



Metro Community Housing Co-operative Ltd.

Annual Report 2020.

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Metro Community Housing Co-op Ltd

Introduction

Metro Community Housing Co-operative Ltd (Metro) is incorporated as an independent Not for Profit Co-operative of members. All Metro tenants are automatically eligible to become members of the Co-operative. The Board strongly encourages tenants and other people with an interest in the activities of the Co-operative, or in the provision of social and affordable housing more broadly, to join the co-operative.

There is no cost to become a member, and the only formal requirement is that members meet the “active involvement” provisions of our Constitution. This requires members to attend a minimum of one meeting per annum – this would normally be the Annual General Meeting. Members can nominate themselves or other persons for the position of Director and are entitled to vote at the election of directors at the Annual General Meeting which must be held no later than 30 November each year.

Metro is primarily funded by the Communities, Places and Pathways division of the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (formerly the NSW Department of Family and Community Services).

Metro is registered as a Tier 2 Community Housing Provider under the National Regulatory Scheme for Community Housing (NRSCH). This requires us to undertake an annual Compliance Assessment conducted by the independent Registrar of Community Housing. Annual Registration is a requirement for ongoing funding from DCJ.

Our primary purpose is to provide long term, subsidised accommodation to people on low incomes who meet Housing Pathways (NSW Housing Register) eligibility. This requires applicants for social housing in NSW to be Australian citizens, permanent residents or have protected visa status; to reside in NSW; and to meet income eligibility requirements.

Our Strategic Direction

Our strategic direction is set out in our 2018-2023 Strategic Plan which outlines our organisational goals and objectives, our 5 year “targets”, and the activities required to achieve these. The targets for this period are:

- To provide housing for 20 additional households per annum
- To achieve 5% growth in non-leasehold properties
- To achieve 5% growth in operating surpluses
- To diversify our income stream outside of CHLP funding/CHAP rental income.

We will meet these targets primarily through:

- Leasing an average of 14 additional properties (above our funded quota of 261 properties), and providing another 4 social housing accommodation units in a property we own. This allows us to provide short-medium term transitional housing for approximately 18 additional individuals or families for persons in urgent need who are nominated by our support partners.
- Our involvement (in collaboration with Bridge Housing, Women's Housing Company and NEAMI National) in the STEP to Home program which will result in Metro housing an additional 20 permanent tenants before 30 June 2020. This program also provides us with an alternate income source for a three year period from September 2018.
- Redevelopment of land/property owned by Metro which will give us a 5% growth in non-leasehold properties; contribute to increased operating surpluses and provide diversification of our income stream through the provision of "affordable housing".

The Strategic Plan is intended to be a "high-level" aspirational document which is given substance through annual Operational plans which set out the specific activities and tasks to be undertaken to achieve our objectives, and assigns responsibilities and timeframes to each action.

Our Vision:

To strengthen our community by providing more people in need with safe and secure homes.

Our Mission:

- To reduce social and economic disadvantage for people in need by:
- providing housing which is affordable and fit for purpose
- empowering our tenants to participate in and engage with their local communities
- providing a stable platform to allow tenants to make positive choices and enhance their opportunities
- working collaboratively with other housing providers and community support services to help us achieve these aims
- actively engaging in activities which support the social housing sector and the broader objective of improving access to safe, affordable housing for all, and
- Valuing and including people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures and abilities

Our Values:

As an organisation Metro seeks to be

- Professional – Committed, accountable and transparent in all dealings with our tenants and other stakeholders
- Informed – to keep abreast of current developments in the housing and community services sector and use knowledge to inform decision making.
- Service Oriented – to keep tenants at the heart of our decision making.
- Responsive – by trying to better understand the needs of our tenants and how we can assist them to meet those needs
- Fair – to consider only relevant information when making decisions and to be open, honest and appropriate in our communications and interactions with tenants and the general public
- Socially and fiscally responsible – to operate in a financially prudent and efficient manner and to reinvest our resources to benefit current and future tenants

We are committed to

- Ensuring good governance and management – to meet our compliance, reporting and operational responsibilities in a timely and effective manner in the best interests of tenants
- Valuing Feedback – we will seek and value tenant's input and involvement
- Being Innovative – by using technology and innovation to improve our tenants experience and enhance their ability to communicate with us
- Being engaged with and empowering our staff to perform their functions effectively and with pride
- celebrating and sharing our achievements

Our staff

Metro has a staff of 10 (8.9 FTE positions) comprising:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Housing Manager
- Housing Officers (2.8FTE)
- Asset Manager (0.6FTE)
- Administration Manager (includes responsibility for Housing Pathways)
- Administrative Officer/Receptionist (0.7FTE)
- Finance Manager
- Assistant Accountant (0.8FTE)

Our Board of Directors

Our Constitution allows Metro to have a board of between 6-10 directors. The current members of the Metro Board of Directors have qualifications and experience in Law, Accounting, Financial and Strategic management, Human Resource management, Disability Advocacy and Evaluation, and Community Support.

Board members are elected for two year terms. Executive Officers are elected by all directors at the first board meeting following the AGM.

The current executive members are:

- Rick Daly - Chairperson
- Maria Kenny - Treasurer
- David Abello - Deputy Chairperson
- Susan Taylor - Secretary

Directors David Abello, Maria Kenny, Shaun Driscoll and Melinda Tunbridge were re-elected or elected to the Board at the 2019 AGM for a two year term and are therefore not required to stand at this year's AGM.

