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Bridge  
Housing's  
Community  
Building and  
Engagement  
Strategy

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bridgehousing  
LINKING PEOPLE TO A BETTER FUTURE

# Building Bridges





A photograph of two young women laughing joyfully outdoors. The woman on the left is wearing a red patterned top and has her head tilted back. The woman on the right is wearing a white top with blue ties and is covering her mouth with her hands. In the background, there is a wooden fence with vertical slats painted in bright yellow and red, and some green foliage.

# Building Bridges

## Bridge Housing's Community Building and Engagement Strategy

### Acknowledgements

Bridge Housing would like to thank all the people who participated in the creation of the *Building Bridges* strategy, including over 90 tenants, the Tenants Advisory Group, three support partners, numerous staff, community organisations and other service providers.

We would also like to thank the following community housing providers for allowing us to interview them at length about their tenant participation and community-building activities: City West Housing, Evolve Housing, Housing Choices Australia, Link Housing, North Coast Community Housing and St George Community Housing.





## Contents

# Foreword

It is a pleasure to introduce *Building Bridges* – Bridge Housing’s Community Building and Engagement Strategy 2014–2017

*Building Bridges* sets out Bridge Housing’s approach and new direction to improve the well being, strength and resilience of our tenant community and build linkages to the broader community. It is based on extensive consultation with tenants, our staff and research. The tenant workshops assisted in developing *Building Bridges* key priorities.

It sets out new ways of working and creates solid ground on which to base community building, tenant participation and capacity building activities.

*Building Bridges* will be delivered through nine new community building initiatives across the organisation and takes a long-term approach to building capacity in the organisation to effectively deliver the strategy.

At the heart of this approach is the concept of working together and involving tenants and partners in decision making about the way we do things. It builds on our existing housing and community services, tenant participation programs and resources to deliver service improvements and initiatives that can contribute to positive change for tenants and their families.

We draw on what we know works in the broader community and community housing sector but also seek innovation in programs such as the Hands Up initiative to create sustainable tenancies and the Tenant to Tenant Peer Support Project, to strengthen bonds between tenants.

It starts from the ground up working with tenants and partners to support successful tenancies, looks at how we can maximise the opportunities for everyone to get involved, provides opportunities for tenants and their families in accessing employment, education, and healthy environments, and strengthens Bridge Housing and tenant ties in communities.

I acknowledge the significant contribution made by the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) in creating *Building Bridges*, through tenant input and partnering with Bridge Housing to deliver the Building Bridges Workshops.

I look forward to the continuing participation of tenants, the TAG and our broader community partners in setting directions for Bridge Housing in these key areas. We are committed to working together to deliver effective initiatives that have positive outcomes for our diverse tenant community.



**John Nicolades**  
Chief Executive Officer



Building Bridges introduces nine new initiatives across the organisation and takes a long-term approach to building capacity.



# Thank you to the Tenant Advisory Group

Bridge Housing would like to thank the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) for putting a lot of work into the strategy – providing input and partnering with Bridge Housing to deliver the Building Bridges Workshops.

The TAG Leadership Team and Chair Pamela Pryor worked tirelessly to give a tenant perspective to the process of developing the strategy. The Leadership Team had input into the workshop agendas, reviewed draft documents in detail, and provided a sounding board to ensure that the workshops were tenant friendly.

Bridge Housing would like to thank them and all the TAG members who participated in the workshops for their part in the development of this document.



# Building Bridges – Bridge Housing's Community Building and Engagement Strategy



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## A Call to Action

Bridge Housing believes that tenants should be at the heart of all that we do. *Building Bridges* is a call to action for the organisation, community partners and tenants.

We want to work together to improve wellbeing and strengthen a sense of community for tenants, their families and household members through:

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- supporting successful tenancies
- making sure that tenants have a real say in the way we do things
- increasing access to opportunities
- strengthening neighbourhood and community connections.

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## What will the strategy do?

*Building Bridges* is a plan that everyone can use. It provides guidance for Bridge Housing as an organisation and guidelines for tenants, applicants, staff and community partners about what we can expect from Bridge Housing in some key areas.

It highlights how we will work together and outlines a plan of action for community and capacity building, and tenant participation activities over the next three years. The plan has grown out of Bridge Housing's Strategic Plan 2012–2015.

Actions outlined in this strategy will be included in future Bridge Housing strategic and business plans and will complement other plans and policies including:

- Bridge Housing Service Standards
- Community Housing for Aboriginal People Service Delivery Action Plan
- Support Partners Review
- Communications Strategy.

