

COMMON EQUITY NSW

Newsletter

WINTER EDITION // JULY 2021

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Image: Brendan, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council



COMMON EQUITY
CO-OPERATIVE
HOUSING

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We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of the country throughout Australia and pay our respects to them, their culture and their Elders past, present and future.



A message from the CEO

Welcome to our Winter Newsletter 2021 edition. These newsletters are a way to profile our co-op sector and members, keep you up to date with key CENSW projects and initiatives and help us communicate and connect with each other.

We have changed the look and feel of this edition to hopefully make it more appealing to read.

In this edition we have included more information about what our sector is up to. Many of our co-ops are closely engaged with their local communities and run many events for their members. This is important and valued work to share.

Our recent Co-op Forum and the Co-op Federation Assembly held in June is profiled for those who were unable to attend.

The Company Co-operative Agreement (CCA) Working Group has contributed an article about their work on reviewing this important document. The CCA defines the roles and responsibilities between CENSW and housing co-ops and the Working Group is continuing to review this agreement after having focused its work to

date on the company rent methodology.

To ensure these Newsletters are useful and relevant for you we would welcome co-op member involvement in putting each Newsletter together. Nicole Stevens, Communications Officer from CENSW will shortly be calling for interest from members who would like to participate in an 'editorial group' for upcoming issues of our Newsletter starting with our summer edition which will come out in December 2021.

I hope you enjoy this new look newsletter!

Nick Sabel, CEO

Croydon development opens

by Tessa Dowdell, Dunroamin Co-op

The Croydon property of the Dunroamin Housing Co-operative opened on Thursday 11 March 2021. The new property is on Wangal Country of the Eora Nation. Dunroamin now operates over three properties: Croydon, Gladesville and Haberfield.



Cutting the ribbon

Brendan Kerin from the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council opened the proceedings with a smoking ceremony and an acknowledgement of country. In opening this way, we pay respect to the unceded land on which the property dwells and acknowledge and pay respects to the ancestors and elders of this country. Brendan also shared his personal story with us. Part of the ceremony included some of the ashes being collected into a jar (where ashes from other smoking ceremonies will be added) while some of the ashes remained on the property.

A marquee tent and chairs were set up in the backyard of the property with speeches on the back porch, which was already decorated in the greenery and plants of one of the new tenants. The marquee on the grass was filled with guests from the

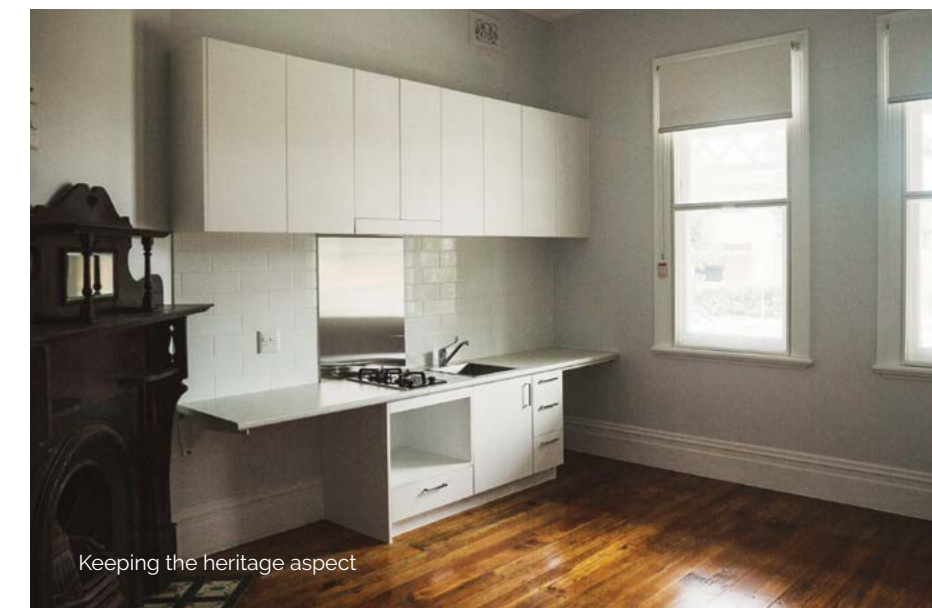
Department of Communities and Justice, Community Housing Industry Association NSW, Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals Co-op Federation and Common Equity Board and staff, members of Dunroamin and other co-operatives.

Proceedings continued with speeches from the Minister for Families, Communities and

Disability Services, Common Equity's CEO, Nick Sabel and Carmen Osborne, CENSW Chair.

