

home

ISSUE NUMBER 3, MARCH 2020

TRUST HOUSE RENTAL HOUSING NEWSLETTER



EAST-SIDE COMMUNITY HUB A GREAT ASSET

Living by the saying, "a problem shared is a problem halved", Donna Gray reckons every community would benefit from having a Te Āwhina Cameron Community House.

The community hub has been a mainstay in Masterton's east-side since 1982.

Just like the name says, Āwhina, it is a place where people can ask for help, whatever their situation.

"We are here to support anyone who needs it, and sometimes that might be to simply just listen," Donna says.

"It always amazes me how much better a person can feel if they share a problem with someone that they trust . . . that is what we are here for."

That, plus a whole bunch of other stuff including a range of programmes and services from cooking classes to distributing food parcels.

Located on the corner of Church Street and Stuart Crescent, Te Āwhina occupies a house that looks and feels homely to anyone who wants to pop in. It operates an open-door policy, so all are welcome to come in and get involved or just to have a cuppa and a friendly chat, Donna says.

"There's always something happening to keep everyone busy and involved to develop the community spirit."

As coordinator for the last six years, Donna has a pretty good handle on what is going on in the east-side community.

It might not be the wealthiest part of town, she says, but there is a rich sense of support and caring for one another.

Over the years Te Āwhina has developed into a significant community asset and activities there include computer resources, education and life-skills programmes, community-led arts and crafts, recycling of goods and a centre for advice on issues ranging from housing through to legal and health. It runs supports groups for both women and men, and also has a Youth Group.

There is an onsite garage sale operating Monday to Friday that is proving to be a great way for people to connect and to get cheap clothes and other goods.

With so much to do and many different people to interact with Donna can't do everything alone, and is reliant on a team of volunteers. She says as well as helping her, the volunteers also get a lot out of taking on added responsibilities and gaining confidence.



A friendly face, Donna Gray, Te Āwhina Cameron Community House coordinator

"We've had some of our volunteers go on to get paid jobs from the skills that they have gained from being volunteers here."

Trust House is a part funder of Donna's position as coordinator and also Te Āwhina Cameron Community House.

NB: For more information about the courses Te Āwhina, check them out on Facebook, or give them a call (06) 378 9638, better still, pop on down and have a chat.



GETTING READY FOR WINTER



The seasons are changing, and we want to make sure that your house is in good shape for the winter.

If you need to report a repair or maintenance issue for your home please let us know.

It is important that things such as draughts or a leaky guttering, for example, are reported now so that they can be fixed before the chilly temperatures start to bite.

We won't know about these issues unless you tell us, after all, it is your home and you know best where there might be a problem.

Your health and well-being are important. Call us on (06)370-0522.

To call toll free outside of Masterton:

Sth Wairarapa (06) 304 9548

Pahiatua (06) 376 6009

Dannevirke (06) 374 5240



RENT SUBSIDY SCHEME BIG HELP FOR TENANTS

Trust House is continuing to work with the Government to ensure low income families in Wairarapa and Tararua have the same access to support available to rental property tenants in the main centres.

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The Income Related Rent (IRR) scheme is particularly beneficial capping rent at 25% of a tenant's net income.

Introduced in 2015, many potentially eligible tenants missed out because the subsidy only applied to new tenants, although there are exemptions.

We are working with the current government to hopefully have this changed so that all of our tenants, who potentially qualify, become eligible, as is the case for Kāinga Ora (formerly Housing New Zealand) tenants.

Due to the outstanding work from our housing team, we have managed to get sitting tenant exemptions approved for 86 families, mostly in Masterton, through what is a very rigorous and time consuming process for both Trust House and our tenants.

Since the last Trust House Rental Housing Newsletter, (December), we have had 45 sitting tenants go through the process and have had it approved, plus another three waiting to be approved.

More than 25% of Trust House tenants are now on an Income Related Rent (IRR) subsidy scheme.

