



Link Housing's
**Tenant Engagement and
Community Development Strategy**

2015-2018



FormingLinks 





“FormingLinks; By working together we will make a lasting difference to the lives of the people who live in our homes and the surrounding communities.”

Contents

CEO'S WELCOME	3
TAG WELCOME	4
ABOUT LINK	5
LINKS' TENANTS	6
MEASURING SUCCESS	7
THE 4 PILLARS	
• PEOPLE	8
• PARTNERSHIPS	10
• PROPERTY	12
• PERFORMANCE	14

CEO's Welcome



Our new tenant engagement and community development strategy – ‘FormingLinks’, has been developed in partnership with tenants for tenants. In fact, more than 300 tenants across Link Housing were directly involved in developing this strategy.

I want Link Housing to facilitate outcomes for and with people. By listening to our stakeholders and then acting to make a difference, this vision will create not only a diverse range of housing solutions, but also pathways for our tenants to be connected to jobs, education, training, health and social interaction opportunities.

‘FormingLinks’; by working together we will make a lasting difference to the lives of the people who live in our homes and the surrounding communities. By developing personal and organisational relationships in our communities, we will listen, influence, identify, and deliver local priorities.

Our strategy builds on our existing community services, tenant engagement programs and resources to deliver service improvements and initiatives that can contribute to a positive change for tenants and their families.

Link Housing Staff have played their part in developing new ways to form links to both our tenants and the wider community. Working together, tenants and staff can ensure that excellent services are provided by Link Housing. Tenants should be able to inspect Link’s services and see clear lines of accountability and communication. Canvassing tenants’ opinions and getting our services right, will in turn, help our organisation innovate and grow, so that we can provide even more homes for people in housing need.

Social engagement and social support are widely

regarded as being important determinants of health, happiness and wellbeing. Participation is also found to be important to health and well being later in life. With over 47% of our tenants living alone and many of whom are elderly or have a disability, encouraging participation and ‘FormingLinks’ is a key criteria for us as an organisation.

Currently one in ten tenants actively engages with us. By the end of 2018 we plan to increase the number of tenants actively engaged to one in five tenants. Tenants have told us that they want:

- to be connected to their local community and have access to support and services;
- opportunities to improve their social and economic well-being;
- to live in safe homes and neighbourhoods;
- to get involved in a way that suits them to help shape our services

Our ‘FormingLinks’ strategy directly relates to our Strategic Direction and outlines the actions we will undertake to deliver on our promise of a better future for those in need through safe and affordable housing.

Thank you for all your feedback and support, you have helped shape our strategy. By increasing opportunities and ‘FormingLinks’, we will make a lasting difference to all our tenants’ lives.

Andrew McNulty, CEO Link Housing



Tag Statement

“I believe that TAG and Link Housing work in partnership and feel that the work TAG does is going to improve the lives of all Link residents”

*– Michael Bolton,
Tenant Advisory
Group member.*

This new strategy marks the start of a very exciting time for Link Housing and its tenants. FormingLinks provides tenants greater access to services and support. It also offers wider opportunities to enrich Link’s tenants and their families in forms of wider social engagement.

The TAG (Tenant Advisory Group) is a diverse group of committed tenants who are dedicated to ensuring that the quality of life of all Link Housing tenants is broadened beyond the scope of ‘housing provision’. The committee members have welcomed the opportunity to discuss the passage and direction of this significant strategy. TAG is proud to see the level of commitment assigned to Links partnership with tenants, an initiative that seeks to improve aspects of social and economic well-being for all.

FormingLinks provides for the continuing challenge of seeking improvement in service delivery, structure and importantly communication and it shows Link Housing’s commitment to pursue forms of engagement and social development.

TAG hopes that tenants will be enriched by these opportunities to become involved and engage with the broader community.

