

# Mia Mia

ABORIGINAL HOUSING VICTORIA  
MESSAGE STICK NEWSLETTER | APRIL 2014



## Future directions and challenges

Building AHV for better housing



Ari Spierings,  
Director of HR and  
Organisational  
Development (left)  
and Jenny Samms,  
CEO (right)  
started with AHV  
last December.

**IN THIS EDITION**

**FULL STORY**  
- Page 3

2



NAIDOC Family Day  
turns 15

4



Introducing Darren Smith  
to our readers

3



Welcome back to  
Mark Lipson

5



Bendigo and Reservoir  
projects now completed

6

Hi-Tech to continue property  
inspections for AHV

# NAIDOC Family Day: celebrating 15 years

THIS YEAR AHV WILL CELEBRATE its 15th year of our NAIDOC Family Day - in partnership with the Collingwood Children's Farm and the City Of Yarra - on Thursday the 10th July 2014, from 10.30 am until 2.30 pm.

Please spread the word and join us for a fun family day of face painting, traditional dancing performances, boomerang painting and more.

Entry is free so why not bring the whole family? There will also be a free lunch provided on the day.



If you wish to volunteer on the day, please contact Tracey Winmar at AHV on 03 9403 2100 - we'd love you to help us in making our 15th anniversary extra special!

## 2014 NAIDOC Theme

NAIDOC Week is a time to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, heritage, culture and achievements. A time to acknowledge our Indigenous artists, scholars, sportspeople, elders, community members and more.

This year the National NAIDOC theme is Serving Country: Centenary & Beyond. The theme was selected by the National NAIDOC Committee to honour all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have fought in defence of our country, from our warriors in the Frontier Wars to our warriors who have served with honour and pride in Australia's military conflicts.



6-13 July  
**2014**

**SERVING COUNTRY –  
CENTENARY & BEYOND**

## Welcome to Nyamba Buru Yawuru

### The Yawuru people from far north-west Australia visit AHV.

AS THE LARGEST INDIGENOUS SOCIAL HOUSING Provider in Australia we believe it is important to also offer fraternal support and advice to our people throughout Australia.

On 14 October, last year, Debra Shortis, Priscilla Williams and Karen Pearce from AHV, warmly welcomed Nini Mills, Community Development Manager, and other representatives from the Nyamba Buru Yawuru (NBY) organisation to engage in information sharing and fraternal goodwill.

NBY is the development arm of the Yawuru Native Title holders. It was established when the Yawuru Native Title Agreement was signed in February 2010. This was as a result of a long land rights struggle by the Yawuru people of the Kimberley region in far north-west Australia. As part of a Global Agreement with the WA State Government, Shire of

L to R: Nini Mills, Karen Pearce, Kamisa White, Rhonen Maher, Debra Shortis and Priscilla Williams.



Broome and the Yawuru Traditional Owners, NBY is now established as the largest future land developer in the region. NBY's role is to develop land and engage in projects aimed at providing a financial return to sustain Yawuru's many social, cultural and environmental programs.

Ms Mills said that, "housing is a high priority for the Yawuru people and in response NBY has developed a number of Housing Programs to support our community. Any information we can gather from AHV and other organisations working in this space is very valuable to us."

# Jenny Samms is committed to working with our tenants and communities to improve housing for Aboriginal Victorians.

HELLO, MY NAME IS JENNY SAMMS, I am very pleased to come to Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) as CEO for this year, to lead our organisation through an important stage of its development on the path towards achieving independence.

AHV is expecting this year to be both challenging and exciting. We are working with Government to move to a general lease arrangement and achieve Housing Association status. This means we will be taking even more responsibility for the maintenance and upgrade of our houses but will have the flexibility and authority to start to expand new housing through construction, purchase or acquisition, using a mix of government funds and private sector investment.

I'm looking forward to providing strong leadership as part of that process.

The AHV Board is committed to ensuring that Aboriginal Victorians have decent, affordable and secure housing. Without housing it is hard for kids to go to school, hard to hold down a job and hard to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

For some, home ownership is an aspiration and it can provide a base for future financial security.

We need to work closely with our tenants and Aboriginal communities to achieve our shared goals. This means we need to spend more time in the Community and hear both your concerns and your good ideas. In that aspect, Ricky Mullett will be taking on the role of Deputy CEO.

“Above all else we are an Aboriginal organisation with a lot to be proud of - and the way we do business needs to be built on, to reflect a strong commitment to culture and self determination.”

