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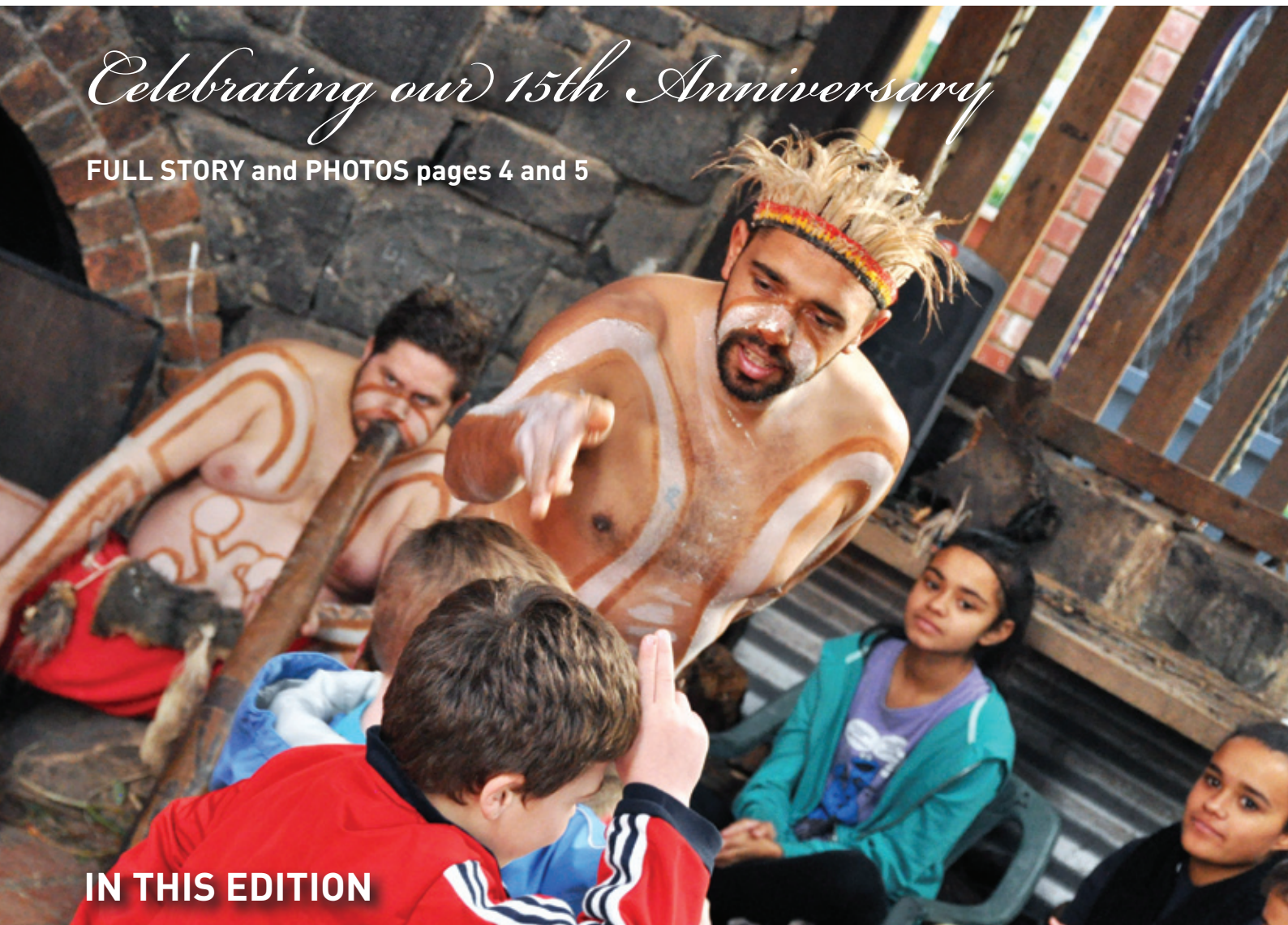
ABORIGINAL HOUSING VICTORIA
MESSAGE STICK NEWSLETTER | AUGUST 2014



2014 NAIDOC Family Day

Celebrating our 15th Anniversary

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Tenant Satisfaction Surveys rolled out

Participate in our survey for a chance to win a \$500 Bunnings Voucher.