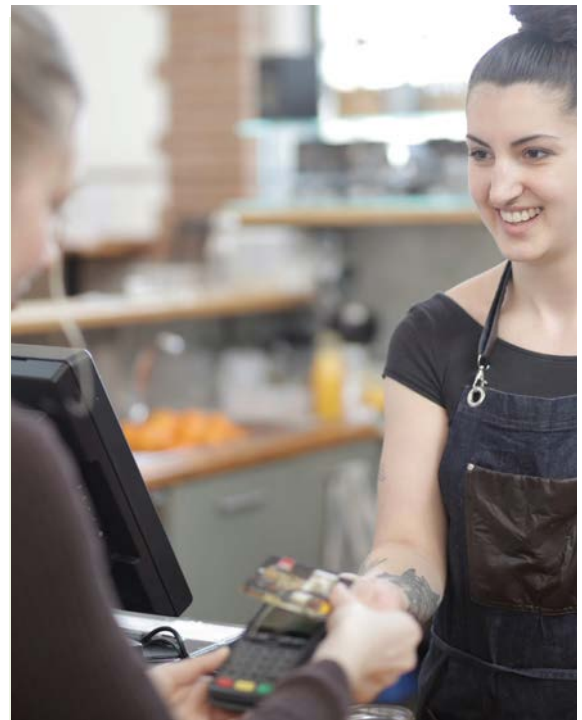
We believe many more are potentially eligible and we strongly encourage tenants to contact Work and Income. Or better still, make an appointment to see them because it may be that it is not just the IRR subsidy that you are eligible for. There may be other support packages that you are entitled to that you are not getting. (See: Help paying the bills).

As you are aware, this year we will be increasing our rents, on average between \$20 and \$25 per week. This is unavoidable and will help pay for reinvestment in the housing stock.

Despite this, our rents continue to remain among the lowest in New Zealand. The rents that we currently charge are on average consistently in the lowest-to-mid quartile of a survey of rents carried out by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

The rent increases, which will take effect from the last week of March, only relate to tenants who are not on an IRR subsidy.

NB: To find out more about Income Related Rent and other support packages, contact Work and Income on 0800 559 009 or visit their website: workandincome.govt.nz



HELP PAYING THE BILLS

If you are having trouble paying your utility bills, such as power, and are at risk of being cut off, you may be eligible for assistance from Work and Income. Best of all, you don't have to currently be on any benefits program to qualify.

DO I QUALIFY?

To be eligible for assistance, you must meet the following conditions:

- Prove that the utility company won't offer a payment arrangement
- Are over the age of 16
- Are an NZ resident
- Live in NZ year-round
- Have an urgent need
- You'll also be subject to certain income and asset limitations based on your age and marital status.

WHAT CAN I GET?

The program provides up to \$200 in utility bill assistance for power, gas, or water. It can be used for an outstanding bill or to reconnect services.

HOW DO I APPLY?

Apply online through myMSD unless you have an urgent need that needs a resolution within 24 hours, then call 0800 559 009 for an immediate appointment.



ACT NOW TO BEAT THE FLU

After a sizzling summer it is hard to believe that winter is not too far away.

With the sudden dip in temperatures inevitably comes a spike in illness, among them, the dreaded flu, or influenza.

The flu is a serious illness that can put anyone in hospital, even kill them. More than 200,000 New Zealanders get the flu each year. Of these, it's estimated that 400-500 people will die either directly or indirectly from its effects.

Flu viruses are constantly changing so it's not unusual for new flu viruses to appear each year. Most seasonal flu activity typically occurs between April and October.

One of the best ways to prevent against getting the flu and staying well during winter, is to get a flu vaccination. They are free for pregnant women, for those aged over 65 and for people with certain medical conditions. Contact your local medical centre to check if you're eligible and to book an appointment.

Even if you don't qualify for free vaccination from a doctor or nurse, you may still be able to get one free from your employer.

FLU VACCINE AVAILABLE FROM 1 APRIL

The 2020 flu vaccine becomes available on 1 April. With most seasonal flu activity typically occurring between April and October, the sooner people get the vaccine after it becomes available the better.

Vaccination is especially important for people at high risk of serious flu complications, and their close contacts.

Also, if you have a loved one who is at high risk of flu complications and who develops flu symptoms, encourage him or her to see a doctor or nurse.

In addition to getting a seasonal flu vaccine, you can take everyday preventive actions like staying away from sick people and washing your hands to reduce the spread of germs.



FLU MYTHS

MYTH: Healthy people don't need to be vaccinated.

While it's especially important for people who have a chronic illness to get the flu shot, anyone — even healthy people — can benefit from being vaccinated.

MYTH: You can't spread the flu if you're feeling well.

Actually, 20% to 30% of people carrying the influenza virus have no symptoms.

MYTH: You don't need to get a flu shot every year.

The influenza virus changes (mutates) each year. So getting vaccinated each year is important to make sure you have immunity to the strains most likely to cause an outbreak.

MYTH: You can catch the flu from going out in cold weather without a coat, with wet hair or by sitting near a draughty window.

The only way to catch the flu is by being exposed to the influenza virus. Flu season coincides with the cold weather. So people often associate the flu with a cold, draughty environment. But, they are not related.

