



Ōtautahi  
community  
housing  
trust

# Our Chat

MARCH 2021

**Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou katoa** — Greetings to you all

## New chair's welcome

I'm glad to be here as chairperson of TAG for the first half of this year and then co-chairperson Dave Wilson will be taking over for the second half of the year.



**Irmgaard van Schouten**

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, last year saw some great social activities organised by TAG and we're planning more this year. Some of our lounges are under-utilised so we are looking at new activities. If you have any ideas, please let us know.

There have been media reports of negative behavior at some complexes which, in a community filled with people doing wonderful things, is a concern. I have been speaking with ŌCHT to find the best way of dealing with these, knowing that these things are of great concern to the tenants affected.

TAG will be involved in a variety of projects this year. We are looking for tenants who would like to trial working with an electricity bulk tender business on a pilot project to help tenants cut their power bills. See more on this on page 2.

We have recently welcomed a new TAG member and hope to have more joining soon. If you would like to be involved and are able to work with others constructively please consider sending us an application via the OCHT website (<https://www.ocht.org.nz/tenant-advisory-group-tag/>) or by calling **0800 624 456**.

Thank you, until next time.

**Irmgaard van Schouten**  
Tenant Advisory Group chair

## Meeting the opportunities of a new year

You, like me, probably welcomed 2021 and were thankful for the promise of a fresh new year, and the chance to put the disruption caused by Covid-19 behind us.

However, as we now all know, it did not take long for the virus to rear its head and force us back into Alert Level 2, reminding us all that we need to be vigilant until it is stamped out completely.

As the alert levels change, it is heartening to know the ŌCHT community continues to follow public health directions, and to do what we all can to keep ourselves and others safe..

Summer is becoming autumn and nearly 2300 ŌCHT tenants will start the colder months with the warmth of a heat pump.

They were installed as part of the Warm and Dry Initiative and at many households, this will be the first full autumn and winter they'll be in use.

The initiative, undertaken in partnership with the Christchurch City Council, continues with the Warm and Dry Team completing the ventilation and draught stopping programme.

Next week we'll announce the winners in the fifth annual ŌCHT Garden Awards at an awards ceremony at Tūranga, the city library.

Our judges visited some splendid ornamental and vegetable gardens at dozens of ŌCHT communities and met some remarkable, community-spirited gardeners along the way.

As you know, ŌCHT is also focused on delivering new homes and we've had an amazing start to the year in opening the first stage of our biggest project yet.

Korimako Lane's 28, 1-bedroom homes were declared open even-as builders



**Media capture the moment Korimako Lane is officially opened.**

continued working on 62 other homes on the site of what used to be Brougham Village.

Two further stages will open over the next few months, adding more 1, 2, 3 and 4-bedroom homes to our city's community housing.

I'd like to end this months' column by offering my sincere thanks to Noeline Monsef, for her fantastic leadership of the Tenant Advisory Group.

Noeline generously offered her time and expertise to help guide TAG in its work providing a positive voice for the ŌCHT community.

Noeline stepped down as TAG chair, a role now filled by co-chairs Irmgaard van Schouten and Dave Wilson.

I wish them well, and I wish you all the best for the changing seasons.

Take care.

**Cate Kearney**  
ŌCHT chief executive

## New jobs landed with job coach's help

**Paul's landed a fulltime job at Pak 'n Save Wainoni with the help of the ŌCHT Employment Service.**

The super-focused service is open to all ŌCHT tenants committed to finding work.

Paul lost his job of three years in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. He didn't know where to start looking "but when I went to Job Club I got support to find something else".

Job Club is part of the ŌCHT Employment Service. It meets every Monday morning and is led by Job Coach Tracie Palmer.

Tracie was impressed with his enthusiasm and offered Paul an internship with the ŌCHT/CCC Warm and Dry Initiative. It helped him explore new skills and identify more of what he enjoyed doing.

All the while, he and Tracie kept looking for job opportunities and Tracie helped Paul update his CV, to register on job seeking sites and to apply for work. They even went "door-knocking" at Westfield Riccarton. A job tip turned into fill-in shifts then a part-time job at Kmart.

