



Featured Resident: Hamida

# Thrive

Community Newsletter | Summer 2020

## Welcome to the Summer Community Newsletter!

This edition includes an update about your rent, a 2020 wrap up from Frank Otis, the Tenant Advisory Group Convenor and Unison's newly appointed CEO, James King, and we meet one of our residents, Hamida.

Enjoy!

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If you need support from an interpreter please let us know.

### Nurturing a food garden for all to enjoy

Hamida has proudly been involved in establishing and nurturing the Kensington Community Food Forest and is so happy to now see the garden producing bumper fresh food crops.

"I have loved helping. It is so nice to see how much it has grown since we started the garden."

Hamida has been involved in the Food Forest since the early days of planning and planting. Her role in the volunteer Forest Care Group has been to look after the compost and help water the plants.

The Food Forest is built on sustainability principles and grows fruit and nut trees, herbs and vegetables. This year Hamida has continued to visit the garden regularly. "I love to pick chilli, capsicum, coriander and mint and my daughter really enjoys smelling the herbs and helping with the harvest," said Hamida with a smile.

Last year Hamida accepted the Office of Housing Victoria in Bloom award for Best Community Garden on behalf of the Food Forest. The award voucher bought loads of seeds, which have grown to produce an abundance of fresh food for the community, including surplus food for families in food crisis and food for residents to pick.



## **A message from the Tenant Advisory Group Convenor, Frank Otis**

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Dear fellow tenants,

Wow what a year hey? I know it has been tough for everyone in different ways. But remember there is help out there and don't be scared or ashamed to ask for it. You have come this far and deserve all the help you can get.

It has been a rather different year for TAG. We have kept going and have been conducting meetings by phone – not as good as face to face meetings but better than nothing. A lot of things have been put on hold due to restrictions.

Our achievements in 2020 include:

- Commenced the process to welcome and support new tenants, especially those people who have had long periods of homelessness
- Shared information about the impact of COVID-19 restrictions and tenant issues
- Provided Unison with advice regarding COVID-19 tenant communication strategies
- Carried out a self-evaluation of TAG and found the group was effective and outcomes were beneficial to tenants
- TAG members successfully managed to carry out meetings under difficult circumstances to keep momentum going.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Jo Robinson, Carol Mogan and Dorothy Woolcock who are retiring from TAG and thank them for their valuable input.

I would also like to congratulate James King on his appointment as Unison's CEO.

Hang in there everyone. Hopefully a more caring society will come out of it.

Frank Otis, Convenor



## **Keep cool in the hot weather**

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Getting too hot can make you sick. It is especially important for children, older people and those with existing health conditions to take care of themselves in the summer.

Here are some tips to stay cool in the warmer months:

1. Drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty.
2. Keep your body cool. Have a cool shower or bath and wear light and loose fitting clothing.
3. Keep your home cool. Close curtains and blinds and open the windows when there is a cool breeze.
4. Take care of others. Check in on your neighbours especially the elderly. NEVER leave kids, older people or pets in cars.
5. If you have to go out, wear sunscreen, a hat and take a bottle of water; rest in air conditioning or under a tree.

## Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Have you seen the images in the news of our crowded landfill and tonnes of our recycled waste being shipped to other countries? With a little more thought, we can all change our habits so we throw out less rubbish.

Here are some tips to help us look after our precious planet and reduce waste.

**Reduce:** Say no to unnecessary plastic, including both big and small plastic bags

**Reuse:** Refill your own drink bottle – it saves money too! Use your freezer for meal portion sized food if you have leftovers

**Recycle:** Check carefully about what you can and can't put in your yellow lid recycle bin. For example, don't put your recyclables in a plastic bag

This website provides more information on reducing, reusing and recycling.  
[www.wwf.org.au/get-involved/change-the-way-you-live/reduce-reuse-recycle](http://www.wwf.org.au/get-involved/change-the-way-you-live/reduce-reuse-recycle)



### Message from the CEO, James King

Hello

2020 has certainly been a very different and challenging year for all of us.

Unison quickly adapted to remote working early in the year and we have continued to deliver our services over the phone throughout most of 2020. While not ideal, the health and safety of our tenants and staff are our priority, and we thank you for your understanding.

This year we were able to complete major projects including the opening of 54 new social housing units in Footscray, with residents relocating from a number of our ageing rooming houses to these self-contained apartments.

Solar panels were installed on 64 stand alone and multi occupancy properties. The project will help reduce the environmental impact of our housing and aim to reduce costs over time.

We also started working to our new strategic plan which you can access on our website [unison.org.au/about-us/publications](http://unison.org.au/about-us/publications).



We are pleased to announce that we have been successful in obtaining State Government Maintenance stimulus funding and are in the process of developing an ambitious maintenance plan for our properties.

In 2021, we will roll out our Tenant Survey which will give you an opportunity to give feedback confidentially, however, you are most welcome to tell us what you think at any time. Just contact your Place Manager.

As the holiday period approaches, I wish you all the very best for the festive season.

Take care of yourself, your family and your community.

James

## Temporary halt on rental increases extended

Due to the temporary suspension of rent increases put in place by the Government, Unison stopped all rent reviews (other than change of circumstances) in March 2020.

This means that our new Rent Policy, which aims to increase transparency on the calculation of rent, has also been on hold for existing tenants. We will re-start implementation when rent reviews can resume.

Unison is a not for profit organisation and relies on rental income to pay for cleaning, maintenance and other services. This is why it is important to keep paying your rent and why we continue to monitor rent payments.

If you find yourself in financial hardship or have any questions, as always please reach out to your Place Manager. They are there to help.

## Be careful what you flush down the toilet

Did you know that each year Unison spends a lot of money clearing blocked toilets? Money that could be used elsewhere in our communities.

Only toilet paper should be flushed.

Please helps us by not putting these items in the toilet.

- Wet wipes (even if they say they are 'flushable wipes')
- Tissues
- Paper towel
- Clothes
- Diapers / nappies
- Cotton balls
- Grease, oil, fat



If your toilet is blocked, call Maintenance.

## Annual Report

The 2020 Unison Annual Report is now available. You can find the Report online at [www.unison.org.au/publications](http://www.unison.org.au/publications).



## Assistance if you need it

It is totally normal to feel up and down, especially at this time of year. There is a range of services just a phone call away. Your Place Manager is here to help and can assist you with finding the right service. You can also call Lifeline's support line on 13 11 14 any time day or night.



Please note that our business will remain open throughout the summer holiday period, except for the following public holidays:

Friday 25 December 2020  
Monday 28 December 2020  
Friday 1 January 2021

## Feedback

If you have stories you'd like to see in future newsletters, or any feedback on the current edition please contact Pam via email at [communications@unison.org.au](mailto:communications@unison.org.au).