TAG Committee



About Link

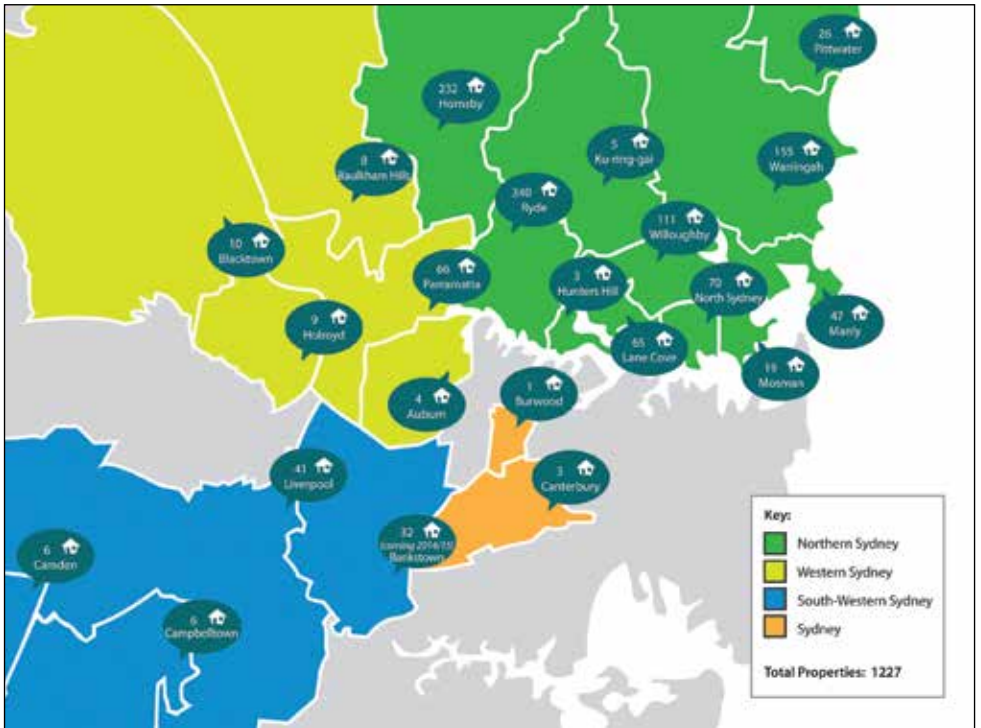
Link Housing Ltd (Link Housing) is a Tier 1 Registered Community Housing Provider (CHP) operating primarily in northern Sydney NSW. We are one of the oldest not-for-profit community housing providers in NSW having been formed in 1984. We have a history of providing affordable rental accommodation to people on very low to moderate incomes.

Link Housing is the successful amalgamation of 5 smaller housing providers. Beginning with a handful of properties in 1984, the organisation now manages more than 1,250 dwellings across 21 Local Government Areas. We have an independent skills-based Board,

and the skills and financial capacity to deliver new ideas, concepts, and growth.

We aim to give a compassionate, client centred service for people who are at risk of homelessness or unable to afford market priced private rental in the Sydney Region.

In our 2014 annual tenant satisfaction survey, 86% of our tenants said they were satisfied or very satisfied with Link Housing’s services over the year. Their response demonstrates how well staff and tenants have worked together to build strong relations, often during difficult times in the lives of our tenants.



