

CEHL Regional Forums – June Report 2017

Attendance

Ballarat (10)

Bendigo (7)

South East (9)

Geelong (15)

Metro-West (12)

Peninsula (4)

Shepparton (9)

Metro-North (8)

Gippsland (17)

Collated Feedback – All Regions		
Agenda Item	Key Points	Update
Organisation Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoughts for Jeff Cook and Trish Reid • Members worried about ‘scams’ when receiving emails from new CEHL employees • Interest in the new team/ Real Estate • Gipps Street members were keen to be given the chance to talk to the incoming team to provide feedback on creating communities, the challenges of living in mixed communities and the OC issues. Consider outdoor space and its community usage 	<p>Thoughts and well wishes have been passed on</p> <p>Answered at meeting: call CDC, when in doubt, to check whether a communication is genuine. FAQ: to be published in September</p> <p>More information will be distributed in Co-operatively Speaking.</p> <p>Offer welcomed, perhaps invite staff to info sessions being offered to applicants or wider community to best utilise co-op time. FAQ: to be published in September</p>
Update from March Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members agreed that a FAQ would be a better way of capturing updates and feedback from last forum • Members advised that the updates page on the website is useful but ability to make comments/provide feedback on content (e.g. discussion forum) would be more useful. Some co-op members experienced difficulty in logging feedback. 	<p>Now implemented</p> <p>CEHL is reviewing its feedback opportunities as part of the Engagement Review to be held later this year.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive response to FAQ suggestion – members requested that new questions be answered separately and new info updated regularly • Question raised: What happens if the company (CEHL) falls over? • <i>CEHL will be working towards simplifying language in documents wherever possible (a March Forum item) - but still policy and procedures delivered are not simply written and are not contextualised</i> 	<p>A new set of FAQ's will be published on the CEHL website in September and regularly updated as questions arise.</p> <p>There are many mechanisms in place to ensure the CEHL's ongoing viability including oversight by the Housing Registrar</p> <p>This feedback has been forwarded to the Program Team and PAC</p>
Participation Program Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive feedback about Anne Leadbeater • A Geelong Co-op didn't get email about Participation Policy workshops - • One member shared that they appreciated email from Peter S about policy consultation – good to be notified what is coming up 	<p>This feedback has been passed on to Anne and the Program team</p> <p>Invitations were sent to individuals – hardcopy invitations went to all households and were followed up with text message reminders, for those who had provided CEHL with mobile numbers. Please keep the contact details you provide to CEHL up to date.</p> <p>This feedback has been passed on to Peter and the Program team</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation is a major hot topic, members feel not listened to. Some members stated that they have heard all this before and don't believe there will be anything that will really benefit co-ops and members from the development of a Participation Policy • Concern expressed that Metro West events are always held in Melton and not Werribee • Some members finding it difficult to log feedback onto CEHL's website, taking a long time. As a result of this experience, some members were not keen to log in and provide information in the future. • Concern expressed that an increase in engagement/participation through the website may have a flow on effect of a reduction in physical participation/engagement (e.g. attending Regional Forums) 	<p>The CEHL Board requested the Participation Policy Advisory Group be established to ensure that members have opportunity to influence the development of the Participation Policy, and that the recommended policy reflects the views of members and is workable for co-ops.</p> <p>Further opportunity to influence this policy is planned at the Conference on 18th August.</p> <p>Venues for CEHL events are chosen for a number of reasons including access for all co-ops in the region, security for staff when packing up, audio visual resources, parking, etc. Suggestions for better venues are welcome and will be assessed when planning next year's calendar.</p> <p>This will be improved once our website is upgraded and Member Portal is established. If members experience difficulties they can also email info@cehl.com.au</p> <p>Web-based engagement opportunities have been introduced in an attempt to offer more opportunities for participation from those who have been unable to attend face-to-face events.</p> <p>Opportunities to influence the type and number of engagement activities held by CEHL in future</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions raised – what is a partner of a member required to contribute? Can a partner participate too? 	<p>will be offered in the Engagement Review to be held later this year.</p> <p>Partners of a member are not required to participate in the co-op or program unless they hold a joint membership of the co-op. Each co-ops adopt different rules regarding joint memberships. Refer to your Co-op rules to find out what might apply to you.</p> <p>Other household members can offer help to a co-op where needed, but cannot vote or complete active membership requirements unless they are a joint member.</p> <p>FAQ: to be published in September</p>
Engagement Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional maintenance training/analysis workshops suggested • Members would have liked the workshop date options to have been included in the link to respond to the emailed invitation • Discussion about the preference of members to continue to receive a hardcopy newsletter...should be explored as part of the review 	<p>The Asset Team are exploring ways to offer more maintenance resources and training to co-ops.</p> <p>Emails to co-ops about regional events include details that are relevant to that region. Further details about events in other regions can be found on our website. The ability to include a link to the web page listing all events will be explored for the next mail out.</p> <p>This feedback has been forwarded to the Program Team as part of the Engagement Review process.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough time is given to co-ops to digest and discuss all that is being sent their way. • Too heavy a load and burn out by members. • Little improvement seen in CEHL’s use of language. 	<p>As above</p> <p>Feedback noted. These topics will be explored at the Engagement Review workshop at the Conference.</p>
<p>Circuit Replacement Project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns were raised about being able to identify who makes deposits • Comment made that Circuit works fine if you know how to use it and are properly trained so you do not need to manually enter so much 	<p>This feedback and other information from the Pilot has been considered and reflected in the decision to cancel progressing with Property Me as a CIRCUIT replacement. A more appropriate option is currently being explored.</p>
<p>Committee Updates: Training Advisory Committee (TAC) Policy Advisory Group (PAC) Newsletter Advisory Group (NAG)</p>	<p><u>TAC:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member shared that their co-op has created their own handbook, roles responsibilities based on handbook, will share with TAC. • Question: Training date for the Southeast Region is stated as August 1 in Co-operatively Speaking and August 2 in forum – please confirm correct date • Refresher training, “What is a co-op”, why not consider increasing skill levels of co-op members. Improve process with quality content, delivery and facilitation. 	<p>What a great initiative! This workbook will be considered by TAC when received.</p> <p>All attending were assured that it was an error and all subsequent emails and invites have the correct date.</p> <p>The topics of this year’s training were chosen by TAC after considering feedback from previous surveys, the Program Principles workshops and issues arising across the program such as Housing Registrar standards, etc.</p>