AT AHV WE'RE ALWAYS LOOKING at better ways to provide the best possible customer service to you. To further that aim, we're now rolling out a Tenant Satisfaction Survey, which will come to your neighbourhood during the next 12 months.

We want to gather from our tenants the facts about what we're doing right and where we're going wrong. We want to have a better understanding of you - your situation and any special needs you may have - to improve our services to you.

Questions will be asked about your situation, your home, customer service, maintenance service and your understanding of your

rights and obligations - with opportunities to register your satisfaction levels.

The surveys are strictly confidential and you are under no obligation to participate. However, we strongly encourage our Tenants to assist us by providing information that can benefit them through improved service levels into the future.

Aboriginal Housing Officers will conduct the surveys during their regular Home Visit. Questions will be available either on a provided iPad (with assistance) or on a paper form. To get your fingers moving, we're also giving everyone who fills in our survey the chance to win a \$500 Bunnings Voucher.

We welcome your survey responses.



Steph McStay lends a hand to at-risk Aboriginal children

Our Aboriginal Housing Officer provides other valuable work in our Community - as a foster carer.

WHEN LAKIDJEKA ABORIGINAL Child Support Services recently contacted Steph McStay with the prospect of providing foster care for a newborn child, she was surprised they had called her first. When they explained the child was 5 weeks premature and, as an at-risk infant, needed specialised care, Steph instinctively agreed to take on the responsibility.

As a foster carer with Kinship Care for some years, Steph had already experienced tough challenges before. But caring for this premature child who had significant health issues, posed a fresh set of problems.

Steph explains that when she was younger her mother had for a time been active in foster care. So while she had some experience in assisting her mum and raising her 5 brothers, she only recently fell back into it through her role here at AHV. On that occasion she secured accommodation in her region

for a grandmother who wanted to reunify her grandchildren who were in separate foster care in another state. Ultimately this event led to Steph taking on the care of 4 extra children for around 16 months duration.

For Steph, that is the greatest reward for her role as a foster carer - the reunification of children with their families, whether that be with parents or siblings. She sees her part as one of providing a bridge between that reunion as well as offering a nurturing step up.

Orana Gunyah Crisis Accommodation

Working with VACCA, Steph has also been involved in their Working Group that assisted development of the Orana Gunyah Aboriginal Women and Children's Crisis Accommodation refuge, which opened in April this year.

The centre in Morwell provides short-term accommodation, as well as counselling, case management and other services, for women and children in need.

Orana Gunyah was officially launched by VACCA in Morwell, on Monday, 4 August, with Steph in attendance representing AHV.



“Fighting for our mob is a fight for human rights”

Mick Gooda, Social Justice Commissioner, speaks on human rights at AHV

WHEN IT COMES TO COMPLAINTS raised against human rights breaches on Aboriginal people in Australia, Mick Gooda reckons, “housing is a big one, particularly for Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory”. He is also quick to point out that, “I don’t think I’ve had any from Victoria”.

Mick Gooda, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner for the Australian Human Rights Commission, visited AHV on Friday, 6 June, to speak extensively on the principles of human rights - sharing his knowledge, experiences and stories with the AHV Team.

Mick is a descendent of the Gangulu people of central Queensland and is well respected for his involvement in advocacy within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs throughout Australia for over 25 years.

Sharing firstly some of his family history on the Woorabinda Mission way up north and also his professional work in both Aboriginal health and as a chief executive for the now defunct ATSIC, Mick went on to outline how he came to join the Australian Human Rights Commission, a role he at first didn’t think he was suited to. But despite his steep learning curve, Mick explains: “If we’re in there fighting for our mob, be it in housing or in health, we’re all human rights activists ... fighting for our mob is a fight for human rights.”

The Australian Human Rights Commission is a government-funded independent organisation with 8 commissioners who are appointed by the Governor-General. “Even though we’re funded by government, the way we’re appointed makes us independent”, says Mick. “Our job really is to make sure Australia complies with the international standards that it signed up to”. These standards are in the form of 7 treaties including elimination of racial discrimination,

rights of the child and women, and political and cultural rights.