I think we should create a youth group or link younger people in with their communities. Often young people need to be supported – they can feel very marginalised and looked down upon.

Kim,  
tenant



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## Why is this important?

Bridge Housing has a strong history in the development of programs and initiatives to support tenants and their local communities. We have also actively worked to establish meaningful tenant participation in our work, through the Tenant Advisory Group and tenant workshops to gain tenant input into the way we do things.

*Building Bridges* has been developed to build on our previous work and the work of the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) and provide clear direction for our activities.

As a community housing provider, Bridge Housing works in communities to support people to obtain and keep quality, affordable housing. We believe that tenant participation is vital to the work we do because it is the best way to deliver quality housing services that meet and respond to people's changing needs.

We believe that in an inclusive society people empower themselves and that tenants are the best people to decide how their tenancies, their lives, and their communities develop. We can support this by working together to provide meaningful opportunities for all tenants to speak out, get involved, and have a real say in, and real influence over the decisions we make.

As an important part of the not-for-profit sector and a community anchor, Bridge Housing can link tenants, their families and household members in with local services and programs.

We can partner with tenant groups, community organisations, not-for-profits, businesses and government to increase access to opportunities for tenants, their families and household members.

We believe that strong and resilient communities are built from the ground up by working with the strengths of the people and organisations in them; by taking the long term approach and building capacity; and by engaging with innovation that tells new stories about health, wellbeing, and social inclusion.

*Building Bridges* sets out principles and actions about how we are going to do this.

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## Our Responsibilities

The development of the *Building Bridges* strategy directly aligns with Bridge Housing values, in particular that "we are a socially responsible organisation with a commitment to social inclusion and improving the lives of the people and communities we support."

The strategy also fulfils our responsibilities as a community housing provider under the new National Regulatory Framework to work in communities to promote housing services, and to involve tenants in service delivery and in their communities.



# What we mean when we use the words...

## Capacity Building

Working with people, organisations and communities to make sure they have the skills and knowledge to achieve their goals or participate in activities in an effective and meaningful way.

## Community Building

Also referred to as community development, community building is about working alongside people and organisations to develop strong and resilient communities through collective action and positive change. It is a way of working with community strengths; recognising that the best people to decide what communities need is the people in those communities.

## Empower

Technically this means handing decision making power over to someone, but in a less formal sense it can mean giving people access to the skills, knowledge and opportunities they need to have more control over their own lives.

## Engagement

A process involving a range of activities to encourage participation, collaboration, and empowerment. Community engagement is about making sure that we work closely with the neighbourhoods and communities that tenants are a part of. Tenant engagement is about giving tenants the opportunity to participate in whatever way suits them.

## Social Inclusion

Many people are excluded from the opportunities they need to create the life they want. In a socially inclusive society all people feel valued and have the support and opportunity to participate fully in society in whatever way they choose.

## Social Justice

This term is used to describe the need for equality and fairness between people and groups of people in our community. We advance social justice when we remove barriers that people face because of gender, class, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, sexuality or disability.

## Tenant Participation

Tenant participation is a part of Bridge Housing's core business. It enables Bridge Housing tenants to get involved in decisions about their housing and covers a wide range of activities, including the TAG, tenant surveys, workshops, and celebrations. Tenant participation is about tenants getting involved in their housing services and communities.

I think the biggest impact from Building Bridges for me, is having greater access to my community and more employment opportunities.

Christopher,  
tenant



# Who We Are

## Bridge Housing

There are more than 28,000 homeless people in New South Wales and over 57,000 people waiting for social housing. Families are the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness<sup>1</sup> and currently less than 5 per cent of rental properties in the metropolitan Sydney area are affordable for people on very low incomes.<sup>2</sup>

As a registered, not-for-profit community housing provider, Bridge Housing works in communities to provide social and affordable housing for the diverse range of people in metropolitan Sydney who struggle with homelessness and housing stress.

We currently employ 40 staff and manage over 1,600 dwellings across Sydney. We project that our portfolio will grow to nearly 1,700 properties by 2015.

## Our partners

Bridge Housing operates across a large part of Sydney's metropolitan area and has access to significant resources, placing us in a unique position to act as a community anchor.

We can bring together all levels of government, community organisations, tenants and the not-for-profit sector to help strengthen communities and improve the wellbeing of tenants, their families and their household members.