	<p><u>PAC:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appropriate use of property – work from home/small home business ○ Fraud protection • Leave of occupancy by tenant – need to be more clear about no sublet • Some members feel that the consultation period 6 July to 17 Aug is too short because of the school holidays. • Difficult for co-ops to prioritise review and feedback with short timelines. • Timeline to discuss and respond not suiting co-op meetings schedules. Timelines are still unrealistic. Some content needs greater discussion than others and with little feedback time allowed, change is subsequently imposed • CEHL is seen to be consulting but not getting the genuine response/feedback due to timelines. Though referencing Co-op principles, it doesn't seem very democratic to give such little time for feedback and discussion. • Question raised as to the difference between 'policies' and 'procedures'? • Some co-ops continue to keep a file of printed 'hard-copy' PAC policies instead of accessing them online - difficult to 	<p>All content is reviewed by TAC prior to formal approval.</p> <p>This feedback will be forwarded to TAC in consideration of the 2018 Training Calendar</p> <p>This feedback has been provided to PAC and the Program team</p> <p>As above</p> <p>As Above</p> <p>As Above</p> <p>As Above</p> <p>FAQ to be published in September</p> <p>CEHL recommend that co-ops access policies online instead of keeping hard copies</p>
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	<p>ensure their hard-copy files are kept up to date with changing policies.</p> <p><u>NAG</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NAG representatives asked if any members in attendance can alert members to the NAG focus of what makes a co-op unique – culture, location, etc. - provide input for newsletter. • Newsletter is seen as a vital communication and engagement tool for co-ops. 	
<p>2017 Conference Preview</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestion: Provide materials and slides or update on the conference • The offer of travel costs and overnight accommodation, and the proposal for a 1-day only conference, was well received • Further information sought about the accommodation for the conference for older members • Disappointed with the language used in the conference flyer “influencing”, a word which does not connect well with co-op • Co-op engagement – buy in from program participants – the co-ops are shareholders and CEHL needs to support that. • Question: Could we have open space sessions in the conference? 	<p>CEHL will offer materials presented at the conference on our website for those who can't attend</p> <p>Members can contact the Program Information Co-ordinator to discuss their needs</p> <p>This feedback has been noted by the Program team</p> <p>This feedback has been noted by the Program team</p> <p>The conference program was confirmed a number of months ago.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disappointing the Jeff's Shed is used again for the conference as it is a very costly space • Multicultural Hub in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne (near Vic Market) had been put forward as a space for consideration. 	<p>Feedback noted. The Engagement Review will explore this type of issue.</p> <p>This feedback has been noted by the Program team</p>
<p>Key Conversation – Member Selection Matters</p>	<p>Ideas Shared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key change – each co-op needs to work out criteria for new members • Hold interviews somewhere neutral, not in vacant house / or house of co-op members • Number of people on interview panel max 3, too many people is intimidating - Need same three people to interview so consistent • Can be difficult to get to know a person in an interview because they say what they think you want to hear. <p>Questions / Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note regarding matching downsizers and upsizers within the current Co-op: what is the current process? 	<p>This feedback has passed to TAC for consideration in planning future training for Interview Panels.</p> <p>This is a process all co-ops should consider when vacancies arise in accordance with their FDP plans. CEHL is developing a Strategic Vacancy Process to assist.</p> <p>FAQ: to be published in September</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would prefer a longer training period for applicants • Not getting the ‘right’ members / quality of applicants • Comment that it would be good to better explain the purpose of the 100 word statement to applicants and also to clear up what is meant by participation – applicants refer to their handyperson skills, which isn’t really what it’s about anymore. • Two co-ops mentioned experiences where applicants appeared to be referred out of date order. • Comment was made that there is pressure from the income limits and that there are other people who want to join the program, but may fall just over the income limit. It was suggested that the program would benefit from these people being able to join. 	