Number of
people who live
in our homes
2382

28% are
sole parents

59% who live
in our homes are
female

19% are linked up
with a support **provider**

51% speak
another language at home

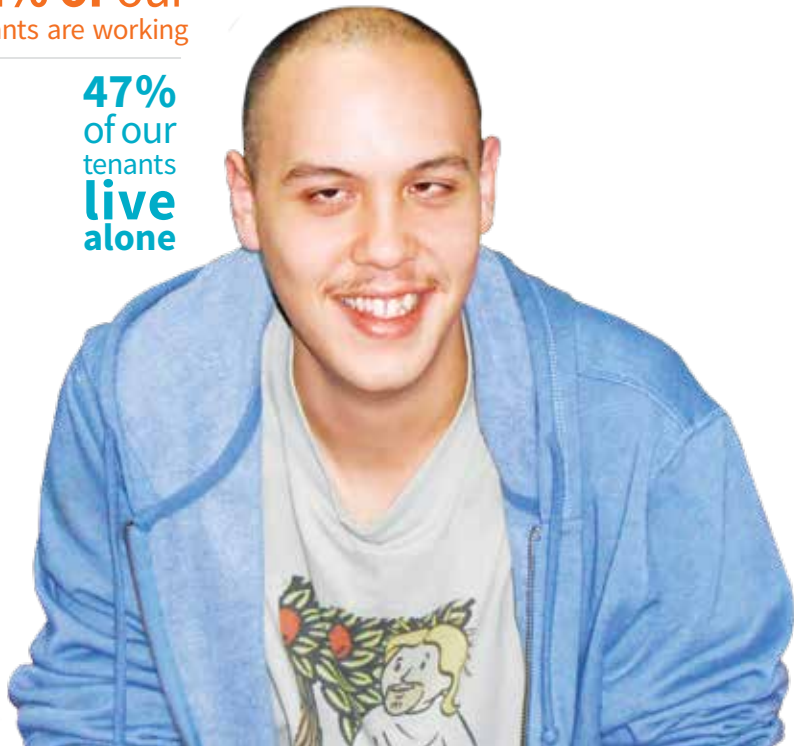
47% of
our tenants
have a disability

46%
of our
head
tenant
is over
55
years
old

35% who live in
our homes are
children

22% of our
tenants are working

47%
of our
tenants
live
alone



Monitoring for success

In order to make sure that this Tenant Engagement and Community Development strategy reflects what the tenants really want and need from Link, tenants have been closely involved in the development of this strategy.

We took the views of a wide range of tenants and staff about what the strategy should do; through TAG and regional workshops, website, the tenant party, specific survey questions and staff consultation. As part of the development we also looked at good practice from other organisations, including Community Housing Providers in Australia and similar organisations from the UK and Canada.

It is important that we track our progress against this strategy, so that we can learn what actions work, what we can do more of and what we need to push harder to achieve.

To ensure we deliver, we will report six monthly to both Link Housing’s Board and to the TAG. We will also report annually to all our tenants through our newsletter and annual report. Tenants can track how we are doing by following our progress on our website.

The key performance indicators we will be tracking are:

PEOPLE	Satisfaction with options for getting involved in the community	85% tenant satisfaction
	Sense of community in the area in which the tenants live	85% tenant satisfaction
PARTNERSHIPS	Satisfaction with the support/advice provided by Link around training, employment, health & well-being	85% tenant satisfaction
PROPERTY	Satisfaction with security of your home and neighbourhood as a place to live	85% tenant satisfaction
	Satisfaction with neighbourhood as a place to live	85% tenant satisfaction
PERFORMANCE	Satisfaction that tenants views are taken into account	85% tenant satisfaction
	Satisfaction that tenants are able to influence decisions	

The support of Link’s Board and Management Team has been excellent and endorses that Link really does want to make a better future for people in need. This strategy will support the vision and will place Link well, to be known for excellence in resident engagement and community development.



“Link Housing has been a great help for our family so that we can have a stable home to stay and concentrate on work and study”

Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2014

1. PEOPLE - Forming Links between our tenants and the wider community and also with each other

Link tenants live in diverse neighbourhoods. We re-let about 10% of our homes each year, with many tenants having to move into a new neighbourhood and away from families, friends and existing support networks.

From our 2014 Tenant Satisfaction Survey, 72% of our tenants were satisfied with their options for getting involved in the community and 75.5% felt there was a sense of community in the area they lived. We want to increase these to at least 85% by 2018.

Social engagement and social support are widely regarded as being important determinants of health, happiness and wellbeing. Participation is also found to be important to health and wellbeing later in life. With over 47% of our tenants living alone and many of whom are elderly or have a disability, encouraging participation with the local community is a key criterion for us.

Tenants would like to be connected to their local community and have access to support and services. They would also like to be connected to each other and to be part of Link's community. To do this we will form links to the local community either through signposting or promoting events. We will also host events for people to get to know and be involved in the Link community.

People

What we will do

Year 1 - 2015-16	Year 2 - 2016-17	Year 3 - 2017-18	Outcome
We will build area portfolios for five areas which will be given to new tenants as an orientation to the local community.	We will complete the area portfolios for all areas we operate in	We will continue to deliver the whole of the tenant engagement and building communities strategy, whilst carrying out a comprehensive review about the effectiveness of the strategy. We will use the review to inform the way in which tenant engagement needs to be delivered from 2018	Increased satisfaction with moving into a new home and neighbourhood in which the tenants live
We will build a volunteer database of both tenants and staff willing to give time, knowledge, and support to help other tenants	We will monitor the success to date and where possible widen the database to include non-tenants as volunteers		Increased access to support
We will Start an Art Exhibition – what does a home mean to you. Opening this up to the wider community – raising awareness of social housing	We will monitor the success of the competition and roll out for a second year again promoting housing in some form		Increased awareness of social housing
We will start up a Social Club providing access to our tenants to at least three social events at reduced prices	We will monitor the success of the social club and increase the number of activities		Increased satisfaction with options to get involved
We will provide a calendar of events throughout the year and publish all events in our newsletters and website	We will create a new calendar of events and encourage tenants to set up their own run events which we will also promote		Increased satisfaction with options to get involved
We will host a reconciliation event during reconciliation week for all our tenants	We will continue our support to reconciliation week in Australia		Increased cultural awareness
For new groups of tenants via new management agreements or developments, we will actively put in place a series of events to introduce them to the local and link community	We will review with any new groups of tenants their satisfaction against actions taken and amend as necessary for future groups		Satisfaction with Link as a Landlord
We will start to develop a LinkFood recipe book, with recipes donated by tenants	We will monitor the success of the book and continue to promote		Increased awareness of Link Housing

