

AMÉLIE NEWS

Summer 2023



Amélie Housing
Building hope through housing

Issue No. 3



L-R 1. New office signage 2. Amélie's Brian Murnane & Mark Thompson meet with Marg Robinson and Madeleine Sirris (Vinnies VP, Board of Trustees). 3. Parkes Forbes' Margaret Robinson, Graeme Miller (Chair) and Marlice Smit. 4. Parkes Men's Action Club helping clean.

AMÉLIE WELCOMES TENANTS FROM THE CENTRAL WEST

FOLLOWING MERGER WITH PARKES FORBES COMMUNITY HOUSING

In November 2022, we were pleased to formalise the merger between Amélie Housing and Parkes Forbes Community Housing.

The merger will enable Amélie Housing to provide opportunities to increase the much-needed supply of community housing in the Central West of NSW, and is consistent with Amélie's vision to become 'a national leader advocating justice in housing markets and a major player in the provision of Social and Affordable Housing to the most disadvantaged members of our society'.

Former CEO, Marg Robinson said, 'We are excited to be given this opportunity to grow our presence in the Central West region, and have considered this merger for some time. I have always looked up to Brian Murnane and what he has achieved for community housing and I am excited about what this means for our tenants and the broader community'.

'Small communities have got so much to offer! We pull together when times are tough – as we saw with the recent flooding in Eugowra,

and we work together to support and improve our community wherever needed – as we saw with our Men's Action Club pitching in to eliminate community rubbish.'

Marg joins Amélie Housing alongside Housing Officer, Marlice. Together they have nearly thirty years experience in tenancy and property management, and an unyielding love and knowledge of the Parkes Forbes community.

A special welcome to all of our tenants throughout the Central West community!

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO, GRAHAM WEST



It is my great privilege to be writing to you as the new CEO of Amélie and St Vincent de Paul Housing. Our team is here to support you in your housing journey, and to ensure that more Australians have access to safe and affordable homes.

Amélie Housing is a national special work of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia, making it part of a global network of members, volunteers and staff working to create a more just society. Our team focuses on supporting your tenancy, but as part of this network, is also focused on creating stronger communities, by connecting people to a broad range of community and support services. We are proud of the work we are doing, in partnership with all levels of government, to pursue better housing options for more Australians.

Over the coming months, I am looking forward to being able to get out to as many communities as possible to meet with you - our tenants and community leaders. Being able to hear your stories and listen to your insights, is critical for us as we seek to understand and respond to your needs. In the meantime, we are also exploring ways to use technology to hear your voice and get powerful feedback that will help us improve our services.

No doubt, 2023 will be an exciting year full of opportunities for all of us, as we expand our services, especially in regional and rural areas. We are delighted to have joined forces with Parkes Forbes Community Housing to deliver housing in the Central West, and we welcome our new tenants and team!

Graham West

CEO

AMÉLIE UPDATES

Introducing Graham West

With Amélie CEO, Graham West starting with us in December 2022, we sat down with him to get to know him a little better, and hear his vision for Amélie's future.

Graham, what was it that led/drew you to Amélie?

I first became involved with Vinnies when I was a teenager, and over the years have spent much of my time working to prevent homelessness and create safe homes and communities.

I was involved in the formation of St Vincent de Paul Housing and Amélie Housing, so was very excited when the opportunity came up to continue the important work of the Society and Amélie, as its CEO.

What is your vision for Amélie, its customers and communities?

Amélie, as part of the St Vincent de Paul Society, shares its commitment to creating a world where everyone has the chance to reach their full potential. We want Amélie to help people not only have a house - but to create a home and build connections in community. I would also like to see us extend our partnerships in the employment and education spaces too.

Where is 'home' to you?

I was born in the Macarthur region and spent much of my life in Campbelltown, attending school at St John's Primary and St Gregory's College. I also did a 'tree change' many years ago to the Snowy Mountains of NSW and

Amélie Annual Report 2022

In case you missed it, our 2022 Annual Report was released in November last year and is available to view or download from our website.

It features updates on our financial performance and operations, and showcases key achievements and results for the 2021-2022 year.

Our Annual Report also proudly features artwork from Dale Pracy - a proud Aboriginal woman from the Wiradjuri people, and the sister of Amélie's very own, Kelly Hallam.



until recently, lived in Berridale NSW - so I understand that regional communities have different challenges and need ways to ensure that their voice is heard.

What do you do for fun?

I love the outdoors and would happily have my office there if I could. In fact, I grew up wanting to be a National Park ranger!

What has inspired your career path?

The people I met when I first started doing home visits with Vinnies many years ago! I was challenged and inspired to consider, 'How do we change the system so that everyone gets a fair go and no one lives in poverty?'

Tea or coffee? Black tea, please!

Night owl or early bird? Can you be neither? But night owl if I must pick.

Favourite TV series? Something that allows the mind to switch off. Recently I've watched Bad Sisters and Yellowstone.

Top 3 dinner guests of your choice (dead or alive): Only three?! I would love to have a big table dinner with all my family and friends.



NEWSROOM

Reconciliation Action Plan Endorsement

We are pleased to report that we have now received confirmation that our Reconciliation Action Plan has been officially accredited by Reconciliation Australia and that we are now recognised as a member of the RAP network.

A big thank you to all those that contributed to the development of our RAP. It is now featured on our website and will support us to achieve critical outcomes for our First Nations customers, staff and communities.



