



Link Wentworth

Unlocking Potential

2021-22 Annual Report



Anne,
Link Wentworth
Tenant



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Acknowledgement of Country

Link Wentworth wishes to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Land on which we work and pay our respect to the Elders both past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Cover photo:
Mary, Link Wentworth Tenant

About Link Wentworth

Link Wentworth is one of the largest and fastest growing Community Housing Providers (CHPs) in Australia. As a nationally registered Tier 1 not-for-profit, our purpose is to provide more homes and deliver quality services to enable a brighter future for people facing housing stress and homelessness.

From humble and local beginnings in 1984, we now operate six offices, serving over 10,000 clients in 6,472 homes. We pride ourselves on maintaining close connections with our residents through having a local presence and delivering compassionate, quality tenancy and asset management services—as well as community programs, like our Scholarship Program, to help build futures.

We are one of the few CHPs to provide services that span the full spectrum of housing need—from Specialist Homelessness Services to social and affordable housing, Specialist Disability Accommodation, private rental assistance and support into home ownership.

With strong leadership, commercial management and governance, our organisation has grown through outcomes-focussed mergers, as well as the successful tendering for the NSW government's Social Housing Management Transfer program in 2018. As such, agility, innovation, and customer-centricity has become part of our fabric. The most recent merger in 2021 has been followed by a focus on business integration including systems, processes and culture and laying the right foundation to support continued growth to meet the increasing demand for social and affordable housing.

Given Link Wentworth's strong cash position and zero debt, our capacity for asset growth is unmatched. Building on our proven record in negotiating and delivering on management transfers and property portfolio management, we now have an emerging track record in delivering new development projects, in partnership and through innovative means. Our current unencumbered financial position will enable us to take advantage of high-quality growth opportunities, which is a focus of our Strategy 2022 to 2025.

Our partners are significant in our growth story and key to our work continuing. We work closely with other CHPs, governments, developers and builders, financiers and investors, community groups and others to deliver more homes, better services, build the capacity of the CHP sector, and advocate for positive change.

Vision

Providing homes, building futures

Mission

Providing more homes and delivering quality services to enable a brighter future for people facing housing stress and homelessness

Values

Customer-focus:

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do

Compassion:

We genuinely care for each other and everyone we work with

Integrity:

We are committed to safety, honesty and accountability

Respect:

We value everyone we engage with and treat them fairly and equitably

Ambition:

We have the courage to lead and help drive positive social change

2021-22 was our first full financial year as Link Wentworth Housing Ltd – and what a year it has been.

Chair and CEO's message

As Chair and CEO of this wonderful organisation, we could not be more proud of what has been achieved. It has once again been a year with significant challenges, beginning with a lengthy COVID-19 lockdown for many of our tenants, followed by the La Niña weather event and devastating floods impacting our communities. At the same time, our staff were bedding down processes and procedures as a newly merged organisation, putting in place new teams and new ways of working. Despite these tough times, we have continued to provide quality essential services and be responsive to the needs of our customers.

In March 2022, we celebrated one year as Link Wentworth. With very few occasions throughout 2021 to get together in person, we marked this milestone with a staff event and by sharing stories of staff on our website and social media.

Building on our previous work to develop a vision for Link Wentworth, we refined our mission and added descriptors to our values. Together, our vision, mission and values guide our decision making and are very much a part of our brand

and how we deliver services, partner with other organisations and intend to grow over the next three years.

Much of this year has been spent developing the first Link Wentworth Strategy – which will guide our work until 2025. With ambitious targets, this strategy addresses the worsening housing crisis in NSW and the role community housing providers, like Link Wentworth, can play in helping to provide more social and affordable homes and support positive outcomes for tenants. For the first time, we have also set key performance indicators around Environmental, Social, and Governance actions which look at how, as an organisation, Link Wentworth can operate in a more sustainable, ethical and environmentally-friendly way.

Unlocking potential

The title of our 2025 Strategy is “**Unlocking potential**”.

This is a multi-layered title, encompassing the potential of Link Wentworth, the Community Housing Sector, our partnerships and the role of the Government and the private sector – and most importantly the potential of our tenants.

For our tenants and clients, “Unlocking potential”

represents our commitment to supporting them to live fulfilling lives in connected, thriving communities. When we support a person to find safe and secure housing, this is just the beginning of their journey with Link Wentworth. Our ability to offer wraparound support and services gives them the skills and confidence to maintain their tenancy and rebuild all aspects of their lives.

We are incredibly proud of all the tenants and clients featured in this Annual Report who have chosen to share their experience with Link Wentworth in a case study. There is nothing more powerful than reading and hearing first-hand stories. It was not so long ago that the stigma associated with living in community housing served to deter our residents from sharing their stories—despite a need for these stories to be heard. We are grateful to all our tenants and clients who are now willing to bravely contribute to our organisation in this way, and be a part of creating positive change in the housing sector.

Our thanks also go to Mary and Marie, two active and committed members of our Tenant Advisory Group (TAG). In the past year, both women

have stepped up in the public domain to talk about their experiences of homelessness and housing stress to help raise awareness about the importance of community housing and support provided by housing providers. Mary was a speaker at our first-ever “Big Housing Debate” and Marie bravely presented her story at the NSW Upper House Inquiry into homelessness among over 55s.

Our range of community programs providing training, employment, education and other opportunities for tenants and clients continues to grow. A few highlights this year include our Scholarship Program which supported a record number of residents and the Ready2Work program funded by ANZ’s Community Foundation which is providing hospitality training to tenants.

Delivering quality housing services

Link Wentworth supports over 10,000 residents and clients across the whole spectrum of housing solutions, making us one of the largest community housing providers in NSW.

While working through the challenges of the pandemic and floods—not to mention

juggling an array of integration projects—our teams have continued to respond to the needs of tenants and clients with the highest quality of service.

Even during the toughest times of COVID-19, our outreach team continued to support people sleeping rough. Additionally, tenants living in Local Government Areas of concern or those impacted by job loss, were provided with financial assistance, food hampers, and assistance with accessing vaccinations. We are grateful to the Department of Communities and Justice for funding grants to support these tenants, as well as the many other service providers, local councils and community organisations who helped us provide much-needed support to this vulnerable cohort.

Internally, we were pleased to complete the integration of our two contact centres and launch our new Customer Experience Team.

Increasing social and affordable housing stock

A key motivator behind forming Link Wentworth was the increased capability of the new entity to deliver more social and affordable housing.

“Unlocking potential”

represents our commitment to supporting tenants and clients to live fulfilling lives in connected, thriving communities.

We are already making solid progress in this area, with new partnerships formed and several development projects on track. We are proud to be partnering with Urban Property Group to deliver a new affordable housing complex in Penrith. Also in Penrith, our plans to build a Youth Foyer with longstanding partner Platform Youth Services are progressing well. We also have a number of other developments well on the way, bringing the number of new homes in the pipeline to 292. Full details of our projects currently underway are on page 44.



A focus on our people

An organisation is only ever as successful as its people, so ensuring we provide a thriving, supportive workplace is a priority. Being an employer of choice remains a key strategic area of priority and during 2021-22, we made significant progress in creating a unified and effective workforce.

As part of our integration work, we were pleased to update all employment contracts and align them to new terms and conditions which we developed in consultation with staff.

Despite the challenges of lockdowns, we invested time and effort in connecting staff with each other, both online and in person. An all-staff mini-conference and end of year celebration was a great way to get together.

We also set up a Diversity and Inclusion Committee who have been working on our first Diversity and Inclusion policy. This work will dovetail nicely with the work we are doing on the next stage of our reconciliation journey and embedding cultural awareness across our organisation.

Building our capacity to retain staff has continued to be a focus. We strive to create an

We are incredibly proud of all the tenants and clients featured in this Annual Report who have chosen to share their experience.

Link Wentworth's NRAS
& Rent Subsidy Specialist
Danielle during our One-Year
Celebrations.



organisational culture that is supportive, nurturing and empowering for staff. In this year's report, we profile three staff members who have been supported to advance their careers within Link Wentworth: Tanya, a Technical Officer, who is progressing her career in the assets part of our business; Zac, who has progressed his career through several internal promotions; and Tionnie, who participated in the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) NSW cadetship and went on to secure employment with us and be recognised with an industry award. Thank you to these staff members for sharing their Link Wentworth story.

Our congratulations also go to the many staff members who have been recognised individually or through project work for their contributions to our organisation, customers and the community housing sector.

Advocacy work

2021-22 has been a big year in the advocacy space for Link Wentworth. As part of our strategy to raise awareness of our new brand, we have been actively discussing the housing crisis in NSW, the urgent need for more social and

A huge achievement this year was hosting the Big Housing Debate. Our thanks go to everyone involved in this ground-breaking event—including the tenants and clients, staff, partners and special guests.

affordable housing and the role community housing providers can play in the solution—working alongside government.

We are particularly proud of the hugely successful Big Housing Debate hosted by Link Wentworth, in partnership with Western Sydney Community Forum in April 2022. It took an enormous amount of work for our staff to bring together representatives from community, academia, the private sector and government to debate how we can meet the need for social and affordable housing. We are excited to see the outcomes and momentum achieved from this important event in the coming years.

Our financials

We have maintained a financially strong balance sheet, placing Link Wentworth in a good position to focus on our goal of providing more homes and building strong futures for our tenants and clients. Link Wentworth currently manages, 6,472 homes, carries no debt and for the 2021/22 year, reported revenue of \$111.6 million, net annual operating surplus of \$7.5 million (excluding property revaluation of \$16.3 million) and net assets of \$275.3 million.

Our thanks

Our first full year as Link Wentworth has been full of many achievements, none

of which would have been possible without our dedicated staff and Board as well as supportive partners and stakeholders.

Our sincere gratitude goes to our tenants, particularly those on our Tenant Advisory Group who have provided valuable feedback on a range of topics from new policies and procedures, right through to social activities and programs for residents.

We thank the NSW Government, Land and Housing Corporation, Department of Communities and Justice and Landcom for their guidance, funding and commitment to solving the housing crisis in NSW. A co-ordinated sector is one that can achieve positive change. We would like to specifically applaud the NSW Government's leadership involved in the expanded Together Home program, which is providing life-changing housing and support to hundreds of people who have experienced long-term homelessness (see case study on page 31).

Finally, we would like to thank the Board, Executive and amazing staff of Link Wentworth Housing Ltd. We are at the beginning of our

new journey: a journey where we continue to believe that housing is a human right and that homelessness is a resolvable issue that can be eliminated within Australia—with focus, investment and ambition.



Mike Allen

Chair, Link Wentworth



Andrew McNulty

CEO, Link Wentworth

New thinking is needed to address the lack of social and affordable rental housing and solve homelessness in Australia.

An opinion piece by Andrew McAnulty,
CEO of Link Wentworth

CEO's opinion piece

Australia's rate of homelessness and the dire lack of affordable rental housing threatens to challenge our national tagline as 'the lucky country'.

It's time to seriously rethink how we scale up the long-term, large-scale delivery of social and affordable housing to address the massive shortfall between supply and demand. There are key learnings we can take from other countries.

There was a whisper of optimism during the 2022 federal election campaign when the then opposition added housing to their list of priorities. The Albanese government have committed to establish a \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund to deliver 30,000 affordable and social housing dwellings over the next five years. This is a significant step in the right direction, but homelessness will continue to surge in Australia unless we strategically develop a new approach to how we deliver safe and secure rental housing.

Supply and demand factors are overwhelmingly impacting housing affordability for many Australians who cannot meet ongoing price hikes and property shortages. The median house price in Sydney is \$1.05million¹ and \$600,000 outside of the NSW Greater Metro Region.² The median rental in Sydney is \$675 per week³ and \$420 outside of the NSW Greater Metro Region.⁴ Increasing numbers of our population are priced out of areas and unable to find affordable accommodation. There will continue to be greater demand for social and affordable rental housing adding to the already enormous strain on limited and ageing existing stock.

In Australia's wider housing system, the proportion of social housing to total homes has fallen. Only 31,400 new dwellings have been added between 2006 and 2021 and census data shows a steady decrease over the past 25 years.⁵ In fact, as a proportion

of overall housing stock, social housing has gone from 6% in 1996, to 5% in 2001 and 4.1% in 2016.⁶ In New South Wales alone, the social housing supply now only makes up around 4 per cent of the housing market. At the same time the waiting list for people desperate to find housing has grown to over 50,000.

Research from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute shows that an estimated 727,300 additional social dwellings will be required over the next 20 years.⁷ According to a report by SGS Economics & Planning commissioned by Housing All Australians, if this housing shortfall is left unaddressed, the cost to Australian taxpayers will reach an additional \$25 billion annually by 2051.⁸

Lack of availability is not the only issue. Current social housing stock is ageing with layouts and property sizes increasingly unsuitable for today's tenants. Older homes designed and

1 <https://propertyupdate.com.au/the-latest-median-property-prices-in-australias-major-cities/>

2 https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/facs.statistics/viz/Rentandsales_15565127794310/Rent

3 <https://propertyupdate.com.au/the-latest-median-property-prices-in-australias-major-cities/>

4 https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/facs.statistics/viz/Rentandsales_15565127794310/Rent

5 <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/housing-assistance/housing-assistance-in-australia/contents/social-housing-dwellings>

6 <https://housingallaustralians.org.au/whatwedo/give-me-shelter/>

7 <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/sites/default/files/migration/documents/Social-housing-as-infrastructure-an-investment-pathway-Executive-Summary.pdf>

8 <https://housingallaustralians.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Give-Me-Shelter-HAA-Synopsis.pdf>

built many decades ago were predominantly aimed at families. But demographics have shifted with a growing number of social housing tenants being single, people with a disability, and older couples. Ageing stock also requires increasingly costly maintenance and repairs, impacting already strained budgets.

Leaving the responsibility to resolve the social and affordable housing conundrum to state governments alone is unsustainable and unrealistic.

In NSW, the government's strategy sees the NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) aim to self-fund (from ring-fenced existing housing assets and revenues) 100 per cent of land and capital cost to renew and increase housing stock, while also footing the bill for maintenance which was around \$517 million in 2021. With an ageing portfolio and a focus on only those most in need, the ability of LAHC to repair, refurbish, and replace let alone substantially increase the number of social homes provided is, I suggest, impossible.

Conversely, I recently returned from a study trip to London where I witnessed scaled-up partnerships, where various

entities (government and non-government) all contributed to meeting the established and agreed strategic priority of providing an on-going pipeline of increased social and affordable housing:

- In the UK all three levels of government provide or facilitate the provision of land for social and affordable housing – **it is very clear that housing is a strategic national and local priority. This is similar in many other European countries.**
- Local Councils provide needs analysis and clear enabling planning processes which prioritise social and affordable housing – recognising it as essential infrastructure and critical to the successful functioning of their localities
 - Planning approval was also staggeringly quick to achieve thereby reducing uncertainty and cost while delivering high-quality housing outcomes
- The Greater London Authority provides a London wide strategic approach, together with capital – and a facilitation role when assembling larger sites and mobilising other essential social infrastructure
- Federal government provides policy direction and capital
- Builders and developers understand the “rules of the game” and that by partnering with Community Housing Providers (called Housing Associations in the UK), they achieve long-term cashflow certainty and gain access to high-profile sites for market housing
- Financiers – banks (including Australian banks), building societies, superannuation funds (again, including Australian ones) all contribute literally billions each year based on the low risk, steady cashflows and mature nature of the market to ensure that the capital cost of delivery is not met by government alone
- ... and lastly, Community Housing Providers, operate at significant scale, in many instances acting as the pivotal conduit, bringing together capital and capability to achieve social and affordable housing outcomes at a scale that Australia can only dream of. Indeed, two of the amazing organisations we met, Peabody and London & Quadrant between them delivered around 7,000 mixed tenure new homes last year alone!

One of my key take-aways from the trip was that all levels of government in the UK have not been protecting or trying to grow their housing balance sheets over the past 40 years – they were almost exclusively acting as policy agents, regulators, part funders and facilitators, to ensure an effective layering of funding and the delivery of as much affordable housing as possible. From one of our meetings with the Chair of Peabody, *Lord Bob Kerslake*, it was clear that governments had long understood that owning a social housing asset that they did not have an ability to independently maintain, refurbish, replace and indeed increase supply of, was not in fact an asset – but a problem! This insight has led to the highly functioning system and partnering approach which exists today.

