

Autumn 2020

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From the CEO's desk

I hope this newsletter finds you well. It has certainly been a tumultuous few months for people worldwide since the spread of COVID-19. Australia seems to be heading in the right direction and PLH is continuing with several temporary measures to keep everyone safe. We appreciate your cooperation during this time.

Now, more than ever, we need to look out for each other. PLH staff have been calling to check on the welfare of some tenants who live alone and are self-isolating. This has been a rewarding experience and the feedback has been very positive.

Although some of our group activities such as gardening workshops are on hold, other tenant programs continue as normal. You can apply online for



laptop loans, learner driver lessons, education scholarships and funds for sports and health activities.

Finally, I would like to formally welcome Simon, our new Executive Manager. I'm sure everyone will make Simon feel welcome and before long he will feel like part of the PLH team!

Ian Lynch - CEO

Sheila Astolfi Education Scholarships



Pacific Link's Education Scholarship Program is named after Sheila Astolfi, who was our founder and Chief Executive of 20 years. Sheila worked tirelessly for the local community and was passionate about equity in social housing and providing opportunities for individuals to overcome adversity. Sadly, Sheila passed away in 2010, however her legacy lives on and we are proud to honour her memory through our Education Scholarship Program.

The next round of Sheila Astolfi Education Scholarships close on the 30th June 2020. They are open to primary and high school students, as well as those undertaking tertiary studies. Scholarships can fund items such as laptops, course fees or other supplies to assist with your studies. Visit the PLH website for information www.pacificlink.org.au/programs

Updates from two of our 2020 scholarship recipients

Sean - Cert IV Photography



What appealed to you about the course?

I'm a long-time photography enthusiast. After a 5 year battle with leukemia I found this a great way to return to normal life.

What is your favourite thing about the course so far?

The assignments and learning to write my first reports. I got a buzz out of completing them but there is a lot more to go.

How has the scholarship helped with your studies?

It actually made it possible! Gave me a little kick in the door.

What are your aspirations for next 5 years?

COVID-19 has thrown the whole year out. Completion of this course will drag into 3rd term which will coincide with my enrolment into Cert 4 Screen and Media, Journalism, Radio Broadcast to be able to enrol in a Diploma of Photography.

Would you encourage other tenants to apply for a PLH Education Scholarship?

Yes! They have no excuses... get motivated and get it done!

Noelene - Bachelor of Coastal & Marine Science



What appealed to you about the course?

I love the ocean and living near water and wanted to understand about the ocean and marine life.

What is your favourite thing about the course so far?

I love learning and learning something new.

How has the scholarship helped with your studies?

Without the scholarship I would not have been able to do this degree. The printer and laptop have been my best friend.

What are your aspirations for next 5 years?

I hope to go on to do my PHD.

Would you encourage other tenants to apply for a PLH Education Scholarship?

Definitely would encourage them. It opens a new world up to you. The prospect of gaining a career in something you love and being able to earn very good money eventually. It just changes your life, make new friends and gives you a sense of achievement and great for your wellbeing.

Sports, Health, Exercise and Wellbeing Program

With schools now reopened, many sports are also recommencing and we encourage our young tenants to get active! PLH's SHEW Program supports the health and wellbeing of children aged between 5 - 17 years. Funds are available to encourage participation in

registered sport, exercise or wellness activities. You can apply for up to \$250 to pay for registration fees, uniforms or other associated costs.

More SHEW information is online at www.pacificlink.org.au/programs



Meet Simon - PLH's new Executive Manager of Tenancy Services

Simon joined the PLH team just after Easter this year at an extremely unusual time for us all. Our typically bustling office was quiet, with most staff working from home due to COVID-19 social distancing measures. Simon adapted extremely well despite these strange circumstances with regular video calls to meet staff and learn about how we work.

Simon has many years of experience in the not-for-profit sector, having worked most recently with Link Housing in Sydney as the Business Improvements Manager. He has worked in multiple

states across Australia, even providing housing services to remote Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley region. It is evident that Simon has travelled far and wide for work, but he has now made his home on the Central Coast with his family. He looks forward to leading the tenancy team so that they continue providing excellent support to our tenants.

As we welcome Simon, we farewell Larissa who was previously in the role. Larissa has moved on to an exciting new position at Central Coast Council and we wish her very well!



Key2 Realty Celebrate First Anniversary

PLH's social enterprise property management agency Key2 Realty have now passed their one-year anniversary! It is certainly a milestone worth celebrating as they have received such support from the community over the past twelve months.



Key2 Realty's profits go towards three of PLH's tenant programs; SHEW, the Education Scholarships and the Learner Driver courses. Key2's staff are just as passionate about seeing our tenants succeed as the PLH staff! Jonathan and Scott attended the Scholarship presentation in February and were inspired when they met the school students and those undertaking tertiary studies.