Directors Malcolm Pollard, Susan Taylor, Enda O'Ceallachain and Rick Daly are required to stand down from the Board, re-nominate and stand for election at this year's AGM.

Executive Directors nominate for, or are nominated by their fellow directors for the four executive positions at the first board meeting held after the AGM. The position of Treasurer requires the position holder to have specialist financial or accounting qualifications.

Director James, Kennedy, our previous Chairperson, resigned from the Board in January 2020 when he relocated overseas with his employer. James held the position of Chairperson for 5 years and we thank him for his contribution and commitment to our work over this time.

Information about the date each Director was appointed and the number of meetings attended in the 2019/20 financial year is contained in the Annual Financial Statement section of the Audit report.

METRO OVERVIEW

How do we operate?

Metro Community Housing receives operational funding from the Department of Communities and Justice through the following programs:

- Community Housing Assistance Program. Metro manages 105 'capital' properties owned by the NSW Land and Housing Corporation. Metro retains the rental income from these properties but has responsibility for all fixed costs (rates, insurance etc.) and for all planned, cyclical and responsive maintenance.
- Community Housing Leasing Program. Metro receives funding to head-lease a minimum of 261 leasehold properties from the private rental market. We then sub-let these properties to tenants who meet Housing Pathways eligibility criteria.
- Crisis Leasehold Program. Metro receives funding to head-lease 5 "crisis" properties for use as transitional housing for individuals and families exiting specialist homeless services and a further 2 properties to house people exiting mental health units for the clients of services nominated by DCJ.

Who do we house?

Metro is a generalist housing association but we have had a long term commitment to house high need tenants nominated by support providers with whom we have a formal partnership. We have set a target of 35% of tenancies being allocated for transitional housing through these partnership arrangements.

We have Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with 20 community based support providers giving them nomination rights to a specific number of tenancies for their clients who are in urgent need of housing. The SLA commits these organisations to the provision of ongoing case management or support for the term of the tenancy to help their client establish and maintain a successful tenancy.

We provide transitional housing for periods of between 3-18 months for persons who are approved on Housing Pathways as Housing General. The term of housing we can offer is determined by the nominating support provider – generally based on their funding arrangements/contracts setting out the maximum period of time they are able to provide ongoing support.

Persons who are Priority approved can remain in their transitional tenancy until they receive a permanent offer of housing. Metro also offers extended terms of tenancy for transitional tenants engaged in full time vocational or tertiary education, and parents of dependent young people completing years 11 and 12 or undertaking vocational or tertiary studies.

Current support partnerships are targeted to:

- People exiting residential drug and alcohol programs
- People exiting the criminal justice system
- Women and their children, and young people (16-25) exiting SHS crisis accommodation
- Transgender and gender diverse persons who are homeless or exiting crisis accommodation.
- People with a moderate psychiatric disability able to live independently
- People with a severe, ongoing psychiatric disability with high support needs

Metro also offers up to 4 “affordable” housing subsidies to tenants who have been able to gain fairly consistent employment but whose income would still present barriers to renting in the private rental market. These subsidies are offered to tenants who are:

- Outside the income eligibility limits for social housing, or
- Approved as “housing general” with little or no prospect of being offered social housing in the foreseeable future, and
- Have a realistic expectation of being able to improve their income through promotion, permanency or greater consistency of employment within a 6-12 month period.

For several years, Metro has received special purpose funding for programs which allow us to provide long term housing to people exiting primary homelessness. These programs aim to provide “wrap-around” services to assist people with a lengthy history of primary homelessness to achieve a sustainable and positive tenancy, improve their health and well-being and develop greater capacity for positive social and community engagement.

These have included earlier programs such as *Platform 70* and *Connect 100* programs in collaboration with Bridge Housing; *STEP to Home* – a 3 year funding program (2018-2021) in collaboration with Bridge Housing, the Women’s Housing Company and NEAMI National to provide long term housing and tailored support for 90 people exiting homeless; and *Together Home* – a 2 year funding program (2020-2022) which provides funding for Metro to head lease 20 properties and contract support services for people who were previously street sleeping but placed into medium term temporary accommodation due to COVID.

Metro has contracted The Salvation Army and Newtown Neighbourhood Centre to provide the support for Together Home participants.

Where do we operate?

Approximately 2/3rds of our properties are located in the inner west metropolitan area - primarily the former Ashfield, Marrickville and Leichhardt Local Government areas (now amalgamated as Inner West Council); with the majority of the balance located in the City of Sydney, and Canterbury-Bankstown Local Government Areas and a small number spread across 12 other local government areas.

Over the last several years we have seen a slight re-orientation of our leasehold portfolio with more properties acquired in middle ring suburbs - allowing us to obtain better value for money in areas slightly further away from the CBD.

Head-leasing properties which are more affordable also means that we have been able to facilitate positive exits from social housing for a number of transitional tenants. Tenants who have demonstrated a positive tenancy history and have gained or increased hours of employment have been able to take over the lease of their property when it is within their affordability. In many cases Metro has been able to negotiate this option with the managing agent or owner at the commencement of our tenancy.