We have a strong track record in establishing and maintaining housing and support partnerships that help vulnerable people who are at risk of becoming – or who are already – homeless. This includes partnerships with specialist homelessness services and support services for people with mental health, drug and alcohol, and other complex needs.

Bridge Housing also has a number of fee-for-service partnerships that allow us to work with private landlords, government authorities and non-government organisations to provide affordable housing.

We are building links across the community with local government, community organisations, neighbourhood centres and support services to ensure housing applicants and our current tenants can access the services and programs they need.

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## The Tenant Advisory Group

The Tenant Advisory Group, established in 2009, is one of the main avenues for tenants to get involved and have their say. The TAG is an independent organisation and runs its own meetings and agendas. More than 80 tenants are now members of the TAG. We regularly partner with the TAG to present workshops and offer tenants the opportunity to have a say in the way we operate.



1. [www.shelternsw.org.au/publications/doc\\_view/362-around-the-house-no-93](http://www.shelternsw.org.au/publications/doc_view/362-around-the-house-no-93).

2. See Bridge Housing Annual Report, pp 17–19, for information on housing supply and affordability for low-income households.

# A Diverse Tenant Community

Tenants come to Bridge Housing from all walks of life and all backgrounds. They are activists, artists, parents, volunteers and workers. They are community members, elders, leaders, survivors and **everyday people with rights and responsibilities**.

Bridge Housing tenants are also some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in Sydney, with high levels of **complex needs**.

We have made a commitment at Bridge Housing to make sure we know who our tenants are and what they think is important. An important part of this are our tenant surveys, working closely with the Tenant Advisory Group, and running regular Tenant Workshops.

As of January 2014, we house over 2,800 people living in over 1,600 dwellings across 18 local government areas. Almost 80 per cent of tenants are in general social housing programs; 17 per cent are in supported programs; and 4 per cent are in affordable housing programs.

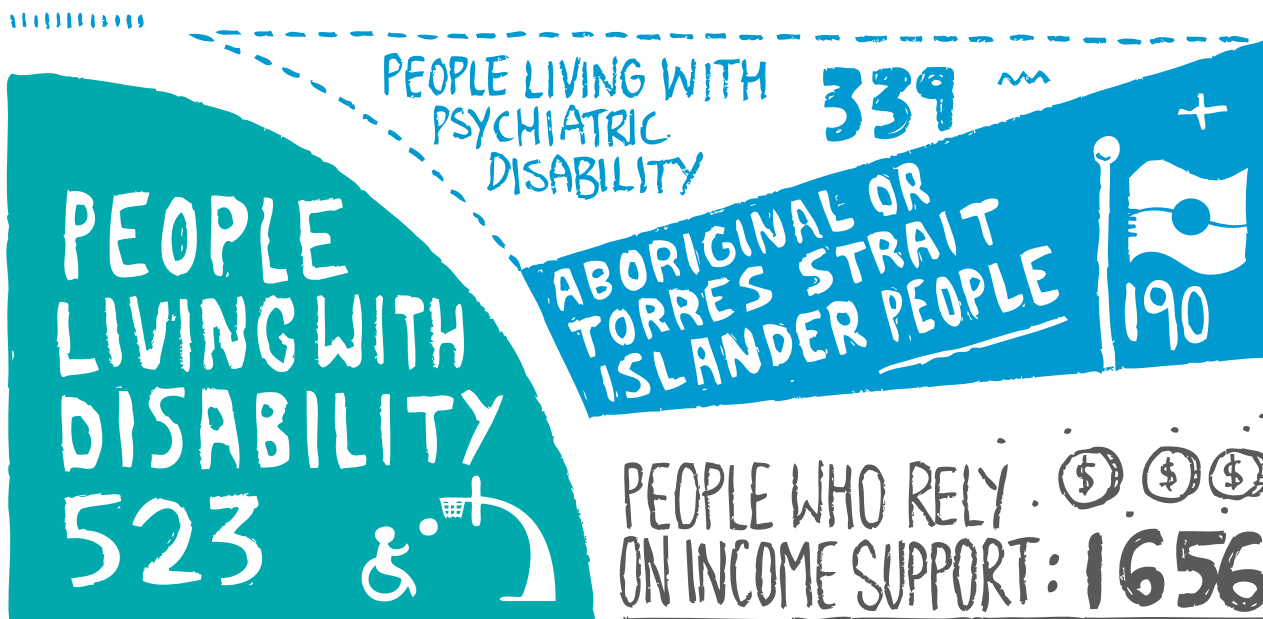
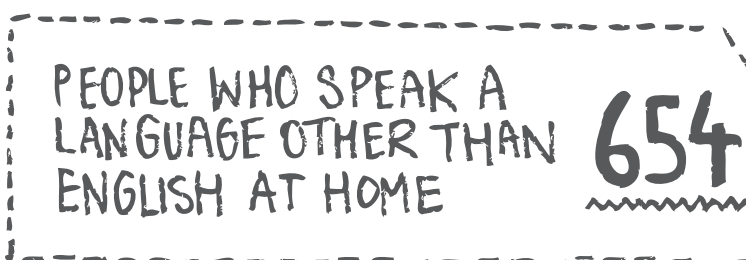
Bridge Housing tenants live in **diverse neighbourhoods**, often with other Bridge Housing tenants. Around 54 per cent of tenants live in unit blocks with at least three Bridge Housing tenants for neighbours. Around 9 per cent of tenants live in social housing estates with Housing NSW tenants. The rest live in mixed neighbourhoods alongside other renters and private owners.

