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## Churches Community Housing's Role in Facilitating Partnerships

CCH's basic strategy in developing a partnership is first to provide information, education and assistance to churches who are considering housing as an option of responding their community. Assistance is then offered to groups wishing to assess their potential of working with government. CCH provides information to government and churches regarding options and methods for utilising church-owned assets for community housing, and facilitates the development of the partnership through brokerage and mediation. CCH performs its role as objective facilitator, seeking mutually beneficial outcomes for both churches and government.

*"The significance of the introduction of the Legislation and a Code of Practice is that all housing providers managing properties owned by the NSW Land and Housing Corporation are obliged to conform with the management practices and standards of the system."*

## How Churches Can Help House People

We all know that having a safe, secure place to live is one of the most basic human rights, and something that most of us take for granted. Churches have a commitment to improve the living standards of those on the margins of society; to call their own members and the wider society to advocate for justice; to work in partnership with government and the community to meet agreed social objectives and improve the fabric of society.

We believe that churches have the potential to make a significant contribution to the delivery of housing outcomes, as well as an understanding of the support

needs of those who require such housing. Churches have a deep commitment to placing greatest attention towards those most in need in the community.

The NSW government has a range of new partnership strategies to provide housing for people in need. The benefit to your church or organisation is that **you will maintain title** over the land and the Office of Community Housing or Centre for Affordable Housing may be able to fund the development of the project.

Within this new strategy, a range of models will be de-

veloped to suit different combinations of partner contributions and security mechanisms. This will also enable us to increase the supply of new community housing and address housing affordability.

Please contact Derek Yule at our office to discuss potential partnerships or the new Legislation and Code of Practice.

One of CCHL's roles as a peak organisation is to represent the church sector and communicate your views and concerns to the Office of Community Housing (OCH), our funding body.



# Churches Community Housing

## About Us

Churches Community Housing Limited (CCHL) was initially established in 1996 as an organisation to assist churches and church welfare organisation in NSW to develop housing initiatives for individuals and families on low incomes in partnership with the State government.

The aim of the organisation was expressed as the desire to support church groups in their mission of compassion and justice as they seek to follow Christ's example to care for those who are most disadvantaged.

CCHL developed a new tenancy management company which was formed and commenced operations in 2003.

Housing management is the focus for CCHL's new company. The church sector has a long history of providing high quality supported accommodation to a range of families and individuals with special support needs. The forma-

tion of the housing company was precipitated by what has been an ongoing issue for some organisations, where the joint role of both landlord and support provider creates a conflict of interest and impacts on the quality of service being offered to the tenant. For example, offering a tenant support over various issues in their lives while at the same time trying to follow up rent arrears.

The solution to this dilemma was the establishment of a church based housing management company that offers housing management services to the church and church agencies while those agencies continue to offer support services. CCHL is an organisation that understands churches and how they operate, and as such is in a perfect position to assist in the tricky separation of tenant and property management and support. The transfer of this management has enabled church agencies to focus wholly on the work at which

they excel, namely supporting people in need.

CCHL manages a total of 180 properties in partnership with 17 church providers and 5 non church agencies. We have approximately 250 tenants most of whom have a variety of support needs. All partnerships with CCHL and church housing providers are negotiated from the basis of a generic Service Agreement which is adjusted to meet the specific needs of the contracting parties.

CCHL is a registered and accredited housing provider, and is able to assist your organisation in developing solutions for viable tenancy and property management.

### Inside this issue:

<i>Does your church house people?</i>	2
<i>What is Performance Based Registration?</i>	2
<i>The new Regulatory Code categories</i>	2
<i>Implications of Registration for Church Housing Providers in NSW</i>	3
<i>CCHL as Housing Managers</i>	3
<i>How Churches can help house people</i>	4
<i>Churches Community Housing's Role in Facilitating Partnerships</i>	4



## CCHL as Housing Managers

Housing management services delivered by CCHL include:

- Sign up of tenants to a residential tenancy agreement
- Rent collection and rental reviews
- Attendance to CTTT
- Property inspections

- Responsive and long term asset maintenance
- An understanding of your clients' / our tenants' needs
- A 24 hour / 7 day week emergency maintenance hot line

- Close relationships formed with support providers
- On-going communication and attendance of meetings

Cont'd page 3.....



## Does your church house people?

Many churches in Australia provide housing and support to the disadvantaged in our community.

