

We make a stand against family violence



AHV makes a submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence and seeks accreditation as a White Ribbon workplace **FULL STORY** page 5

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Building our future: AHV Strategic Plan 2014-2025

ON JULY 7TH, AHV BOARD members Ian Hamm and Jacki Turfrey along with AHV management, Jenny Samms, Darren Smith and Des Rogers, met with the Victorian Government Minister for Housing, Martin Foley, to present our new Strategic Plan.

AHV's vision is to provide secure, appropriate, affordable housing as a pathway to better lives and stronger communities. Our strategic plan sets out how we will reach our objectives and very importantly, how we will achieve the original ambition of AHV's founding Elders to achieve self determination and provide culturally responsive housing services for Aboriginal Victorians.

Our priorities are to:

- Grow our housing supply.
- Strengthen governance and viability.

- Improve and grow our capabilities.
- Improve the quality of our services.
- Build better relationships with our Community.
- Strengthen government, corporate and community sector partnerships.

The Minister talked with us about their election commitment to work toward transfer of government-owned housing title to AHV, the importance of integrated support services for clients and how the new National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) links up with social housing.



L to R: Jacki Turfrey, Martin Foley, Jenny Samms, Darren Smith, Ian Hamm and Des Rogers

Progress on Title Transfer to AHV

AHV IS PLEASED TO REPORT that we are meeting with the Victorian Government on its commitment to work towards the staged transfer of State-owned properties currently managed by AHV to the organisation.

As you may be aware, while AHV manages over 1500 properties, most are owned by the Director of Housing, in the Department of Health and Human Services. Title transfer means that ownership of the properties transfers from the Department to AHV.

At our NAIDOC event at the Collingwood Children's Farm, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs affirmed the Government's commitment to work towards transfer to AHV of ownership of the Government properties AHV manages. Her announcement was met with much enthusiasm.

Title transfer has been a long held aspiration of this organisation and the Elders who founded it.

The move will present AHV with many opportunities to better meet the housing needs of Aboriginal Victorians. We will be able to develop properties and over time provide more and better housing for Aboriginal Victorians.

removing confusion for tenants about the different areas of responsibility between AHV and DHHS.

There would be no changes to existing tenancies as a result of title transfer and your rent will still be calculated in the same way.

AHV will keep tenants up to date on developments with title transfer. We will also be again holding community consultations across Victoria later this year and there will be an opportunity to discuss the opportunities that will come with AHV's ownership of all the houses that it currently manages.

If you have any questions or queries, please email or call your local housing or property officer.

"AHV is striving towards realising the shared vision of many before me, that shared vision of working towards the transition of ownership of the Victorian Aboriginal Rental Housing - a first for Victoria - and I am very proud to have served and been involved with AHV."
- Aunty Pat Ockwell

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It will mean AHV will be responsible for both maintenance and upgrading of properties,

AFL SportsReady and AHV



will soon be engaging in Aboriginal Employment and Training across Victoria.

WATCH THIS SPACE!

A Family Day of fun activities at the Farm

WITH AN EXPANDED RANGE of activities this year and buses supplied to regional areas for our Tenants to come and join in the festivities, our NAIDOC Family Day on July 8th at the Collingwood Children's Farm proved another great success - this year celebrating our spiritual and cultural connection with land and sea.



Auntie Pat Ockwell

Wurundjeri Elder, Auntie Pat Ockwell provided a warm Welcome to Country and acknowledged our sponsors for the event, the City of Yarra and the Collingwood Children's Farm. Auntie Pat, who has made a long and

valuable contribution to AHV and its forerunner, the Aboriginal Housing Board, said that: "We all look forward to this day, that we can have a great fun day with our next generation. I would like to give a special thank you to the staff of AHV for organising this day for the children and families."



Natalie Hutchins

Speaking on behalf of the State Government, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Natalie Hutchins, confirmed the Government's commitment to work toward transfer of ownership of the AHV

rental houses. She also said that, "sometimes in my job it's hard to get Victoria's Aboriginal voice on the national agenda and that's something that we work hard for here in Victoria ... the Government looks forward to working with Aboriginal Communities all around Victoria and having their voices at the table rather than speaking on their behalf - making sure that we're listening and involving Aboriginal people in the decision making. The most important thing we can do as a state is to respect our history - the culture of our Aboriginal people ... and this week is a week of remembering and it's a week of celebrating our culture."



Phillip Vlahogiannis

The Mayor of the City of Yarra, Cr Phillip Vlahogiannis, spoke of the Council's "very strong commitment to embracing, to promoting, to supporting our ancient and contemporary Aboriginal heritage.

The City of Yarra, particularly Fitzroy, was the beginning of many Aboriginal organisations and we're very glad that this is part of the heritage of our municipality."

The brothers of the Wayapa Wuurk Dance Group, from Gunai country out Gippsland way, once again were kind enough to put on a great show for the families and children, fully decked out in dance paint and possum skins - and equipped with didgeridoos, boomerangs, spears, clapsticks and even a marngrook footy! Fittingly, given the NAIDOC theme this year, they performed their captivating dances that connect closely to native animals and the land - and later involved children in an interactive dance workshop.

AHV staff and volunteers were busy helping with popular activities such as boomerang painting, beading, basket weaving, damper making and colouring-in. The jumping castle made a popular return and tractor rides are always chockers. Farm staff provided morning tea and cake, with a lunch barbecue later on.

We'd like to say a big thank you to all those who volunteered to make our NAIDOC Family Day celebration another roaring success.