Tenants live in some of the most economically disadvantaged areas of Sydney such as Auburn and Canterbury, but also in some of the most advantaged areas such as Leichhardt and Woollahra. What is common to all of these areas is the critical lack of affordable accommodation.

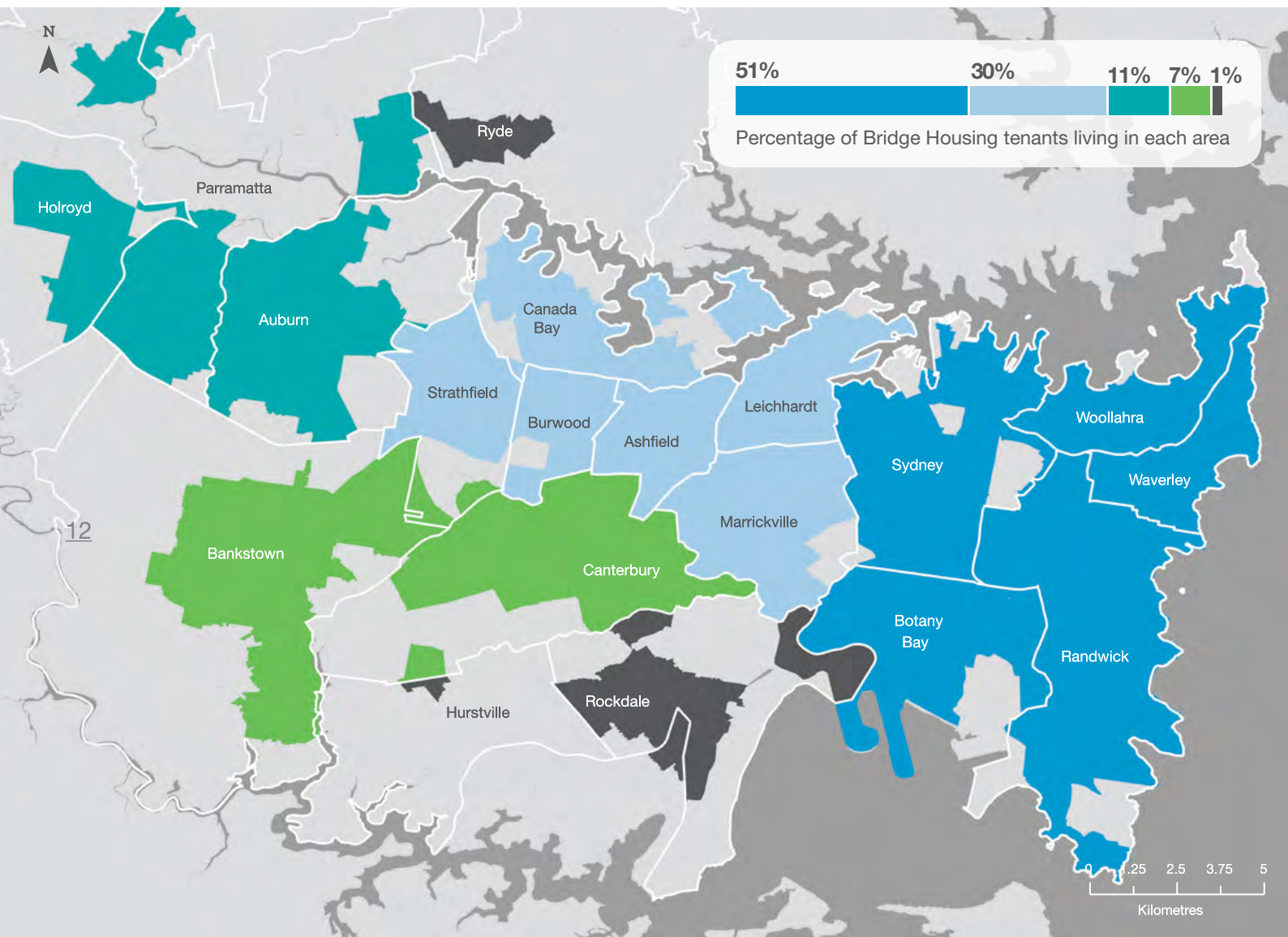
Bridge Housing **tenants are active in many communities** from local neighbourhood and community organisations to ethnic and aboriginal community networks, tenant groups, political movements, gay and lesbian communities, church associations and many more.