Later, light refreshments were served from the kitchen/lounge out the back of the house in true Covid-style - in individual cardboard boxes.

The event was a culmination of years of effort by CENSW and Dunroamin Co-operative. Current directors are grateful to former directors' efforts over the past few years to get us to this point. The development brought together several contemporary best practice ideas: deliberative design, adaptive reuse, co-living principles and infill affordable housing. The result is an innovative dwelling which includes two adaptable units. The building is also responsive to the Co-op's co-living needs while maintaining the building's original heritage character as well as supporting diversity.



Keeping the heritage aspect

Common Equity NSW Forum

This year's Forum was held as part of the Co-op Federation Assembly, which took place on 17 & 18 June 2021 at the Teachers Federation in Surry Hills.



Group discussions

We delved into the modern world and participants submitted questions or topics they wanted discussed via the online platform Slido, they were also able to vote for their preferred topic and the top 4 were chosen for small group discussions...

Growth

Project
Collaboration

Changing
needs

Miscellaneous

The morning Assembly plenary session was extremely interesting. Ronni Kahn (founder of Oz Harvest) spoke about her journey in forming the well-known food rescue organisation and how it has changed its model somewhat in recent times. A quote she used resonated, particularly post COVID "Community is the new immunity" and I believe would resonate with our members too.

Assistant Professor Nathan Schneider Zoomed in from the University of Colorado Boulder in the USA. He provided a history of Co-ops in the U.S with a focus on his area (Boulder Colorado) and highlighted the fact that Co-ops have gone from a lateral to vertical structure, meaning they have become more hierarchical and focused on what they can do for the 'customer', moving away from the ethos of supporting members to 'do' and problem solve for and amongst themselves. He also mourned the loss of Co-op stories being told and discussed a range of online engagement platforms such as Lumio and Slack.

The CENSW Forum ran from 11am to 3.30pm – the purpose of the session was to help shape joint activity and support between Housing

Co-operatives and Common Equity and to explore potential opportunities to further develop the sector.

As per our last Forum, the issues were dissected within small groups and after lunch associated Action Items were developed by each group. These Action Items were then voted upon and will form the basis of a new Forum Action Plan which will be shared with you soon.

We gave participants the opportunity to provide feedback on our Strategic Plan and only received a few comments so we think we're on the right track!



Nick with Samuel & Chithravel, Tamil Seniors Co-op

RESEARCH STUDY

Articulating the Value of Housing Co-operatives

In Australia we are facing a housing crisis. More and more households are struggling in insecure and unaffordable housing. As we know, Housing Co-operatives offer a great alternative.

This study will develop an evidence base about the benefits of the Australian affordable rental Housing Co-operative sector. It will identify the benefits of these Housing Co-operatives to co-op members and the broader community as well as calculate the cost effectiveness of delivering these benefits. The research will focus on co-operatives that are part of Common Equity NSW (CENSW), Common Equity Housing South Australia (CEHSA), Common Equity Housing Limited (CEHL Vic) and United Housing Co-operative both in Victoria, as well as Co-operation Housing W.A. The overarching national body that represents these organisations

and that commissioned the research is the Australian Co-operative Housing Alliance (ACHA).

The research will help to demonstrate the diversity of the sector across Australia. The project aims to create an evidence base of what works in co-operative housing and challenges currently being faced, to help the sector and policy makers make decisions about how the sector might grow.

There are a few ways that housing co-operative members can take part in the project and the research team are keen to hear from you. If you live in a rental Housing Co-operative and are interested in taking part, please contact Bronwyn Bate: b.bate@westernsydney.edu.au

To find out more about the project you can visit our website: www.housingcoopresearch.org.au

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



By Bronwyn Bate | Postdoctoral
Research Fellow Institute for
Culture and Society;
Executive Officer Geographical
Society of NSW

PROPERTY WORKS PROGRAMS

DPIE & LAHC funded projects

The first half of this year has certainly seen a lot of activity and upgrades happening across our portfolio. Despite the impact of COVID-19 and the extra challenges this threw at us all, we delivered all expected works within the required timeframes for both projects.

As reported previously Common Equity was successful in receiving funding from the Department of Planning, Infrastructure & Environment (DPIE) for the Sustainable Energy / Thermal Upgrades Project and from the Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC).

An audit of all our properties was undertaken by SPM Assets in 2020 and the information gathered provided the basis of which properties were eligible for the heat pump hot water units and the insulation and/or draft proofing, which was funded under the DPIE funds.

These works have included upgrading 60 ageing hot water units by installing the more efficient heat pump model and undertaking works to help insulate and draught proof some 35 of our ageing properties.

