

**INSIDE**

<b>TAG Elections - Call for Nominations!</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Building Bridges 2018 - 2021</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Information Day</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Appliance Replacement Offer</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>You're Invited!</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>TAG in 2018</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>What's On</b>	<b>6</b>

# BRIDGE TO WORK

**Meet Gavin Marks! Gavin is the Bridge to Work Employment Support Coordinator. Bridge to Work is a new initiative connecting Bridge Housing residents to employment opportunities.**

Gavin is located at Bridge Housing's office. He has been working closely with many residents who are looking for work or wanting to improve their current work situation. Bridge to Work is a partnership between Bridge Housing and CoAct, an experienced Job Network Provider. Bridge to Work launched in June 2018 and already a number of residents have reached their employment goals. Check out some of their stories in this newsletter!

To be eligible for Bridge to Work, you must be a Bridge Housing tenant or household member, between 17 and 70 years old and on a low income such as Centrelink.

If you find employment for the first time or after being unemployed for 12 months, you may be eligible for the Start Work Incentive which will provide a "rent freeze" period of 26 weeks.

If you are interested in registering for Bridge to Work, call Gavin Marks on **0447 092 194**, register online at **[www.bridgetowork.org.au](http://www.bridgetowork.org.au)** or talk to your Housing Manager.



Gavin Marks and John Nicolades

## Sona's Bridge to Work

*Gavin and the Bridge to Work team made it possible for me to find the perfect job.*

*Getting your foot in the door in any industry can be an overwhelming experience though Bridge to Work made it all seem very achievable. Gavin and the team were always welcoming and available for any questions I had and helped me tailor my resume to catch the eye of my current employer. I am now happily employed thanks to the Bridge to Work program.*



**General Enquiries** - 8324 0800  
[customerservice@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:customerservice@bridgehousing.org.au)

**Repairs** - 8324 0886  
[repairs@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:repairs@bridgehousing.org.au)

**Community** - 8324 0844  
[community@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:community@bridgehousing.org.au)

**Housing Pathways Applications**  
8324 0890  
[pathways@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:pathways@bridgehousing.org.au)

**Housing Team & Tenancies**  
8324 0885  
[customerservice@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:customerservice@bridgehousing.org.au)

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# TAG Elections – Call for Nominations!

The Tenant Advisory Groups are made up of Bridge tenants who volunteer their time to give back to the tenant community and provide feedback to help Bridge Housing improve the way we do things. Bridge Housing currently has five tenant groups that meet regularly. Three of the tenant groups have formal leadership roles that are selected through an election process. The TAG elections are held every two years, and all Bridge tenants are given the opportunity to take on leadership roles in the different groups. The election takes place at the biennial General TAG meeting which will be held this November.

The elected TAG positions are:

**West TAG:** Chair and Vice Chair

**Central TAG:** Chair and Vice Chair

**East:** Chair and Vice Chair

Other:

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander TAG (ATTAG)**

Rotating Chair – no elections required.

**Vietnamese TAG (VNTAG)**

Meetings chaired by BHL staff unless otherwise requested by VNTAG members

To nominate yourself, or someone else for a leadership role at one of the TAGs, please



contact the Community Team on **02 8324 0844** or email [community@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:community@bridgehousing.org.au) by Wednesday 10 October.

## Building Bridges 2018 - 2021

Building Bridges 2018 to 2021 builds on the work we have done over the last four years to put community engagement and tenant participation at the core of our business. This new strategy was developed with a significant amount of input from tenants through workshops and surveys in early 2018. We want to thank all those who got involved and helped develop this new approach.

Tenants have told us about their priorities and what is important in their lives and local communities. This has enabled us to adopt a more flexible and responsive approach to community building and engagement. Our approach provides the space to take on positive ideas for change, responds to changes in our tenant community, and will utilise funding and project opportunities as they arise.



### Our key focus areas are:

1. Supporting successful tenancies
2. Making sure that tenants have a real say in how we do things
3. Building opportunities for younger tenants
4. Increasing access to opportunities for tenants, their families, and household members
5. Strengthening neighbourhood and community connections

If you would like to read more about Building Bridges and our approach to tenant engagement over the next few years, head to our website [www.bridgehousing.org.au](http://www.bridgehousing.org.au) or call the Community Team and we will be pleased to send you a copy of the new Building Bridges strategy document.