# Where Bridge Housing Tenants Live



- City of Sydney and Eastern Suburbs** (Randwick, Waverley, Botany Bay, Woollahra – LGA's)
- Inner West** (Ashfield, Strathfield, Burwood, Canada Bay, Leichhardt, Marrickville – LGA's)
- Central West** (Parramatta, Auburn, Holroyd – LGA's)

- Canterbury-Bankstown – LGA's**
- Other areas**



## Compared to the general population of Greater Sydney, Bridge Housing houses:

	Greater Sydney <sup>3</sup>	Bridge Housing
many more people with disability <sup>4</sup>	4%	24%
more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	1%	7%
more sole parent families	11%	16%
many more adult residents who rely on income support	27% <sup>5</sup>	76%
many more people living alone	26%	57%
significantly more people aged 60 and over	18%	26%
more women	51%	56%
around the same percentage under the age of 18	23%	22%
many fewer couples with children	35%	4%
fewer people that speak a language other than English at home – the main languages spoken include Vietnamese, Arabic, Spanish, Mandarin and Cantonese	33%	23%
far fewer people who are employed	94%	15%

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3. Statistics sourced from ID Community Profiles unless otherwise stated.

4. 13% of residents identify as having a psychiatric disability.

5. Overall Australian statistic from [www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features50Mar+2010](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features50Mar+2010).

# What You Told Us

*Building Bridges* was created by working with tenants, staff, support partners and the TAG.

In developing *Building Bridges* we:

- researched the literature on tenant participation, community building, and engagement
- surveyed innovative community housing providers in Australia, the UK and Canada
- interviewed staff
- looked at what tenants have told us through the TAG and annual Tenant Surveys
- met with government and attended forums and seminars
- held meetings with potential project partners
- conducted a series of workshops for tenants, staff and support partners.

The workshops involving tenants, staff and our partners were structured in a way that would help us identify and confirm our strategic objectives – creating a shared vision of how we work together, and priorities for action.

We held the workshops at different times of the day and in various locations to ensure that as many tenants as possible had the opportunity to attend. We used a range of methods to engage tenants, including the tenant newsletter, personalised invitations, promotion at the TAG meetings and targeted phone calls.

The workshops were **creative and full of deep discussion, hard thinking, consensus making, and debate**. More than 77 tenants came to the first workshop. Over 90 tenants attended in total, with many coming to all three workshops.

What tenants, staff, support partners and research told us has been incorporated into the strategy and reflected back continuously through reports and briefings. This strategy talks about what we can and will do by working together with tenants and our partners to affect positive change for tenants and their families in the context of being an accountable, responsible and responsive community housing provider.





# Charter of Tenant Rights

*Bridge Housing recognises your rights to:*

- ① safe, secure, appropriate and affordable housing
- ② security of tenure in line with your tenancy agreement
- ③ housing that meets basic standards and is in a reasonable state of repair
- ④ the peaceful enjoyment of your home
- ⑤ be treated and communicated with in a fair, open and transparent way
- ⑥ be treated with respect regardless of cultural identity, race, ability, gender, sexual orientation or age
- ⑦ the privacy and confidentiality of your personal information, unless your permission is given to share information, or we are required by law to do so
- ⑧ have policies and procedures applied to your situation fairly and consistently
- ⑨ have your housing needs responded to as they change over time, within the guidelines and resources of the organisation
- ⑩ be supported to appeal or complain if you do not agree with a decision or service delivered by Bridge Housing and to be kept informed of the outcome
- ⑪ have a real say in the way we deliver services and in how we manage your tenancy

# Our Response

## How We Work Together

We believe that an important part of any organisation is how it works with the people and communities affected by the decisions it makes. Tenants and our partners told us that what they most valued in working together were respect, honesty, communication, understanding and active listening, as well as justice, equality and integrity.