Partnerships

2. PARTNERSHIPS - FormingLinks to help our tenants improve their social and economic well-being, and create opportunities for training, employment, well-being and health.

Many tenants would like the opportunity to build on their skills, create opportunities for their children or use their skills to contribute to the community. Tenants would like to know how to improve their personal health, social and economic well-being.

To date 19 tenants have taken advantage of our scholarships. By the end of 2018 we plan to increase the number of tenants who have taken advantage of scholarships or access to sports, health and wellbeing programs by expanding what the scholarship can be used for, by increasing tenants' access to technology and by providing links to employment through partnerships.

Training and support for tenants has never been more important. Having well trained tenants will help tenants get involved with improving the services that are important to them accessing employment.

By 2018 we wish to see 85% tenant satisfaction with the opportunities provided by Link for training, employment, health and well-being.

“Link Housing are doing an excellent job and should be highly recommended”

Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2014



Partnerships

What we will do

Year 1 - 2015-16	Year 2 - 2016-17	Year 3 - 2017-18	Outcome
We will review our scholarship program to increase access to sports, health & well being programs	We will monitor the applications and track advertisement of the scheme	We will continue to deliver the whole of the tenant engagement and building communities' strategy, whilst carrying out a comprehensive review about the effectiveness of the strategy. We will use the review to inform the way in which tenant engagement needs to be delivered from 2018	Increased tenant number of scholarships awarded
We will increase our tenants access to technology through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to PC at our office • Interest free loans for a laptop 	We will continue to advertise this promotion and track improvement in increased access to technology		Increased tenant access to technology
We will research options for increasing tenant's access to the internet	We will implement options if viable to do so		Increased tenant access to the internet
We will provide Links to training for computers for tenants over 55 years	We will monitor and encourage more involvement by our over 55yr tenants		Increased tenant access to technology for the over 55s
We will build partnerships with employment and job seeker companies to link tenants to employment opportunities, involving employment skills training	We will continue to monitor and build new partnerships		Increased tenant access to employment
We will design and launch a tenant training program aimed at improving participation in a committee	We will design and launch specific training on life skills as part of the tenant training program		Increased number of tenants attending training courses
We will raise awareness of support available drug and alcohol, mental health, financial advice, health advice and property maintenance	Continue to update our website and raise awareness through social media		Increased tenant access to information and support
We will build partnerships with microfinance enterprises and signpost tenants to them	Monitor the success and continue promotion		Increased tenant access to funding for business opportunities
We will build relationships with social enterprises to link tenants to training and work opportunities	We will monitor the effectiveness of the relationships and promote the opportunities to tenants		Tenants involved in social enterprise opportunities

Property

3. PROPERTY - FormingLinks to create great places for our tenants to live in, sustaining tenancies, safe homes & neighbourhoods and access to support.

Around 58% of our tenants live in a block with other Link tenants, and further 42% live in mixed neighbourhoods alongside renters and private owners. 35% of our properties are also close to a concentration of social housing, such as Naraweena, Hornsby & Ryde.

Our tenants have told us that they want to feel safe where they live and that they want to see opportunities for tenants to be involved in maintaining the neighbourhoods, so that they feel they have more ownership of the neighbourhood.

In our 2014 tenant satisfaction survey 76.6% of tenants felt secure where they lived. We wish to increase this to 85% by 2018. 83% of our tenants are happy with their neighbourhoods; we wish to increase this to at least 85% by 2018.

