

# CO-OPERATIVELY SPEAKING

LASTPRINTISSUE

2019 ISSUE 01



Herbert St Co-op members and CEHL Finance Team members at the Portal demonstration day held at Herbert St, Dandenong.

**C**o-ops are getting connected with the new online member portal. Over 30 residents at Herbert Street Co-operative gathered in the Co-op's Community Centre on Tuesday 5 March, 2019 to help one-another use and learn more about the new member portal.

The portal will give people access to up-to-date information about the CEHL Housing Program, and enable co-ops to share information with one-another more securely. There are help videos and a troubleshooting checklist in *Co-op Resources* on [www.cehl.com.au](http://www.cehl.com.au)

There are eight scheduled portal demonstration days taking place across the state in March and April, check the What's on for details [www.cehl.com.au/WhatsOn](http://www.cehl.com.au/WhatsOn)

Herbert St Co-op Champion, Norma Castro along with the 50 other Co-op Champions have done a fantastic job helping people in their co-ops start using the portal and complete their Annual Rent Review online.

Co-op Champions have played a key role in testing the portal before it was launched. They will continue to help members of their co-ops get started using this new communication tool.

At the time of publishing, half of all co-op members and direct tenants have already started using the portal!

As use of the portal increases there will be significant benefits in reducing printing and postage costs.

If you haven't received a portal invitation by email yet, contact [portal@cehl.com.au](mailto:portal@cehl.com.au) with your up-to-date email address.

# News from the Chair

Welcome everyone to 2019! I hope you have all made some happy memories over the new-year and have something to look forward to this year.

I will first update you on our recent Board activities, then share some great news from ‘Co-op Land’ and finally tell you a little more about me, your new Chairperson.

At the 2018 AGM we welcomed Gordon Kieselbach as a new Director. Gordon has a background in finance and risk and we look forward to his contribution. We also thanked David Spenceley for his contribution over many years, David retired earlier in 2018.

At the first Board meeting after each AGM, the Board elects a Chairperson and nominates Directors to the board committees, this is your Board for 2019:

Board Member	Committee + Role	Board Member	Committee + Role
Heidi Lee <i>Chair</i>	Property <i>Member</i>	Stephen Copland	Property <i>Chair</i>
Fiona Herman	Policy Advisory <i>Chair</i>	Joel Chibert	Finance & Risk <i>Chair</i>
Sylvia Greda- Bogusz	Policy Advisory <i>Member</i>	Tony de Domenico OAM	People Culture & Governance <i>Chair</i>
Gordan Kieselbach	Finance & Risk <i>Member</i>	Brodie Woodland	People Culture & Governance <i>Member</i>
Karren Walker	People Culture & Governance <i>Member</i>	David Williams	People Culture & Governance <i>Member</i>
		Stephen Nash	All committees <i>Managing Director</i>

## Rent News

Like most of you, I received my 2019 Household Information Form (HIF) in the mail this week. You can now complete the form online in the member portal. Once you update your household information, you will get an accurate rent assessment which will supersede the notice sent last year about the approximate range of your new rent. While the new Rent Model will have minimal impact on our lowest income earners, for those earning higher incomes there will be a staged implementation of rent

increases. Please get in touch with CEHL staff for clarity about your rent.

We will shortly be starting our *Company Rent and Affordability Benchmark Advisory Group*, a key recommendation from the *Rent Model Advisory Group*. This project will review Program costs and make recommendations to the Board about viable changes that members will benefit from.

## Engagement News

We were delighted to receive preliminary outcomes from the *Engagement Review* from Jeanette Pope. Member engagement is the centrepiece of great decision-making in our Program and we are always keen to hear from members. Please continue to share your thoughts and ideas to broaden and strengthen your engagement with the Program.

We are hearing wonderful news about co-ops getting together outside of CEHL-led events, sharing recommendations for things like maintenance projects and computer software. It’s always heartening to hear of **‘Co-ops doing it for themselves’**, the name of the group of self-helping co-ops in the inner-north. If you have a story to share, or group starting in your area, please feel free to share your success with others by writing about it in *Co-operatively Speaking* or at your next Regional Forum.