To make sure that we work in a way that reflects this and our values as an organisation, Bridge Housing will be guided by the following principles. We will:

- ✓ make sure that tenants and our partners have a real say in and real influence over the way we do things, and provide the resources to make it happen
- ✓ work closely with the communities and neighbourhoods that tenants, our partners and potential tenants are a part of
- ✓ value the skills, knowledge and experience of tenants and our partners
- ✓ raise awareness and encourage understanding of tenants and their life experiences
- ✓ make sure we keep communication open, honest and inclusive and that we know who our tenants are and what they think is important
- ✓ support the TAG to grow, achieve its goals and be open to all
- ✓ support tenant volunteers and tenants active in their communities, to develop and grow their skills and knowledge
- ✓ provide a variety of ways for tenants to get involved so that everyone has a chance to participate in a way that suits them
- ✓ recognise that not everyone is interested in participating
- ✓ be open and honest about what we can and can't do but also be open to new ideas and suggestions
- ✓ use tenants' and partners' stories, opinions, feedback, appeals and complaints to measure the impact of our work and adapt, change and innovate
- ✓ report back to people so that tenants and our partners can evaluate whether we have actively listened to them and acted on what they have told us
- ✓ keep up to date about meaningful and effective ways to work with people and ensure that staff members have the skills and knowledge to put the research into action.

Actions to support these principles are included in the Community Action Plan and are supported by the Bridge Housing Charter of Tenant Rights.



# Our Response Community Action Plan 2014–2017

*Building Bridges* – is a call to action for our organisation, community partners and tenants to work together to improve wellbeing and strengthen a sense of community for tenants, their families, and the neighbourhoods and communities they live in through:

- ✓ supporting successful tenancies
- ✓ making sure that tenants have a real say in the way we do things
- ✓ increasing access to opportunities
- ✓ strengthening neighbourhood and community connections.

The *Building Bridges Community Action Plan* holds Bridge Housing accountable to working with tenants, the TAG and our partners to implement the strategy in full. It is a living document that will respond to changes in funding, resources, best practice, evaluation and new ways of thinking.







# Working together to support successful tenancies

Tenants have told us they want housing and financial security, safe homes and neighbourhoods, and access to support and assistance when they need it.

Bridge Housing is committed to working with tenants to sustain their tenancies. We recognise that tenants who are unable to sustain their social housing tenancies are at risk of homelessness and face unaffordable housing options. We are currently working with our support partners to review the way we provide support to our most vulnerable tenants, but we can always do more.

We recognise that some groups of people have particularly complex challenges in life and we will work closely with those groups to make sure that they have the opportunity to access the services and support they need.

Bridge Housing will work closely with tenants at risk of losing their tenancies to offer early intervention and innovative solutions that address the causes of debt, through the **Hand Up** initiative:

- ✓ investigate and implement an innovative approach to arrears management, by June 2015
- ✓ implement Rent It Keep It training for new tenants who have had previous difficulties maintaining their tenancies, by June 2016

Bridge Housing will link tenants to local services and programs that meet their needs and help to support sustainable tenancies through the **Local Links** initiative:

- ✓ develop Stickybeak Tours in partnership with local organisations to introduce tenants to local services, programs and facilities commencing in 2014

- ✓ strengthen partnerships with local councils and interagencies to keep informed about local services and programs, and improve tenant access to local support services, by June 2015
- ✓ incorporate the Property Inspection process into a Home Visit Program and use these visits to better identify tenant needs, and promote links to local services and programs targeted to tenant need, by June 2016
- ✓ research, develop and implement a Tenant-to-Tenant Peer Support Project to provide support for new tenants or tenants at risk of losing their tenancies, by June 2017, with particular consideration given to tenants with high levels of need

Bridge Housing will encourage good neighbourhood relations to create a sense of safety and belonging through the **Good Neighbours** initiative:

- ✓ implement the block meeting review to improve neighbourhood connections, encourage the use of common rooms, and promote Bridge Housing's Good Neighbour Policy, by December 2014
- ✓ develop and implement an awareness raising and information campaign to promote the use of Community Justice Centres and mental health programs that support and inform tenants, by December 2015.

# Working together to give tenants a real say in the way we do things

Tenants told us they valued personal responsibility and empowerment, respect and communication, leadership and independence.