The Commission makes the Government aware of any breaches in their human rights obligations and any legal implications as a result. Mick gave examples of these types of breaches, such as the 2011 plan to relocate boat refugees to Malaysia, which was ruled as unlawful by the High Court; and the Northern Territory intervention, where the Commission pointed out the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act would put Australia in breach of their international obligations. “We point out to Governments where they’re going wrong”, says Mick.

While the Commission itself is a neutral legal adviser to the government, Mick explained how past Aboriginal leaders, such as Kath Walker and Bruce McGuinness used what he calls “the politics of embarrassment” overseas, to achieve change locally. In those days the Government was engaged in signing a global convention on racial discrimination, while human rights violations to Aboriginal people still occurred. “Overseas, Australia really values its reputation”, notes Mick, “and that’s how we change things.”



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Annual Rent Review

WE ARE IN THE PROCESS of conducting the Annual Rent Review for 2014.

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 will be notified of the new rent charge by mail in the first week of August. New rent charges will be applied to your rental account on the 18th of August, 2014.

A cultural milestone: celebrating 15 years of our NAIDOC Family Day

ON THIS SPECIAL MILESTONE, celebrating 15 years of AHV's NAIDOC Family Day it was fitting that Wurundjeri Elder, Colin Hunter Jr made the Welcome to Country address to launch our day. A direct descendant of Bebejan (Ingurungaeta or tribal leader at the time of European settlement), Uncle Colin greeted the packed barn at the Collingwood Children's Farm with a Woiwurrung "womenjika" (welcome), then acknowledged the traditional owners, past and present, explaining that Wurundjeri country stretches "from the inner city of Melbourne, across the mountains of the The Great Dividing Range, west to the Werribee River, south to Mordialloc Creek and east to Mt Baw Baw".

Aboriginal dance performers this year were the Wayapa Wuurrk Dance Group, from Gunai country in the east of Victoria. Wayapa Wuurrk performed dance that connected closely to



Uncle Colin Hunter Jr

native animals and the land. They later invited children to interact with them in dance and as a workshop, which was a big hit with the kids in attendance. Traditional instruments such as the didgeridoo, kept all ages both entertained and fascinated.

Returning this year, our special guest was Olympian, Kyle Vander Kuyp. Always very popular, Kyle assisted with the raffle draw and signed many autographs. Thank you again Kyle!

Out back of the farm, AHV staff and volunteers were busy helping everyone with boomerang painting, emu feather craft and colouring-in. Farm staff provided morning tea, featuring 15th anniversary cake and later on a lunch barbecue. Damper making, tractor rides and the farm animals, were again big hits this year.

A sincere thank you to all those who volunteered to ensure our 15th NAIDOC Family Day celebration was a fabulous success.

Have your say to help Aboriginal children

Taskforce 1000 calls on your help to assist Aboriginal children and youth in out-of-home care.

TASKFORCE 1000, LED BY THE Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP), has been established in response to the near 1000 Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care and residential care in Victoria.

The Taskforce will examine the plans for all Aboriginal children currently in care to ensure that they are safe, well, thriving and culturally strong.

Andrew Jackomos, Victorian Commissioner for CCYP and Taskforce co-chair said:

"It is important that we hear from families that are concerned about their children in care with a disability, mental health and/or medical condition; those who have had contact with the youth justice system; those who have had minimal contact with their parents, siblings and other close family members; those disengaged from school, and others that may have issues they wish to talk about. Equally we want to hear about good news stories so we're able to learn from and share these experiences."

If you are aware of, or connected to vulnerable children within the out-of-home care system, you can contact the Commission's Office during August on any of these numbers:

(03) 8601 5243, 8601 5283, 8601 5273, 8601 5272 or email: andrew.jackomos@ccyp.vic.gov.au

Our anniversary of culture and fun



ABORIGINAL
HOUSING VICTORIA
15 YEARS OF NAIDOC
AT THE COLLINGWOOD
CHILDREN'S
FARM



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On the subject of housing, Mick spoke of the so-called “3 strikes policy” for public housing in WA, where tenants can be evicted after 3 complaints of “anti-social behaviour”. “We have people living in tents over in WA ... they just throw them out willy-nilly”, commented Mick. In one instance an old woman who was being harassed by her neighbours, was threatened with eviction. Mick relates: “She was saying, ‘look I’m trying to do my best but the mob keep turning up!’ So they were going to throw her out and then this philanthropist went and bought this house and gave it to her ... so the neighbours didn’t get rid of her at all ... there’s some good people out there.”