It is a seismically different strategic starting point to where we are in Australia today, where governments tend to operate in silos and have great difficulty getting past the focus on balance sheet.

The parallels deserve further scrutiny.

From a crisis there is usually an opportunity. As an optimist, I hope the current housing crisis

in Australia enables us as a country to re-align our thinking and realise housing is not purely an asset – it is a home.

As not-for-profit organisations that reinvest surpluses back into housing stock for low-income tenants, CHPs are well positioned—financially, strategically, and ethically—to partner with government and private sector stakeholders, including developers and investors, to increase the supply of social and affordable housing and optimise the impact of the Housing Australia Future Fund.

Ultimately, a layered funding approach, where we bring together capabilities and resources will produce more effective outcomes and housing than what is currently being achieved. CHPs taking a leading role in finance, delivery and management will ease pressure on the government and facilitate a greater number of affordable homes to meet the increasing demand across the country. It will help people avoid homelessness and give them a sense of optimism that the great Australian dream is still within their reach – And just maybe, we can remain ‘the lucky country’ for all.

Our year in highlights

Getting through COVID:

332 clients

helped with financial assistance.

\$180,000

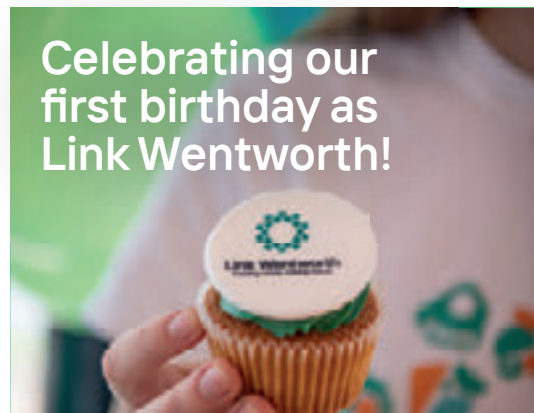
from the Department of Communities & Justice directly supported the health and wellbeing of people from Local Government Areas of concern



Launching Ready2Work, our new hospitality employment program for social housing tenants funded by ANZ's Community Foundation



Celebrating our first birthday as Link Wentworth!

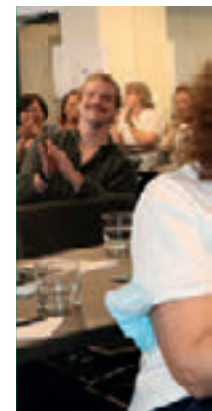


First-ever Big Housing Debate



Funding for our Specialist Homelessness Services secured for a further 3 years

One Link Wentworth TAG – working together to represent all tenants





New Link Wentworth Affordable brand

\$121,000

in grants provided to more than 100 residents for education, training and upskilling through our Scholarship program



Largest provider of the Together Home program

155 people supported; 97% either still housed with Link Wentworth or positively exited from the program

Receiving Community Housing Innovation Fund funding from the NSW Government to deliver our Rouse Hill project

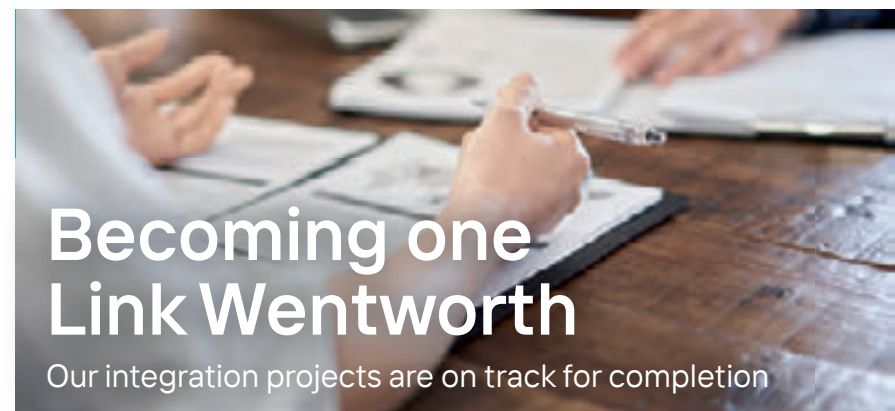


Staff industry recognition at the PowerHousing Awards and Zest Awards

Construction commenced on our Safe Places complex for women and children escaping domestic violence.

Becoming one Link Wentworth

Our integration projects are on track for completion



Our performance

Operational highlights

6,472

properties under
management

391

clients assisted through our homelessness
services (Specialist Homelessness Services
and Together Home)

10,000

residents

98%

overall satisfaction in the SHS 2021 Client
Satisfaction Survey (benchmark of 91%)

98%

occupancy rate

97%

clients still housed or positively exited from the
Together Home program

Retained our Tier 1 Community Housing status

Financial highlights

\$111.6 million Revenue

up \$30.3 million from \$81.3 million in 2021
(including \$16.4 million asset revaluation)

\$7.5 million Surplus

up \$1.3 million from \$6.2 million in 2021
(excluding asset revaluation)

\$275.3 million Net Assets

\$56.5 Cash and Financial investments

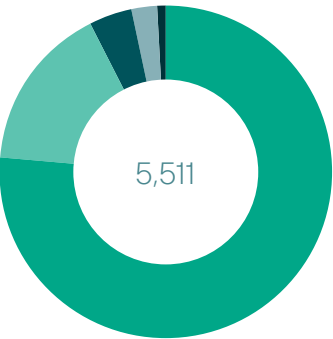
Our properties are across 28 Local Government Areas. We deliver social housing, affordable housing and disability housing.

Our properties

Total portfolio

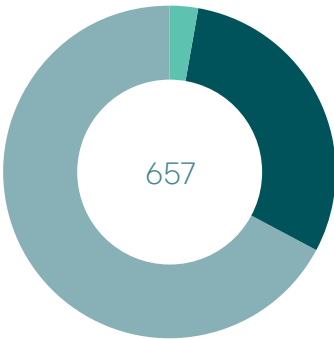
2022
6,472

Social Housing



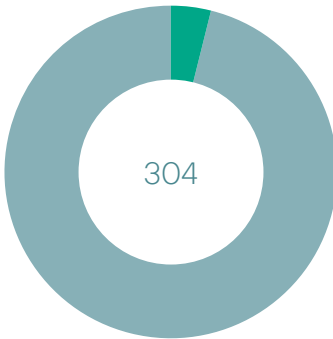
Capital	4,221
Leasehold	882
Owned	229
Fee for service (FFS)	140
Meanwhile use	39

Affordable Housing



Leasehold	20
Owned	196
FFS	441

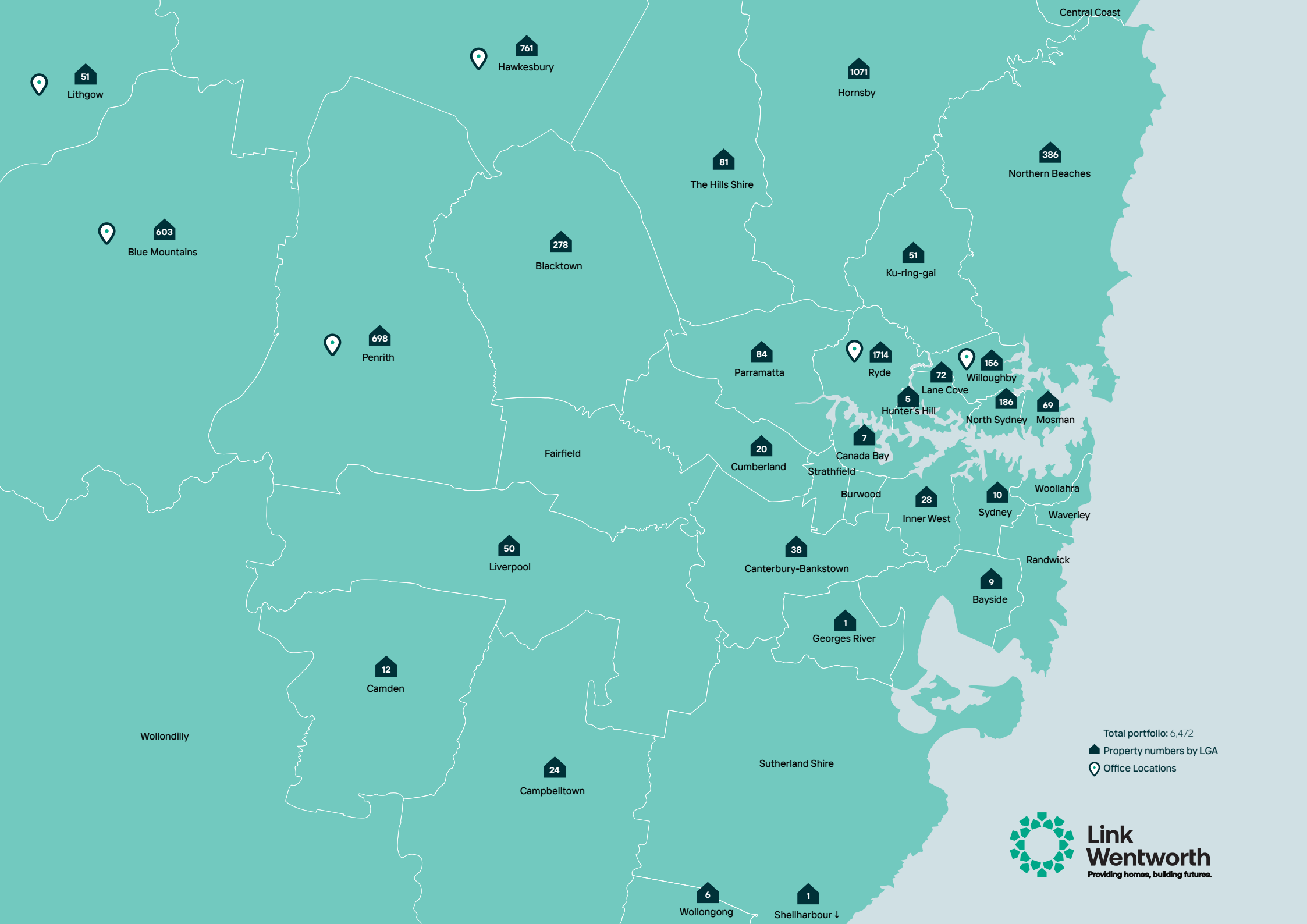
Disability Housing



Capital	12
FFS	292

Property type

House	1,529	Group House	312
Unit	3,383	Studio	202
Townhouse	682	Villa	225
Duplex	58	Granny Flat	15
Boarding House	34	Other	32



Total portfolio: 6,472

Property numbers by LGA

Office Locations



**Link
Wentworth**
Providing homes, building futures.



Delivering essential services

Addressing the
housing needs
of vulnerable
cohorts

Support through
challenging
times



Providing homes

Delivering essential services



Link Wentworth is committed to delivering a range of housing options for people who are experiencing housing stress and homelessness. Our wraparound services and community programs give our clients the support to sustain their tenancy and build a brighter future.

Social housing

In 2018, we commenced managing almost 1,900 social housing properties in the Hornsby, Ryde and Ku-ring-gai areas of Northern Sydney, transferred from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice. This Social Housing Management Transfer project formed part of a broader NSW government agenda to outsource the management of social housing across the state to Community Housing Providers (CHPs).

Our team has been doing a fantastic job at managing and supporting residents in these properties, many who are dealing with a range of other health and social challenges in addition to maintaining their

tenancy. In our most recent tenant satisfaction survey, 62% reported that their quality of life had improved since living in a community housing property. This is up from 57% in the previous survey.

Working collaboratively with Bridge Housing (in partnership with Women's Community Housing) and SGCH, also allocated Northern Sydney social housing properties in the transfer, together we have added refreshed energy to the social housing sector and worked effectively to reach positive outcomes for tenants. Jointly we have taken a lead role in coordinating the social housing service system in Northern Sydney, since the Department of Communities

and Justice transferred its housing services from the Northern Sydney District.

Guided by the jointly developed Northern Sydney Social Housing Service System Coordination Plan, we have strengthened the focus on homelessness and mental health support for those living in social housing or at risk of homelessness. Additionally, the Coordination Plan has enabled greater sharing of ideas, knowledge and networks between providers, as well as positive collaboration, resulting in strengthened service delivery and improved outcomes for tenants.

At Link Wentworth, through working collaboratively we have been able to identify clients for the Together Home program (see page 22) and provide the necessary wraparound support they need.

Working with the other providers, we provided a tenant voice forum that invites residents from all three organisations to come together to share information and priorities for their communities. We have also jointly provided a range of programs and training opportunities to support tenants to sustain their tenancies and access the support they need. We have adopted a coordinated case management model which

is working well to support clients, particularly those at risk of homelessness.

In 2021, all three CHPs worked together with the State Government to support tenants to access vaccinations. Link Wentworth held two vaccination hubs, as well as shared information and participated in planning with the other providers, Primary Health Network, Northern Sydney Local Health District and the Department of Communities and Justice. This included communicating about vaccinations and supporting tenants to access information.

Link Wentworth's Chief Customer Officer, Margaret Maljkovic, leads the quarterly Northern Sydney Housing and Mental Health meeting. This group brings together NSW Health, CHPs and other community groups working in the area of mental health and housing to discuss strategies to achieve improved outcomes for people in housing crisis who are also managing mental health issues. The meetings have led to improvements in the working relationship with the Northern Sydney Local Health District and positive feedback from NSW Health about the collaboration. Through sharing success stories and first-hand experiences, the

group has been able to assist more people to seek tailored mental health support and gain the skills and confidence to be better equipped to maintain their tenancy.

Repairs, maintenance and sustainability

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions, this year we upgraded more than 200 homes across our Western Sydney social housing portfolio with new, up-to-standard electrical meter boxes. This increases the safety of both tenants and the contractors who complete repairs and maintenance at these properties.

In line with our objective of being an environmentally responsible housing provider, this year we converted the lights at our social housing College Crescent Hornsby property to LED. This will create energy savings of 81% annually and reduce the amount of CO₂ produced by almost 30 tonnes. For perspective, this is the equivalent of taking six cars off the road or planting 476 trees. We look forward to rolling out these improvements across the rest of our property portfolio.

Gardening workshop
for residents with
Royal Botanic Gardens



 RESIDENT STORY

Supporting residents through change and transfers

Anne, Link Wentworth Resident



In 2018, amid state government plans to redevelop Ivanhoe Estate in Sydney's north-west, residents were told they needed to relocate.

While the development aimed to provide more social and affordable housing supply, it was a confronting situation for many who called the Estate home.

Among those impacted was Anne, who had lived at Ivanhoe for 29 years and raised her three children there. She felt part of a community and knew all her neighbours. Moving on, she said, felt like her "security was all of a sudden being taken away".

"It was quite daunting, not knowing what to expect," Anne recalls.

When she was transferred to her current home in West Ryde, Anne was told Link Wentworth would now be managing her tenancy, which was another change to adjust to.

"Community housing had some different ways of doing things," she says. "I'd never had to deal with the rental assistance that gets put on, so I had to learn about new things and how it worked."

Link Wentworth helped the transition, she says, with helpful information and responsive staff.

"I actually have found it easier with Link Wentworth to talk to people," she says, comparing it to her previous experience. "Everyone's just been really nice and welcoming is what I found."

While she admits the move was really hard, Anne feels settled in her home now. The property is also thankfully suited to her needs—it has a room for her and a room for her son, a backyard for their cat, and a ramp that assists with her mobility issues.

"I was really worried about what I was going to be given," she says. "But I'm lucky... It's an old red-brick home. My daughter put in a trampoline for the (grandkids). There's a carport, so the kids play outside there in the good weather and it's safe away from the road. I just feel really blessed."

Reflecting on the move, which happened four years ago in May, Anne says Link Wentworth turned a scary time into a positive experience.

"It gave you ease during an uneasy time."

Anne is now a member of Link Wentworth's Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) and Policy Review Committee and gets involved in community programs where she can. From her experience, she believes that Community Housing Providers are a really positive addition to the housing landscape.