Although there was slight hesitancy from some co-op

members, the majority have been thrilled with the new works and upgrades.

Bob Cregan from BRANCH Co-op "The experience was very good; the installer was very competent and experienced. We are thrilled to get the heat humps."

The LAHC funding has enabled a program of works which have improved the quality, safety and comfort of homes with repairs to bathrooms, external brick repairs, fencing and retaining walls across 16 LAHC properties throughout NSW.

This funding has allowed us to address priority maintenance works across our portfolio as well as expediting capital works, maintenance and upgrades on assets owned by LAHC.

The works were distributed across regional and metropolitan areas and include LAHC



properties we manage which are over 30 years old. Properties where vulnerability of residents, or where there are significant health and well being gains in completing works, have also been included.

As per funding requirements, we worked with Small to Medium Enterprises (SME) and engaged business that align with our values as much as possible.

Feedback from the LAHC is especially pleasing:

"The performance of CHPs, delivering \$40m in stimulus funds in under six months is a clear indicator of the capability of the sector and its capacity to deliver more for social housing tenants in NSW. This achievement on the part of the sector will strengthen the case for future opportunities." Mick Cassel, Chief Executive, Land and Housing Corporation.

CDT hit the road...

Members of the Co-operative Development Team (CDT) hit the road in March 2021 to travel up north, visit co-ops and deliver training.



It was a great trip and they visited North Coast Womens Housing, Branch, Twin Towns, Nelson Bay and Great Lakes Co-ops.

Training covered topics such as: open communication, responsibility of being a Board member, privacy & confidentiality and reporting obligations.

What our Co-op members had to say...

"Timing, content and delivery was fantastic"

"I found it useful and appreciate you guys coming up"

"Very informative and thoroughly enjoyed it"

North Coast Women's Co-op: Nasim (CDT) and Sue with garden haul

Celebrating independence and friendship

By Cen Amores, KCL

Filipino-Australian Housing Co-op members led the huge public picnic to celebrate Philippine Independence Day and Aus-Phil Friendship Day

"Ang Diwa ng Pagtutulungan sa Panahon ng Kagipitan" ("The Spirit of Cooperation in Time of Crisis"). This was the apt theme of the double milestone celebrations - 123rd Anniversary of Philippine Independence and 75th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Philippines and Australia.

Organised by the Alliance of Philippine Community Organisations Inc (APCO) a free Community Picnic was held at the Auburn Botanic Gardens' Community Picnic Ground.

About 350 guests gathered together and composed of representatives from state and local government, the Philippine Consulate General in Sydney, mainstream and multicultural communities including refugees and asylum seekers, churches, NGOs, corporate sponsors, the Filipino media, international students and a cross section of the Filipino community in NSW.

The event started with singing of the national anthems of the Philippines and Australia followed by a series of speeches interspersed with cultural performances. The current President of Sedgwick Housing Co-op Dr Edgar Escultura welcomed all the guests, followed by greetings from the Lord Mayor of Cumberland City Council, Steve Christou. The Hon Kevin Conolly MP, Member for Riverstone, Hon Natalie Ward MLC. Philippine Consul Melanie Diano represented Hon Ezzedin Tago, Consul General of the Philippines in Sydney.



Nick with co-op housing reps from Kapit-bahayan, Sedgwick and Guildford Seniors (from left: Ruben, Ed, Cen, Emma, Nick and Glorina).



Nick with Co-op members at the picnic

Meanwhile, the Chief Executive Officer of Common Equity NSW, Nick Sabel spent the day actively engaging with different groups of leaders from multicultural communities, civic organisations and churches who are all interested in Co-operative Housing for their respective members. Filipino leaders of the Kapit-bahayan Co-operative Ltd (Ruben and Dr Cen Amores) and Sedgwick Co-operative (Dr Edgar and Violeta Escultura) were on hand to assist CEO Nick Sabel.

The non-stop spectacular cultural extravaganza featured very talented Filipino and Australian singers, dance groups and models showcasing traditional and modern costumes.

Ningana artists hard at work



Gunther by Tim Kyle

Tim Kyle

Tim is a Sydney based figurative artist working in a broad range of media including painting, drawing and ceramics. His work is in many private international collections and at the Art gallery of NSW and the Australian War Memorial. His sculpture of Gunther is life-size and made from paper pulp and wood.

Sam King

Sam is 53-year-old artist and photographer who's currently working on a solo show. Ningana is the first time that Sam has had a secure roof over her head, which has enabled her to really focus on her work.