Defining the theory of human rights, Mick spoke of what he refers to as a “contest of human rights”, whereby sometimes when we want to exercise our own rights, they can conflict with those of others. As an example he cites an alcohol problem at Fitzroy Crossing, up in the Kimberley: “If you’re going to exercise that right to goods and services by drinking alcohol, you have a couple of duties. And the first one is you’ve got to exercise that right in a way that makes sure everyone else can exercise it ... and then you’ve got to exercise it in a way that protects other’s rights, so the right to secure personal safety ... the rights of women, children and elders.” He hastens to add, “our mob think all the stuff on alcohol is just happening in our mob ... [but] the biggest debate we’re having in Sydney right now is ... access to alcohol in Kings Cross.”

“So, we have these big debates and we come to a conclusion and we say, we’re prepared to give up that right or that right to make sure women and children are protected, for instance ... but the problem in Aboriginal Affairs is, we don’t have those debates ... we have the Government come in and impose bans on alcohol without any consultation with our mob ... that’s what happened in the intervention,” he notes.

Later Mick took questions from the AHV Team on a wide range of topics relating to the Commission, human rights and some of Mick’s own thoughts. He spoke on the independence of the Commission in comparison to that previously exercised by ATSIC; the issues around the redevelopment of “the block” in Redfern, Sydney and its impact on the

Mick Gooda addresses the AHV Team



local indigenous community; and also spoke at length about the “Recognise” campaign, which is aimed at redrafting the Australian Constitution to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. His role on the expert panel was to provide key change recommendations. Mick explained the importance of not just recognition, but also the repeal of 2 sections of what he refers to as “the race powers” embedded in the current Constitution.

In summation Mick passionately related focus group poll results as part of the “Recognise” campaign - that emphasise the fast growing support for not only Constitutional recognition, but also acknowledgement of the unique value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture to Australia - particularly among non-indigenous people. “But I reckon, if we get it right it [recognition] will be one of the most powerful things that has ever happened in this country”, concluded Mick.



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

NO ELECTRICITY AT YOUR PROPERTY?

Check these things first:

1. Usually the cause of the electricity cutting out is due to a faulty appliance, which is triggering the electrical safety switch. Check the electrical switchboard which should be near the front door of your property to see if any of the switches have been triggered.
2. The most common place that an appliance might be shorting out is in the kitchen or the laundry of the property.



Secret Kids' Business

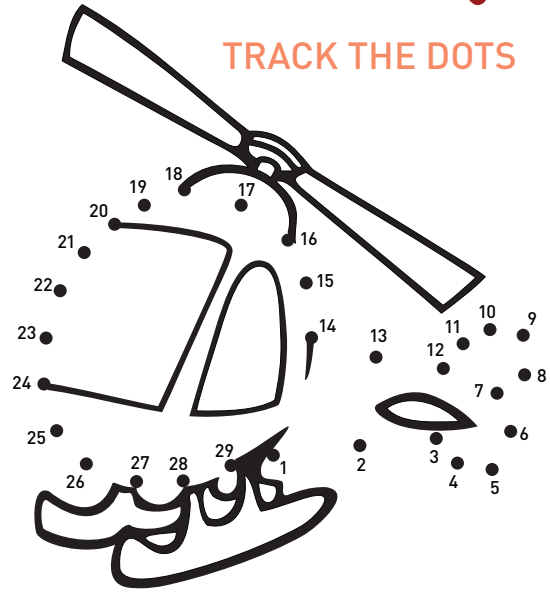


NAIDOC FAMILY DAY WORD SEARCH

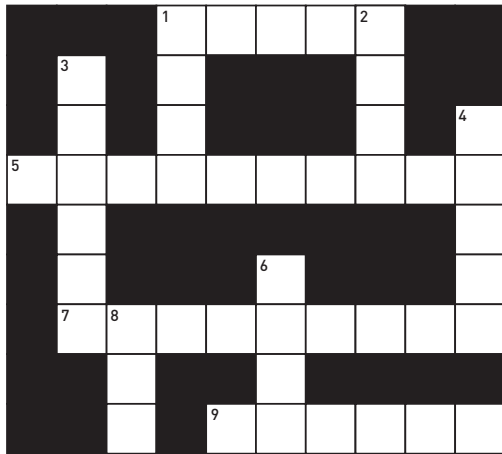
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- ANIMALS
- BARBECUE
- BOOMERANGS
- CASTLE
- DANCING
- FACEPAINT
- FEATHERS
- MUSIC
- NAIDOC
- PRIZES