“ I have only ever had good experiences with the staff at Link Housing. I found staff to be friendly, approachable and professional. I know I am one of the lucky ones to have a home through Link Housing ”

Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2014



Property

What we will do

Year 1 - 2015-16	Year 2 - 2016-17	Year 3 - 2017-18	Outcome
We will continue with our successful gardening competitions. In addition we will add in a new category to encourage new gardeners to get involved	We will monitor the success of the gardening competitions and involvement from new gardeners	We will continue to deliver the whole of the tenant engagement and building community's strategy, whilst carrying out a comprehensive review about the effectiveness of the strategy. We will use the review to inform the way in which tenant engagement needs to be delivered from 2018	Increase in tenants getting involved in their gardens
We will develop the level of tenant influence in all stages of procurement and monitoring of contractors	We will build up the pool of trained tenants involved in procurement		Contracts are awarded with tenant involvement in the process
We will initiate a Community Fund whereby tenants can access funds for projects that will make a difference to the community	We will monitor the funds and projects being allocated and continue to advertise the funds available		Increased satisfaction with the community
For new developments we will commit to engaging with tenants or prospective tenants and the local community on design and where possible a choice of colour scheme.	We will review our commitment and/or any new developments and check what works/ doesn't work		Tenants are engaged with the development process. Local community is engaged with developments
We will invite the police to Regional Meetings to address local community concerns	We will review the police attendance and improve /change as appropriate		Increased tenant satisfaction with security of the neighbourhood
We will initiate neighbourhood watch/buddy system in two areas	We will review and implement in additional areas as required		Increased tenant satisfaction with security of the home





4. PERFORMANCE - FormingLinks to reach our tenants – to create opportunities to get involved in a way that suits them and actively encourages tenants from diverse communities to get involved.

Today, about one in ten Link tenants play a part in shaping the services that are important to them. We want to improve this number. By the end of 2018 we plan to increase the number of tenants actively engaged to one in five through surveys, attending focus groups, consultation events, being on committees, panels, forums, taking part in service inspections, mystery shopping and via the online forum.

From our 2014 tenant satisfaction survey 66.1% of our tenants were satisfied with their ability to influence decisions in the organisation. This was an increase of 43.8% in the past year, however we wish to increase this to 85% by 2018.

It's important that the engaged tenants accurately reflect the diverse population in their area. This means that Link will actively seek to engage more young tenants and other under-represented groups.

We will ensure that tenants have opportunities to participate in and challenge the services that they receive from Link and that there is clear and well-published involvement structures in place for them to do this.

We will take advantage of both new and old methods of communication to encourage as many tenants as possible to get involved and share their experiences, comments and suggestions with us.

Performance

What we will do

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Outcome
We will promote tenant involvement through a suite of leaflets aimed at recruitment of more tenants to get involved	We will continue to promote tenant engagement and keep tenants informed of progress	<p>We will continue to deliver the whole of the tenant engagement and building communities strategy, whilst carrying out a comprehensive review about the effectiveness of the strategy.</p> <p>We will use the review to inform the way in which tenant engagement needs to be delivered from 2018</p>	Increased number of tenants involved
We will interview under-represented groups of tenants to identify how we can encourage them to get involved	We will implement a plan to ensure involved opportunities meet the needs of the tenants from under-represented groups and measure effectiveness		There is an increase in the number of tenants involved from under-represented groups
We will improve online communication such as 'You Said, We Did' pages on the website. Work with tenants to improve usability and promote the online forum	We will continue to monitor and improve the website with tenants input		Tenants are more satisfied that they are informed and that their views are taken into account
We will implement an initiative to improve tenant engagement, such as rewards points	We will monitor the success of the initiative and report back to tenants		Increased number of tenants involved using a variety of means
We will develop new tenant engagement performance indicators and ways to measure value for money	We will provide regular reports to TAG on our performance		Accurate numbers for tenant engagement and ability to show what works
We will continue to promote TAG and are ensure they are involved in setting the vision and strategic direction for Link and monitoring our performance	We will continue to promote TAG and there governance involvement		Increased tenants involvement in TAG

2015-2018



Link Housing Ltd

Level 12, 815 Pacific Highway, Chatswood NSW 2067
PO Box 5124 Chatswood West NSW 2067

Tel: (02) 9412 5111 Fax: (02) 9412 2779
www.linkhousing.org.au