"I'm not that great with change," she says. "And I just remember that first time walking into Link Wentworth, being greeted with a smile, and a 'how can we help you?' And it was like, 'Oh, wow'.



Scan to watch
Anne's story

By offering below-market rental properties, we can help people save to buy their own homes. In fact, over the last year, six Link Wentworth tenants were able to buy their home while living in one of our affordable housing properties.

Affordable housing

Rebrand

Our Affordable Housing service relaunched in April 2022 under a new name: “**Link Wentworth Affordable**”.

Affordable housing is a vital service for people on low to moderate incomes who are not able to afford market rent. It allows them to live in central locations near their work and support. Delivering services as a registered real estate agency, Link Wentworth Affordable enables our organisation to address the full spectrum of housing needs for our clients. We support our clients on every stage of their journey from homelessness to home ownership.

By offering below-market rental properties, we can help people save to buy their own homes. In fact, over the last year, six Link Wentworth tenants were able to buy their home while living in one of our affordable housing properties.

The Link Wentworth Affordable team has set the ambitious goal of having 1,000 affordable properties under management by 2027. To achieve this, they will continue to work in close partnership with private property owners, investors,

developers, local government and other charitable organisations.

National Rental Affordability Scheme

With the Federal Government due to wind up the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) by 2026, 3,360 homes are expected to exit the affordable housing system over the next five years. Link Wentworth is working in four key areas to offer security and continuity for our tenants during this transition and to address the shortfall in affordable homes.

For tenants living in the 150 Link Wentworth-owned affordable properties, nothing will change when the NRAS ends. We will continue to make these homes available at affordable rents.

For tenants living in the 200 privately owned properties currently being managed by Link Wentworth under the NRAS scheme, we are working towards retaining them post NRAS and negotiating the asking rent for our tenants. This will have the benefit of providing both consistency of management for owners and security of tenancy for clients.

We have also applied to the Australian Taxation Office for

a ruling, applicable only to Community Housing Providers, which would allow owners to claim the difference between market rent and affordable rent as a tax deduction. This could be used as an incentive for owners to keep their properties affordable.

As the NRAS is phased out, Link Wentworth is also aiming to fill the gap in affordable housing by working with developers to acquire more properties under the State Environmental Planning Policy (Affordable Rental Housing).



Matthew Jackson, Affordable Housing Lead & Licensee

Partnerships

We continued to strengthen our partnerships with Ryde, North Sydney, Lane Cove and Inner West Councils this year. In the case of Ryde, we successfully retendered to remain the Council's affordable housing partner. These

relationships represent strong growth opportunities for our organisation going forward.

In 2021, Link Wentworth entered into a new partnership with the Urban Development Group to deliver 10 affordable studio apartments as part of a new development in Penrith. This

agreement was entered into voluntarily by the developer, who was excited by the opportunity of working with us and giving back to the community in a philanthropic way.

Link Wentworth also formed an innovative partnership with Byron Bay-based developer,

Kollee to manage their 10 'build-to-rent' affordable properties, with an extra 2-5 additional properties to be added each year. This was a strong opportunity to help meet housing needs in an area that has been heavily impacted by floods and a critical

shortage of homes. Under a remote management model, Link Wentworth will serve as the overriding property manager, while partnering with a local real estate agency to deliver on-site services.

Link Wentworth staff,
Mayra, Rachael and Maree



RESIDENT STORY

Pathway to home ownership through Affordable Housing

As a single mother, Smita never thought the prospect of home ownership would be possible for her. Even scraping enough together to rent a two-bedroom apartment felt out of reach.

But after a year of living with her sister, Smita felt she had outstayed her welcome and needed a place for her and her son to live. "I was looking for rental properties on Domain and it said 'this is affordable housing only'," she recalls. "I had never heard of it before so I started looking into it."

Realising she'd be eligible for a two-bedroom apartment in the same suburb as her sister, Smita says she "took a chance" and applied. She was approved for a Link Wentworth-managed property close to her son's day care centre and support networks.

Smita says that being in affordable housing gave her a sense of safety and groundedness.

"Before I was just kind of surviving with my sister, just going day to day," she says. "But now, you don't need to worry about all the survival things. You've got your own place, you've got your own room, my son's got his own room, I've got a job. I was paying all my bills."

The experience gave Smita the space to ask herself, 'What's next for me?'

After a few years of living in her much-loved apartment, she found out the owner wanted to sell. Thanks to a first-home buyers scheme and her new-found financial stability, Smita was able to put in an offer and purchase the place.

"I was so happy," she says. "Just before my 40th, I bought the house. It was like the biggest present of my 40th birthday."

Ten years ago, Smita says, she would never have imagined she'd be in the position she is today. "Especially with a child who has autism and I was alone and my marriage broke down," she says. "I was just in a place where I thought I could never get up again. But to buy a house in a few years' time, I could not have envisioned that a few years back."

Smita gives a lot of credit to the Link Wentworth Affordable program for giving her the confidence to pursue this dream. "I think it is a really good program to give people stability and get them out of that survival mode so they can focus on their life to move forward," she says.

Now her and her son have a safe, stable home for many years to come.

Disability housing

Link Wentworth provides and manages a range of disability housing options and respite homes for more than 277 people with a disability. We partner with disability support providers to ensure tenants have access to services and supports so they can lead productive and fulfilling lives. As the accommodation provider, our Disability Housing Team is responsible for property maintenance and repair, vacancy management, tenancy support and rent and SDA payment management.

Our support partners

We have continued to strengthen the relationship with our disability support partners, Cerebral Palsy Alliance, Inala Disability Services and Ability Lifestyles. In the past year, we completed accommodation agreements with all tenants in the six disability properties where Inala is the support provider. Link Wentworth now manages the tenancy agreements, SDA payments as well as the maintenance and repairs for residents in these properties.

Creating more SDA

We completed the Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) conversion of two apartments in our affordable housing complex in Pennant Hills. Both apartments now meet SDA design standards and are registered for SDA funding with the NDIS. A tenant has moved into the converted one-bedroom property and has been supported by our Disability team with tenancy requirements.

Older people with disability

Our partner Cerebral Palsy Alliance received \$107,000 from NSW Health's Disability Support for Older Australians (DOSA) program to use to benefit tenants over the age of 65. Using the funds, upgrades to 7 of our SDA properties occupied by over 65s were completed. Projects included an:

- accessible bathroom renovation
- paving and concreting outside areas for accessibility and use
- furniture upgrades
- painting
- installation of vegetable pod and plants



Castel Hill MP, Ray Williams (second from left) with Josephine Parsons, Corporate Communications Specialist, Chief Property Officer Sean Carty and Chief Financial Officer George Bogdanovic at the site of Link Wentworth's Rouse Hill development

 RESIDENT STORY

Providing people with a disability with a place to call home

Samantha, Link Wentworth Resident



Samantha's life changed forever when a terrifying medical episode left her in hospital for 18 months, three of which were spent in an induced coma. She spent the following years living with her mother and brother and then in a group home in Bass Hill.

As her support needs continued to grow, Samantha made the transition to a medical-grade group home in Asquith run by Link Wentworth in partnership with Supported Independent Living provider Cerebral Palsy Alliance.

Eight years on, and the 34-year-old says she can't imagine living anywhere else.

"It doesn't feel like a group home, it feels like a big family," Samantha says. "I get on well with all the staff and residents. Whenever I've been out, it's really good to get back and see everyone. They always welcome me home which feels really nice."

Samantha says the staff go out of their way to make the home a comfortable and enjoyable place to live.

"They make it so much fun. There's always so much going on. Sometimes we do art and craft. Sometimes we get out and about in the community for coffee and things like that.

"In the middle of COVID in 2020, our carers made Easter Hats with us and put on a little Easter Parade at the home. That really lifted our spirits when we couldn't get out and do much because of the lockdowns."

Samantha likes to keep herself busy, working one day each week at packaging and assembly company, Packforce, a division of Cerebral Palsy Alliance. While it can be tough some days, she is thankful for the opportunity to earn some money and gain work experience. She also hopes it will help her to one day land her dream job.

"I have to get up at 6am to get to work on time because it takes me a while to get ready, and the drive can be really long. It can be tiring some days, but I enjoy it and I really love the people I get to work with.

"I've always had pets, including my beautiful budgie Blue who sadly passed away a few years back. I'd love to find a job someday where I get to work with animals."

When she's not at work, Samantha says she enjoys helping out around the kitchen at the home.

"I didn't used to bake or cook, but now I do those things a lot. Whenever we are short staffed, I go and see what I can do to help. Through that I've actually discovered I quite like cooking. It's nice to feel like I'm valued and I can make a contribution in this way."



In 2021-22, we received just over \$2.2 million to fund a range of housing assistance services, which enable people to secure affordable accommodation and improve their lives. With rents continuing to rise sharply across Sydney, a growing number of people rely on these services to put a roof over their heads.

Housing solutions

Link Wentworth partners with the NSW Government to deliver a range of housing assistance services to people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or need support to rent in the private market. Until recently, these services were delivered exclusively by the Department of Communities and Justice. Since management of them was transferred to Community Housing Providers, Link Wentworth has delivered enhanced outcomes for clients by leveraging our relationships with other support services and providing access to alternative housing products.

In 2021-22, we received just over \$2.2 million to fund these services, which enable people to secure affordable accommodation and improve their lives. With rents continuing to rise sharply across Sydney, a growing number of people rely on these services to put a roof over their heads.

Temporary Accommodation

Link Wentworth provides temporary accommodation for up to 28 days for eligible clients who are homeless or experiencing a housing crisis. This is as short-term option while the Housing Solutions team identifies the most appropriate long-term housing options for our clients.

Rent choice - Start Safely

Working in close collaboration with domestic violence services, this program provides rent support to those who have left or need to leave an unsafe home due to family or domestic violence. As well as helping clients find appropriate accommodation, the program covers a portion of the rent for up to three years. Built on a sensitive and client-centred approach, it also provides assistance with education and employment options to support financial independence. In 2021-22, Link Wentworth supported 76 people through Start Safely and helped 18 residents transition to the private rental market.

Private Rental Subsidy

This rental assistance program is designed to help clients access affordable accommodation in the private rental market while they wait for suitable social housing to become available. The subsidy bridges the gap between the rent and what the client can afford to pay. In 2021-22, Link Wentworth provided a Private Rental Subsidy to 51 clients of which 13 were supported to transition into suitable, long-term social housing.

Private Rental Brokerage Service

Our Private Rental Specialist assisted 74 clients with intensive tenancy facilitation, including searching and applying for properties in the private rental market and understanding their rights and responsibilities as a tenant.

Tenancy Assistance

Clients renting privately can apply for tenancy assistance if they are in rental arrears. This financial assistance has been designed for the sole purpose of helping eligible clients at risk of homelessness due to arrears sustain their tenancy.

Transition 2 Home

Launched in October 2021 as a response to the impact of the pandemic on temporary accommodation, this referral program helps eligible people secure and sustain appropriate private rental accommodation. Link Wentworth received just over \$26,000 in funding to administer the program. Our team has worked closely with real estate agents and landlords to find suitable accommodation and provide a subsidy to help clients pay their rent. Link Wentworth is the only community housing provider in the Northern Suburbs who has 2 active clients on this program.

RESIDENT STORY

Finding strength through Start Safely

Lisa* had always considered herself a strong, self-sufficient woman. Before meeting her husband, she had a career she loved, earned a decent income, paid a mortgage, kept a few investments—in her own words, she felt that she was in charge of her own life.

So when her marriage turned abusive, Lisa kept it to herself for many years. She felt afraid and frightened. She didn't know how to move forward.

"It's difficult to go from having everything to suddenly finding yourself having nothing, not even a home to live in," she says.

Her main concern was her two kids, who were 18 months and three-and-a-half years old at the time. "When you have children and you're in this situation, homelessness is your biggest fear, not having a roof over your head and two kids is enormously overwhelming."

Ensuring their safety was what eventually encouraged Lisa to seek help.

"I didn't want anything to happen to them," she says. "I didn't want him to gain the upper hand and potentially hurt us further."

Gathering the courage to share her experience with her kids' school principal and then her local priest was "a turning point". Lisa was able to tell her story without judgement and learn more about the community support available.

The church referred her to CatholicCare and Lisa was placed on the Start Safely program, which supported her to leave her abusive marriage and take steps to create a life without her husband.

Start Safely is a rental assistance program that provides rent support to those who have already left or need to leave an unsafe home due

to family or domestic abuse. Through the program, Lisa was placed in safe, secure and affordable housing through Link Wentworth.

Lisa found that the simple act of being able to make her rental payments helped to restore her confidence. At the time, it was hard for her to consider that one day she'd be able to hold down a job and go about her daily life without being afraid. But with her rent set at a manageable amount, it made her think, "I can do this. I can repay this."

"These gradual steps that Start Safely support you through make all the difference," she says.

"Because you need to have the confidence to know that you can go back into the workforce and you can be a valued employee and you do have something to contribute."

"These gradual steps that Start Safely support you through make all the difference"

Another necessary factor was being able to stay in her own community, surrounded by positive influences. Being worried that she'd have to take her children out of school or be judged by her peers was something that prevented Lisa from seeking help in the first place. The fact that she was able to stay in her suburb and continue some sense of normalcy was "vital" and contributed to emotional and psychological stability.

"The family dynamic was changing rapidly, so the one constant for the children and myself was to stay in our community and at least have a few familiar faces that were comfortable for us," she says.

While Lisa still deals with the challenge of her ex-husband, she is proud of where she is now. She has a job and her kids are thriving in school.

"I'm proud that I can talk about it now without crumbling. I feel satisfied and really proud of what I've achieved."

She has called it "full circle". That strong, self-sufficient woman we introduced at the beginning? Stronger than ever before.

**Link Wentworth has used a different name for privacy reasons.*

Homelessness Services

Link Wentworth is one of only a few community housing providers to have a registered specialist homelessness services (SHS) support team dedicated to helping people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to find temporary or transitional accommodation.

Specialist Homelessness Services

In collaboration with our partners and other community organisations, we provide support through early intervention, crisis and transitional support and post-crisis support services. Our Assertive Outreach team reaches rough sleepers, supporting them to find suitable temporary housing, and once they are housed, linking them with additional support and services.

In July 2021, Link Wentworth secured a further 3 years of funding for our SHS from the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). We work with local agencies and other community organisations including DV West Domestic Violence Services, Community Restorative Centre, Lithgow

Community Projects, The Gender Centre and Platform Youth Services to deliver these services in the Penrith Nepean Blue Mountains region and Hawkesbury area.

Our contracts with DCJ currently run until June 2024. To ensure that we will continue to provide critical SHS to the local communities beyond this time, we are currently working towards achieving accreditation through the Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES), a contractual compliance requirement for all NSW SHS providers post June 2024.

Together Home

Link Wentworth is the largest provider in NSW of the Together Home program, supporting people across Sydney, South-Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney, Western Sydney and the Nepean Blue Mountains. We partner with Mission Australia, Catholic Care, the Salvation Army and use our own SHS team, to support participants in building their capacity to maintain their tenancy and improve other fundamental aspects of their lives. Participants have remained highly engaged in the program, with 97% either still housed with Link Wentworth or

2021–22 numbers

236 clients

supported through the Link Wentworth Adult Homelessness and Housing Support Service

74 clients

supported through the Link Wentworth Tenancy Support Service

182 clients

helped through the Link Wentworth Nurreen Domestic Violence Service

Demand for all three services exceeded contractual arrangements. In total, in collaboration with the other service providers, we went above the contracts by 34% (Total 769 – Contracted: 575).

positively exited from the program.

Our work with SGCH and Bridge Housing (in partnership with Women's Community Housing) as part of the Northern Sydney Social Housing Service System Coordination Plan has been beneficial in both identifying clients eligible for Together Home and providing the wraparound support which is so crucial in achieving positive housing outcomes.

155 people supported

Client survey

In the SHS 2021 Client Satisfaction Survey, conducted from March – May 2021, Link Wentworth clients reported a high level of overall satisfaction (98%) with our services (compared with the benchmark of 91%) as well as high satisfaction (95%) with their accommodation (compared with the benchmark of 76%). Clients also reported being treated with respect (98%), feeling accepted by staff (98%) and being informed about their accommodation options by staff (98%).