Sam had never heard of Co-operative Housing before moving into Ningana and if it weren't for living there, she feels she wouldn't be able to afford to live in Sydney. Sam has a back injury but her health has improved considerably since living at the Co-op.

"I love the community here and I love that as a committee member and co-op member, I can be involved and have a say about my living environment. I feel very much like Ningana is my home. Something I've missed for quite some time and for that I'm grateful."



Sam with one of her artworks

Alpha House the Artists Co-operative

Alpha House residents and artists Paola Talbert and Trevor Brown were involved in a project called EDGE 2021 – Art Camp on the Greenway, a 24-day Artist in Residence program that saw a group of about 45 artists and performers take up 'camp' on the banks of the Iron Cove Bay at Lilyfield. The event was funded and organised by the Inner West Council.

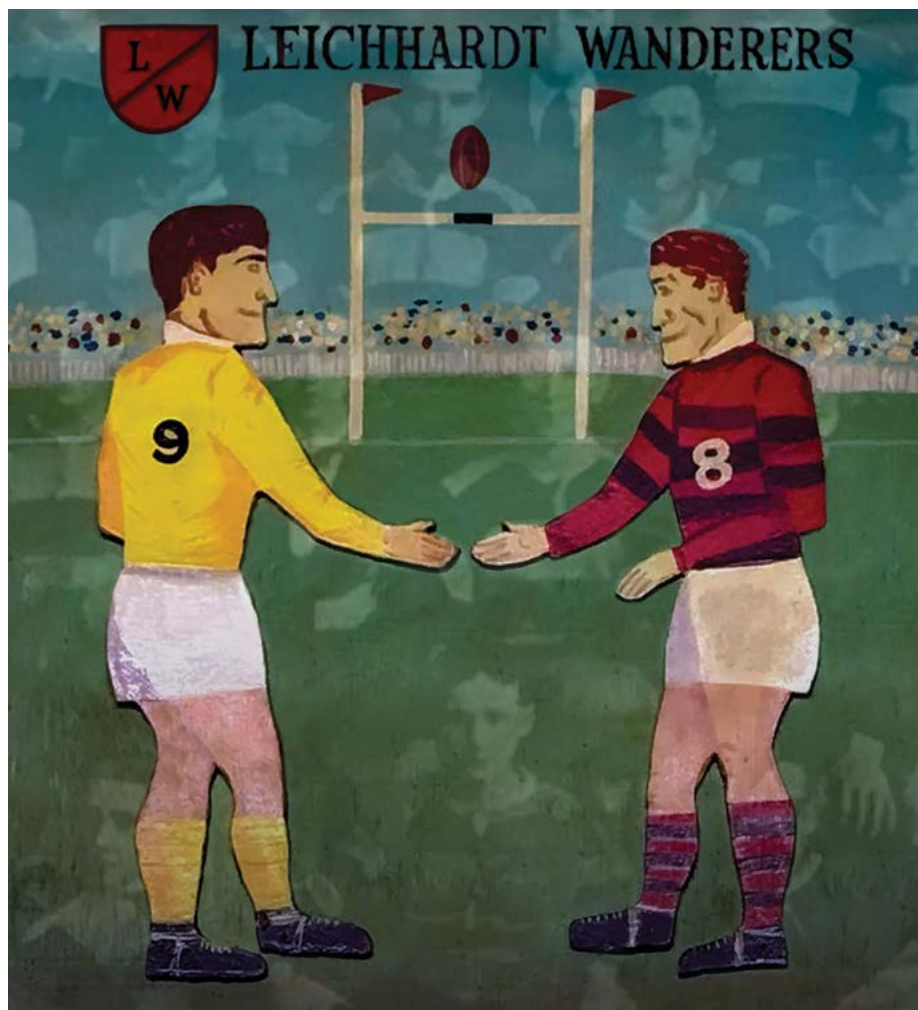


The project allowed visitors to wander through the site, meet the artists and experience the creative process out in the natural environment and in a COVID safe way.

Paola's photographic work 'Moving through time' told the story of the history of the Leichhardt Wanderers, a junior rugby league club that has been based at Blackmore Oval for 110 years. Her photographic works show-cased the extensive community the club has built over the decades.

"Acknowledging the land of the Gadigal and Wangal people of the Eora Nation, where Blackmore Oval and the Greenway are situated was foremost in my thinking when it came to creating one of the first layered artworks for this residency"

Paola Talbert



Moving Through Time poster Paola Talbert

Sedgwick Co-operative observing the age-old tradition of 'senakulo'

By Michele Baltazar, Australian Filipina Magazine 1 April 2021

Jimmy and Myrma from Sedgwick Co-op organise the 'senakulo' every year for almost 30 years!