Earlier in the year, Key2 Realty were fortunate to win grant funding from the local Bendigo Bank branches to have a video produced about how the social enterprise is helping PLH tenants. The video showcases Karina's story, one of the Education Scholarship recipients from last year, who expresses how the scholarship gave her the moral and financial support needed to follow her dreams and pursue a career in photography.

Visit the 'How we help' page on Key2 Realty's website to watch the video www.key2realty.com.au/how-we-help

Apply Online for PLH's Learner Driver Program

Registered driving schools are now back on the road after NSW Government recommendations were lifted on the 25th May 2020.

PLH's Learner Driver Program is open to tenants of all ages who meet the eligibility criteria. In partnership with the NRMA Safer Driving School, PLH

offers 10 free professional driving lessons. The course teaches essential road safety skills, builds confidence of learner drivers and also provides logbook credits approved by the RMS.

Applications to PLH's Learner Driver Program can now be made online at www.pacificlink.org.au/programs



Connecting with our isolated tenants




Due to COVID-19, PLH has made some changes to their regular business routines, including calling some isolated tenants to check on their wellbeing. It's been a great experience and a treat for staff to connect or reconnect with tenants. Staff have made calls to over 180 tenants and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. Read some feedback below.

We were so pleased to hear about tenants looking out for their neighbours who are self-isolating. Collecting mail, picking up groceries or just calling to say hello can make

a big difference to someone who is staying home to stay safe. If you're able to do so, offer help to your elderly or vulnerable neighbours during this difficult time, always respecting the need for social distancing.

One thing we noticed with the tenants we called, is that they're getting along day-to-day, making it the best they can. Must be that Aussie Spirit! It's times like these you realise we are the lucky country. Reminds us of that saying, "Life doesn't get easier or more forgiving, we get stronger and more resilient."

We are always open to receiving your feedback on our services and encourage you to let us know what we are doing well and what we can improve.

 Write to us
 Call us
 Email us

During our welfare calls we asked tenants what sort of things they, or their families and friend, are doing to pass the time. These were some of the responses:

- Learning new recipes
- Crosswords/puzzles
- Gardening
- Reading books and e-books
- Sending inspirational quotes and jokes to friends
- Making greeting cards
- Playing games online
- Cleaning up photo albums
- Online shopping
- Virtual workshops

"I take this opportunity to thank the staff of Pacific Link for all the links sent to ensure we, as tenants, are up to date with information about the virus. Over the 21 years I have been a client of Pacific Link I have always found the staff helpful and informative."

"I would like to thank Pacific Link Housing for showing restraint and compassion towards its tenants during this emergency, as opposed to some landlords who have been appearing in the media lately for all the wrong reasons. We are all in this together, so we all have to pull together in order to pull through at all."

"I want to thank Pacific Link for taking good care of us tenants in keeping us up to date with what's going on in our community and looking out for our mental and physical health. Your care and concern is second to none and for that you are to be commended. Once again thank you for your ongoing care for your tenants."

"Thank you for continuing all the amazing things you do for the most vulnerable in the face of this disaster. Whilst we are always thankful for the security of housing, I cannot tell you how lucky we feel to have that one major issue not added to the list of serious concerns during desperate times."



Australian Red Cross COVID Connect Service

Good social connections are essential for all aspects of our physical and mental wellbeing. While many of us are staying at home it can be easy to feel isolated.

COVID Connect is a free service provided by the Australian Red Cross which provides support and community connection to people who

are feeling socially isolated as a result of COVID-19. One of their volunteers would be happy to call you – once or regularly – for a friendly chat to help maintain or improve social connection!

You can register for a call online at www.redcross.org.au or contact their Customer Care Team on 1800 733 276 if you need help registering.

COVID-19 Update for Tenants

PLH is continuing with several temporary measures to protect the health of tenants, staff and the wider community during this Coronavirus pandemic. We appreciate the support and cooperation of tenants during this time.

As you would know, the April rent review has been postponed until later in the year. Please continue to provide your household and income details and we will maintain these on file. If a change in rent is required, rent decreases will be processed immediately, however any increase to rent will not be processed at this time.

We also ask that you continue paying rent as normal and to avoid falling into arrears. If you have lost work due to COVID-19 and are having difficulty paying rent, please call us ASAP so we can assist.

We will continue to update you by post, SMS messages, by email and in our newsletters. The most up to date information for tenants can be found on our website at www.pacificlink.org.au/coronavirus

Over the coming months, we will begin phasing back in some of our routine practices in line with government's social distancing regulations. These include:

- Non-essential repairs and maintenance
- Tenancy inspections
- Tenant events, workshops and group training
- Non-urgent housing transfers
- Staff working arrangements
- Office social distancing measures

Australian Government's COVIDSafe App

The COVIDSafe app is part of the Australian Government's work to slow the spread of COVID-19. It will help to find and contain outbreaks quickly so that restrictions can be eased sooner.