## Victorian Housing Register

The outcomes of the Victorian Housing Register (VHR) are now back from Government with a proposed requirement that less than 4% of all vacancies be allocated to priority access households. That was not a typo, it is really less than 4%, down from the proposed 75% at the start of discussions. This is much less than co-ops have allocated in the past 2 years, in 2018 - 28.9%, and in 2017 - 16.5% of all allocations went to priority access households.

We are very optimistic that this allocation requirement will bring positive outcomes for co-ops, enabling you to have access to a wide pool of eligible members, provide housing for people in genuine need, and the opportunity for secure rental income.

Your input to our negotiations was essential for us to take a firm position on your behalf, and I would like to personally thank everyone who contributed to the discussions about VHR over the past two years.



Co-ops would have already received information about the analysis that led to the decision and ways for co-ops to provide feedback.

## A bit about me

I’ve been a member of Earth CERC for the past seven years and on the CEHL Board for three years. I live in a co-op property in Heidelberg Heights with my family, and I truly value the community that co-op housing brings to my life. My co-op has been a fantastic support network for me, and I am a true believer in the value of co-ops, and people working together for a common purpose.

In my professional life, I’ve worked in architecture for the past fifteen years, specialising in environmental sustainable design. I now focus my time on consultancy work on low carbon infrastructure projects and climate emergency advocacy. You might see me speaking on a panel or running community workshops around Melbourne – if you do, please come and introduce yourself and tell me about your co-op! I love hearing positive stories about co-op living, and welcome your constructive ideas for how we can continue to improve support for our Program.

Thanks again Karren for all your wonderful work and commitment to co-op housing in ten years as Chair. It is a privilege to take on this role and I look forward to working with the Board and our members this year.

## Staying connected

This will be our last print edition of *Co-operatively Speaking*. From our next edition, we will be moving online to enable a wider diversity of topics to be shared, longer form articles and more image-based content. I hope this provides more chances for your voice to be heard and your stories to be shared – and ultimately a new, modern platform for our co-ops to communicate.

Heidi Lee, CEHL Chair



# Managing Directors Report

I hope your 2019 is going well.

It’s very pleasing to see how the new processes are starting to support the cycle of co-op *Future Direction* planning. Information from each co-ops’ *Future Direction Plan* feeds into a regional strategy which determines where properties are purchased or developed and in turn allocated to co-ops.

Thank-you to all of the co-ops involved in the initial piloting of the process and, for those who have been actively progressing their *Future Direction Plans*.

The CEHL Board starts each year with a ‘Strategic Saturday’ session to discuss key changes to our operating environment and the priorities for the year. This year will focus on:

## Strengthening the financial sustainability of the Program with:

- the implementation of the new *Rent Model*
- consultation with co-ops to review the *Company Rent Model*
- growing our *Capital Investment Strategy*
- seeking funding opportunities to accelerate regional plans

## Strengthening co-op engagement by implementing ideas from the Engagement Review workshops

## Funding opportunities

A number of government funding opportunities have been released in the past few months. CEHL has made submissions that, if successful, will provide additional housing in the Program where the funding supports our Program Principles and rent model, and will accelerate some of the regional plans.

Some funding opportunities however, are limited to ten years which does not support our commitment to Security of Tenure. In these instances, CEHL has made submissions that would support our Capital Investment Strategy, that will provide; housing to people outside of the Program, a revenue stream, and return properties back to CEHL to fund Program priorities after the ten year period.

Stephen Nash, CEHL Managing Director







**Launch  
HOUSING** IT'S TIME TO END  
HOMELESSNESS



### Need support to keep your housing or co-op membership?

CEHL have partnered with Launch Housing to offer all co-op members and CEHL tenants a referral service that can link people to support services.

Angela Miller (pictured above) from *Launch Housing* is now working with CEHL to provide co-op members and direct tenants with referral to support services.

The support services available can assist in many aspects of daily life including financial counselling, health or disability services, family relationships, etc.

You do not need to be facing a housing crisis to access this service.