The overall wellbeing index for Link Wentworth respondents gave a score of 66.0 compared to the benchmark score of 64.2

and Link Wentworth scored highest on questions related to standard of living, safety and future security.

Outreach

Despite the challenges of the pandemic and extreme weather events, our Outreach team continued to visit people in situ. During the floods, this meant ensuring those sleeping rough had moved to safer locations as the water was rising. This team connects with people who are experiencing or facing homelessness, assisting them to find secure and safe housing and supports them to access services to help them rebuild their lives.

RESIDENT STORY

Housing first with Together Home

“If the program hadn’t come into my life, I probably wouldn’t be sober. I don’t even know if I’d be alive”

Renee* has been proudly sober for over 500 days. She lives in an affordable, secure home and regularly sees her psychiatrist. While her mental health is still a work in progress, Renee is in a stable place—an achievement she didn’t think was possible two years ago.

Back then, in 2020, Renee couldn’t find anywhere to live. She was fighting an uphill battle with her mental health, which impacted her work and her relationships. Renee was left with little option but to sleep in her car—so that’s what she did.

“It was terrifying,” she recalls. “A lot of the time I just wanted to die because I didn’t have anything stable. I was lucky to have my car. I can’t even imagine people who don’t even have that, or who have absolutely no one they can stay with.”

While she says she could have “begged” people she knew for somewhere to stay, Renee says her poor mental health made her feel like an inconvenience.

During this time, Renee was in and out of hospital for treatment, which became her saving grace. She was linked up with a Case Worker who placed her on the Together Home program.

Delivered in partnership with the NSW Government, Community Housing Providers, Specialist Homelessness Services and health services, Together Home helps people who are experiencing primary homelessness into permanent and safe accommodation. The program also provides support services to help clients maintain their tenancy, improve health and wellbeing and move towards training and employment.

For Renee, being placed in a home and having the support of the program “meant everything”.

In her experience, she says that having a home gave her the stability to properly address her struggles with mental health. “You can’t really work on your problems if you’re just struggling to survive,” she says.

Reflecting on the person she is now compared to two years ago, Renee says she’s “a lot better than before”.

“If the program hadn’t come into (my life), I probably wouldn’t be sober. I don’t even know if I’d be alive,” she says. “I definitely wouldn’t have anywhere stable to live and my mental health would be much worse than it is now.

“So when I think about it as a whole, I would most likely not be alive without this program.”

As the largest provider of Together Home in the state, with 155 packages delivered across the Sydney, South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney District and Western Sydney, Nepean Blue Mountains District, Link Wentworth has seen first-hand the life-changing benefits of the Together Home program. Renee’s remarkable story is testament to this.

We hope to continue working with the state government and other community services to deliver housing and wraparound support to this cohort.

Renee’s story demonstrates the importance of housing as a first step, and the foundation it provides to safely heal and move forward.

**Link Wentworth has used a different name for privacy reasons.*

Addressing the housing needs of vulnerable cohorts



At Link Wentworth, we are fully committed to supporting the most vulnerable and isolated in our communities. We seek to find solutions to their unique needs so they may no longer feel forgotten, unseen or unheard.

Supporting women aged 55 years and over

Older single women are some of the most at risk and vulnerable members of our community. To support women over the age of 55 who are experiencing homelessness and housing stress, we have continued our innovative partnership with Women's Community Shelters and Twilight Aged Care to provide 39 short-term, safe and affordable properties. Women living at Mosman House and Beecroft House have access to wraparound mental health and community support, as well as the company of other women in their age group who are experiencing similar hardships. .

Aboriginal Housing property management transfer

Our team assisted with transferring the management of 19 Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) owned properties previously managed by Link Wentworth to an Aboriginal Community Housing Provider. While the transfer project was managed by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) in line with the AHO's Strong Families, Strong Communities initiative, Link Wentworth was heavily involved in ensuring the transfer was completed by July 2022. We are pleased to see the sector growing as a result of these property transfers.

Continuing our reconciliation journey

Following the launch of our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan in December 2020, we have set up a new Reconciliation Working Group, made up of staff who are interested in being part of the next stage in our reconciliation journey.

To assist in the development of the next RAP, a Reconciliation Advisory Committee has also been established. Terms of Reference for both groups have been drafted and a schedule of activities has been agreed to. The RWG has already begun work, with members involved in various NAIDOC Week events planned for July 2022 including events by the Deadly Gap Cafe, Sydney Regional Aboriginal Corporation and internal morning teas.

With endorsement from the Board, the RWG has also made a commitment to launch Link Wentworth's Innovate RAP in 2023.

Snapshot of our residents in 2021-22

Gender



Female occupants	5,072
Male occupants	4,058
Other occupants	55
Not stated	17

Household age demographic



Occupants <=18	1,943
Occupants 19-24	504
Occupants 25-34	681
Occupants 35-44	876
Occupants 45-54	1,401
Occupants 55-64	1,321
Occupants 65+	2,303
Not stated	173

This profile is based on 9,202 tenants, excluding Affordable housing tenants.

Affordable tenants are entered into a separate tenancy system to our main housing management system, where only the main tenant is counted. It is estimated that there is on average 2 people per Affordable property, and we have 657 properties.

Link Wentworth has an estimated 10,516 tenants in total.

\$663.75/week

Average weekly income

132

single youth tenancies

1,384

tenancies held by single women over 55 years

438

residents identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

 RESIDENT STORY

The healing power of a home

Julie, Link Wentworth Resident





Due to circumstances beyond her control, Julie began experiencing homelessness in her early 50s. It was a curveball she never saw coming. “I had my own home at one stage,” she says. **“I’d never thought that I’d end up in this situation, where I had to worry about where I was going to live and what I was going to do.”**

Facing an increasingly expensive rental market without a support system and a significantly reduced income, Julie was left without options.

“I didn’t know what I was going to do,” Julie says. “I kept looking around and I just couldn’t find anything.”

It’s a story that has shamefully become more common in Australia, due to our country’s accelerating housing crisis. In the 2016 census, older women were identified as the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness.

“I think I had heard that there was over 400,000 women in Australia facing this situation in this age group,” Julie says. “Like myself, they’d worked professionally...But we’ve just found ourselves in these circumstances for all sorts of different reasons.”

After many months trying to find a suitable place to live, Julie found Mosman House. In partnership with Women’s Community Shelters, Link Wentworth’s Mosman House is a meanwhile use model of housing that provides temporary accommodation

to women over the age of 50. Utilising buildings that would otherwise go unused while awaiting planning approvals, the model allows women to live in convenient locations at an affordable price.

Julie has been living at Mosman House since April 2021, an experience that she has found “healing”. “There’s something quite comforting about it, that there’s people around and there’s activities that you can get involved in so you’re not socially isolated in the community,” she says.

While living at the property, Julie pays an affordable amount of rent, giving her space to make friends and even try out new hobbies. She says she never feels alone. “It’s really important for women that have gone through a very difficult time to have an environment like that, in which to heal and feel safe and secure and connected with the community.”

Though a temporary solution, Mosman House shows what’s possible when non-profits, charities, government and community come together to make a difference. Julie thinks adopting this model for the long-term is a no-brainer.

“If the government gets

onboard with (models like Mosman House), it’s just going to solve a lot of the crisis out there,” she says, noting that women over the age of 50 are “doing it really tough”.

“It’s a very safe and secure place, and I just wish they had ongoing things like this. I’d be happy to stay in something like this even longer term.”

Julie’s story illustrates that housing means more than just a safe place to lay your head—that homes are built through connection, support and community. While Link Wentworth will continue to strive to deliver innovative solutions to the current housing crisis through partnerships and other means, we also recognise that meanwhile-use is a temporary solution to the chronic shortage of safe, appropriate and long-term social and affordable housing in Australia.

Support through challenging times

The 2021-22 year was a challenging one for many. Sydney's extended COVID-19 lockdown from June to October 2021 impacted jobs and the economy, not to mention the health and wellbeing of the vulnerable people and communities we support.

Then, just as life appeared to be returning to some resemblance of normal, many of our residents and clients faced major flooding in their communities. No matter what they were facing, Link Wentworth's teams, from our customer service officers to our frontline staff, were there for our customers.



COVID-19 assistance packages

332 clients helped with financial assistance

Following the COVID-19 lockdown in 2021, we received \$180,000 from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) to directly support the health and wellbeing of people from Local Government Areas of concern facing hardship as a result of the lockdown. This assistance could be used in whatever way customers needed, such as to help pay bills, buy food or cover school costs. Between October and December 2021, we provided an average of \$482 to 332 customers, with the majority of assistance going towards utilities expenses (45%), food relief (14%) and rental arrears (14%).

After the lockdown, 86 customers received assistance through the Recovery and Roadshow Project, funded by DCJ.

Tony, Link Wentworth Resident (middle) receiving a Christmas hamper from Tzu Chi Foundation Eastwood

Other COVID-19 assistance to support improved wellbeing and mental health

Throughout the lockdown, our Penrith and West Ryde offices remained open and we continued to be out in the field supporting residents and clients.

1,688 hot meals

were distributed from July–December 2021 to customers in partnership with Darcy St. Project Café.

255 customers

attended daily virtual wellbeing sessions offered during lockdown.

Residents supported by our Chatswood and Penrith hubs received **80 Rapid Relief Team food boxes**, after wellbeing calls from our teams.

552 food hampers were delivered to residents and clients

during lockdown in partnership with Darcy St. Project Café, Salvation Army Ryde and Chatswood, Tzu Chi Foundation Eastwood, Christian Community Aid, Sydney Community Services, Vinnies Hornsby and One Meal Northern Beaches.

77 vegebags

were distributed during lockdown to improve mental health outcomes of our customers.

We helped 450 residents travel to receive vaccinations

and attend other appointments, in partnership with Stryder Community Transport.



Flood impacted residents

During the flood crisis in April 2022, we provided residents and clients with essential services, additional support and up-to-date emergency information through direct and online channels. Our teams made regular wellbeing calls to check on the health and safety of residents. The Assertive Outreach team continued to check in with rough sleepers living along or near the Hawkesbury River and other flood zones. They kept them informed about the situation and our teams made sure any rough sleepers had moved to safer areas before the water started rising.

We assisted residents in 100 properties in Northern Sydney and 92 properties in Penrith with cleaning their gutters and

removing mould from their homes. Our Windsor Tenancy Team also assisted 50 clients who required professional mould removal by providing mould cleaning hampers to help them clean minor issues in their properties. These initiatives were partly funded by DCJ.

Looking after properties

The extended lockdown in 2021 prevented visits to properties unless urgent repairs and maintenance were required. However, once restrictions were eased, we were able to address the backlog of regular maintenance work and ensure tenant requests for work were completed in a timely and efficient manner.

New contractors

To continue to provide a quality service to tenants, we appointed several new contractors to help us support the property repair and maintenance needs of residents. This included a new fire contractor, MNI Electrosark, and two maintenance contractors, SR Construction servicing the Western Sydney hub, and Asset Group Services, servicing the Eastern and Northern Sydney hub. The new contracts kicked off from 1 July 2021.



Supporting
tenants to build
strong futures

Developments
in the pipeline

Advocating for
positive change

g homes,
futures.

Providing homes,
building futures.



Link
Wentworth



Building Futures

Supporting tenants to build strong futures



In a person's journey with Link Wentworth, providing them with secure and affordable housing is just one aspect of the work we do. Equally important is the wraparound support we provide once a person is safely and comfortably housed.

Our staff support clients and tenants to access vital support and services to help them maintain their tenancy, improve their health and wellbeing, link with training and employment opportunities and participate fully in their community. We do this by working collaboratively with local councils, other organisations and community groups, with the shared goal of improving life outcomes for the people we support.



Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) members celebrating the new, merged TAG

One combined TAG

We merged our two Tenant Advisory Groups (TAG) to form one Link Wentworth TAG, open to all residents. This group provides a forum for tenants to discuss tenancy issues, provide feedback on Link Wentworth policies and communications, be involved in planning projects and special events as well as learn about our policies, procedures, projects and resources for

tenants. Working with TAG members, we restructured the group to ensure it continues to meet the needs of residents. TAG meetings, where Link Wentworth teams provide service updates, are held four times a year and are open to all residents.

GROW participants
completing their training



Engaging with residents

Through Drop-in Sessions and online meetings, we provided a range of ways for residents to meet our team members, receive information, ask questions and provide feedback about our services and programs. We also invited residents to participate in committees such as our Community Activities Committee or Policy Review Committee, so they can contribute to our operations and improve their communities.

A specific program of engagement was developed for nine of our communities where we identified that residents needed more support to link with external services and other departments within Link Wentworth. Our team worked with other local organisations and services to bring representatives on-site to provide information and support to residents.

We hosted three end of year celebrations for residents to connect and socialise with each other and our team members. 135 tenants and clients joined in the celebrations which included food and live entertainment.

GROW

Our training program for women in Western Sydney facing barriers to employment ran from March 2021 to April 2022. Funded by Women NSW, GROW (Generating Real Opportunities for Women) provided opportunities for training, work experience and employment within the health and care sectors, two areas identified as experiencing staff shortages.

Funding support enabled barriers to employment such as child care costs, digital connectivity and work-related expenses to be eliminated,

allowing the women to fully immerse themselves in the program.

Participants completed a variety of TAFE training courses, online training modules through Building Services Contractors of Australia, as well as inhouse workshops to support their job readiness including resume writing, self-care and financial literacy. They were also supported to apply for a Working With Children Check and access a flu vaccination.

- 18 women began the program
- 9 women completed the

training components

- 5 women completed paid work experience
- 7 women obtained full or part time work after completing the program
- 10 women stayed engaged throughout the program

Link Wentworth partnered with TAFE, Uniting, Crown Property Management and local women's services including Domestic Violence Service Management to develop the program. Women from a variety of housing-related organisations including Link Wentworth, Evolve Housing,

Department of Communities and Justice and women's shelters participated.

A decade of our Scholarship Program

We awarded \$121,000 in scholarship funds to around 107 residents in the 10th year of our Scholarship Program. These scholarships allow recipients of all ages to pursue personal and professional development and training opportunities that would otherwise be financially out of reach. This year, more scholarships were awarded than in any previous year and tenants from areas including Penrith, Hornsby, Ryde, the Hawkesbury and

Blue Mountains were able to join the program for the first time. Through the initiative, we assisted tenants who had lost their job due to the pandemic to retrain or update skills to increase their employability.

- 28% of recipients used the funds for tertiary education
- 17% of recipients used the funds to help support school-related purchases
- 15% of recipients used the funds for professional development and education courses and certifications

- 12% of recipients used the funds for personal development, such as investing in therapy or mental health management

Eastwood resident Tina, 41, applied for the scholarship so she could purchase tools to help her complete a degree. “I was unable to continue my university studies as my new course requirement was specific equipment needed for designing software,” she says. “I felt like there was no hope for me as I definitely couldn’t afford this.” Now, with financial assistance, Tina says she can continue her passion. “I can see a positive, exciting and bright future for myself in a career I am passionate about,” she says.

Scholarship Program winners 2021



Ready2Work

In September we received \$25,000 in funding from ANZ's Community Foundation to fund a new hospitality employment program for our social housing tenants. Delivered in partnership with Darcy Street Program, Ready2Work trains and empowers social housing residents with work-ready skills so they can find and keep permanent employment in the hospitality sector. Over two months, participants obtain hospitality skills and certifications, and complete 50 hours of work experience on site at the Darcy Street Café in Macquarie Park.

From November 2021 to June 2022, 11 Link Wentworth customers signed up to the program, with 4 completing their course and undertaking work experience.

72% of participants were under 25 years old and linked to youth service providers we partner with.

Darcy Street Project CEO
John Cafferatta training one of
our Ready2Work participants



Work Rent Incentive Scheme

The Work Rent Incentive Scheme is a program developed by Link Wentworth prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Its aim is to better support young people living in our transitional housing to attain and keep a job, as well as to save in preparation for moving into more permanent housing. Young people on the scheme pay a deemed rent amount based on what they would receive from Centrelink, rather than a subsidised rent amount based on their income.

Although the pandemic meant fewer young people signed up to the service (due to job losses and difficulties in finding work), the program has seen some good outcomes since its implementation in February 2020.