He will have specific responsibility for ensuring AHV works with communities to hear what you have to say. Ricky will also take on leadership of new and innovative projects that meet special needs within our Community.

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## Our Board welcomes back Mark Lipson

AS A PREVIOUS AHV BOARD MEMBER from 2006 to 2010, Mark Lipson returns with a wealth of knowledge and experience about our organisation and our Community. As a Forensic Accountant with over 25 years of expertise in professional accounting practice and family law matters, Mark also equips us with commercial accounting, auditing and risk management guidance.

Over the years, Mark has been heavily involved in providing evidence in family law matters in the Family Court of Australia, and given evidence in a number of commercial



Mark Lipson

matters in the Supreme Court of Victoria, the County Court of Victoria and also the Federal Court of Australia.

Mark is a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia, Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia Professional Conduct Tribunal, CPA Australia, Forensic Accountants Special Interest Group, an associate member of the Institute of Arbitrators and Mediators in Australia and a part time ordinary member of VCAT in the legal practice list.

We welcome Mark back to the AHV Board and look forward to his valuable contribution during an important period of transition for our organisation.



## DEPUTY CEO's *messages*

### Introducing Darren Smith, our new Director, Policy, Strategy and Executive Coordination



Darren Smith

THIS EDITION OF Mia Mia features strong messages about new directions, growth and challenges for our organisation. My new role here at AHV, as Deputy CEO, is all about working closely with all our mob across the state to develop exciting projects that meet the special needs of our Community.

I'd like to introduce Darren Smith our new Director, Policy, Strategy and Executive Coordination, who will play an important strategic role in assisting us in our quest to develop and achieve success with these projects.

Darren has academic qualifications in law, engineering and public policy with over ten years experience working in a range of policy roles for the Victorian Government. He has worked in policy and program roles in Aboriginal Affairs in the former Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and health and human services departments. Most recently Darren was Manager of Policy and Strategy in Building Policy in the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure.

His experience in policy development and providing executive support to statutory boards and Ministerial Advisory Committees will be a valuable asset in strengthening AHV's governance.

Darren has also gathered experience in the building regulatory environment. This will be invaluable in understanding challenges in the housing regulatory environment and in the development and implementation of effective strategies to assist AHV achieve its goals and vision.

Darren's family are Palawa Trowerna from the Pyemairrenner mob in Tasmania which includes Trawlwoolway and Plairmairrenner and related clans.

**4** He has developed strong relationships with the Victorian Aboriginal Community,

government and industry and will utilise these networks to assist our team to strengthen our relationships and develop partnerships with government and non-government sectors.

Darren considers his appointment to be a fantastic opportunity to meaningfully contribute to the further development of a respected and trusted Aboriginal institution as it works toward achieving its full potential as a housing provider of the highest quality for Aboriginal Victorians. He firmly believes that Aboriginal Housing Victoria has the potential to deliver on more than just the housing needs of Aboriginal Victorians. It can also make a unique contribution to the social, economic and cultural aspirations of Victoria's Aboriginal communities. The best chance of success is for the Board, staff, tenants and our Community to share a common vision founded on the cultural values and aspirations of the Community we serve and the Aboriginal people we house.

On behalf of AHV, I'd like to welcome Darren to our team.

Ricky Mullett, Deputy CEO



OUR MAINTENANCE TEAM SHARE WITH YOU SOME TIMELY "HANDY HINTS" TO TRY OUT BEFORE YOU CALL FOR ASSISTANCE.

#### NO GAS AT YOUR PROPERTY?

Try this step-by-step check first:

1. Outside in the front yard of the property (Usually at the side of the property) you will find your gas meter.
2. On the gas meter there is a red lever that turns the gas on and off.
3. Check to make sure that the red lever is in the down position pointing in the same direction as the gas pipes connected to the meter.
4. If the lever is in the down position (horizontal) the gas is turned on. If the lever is pointing straight up or down (vertical) then the gas is turned off.
5. If the lever is in the down position and the property is still not receiving gas then you will need to contact your gas supplier.

# Bendigo and Reservoir housing projects completed

KEY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS undertaken over the past 12 months, as part of our Construction Program, have now been completed.

Two stand alone 4-bedroom homes in Jackass Flat, Bendigo and three 3-bedroom units in Reservoir are at lock-up stage and will help to alleviate housing shortages in these particular areas over the longer term.

Landscaping to these properties are the only finishing touches yet to be completed. That work will be carried out during their first tenancies.