Paul's now accepted a fulltime job at Pak 'n Save Wainoni.

Tracie says Job Club and focused one-on-



**ŌCHT Job Coach Tracie, with successful job-seeker Paul.**

one support can help people in a tough job market.

She's a facilitator who'll help motivated people make the most of their strengths, and to find work that matches their skills and that they are comfortable doing.

"Everyone has strengths and weaknesses, and we work together to find ways to build on the skills people have to reach their employment goals."

- **Job Club meets 10am Mondays at Tūranga, the city library. You'll find Tracie and other jobs seekers at the table by the window on the ground floor, near the Gloucester St entrance.**

**To learn more call 0800 624 456.**

## Keeping our lawns and gardens in trim

Our gardening and lawn mowing contractors are making the most of the good weather.

Recreational Services started with us last year. They're taking care of grounds maintenance, while Glenharrow (House and Land) continue to mow our lawns. Please make them feel welcome - but please do not approach them when they're on-site, especially if they are using heavy or noisy machinery.

They're there to make a great job tending to the common areas, but they don't work on private gardens. Please call ŌCHT on **0800 624 456** if you'd like to talk about

maintaining your personal garden. We have garden management plans available for all tenants.

### Lawn edging

We're changing the way we maintain lawn edging. After a successful trial at four complexes, we'll use the natural herbicide LocalSafe Weed Terminator to brown-off weeds and grasses.

The spray dehydrates unwanted plants and its results last longer than manual edging. It works within hours but, as with all other sprays, we ask you not to walk on the sprayed area for a couple of days.

## Cheaper power trial

The Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) is backing a two month long project aiming to get cheaper electricity to people, no matter their credit history.

Saveawatt, EECA and Pocketful need about 100 tenants who have internet access to be part of the Reducing Energy Hardship through Financial Inclusion trial.

Saveawatt will assess participants' energy spend and switch them to a new deal if it'll save them money. It'll work out regular payments and sign participants up to Pocketful, a payment gateway.

Call ŌCHT on **0800 624 456** to register your interest. You can find out more about the project at [www.ocht.org.nz](http://www.ocht.org.nz)

## TAGging you in

Here's some of what was discussed at the February Tenant Advisory Group meeting.

### Hello, neighbour

TAG member Errol Turei has pitched a plan to connect tenants and to make the most of our community lounges. The "Hello, Neighbour" programme will see lounges used for everything from knitting and art classes, through to photography and karaoke. They'll also be a focal point for welcoming new tenants. Errol will trial the idea at Biddick Courts and it could provide a template for activities at other communities.

### Public transport

A university researcher wants to learn more about how ŌCHT tenants use public transport. Dr Helen Fitt, from Lincoln University, told TAG she would be in touch with tenants to explore how issues such as convenience affected travel habits, to see how public transport might be improved.

### Housing heroes

TAG is calling for nominations for the annual Housing Heroes Awards, which returns after a Covid-caused absence. You can nominate a deserving community-minded tenant at any time during the year by calling **0800 624 456**.



## Vouchers, gift baskets ready for garden awards

It was hot, wet and even windy when the judges visited our communities to find the best of our summer gardens in January.

They were amazed at the variety of plants, design and landscaping on display as they judged the fifth ŌCHT Garden Awards.

They will soon name the winners and the highly commended in categories that

span everything from Best Garden through to a new award for a person whose gardening makes a significant contribution to their community.

Among the prizes are hundreds of dollars in gift vouchers, gardening tools and certificates. Anyone can attend the awards which are at 11am March 9, at Tūranga, the city library.

## Changes to the Residential Tenancies Act

**The Residential Tenancies Act changed last month. Here's a rundown of some of the key moves:**

Tenants now have to give their landlord 28 days written notice to end their tenancy, and landlords can't end tenancies by providing 90 days' notice without reason.

There are new grounds to end a tenancy to deal with anti-social behaviour and rent arrears, and tenants can challenge a notice issued because of anti-social behaviour through the Tenancy Tribunal.