Angela Miller has experience in human services and project management with a history working in housing services and mental health. She is friendly and great to have a chat with.

#### LINKS

Contact Angela on 0400 409 655

[CEHLreferrals@launchhousing.org.au](mailto:CEHLreferrals@launchhousing.org.au)

## Company Rent Model and Affordability Benchmark consultation

The CEHL Board accepted the recommendation of the *Rent Model Advisory Group* to establish a new advisory group to review the existing company rent model and the rental affordability benchmark.

To help facilitate a Program discussion on the adequacy and equity of our company rent and rental affordability benchmark, the CEHL Board has requested an advisory group made up of Program participants be established.

The objectives of the *Company Rent and Affordability Benchmark Advisory Group* (CRABAG) are to:

1. Ensure that the review provides appropriate, accessible and timely opportunities for Program participants to input and provide feedback into the review process
2. Make a recommendation of a revised Company Rent Model and an Affordability Benchmark to the CEHL Board that reflects feedback from Program participants and aligns with the Program Principles and Board requirements

### Rent information

Call the Rent Hotline with any questions about the rent model or rent changes.

**Rent Hotline 9208 0806**

10am and 3pm Monday to Thursday



Iain Walker receiving the Community Hero Award from Hon Jenny Macklin MP at Banyule City Council.

## Community Hero Award

Congratulations Iain Walker, who received a *Jagajaga Community Hero Award* on Australia Day 26 January, 2019. The award recognises the efforts of individuals and groups who selflessly volunteer their time and effort to make our community and our nation a better place.

*Iain's significant contributions to community include his involvement in the advancement of the co-operative housing movement in Australia. Iain is a founding member of Earth Housing Co-operative (1986), and Murundaka Cohousing Community, now seven years old, providing affordable, secure and community based homes for twenty households.*

*Iain was involved in the formation of the Sustainable Living Foundation.*

*Iain has also been a CEHL Board member and an Honour Board recipient in 2014.*

Excerpt from Iain's Jagajaga Community Hero Award Nomination



## Next Policy Consultation

The next policy consultation cycle runs from **4 April to 16 May 2019**.

Go to *Have your say* on the CEHL website and to review the draft policies and complete the survey on the **Policy Consultation** page of the CEHL website.

#### Where to find CEHL Policies . . .

Policies, procedures and other useful guides and forms can be found in the [Policies & Procedures Directory in Co-op Resources](#) via the portal from 1 April 2019 [www.cehl.com.au](http://www.cehl.com.au)

## Family Violence Guidance

CEHL has started to prepare a Program response to Family Violence, to provide guidance to co-operatives on how they can support people experiencing family violence.

It will include information about the co-ops responsibility as landlord and information about the rights of tenants or a household member affected by family violence.

#### For more information

Call Peter Sleeman on 9208 0859  
[peters@cehl.com.au](mailto:peters@cehl.com.au)

If you or someone you know is experiencing family violence, help is available at **Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria** [www.dvrcv.org.au](http://www.dvrcv.org.au)

For 24/7 counselling and support call **1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732**

Or call **000** if in immediate danger



## Improving Engagement



The CEHL Board recognises that to achieve a *Co-op led Program*, co-ops must be provided with effective opportunities to influence Program decisions and direction. Improving our approach to engagement is an important first step.

In 2018, CEHL commissioned consultant Jeanette Pope to examine ways to improve engagement between the Program and member co-ops.

### SURVEY

We started with a survey and over 80% of co-ops responded. The survey found responsibilities between CEHL, co-ops and the Program are not completely clear and co-ops had good ideas about how CEHL could improve service delivery.

Many co-ops also reported:

- issues with member participation
- the lack of ways for co-ops to talk to each other and share information, advice and positive stories.

### WORKSHOP

In December 2018, this topic was workshopped by co-op members at nine regional forums. Around 150 members attended the workshops and pitched ideas for co-ops to improve participation.

### REPORT + ENGAGEMENT PROPOSAL TO BOARD

Jeanette and her team are now finalising a proposal outlining the next steps and this will go to the CEHL Board in March.