### Thomas' Bridge to work

*The Bridge to Work program is a great initiative that helped me to not only find work but also feel supported in my job search efforts and confident in my ability to engage with employers and gain employment in my desired sector (community services).*

*My time with the Bridge to Work program made a very positive impact on my life. I was consistently reassured that I would attain the goals I had set out for myself and I was supported through every step of the way. I was also relieved of much of the financial stress in my life due to the "rent freeze" policy, which in turn allowed me to think with a clearer head and pursue my goals free from the burden of financial hardship.*

*I would strongly recommend the program to all people who are looking for work and need some assistance and support throughout their transition to employment.*

# Information Day

Would you like to learn more about the **Advance Scholarship** or **Big Ideas Grants** initiatives? We will be holding information sessions to explain how these programs work and how you can apply.

**When:** Thursday 18 October

**Where:** Redfern Community Centre

**Session Times:**

**Advance Scholarships:** 10:30am – 11:30am

**Big Ideas Grants:** 12:30pm – 1:30pm

Please call the Community Team on **8324 0844** or email **community@bridgehousing.org.au** to register your place

## ADVANCE SCHOLARSHIPS

The Advance Scholarship program is open to Bridge Housing residents who are at school, studying tertiary education or seeking professional development. An Advance Scholarship can provide financial support to help you achieve your goals. The amount of money you can apply for is dependent on your age. Primary school children are eligible for scholarships up to \$750, high school students are eligible for up to \$1000 and adults who are studying or pursuing professional development are eligible for up to \$1500.

## BIG IDEAS GRANTS

The Big Ideas Grants initiative provides small grants to tenants for projects that bring people together in their neighbourhood or community. Tenants can apply for up to \$500 for an individual project or \$1000 if working in partnership with a community organisation.



*If you are interested in applying for an Advance Scholarship or a Big Ideas Grant but are unable to make it to the information sessions, please download the guidelines and application form from the Bridge Housing website: [www.bridgehousing.org.au](http://www.bridgehousing.org.au) under the Tenants tab or call **02 8324 0844***

## Money Matters

Keeping up with all your bills on a low income can be a struggle at times. Perhaps you have had some extra expenses, like fines and debt repayments, and may be interested in financial counselling. Financial counsellors are non-judgemental and help you to make a plan to improve your financial situation. Bridge Housing and Good Shepherd have teamed up to offer a free, confidential and independent financial counselling service – Money Matters. The financial advisor visits Bridge Housing on the 3rd Thursday of every month and can also meet you for appointments outside this time.



Contact Bridge Housing to book your appointment by calling **02 8324 0885** or emailing **customerservice@bridgehousing.org.au**

## Appliance Replacement Offer



If you're looking to upgrade your old fridge or television, you may be able to get a discount through the appliance replacement offer. Replacing older appliances with new and more efficient models can save you money on your electricity bills.

If you're eligible, you could save:

- ▶ 40% off the cost of a new fridge
- ▶ 50% off the cost of a new television.

The fridge and television models on offer have been selected for their energy efficiency, affordability and quality.

To check the eligibility criteria and to apply online, go to <https://powertosave.nsw.gov.au/households/appliance-replacement-offer> or call The Office of Environment and Heritage on **02 9995 5000** for more information.

## Legal Pathways for Older People

Council on the Ageing NSW (COTA) and Legal Aid are offering assistance to help older people obtain free or reduced cost legal assistance. Documents such as Wills, an Enduring Power of Attorney, or Appointment of Enduring Guardianship can be drawn up by a qualified solicitor at the office of COTA NSW (Sydney CBD) at a discounted rate of \$50 per document. This assistance is available to Aged Pensioners or holders of a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card.

All appointments need to be booked through COTA NSW on **02 8268 9616**.



## CEO Update

October is Mental Health Month and this year the theme is again 'Share the Journey'. Mental Health Month is a great opportunity to raise awareness about mental health and wellbeing and the important role it plays in all of our lives. There is help available and I would encourage us all to remember to speak up when things get tough. Connect with friends, families or pets and take the time to care for yourself.