The impacts of COVID 19 on the rental market – particularly since June 2020 - has seen a moderate re-alignment back to acquisitions in the inner metropolitan area (primarily inner west) due to a far more competitive market. The number of former rough sleepers housed through Housing First programs over this period has also impacted - many of these tenants had existing supports in or close to the CBD and we have attempted to acquire properties close to these services.

How are we governed?

Metro is incorporated as a not-for-profit, co-operative of members with Public Benevolent status. Membership of the Co-operative is made up of Metro tenants and other persons with a demonstrated interest in our organisation or in the provision of community housing more generally.

All potential members complete a written application and these are submitted to the Board for approval at the first available board meeting. Membership will only be refused where persons applying have acted in a way contrary to the interests of the co-operative or its members.

All members of the co-operative must meet the “active membership” provisions which require them to attend at least one meeting of the Board per annum. This would normally be the Annual General Meeting. All members of the co-operative are entitled to nominate for, and/or vote at the AGM for appointment as a Director.

The newly elected Board of Directors then call for nominations and elect specific position holders (i.e. Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer) at the first board meeting held after the Annual General Meeting. These position holders are termed “executive” members.

There is also a standing Finance, Audit and Risk Sub-committee comprising 3 directors, one of whom must be the Treasurer. Other sub-committees are formed on an ad-hoc basis in response to specific requirements, i.e. Policy Sub-committee, Complaints Sub-Committee.

What is the role of the Board of Directors?

The role of the Metro Directors is to ensure the good governance and financial viability of the organisation. The Board of Directors are responsible for setting and monitoring Metro's strategic direction and ensuring the organisation is meeting its legal, regulatory and fiduciary responsibilities.

The Board meets every month to monitor the implementation of the plans (Strategic Plan, Business Plan, and Risk Management Plan) which provide the framework for our operations.

At each meeting the Board is presented with information in relation to our key performance indicators in the areas of arrears, asset maintenance, occupancy rates, our financial performance against budget and significant tenancy issues.

The Board is provided with Profit and Loss and Balance Sheet statements for the preceding month and quarter and our accountant prepares Explanatory Notes/Exception Reports in relation to any significant (>5%) variations to budget/other matters of consequence. The Accountant attends several board meetings each year and is available to respond to any board enquiries about our financial position in a timely manner.

The CEO, in consultation with other management staff develops the annual Business Plan with specific actions aligned to each of the objectives in the Strategic Plan, liaises regularly with the Chairperson, attends board meetings and provides the Board with updates related to sector and organisational activities.

The CEO represents Metro on relevant committees/working groups and is responsible for developing and overseeing Service Level Agreements with partner agencies.

External Accountability

Since 2014 all community housing providers have been required to undertake an annual compliance assessment under the National Regulatory Scheme for Community Housing Providers (NRSCH).

Providers are first assessed to determine their "tier" level – this is based on organisational size and risk profile. As a relatively small housing provider which has not undertaken development activity or other ventures which would place pressure on our financial viability, Metro has been assessed as a Tier 2 provider.

Annual compliance reporting requires us to demonstrate that all aspects of our operations meet the standards required by the independent Registrar of Community Housing which is a statutory position.

Reporting focuses particularly on the areas of governance, financial viability and protection of government assets.

This requires us to provide:

- A rolling/annually updated 10 year Asset Management Plan
- A rolling/annually updated 10 year financial modelling analysis
- Board minutes and papers demonstrating that our Strategic, Risk Management and Operational Plans are regularly reviewed and updated in response to changing circumstances.

Metro also provides detailed financial and governance data on an annual basis to the NSW Registry of Co-operatives, the NSW Department of Fair Trading, and the Australian Charities and Not- for- Profit Commission.

As well as annual reporting we provide key performance data in relation to tenancy management, asset maintenance and financial performance on an annual and quarterly basis to the Community Homes and Places Division of the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (our primary funder).

Metro conducts annual tenant surveys which are independently conducted on our behalf by our peak body – the Community Housing Industry Association (NSW). CHIA conducts surveys on behalf of other Community Housing providers and formats are standardised to allow us to benchmark our performance against our peers. Survey results inform and assist us to review and respond to any service delivery issues identified by our tenants.

Our Housing Support Partners

Metro is committed to working effectively with our support partners to provide appropriate assistance to high need clients. Through giving our partners nomination rights to a specific number of properties/tenancies we provide transitional supported accommodation to the clients of these services with a focus on:

- People with a chronic and enduring psychiatric disability who require intensive support
- People with a moderate psychiatric disability who need to demonstrate that they have the capacity to sustain a tenancy (with appropriate supports)
- People exiting from long term primary homelessness (rough sleepers)
- Young people exiting care or crisis services
- Women and their children escaping domestic violence
- Young indigenous families
- People exiting the criminal justice system and alcohol/other drug rehabilitation programs

At Metro we believe strongly that our transitional housing programs complement and support a “Housing First” approach by providing affordable, stable housing to people experiencing short term situational crisis or those who need to demonstrate their ability to sustain a tenancy pending an offer of permanent social housing.

Transitional housing terms of between 6-24 months allows individuals to access appropriate supports to address the factors that led to their becoming homeless in the first instance, and provides these tenants with an opportunity to develop independent living skills which will improve their capacity to gain and sustain a positive tenancy history.

Many of the people who we house in transitional programs would otherwise have experienced a worsening of their health, social connectedness and capacity to engage in education or employment whilst waiting for permanent housing. This is particularly important given that waiting times for the allocation of long term social housing, even for priority approved applicants, continue to lengthen.

