders to contribute. Further information regarding the consultation process in Queensland will be provided closer to the time.

More information: Please contact Yvonne Quinn, Principal Project Officer, on 3225 2259 or email communityhousing@housing.qld.gov.au.

Extended tenancy advice service from the Tenants' Union

In July 2008, the Tenants' Union of Queensland extended its statewide tenancy advice service for tenants, with an option for tenants to use the service on certain weeknights. This extended evening service will be of particular benefit to those tenants who work during the day and are unable to call the daytime service.

The new advice service hours of operation are Monday to Friday, 9am - 4pm (Tuesday and Wednesday until 7pm).

More information: Contact the Tenants' Union of Queensland on 3257 1108, or 1800 177 761 for callers outside Brisbane.

Resources to support providers

A range of [resources](#), including policies, procedures, information and forms, is available from the Department of Housing to assist community and local government housing providers to effectively undertake their role within Queensland's one social housing system.

More information: Visit the department's website at http://www.housing.qld.gov.au/programs/ch/info_pack.htm.

Community Door website

The Department of Communities launched the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations strategy in 2005.

One of this strategy's initiatives was the development of the [Community Door website](#). The website provides tools, resources and information to assist non-government organisations to manage human resources, finances, marketing, administration and many other everyday tasks.

The website is accessible to anyone. However, some tools are only available to non-government organisations funded by the Department of Communities or Disability Services Queensland. Organisations are able to register via the Community Door website to access these resources.

Whilst these tools and resources have been specifically developed for use by services funded by the Department of Communities, community housing providers may also find some of the material useful.

More information: Visit the Community Door website at www.communitydoor.qld.gov.au.

Neighbour Day 2009 celebrations

'The community you want starts at your front door.' That's the important message behind [Neighbour Day](#).

On the last Sunday in March, people from all around the world, from Rockhampton to Rotterdam, will be getting to know their neighbours, and in doing so, will be making new friends and building better and stronger communities.

Participating in Neighbour Day is easy and everyone is invited to get involved. Neighbour Day is not about donations, badges, ribbons or committees. It is about saying hello, introducing yourself to new neighbours and making a special effort with older residents and people who live alone. It gives us all an opportunity to build supportive communities.

The Department of Housing is a proud supporter of Neighbour Day and provides funding to assist tenant participation groups to get involved. In 2008, tenant groups were encouraged to invite their neighbours to Neighbour Day activities. Small events were held in parks, community rooms or car parking areas, with games, morning teas, afternoon teas or barbecues.

More information: Social housing tenants can contact the department's Tenant Participation Unit on 3227 6150 to discuss ideas for Neighbour Day and find out more about the Tenant Participation program.

Residential Tenancies Authority 2009 Community Education Public Grants Scheme (reminder)

In 2009, the Residential Tenancies Authority is providing grants of up to \$15,000 for projects which promote awareness and understanding of Queensland's new renting laws. Strict timeframes apply this year, and applications close on Friday 27 March 2009.

More information: An information kit, including an application form and guidelines, is available to download from the [Residential Tenancies Authority](#) website.

Translating and interpreting services for community housing providers

From March 2009, the department will meet the costs incurred by funded providers utilising translating services provided by the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National). This is to help ensure that culturally and linguistically diverse clients have equal access to housing services delivered by registered providers.

Community housing providers under Home Assist Secure, Home and Community Care, Community Rent Scheme, Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service (Queensland) and Community-managed Housing – Studio Units programs will receive correspondence from the department this month that will include an access code for fee-free translation services via TIS National. Providers will need this code to access the service at no cost.

A fact sheet and practice guide about how to use multilingual interpreting services will also be provided.

More information: Please contact Sharon Miller, Senior Program Officer, Department of Housing on 3227 8196.

Community education sessions on tenant rights and responsibilities

The Tenants' Union of Queensland, with funds from the Residential Tenancies Authority Community Education Grants, will deliver a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Accessible Service Delivery Community Partnership project.

From mid-March to the end of May 2009, the Tenants' Union of Queensland is offering free workshops on tenant rights and responsibilities to community groups working with people from new and emerging culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The workshops will be delivered by community educators in a range of community languages:

Brisbane & Logan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sudanese Arabic• Dinka• Kirundi• French	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kinyarwanda• Swahili• Farsi
Toowoomba	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sudanese Arabic• Mende	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dinka• Liberian English

Consultation with the Tenants' Union may enable the tenancy workshops to be tailored to suit participants' needs. The workshops are expected to take one to two hours.

More information: If your community organisation is interested in arranging a workshop, contact Anna McCormack at the Tenants' Union on 3257 1411 (Tuesday to Thursday).