- 23 young people on the scheme received a reduction in rent due to the implementation of the scheme.
- Individual young people are estimated to have saved an average of \$5,143 over the program's duration.
- Individual young people have used their savings to pay for expenses associated with moving into a private rental, education related expenses and to pay off debts.

Neighbourhood Jobs

The social enterprise Neighbourhood Jobs was transferred to Active Care Network in October 2021. We are delighted that the property care and gardening business has found a long-term home within a similar social enterprise.

Active Care Network is a multi-faceted community service provider operating in Blacktown, Penrith and the Blue Mountains. In addition to providing community transport, Active Care Network operates a gardening and home modification business and is well equipped to continue to provide training and employment opportunities for young people through Neighbourhood Jobs. Two staff and two trainees from Neighbourhood Jobs were transferred to Active Care Network through the agreement.

Neighbourhood Jobs crew



Tenant Advisory Group contributions to 'Community Connect'

Our Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) has taken an active role in ensuring the content of our quarterly resident newsletter, 'Community Connect', is relevant to residents.

Here TAG member and Affordable Housing resident, Mark Shalovsky, shares highlights of the contributions made by TAG members.



Highlights

As I write this on 11 August 2022, we are working on the 6th edition of 'Community Connect'. The new Link Wentworth resident newsletter was launched following the merger in April 2021. One of the most pleasing developments has been the increasing interest from tenants to write their own contributions for the publication.

In the inaugural issue in May 2021, John Murray spoke about the street libraries that he has designed and built himself. He brings to the task his strong sense of community and his desire to continue contributing, together with his years of experience as an architect and his knowledge of industrial design, function and the use of materials.

Dario appeared in the August 2021 issue and shared his passion for graffiti art and the Streetwork mural featuring his dog, Jake.

In the December 2021 issue, Grahame spoke about his passion for making lutes and acoustic guitars. His two Link Wentworth scholarships have allowed him to pursue this passion again.

Anne generously shared with us major life events, the value of family and her passion for social work with elderly people in the March 2022 issue.

In the June 2022 issue, Mary courageously shared with us her personal story of financial hardship as a single mother and her fears of facing potential homelessness. She also gave a speech about this experience at the recent Big Housing Debate.

Susan Lucock and Mary Conyard have written an article for each issue about the work that is being done by the Resilience Committee. Over the last year, they have provided tenants with practical advice on resilience and how to cope with challenges such as the coronavirus pandemic, extreme heat and floods, storms and bushfires, especially in the Penrith and Hawkesbury areas.

I have written several articles about the work of the TAG to encourage all tenants to take an interest in its work and to consider joining. I have also written about the ability of Link Wentworth's Scholarship Program to help tenants to achieve their dreams. For our next edition, I am preparing an article about the microfinance loans that are offered by Good Shepherd.

I wish to encourage all tenants to consider making their own contribution to future issues of Community Connect.

At our 2021 Annual General Meeting, we were thrilled to award our beloved former tenant John Murray with Lifetime Membership to Link Wentworth.

John signed his first tenancy with Link Wentworth back in 2009, when the organisation was known as Gadigal Housing. He has seen the organisation transform in many different ways, contributing valued feedback on our operations and sharing the views of tenants with us along the way.

Over more than a decade, John has generously contributed his skills and time to our organisation and his local community. He has been a valued member of our Tenant Advisory Group (TAG), advocating for the needs of community housing tenants, and helping Link Wentworth to improve and achieve our mission and goals.

With a varied working life including time spent working in state and local government roles, running a family-owned organic food business and pursuing a degree in

architecture at 53 years old, John brought many skills and life experiences to our TAG.

"I really enjoyed being part of the TAG. I was very fond of all the people there and enjoying making contributions with them," John recalls.

"I particularly enjoyed picking holes in Link's policy documents – always constructively of course," he jokes.

As a member of Community Housing Industry Association NSW's tenant network, a group of tenants representing all the community housing providers across NSW, John presented at industry conferences and proudly championed the needs of tenants state-wide.

A passionate woodworker since a young age, John has also constructed street libraries for Link Wentworth's community housing properties. After a

Link Wentworth Community Engagement Officer noticed John's beautiful libraries around his neighbourhood, she asked him if he would build some for Link Wentworth. Always happy to contribute, John designed and created 5 street libraries for our residents from a woodwork bench set up on his balcony.

"Thank you very much for the honour of being a Life Member. To accept it is a great honour and somewhat overwhelming.

"It was a pleasure, as a tenant, to make contributions to Link, via the TAG but also by doing something I enjoy—woodwork—and making the street libraries.

"It's an absolute pleasure to be a Life Member of Link Wentworth and I thank you very much.

"(Link Wentworth) is a wonderful institution that has made life for me and many others secure and comfortable."

Home is a very special place to John and he best sums this up in a poem he wrote, adapted from 'My Foundation' by Annette R. Hershey.

The Meaning of Home

This structure is very special
It means the world to me
It began on a strong foundation
A secure place to be.

When I have felt threatened
It has sheltered me from the storm
Each brick placed by skilful hands
Makes up this solid form.

The walls hold pictures of my past
The décor shows my style
Warmth emits from every room
Old memories make me smile.

My home is my foundation
It means the world to me
The structure is my shelter
A secure place to be.

Due to health, John has moved out of his Link Wentworth home, but remains connected to our organisation. We thank him for all his contributions and are proud to be able to recognise him with a Lifetime Membership.



RESIDENT STORY

Lifetime Membership for a dedicated and valued tenant

A photograph of an elderly man, John Murray, wearing a grey fedora and a light blue shirt. He is standing outdoors, reaching into a bright blue metal street library box to stock it with books. The background shows a residential area with green bushes and a brick house.

John Murray
stocking one of
the street libraries
he built

Developments in the pipeline



Link Wentworth is quickly establishing a reputation for delivering shovel-ready projects and attracting the grant funding needed to take them to the next level. This puts us in a strong position to be able to continue growing social and affordable housing in the communities we serve for many years to come.

Safe Places

We commenced construction on four independent accommodation units for women and children escaping domestic violence in the Hawkesbury. This project is funded through the Commonwealth Department of Social Services' Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program.

The complex was co-designed by the Women's Cottage, the primary specialist domestic violence service in the Hawkesbury. We also consulted closely with other local community organisations, Hawkesbury Council and Police to ensure the accommodation

best meets the needs of vulnerable women and children in this community.

When complete, the project will provide both safe accommodation and a common area where local community organisations can offer services and support groups.

Queenscliff

This year, in partnership with Landcom, Link Wentworth lodged a Development Application for the adaptive reuse of the Queenscliff Community Health Centre into an affordable housing complex for women aged over 55 in housing distress.

When complete, the project

will provide 37 units, 12 of which will be allocated to local women at risk of homelessness on the Northern Beaches due to family breakdown, unemployment or lack of superannuation.

Construction on this project is due to commence in 2023.

Lachlan's Line

Link Wentworth is partnering with Landcom on an Affordable Housing and Diversity Model demonstration project, which will allow key workers like nurses, cleaners and childcare workers to live affordably close to employment opportunities and their family and social networks.

When complete, the development will offer 139



8 new developments
underway to deliver
292 homes





affordable dwellings in the City of Ryde—a substantial increase on the original 95 envisaged at the time we won the tender. This means it will do even more to address the critical need for affordable housing in the area.

A Development Application is being prepared and we anticipate lodgement in late 2022.

Civic Way, Rouse Hill

Construction on this affordable housing development is due to commence in the coming year. It includes 33 studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units in Rouse Hill Town Centre. Four ground floor units are designed to meet the SDA Improved Liveability design standard.

Link Wentworth has secured an additional grant from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice to make 16 of these units social housing.

Lemongrove Project, Penrith

We have been working with our partner Platform Youth Services to build eight studio apartments in Penrith to house vulnerable young people undertaking study and training. Funded under the Department of Communities and Justice's Social Housing Innovation Fund, the program offers affordable and independent supported social housing in a Youth Foyer model which connects young people with the support services they need to break the cycle of disadvantage. The Australian Social Value Bank estimates the service will deliver \$140,000 worth of benefit over its first six months of operation.

A significant milestone was reached on this project in 2022 with the lodgement of the Development Application.

Miller Street, Cammeray

Link Wentworth has lodged a Development Application to redevelop an existing property in Cammeray to deliver 12 apartments in a modern boarding house style development. This project is a joint venture with North Sydney Council.

Barrett Avenue, Thornleigh

In 2020, Link Wentworth purchased a privately owned property to become part of a larger development site which will offer 48 social and affordable rental dwellings for seniors.

Killaloe Avenue, Pennant Hills

Line Wentworth is planning an affordable housing project at this site.

 PARTNER STORY

Friends in partnership: Platform Youth Services



Stephanie Oatley, CEO,
Platform Youth Services



The partnership between Link Wentworth and Platform Youth Services is older than both organisations, says CEO Stephanie Oatley. **It began in the late 90s, when Stephanie was working at what was then Blue Mountains Youth.**

"We had four properties in the Mountains," Stephanie says. "But as a youth service, we were getting tired of chasing rents, doing inspection reports, chasing bonds."

Their role as a landlord to their clients was creating friction in relationships and leading to poorer outcomes.

"If a young person couldn't pay rent, they would just avoid us and the whole case management would just stop—they would go underground, and we couldn't get anything done," she explains.

Her and her colleagues had a brilliant idea to outsource their tenancies and reached out to the Katoomba housing cooperative to see if they could help. It would be a unique

arrangement but by bringing a community housing provider on board and separating support and tenancy, young people would be more effectively assisted and supported to maintain their housing.

It was the first partnership of its kind in New South Wales. And it worked brilliantly.

Over the next 20 years, as Blue Mountains Youth became Platform Youth Services, and the Katoomba housing cooperative became Link Wentworth, the partnership has only deepened and strengthened.

"It's a very two-way partnership, built on mutual respect. I think we both bring a lot to the table and we both respect each other," Stephanie says,

adding that both organisations have a grassroots, localised perspective that makes them stand out.

With such rich history and trust between the two organisations, the idea of collaborating on a shared project felt like a natural next step.

Providing accommodation to up to eight young people facing homelessness in the community, along with wraparound support, the Platform Youth and Link Wentworth Youth Foyer model will be the biggest project the partners have worked on together.

"It's about breaking the cycle, it's about offering a longer support period in a specialised property so younger people can complete education," Stephanie explains of the benefits of the model. Rather than a transitional property, which doesn't offer the stability needed to reach long-term goals, this new model will provide a secure base to young people through which they can develop meaningful lives.

"We know that education equals employment, which equals housing," Stephanie says. "The only way that these young people are going to be adults who aren't homeless is to have employment. And any employment that's going to be sustainable, purposeful and give enjoyment is something that's going to be career driven."

Stephanie says she is "very, very happy" with how the project is proceeding and grateful to the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) for providing the funding for it. Subject to approvals, construction on the Youth Foyer will begin in July 2023.

As for the partnership, she believes it will go from "strength to strength", with both organisations possessing many similar values that will ensure it continues for many years to come.

Advocating for positive change



Link Wentworth has a long history of advocating for social change in the housing sector. In the past year, with increasing housing stress, this work has only become more important.

Our mission is to ensure that all Australians have access to safe and secure housing. As one of the largest community housing providers (CHPs) in New South Wales, we are proud to be involved in events, activities and initiatives that shine a light on the ever-increasing housing crisis. Our actions aim to achieve more government and private investment in social and affordable housing as well as better access to services and support for those in housing stress or at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Awards and recognition

In nominating our projects and people for local, state and national awards, Link Wentworth seeks to raise the profile of what we do, challenge stereotypes and perceptions and ultimately gain more business, government and community support for social

and affordable housing.

Congratulations to Link Wentworth's Solution Architect Adam Cunningham who won the 2021 PowerHousing Award for Excellence in Customer Service and Business Support. Two other staff members were also nominated in the PowerHousing Awards: Alice Taylor for the Rising Star Award and Heather Maloney for the Outstanding Achievement Award. We were also proud to put forward our *Heat and Social Housing in Western Sydney* project for the Tenant Engagement and Social Inclusion Awards and our industry-leading merger for the Program Leadership and Government Collaboration Award.

Link Wentworth was also proud to be well represented at the 2022 ZEST Awards.

Congratulations to Julia Shoesmith, Link Wentworth Specialist Support Lead for Together Home Nepean-Blue Mountains region, who won the Award for Outstanding Community Sector Leader. Our resident Mary, a valuable member of our Tenant Advisory Group, also won an award for Outstanding Volunteer Community Leader. We were honoured to have nominated Mary for the Award. Along with her very generous work with Link Wentworth, Mary has volunteered at the Women's Cottage in the Hawkesbury for over 25 years. Link Wentworth has been a sponsor of the ZEST Awards since 2018.

Our campaign to develop the new Link Wentworth brand and bring it to life as 'One Link Wentworth' was recognised as a finalist in the Not For Profit Marketing category of the 2022 Australian Marketing Institute (AMI) Marketing Excellence Awards. Encompassing the creation of a new visual look, values, tagline and positioning statement for the combined entity, as well as launch activities and an interim website, the project was completed over five phases and achieved our goal of engaging tenants, clients, staff and stakeholders in our journey.



Conferences and sponsorships

Link Wentworth representatives were invited to present at many events throughout the year, speaking up about the great need for further social and affordable housing across NSW and the role community housing providers, like Link Wentworth, can take in addressing homelessness and supporting people and communities in need. We also sponsored a number of events and conferences, to grow recognition of our new brand.

August 2021:

CHIA NSW conference – sponsor; CEO Andrew McAnulty (presenter); Chairperson Mike Allen (session facilitator)

October 2021:

Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) Affordable and Diverse Housing Forum – CEO Andrew McAnulty (presenter)

November 2021:

Domestic Violence Forum convened by Federal MP, Susan Templeman – Link Wentworth Client Services Manager, Kerry Dolaghan (presenter)

March 2022:

Sponsor of State of the Nation session at the National Housing Conference

April 2022:

National Housing and Homelessness Forum – Chief Customer Officer, Margaret Maljkovic, Specialist Homelessness Team representatives, Julia Shoesmith and Kerry Dolaghan (presenters)

April 2022:

CHIA Northern Territory workshop – Link Wentworth representatives Amanda Murray and Margaret Maljkovic (presenters)



Top left: Julia Shoesmith and Mary at the Zest Awards

Top right: Link Wentworth team at the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Conference

Bottom left: Link Wentworth team at the Housing and Homelessness Forum

Bottom right: Chief Customer Officer, Margaret Maljkovic

June 2022:

Post NSW Budget NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) panel discussion – CEO Andrew McAnulty (panellist)

June 2022:

PowerHousing Australia CEO Roundtable – CEO Andrew McAnulty (participant)

June 2022:

Mountains Community Resource Network Blue Mountains Housing Summit – Link Wentworth Transition Specialist Homelessness Service & Safe Places Manager, Jenny Ranft (presenter)

Media and opinion pieces

Link Wentworth appeared in various print and online publications throughout the year. A few highlights included:

- Local and national media coverage of The Big Housing Debate by ABC News, News.com.au, Realestate.com.au, Herald Sun, Daily Telegraph and Western Weekender – April 2022
- Opinion piece: 'Working together to get young people back on their feet' published in Parity, April 2022, Volume 35, Issue 21.
- Local media coverage for our Scholarship Program award recipients and special guests including the Mayor of Hornsby and Mayor of Hawkesbury.
- Coverage of CEO Andrew McNulty's views including in The Fifth Estate, as well as our submission to NSW parliamentary inquiry on homelessness among older people aged over 55 in the Sydney Morning Herald.

Link Wentworth sponsored and contributed to the Deloitte and the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue (WSLD) paper titled 'A regional perspective on a national crisis:

The Commonwealth's role in delivering new social and affordable housing'. This paper focused on the Social and Affordable Housing landscape in Greater Western Sydney and was launched at The Big House Debate event in April 2022.

Inquiry submission

In May 2022, we made a submission to the Government Inquiry into homelessness amongst older people aged over 55 in New South Wales, drawing on our extensive experience as a Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) provider in Greater Sydney.