These constructions were developed in partnership with our builder, Watersun Homes. They are just one aspect of AHV's growth strategy, which is designed to focus on helping to meet high demand for Aboriginal housing wherever shortfalls occur across the state.

AHV's Construction Program is ongoing and the Mia Mia Message Stick Newsletter will be bringing to you reports and updates on new developments as they happen.



**AHV**  
*faces*



FIRST OF ALL, I'D LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE the traditional owners of this land, and their elders, both past and present.

My name is Marc L'etang. I've just started working with Aboriginal Housing Victoria as a Customer Service Officer and will be assisting the Tenancy team with processing new applications. This means that I'll get the opportunity to talk with many of you who call in regarding applying for housing!

After finishing high school, I completed a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. Unsure of what I wanted to do after that, I worked in customer service for several years. These few

years of employment helped me to realise that I wanted to work in a field where I could assist in supporting others. This meant going back to uni, so after two more years of study, I finished my Master of Social Work in December last year.

I have an interest in working with Aboriginal communities, so when I found a position vacant at AHV, I was keen to apply. I'm glad that I've been provided this opportunity and hopefully this will be the start of a long and positive relationship of working with Aboriginal communities.



Marc L'etang

## Property inspections by Hi-Tech to continue this year

IN 2013 THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS) engaged an asset and property management company, Hi-Tech Inspect, to collect property condition information on all the department's public properties throughout Victoria - these include AHV properties leased by our tenants.

The purpose of these property condition reports is to help improve public and community housing over the longer term.

The work which Hi-Tech began in 2013, will continue this year. If you have yet to be visited by Hi-Tech you should be aware that this will occur sometime throughout 2014. This property inspection will take no more than one hour.

## How you will be notified and what will occur

- Hi-tech will deliver an advance notice to you in the mail
- Over the following month they will telephone you, and/or visit your home, to organise a date and time that suits you for the inspection
- On the day, they will inspect each room of your property and take photographs inside and outside your home.

Inspections will generally occur between 8am-6pm, Monday to Friday, however Hi-Tech can organise weekend visits if required. A calling card will be left if you are not at home.

For your personal safety and security, please remember that all Hi-Tech inspectors should be clearly displaying their photo identification before allowing them access to your home.



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I'm pleased to say we have already started to work through all of our policies to ensure that they are stronger and importantly, are relevant to our cultural traditions and contemporary challenges.

AHV must also become a stronger organisation. We need to have the capacity to operate in a modern way that is disciplined, team based and meets our compliance and community obligations.

Above all else we are an Aboriginal organisation with a lot to be proud of - and the way we do business needs to be built on, to reflect a strong commitment to culture and self determination.

Organisational and staff development is a very important first step in this process. I'm therefore pleased to introduce Ari Spierings, who joined AHV late last year as Human Resources Director to lead this key organisational work. We want to equip our staff with the skills needed to provide the best possible service to you, our valued tenants. Ari is committed to developing a flexible, skilled and knowledgeable workforce with strong cultural awareness.

We have also recruited Darren Smith, who will take on the new role of Director Policy, Strategy and Executive Coordination. In any organisation policy and strategy are essential drivers, so Darren's work will be critical for the future development of AHV. You can read more about Darren's background and experience in this edition of Mia Mia (see page 4).

Over the coming months I will be getting out into the community and talking to Housing Officers and meeting with some of our tenants. For me this is the most important way that I can learn about what is really happening - and then work out how we might do what we do better, while also looking for new opportunities to better achieve quality housing for all Aboriginal Victorians.

It is absolutely important that AHV provides good stable accommodation. But it is also important that we advocate for all Aboriginal Victorians whether or not they reside in AHV houses. We have to be more than just a landlord.

I look forward to working and meeting with you this year and welcome any comments or suggestions you may have.