A report on the findings will be sent to all co-ops and we expect a big opportunity to discuss the ways forward at the June Regional Forums.



Centre for the  
Study of Co-operatives

### Governing the co-op

A number of co-operative members and CEHL staff members enrolled in a global 'Governance in Co-operatives' MOOC (massive open online course).

Each person committed to studying three hours per week from late January until early March this year, immersing themselves in real world case studies and reflecting on their own experience.

Topics included:

- working together
- coming to an agreed view of the future and
- building legitimacy in co-operative organisations

Initial reports are that all gained new insights and were much enlightened.

Don't worry if you missed it's running again later this year. It's a FREE online course

For more details go to [usaskstudies.coop](http://usaskstudies.coop)

**QU:**  
**What breed of dog  
can jump higher  
than a house?**

**A: Any dog can, houses can't jump!**

## 2019 Scholarships

Congratulations to nine new CEHL Scholarship recipients for 2019!

Each year, CEHL provides education scholarships worth \$2,000 each to people living in our co-ops who wish to further their education.

The CEHL Board provides eight general scholarships and one for applicants studying Business Administration, Information Technology or Commerce at any level. This scholarship is in memory of Helen Tyndall, who was a well-known and highly respected Administration Team Coordinator for many years at CEHL.

This year we were delighted to receive eleven applications across all qualification levels. We were especially pleased to hear from people undertaking Certificate and Diploma level courses this year.

### Congratulations . . .



**Michelle Boxell**  
**Eyrie Co-op**

**Masters of Visual Arts.** Michelle wishes to use her studies to help people within her community who have disabilities to communicate through artwork.



**Elaine Fell**  
**Carringbush Co-op**

**Juris Doctorate in Law.** Elaine wishes to finish her Juris Doctorate in Law and use her knowledge of the law to help people and find work in the legal field.



**Arlo Grech**  
**Earth Co-op**  
**CERT IV in Laboratory Technology (Biotechnology)**

Arlo plans on starting a career as a laboratory worker while continuing to further his education in biotechnology.



**Diamond Valley Co-op member**  
**Diploma in Nursing.** Studying nursing to further their own life goals and provide a benefit to their children.



**Melanie Jade Krupa**  
**Traralgon United Co-op**  
**Diploma in Nursing.** Melanie plans to use her nursing qualification to help others as much as others have helped her.



**Emily Nelsson**  
**Lakewood Co-op**  
**CERT IV in Disability.** Emily wishes to work with young people and children with special and additional needs in schools and in their homes.



**Joanne Tangas**  
**Dragon City Co-op**  
**Diploma in Nursing.** Joanna is passionate about caring for those around her and wishes to use her nursing skills to help her sons and others.



**Nicole Wood**  
**Stockaders Co-op**  
**Diploma in Community Services.** Nicole is following her passion of working with people to better the community through intensive case work and support services.



**Tyson Wright** **Solar City Co-op**  
**CERT IV in Information and Digital Media & Technology.** Tyson plans to pursue a career as a computer programmer.





## SEEKING NEW MEMBERS . . . .

### Newsletter Advisory Group

Do you have an interest in co-op news?

Want to help improve the stories and information you read in *Co-operatively Speaking*?

We are looking for new members to join the Newsletter Advisory Group (NAG)

Commitment

- Work collaboratively
- Four meetings per year
- Monthly stipend + travel reimbursement or option to attend meetings 'online'

Contact Sandra on 9208 0800 or email [newsletter@cehl.com.au](mailto:newsletter@cehl.com.au)

## LASTPRINTISSUE

Next issue of **Co-operatively Speaking** will be **ONLINE!**

Read all the latest co-op news as it happens on the website and each quarter *Co-operatively Speaking* will come straight to your email inbox or portal home page.

As usual co-ops are encouraged to keep members up-to-date with Program news.

### Training Advisory Committee

The Training Advisory Committee (TAC) invites all co-op members to consider being part of the committee.