Senakulo is the Filipino term for the re-enactment of the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ as told according to the 14 stations of the cross. It was a group effort with other members of the Co-op and the broader community being involved in the re-enactment.

The re-enactment was done in a grass clearing that allowed for all 14 stations to be set up temporarily. While the crowd was scarce, compared to the numbers in previous years, Jimmy and Myrma said they were happy they were still able to observe the Lent despite the pandemic and have been volunteering to do it since 1993, when they first moved to Australia. "We've been doing this for almost 30 years," he said.





CCA Review progress report

Last year we commenced a review of our Company Co-operative Agreement (CCA) with the aim to improve it and make it fit for purpose.

We established a CCA Working Group comprising of Co-op members and CENSW staff to undertake the review in a collaborative and transparent manner. Co-op members on the group are Chris Ryan (Planet X and CENSW Member Director), Tara Morelos (Extended Family), Gary Luke (Emoh Ruo), and Kim Brydon (Palace Womens).

The CCA Working Group has met 7 times over the last financial year. Most of its focus has been spent on reviewing the company rent methodology. This was a big and complex piece of work and took longer than expected.

The result of this work was the development of a new company rent approach based on 60% of rental income together with a 5% surplus contribution to a new

sector 'building and growth' fund for those Co-ops with \$90K or more in reserves. We will monitor the implementation of this new company rent approach over the next few years to ensure it is sustainable, helps achieve our common goal of growth and works for all.

For the rest of this year the review will focus on other aspects of the CCA including CENSW and Co-op responsibilities and compliance obligations and processes. The Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) have also recently revised their head lease agreements with Community Housing Providers (CHP's) for LAHC owned properties, including a new 20 year lease for Tier 1 CHP's. We need to look at these lease changes and see what impact

this might have on our CCA. We are also looking closely at the 20-year lease option and seeing whether it is beneficial for our sector. We are seeking pro bono legal advice to assist us in this process and to ensure that any changes in the LAHC lease agreements are correctly included in our CCA to ensure compliance.

The CCA Working Group will continue to meet monthly throughout 2021/ 22. Any recommendations arising out of the continued review will be brought to the sector for consultation. This is likely to occur in the first half of 2022.

I want to thank and acknowledge all Working Group members for their on-going assistance and thoughtful contributions to the CCA Review. I also want to thank the sector for supporting this further extension to the review. This is an important project and there is much work to do.

The CCA is the key document that frames the relationship between CENSW and Co-ops for the use and operation of government owned properties, so it is important that it reflects best practice, is contemporary and ensures compliance with government policy and regulations.

For further information about the progress on the CCA review please contact Nick Sabel, CEO at nick@commonequity.com.au or a co-op representative on the Working Group.

Contacts

Common Equity NSW

Main Number **02 9356 9200**
Toll Free Number **1800 066 834**
Maintenance **02 9356 9219**
After Hours Emergency **0432 664 486**

Registrar of Community Housing

Ensures CENSW and our Housing Co-operatives maintain our responsibility as a Registered Housing Provider.

1800 330 940
www.rch.nsw.gov.au

NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT)

Oversees and deliberates on a range of matters including: housing issues, building works and guardianship.

1300 006 228
www.ncat.gov.au

Community Justice Centres

They can assist with disputes including: pets, children, noise, garbage, unreasonable behaviours, family disputes.

1800 990 777
www.cjc.justice.nsw.gov.au
cjc@justice.nsw.gov.au

Tenants' Union NSW

The Tenants' Union specialises in NSW residential tenancies law. Check their website for your local office.

02 8117 3700 1800 251 101
www.tenants.org.au

Housing Appeals Committee (HAC)

An independent avenue of appeal for social housing tenants in NSW. Reviews decisions made by CENSW or the Co-op.

1800 629 794
www.hac.nsw.gov.au
hac@dhs.nsw.gov.au

Legal Aid NSW

They deliver legal services in most areas of criminal, family and civil law.

1300 888 529
www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au

Domestic Violence Line

Provides telephone counselling, information and referrals for people who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence.

1800 656 463
24 hours, 7 days a week

Translating & Interpreting Services (TIS)

TIS provides a telephone interpreting service.

131 450
24 hours, 7 days a week
www.tisnational.gov.au

Centrelink

For more contact information, please refer to our [Tenant Handbook](#)

www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/centrelink

If you have any feedback or would like to contribute to our newsletter please get in touch Nicole Stevens, Communications Officer **02 9356 9223** nicole@commonequity.com.au



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