We thank our Elders

While we always value and respect our Elders for their wisdom and the preservation of our cultural lore, their presence and contribution to activities during NAIDOC Week is something we sometimes take a little for granted.

As a token of our gratitude for their work during NAIDOC Week, AHV has awarded each Tenancy with an Elder over 70, a \$50 Gift Card that we're sure they'll put to good use.

To our Elders, from the Team at AHV, a very big thank you!

*Celebrating and respecting our
Sacred Ground*



Homelessness and housing instability a major cause of family violence

AHV has made a submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, which began in July this year.

ADDRESSING FAMILY VIOLENCE is a key priority for our organisation not only as a Community aspiration, but also in ensuring we can continue to effectively provide adequate and quality housing. Family violence is a major contributor to the rising demand for our services, with 1137 people now on our waiting list. "Clients on our waiting list and tenants seeking to relocate because of family violence in too many cases cannot, because affordable housing is not available," said Darren Smith, AHV's Director Executive Coordination.

AHV has for a long time called for state and federal governments to better target the specific cultural needs of our Community. We believe that family violence and housing instability are closely associated and that solutions should take into consideration cultural values and

obligations as well as the extended nature of Aboriginal families.

Jenny Samms, CEO, said: "It is our belief that family violence is a significant cause of homelessness for Aboriginal people and of housing instability. Further, that family violence, often in concert with other factors, causes stress and trauma which undermines the ability for Aboriginal people to improve their circumstances."

In a separate statement, AHV Board Member, Jacki Turfrey, pointed to the flow on effects of family violence in our Community: "The impact of family violence on Aboriginal communities is devastating in terms of Aboriginal over-representation in child protection, youth justice, adult incarceration (particularly among women), homelessness, poverty, poor physical and mental health and alcohol and drug abuse. All of these factors also present family violence risk factors," she wrote. Jacki also noted that a key

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Taking a stand to end violence against women

IN JULY THIS YEAR, AHV formally applied to White Ribbon Australia seeking workplace accreditation as an organisation that actively prevents and responds to violence against women. White Ribbon Workplaces proactively practise respect and safety for women at work and in the broader community.

Key AHV managers have already attended an Orientation Workshop to begin the 15-month accreditation process. Some of the many benefits that will assist our organisation include: improved office safety and morale by providing refined support to employees who are victims of violence, educating staff in effectively recognising and responding to violence and inappropriate behaviour, risk mitigation, and increased employee and Community confidence in our organisation.

AHV is committed to being a leader in this area both as an employer and as a Community housing provider.

About White Ribbon Australia

White Ribbon is Australia's only national, male-led Campaign to end men's violence against women. Its vision is that all women live in safety, free from all forms of men's violence. It works through primary prevention initiatives involving awareness raising and education, providing programs with youth, schools and workplaces across the broader community.

Globally, White Ribbon is the world's largest male-led movement to end men's violence against women. White Ribbon is active in more than 60 countries and began in Australia in 2003. White Ribbon Australia observes the International Day of the Elimination of Violence against Women, also known as White Ribbon Day, annually on November 25.

You can find out more about White Ribbon at:
www.whiteribbon.org.au

Tenant Life Skills Program

SAFE, COMFORTABLE AND STABLE housing is the foundation for strong families, good health and a better life. We know that some of our tenants need a bit of support to achieve that.

That is why we have introduced the Life Skills program. It aims to provide tenants, particularly those most in need, with the skills that will help them sustain their tenancies and effectively manage their households.

With the introduction of this program all new tenants will receive starter packs that will help them get going in their new house. Following an interview, some new tenants will then participate in an orientation program which will provide support and advice on things like their rights and responsibilities as tenants, managing budgets, maintaining the house and reducing the need for costly repairs and improving the living environment.



Where tenants and/or their families have the need for more intensive and personalized support, AHV will

work with them, and in partnership with other support

services to ensure that they have intensive client-focused support, case management and coordination. The support period and case plan should aim to be completed in 6 months.

We are targeting 50 clients to work with intensively for the first 12 months of the Life Skills Program. If this goal is successfully achieved, the number will be increased to 75 for the next 12 months. Initially, the Life Skills Program will work with clients from the Metropolitan area. The medium-term goal for the program is to offer a state-wide service to our AHV clients.

The program will employ two full-time staff, one of whom is Nikki Moss, the program's Life Skills Coordinator. Housing Officers will work in partnership with dedicated Life Skills staff to achieve the successful outcomes we are hoping for.

If you would like to know more about the program or feel it may benefit you, please contact **Nikki Moss on 9403 2100**.



Annual Rent Review

WE ARE IN THE PROCESS of conducting the Annual Rent Review for 2015.

Thank you to everyone who has responded to AHV's requests for documentation. If you have not responded and think you may be entitled to subsidised rent, please contact your Housing Officer or Head Office to obtain an Application for Subsidised Rent form so we can assess your eligibility.

If you have responded then you would have been notified of the new rent charge by mail in the first week of August. New rent charges are applied to your rental account from the 17th of August, 2015.

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challenge for the Commission is the, "limited mainstream understanding of conceptions of family violence in Aboriginal communities."

Hearings for the Commission were conducted between July 13 and August 14, with a report and recommendations due to the government by Monday, 29 February 2016.

For all your repairs and maintenance needs please call one of the following AHV Maintenance Lines:

General metro: (03) 9403 2166

Regional: 1300 664 392 (cost of local call)

Emergency after hours: (03) 9403 2171