As at 30 June 2020 we provided accommodation for 120 transitional tenants who are nominated by and provided with ongoing support by the following specialist support providers.

- The Aboriginal Women and Children's Crisis Service
- Flourish Australia
- Glebe House
- Guthrie House
- Launchpad Youth Community
- Lillian's Place
- NEAMI National
- New Horizons
- Rainbow Lodge
- Salvation Army Homelessness Services Network
- St John of God
- St Vincent De Paul Homelessness Services
- Stride (formerly the Aftercare Association)
- Sydney Local Health District Mental Health Services (incorporating Camperdown, Canterbury, Croydon, and Marrickville Community Mental health teams, the Mobile Assertive Treatment Team, Concord Centre for Mental Health, and the Maree Bashir Unit, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital).
- The Gender Centre
- We Help Ourselves
- Wesley Mission Ashfield Program for Young People
- Youth Off The Streets
- YWCA (Young Women's Support Program; Rapid Rehousing Program)
- Women and Girls Emergency Centre

2020 Tenant Satisfaction Survey

For the last several years, Metro has engaged CHIA NSW (our peak body) to conduct our tenant satisfaction surveys. The survey format was developed by CHIA in consultation with the Community Housing sector.

There are many standardised questions used by all providers. These allow us to demonstrate that Metro meets benchmarks in relation to tenant satisfaction across several areas of our operations as part of the annual compliance assessment process under the National Regulatory Scheme for Community Housing (NRSCH). Metro also uses a number of non-standard questions which provide specific information about our services and programs. Metro receives de-identified data only from CHIA.

Our most recent survey was conducted between 13 January 2020 and 17 February 2020 with all tenants sent a written survey. To ensure tenants have confidence in the confidentiality of their responses, surveys include an addressed, return paid envelope to enable completed surveys to be sent directly to CHIA. Tenants can also complete the survey on-line.

The response rate for this survey was 35%, which is above the NRSCH benchmark of 25% and above the response rate achieved in previous years. For the last survey period 21% of responses were received on-line which is slightly down on the results for the last survey (25%).

Metro met or exceeded the three key NRSCH thresholds, including:

- ✓ Satisfaction with housing services which had a combined satisfaction rate of 94% (the NRSCH threshold is 75%)
- ✓ Satisfaction with property condition which had a combined satisfaction rating of 91% (the NRSCH threshold is 75%), and
- ✓ Satisfaction with the quality of repairs and maintenance which had a combined satisfaction rating of 90% (the NRSCH threshold is 75%)

Other notable results include:

- ✓ 94% were satisfied with their communications with Metro Housing
- ✓ 92% were satisfied that their rights as tenants were upheld by Metro
- ✓ 91% were satisfied with the condition of their property
- ✓ 92% of respondents said they would recommend Metro to family & friends
- ✓ 95% of respondents reported that Metro staff were helpful

Benchmarking Against our Peers

Thirty three (33) Community housing providers currently participate in CHIA NSW's tenant satisfaction benchmarking group – 22 in NSW and 11 across the other states. The group consists of 21 Tier One providers, 10 Tier Two providers and 2 Tier 3 providers.

Metro performed very well against the benchmark indicator set – we were ranked above the benchmark in all 15 categories with scores:

- ✓ 10% above the sector benchmark for Tenant Involvement,
- ✓ 14% above the benchmark for knowledge of appeal processes,
- ✓ 13% above the benchmark for quality of communications,
- ✓ 16% above the benchmark for Complaint Handling,
- ✓ 10% above the benchmark for overall satisfaction and
- ✓ 7% above the benchmark for satisfaction with the condition of their home.

Complaints and Appeals

In regard to awareness of complaint and appeal processes, 78% of tenants reported that they knew how to make a complaint to Metro. Of the 15% (or 22) respondents who indicated they had made a complaint in the last year, 67% were very satisfied/satisfied/neutral about how their complaint was dealt with. This reflects a major improvement over the last few years - in the 2015 survey only 41% of tenants reported understanding the complaints process.

Despite the high number of supported transitional tenants who are housed by us for short periods (between 6-24 months) it was pleasing to see that over 80% of clients who have a support agreements in place indicated a good knowledge of our complaint and appeal processes.

Our website includes information about complaints and appeals, and we publish regular articles in our biannual newsletter on both internal and external complaints and appeals processes. Metro actively utilises the expertise and resources of external bodies such as the Housing Appeals Committee at early stages of the complaint process, and we ensure that tenants are referred to legal and support services to ensure they have effective representation.

Location of Home and Satisfaction with Neighbourhood

Tenants rated satisfaction with the location of their home at 94% (slightly above 2018 result of 92%) with a positive upward trend from 83% in 2014. *Overall Satisfaction with Neighbourhood* increased considerably over the last year with 92% indicating they were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live (up from 83% in the previous survey).

Given that there are many external factors - demolition or construction activity resulting in greater noise/disruption to residents, worsening traffic or public transport access, perceptions of crime/concerns about safety which can negatively influence tenant's perceptions – we consider this to be a very positive result.

Communication

This section is made up of 2 questions relating to communication with tenants. The first question asks how satisfied tenants are with the way Metro provides information and this resulted in scores of 95% satisfied.

The second part is how helpful tenants felt staff were when contacted, with 95% reporting they found staff to be helpful and only 2% stating staff were unhelpful. Overall satisfaction was therefore ranked as 95% satisfied.

