

CEO UPDATE

DECEMBER 2020

David Fisher



For over 30 years Housing Plus has provided quality housing and wrap around support services to clients and tenants throughout the Central and Far West, NSW (New South Wales) and as an organisation we continue to grow from strength to strength.

We were excited to have completed construction on The Orchard, in Orange, the State's first purpose-built trauma informed core and cluster-based design for women and children escaping domestic violence. The Orchard will provide a safe and supported environment for victims to recover. An environment that starts with safe, trauma-informed physical design and is complemented by a service delivery model that provides intensive support when it is needed most and a lighter touch when recovery begins. Support will be personalised and brought into The Orchard by Housing Plus and its partner organisation. We are indebted to our community, partners, and all levels of Government for the support that they have provided.

During the year, the tenancy service underwent some changes and introduced new services to support tenants to sustain their tenancies. Later in the year and in response to COVID-19 we introduced a Good Neighbour Service to assist the most vulnerable of our tenants.

Housing Plus continues to perform well and even with the uncertainty arising from the global pandemic, we are pleased to report continued strong financial and customer service performance. Despite the changes in service delivery imposed by NSW Health we did not see a reduction in service delivery.

This year we passed an important landmark of 1000 properties in ownership/management.

Our growth has been managed effectively and has been supported with investment in new IT systems to replace and upgrade our processes and reporting capabilities and corporate resources.

Our work to improve homelessness services in the region has continued with an additional 12 properties under the Supported Tenancies and Engagement Program. We have been selected to deliver the Together Home, housing, and supported services, to help 10 rough sleepers. These are both important Housing First approaches to tackling homelessness and the State government should be congratulated for adopting this approach.

We successfully retained the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service for an expanded Central Region and have also taken on the Western Region. We now provide this important service in supporting victims of domestic violence in an area that ranges from Lithgow to Nyngan.

The Board concluded its recruitment process during the year and selected two new Directors who joined the Board in May 2020, Emily Swift and Anna Noonan will contribute to the Board with their expertise and experience.

The Board held its first Virtual AGM this year where we were able to hear from our guest speakers including Alice Styles from Legal Aid NSW, Katherine McKernan, CEO, Homelessness NSW and Minister for Families, Communities Justice and Disability Services, Gareth Ward.

We are now beginning to measure the social impact of our services. For this year we can report that our community services were able to deliver \$10m in net benefits from the programs, after the cost of delivery is deducted. The net benefit for each client is over \$30,000 and the Benefit to Cost Ratio is 16.35.

Thanks to our Board, Executive and the Housing Plus team and partners for the resilience and flexibility shown during the year, their energy and commitment is reflected in the achievements summarised below. Uncertain times lie ahead, but we meet these in a strong position with dedicated, hardworking, and engaged employees and customers.



THE ORCHARD

Official Opening

On Friday 30th October Ministers the Hon. Andrew Gee, Member for Calare, the Hon. Mark Speakman, Attorney General & Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, The Hon Gareth Ward, Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, Mr Reg Kidd, Mayor of Orange representing all levels of government, were welcomed to The Orchard by our Vice Chair Carleen McConnell and CEO, David Fisher, to officially open the first purpose-built, core and cluster domestic violence centre to be built in NSW.

The Orchard will provide crisis accommodation and intensive case management for women and children, living within the Canobolas Local Area Command (NSW Police Force), who are escaping domestic and family violence and have been assessed by Police as at 'serious threat of further injury and/or death'.

The community of Orange has been advocating for a purpose-built crisis facility for several years. In October 2015, this vision came a step closer when Housing Plus took the lead in establishing the Orange Domestic and Family Violence Roundtable to develop solutions to address the serious local domestic and family violence problem, and to collaboratively consider options that may assist in the reduction in the level of violence against women in the region. Fundraising and awareness started in earnest in 2017.

The six fully furnished self-contained units include air-conditioning and security systems.

The centre also has multiple outdoor areas, a playground for children and healing and wellness rooms.

All Housing Plus domestic violence programs and services will be delivered from The Orchard and we will be accommodating clients in the coming weeks.





135 NEW AFFORDABLE HOMES

Delivered across the Central West

Our program of building 220 new social and affordable houses has been extended to 280 properties and now includes Mudgee, Lithgow, Cowra, and Parkes all towns experiencing an increase in demand for affordable housing.

The award of these additional dwellings is in part a reflection on our success in delivery the current program of house building to date and recognition of the growing need for affordable housing in the region.

Housing Plus is now delivering one of the largest regional social and affordable housing programs in regional NSW.

We have successfully delivered 36 homes in Bathurst, 77 homes in Dubbo and 22 homes in Orange making a total of 135 homes delivered over the two years we have been working on this program.

These homes have been tenanted, and our tenants are receiving coordinated support to ensure that they sustain their tenancies and reach their personal goals.

We recently started construction on homes in Dubbo, Parkes, Lithgow and Cowra and will be delivering these homes early to mid 2021.



RENOVATIONS

to Homelessness Refuge in Orange

Wiree is a refuge for individuals experiencing homelessness in Orange managed by Housing Plus.

In 2019, Housing Plus received \$325,000 from the Department of Communities and Justice to fund the renovations through the Outsourced Maintenance Program for crisis accommodation.

There are nine single rooms which include a TV, fridge, bed and ensuite, communal area that includes a kitchen and a lovely outdoor space for residents, and an office for Housing Plus staff.

One of the rooms has been modified to be wheelchair accessible.

Housing Plus deliver the specialist Homelessness Service in Orange and assist people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Our Case Management is a client centred, trauma informed, and strengths-based approach aimed at empowering and working in partnership with clients to effectively meet their individual needs.

One of our tenants has given us permission to share their story about their experience with the Housing Plus specialist homelessness service to read more click on the link below

[Darren's Story](#)

*The Housing Plus
Specialist
Homelessness
Service supported
over 1,300 clients
in the past 12
months*



CHANGES IN DUBBO

Indigenous Garden created

Housing Plus now have 12 employees operating out of their Frith Street office in Dubbo.

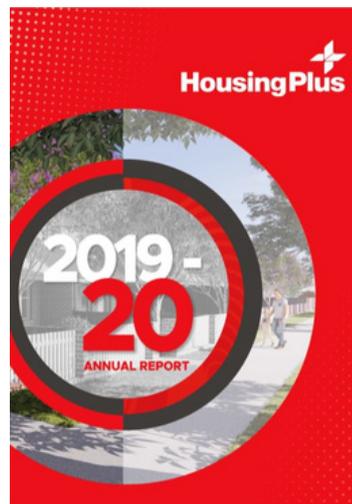
We deliver the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy services to the Western region.

We also have Tenancy Support Officers working with the tenants of the new affordable properties we have completed over the past 12 months, and our Opportunity Pathways service have two full time employees working with tenants of social housing to assist them in reaching their employment goals.

In November we celebrated NAIDOC week with the opening of an indigenous garden space.

The garden was designed by Indigenous members of staff and pays tribute to the various First Nations people that inhabit the region.

The garden area is essential for providing a 'private, relaxed' environment for families that use our services.



A FIRST FOR US

Our inaugural virtual AGM

Housing Plus held its inaugural virtual AGM on the 29th October 2020

We were joined by guest speakers Alice Stiles, WDVCS Manager Legal Aid NSW, Katherine McKernan CEO Homelessness NSW and Minister for Families and Communities Gareth Ward

Thank you to all who joined us.

We were enormously proud to launch our 2019/20 Annual report, a celebration of our achievements, see the link below.

[Housing Plus 2019/20 Annual Report](#)

It was great to listen to our guest speakers and hear their views on a challenging year