All fixed-term tenancy agreements will become periodic tenancies at the end of the fixed term unless the parties agree otherwise, the tenant gives a 28-day notice, or the landlord gives notice in accordance with the termination grounds for periodic tenancies.

Tenants can ask to make minor changes to the property and the landlord can't decline if minor. Landlords must respond in 21 days.

Tenants can ask to install fibre broadband

and landlords must agree if it can be installed at no cost to them.

There are now provisions allowing suppression orders to remove names and identifying details from published Tenancy Tribunal decisions.

All requests to assign a tenancy must be considered and landlords can't decline unreasonably.

Not providing a tenancy agreement in writing is an unlawful act and landlords will need to retain and provide new types of information.

The Regulator (the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment) has new measures to take action against parties who are not meeting their obligations.

The Tenancy Tribunal can now hear cases and make awards up to \$100,000. This is a change from \$50,000.

- **Read more online at [www.tenancy.govt.nz/law-changes](http://www.tenancy.govt.nz/law-changes)**

## Let's march on rubbish!

Let's make March the first month in our push to stop people dumping rubbish near our homes.

We've installed signs at some communities where fly tipping has become a real nuisance.



The signs will help, but we can all play our part in keeping our communities tidy and safe.

If you see anyone dumping rubbish in your patch, please note what you see—licence plate numbers, where they arrived from, anything that might help us track them down—and give us a call on **0800 624 456**.

## E-vehicle trial confirmed

We've got some great news for our communities and the environment.

We're delivering a subsidised electric vehicle share scheme that's open to all ŌCHT tenants and based at the new Brougham Street development.

ŌCHT will supply two cars and five electric bikes in a two-year pilot to see how shared, low carbon transport can work in our communities.

The e-bikes can be used for free while the cars' maintenance, management and replacement costs will be paid from a nominal fee.

Zilch will manage the vehicles and a booking portal will help make the most of them. An education campaign to encourage uptake will underpin the programme.

If successful, the project will be promoted to other community housing providers around in New Zealand.

It is expected to go live in June.



## New homes open at Korimako Lane, Brougham St's first stage

**Korimako Lane, the first stage of Ōtautahi Community Housing Trust's ambitious Brougham St development, has opened and is home to its first tenants.**

It's the largest building project commissioned by ŌCHT since the trust was established in 2016.

It's also one of the largest developments of its kind under construction for an NGO in New Zealand.

Christchurch Mayor Lianne Dalziel cut the ribbon to open the first 28 homes of the 90-home Southbase-delivered development in January.

ŌCHT chief executive Cate Kearney paid tribute to all those who contributed, including contractors Southbase, architects South by Southwest, the Tenant Advisory Group and ŌCHT staff.

The project would not have been possible without the unflinching support of the city council, and its bold plan to improve the way community housing was delivered.

New Zealand needed to know what was happening in Christchurch, and how it could improve community housing provision across the country, she said.

It is the Trust's sixth development. It has opened 75 units since it was established four years ago, and more are planned.



The Brougham St development was designed as a series of three communities, with shared spaces, communal gardens and even access to e-transport such as scooters and, later, other electric vehicles.

The homes are designed to the NZ Green Building Homestar 7 standard.

Overall, the Brougham St development will consist of 70 x 1-bedroom homes, 3 x 3-bedroom homes, 14 x 2-bedroom homes and 3 x 4-bedroom homes.

A dozen homes have been designed so they can be converted to meet accessible home requirements.

The site was previously a large social housing complex called Brougham Village, where 89 homes were demolished following the 2011 Canterbury earthquake.

The development is set for completion in June this year.



### More smoke detectors being installed

**We're checking and installing more smoke detectors in all ŌCHT communities.**

All homes already have smoke detectors, but we want to do more than is legally required.

Our handypeople are checking detectors and installing more where they are needed.

If you haven't already, you'll get a call from our team to book a time to visit.

You also have a part to play in keeping fire safe.

Please make sure you regularly test your detectors by pressing their test buttons at least once every six months.

The alarm will sound if it is working. If it doesn't, please call us on **0800 624 456**.

Our handypeople put the detectors where they will work best. Please don't move them.

# Thank you!



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