# Secret Kids' Business



## ABORIGINAL WORD SEARCH

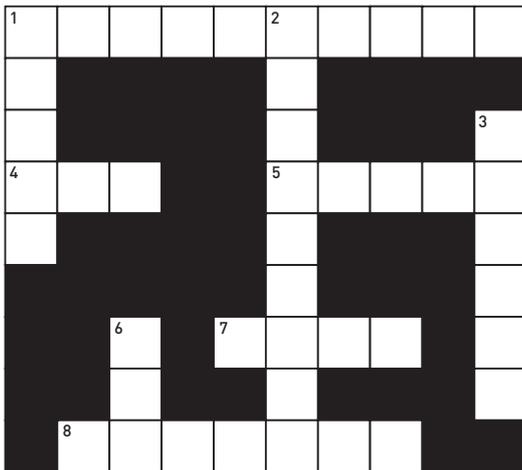
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 V T M U L G A B P H

COOLIBAH  
 DREAMTIME  
 JARRAH  
 KOORONG  
 MULGA  
 POTOROO  
 QUOKKA  
 WARRIGAL  
 WOIWURRUNG  
 WOOMERA

## TRACK THE DOTS



## MIA MIA CROSSWORD

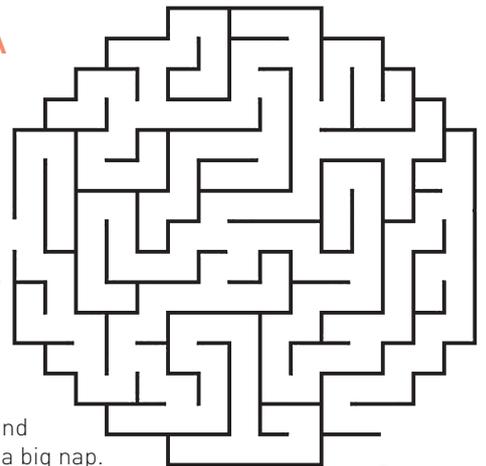


- Across**
1. Aboriginal ceremony and dance.
  4. A big Australian bird.
  5. Australian native dog.
  7. This baby animal lives in a pouch.
  8. An aboriginal word for "our home".
- Down**
1. Aboriginal bush call.
  2. A small furry Australian animal.
  3. A big lizard in the outback.
  4. Short word for kangaroo.

## MIA MIA MAZE



Our wombat is very sleepy and needs to find his burrow for a big nap.



## DEADLY COLOUR-IN



# Our Customer Service Charter

THIS CUSTOMER CHARTER is for both Tenants and Applicants. It outlines the standard of service you can expect from AHV, your responsibilities as a tenant and what to do if you are unhappy with services.

## Our services

WE WILL: • Treat you with respect and dignity and be fair and sensitive to your needs • Listen and be helpful and respectful • Provide you with information to make informed choices • Conduct your business in a safe environment • Respect your privacy and confidentiality • Respond as quickly as possible and refer you to other agencies if required.

## Our decisions

WE WILL: • Explain the reasons for decisions about your housing • Where possible, involve you in decisions • Hear your complaint if you are not satisfied • Assist you to exercise your right to a review.

## Our property responsibilities

WE WILL: • Ensure your property is secure and in good condition • Provide an information folder when your tenancy starts • Ensure your home is maintained • Give 24 hours written notice before inspecting your property • Provide data of rent payments if requested • Comply with the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.

## Our maintenance services

WE WILL: • Attend to your maintenance as quickly as possible • Brief you on the repairs,

replacements and timeframe • Ensure all contractors engaged are qualified • Ensure contractors engaged carry identification, displaying their name, position and AHV approval.

## Your housing application

PLEASE: • Give us accurate information about household members, changes and incomes • Keep us informed of a current postal address • Pay off outstanding charges owing.

## Your responsibilities

PLEASE: • Pay your rent on the due date or notify us if you have any problems • Notify us of changes in household income or members • Look after your home • Contact us if you are not happy with a decision • Respect the rights of your neighbours • Comply with your tenancy agreement • Be accountable for actions of your household and visitors.

## If you have a maintenance problem

PLEASE: • Give us your contact name and phone number to arrange a time to attend your property • Contact us about poor work or behaviour by any contractor representing AHV • Request the contractor's identification on arrival • If no identification is provided, you do not have to give access to your property.

**FOR A MORE DETAILED COPY of our Customer Service Charter or any queries, please contact us on 9403 2100 or email at: [info@ahvic.org.au](mailto:info@ahvic.org.au)**

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**



**Hours of Business:** Monday to Friday, 8:30am – 4:30pm. **Address:** Narrandjeri House, 125-127 Scotchmer Street, North Fitzroy, VIC 3068. **Telephone:** (03) 9403 2100. **Fax:** (03) 9403 2122. **Email:** [info@ahvic.org.au](mailto:info@ahvic.org.au) **Aboriginal Housing Victoria** is a not-for-profit organisation that works to deliver accessible, affordable, appropriate and secure housing to meet the social, cultural and economic aspirations of the Victorian Aboriginal Community.