We used the submission to call for an increase to the supply of social and affordable housing that is designed, delivered and managed with the aim of meeting the specific needs of people 55-65 years of age. We also proposed the development of a specific aged care community housing model, which provides long-term and age-appropriate housing—with accompanying community and health care support networks—for people on a pension income.

Link Wentworth also contributed to the submission made by CHIA NSW, sharing our experiences supporting

women aged over 55 in 'meanwhile-use' temporary housing in Beecroft.

At a hearing for the Inquiry, our tenant, TAG member and housing advocate, Marie bravely presented her story as a single senior woman who has experienced the trauma of housing stress.

Government relations

Building strong and productive relationships with our government leaders is crucial for Link Wentworth to be able to achieve its goal of providing safe and secure housing for all. We are actively in discussions with local, state and federal government representatives on issues including housing policy and the need for more social and affordable housing.

We are members of a range of housing advisory groups and think tanks which offer opportunities to engage with government leaders on a variety of issues relating to social and affordable housing. During the year, we worked closely with PowerHousing Australia, CHIA NSW and CHIA, Shelter NSW, the Everybody's Home campaign, Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue, Business Western Sydney, Committee for Sydney, NCOSS



Marie, Link Wentworth Resident

At a hearing for the Inquiry, our tenant, TAG member and housing advocate, Marie bravely presented her story as a single senior woman who has experienced the trauma of housing stress.

and Australian Housing Institute.

Our people at all levels, from our Board and Executive team to our frontline staff come into contact with government decision-makers and take these opportunities to listen, understand, share their insights and learnings and offer solutions and new ways of thinking.

In November 2021, Client Services Manager, Kerry Dolaghan represented Link Wentworth at the Macquarie Women's Homelessness and DV Interagency Forum, organised by Federal Member

for Macquarie, Susan Templeman. Susan Templeman was joined by Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness, Jason Clare, and Shadow Assistant Minister for Communities and the Prevention of Family Violence, Jenny McAllister.

Kerry leads the Link Wentworth family and domestic violence service Nurreen and is involved in planning for our new Safe Places project. She was able to share insights into the housing situation in the Blue Mountains, including the lack of temporary accommodation and fit for



Penhurst Road, Roselands

purpose dwellings, and the huge increases in housing prices, resulting in the need for people to move out of the area in order to find suitably priced accommodation.

Also in November, Chief Financial Officer George Bogdanovic, Chief Property Officer Sean Carty, Chief Communications Officer Brianna Ragel and Corporate Communications Specialist Josie Parsons met with Member for Castle Hill Ray Williams to tour the site of our Rouse Hill development.

The project will be delivered in partnership with the NSW Government through their Community Housing Innovation Fund (CHIF). Mr Williams applauded the project for providing a mix of housing

options in close proximity to transport, shops and services – as well as local jobs during construction. The CHIF is a \$150 million program delivering more social and affordable housing in partnership with CHPs across NSW.

Relationships with local government are also important to Link Wentworth and in June 2022 a case study on Link Wentworth's decades-long partnership with North Sydney Council was featured at the 28th National General Assembly (NGA) organised by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). CEO of CHIA Wendy Hayhurst included the case study in her presentation on the value of local level partnerships and the potential for ALGA and

CHIA members to deliver on the new federal government's housing agenda.

In June 2022, following the Big Housing Debate, Link Wentworth CEO Andrew McNulty met with the Hon. Rose Jackson MLC, Shadow Minister for Water, Housing and Homelessness and Hon Shayne Mallard MLC to discuss solutions.



Shelter Don't Swelter resources being shared at a Link Wentworth event

Heat and Social Housing in Western Sydney project

In response to rising temperatures in Western Sydney, Link Wentworth coordinated the *Heat and Social Housing in Western Sydney* project, funded by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's Increasing Resilience to Climate Change program. Launched in 2020, the initiative brought together Link Wentworth, Hume Community Housing and Evolve Housing

along with Penrith and Hawkesbury City Councils.

In 2021, as part of the project, we launched Shelter Don't Swelter, a pilot campaign co-designed with social housing tenants to uncover and share tips that tenants can use to stay cool during heat waves, without impacting heavily on their energy bills.

From January 2021 until the program's conclusion in March 2022, 2,500 tenants (including 61 from Link Wentworth and

Evolve Housing) took part in the pilot. Using the Australian Social Value Bank (ASVB) social impact measurement tool, we found the Shelter Don't Swelter pilot produced an overall net benefit of \$427,977, or \$7,016 per participant. The campaign was also featured as a case study on the NSW Government's AdaptNSW website.



2022 Ryde street count

Street Count

In February 2022, Link Wentworth led street count evenings in the Ryde, Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Local Government Areas. Street Count is a state-wide initiative used to gather real-time data about the number of people who may be sleeping rough across NSW. City of Ryde provided staff and council vehicles to assist the Ryde count and volunteers from organisations including Mission Australia, Catholic

Care, Barnardos, Northern Life and the Department of Communities and Justice were also on hand to assist our staff. One rough sleeper was counted in each LGA.

Brand and communications

Link Wentworth recognises that as a not-for-profit service business, our brand plays a significant role in helping us to achieve our advocacy goals.

To ensure consistency of our branding, in January 2022, we launched an online brand portal for staff and partners to access the most up to date brand guidelines, templates and communications assets.

During the year, we were also pleased to launch new tenant handbooks and fact sheets, begin work on our first tenant newsletter mobile app, roll out website enhancements for accessibility and user experience, and deliver our quarterly resident and corporate newsletters.

Our new brand was also listed as a finalist in the Not-for-Profit Marketing category of the 2022 Australian Marketing Institute Awards. We look forward to attending the Awards ceremony in October 2022 and celebrating with all the finalists.



The Big Housing Debate

One of our more significant events this financial year was the first Big Housing Debate. Conceived by Link Wentworth, the Big Housing Debate was delivered in partnership with Western Sydney Community Forum and held on 21 April 2022, prior to the Federal Election.

With an audience of 500 in-person and watching via live-stream, the event brought together representatives from community, academia, the private sector and government to debate how we can meet the need for social and affordable housing.

Top: Link Wentworth team at the Big Housing Debate
Middle left: Mary, Link Wentworth Resident
Middle right: Guest speakers
Bottom: Panelists



Speakers included:

- **The Honourable Rose Jackson MLC** – Shadow Minister for Water, Housing and Homelessness
- **The Honourable Shayne Mallard MLC** – Parliamentary Secretary for Western Sydney
- **Mary Conyard** – Link Wentworth resident and lived experience speaker
- **Aunty Carol Cooper**
- **Nicole Woodrow** – Development Director, Landcom
- **Hugh Hartigan** – Senior Advisor, National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC)
- **Rod Fehring** – Executive Chairman, Frasers Property Australia and Chair, National Affordable Housing Alliance
- **Dr Rae Duffy-Jones** – Associate Professor, Western Sydney University
- **Leo Patterson Ross** – CEO, Tenants' Union NSW
- **Caryn Kakas** – Head of Housing Strategy, ANZ
- **Ryan Banting** – Director of Social Infrastructure, Australian Unity
- **Syvilla Boon** – Associate Director, Deloitte Australia
- **Councillor John Thain** – Deputy Mayor, Penrith City Council
- **Billie Sankovic** – CEO, Western Sydney Community Forum

The event featured a series of addresses, followed by two panels—'Making the social and economic case for investment in social and affordable housing' and 'How can community, government and business work together to help deliver solutions?'

One of the highlights was the personal address delivered by Link Wentworth resident, Mary, who spoke about the challenges she has encountered as a single mother facing homelessness. The audience also heard from The Honourable Rose Jackson MLC – Shadow Minister for Water, Housing and Homelessness and The Honourable Shayne Mallard MLC – Parliamentary Secretary for Western Sydney, as well as Link Wentworth CEO Andrew McNulty who gave the closing address, refocusing the discussion towards proactivity and optimism.

Key takeaways

The event was productive and thought-provoking, highlighting first and foremost that Australia's housing crisis has reached a critical point and now is the time to act.

A number of ideas and solutions were discussed throughout the debate, with the following being the essential points for government leaders to take note of:

- The housing crisis cannot be solved by states and local governments alone. We need a National Housing Strategy run by a federal agency that takes a bipartisan approach to social and affordable housing supply.
- Social and affordable housing must be seen as essential infrastructure in every major city and town, contributing social and economic benefits.
- Community housing providers have the local knowledge, networks and expertise to deliver services and identify needs in line with a National Housing Strategy.

At the event, Deloitte and the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue (WSLD) launched their region-focused paper titled 'A regional perspective on a national crisis: The Commonwealth's role in delivering new social and affordable housing'. The paper outlines a number of stark statistics about the state of housing in Western Sydney, and the significant role community housing providers play in delivering new supply.

Link Wentworth plans to continue the Big Housing Debate series in the future.

Scan the QR code to watch all the speeches from the event and read the post event report.



Becoming one
Link Wentworth

Environmental,
Social, and
Governance,
and our Impact

Our Strategy
2025

Unlocking Potential



Becoming one Link Wentworth

A lot of work was done this year to fully integrate and transform our organisation—to make it the best possible place to work for our team.

New terms and conditions

After consulting closely with staff members, we updated all our employment agreements this year to ensure they are consistent across the organisation and reflect industry best practice.

We listened closely to what our people wanted, and were proud to offer new conditions including:

- superannuation on maternity leave pay
- up to 10 days paid domestic violence leave
- increased paid parental leave (up to 8 weeks)
- study leave for the entire organisation
- up to 2 weeks purchased leave for all staff
- a 35-hour working week for all award based staff.

These changes will help make Link Wentworth an even more inclusive, flexible and desirable place to work in the years to come.

Consolidating teams

Significant work was done this year to combine former Link and Wentworth teams and get them working cohesively under one manager across our two hubs in Chatswood and Penrith. We made a strong commitment that no one would be worse off under this process, and we were proud to achieve our business objectives in this area. The efficiencies and improvements achieved through this process will help us better meet the needs of our clients and the communities we serve.

Getting together

After two years of lockdowns and social distancing, we were delighted to bring all staff together for a mini-conference and end of year celebratory lunch in December 2021. Team members who hadn't seen each other much in recent times enjoyed the opportunity to relax and connect face-to-face. We are planning to hold an all staff, two-day event in September 2022.

New training approaches

We were pleased to increase our training program after two years of reduced offerings. We are now offering a range of professional development opportunities via a hybrid model with face-to-face and online training options open to staff members from all levels of the organisation.

Taking a pulse check

In February we conducted a pulse survey to continue measuring how staff were feeling about the merger, integration activities and Link Wentworth's culture and future. The following three questions were asked:

How would you describe the current workplace culture in three words?

Top three answers: supportive, positive, team

What do you love about Link Wentworth's culture?

Top three answers: customer focus, supportive, friendly

What aspects of the culture would you like to improve?

Top three answers: team building, nothing, oneness





2021 staff award winners

Staff awards

December 2021 saw our first ever Link Wentworth Awards of Excellence presented to outstanding staff.

The winners were:

Service Excellence

Brooke Cameron
Pam Thompson

Teamwork

Heather Maloney
Carolyn Stewart

Leadership

Karen Riley
Denise McGrath

Quiet Achiever

Amelia Williams
Cherry Zhang

Innovation

Adam Cunningham
Bernadette Tabula

Rising Star

Ellen Al-Ali
Nikki Crossley
Josephine Parsons
Leticia Fitzgerald
Alice Taylor

Manager of the Year

Sarah Barr
Matthew Jackson

Link Wentworth staff profile

Total Staff: 212

Full-time/part-time

91% Full time

9% Part time

Mean length of service:

4.2 years

Mean age:

43 years

Workplace diversity

Staff

74% Female

26% Male

9% Staff diversity by ethnicity (CALD background)

2% Identifies as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander¹

0-1% Gender X²

Board

27% Female

73% Male

Executive

43% Female

57% Male

¹ collected gradually from new starters but not existing staff

² Gender X refers to staff who identify as non-binary, genderfluid, trans or intersex, or otherwise do not identify within the gender binary definition

STAFF STORY

People-first properties with Maintenance Supervisor Tanya





Tanya is one of those people who loves the human side of housing. While her job within our Assets Team involves a lot of site inspections and Work Health Safety (WHS) compliance, Tanya thrives most when she liaises with our partners, clients and contractors.

"I like to build relationships with people," she says.

Starting her career at Link Wentworth as an Assets Coordinator, Tanya soon moved into the role of Maintenance Supervisor, overseeing our Specialist Disability Accommodation contracts.

It's a role with many different stakeholders, she says. "You've got DCJ and LAHC (Land and Housing Corporation). You have the SIL (Supported Independent Living), you have the residents and the participants of the group home. You've got their guardians. You've got your peers that you need to talk to as well."

Dealing with so many types of people can bring challenges, of course, which is something Tanya says she encounters a lot in her role. "Where there is a challenge, I take that as a plus because it gives you that capability to look at how you can better communicate and

resolve things for different people," she says, noting the Link Wentworth company values of respect and integrity that she tries to emulate.

Above all else, Tanya feels passionate about the mission of community housing to help others and the role she plays in bringing this to life. "Being part of the Assets Team is respecting people's homes by taking care of them," she says.

From her own perspective, Tanya is fueled by the environment she works in and is inspired by the work of her colleagues.

"Link Wentworth has a beautiful culture," she says. "Everyone is absolutely lovely and has something wonderful to contribute to help people's lives and make things better for the residents within their homes."

When asked what goals she has for the future, Tanya simply says she has "heaps!"

She is currently completing her Bachelor of Construction and is looking forward to using her learnings to create more inclusive and community-oriented spaces where all kinds of people can thrive.

"And I would like to do it at Link Wentworth, of course."

 STAFF STORY

Vocational Student of the Year award for cadet Tionnie

Link Wentworth is grateful to CHIA NSW for their cadetship program, which gives the opportunity for bright and passionate people to begin a career in the community housing industry.

Through the program, we had the pleasure of welcoming Tionnie to our organisation as a cadet. She gained experience in all areas of the business while studying to complete her Certificate IV in Housing.

Tionnie had always wanted to pursue a career in the

sector but says she didn't have enough experience. "I lacked the knowledge and work experience required to ensure I would be providing the best possible service to clients or potential clients," she says.

"Whilst researching ways to get my foot in the door, I came

across the Cadetship Program on the CHIA (NSW) website. I knew it would be a great opportunity to be employed in a position that would allow me to liaise with all areas of the housing network."

Shortly into her time with us, it was clear Tionnie embodied the company values and had a passion for the sector. She was offered full-time employment with us and remains with the business as she completes her studies.

Tionnie's hard work and passion was acknowledged in June 2022 when she won Vocational Student of the Year - Western

Sydney and Blue Mountains at the NSW Training Awards.

We're so proud of Tionnie for being formally recognised for her achievements as a student and employee. Not only has she excelled in her role, Tionnie has been a great advocate for the program and actively encourages others in her position to get started in the community housing sector.

"If you like the idea of being able to assist some of the most vulnerable people within our communities gain housing that is safe and secure and to help them to grow within the community, then this is the

career for you," she says.

"CHIA and Link Wentworth's support throughout the whole process has been amazing! I will be forever grateful for this opportunity and encourage you to apply."

We look forward to further developing Tionnie's career at Link Wentworth and welcoming more CHIA NSW cadets as the years continue. Thank you to CHIA NSW for this great program.





Embracing opportunities with Tenancy Manager Zac



Beginning his career with us as a Client Service Officer (CSO), Zac admittedly didn't have a huge amount of knowledge about the community housing industry. **That quickly changed.**

"I soon found out that I was quite interested in social housing and started developing a passion for it," Zac tells us. "I wanted to stay in the field and learn more."

Three months into his role as a CSO, Zac's newfound ambition led to him successfully apply

for a new position within his team as a Responsive Maintenance Officer. Zac answered calls related to maintenance, listening to queries and dispatching trades. This further ignited his passion for the industry. Ten months later, Zac successfully applied

to become a Tenancy Manager based in West Ryde.

When asked why he jumped at the opportunity to move into another role, Zac explains that he wanted to build more personal relationships with our residents.

"I've been speaking to our tenants over the phone for over a year, so I wanted to get out there, see what it's like in their shoes," he says. "See the properties, meet the people, get a better idea of their needs."