With an increasing focus on tenants as customers across the sector has come an increasing focus on customer rights to good service delivery. We believe that this is a positive approach but also that tenants are more than just customers. Tenants are:

- customers, with a right to participate in good service delivery
- clients, with the right to determine how their needs will be met
- citizens, with the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives, and with responsibilities to uphold.

Tenant participation has been a focus of Bridge Housing over the last half decade. Bridge Housing has worked with tenants to develop the TAG, which provides a passionate voice for tenants in the organisation and tenant networks. Participation in the TAG also builds tenant skills and knowledge through meetings and workshops. We are committed to working with the TAG to help it grow, achieve its goals and be open to all.

We also need to widen our commitment to tenant participation and make sure all tenants irrespective of race, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, gender, age and education feel like they are able to contribute. As an organisation committed to working with tenants, their families and household members, we need to keep the conversation open about how to give people real choices and a real say within the context of being an accountable, responsible and responsive community housing provider.

Bridge Housing will work closely with tenants and the TAG to ensure tenants have a real say in the way we do things, through the **Tenants in Operations and Planning (TOP)** initiative:

- ✓ continue to work with the TAG and the wider tenant community to support and develop:
  - TAG
  - tenant workshops
  - the newsletter
  - tenant surveys
  - Your Views e-panel
- ✓ involve tenants in the development of interview questions for new staff, commencing 2014
- ✓ provide leadership training and skills development opportunities for TAG members, commencing 2014
- ✓ involve tenants in Bridge Housing's strategic and business planning processes, by June 2015
- ✓ identify opportunities for tenants to attend housing conferences and training, and develop a fair and equitable Expression of Interest process and promotion, by June 2015
- ✓ work with tenants to develop a Tenants Code of Conduct, by June 2016



- ✓ work with Aboriginal tenants and service providers to develop an approach to engage more Aboriginal tenants in our tenant participation activities, by December 2014
- ✓ work with Aboriginal tenants and service providers to implement, monitor and evaluate the Community Housing for Aboriginal People Service Delivery Action Plan, commencing 2014
- ✓ work with Aboriginal tenants and service providers to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan, by June 2016
- ✓ work with Aboriginal tenants and service providers to promote increased participation of Aboriginal tenants in the annual Tenant Survey, by June 2017
- ✓ provide training and development opportunities for staff in best practice in engagement, empowerment and social inclusion, by June 2016
- ✓ investigate, develop and implement strategies to engage younger tenants, by June 2017

- ✓ continue to work closely with government and other partners, and advocate for and involve tenants in contributions to significant housing reforms

Bridge Housing will review our tenant communications to reflect tenant diversity and increase participation through the **Bridge Housing Communication Strategy:**

- ✓ review tenant communications and promotion investigating:
  - culturally appropriate communications
  - Bridge Housing newsletter and website
  - promotion of external services and programs
  - the use of social media and digital technologies by December 2014
- ✓ finalise the implementation of new communication and promotional strategies, by December 2015
- ✓ promote tenant volunteers and tenants active in their communities through the newsletter, annual report and other promotional opportunities, by June 2017.



# Working together to increase access to opportunities for tenants, their families and household members

Tenants have very clearly told us that they want opportunities for their children, personal health and wellbeing, and access to education, employment, healthy environments, nature and appropriate housing.

Many tenants have been excluded from the workforce due to ill health, disability, age, poverty or care responsibilities and are seeking a way in. Others would like to build on their skills to create opportunities for themselves and their children, or use their skills to contribute to their communities. Some tenants are passionate about the environment and would like to have more opportunities to join in the debate about sustainability and access to green space, or contribute to people-centred sustainable design.

Bridge Housing very clearly has a responsibility to work with tenants and our community partners to ensure that we support tenants and household members in whatever they choose to get out of life for themselves and their families. We also need to engage children and young people in the way we do things to ensure that their voices are heard and their needs understood.

Bridge Housing will support tenants and their families to access education, work experience and employment, and raise the profile of children in the organisation through the **Streets Ahead** initiative:

- ✓ develop a Social Procurement Policy to encourage tenant employment and social procurement outcomes through Bridge Housing contracts, including the provision of Aboriginal employment targets in our contracts, by June 2015
- ✓ develop a Work Experience & Volunteer Policy and Promotion to support tenants and their families who want to build skills and contribute through Bridge Housing, by June 2016
- ✓ develop a partnership with a community organisation such as the Martian Embassy to deliver a Kids and Young People Engagement Day during school holidays, by June 2016
- ✓ research and develop the Bridge Housing Scholarship initiative, working with existing programs such as the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience to support success, commencing 2016
- ✓ launch the Bridge Housing Scholarship initiative for children, their families and tenants looking to build their skills and access opportunities, by June 2017

A tenant's code of conduct would make a big difference to me and my community, as tenants have to realise that they have responsibilities too.