PLH staff have downloaded the COVIDSafe app on work mobiles and we encourage tenants to do the same. It is completely voluntary, however

downloading the app is something you can do to keep yourself and the community safe.

When you download the app, you will be asked to enter a name, phone number, postcode and age range which is uploaded to a highly secure data storage system. For more information visit www.health.gov.au



Killarney Vale
apartments



Killarney Vale
apartments

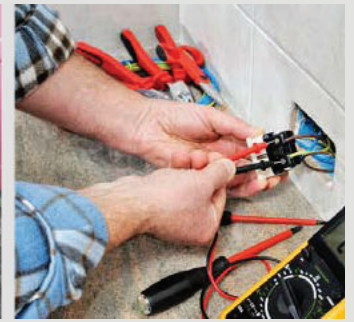
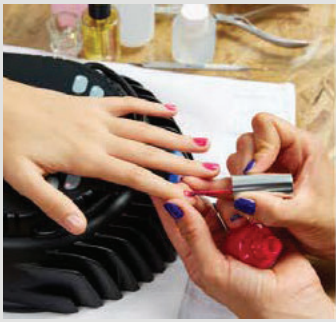
New studio apartments

Twelve PLH tenants are now living in brand-new apartments at Killarney Vale. We've had great feedback that the rooms are bright and modern with lots of natural light!

Additional studio apartments are in construction at Canton Beach and will be completed by August 2020. Wallis Place will provide 30 units for affordable and social housing including accommodation for a live-in manager.



Aaron, MG, Simon
and Mark at
Canton Beach



Stay Digitally Connected through COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the way education is delivered across the globe. Universities, schools and colleges have quickly moved to remote learning with lots of positive outcomes. With most PLH staff working from home, we have weekly meetings and training via video conference. It's a great way for us to stay connected!

This shift towards online learning has opened up more opportunities for people to undertake studies or short courses from home. If you are interested, we encourage you to search online. There are so many options available so you are bound to find a course that interests you!

Technology can also help you stay connected with friends, family or even create new social groups. Be Connected is a great Government program aimed helping older Australians thrive in the digital world. You can learn at your own pace with free courses on everything from how to access the internet, make video calls or find new friends who share similar interests. Visit their website to read about their full range of topics www.beconnected.esafety.gov.au

Staying at home doesn't mean that you can't stay active with the help of technology. There are plenty of free resources online with ideas on how

to keep moving. The government website www.sport.nsw.gov.au has a section aimed at staying active during COVID-19 with activities, nutrition tips and information for all age groups. Jump online and learn something new!

If you are interested in online learning or just want to stay connected with friends and family, PLH can provide interest free laptop loans to eligible tenants.

Visit our website or give us a call for more information on the Laptop Loan Program and how to apply.

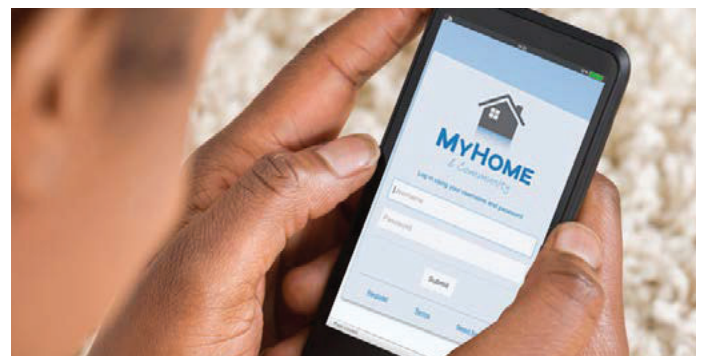
New Tenant App coming in July

PLH will be introducing a new and improved tenant app in July, due to the MyHome app being upgraded. It will provide improved rent statements, more information on household details and the ability to request maintenance.

Meanwhile tenants who used the MyHome app to make payments, can still pay rent electronically through our website. It's a similar process to MyHome and is very easy to use. All you need is your tenant ID number. If you don't know it, please call the office or email staff to find out.

We will keep you updated on the release date of the new app. Please make sure we have current contact details, including your mobile number and email address for updates.

NOTE: *If your rent payments are made directly via Centrepay, they will continue as normal. The change will only affect tenants who previously used the MyHome app to make payments.*



To pay rent online, visit www.pacificlink.org.au/paymyrent and click the orange Pay my Rent button which will take you to PLH's Bpoint page. You will need to enter the following:

- **Biller Code:** Select payment e.g. rent, water, repairs, bond
- **Reference 1:** Your 5-digit tenant number
- **Amount:** The dollar value e.g. if you're paying \$50 – you would enter 50.00 or 50 – no need for a dollar sign
- **Select your payment option:** choose one of the options displayed by clicking on the logo

You will be asked to confirm payment which will generate a receipt number for your records.