Expressions of Interest are being sought by TAC by the end of March as outlined on [www.cehl.com.au/TACEOI](http://www.cehl.com.au/TACEOI)

The successful co-op members will work collaboratively as part of the advisory committee to:

- Provide insight and advice to CEHL on the learning and training needs of co-op members
- Provide feedback and suggestions to CEHL on the planning and delivery of training
- Report to and seek input regarding training from co-op members via regional forums
- Be part of a group passionate about training and education for co-op members.

For more information contact Heather on 9208 0800 or email at [training@cehl.com.au](mailto:training@cehl.com.au)

John Harrison of Eureka Co-op has been a founding member of the Eureka regional group and an early member of the Training Advisory Committee (TAC). He is leaving TAC after extensive involvement and these are John's reflections on TAC.

What I gained by joining TAC:

- The skills you gain are listening and learning from other people who have a different point of view or perspective and being able to work through their ideas to achieve a positive outcome
- You learn the skills of creating easy to use training notes and packages.
- The bonus you receive is in your personal confidence which grows as you are given the opportunity to talk to people who are training about how to use the training notes.
- Friendships are formed with team members from co-op throughout the state and work co-operatively with CEHL staff.

Thankyou to my region for their support and CEHL staff who have given me the space to grow.

John Harrison

## Shared garden sows the seeds of community satisfaction



Murundaka resident Kaz Phillips says the ability to take a long-term view is one of the great benefits of gardening in a co-housing arrangement. photo JUSTIN MCMANUS

There's nothing like a spot of extreme weather to test a co-housing community's mettle in the garden. When temperatures rose to more than 40 degrees earlier this month, there was no shirking at Murundaka in Heidelberg Heights.

Residents of the community – where homes are clustered around shared space – had already participated in a mass mulching session, applying straw over every scrap of bare earth. During an earlier workshop, the garden's thirstiest plants were pointed out and the benefits of deep watering expounded. Many had volunteered for the daily summer watering roster.

But, on the eve of Victoria's hottest day in five years, it was decided that the roster alone wouldn't cut it. There was a call for more hands on deck. Residents rallied. They watered at dusk and again the following dawn and, as the temperature steadily climbed, no plant died and no leaf was scorched.

*"It's not just the outcome but about being in the garden that is important for me. All gardens are more about people than the garden. Gardening is about providing a space for people to connect with each other, or with themselves in a serene way."*

Central to this effort has been Kaz Phillips, who moved to Murundaka three-and-a-half years ago and is the community's most active gardener. Kaz and other residents dig out lawn and replace it with comfrey. They make Hugelkultur-style raised beds by covering piles of branches and leaves with compost. They tend the food plants and think about what other species they should plant to provide more shade and privacy.

The Murundaka Cohousing Community is all about collective management. But, in keeping with the first modern co-housing communities that appeared in Denmark in the early 1970s, residents of this all-rental housing co-operative are able to balance the private and the public.

Excerpt from article by [Megan Backhouse, Sydney Morning Herald 18 January 2018](#)





## International Women's Day

Collective action and shared responsibility for driving a gender-balanced world is key. International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women - while also marking a call to action for accelerating gender balance.

The first International Women's Day occurred in 1911, supported by over one million people.

Today, IWD belongs to all groups collectively everywhere. IWD is not country, group or organisation specific.

**Thank you for your contribution to your co-ops and to the Co-op Housing Program.**

The co-operative movement has a long history of empowering women. Women in co-operatives had an equal vote decades before they could vote for parliament.

Gender equality is positively supported and reflected in the gender balance at CEHL and in the housing co-operatives.

**80% of Co-op Directors in CEHL Housing Co-ops are female.**

Interested in running for local council?

**The Victorian Local Governance Association VLGA**

VLGA's Local Women leading change campaign aims to achieve equal representation of women as Local Councillors by 2020 (the next LG election round).

While we're sure lots of co-op members have a strong interest in their local community, we'd encourage any Program members to get active and stand for election.

We'd especially encourage our female members to do so given that women make up 50.9% of the population, but only 38% of local councillors.