Community News

Doonmore Street Penrith

We are pleased to say that our first tenant morning tea took place last week and was a great success. In addition, our local Vinnies conference members are kicking off a walking group soon, with plans to do the Great River Walk. The 6.4km bridge to bridge loop follows the riverbank along the Nepean River, with spectacular views of the Nepean River, the Blue Mountains, birds and other wildlife. For more information or to register your interest, contact Robin Rennex. Robin.Rennex@amelie.org.au

Chamberlain Street Campbelltown

There is a lot happening at Chamberlain St Campbelltown with our community garden set up and running, thanks to our gardening group made up of tenants and Vinnies Conference members.

This group will soon combine with Coffee Club to be known from now on as 'Gardening Club'. If you are interested in making new friends within your neighbourhood, or have a green thumb, don't hesitate to come along and get involved in this or the upcoming walking group. For more information, contact Jessica Milenkovska. Jessica.Milenkovska@amelie.org.au

Staff Spotlight: Margaret (Marg) Robinson

What is your role and how long have you worked in housing? I was the CEO of Parkes Forbes Community Housing and am now the team leader of Amélie Housing Parkes.

What is one thing you love about the Parkes Forbes community? I love the

fact that because we are a closeknit community, people are always willing to help others if they are in need of help or support of any kind.

What are your favourite movies? Bohemian Rhapsody, Braveheart, Ghost. I love Patrick Swayze!

Top three dinner guests of your choice (dead or alive): Patrick Swayze, Freddy Mercury, Queen Elizabeth.

Life mantra: 'Be kind, it makes everybody happy' and 'Good things happen every day!'



Marg Robinson

Tenant Christmas Parties

It was fantastic to celebrate Christmas with so many of our tenants in December last year. We were fortunate to have Amélie's Jonathon Armstrong host our annual Christmas lunches over the course of three days.

This was a wonderful time for tenants and staff to gather together, to share stories and enjoy Christmas festivities.

A special thank you to Jonathon, Mary, Margaretha, Marianne and Tania, for everything they did to make these events possible.



Jonathon Armstrong hosting Amélie's 2022 Tenant Christmas parties.

Papal Honour for Amélie's Beverley Kerr

A special congratulations to Amélie Board Member, Beverley Kerr, who recently received a papal honour, becoming a Dame of the Order of St Gregory the Great.

Beverley received her papal medal from the Vatican at a service held at St Francis Xavier Cathedral in Wollongong on 22 January.

Beverley has not only been a passionate and hardworking advocate for Community Housing but has a record of distinguished service in Homelessness Services and Government. We wish her a huge congratulations on receiving this award!

HOME HINTS AND TIPS

Are you fire safe in your home?

The Fire Services recommend this simple safety checklist to assist in keeping your home fire safe.

- Test smoke alarms regularly.
- Have a written escape plan in case of fire and practice it regularly.
- Make sure keys to all locked doors are readily accessible in case you need to escape.
- Never leave cooking or any other open flame including candles or oil burners unattended.
- Clean the lint filter of your clothes dryer each and every time you use it.
- Never smoke in bed and take extra care if consuming alcohol whilst smoking.
- Don't overload power points and switch off appliances when not in use.
- Always keep lighters and matches away from children.
- If you have a garage or shed remember to take extra care with any stored chemicals and fuels and always refuel mowers, edgers etc when they are cold and in the open.
- If you have a gas, electric or wood BBQ, always check that it is in safe working order before lighting and that it is always in the care of a responsible adult when in use.
- If you live in a bushfire prone area, keep the ground around your home clear of leaves and other litter.

From Social to Affordable... A pathway to more opportunity

"When I originally accepted my social housing unit in Maitland, I did so because I was allowed to have pets in the property, and I knew I would need some company, given I was on my own.

At that time, I was doing casual work but it wasn't long before my circumstances changed and I was able to secure full time work. This prompted me to start applying for properties in the private rental market. By this stage, I was also with my partner, Renee, so we wanted to find a place that was a little bigger for the both of us.

Thankfully, at this point, I was contacted by Amélie's Kerry Wade about an Affordable Housing property at Cardiff, so I went out to inspect the property and found it was much bigger than I expected,



and in good proximity to Newcastle and other amenities.

I put my application in and let's just say, the rest is history.

The transition from Maitland to Cardiff has been a game changer for me! I hadn't considered it previously, but the change has meant much greater opportunities for me in terms of work. I now have a more secure long term job

and Renee and I are really happy with our home and the area. I am forever grateful for stable housing that has supported my growth and the changes in my circumstances."

- Michael Fisher, Amélie tenant

Did you know:

Affordable Housing is designed specifically for key workers, to ensure affordable housing is available in close proximity to key places of employment. Many people need affordable rental housing for lots of different reasons, including people who work full-time or part-time in low to moderate paying jobs. Affordable Housing can also be a solution for people who are going through a life change that has impacted their financial situation. Rent is usually capped at 75% of the market rent.

FOR REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE:
Call 1800 950 575

Feedback and Complaints

Amélie Housing takes feedback, complaints and appeals seriously. If you would like to lodge a complaint, appeal a decision, or provide feedback on what we do well or what we can improve, there are several ways you can do this:

- **Use our online Feedback form**
(Go to <https://bit.ly/ameliefedback> or scan the QR Code).
- **Call us on 1800 950 575 (free call).**
Note: Some charges may apply for mobile users.
- **Access independent support.**
If you need assistance in making a complaint, appealing a decision or providing feedback you can ask a nominated person to help you. You will just need to provide consent for staff to talk with another nominated person on your behalf.



ONLINE
FEEDBACK FORM

Your voice matters to us. For more information or for assistance, please speak to our staff.