The Bridge Housing Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on Thursday 22 November at the Redfern Community Centre. The AGM is open to all tenants to attend and members will be able to vote on matters raised. All Bridge Housing tenants are invited to become members of Bridge Housing for the duration of their tenancy with us. Membership applications can be found on the Bridge Housing website or by calling Reception on 02 8324 0800.

It has been wonderful to see such a great turnout at the meet and greet lunches we have held on the Northern Beaches. We are looking forward to the upcoming months where tenants will be getting to know Bridge Housing and finding out about how we do things before the transition in August 2019.

We are regularly using our Facebook page to let you know about events and useful information. If you are a social media user, please follow Bridge Housing on Facebook for information and updates.

**John Nicolades, CEO**



# You're Invited!

Please join us for the Tenant End of Year Party! This year, we are heading to the Olympic Park Aquatic Centre for an early lunch in the Aquatic Centre garden. After we share lunch and celebrate together, you can go to the Aquatic Centre to enjoy the pools, water playground, baby pools, spas, steam room and sauna.

This year's party will be held on Saturday 24 November. Places are limited so please register your spot by emailing [community@bridgehousing.com.au](mailto:community@bridgehousing.com.au) or calling **8324 0851**. More information will be provided upon registration.

Please note that the Sydney Olympic Park Aquatic Centre (including outdoor areas) is a non-smoking venue.



## Northern Beaches Update

Our Meet and Greet sessions with Northern Beaches tenants kicked off on 9 August at the Warringah Library in Manly Vale. We have since visited Narrabeena and Manly, joining over 150 tenants and family members for a welcome and information sharing lunch.

Several Bridge Housing tenants attended these sessions with us to answer any questions Northern Beaches tenants had about being a Bridge Housing resident. Women's Housing Company and FACS staff also attended.

Amongst other things, tenants asked questions about repairs and maintenance.

Repairs and maintenance for Northern Beaches tenants are provided by the NSW Government (LAHC) contractors for the first two years after the transfer. This means tenants continue to ring the same number for maintenance requests.

We have also been recruiting new staff for the Transition Team and for the Northern Beaches Housing Team, which will manage the Northern Beaches tenancies from August 2019.

Visit our website at [www.bridgehousing.org.au](http://www.bridgehousing.org.au) for more information and click on the Northern Beaches Quick Link on the home page.

## New and Revised Policies

**Start Work Incentive Scheme** – Bridge Housing is excited to announce the expansion of our Start Work Incentive (SWI) scheme from 4 weeks to 26 weeks. This means, if you are entering the workforce for the first time or starting a new job after being unemployed for over 12 months, Bridge Housing will apply

a rent freeze period for 26 weeks. This means your rent will not go up based on your new income for 26 weeks. As normal, you need to advise us within 21 days of starting the new job, so make sure you tell your housing manager or contact us on **02 8324 0800** for more details.

# TAG in 2018

**Tenant Advisory Group**  
Be involved, have your say!



## Update from Pam Pryor

### Chair of Central and West

Hello everyone, hope you all survived the winter

without having had the flu or other winter related illness.

The year is again flying fast we will be having our final meetings for the year at Parramatta and Redfern in the next 3 months.

We had an excellent tenant attendance at the last Redfern and the guest speakers from Uniting Care provided a lot of relevant information to the changes that have taken place with the "My Aged Care" packages.

I attended a welcome block meeting for the new properties in Glebe, what a great turnout. Bridge staff talked to the new tenants about any issues that may arise with a new development and the importance of reporting defects immediately while the builders are still under warranty. Some of the tenants showed an interest in having art and craft groups in the common area on a regular basis, just a social gathering to have coffee and a chat while doing their own projects.

Look forward to seeing all the regulars and hopefully some new faces at the upcoming meetings.

### CENTRAL:

#### Small Room, Redfern Town Hall

73 Pitt St, Redfern | 10:30am - 12pm  
RSVP to Pamela Pryor: 0409 047 301

**Friday: 5 October**



## Update from Julia Nunes

### Chair of East

Hello fellow tenants, I hope you are all well, safe and happy.