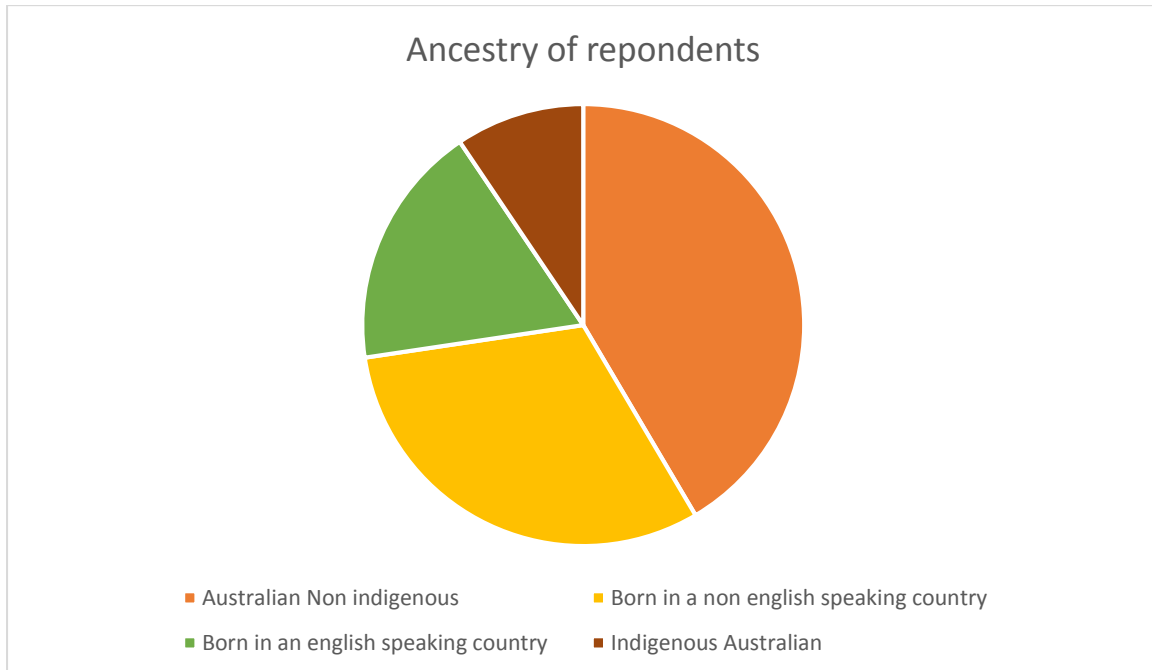
Tenant engagement

This section asks 3 separate questions relating to the degree of engagement tenants have with Metro as an organisation:

1. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Metro involves tenants?
2. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that Metro listens to tenant's views and acts on them?
3. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that tenants are able to influence Metro's decision making?

Overall results for this category at 86% were an improvement over the 2017 ranking of 83% and it is pleasing to note that this area is trending in a positive direction with comparative results being 72% in 2015 and 58% in 2014.

About our respondents



Respondents gave their ancestry as:

- 44% born in Australia and not indigenous
- 33% born in a non-English speaking country (19% stating they speak a language other than English at home).
- 19% born in an English speaking country
- 10% indigenous

This aligns reasonably well with the proportion of Metro tenants in each of these categories with perhaps slight under-representation of tenants from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Statistical Information for 2019/2020

Tenancies as at 30 June 2020: 459

For the year:

- Total tenancies 1/7/19-30/6/20: 591 #
- Total people housed as at 30/6/20: 906 ##
- Total people housed 1/7/19-30/6/20: 1139 ##

This includes 124 tenants who have exited during the period

This includes head tenants, their dependent children, adult/non-dependent children, other extended family members, partners, carers and non-related additional occupants.