<p>CEHL and Co-ops share the responsibility for offering the right preparation for applicants and to keep this information up to date. It is important to acknowledge, however, that applications might have been made many years ago and the applicant may have experienced a different form of training or assessment in the past.</p> <p>Our program also needs to be accessible to people with diverse skills and abilities. CEHL will continue to review the preparation offered to applicants, but can only provide the broad overview. Each co-op will need to provide information unique to their way of working.</p> <p>CEHL will try to identify how this might have occurred.</p> <p>The income and asset limits that determine eligibility are set by government as a condition of the funding we have received to build and buy our properties. CEHL and Co-ops currently have no ability to offer housing to people outside these limits. The CEHL strategic plan does encourage us to develop new co-op models for different groups whose needs are not being met in the housing market. This will include consideration of models for groups who would normally not be a priority for government funding but who would benefit from co-op</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestion: Interview panel training • Members asked whether CEHL can provide information about whether a prospective member was a 'good' or a 'bad' tenant previously. • Co-op experience had 16 people on list but were unable to find any suitable applicants • It was requested that more applicants be added to the pool in the referral list • If no-one on the list to take the property, can co-ops advertise (in agreement with CEHL)? 	<p>housing. We will ensure that member Co-ops have opportunities to contribute to this kind of program development as part of engagement planning with co-ops.</p> <p>This suggestion will be passed on to TAC</p> <p>CEHL strongly advises all co-ops to check references from previous landlords. Our current application form also requires permission for CEHL to share information about whether an applicant was previously evicted from a CEHL property or had their membership cancelled or expelled (where that information has been provided to CEHL by the previous co-operative). An applicant owing a debt (ordered by VCAT) to CEHL or a co-operative will be asked to make arrangements to repay the debt before being placed on the referral list.</p> <p>It is important that difficulties in finding suitable applicants are discussed with a CDC so that CEHL can try to understand the difficulty and work through options with the co-op.</p> <p>CEHL is currently exploring ways to recruit applicants that is better focussed on the likely needs of co-ops.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacts sent should be from the area, so you only get people who are interested in the area - sometimes names sent of people outside area, need to clarify if they had expressed interest in relocating 	<p>Where the number of referrals available is low, it is important to discuss with the CDC or Program what options are possible.</p> <p>At times this may include suggestions for co-ops to invite applicants who have applied for other areas to consider a new location, offering information to people who have not previously attended an information session or other actions agreed by CEHL.</p> <p>It is hoped that CEHL will be able to do a more thorough review of referral processes once the implications of the VHR are fully known.</p>
<p>General Questions and Discussion</p>	<p>VHR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want CEHL to make sure values of co-op are maintained. • : while challenges were noted, it was also noted that exposure could be good for CEHL and spreading knowledge of the co-operative program • Further concern for the heavy welfare load that this puts on the co-ops. Housing people who don't have a desire for co-op could seriously dilute the program. • Concern that the Housing Registrar has a say in how the co-op program fills their vacancies. 	<p>This feedback will be included in considerations put to the CEHL board.</p> <p><i>(NB: the VHR is an initiative by DHHS, not the Housing Registrar)</i></p>
<p>Questions/topics raised by members that require further CEHL follow up, clarification or more information (include Co-op/members name and contact details)</p>		