MYTH: Feed a cold, starve a fever.

If you have the flu (or a cold) and a fever, you need more fluids. There's little reason to increase or decrease how much you eat. Though you may have no appetite, "starving" yourself will accomplish little. And poor nutrition will not help you get better.



WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN WAKE OF COVID-19

The issues around Coronavirus (Covid-19) are changing on a nearly daily basis.

What is constant is that the World Health Organisation has characterised this as a pandemic. This is being taken very seriously by all countries around the world.

New Zealand has brought in very strict measures on travel and self-isolation.

Whilst we should not panic, we should certainly take our own steps to help ourselves, our family/whanau and the community to stay as healthy as possible.

Trust House takes the Health and Safety of our tenants, contractors, staff and community very seriously and will change our approach to the situation as and when necessary based on the Ministry of Health guidelines and instructions (directives).

As of the date of writing this newsletter New Zealand has only twenty cases of Covid-19. All were brought into the country from elsewhere. There is no known person-to-person transmission within New Zealand. That is not to say that it will not happen going forward. For the time being we have cancelled all our routine inspections of your home. This is to ensure that your family and whanau are

safe and our staff are kept safe. Ingoing and outgoing inspections may be delayed slightly and will be dealt with on a case by case basis. Our offices are open and jobs for repairs and maintenance will be let to our contractors.

We are asking that you, our tenants, try and reduce the amount of face to face contact in our offices for regular transactions such as paying the rent or reporting repairs or maintenance items.

If you currently pay your rent at the office we ask you to look at making your regular payment through on-line banking. Our Bank is the Bank of New Zealand

Name: Trust House Limited - **Account number: 02 0688 0172088 00.**

If you have any repairs or maintenance, you can phone the office on the usual numbers, or you can go through our website <https://trusthouse.co.nz/homes/report-repair-online/>

There is always a housing officer on call outside of hours for emergencies.

If the Government's advice changes we will look at how our interactions may change going forward.

If you do have any questions around your own health issues and are concerned, you should follow the guidelines on the Ministry of Health website <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

If you are self-isolating and we need to send a tradesperson to your house please let us know. We and the tradesperson may have to take further measures to keep everybody safe.

If you are self-isolating and the repair is minor, it is likely that this repair will not be carried out until you are out of self-isolation. If the repair is an emergency we will get to it as normal, however, we may ask you to leave the door open for the tradesperson and ask you not to be in the same room as the tradesperson. This is to help keep you and the tradesperson as safe as possible.

We will keep you updated as much as we can on how this may affect you or your family going forward.

Should our current approach change in the future we will update our website or Facebook page as necessary.

Please keep yourself, your whanau and the community as safe as possible.

DOG POLICY ADOPTED

Hey canine lovers, the Trust House Board has recently updated its dog policy. Whilst we are working through the necessary forms, please have a look at the policy and if you have a dog or want a dog, start making the first steps to compliance by registering your dog with the local council. This is needed before you will be allowed to have or keep your dog at your house.

Dog Policy

Trust House does not allow dogs on the property without prior approval.

This policy has been changed to recognise that dogs, when properly treated, can be a good companion for a tenant or their family. It also recognises that many tenants do have dogs, which is in breach of their tenancy agreement. In order to be fair to the tenant, the following policy will be brought into use.

If a current tenant has a dog (in accordance with their Tenancy Agreement or not), or wishes to have a dog, the following criteria must be met:

- The dog is currently registered with the relevant local authority and must meet and continue to meet the local authority's requirements of being a dog owner. This includes continuing annual registration, microchipping etc.
- The dog is not classed as a "menacing dog".
- A Pet Information Form will be completed and signed by the prospective tenant.
- You will be responsible for the actions and behaviour of your dog relating to nuisance or harm caused by the dog.

Trust House will not upgrade any fencing at the property if it is only to allow a dog at the premises. Trust House will abide by the Fencing Act 1978, as to provide an "adequate fence" under that Act.

Existing tenants who have dogs will be advised that Trust House has the above policy and that they will need to ensure the above criteria is met to allow the dogs to continue living there. If they refuse to do so, or choose not to do so, a 14 day notice to remedy will be sent. If necessary a Tenancy Tribunal application will be made.



We're a TOLL FREE call away *

Masterton, 370 0522. Sth Wairarapa, 304 9548. Pahiatua, 376 6009. Dannevirke, 374 5240

* Calls are a free local call from a land line. A charge may apply if you call these numbers from a mobile phone.