TENANCIES AS AT 30
JUNE 2020

459

TOTAL TENANCIES
1/7/19-30/6/20

591

TOTAL PEOPLE
HOUSED AS AT
30/6/20

906

TOTAL PEOPLE
HOUSED 1/7/19-
30/6/20

1139

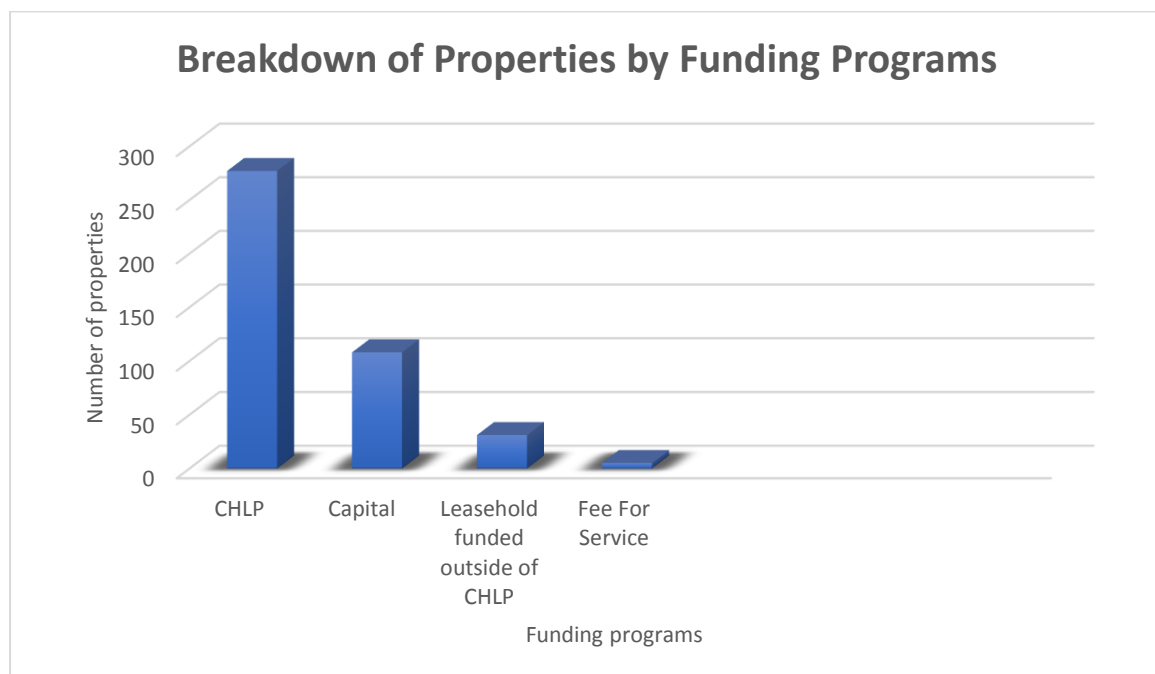
Properties as at 30 June 2020: 423

Consisting of:

- 277 Community Housing Leasehold Program (CHLP) properties rented from the private market. *
- 31 Leasehold properties funded outside of the CHLP program (STEP: 20, Connect 100: 4, Crisis Leasehold: 7)
- 108 Capital properties (i.e. properties owned by the NSW Land and Housing Corporation)**
- 5 Fee for Service properties (properties owned by a government agency or community organisation who pay Metro a fee to provide tenancy/property management on their behalf).

* This is the average number of CHLP properties leased in 2019/2020. Metro is contracted by and receives an annual budget from the Department of Communities and Justice to head lease 261 properties through this program but we consistently lease above this number.

** This includes 2 crisis refuges where Metro does not retain rent paid by residents and maintenance is outsourced by LAHC to another provider.

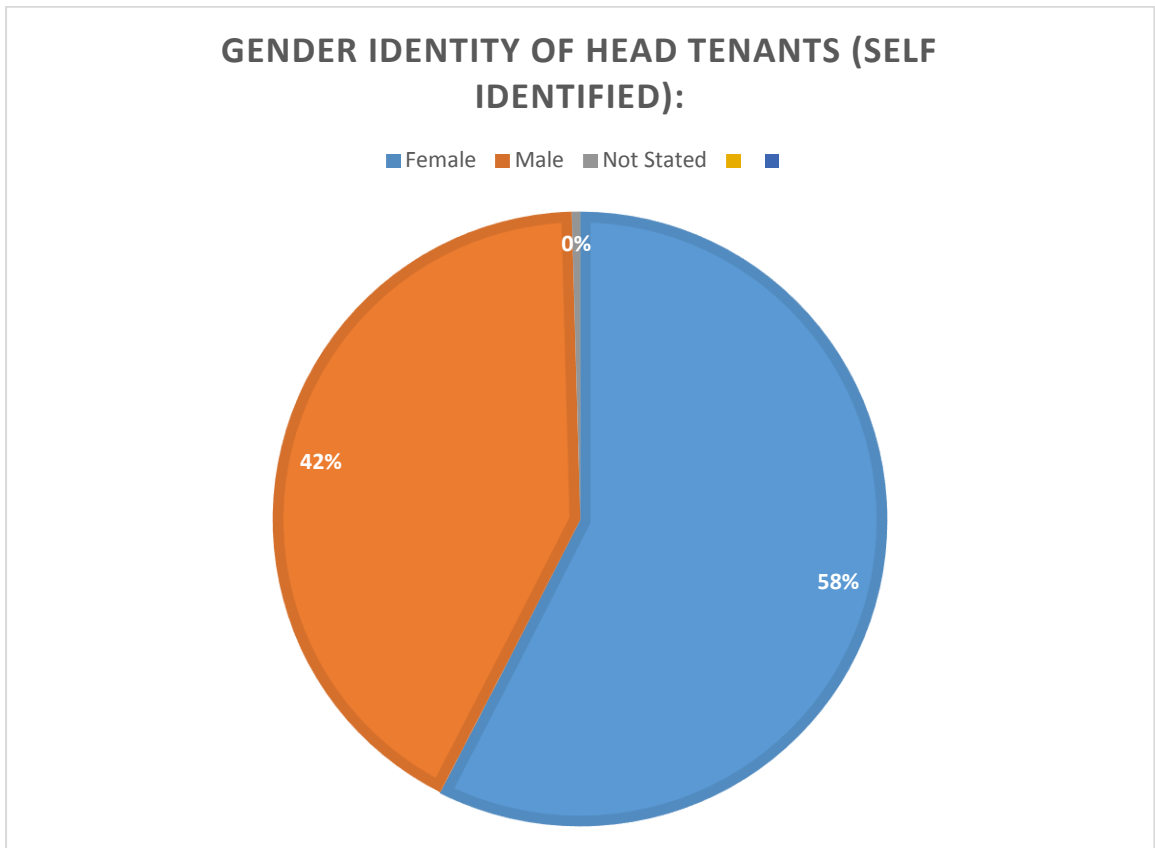


Gender Identity of head tenants (self-identified):