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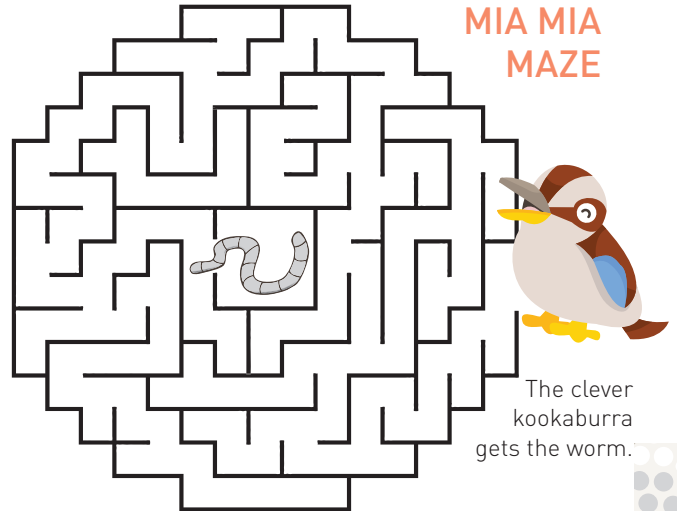
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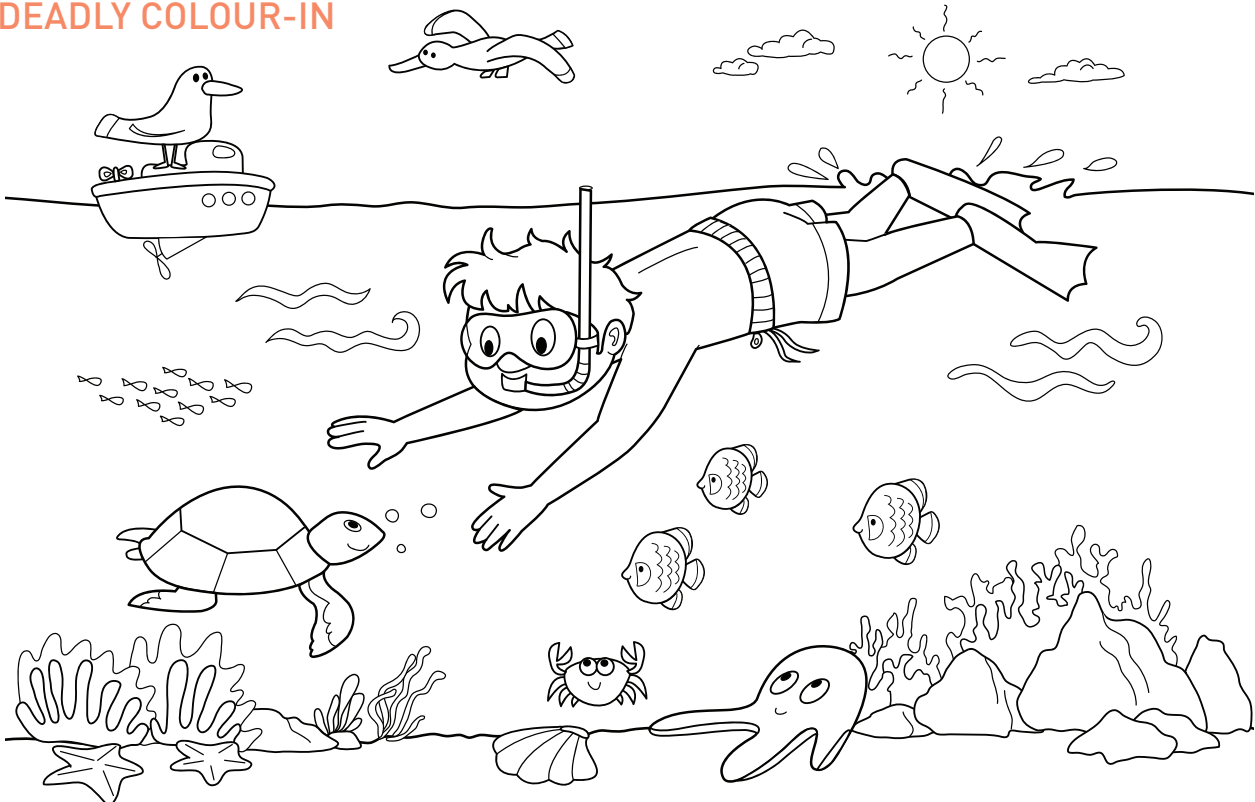
- Across**
1. Cute Australian animal with long ears.
 5. Aboriginal musical instrument.
 7. Melbourne suburb named after a famous Aboriginal.
 9. They slither in long grass.
- Down**
1. Aboriginal word for broken.
 2. It's behind your house.
 3. You find this in a Sacred place.
 4. Australian animal that loves gum leaves.
 6. Aboriginal word for talking.
 8. You need this to fish.