Individual co-op questions have been referred to the appropriate staff member.

Feedback from Metro North Forum:

- Meeting Format

Some members expressed concern that the agenda of regional forums does not provide opportunities for ideas and views on a particular issue can be exchanged and requested more opportunities to provide input or reflect on which items might need more time.

It was also suggested that formatting and content of presentations could be improved.

- Forums are being managed by CEHL – they should be facilitating co-op communication – peer to peer – we want to be able to reach other members and co-ops.

- Attendance Concerns: Years ago we used to get 40 people to Regional Forums, tonight we have a handful of attendees.

While CEHL does try to include some opportunities for discussion, the current purpose of regional forums is to inform members of current issues, changes and engagement activities. Agendas are set so they are consistent across every region.

Co-ops are able to add to this content by suggesting agenda items for the next meeting and/or arranging content specific to their own needs in addition to the time allocated by CEHL. In some regions, Co-ops convene a separate regional association, where the agenda is developed directly by co-ops in the region.

The Engagement Review will provide an opportunity for Co-ops and members to provide feedback current and potential future engagement processes.

It is true that attendances at CEHL events have diminished in recent years, often in parallel to declining participation levels observed by co-ops. Attendance varies widely, however, from region to region and season to season, with

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Agenda</u> Can we please get a copy of the agenda prior to the meeting? Can there be a call for agenda items so we can identify issues for our region and have a discussion on them. CEHL drive the agenda and the focus of the session. There is no opportunity prior to, or time at the sessions, to bring to our group concerns and items of interest. Regional Forums in the past had a degree of spontaneity and were enjoyable. • <u>Communication</u> Why doesn't CEHL ask co-ops what would make forums more inviting? • <u>Training</u> Members of one co-op made specific criticism of recent training offered, particularly the Communication presentation at the previous regional forum and the Director's Training. They stressed their preference to use this time for further networking and sharing of issues and ideas. 	<p>many regions experiencing high attendances, especially in daylight savings time.</p> <p>The engagement review will consider why attendances might be declining in some area and what forms of engagement might offer the most appropriate engagement opportunities</p> <p>The agenda is circulated with each invitation.</p> <p>Suggestions for agenda items are sought at the end of each prior forum and would be welcome at any time prior to invitations being sent.</p> <p>FAQ: to be published in September</p> <p>Opportunities to provide this feedback will be available in the Engagement Review discussion at the Conference.</p> <p>This feedback will be forwarded to TAC</p>
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Questions:

What does CEHL mean by short term leases + spot purchases? How do they affect the program?

Please provide clarification on what the Real Estate services will provide and who will be housed in short term leases

Question about specific property in Geelong

“Short term leases” are offered on the private market to people outside our program, primarily where there is no current need for the property in the program but there are plans to use the property (or land) for another purpose in the future. They ensure that properties are cared for and meet their costs while further plans are made.

“Spot Purchase” is a term used to describe the process of buying an individual property from the private market (as against building a property or developing an apartment block). It is one way that we can purchase additional properties, mainly as part of regional FDP plans.

The Real Estate Services team will engage with local real estate agencies for these functions as approved by the CEHL board.

FAQ: to be published in September

Property decisions are made in accordance with CEHL policy with the oversight of the Property subcommittee of the CEHL Board. Information about specific properties is available to the co-op that manages the property. It is not possible to distribute this information more broadly.

<p>Can co-ops still advertise for members?</p>	<p>This is an option of last resort and can only be done by CEHL after all other options have been explored.</p>
<p>Other</p>	
<p><u>Shepparton Forum Discussion:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion around the regional forum venues - move meetings to Shepparton South Community House and use some funds to provide food <p><u>Northcote Forum Discussion:</u></p> <p><u>Trust issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern expressed that CEHL appear to be rushing through policies and procedures (knowing that co-ops are still constantly saying they need more time to digest and discuss and provide feedback) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern expressed that CEHL are seen to be looking to take back properties and appear to want to undertake further tenancy management and move away from co-ops. 	<p>See information about CEHL event locations earlier in this document. CEHL is also exploring options for catering at events.</p> <p>Information about policy cycles and the timelines required have been previously circulated by PAC. Recent adjustments have also been made, reflecting on previous feedback. Further opportunities to discuss timelines for program activities will be available in the Engagement Review discussions at the CEHL conference.</p> <p>Property handbacks are now occurring in accordance with FDP plans agreed between CEHL and Co-ops. This will enable more appropriate stock to be purchased in accordance with the needs identified in the FDP process. The first round of regional acquisitions planning is about to commence with the establishment of the Real Estate Services team.</p>

	<p>CEHL has no desire to increase the number of properties directly managed. It is committed to enabling co-ops to choose the responsibilities they undertake in accordance with the interests and capacity of their members. Where a co-op is struggling to meet current requirements, or requests a change, CEHL will offer to take up tenancy and maintenance responsibilities under a CMC model.</p>
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