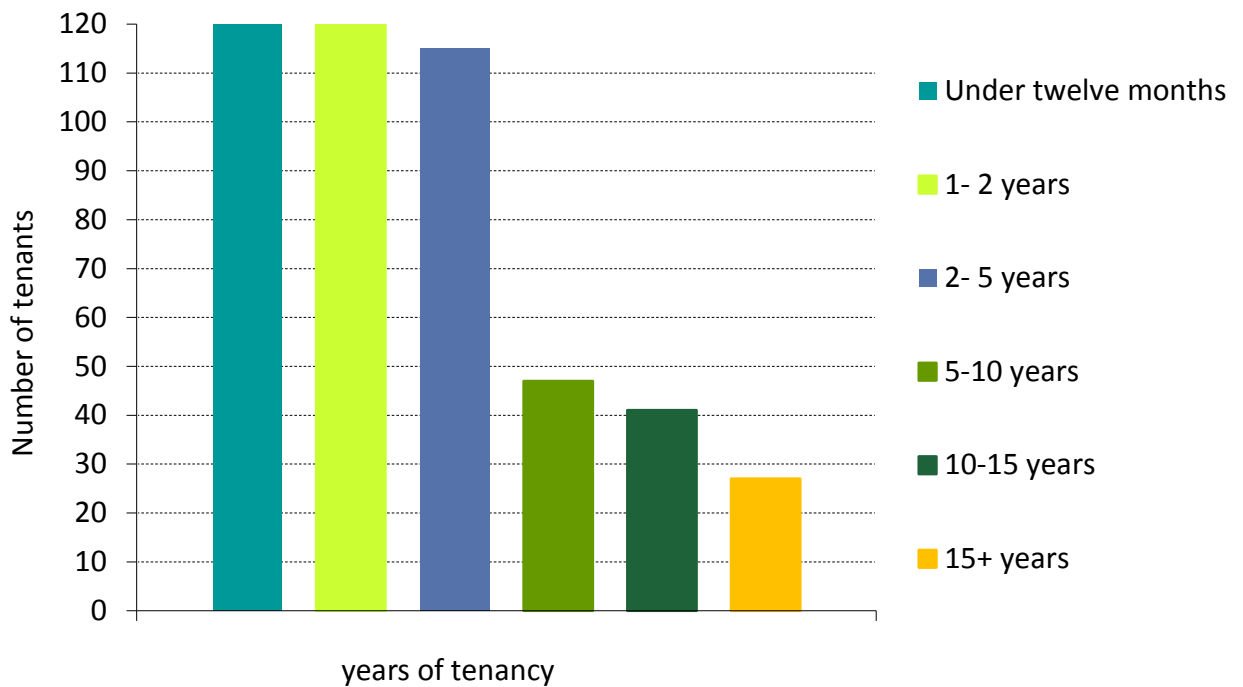
Female: 264

Male: 193

Not Stated: 2



Length of tenancies:



- Under 12 months: 229
- 1-2 years: 144
- 2-5 years: 115
- 5-10 years: 47
- 10-15 years: 41
- Over 15 years: 27

Note:

The majority of tenants in the “under twelve months” category were transitional tenants who have exited. Transitional tenants who are Housing General approved are offered terms of between 3-18 months meaning that properties may be re-tenanted more than once in a twelve month period.

Tenancy Movements

New tenancies for the period:	229
Tenancies ending in the period:	124
Tenant transfers for the period:	53

Notes:

1. New tenancies do not include tenants transferring between Metro Properties
2. In the majority of cases tenancies ending relate to tenants completing transitional housing program. It also includes tenants who voluntarily left, were deceased, abandoned their properties, or had tenancies terminated by an order of NCAT.
3. In descending order, tenants exited to:
 - Permanent social housing (DCJ and Community Housing)
 - The private rental market
 - Reside with family or friends
 - Higher support facilities such as aged care hostels/nursing homes/long term hospitalisation
 - Residential programs for Alcohol and other drug treatment
 - Prison/Immigration detention/deported
 - Moved to regional/country NSW, interstate or overseas
 - Home ownership

Chairperson's Report

This is my first year as Chairperson of Metro and what a momentous year it has turned out to be.

In common with organisations nationwide, due to the COVID pandemic, Metro had to very quickly change the way we did business to allow all staff to work from home, to hold meetings remotely, to cancel non-essential inspections of our properties, to undertake viewings of new leasehold properties via Zoom, and to look at innovative new ways of working and supporting tenants.

Our Intelligent Messaging system which allows us to send bulk SMSs to tenants was invaluable in keeping our tenants up to date with changes in our operations and contact arrangements; information about local COVID testing sites and links to relevant websites, advising aged/physically ill tenants about initiatives such as timed priority access to supermarkets or home delivery services and letting tenants know about sources of emergency assistance for food, utilities, and personal protective equipment.

The initial period before the Federal Government introduced the JobKeeper payment was an anxious time for many of our tenants who had lost employment or hours of employment and staff spent a lot of time contacting and reassuring tenants that their tenancy would not be impacted by their loss of income.

We were very pleased to see that the government eventually responded to the need to stimulate the weakened economy by introducing the fortnightly JobSeeker supplement and providing the two lump sum payments of \$750.00 to people receiving Parenting, Disability and Aged pensions.