Zac now manages a portfolio of around 250 properties and is loving the flexibility the role provides. "I get to go out into

the field almost every day," he says. "It's a lot more varied, I think, rather than just on the phone and on the computer. There's a lot more face to face."

In general, Zac has really enjoyed his time at Link Wentworth and the opportunities he has been provided with—three different roles in 16 months is quite the achievement.

"I like working at Link Wentworth, especially since we merged together," he says. "It's created a lot of brand-new positions and lots of opportunities to move around the business—I'm an example of that."

"I also like the culture we've got. In Chatswood and particularly West Ryde, it's a great team culture. You walk to the kitchen and stop by and have three chats with a bunch of people. It's nice."

While Zac is happy in his current role, he looks forward to a future within the company where he has a more hands-on role in the Assets Team. If his track record is anything to go by, we have no doubt Zac will achieve his goals and more within Link Wentworth.

In July 2021, the hard work of harmonising the pre-existing systems and processes of Link and Wentworth began.

Integration and transformation

In July 2021, the hard work of harmonising the pre-existing systems and processes of Link and Wentworth began. Guided by an Integration Plan and roadmap aimed at creating an organisation fit for the future, this major project covers eight key areas: Business Improvement Activity, Customers, Finance System, Operations IT, Policies, Structure, Supporting Systems and Terms and Conditions.

Underpinning the whole project is a strong governance framework, established to ensure all projects and changes are well managed and communicated effectively.

By delivering business improvements, making cost savings and building efficiencies, this significant body of work aims to improve both client and staff experiences. We are on track to complete most of this work in December 2022 in line with the Integration Plan.

Some of the key integrations completed in the past year include:

New organisational structure

By June 2022, most structure changes had been agreed with final confirmation of changes in the Tenancy team due to be finalised in August. This goal of the new structure is to support a future-fit Link Wentworth that is ready for growth and aligned to our new culture. A key part of this integration work was consultation with staff about the proposed team structures and operations.

Closely aligned with the new structure integration was a project to update and align our staff terms and conditions. See page 64 for more on this.

Customer Experience Team

Our customers have remained our key priority whilst integrating many internal processes, procedures and operations. Merging the customer contact centres from Link and Wentworth into a single new Customer Experience Team (CXT) was critical to ensure we provide the best service for our customers. This team integration was completed in mid 2022 and we are currently updating systems and processes.

Link Wentworth staff, Amelia, Katie and Josie



Link Wentworth CEO, Andrew McNulty and Chair, Mike Allen



Celiann and Nikki,
Link Wentworth staff members



To assist with establishing a new CXT strategy to inform how we interact with our customers, we held workshops with staff and clients in May and June. These were focused on future service delivery requirements and recommendations for an effective contact centre. From this feedback and learnings, future strategy recommendations were developed and submitted for approval.

One tenancy management system

With staff in our Chatswood and Penrith hubs using different versions of the Castleton housing management software at the time of the merger, bringing everyone onto the same housing operations and finance systems was crucial. Before consolidating these systems, we first upgraded the Chatswood hub to the latest version of Castleton. Since completing this in November 2021, we are on track to merge the Castleton system and harmonise policies and procedures to achieve one way of doing tenancy management across Link Wentworth by late 2022.

We are also implementing a new finance system across the organisation to align with the Castleton consolidation in late 2022. Consolidating housing operations systems will significantly improve the collaboration and efficiency of business operations as well as deliver IT infrastructure cost savings.

Environmental, Social, and Governance, and our Impact

Ashley, Lauren, Alex and Michael at the Link Wentworth staff mini conference in December 2021



Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)

Link Wentworth has been actively participating in corporate social responsibility initiatives for several years. This has included measuring the social and economic outcomes of our services, and nominating ESG-related KPIs for our executives. With the rise of ESG, over the past year we began looking at how we might evolve our current plans to suit the changing landscape and ensure that our organisation's value can be easily evaluated by a business, employer or potential investor.

ESG is now a priority for our staff, management and our

Board. As such, one of the strategic pillars in our Strategy 2025 focuses on developing clear and measurable ESG and sustainability targets and reporting on our impact over the next three years.

As part of this, we held a consultation session with staff in May 2022. The feedback from this session will be combined with data from tenant surveys and management workshops to form our ESG materiality assessment. The materiality assessment will provide a list of the material issues that are important to Link Wentworth's stakeholders to aid in the development of our first ESG strategy and targets.

An ESG standard for the sector

Separately, we were pleased to be a leading CHP supporting the development of an ESG reporting standard for the community housing sector. The initiative led by the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) and a consortium of private and public sector partners will help our sector to show our impact and attract more diverse private sector lending, including from ESG investors. The standard will provide CHPs with a set of criteria to report on annually, putting Australia at the forefront of ESG reporting for the sector globally.



Link Wentworth is committed to ensuring that we minimise negative impacts and enhance positive impacts on our key stakeholders, being our customers, staff and the planet.

Outcomes Report 2022

For the year, Link Wentworth continued to use the Australian Social Value Bank (ASVB) tool to measure the value of some of our initiatives. You can see this reported as part of our Outcomes Report 2022 on page 76. Our Outcomes Framework was launched in 2019 and we have reported against this framework over the last few years. Our goal is to look at our outcomes reporting as part of a larger piece of work on our ESG strategy and targets in the coming year.

ESG highlights for 2022

Link Wentworth is committed to ensuring that we minimise negative impacts and enhance positive impacts on our key stakeholders, being our customers, staff and the planet. Our current services and initiatives address 9 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across these stakeholder groups.

Customers



Link Wentworth's core mission and services seek to reduce poverty, inequality and promote good health and wellbeing by ensuring that everyone has access to safe, stable and appropriate housing. The positive impact that we have on our residents and clients is detailed throughout this report.

On an ongoing basis, our regular tenant satisfaction and health and wellbeing surveys tell us how we're performing according to our customers and inform our continuous improvement initiatives, new program and service design.

To help our most vulnerable residents to sustain their tenancies, gain independence and reach their goals, we work with partners and employ specialist inhouse teams with relevant experience

and skills to offer tailored support. Our Communities Team also successfully run customer-focused programs and initiatives like our Tenant Advisory Group and Scholarship Program that provide opportunities for empowerment, connection and growth.

Importantly, over the financial year, Link Wentworth also supported tenants during natural disasters with wellbeing calls and other initiatives including a mould removal program.

Staff



This year, Link Wentworth's long-standing White Ribbon Committee, made up of staff volunteers, completed the necessary work required to submit to become a White Ribbon Accredited Workplace. Accreditation is on track for completion by September 2022. We also formed a staff Diversity & Inclusion Committee who are on track to deliver the organisation's first Diversity & Inclusion policy by the end of 2022.

Our Reconciliation Working Group led a number of initiatives over the year and began work on the Innovate RAP, following the launch of the organisation's Reflect RAP in 2020.

Our new employee Terms & Conditions acknowledged the diversity of our staff group by adding ceremonial leave, domestic violence leave and increasing parental leave. During the year, our Award staff also received salary increases to be 5% above the new Award.

We are committed to providing decent work opportunities and the development of an

environment where our staff can thrive.

Our wellbeing program delivered a range of valuable sessions for staff in self-care, meditation and more. Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) website and service has been used extensively by staff for coaching as well as providing counselling sessions.

Staff participated in over 33 different training courses over the year, including courses on trauma-informed practice, building resilience against vicarious trauma, effective case notes and record-keeping, mental health awareness and first aid, time management and work-life balance in a hybrid work environment, creative problem-solving, leadership, dealing with difficult and complex behaviours and situations, work health and safety, bullying and harassment prevention, and gendered violence.

At least 93 individual staff completed at least one training course during the year (not including the mandatory e-learning courses, which are completed by all new starters on commencement). During the year, 58 staff accepted new internal career opportunities (including promotions, new roles, secondments, and higher duties).

Staff were also given the opportunity to work flexibly and safely during the pandemic with the right technology and equipment provided for them at home and in the office.

Planet



We supported our tenants and staff through the NSW floods in early 2022 with messaging to help them prepare their properties. We also provided tenants with information about managing the heat and cold in apartments and homes in an energy-efficient manner.

Our *Heat and Social Housing in Western Sydney* project came to end in March 2022. The project looked at ways social housing tenants can stay cool, without impacting heavily on their energy costs. Read more on page 58. We are now part of a research project with Western Sydney University (WSU) exploring '*Living with Urban Heat: Becoming Climate-Ready in Social Housing*'. The project, which is funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage grant, is exploring the impact of rising heat and personal mitigation strategies within social housing. Researchers will work with culturally diverse social housing residents to look at practical, low-cost ways to manage increasingly hotter urban environments.

Students from the University of New South Wales (UNSW) Built Environment Faculty completed a project exploring how our properties could be more sustainable and environmentally friendly. The students were assigned a vacant Link Wentworth property and tasked with finding out as much as possible about the property and its surrounding environment with the goal of developing methods to improve sustainability and reduce environmental impact. Over several months the students met with staff and tenants to learn more about what it is like to live in community housing and the day to day concerns of tenants. Their findings were presented to Link Wentworth in April and will be used by UNSW staff to compile a research article and recommendations on how social and community housing properties across NSW could become more environmentally sustainable.

We have begun a project to find strategies to become a more environmentally responsible housing provider, with a focus on our property portfolio. As part of this work, we completed an LED upgrade program at one of our complexes in Hornsby with 66 units.

With a total investment of \$5,500, the project is estimated to save almost 30 tonnes of CO₂ annually and contribute an energy saving estimate of 81%. This is also equivalent to 3 houses being powered or 6 cars off the road or 476 trees being planted.

We have appointed consulting firm Pangolin to conduct a Carbon Impact Assessment across our operations and tenancies. Pangolin worked with Link Wentworth previously to prepare a Greenhouse Gas Assessment in 2019. We expect a final report from Pangolin later in 2022.

Other initiatives included establishing 2 new community gardens in the Ryde and St Mary's area for residents, upgrading community rooms in complexes to promote social connections, adding a 'green tip' section to our monthly staff newsletter, and promoting flexible working options for staff to reduce their carbon footprint through reduced commuting.



One of our residents
tending to a new
community garden

Outcomes 2021/2022

Wellbeing

Improved emotional wellbeing and mental health



255 customers attended daily virtual wellbeing programs offered in lockdown

552 food hampers delivered to Link Wentworth customers during lockdown in partnerships with 7 community organisations

202 residents worked with our Sustainable Tenancy Team to improve their overall health or condition of their property

174 customers and staff volunteers attended 3 End of Year celebrations events in Lithgow, Ryde and Penrith

86 customers received post-COVID 19 lockdown assistance through the Recovery Roadshow Project funded by DCJ

24 newly housed customers received assistance in fully furnishing their property through a partnership with Generous and Grateful

Employment

Improvement in job readiness and employment



72% registered Ready2Work participants are under 25 years old and linked to our youth service providers partners

11 Link Wentworth customers signed up to Ready2Work program 4 have completed their course and currently doing their work placement

33% Generating Real Opportunities for Women (GROW) project participants secured permanent employment

46 people attended Digital Discovery program resulting in improved IT skills and job readiness and the project still current

13 referrals to employment services

Safety

Improved feeling of safety and security in my neighbourhood



60 customers were involved in Western Sydney Heat and Social Housing project in partnerships with Penrith City Council and University of Western Sydney

9 Tenant Satisfaction Action Plan info sessions offered to residents

34 CALD customers attended info sessions about available community services in Ryde LGA

8 consultation sessions regarding Built Environmental Sustainability in partnership with University of Western Sydney and UNSW offered and attended by tenants and staff

16 Drop-In Sessions** meetings offered across the whole Link Wentworth portfolio

19 community rooms security access being upgraded

50 mould cleaning hampers distributed to Hawkesbury residents and 10 customers received professional mould cleaning assistance following the 2022 floods

77 Vegebag were distributed during lockdown to improve customers mental health outcomes

66 attended 4 virtual gardening workshops offered in partnerships with Royal Botanic Gardens

144 food boxes and helping hand packages distributed

30 information and educational sessions offered to our residents in microunit dwellings in St. Marys

20 residents attended healthy cooking class and floristry workshop funded by Womens NSW grant



Health

Improved overall health

107 residents awarded Link Wentworth scholarship in 2021

144 CALD residents attendances weekly English class in partnership with Hornsby Kuring-gai Community College

55% GROW project participants completed training including TAFE certification, first aid, cleaning modules and inhouse workshops and paid work experience

4.64 net cost benefit ratio for Link Wentworth Scholarship program*

9 youth tenants completed a certification with the Tenancy Skills Institute

\$121,000

awarded in the Link Wentworth 2021 Scholarship Program



Education

Improved education attainment

1688 Hot meals distributed from July to December 2021 to Link Wentworth customers in partnerships with Darcy St. Project Cafe

8 monthly gardening workshops sessions provided in 8 community gardens locations in partnerships with Royal Botanic Gardens

4 community rooms and tenant group reactivated with ongoing wellbeing programs post lockdown

\$722 is the net benefit per participant* at Link Wentworth End of Year Celebrations for tenants

2 new community garden established in Ryde and St. Mary's area



Community

Improved satisfaction with neighbourhood and community

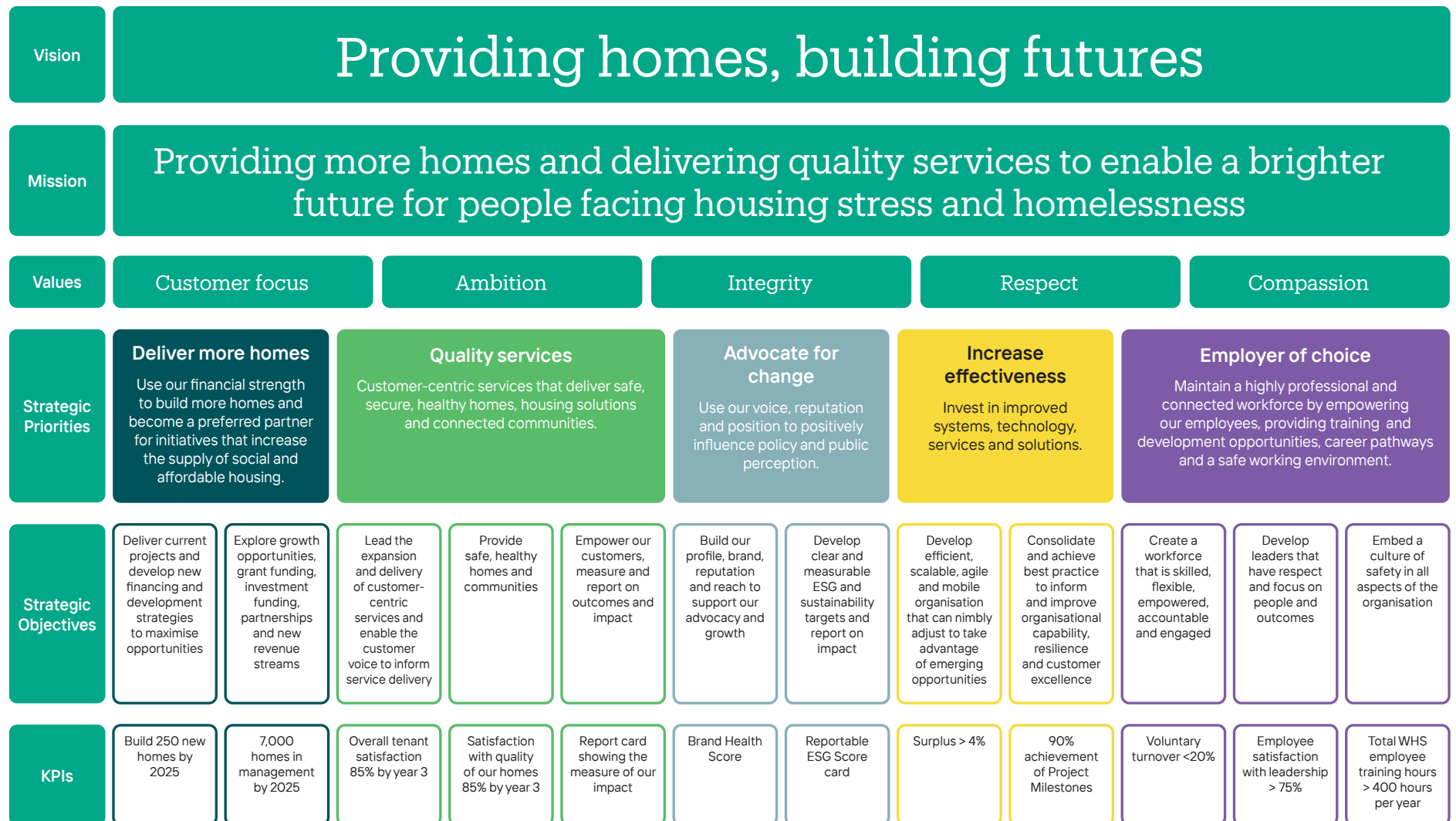
2022-2025 Strategy: Unlocking Potential

As a nationally registered Tier 1 not-for-profit, our purpose is to provide more homes and deliver quality services to enable a brighter future for people facing housing stress and homelessness.