Last edition's answers. Across: 1. Corroboree 4. Emu 5. Dingo 7. Joey 8. Country. Down: 1. Cooee 2. Bandicoot 3. Goanna 4. Roo.

MIA MIA MAZE



DEADLY COLOUR-IN





TENANT Yarn



How we calculate your rent

The rent you pay AHV is calculated on specific percentages of your income, Centrelink Family Payments and Commonwealth Rent Assistance - depending on your particular circumstances.

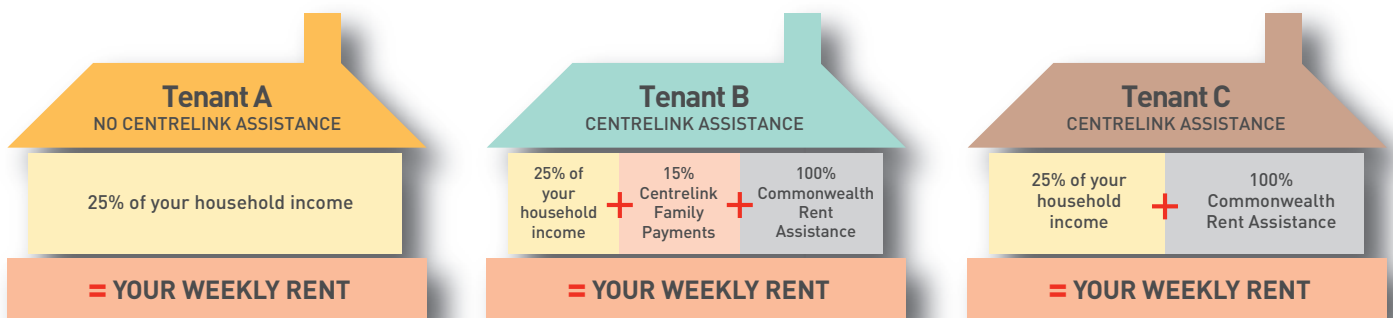
Every tenant's rent is based on 25% of their total household income. If you receive Centrelink Family Payments, 15% of those

payments are added to your rent. If you receive Commonwealth Rent Assistance, 100% of that payment is added to your AHV rent.

In calculating your rent, AHV use either household income as a basis (see diagram below) OR the market rent of your property - whichever is lower.

If you have any further queries about how we calculate your rent, please contact your Aboriginal Housing Officer.

The diagram below illustrates how we calculate rent for each of our tenant types, depending on their household situation.



AHV faces



Trudi Smith

FIRSTLY I'D LIKE TO acknowledge the traditional owners of this land and their elders, both past and present.

My name is Trudi and I've been working with Aboriginal Housing Victoria as a Customer Service Officer within the maintenance department since September 2013.

I was thrilled to be offered the position at AHV and feel honoured to be working with the Aboriginal

Community. I am passionate about helping people and making positive change where I can. I'm also a person who has a strong interest in understanding all cultures.

Many of our tenants may know me by now, as I have already assisted them in getting their repairs sorted out!

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 **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.