For many of our tenants who had previously been on Newstart, they now had an income that was slightly above, rather than significantly below the poverty line. We hope, but are not overly optimistic, that the Government will not revert to the inadequate pre-COVID rates when determining future JobSeeker payments.

COVID has had other impacts on workload for Metro – staff report receiving increased numbers of nuisance and annoyance complaints from, and about our tenants – reflecting both the higher than normal numbers of people at home all day and higher levels of anxiety and distress in the broader community.

One of the few positive impacts has been the downward pressure on rental prices and the greater availability of properties in what have been high demand markets. This has allowed us to acquire better quality properties for equivalent prices and to lease additional properties within our annual CHLP budget.

This has given us an opportunity to partner with the Salvation Army to offer a number of “affordable” tenancies to clients of their service who had immigrated to Australia on

“partner visas”, and then experienced the breakdown of that relationship (primarily due to domestic and family violence).

Whilst able to financially support themselves beforehand, many were in casualised, short term positions, and they were among the many thousands of people who lost employment or experienced a significant decline in income due to COVID, but were ineligible for any Commonwealth benefits. Metro has agreed to subsidise a minimum of four tenancies for up to six months.

Metro has also been involved in the state wide roll out of the *Together Home* program which commenced on 1 July 2020 to provide long term housing to people who had been sleeping rough when COVID struck, but had been assisted into temporary accommodation by the Department of Communities and Justice in response to the challenges of keeping this cohort safe during a pandemic.

Metro received funding for 20 accommodation and support packages to allow us to head lease properties and contract specialist support services for a period of 2 years. Metro has engaged the Salvation Army and Newtown Neighbourhood Centre to provide the wrap around support for our Together Home tenants.

This follows on from our long term involvement in “housing first” programs including *Platform 70*, *Connect 100* and most recently *STEP To HOME*. In collaboration with Bridge Housing, the Women’s Housing Company and NEAMI National we have met the milestone of providing long term housing and support to 90 people exiting primary homelessness with very positive rates of tenancy sustainment.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the management team and staff at Metro for their contributions during these difficult and anxious times – particularly those staff managing working from home whilst “home schooling” young children; dealing with absence from, and anxiety about, their family overseas, or living with health issues which made them more vulnerable.

The ability of our staff to respond so effectively and empathically is not a surprise. In what seems like a lifetime ago now, Metro undertook our (slightly delayed) annual tenant survey in January/February 2020. A summary of the outcomes is outlined in this Annual report but I just wanted to highlight the excellent results achieved then – particularly in the areas of communication and service delivery and acknowledge everyone’s efforts.

Rick Daly

Chairperson

Treasurer's Report

This is my second Treasurer's report and I am pleased to be able to again report to you on our positive financial performance for the 2019/2020 financial year.

As Treasurer I can confirm that Metro is a focused and financially strong organisation, which takes seriously its obligations to our funding and regulatory bodies and to the taxpayers of NSW to run a fiscally responsible organisation whilst also providing high quality, responsive services to our tenants.

METRO's healthy cash reserves and assets will ensure our ongoing financial viability and continuity of operations whilst giving us the opportunity to meet our strategic objective to house more people in need.

Highlights of our operating performance for this financial year include:

- Total income increased by 5.2% from the previous year to \$11.89 million
- Income from grants increased by 7.8% from the previous year to \$7.00million.
- Rental income increased by 3.7% to \$4.62 million.
- Total expenses for the year were \$10.53 million, up by 6.6% from \$9.88 million in 2019 with rent payments for the year increasing by 3.4% to \$8.05 million
- We achieved an overall operating surplus of \$1.36 million.

Highlights of our balance sheet position as at the end of the financial year include:

- Total assets at the end of 2019/20 were \$17.58 million versus liabilities of \$6.23 million, resulting in net assets of \$11.35 million
- Current assets increased to \$8.25 million in 2019/20 from \$7.42 million in the prior year.
- Cash reserves increased to \$7.97 million in 2019/20 from \$6.97 million in the prior year.

As shown in the Profitability Margin graph below which shows the ratio of Earnings Before Interest, Tax, Depreciation and Amortisation over the last 5 years, these results are consistent with Metro's strong financial performance over time.

Profitability Margin

- 2016 – 12%
- 2017 – 14%
- 2018 – 13%
- 2019 - 12%
- 2020 – 11%

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank the METRO management team for their strong leadership and prudent financial management.

Maria Kenny

Treasurer

Metro Community Housing Co-operative Ltd:

Incorporation status: Co-operative, Public Benevolent status

Registration status: Registered as Tier 2 Housing Provider under NRSCH

ABN: 85775722 514

Location: Suite 208, (L2) 1 Erskineville Rd, Newtown 2042

Postal Address: PO Box 1198, Newtown, 2042

Telephone: 02 9565 4599

Office hours: 10.00am -4.30pm Mon, Tues, Thursday; 1.00pm-4.30pm Wed.
Friday by appointment.

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This report can be downloaded from our website: www.metrohousing.org.au.

To request a hard copy please call us on (02) 9565 4599, or e-mail
reception@metrohousing.org.au.

The Metro directors and staff acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we work on and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded and acknowledge the continuing inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a direct result of invasion.

Thank you to all who have contributed to the co-operative over the last year!