Hori,  
tenant



Bridge Housing will involve tenants in the provision and maintenance of appropriate and healthy housing through the **Our Place Green Space** initiative:

- ✓ develop and implement Community Garden Protocols to support tenants who wish to create community gardens, by December 2014
- ✓ continue to prioritise design based on community building principles and establish tenant feedback methods to identify design that works in practice, by June 2015
- ✓ investigate the feasibility of introducing participatory budgeting for planned upgrades, by June 2016
- ✓ work with tenants to develop Design Guidelines for new developments that incorporate best practice principles regarding ecologically sustainable design for health and wellbeing, and that create a sense of community and opportunities for tenants to engage with green spaces and gardens, by June 2016
- ✓ develop an integrated estate planning policy based on best practice in community and tenant engagement, place making and capacity building, by June 2017
- ✓ investigate the feasibility of a tenant volunteer maintenance project linked to the Bridge Housing Volunteer Policy, by June 2017.

# Working together to strengthen neighbourhood and community connections

Tenants told us that they valued connections to family and community, cultural awareness, neighbourhood peace and harmony, social inclusion and a sense of belonging.

Bridge Housing works in communities to make sure that we are accessible to vulnerable and marginalised people. We work in partnership with tenant groups, community organisations, the not-for-profit sector, businesses and all levels of government to support the growth and development of sustainable and inclusive communities, where people have the opportunity to take control of their own lives and participate actively in society.

We are committed to working alongside people and organisations in communities and building on community strengths. We also acknowledge that sometimes communities need support, new skills and information to enable collective action and positive change.

Bridge Housing will support tenant led initiatives that bring people together in neighbourhoods and communities through the **Big Ideas Grants & Capacity Building** initiative:

- ✓ develop and implement Big Ideas Grants to support local connections and tenant-led initiatives, building capacity to encourage tenants to apply for this and other grants programs, by June 2015.

Bridge Housing will celebrate diverse communities and strengthen community connections through the **Bridge Housing in Communities** initiative:

- ✓ attend significant community events to promote Bridge Housing and hold at least two in-house events annually to raise awareness, engage diverse communities, promote accessibility and celebrate diversity, commencing 2014
  - Anti Poverty Week
  - International Women's Day
  - Harmony Day
  - Mental Health Week
  - NAIDOC Week
- ✓ maintain a responsive approach to opportunities and partnership building, which supports projects and initiatives outlined in the *Building Bridges* strategy and which encourages innovation aligned with community needs and aspirations.



# Measuring Our Success

Bridge Housing wants to work with tenants to develop initiatives that have positive results for tenants, their families, and household members. We want to know what impact our work has on people.

To do this, Bridge Housing will ensure that we continually monitor the progress of and evaluate the initiatives outlined in the Community Action Plan.

Every six months, we will report to the Bridge Housing Board and to the TAG about how we are implementing the *Building Bridges* strategy. We will also report annually through the tenant newsletter and annual report.

We will use the following tools to measure the success of initiatives and the impact they have on the people they involve:

- ✓ “logic models” (or project plans) for each major initiative, which outline:
  - the aims or changes we want to bring about through the initiative
  - what we are going to do and how
  - expected outcomes
  - how we are going to measure the outcomes and long-term impacts of the initiative – both expected and unexpected
  - how we are going to report on results once we have evaluated the initiative

- ✓ evaluation methods that rely on feedback from the people who are involved in the initiative – spoken, written and creatively generated!
- ✓ a responsive approach that makes changes as we learn from our evaluations
- ✓ the ‘we asked, you said, we did’ feedback framework so that tenants can evaluate whether we have actively listened to them and acted on what they have told us.

Towards the end of the three years covered by this plan we will work with tenants and partners to develop new approaches to guide us into the future.



## Document Review

This document has been compiled by the Bridge Housing Community Team and is a living document that can be updated to respond to changes in funding, resources, best practice, evaluations and new ways of thinking.

Version	Changes	Notes
21 May 2014		



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[www.bridgehousing.org.au](http://www.bridgehousing.org.au)