Churches are committed to improving the living standards of those on the margin of society.

Churches provide church owned properties that house these people or manage properties that are owned by the NSW Land and Housing Corporation.

After years of managing and providing support to less fortunate people that live in these properties, it can be very diffi-

cult to know who owns the asset.

It is very important to know who owns your properties, and if they are owned by the NSW Land and Housing Corporation, there is certain criteria you will have to meet to continue providing support and management of these properties.

It is important that you find out who is the actual owner of your properties prior to new legislation being introduced early in 2008.

There will be certain criteria to meet for anyone (not only churches) that is the manager

of a property owned by the NSW Land and Housing Corporation.

You will be obliged to conform with the management practices and standards of the regulatory code.

If you do not conform to these standards, NSW Housing may "take back" your properties and allocate them to a registered housing provider of their choice for management.

CCHL is able to offer support and guidance in this process.

*"It is important that you find out who is the actual owner of your properties prior to certain legislation being introduced early in 2008."*

## What is Performance Based Registration?

NSW Housing is creating a public register which lists the names of all community housing providers. To be on the list, a provider needs to demonstrate they have achieved certain outcomes relating to service quality, corporate governance and financial sustainability and be able to sustain the outcomes.

The regulatory code is compulsory. NSW Housing will only 'do business' with registered

providers—this means the Department will only enter into and remain in funding and head leasing arrangements with registered housing providers.

Both housing associations and housing providers are expected to achieve nine core outcomes to achieve registration, five related to service quality, two to corporate governance and two to financial sustainability. This process requires submission of records on outcomes

data which is used to conduct an annual performance review undertaken by the Performance Review Team within the Office of Community Housing (OCH).

The reason for NSW Housing and OCH to have providers registered, is so their asset (property) is being "looked after" and is being used to house those eligible for public or community housing."



## The new Regulatory Code Categories

There will be four registration categories that will cover all community housing providers:

- Not for profit growth providers
- Housing providers
- Housing Managers
- Small Housing Managers

Typically, a **not for profit growth provider** will be an organisation that will or can manage 200 or more community housing properties, and develop large scale affordable housing projects.

A **housing provider** will or can manage 200 or more community housing properties.

A **housing manager** will or can manage between 1—199 community housing properties.

A **small housing manager** will or can manage 1—30 community housing properties.



## Implications of the Regulatory Code for Church Housing Providers in NSW

One of the challenges for church housing providers is the relatively small size of the agency and a housing portfolio which contains a mix of funding sources and ownership along with church owned stock. Often, the reality of the specific reporting requirements of the regulatory code needed for a segment of the church housing stock does not justify the level of infrastructure or its costs. Historically churches have provided supported housing and have become housing managers

by default. The regulatory code requires a professional and formal separation of these two functions and each tenant has to be protected by a residential tenancy agreement.

The options under the new code will be to become a registered housing provider, hand over church properties to a registered housing provider or develop a partnership with CCHL to manage your properties.

If the above options above do not suit, then NSW Housing or OCH will nominate a housing provider for your organisation.

If you "hand over" your properties to CCHL, you will retain nomination rights to your properties and will be able to concentrate on your core business of support.



## CCHL as Housing Managers

CCHL is pleased to report that since operating as a tenancy manager since 2003, we have developed and sustained partnerships with seventeen support providers, covering twenty two programs.

Our relationship with our support partners is critical to our successful operation and growth. As this time our partners include Mission Australia, St Vincent de Paul Society, Centacare Australia, Centacare Alive program, Uniting Care,

The NSW Alcohol and Drug Foundation, The Haymarket Foundation, L'Arche Community, Rendu Youth Services, Vincentian Family Services, The Marian Centre, Gethsemane Community, Sudanese Settlement Services, The Assertive Recovery in the Community Team, the Office of The Protective Commissioner, and Catholic Healthcare.

Our support partners and CCHL share common values and common goals. CCHL

understands various client issues and the need for flexibility to allow support partners to operate their programs. Support workers' focus can now be directed more to developing living and life skills instead of housing and tenancy matters.

The communication between partners and clients / tenants promotes and enhances their sense of worth and self esteem.

*"The options under the new code will be to become a registered housing provider, hand over church properties to a registered housing provider or develop a partnership with CCHL (or a registered housing provider) to manage your properties."*