VLGA have created a toolkit to help you get started in local government

[www.vlga.org.au/events-training/local-women-leading-change](http://www.vlga.org.au/events-training/local-women-leading-change)



## Outcomes Framework



*Imagine a world where ...*

- Co-op housing is a mainstream housing option, providing quality, affordable housing for all members of the community
- Neighbourhoods are safe, there is no homelessness and people are actively contributing to their communities
- People are working together through their co-operatives to solve local problems and build resilience to threats such as climate change

*Sounds great doesn't it! But how do we get there?*

CEHL has started a project to develop a *Co-op Housing Program Outcomes Framework*. This work will help answer the questions:

- What is the change we are working for?
- What is the context in which we are working?
- What needs to happen for the change to come about?

It will describe who experiences the change, what actually changes for them and what activities contributes to this change. Not surprisingly, it is called a 'Theory of Change'!

We often hear stories from co-op members that being in a co-op has helped them create a better life for their family or improved their confidence so they feel able to take on new challenges.

This work will help us measure how being a member of a co-op housing program contributes to these 'soft' skills that make life worthwhile.

Member co-ops will be engaged throughout the development of the *Outcomes Framework* to reflect on what difference co-op housing has created in their life and communities and to help identify the best ways of knowing that this change is taking place.

*Co-op Focus Group*

*Call for volunteers ...*

Would you like to be involved in a focus group made up of co-op members that will influence the development of the *Outcomes Framework*?

Email the Program Development Team

[pdt@cehl.com.au](mailto:pdt@cehl.com.au)

Focus Group sessions will be held in early April, see the project page on the *Have your say* section of the website for more details

[www.cehl.com.au](http://www.cehl.com.au)

### Community Housing Industry Association Social Outcomes Framework

The Community Housing Sector and the Community Housing Industry Association Vic (CHIA Vic), are also working towards developing a sector-wide Social Outcomes Framework.

This major project is to transform the ability of the sector to measure and deliver tenant outcomes and fulfil the role of 'social landlord'.

CEHL is one of several community housing organisations contributing to this unique and exciting project.

CEHL will be conducting tenant interviews as part of the project and looking for people to share their experiences of 'what is different' and 'what has improved' as a result of being housed in co-operative housing.

**Interested in being interviewed and sharing your experiences?**

Contact the Program Development Team

[pdt@cehl.com.au](mailto:pdt@cehl.com.au)

## CEHL Program Principles

1. Affordability and Financial Sustainability
2. Changing Needs
3. Member Support and Development
4. Membership and Growth
5. Participation
6. Quality of Housing
7. Security
8. Working Together

**CEHL Office Contact 1800 353 669**



### **Out of Hours URGENT**

Maintenance for CMC or  
Direct Tenants contact

**Valley Maintenance 0417 102 414**

### **Geelong Network Meeting Dates**

**3rd April**

**5th June**

Meetings are held at  
113 Noble Street, Newtown at 7pm.

**All welcome!**

**For any enquiries please contact Shirley:**

Phone: 5244 3961 Mobile: 0418 141 228

Email: [martynjulian@optusnet.com.au](mailto:martynjulian@optusnet.com.au)

### **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

For up to date event and venue details go to  
[www.cehl.com.au/WhatsOn](http://www.cehl.com.au/WhatsOn)

14 Mar	Member portal demo and rent review help GEELONG
15 Mar	Policy Advisory Committee Meeting
21 Mar	Training Advisory Committee Meeting
27 Mar	CEHL Board Meeting
2 Apr	Member portal demo and rent review help BENDIGO
3 Apr	Member portal demo and rent review help BALLARAT
3 Apr	Newsletter Advisory Group Meeting
8 Apr	Member portal demo and rent review help GIPPSLAND
9 Apr	Member portal demo and rent review help MELTON
6 May	Gippsland Training Forum
7 May	Metro South East Regional Training
7 May	Metro West Regional Training
8 May	Bendigo Regional Training
8 May	Peninsula Regional Training
9 May	Geelong Regional Training
9 May	Shepparton Regional Training
14 May	Ballarat Regional Training

Send us your stories, images, article ideas to  
[newsletter@cehl.com.au](mailto:newsletter@cehl.com.au)