Our current unencumbered financial position will enable us to take advantage of high-quality growth opportunities, which is a focus of our Strategy 2022 to 2025.

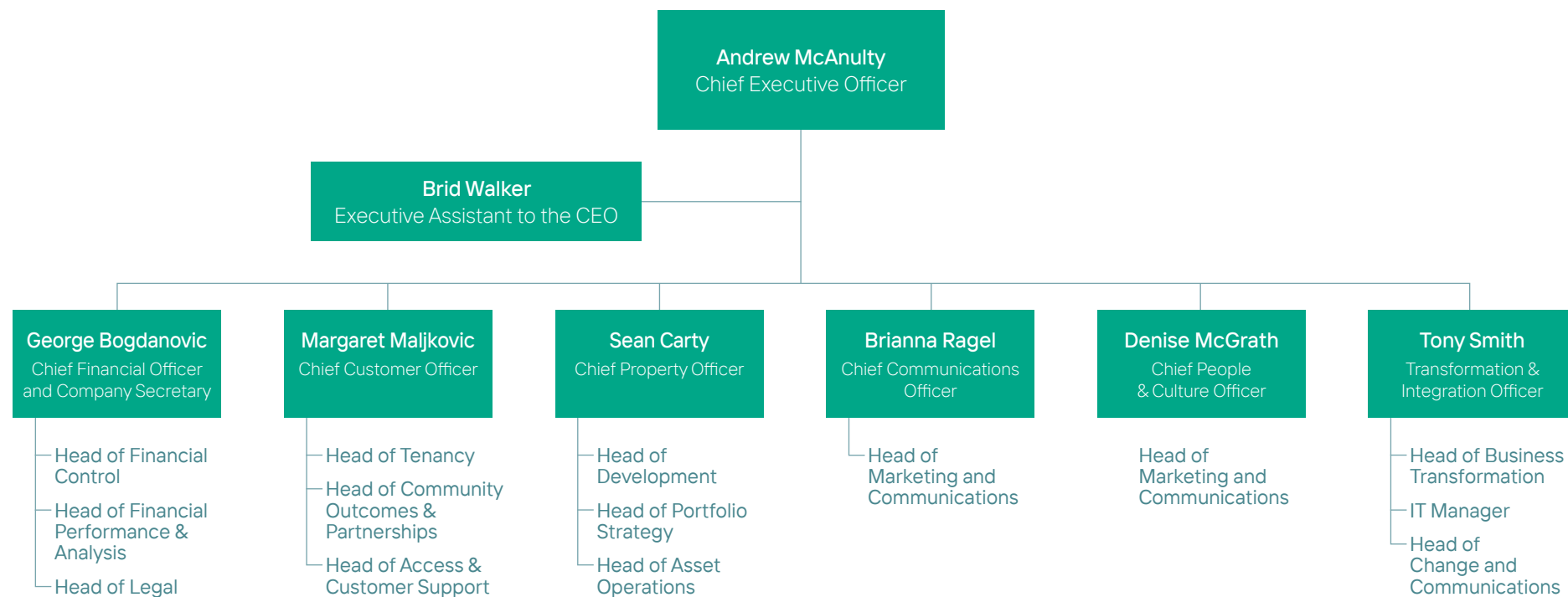


2022-2025 Strategy: Unlocking Potential



Organisational structure

Our structure includes an Executive Leadership Team and Senior Management Team as shown below.



Executive Leadership Team



Andrew McNulty
Chief Executive Officer

Andrew is a respected community housing figure, both nationally and internationally. He has delivered social, affordable and large-scale urban renewal projects for more than 30 years across Australia and the United Kingdom. Andrew's experience highlights the innovation and vision required to create cutting edge outcomes for projects which link Government, the private sector and the community housing sector – in order to deliver mixed tenure housing and place based urban renewal outcomes which create places for people to thrive.



George Bogdanovic
Chief Financial Officer
and Company Secretary

George has over 25 years experience across the private and public sectors with senior roles in finance, enterprise risk, sales, operations, business development and corporate strategy. He is passionate about creating inclusive communities where both safety and opportunity are available to everyone in our society. As a C-level executive he has played key leadership roles in major transformation programs and shaped customer centric organisational cultures enabling teams to achieve their very best. George holds a Bachelor of Economics, Master of Business Administration and is a Fellow of Chartered Accountants Australia New Zealand.



Margaret Maljkovic
Chief Customer Officer

With a career in social housing spanning over 25 years, Margaret has previously held executive management roles in NSW Government, leading major initiatives in community and estate regeneration in some of Sydney's most disadvantaged communities. Her earlier work experiences in the fields of homelessness, domestic violence and drug and alcohol support services have led her to understand the profound importance of stable and affordable housing. This, she believes, is both a fundamental human right and a foundation on which people can rebuild their lives and reach out to opportunities. Margaret has a degree in Social Sciences and a Real Estate licence and is committed to customer service excellence in social housing service delivery.



Sean Carty
Chief Property Officer

Sean has delivered social, affordable and market-rate housing outcomes for more than 15 years. With a background in end-to-end property development and asset management, Sean has held senior roles in the government and not-for-profit sectors in the New York City metropolitan area and Greater Sydney. He has extensive knowledge of Government and Community Housing and expertise in delivering collaborative housing outcomes across all sectors. Sean has a Bachelor in Financial Management and a Masters in Real Estate Development.



Brianna Ragel
Chief Communications Officer

Brianna has 20 years' experience delivering strategic value across customer experience, product management, marketing and communications. Starting her career in media, Brianna has a track record in helping organisations to get results in times of growth and transformation. Brianna has worked across a range of sectors including consulting and technology. She holds a BA (Media and Communications) and Masters in Business Administration (AGSM).



Denise McGrath
Chief People & Culture Officer

Denise's career in Human Resources (HR) spans more than 17 years. Her expertise includes staff recruitment, selection, induction, administration of HR programs, implementation of tools and systems and the management of performance appraisals and the salary review process. Denise has also developed and implemented employee initiatives including staff rewards and health and wellbeing programs. Her previous roles include Human Resources Associate at Hartmann ANZ and Human Resources Advisor for Link Housing.



Tony Smith
Chief Transformation and Integration Officer

Tony has held senior management roles in the financial services, energy, local government and not-for-profit sectors. He is skilled in positioning organisations to be financially sustainable and adaptive in meeting opportunities for growth and efficiency. He is a Fellow of Certified Practicing Accountants Australia, Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators and Governance Institute of Australia, as well as a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Tony holds a Bachelor of Business and a Graduate Diploma in Local Government Management.



Eva Gerencer
Acting Chief Communications Officer (July - Oct 2021)

Passionate about driving results for communities through collaboration, partnerships and relationships, Eva has worked for over 25 years in the community services industry covering a wide range of areas including communications, advocacy, social research and project management. Eva has a Bachelor of Arts, Post Graduate Diploma in Adult Education and is completing a Master of Policy and Applied Social Research.

Board directors



Mike Allen PSM
Chair

Mike Allen is a respected industry leader, independent housing advisor and former Chief Executive Officer of Housing NSW. He has more than 30 years of experience in social housing management and asset services, homelessness, and community and Aboriginal housing. In 2011 he was awarded the Public Service Medal in recognition of his outstanding and meritorious services to the community and for his strong commitment to the values and principles of social housing. Mike holds a Graduate Diploma in Urban Estate Management; and is a Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, a Fellow of the Institute of Public Administration Australia and a Life Member Australasian Housing Institute.



Nirmal Hansra
Deputy Chair

Nirmal is a Non-Executive Director of National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd, Have a Voice Pty Ltd and Children's Tumour Foundation of Australia Ltd. He recently retired as Chair of Campbell Page Ltd and prior director appointments include Non-Executive Director of Eureka Group Holdings Ltd, Ku-ring-gai Financial Services Ltd and Council of the Aging (NSW) Inc. He is an Independent Member of the Audit and Risk Committees for the Property and Place Group, NSW Department of Planning and Environment and NSW Greater Cities Commission and Chair of the Compliance and Risk Committee of Gleneagles Asset Management Ltd. Nirmal has over 35 years executive experience as Finance Director/ Chief Financial



Belinda Bentley

Belinda is the founding director of 9Springs, a privately held property investment, development advisory group. Belinda's experience varies from managing complex commercial real estate transactions to being responsible for portfolios and the delivery of transformative projects across the Australian eastern seaboard. Belinda holds a Master of Property Development, NSW Real Estate License (Class 1); and is a Graduate Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Brodie Druett

Brodie is a retired senior public servant formerly with Housing NSW and the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS). He was General Manager for Southern and Western Region in Housing NSW for six years. His latest role prior to retirement was Interim District Director FACS Nepean Blue Mountains. Brodie has a Graduate Certificate in Housing Management and Policy; and is a Member of the Australasian Housing Institute (AHI) and Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Ken Gilbert

Ken is an independent consultant assisting businesses to improve the return on investment in their human capital. Previously Ken held general management roles in municipal councils, senior positions in leading community services teams, and human resources and senior executive roles in companies and management consulting firms. His experience in the corporate and not-for-profit sectors is extensive and he provides specific expertise in the areas of human resources management, strategy development and community networks. Ken holds a Bachelor of Social Work and Bachelor of Business; and is a Graduate Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Dr Dianne Jackson

Dr Dianne Jackson is the CEO of Key Assets Australia, a national child and family organisation providing services that include out of home care, intensive family support, family preservation, early intervention and disability services. She is an experienced advisor, non-executive director, and leader in the social sector and has held several national roles focused on improving the lives of disadvantaged children and families. Dianne has a keen interest in the social determinants of health and education, and the critical role that housing plays in determining positive outcomes. Dianne is also an Adjunct Professor at Western Sydney University where she chairs the external advisory board of TeEACH (Transforming Early Education and Child Health), a research centre focused on integrated and holistic approaches across health and education.



Aimee Lindfield

Aimee is an experienced IT leader who is passionate about enabling business strategy through technology. She has over 19 years of experience in professional services, including IT strategy and program delivery, management consulting and financial audit. Aimee holds a Bachelor of Business, a Graduate Diploma of Chartered Accounting and is a Graduate Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Simon Maughan Wright

Simon is the owner and principal of ABSA Corporate Advisory, a corporate finance/M&A advisory and transaction and investment banking business and a private real estate development business. He is also a director at Blue Mount Capital. He has been a director of ANZ Investment Bank (Business Sales and Acquisitions), Westpac Business Bank Succession Services, and Group General Manager and Director of a real estate development and asset management group of companies.

Simon is qualified in Law with a Graduate Diploma in Labour Law, a Master of Business Administration, a real estate license and a Graduate Certificate in Digital Management.

He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Mark McEnallay

Mark consults on Governance and Risk and sits on the Board of the Australian Psychology Society. Mark has previously worked for RSL LifeCare, Reckitt and Colman, Coca-Cola and ASX listed Medical Australia Limited. Mark is a Fellow of CPA Australia, AICD and the Governance Institute of Australia.



Kerry Robinson OAM

Kerry is Chief Executive Officer of Blacktown City Council where he leads a team of 2,200 staff with an annual budget of more than \$800M. He is the Deputy Chairman of: Civic Risk Mutual Limited; of Blacktown Venue Management Limited; and, of Blacktown and Mount Druitt Hospitals Foundation Limited. He is a Member of the University of New South Wales' City Futures Research Centre advisory panel. Kerry has over 30 years of experience in the property industry having held senior roles in corporations and Government and is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Andrew Sweeney

Andrew has 40 years of experience in various property sectors. This includes 14 years at Lend Lease in property development roles. In 2005, Andrew co-founded Greengate to provide quality care-based housing for the elderly. Over the past four years Andrew held an executive role at Keppel Capital, a Singaporean listed conglomerate. He recently Co-Founded Bluepoint which will focus on energy transition investments. In 2012 he initiated the community group Support Lindfield with other locals to create a new heart for the area. Andrew holds Built Environment and Architecture Degrees; and is a Registered Architect (Qld, NSW) and Licensed Real Estate Agent (NSW).

Statement of Governance

Link Wentworth Housing Limited is committed to maintaining high standards of corporate governance to ensure the organisation achieves its stated objectives in ways that are transparent, accountable and effective. Corporate governance arrangements are reviewed annually by the Board.

The Board's conduct is governed by Link Wentworth's constitution and governance framework.

The Board is responsible for:

- setting and monitoring the strategic direction of the organisation
- approving and monitoring financial reporting including financial budgeting and forecasting
- establishing policies and guidelines to ensure accurate and timely financial and operational reporting
- establishing policies on risk oversight and management
- approving delegation of authority
- promoting ethical and responsible decision making
- appointing and measuring the performance of the Chief Executive Officer and the organisation
- ensuring that the Board is and remains appropriately skilled to discharge its responsibilities and duties, and to meet the changing needs of the organisation and sector
- ensuring that Link Wentworth complies with Corporations Law, Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission and all other relevant legislation
- providing guidance on and overseeing the performance of other key aspects of Link Wentworth's operation.

Committees

We established the following standing committees to assist the Board with governance:

- Audit, Risk and Improvement
- Assets and Development
- People & Culture.

Each committee has terms of reference that set out its role, responsibilities, composition and structure. The terms of reference are reviewed periodically. Committees report regularly to the Board and minutes of meetings are provided.

Ethical standards

The Board promotes practices that are transparent and uphold the principles of good citizenship. All Directors and staff sign a code of conduct. The code guides compliance with legal, policy and other obligations.

Directors are required to disclose any potential conflicts of interest at the start of all Board and committee meetings. The Board then determines an appropriate response which may require a Director to remove themselves from discussions, decisions or votes.

In the case of staff, any actual or perceived conflict of interest must be declared to management in accordance with the Link Wentworth Conflict of Interest Policy.

Board performance review

The performance of the Board, its committees and Directors is reviewed regularly. This ensures Directors and the Board work effectively and efficiently to maintain high standards of governance and fulfil their functions set out in the Corporate Governance Framework.

Board composition and renewal

The Board considers that, individually and collectively, the Directors bring an appropriate mix of skills, experience and expertise. Information about Directors and their skills and experience can be found in this report. The Board regularly reviews and evaluates its succession planning process. A Board skills matrix identifies the skills and experience of current Directors and the skills and experience that the Board considers necessary and desirable for the future. This matrix helps guide selection and appointment decisions.

Thank you

Our funders and partners, including



This page is intentionally left blank.



Providing homes, building futures.

Chatswood

Level 10, 67 Albert Avenue,
Chatswood NSW 2067

Katoomba

Blue Mountains Community and
Neighbourhood Centre
6/10 Station St
Katoomba NSW 2780

Lithgow

42 Main Street,
Lithgow NSW 2790

Penrith

Borec House, Suite 1002, Level 1,
29–57 Station Street,
Penrith NSW 2750

West Ryde

Level 2, 3–5 Anthony Road,
West Ryde NSW 2114

Windsor

409A George Street,
South Windsor NSW 2756

Contact during office hours

Chatswood Hub

P (02) 9412 5111

PO Box 5124
Chatswood West NSW 2067

Penrith Hub

P (02) 4777 8000

PO Box 4303
Penrith Westfield NSW 2750

E enquiries@linkwentworth.org.au

linkwentworth.org.au