What a lovely warm winter we have had with many glorious sunny days. We do need the rain desperately and our thoughts are with the farmers and their families experiencing the worst of this drought.

There are not many TAG meetings left for this year so don't miss them. I am pleased that so many people have been enjoying the guest speakers at the East TAG meeting and are going home with the knowledge that they are not alone and there is a lot of support and help out there. This is especially important when you are living by yourself. Bridge staff are also at the meetings and people have been so pleased to be able to speak with staff and ask questions about various issues.

Take good care of yourself and as usual, I am always excited to see you at your next TAG meeting!

### EAST:

#### Theatrette, Waverley Library

32-48 Denison St, Bondi Junction  
10am - 11.30am RSVP to Julia Nunes:  
0423 451 188

**Friday: 2 November**



## Update from Jenny Thomsen

### ATTAG

The Autumn ATTAG meeting was very special. The meeting was

well attended and we all celebrated and thanked Francesca Cathie for her good work in supporting the ATTAG and promoting access to Bridge Housing services and employment opportunities for Aboriginal tenants. Francesca conscientiously consulted with all interested tenants and staff to produce a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for Bridge Housing. The RAP is meaningful and practical for all areas of the organisation and all levels have committed to and actioned the RAP. What a legacy.

The 2 year term of the RAP finishes early 2019 and so a new round of consultations with interested tenants, staff and stakeholders will commence in October 2018 for the next RAP. We hope many people will get involved and have their say.

Bridge Housing sent their deadly Aboriginal workers, Megan and Corrine to the recent Aboriginal Women's Conference. Corrine reported that they both enjoyed the opportunity to attend the conference to meet, listen, and learn from other Aboriginal women.

The ATTAG meeting runs every second month and all interested Aboriginal tenants are welcome to attend.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tenant Group

Bridge Housing Office  
Lawson Square, Redfern, 10am - 12 noon  
RSVP to Sarah Kingsbeer 02 8324 0827

**Thursday: 25 October**

### WEST:

#### Darcy Room, Parramatta RSL

2 Macquarie St, Parramatta  
10:30am - 12pm  
RSVP to Pamela Pryor: 0409 047 301

**Friday: 9 November**

# What's On

## Energy Training for CHP staff and tenants

Responding to rises in energy prices in recent years, a series of specially developed energy training sessions have been designed for CHP staff and tenants to help reduce energy costs and promote energy efficiency. If you are interested in attending a session in the Sydney CBD on 30 October 2018, please contact Leoni Lynch on **9690 2447** or email [leonil@communityhousing.org.au](mailto:leonil@communityhousing.org.au).

## Don't Lose Your Marbles!

The 6th Annual Marble Challenge event is on again! There will be a free BBQ, coffee and cake, information stalls, music and entertainment. Everyone is Welcome!

**When:** Thursday 11 October, 11am – 2pm

**Where:** Northcott Community Centre and Ward Park, Belvoir St Surry Hills

## Calling Tenants from the Canterbury Bankstown Area!

Are you living in the Canterbury Bankstown area? We will be holding a get together in your area to talk about starting a local TAG meeting. If you are interested in coming along for lunch and a chat or getting involved in planning the TAG meetings, please contact the Community Team on **8324 0844** or email [community@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:community@bridgehousing.org.au).

## Vietnamese Tenant Group

Bridge Housing Office Lawson Square, Redfern

Ha Nguyen will be joining us for a lunch and catch up on 10 October 2018 at the Bridge Housing office. Contact Anna Barker to register.

Call **02 8324 0844**, text **0425 777 796** or email [community@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:community@bridgehousing.org.au)



### Outreach Times and Locations

#### Parramatta Outreach

93 George Street  
Parramatta 2150 NSW  
**Hours:** All day Tuesday

#### Mill Hill Outreach

Waverley Council  
1st Floor, 31-33 Spring Street  
Bondi Junction 2022 NSW  
**Hours:** Monday 1.30pm to 4pm

#### South Coogee Outreach

3 Yamba Place  
South Coogee 2034 NSW  
**Hours:** Tuesday 9.30am to 12.30pm