



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



How we can help

2022-23 Annual Report



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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 past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

About Link Wentworth

Link Wentworth is one of the largest 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 10,000 clients in 6,400 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 needs - from homelessness services based on Housing First principles to Disability Housing including Specialist Disability Accommodation.

With strong leadership, commercial management and governance, our organisation has grown through outcomes-focused mergers, as well as successful tendering for the NSW Government's Social Housing Management Transfer (SHMT) 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 integration, systems, processes and culture – laying the right foundations to support continued growth to meet the demand for social and affordable housing.

Our capacity for asset growth given our strong cash position and zero debt is unmatched, and our capability is demonstrated by our emerging track record in delivering new social

and affordable housing projects, in partnership and through innovative means. Our current unencumbered financial position will enable us to take advantage of high-quality growth opportunities, reflected in 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, Mission and Values

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



Chair and CEO's Message

As we reflect on the past year, as Chair and CEO of Link Wentworth we do so with a deep sense of pride and accomplishment. The journey we have embarked upon as Link Wentworth has been transformative, marked by significant milestones and a steadfast commitment to our values.

A renewed focus this year has been putting our customers first. From organisation-wide training in customer service, through to bringing to life our new Customer Service Charter, we consistently put our customers at the centre of all our decision-making. The theme of this year's report "How we can help" is the central tenant of the Charter. One of our Tenant Advisory Group and RAP Advisory Group members, Lynne, spoke to us about how these four simple words meant so much to her when she first came to Link Wentworth. While it made her cry when one of our staff asked her how they could help, it gave her an immense sense of hope and relief in a time of great personal distress and the reassurance that someone really cared. Embedding a culture of service in all our relationships is key. From helping someone

in housing stress, supporting our colleagues through to helping government achieve their goals in growing social and affordable housing, Link Wentworth is here to help.

Over the past year, we have also focussed on refining the systems and processes implemented during a period of profound change. This phase of integration required meticulous attention to detail and a collective effort to ensure alignment of our operations. The successful completion of this phase is a testament to our team's resilience and dedication, making us stronger as an organisation.

We find ourselves entering a new phase, one that holds immense promise and potential. The emergence of federal and state governments with an emphasis and commitment on delivering social and affordable housing, presents





us with a unique and a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make a lasting impact on the communities we serve. While we are faced with a housing crisis, with ambition, dedication and commitment we believe that collectively we can resolve this.

Delivering more homes

Delivering more homes to people who need housing that is secure and affordable was one of the drivers to become Link Wentworth. Over the past year we have focussed on attracting more grant funding, winning more tenders and significantly delivered our first development as Link Wentworth in the Hawkesbury.

To achieve our mission, we have focussed on the spectrum of housing need and scale—from small developments to provide a safe haven for women and children escaping family violence through to being part of one of four consortia selected by the NSW Government to participate in Request for Proposal Stage 1 of the Waterloo Renewal Project, one of the largest urban renewal projects in the country.

Looking to the future we are ready and willing to work with government and the private sector to help deliver more homes, improve the planning system, streamline processes, develop long-term policy and set the groundwork to deliver a pipeline of good quality social and affordable housing for years to come.

Providing quality services

After the challenging years of COVID-19 lockdowns and social isolation, we were pleased to once again be able to visit tenants face-to-face and build strong connections with our communities.

The year also brought in new challenges with the growing housing crisis increasing demand for housing and support. Notably, our teams have reported that people who would never have needed support previously are now approaching us for help with maintaining their tenancy and connecting with other services and support.



To better support our tenants, we introduced a range of initiatives aimed at improving health, wellbeing and social outcomes. These included service pop-ups with our key operational teams and maintenance contractors, where tenants could speak directly to our contractors, report a repair, and have minor work completed onsite. Our Linking Communities Placemaking Model was launched to provide a consistent approach to how we deliver coordinated community-led service provision. The model informs collaboration between Link Wentworth and local partners such as community services, police, and health.

Advocating for greater change

As one of the largest Community Housing Providers in the state, we have a responsibility to be a leader within our industry and draw attention to the need for more social and affordable housing to address the current housing crisis. We held several high-profile events, attracting wide media coverage to highlight this message.

Following a study tour of UK housing associations in late 2022, Link Wentworth released an Insights from London report and accompanying video at NSW Parliament on 13 June 2023. The report launched by the new NSW Minister

for Housing, Rose Jackson outlined key recommendations for local, state, and federal governments to help ease the housing crisis across Australia.

Our biennial fundraiser, Home Sweet was held in March 2023 for the first time since the COVID pandemic. As well as providing a platform to highlight the need for action to address growing homelessness in our community, the charity sleepover raised \$170,000 for our partners The Burdekin Association and Women's Community Shelters as well as Link Wentworth's Scholarship program.

Increasing our effectiveness

This year marked the completion of the integration program with this extensive program of work achieved on time and on budget. We have embarked on an ongoing program of work to identify processes and procedures across the entire organisation where improvements and efficiencies can be made.

Our new digital strategy will allow us to plan our digital journey over the next five years, focussing on performing functions faster and positioning us for further success. Cybersecurity was a high priority throughout the integration process and continues to underpin our process uplift strategies.

Our commitment to our Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles remains a high priority. We have completed a rigorous materiality assessment, which lays the groundwork for our ESG Framework and reporting mechanisms. This framework will guide us, as we navigate complexities and take opportunities to contribute positively to the greater good.

Employer of choice

Being an employer of choice within the community housing sector is a key strategic objective. We strive to foster a workplace where staff feel connected with each other and our organisation's vision, mission, and values. Supporting staff with the skills and confidence they need to do their job well is critical to Link Wentworth's success.

We invested in further developing a positive culture at Link Wentworth with staff and Board participating in a culture survey and subsequent workshops to develop culture action plans across the organisation.

We held our first Link Wentworth Residential Conference for all staff in September 2022 in the Blue Mountains. With the theme, Unlocking Potential, staff had the opportunity to collaborate, build trust and have fun, while also immersing themselves in the Link Wentworth 2022-25 Strategy.



The past year saw a number of firsts in our journey to being an employer of choice, including the launch of our first Diversity and Inclusion Policy, achieving White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation and establishing a Learning and Development Strategy to enhance individual and organisational capability.

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 carries no debt, and for the year, reported revenue of \$120.7m, net annual operating surplus excluding assets revaluation of \$4.5m and net assets of \$296.5m.

Our thanks

Our sincere gratitude goes to our residents, particularly those on our Tenant Advisory Group who actively participated in meetings and newly established sub-committees providing us with valuable advice and feedback to improve our services for all residents. We are inspired by your stories and resilience.

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.

We would also like to acknowledge our sector colleagues and partners. We are truly inspired and privileged to work in such a collegiate industry where we are all aligned to make a positive difference in peoples' lives.

Finally, we would like to thank the Board, Executive and remarkable staff of Link Wentworth. As we look ahead, we are energized about the possibilities that lie before us. With the dedication of our team, the support of our partners, and a shared vision of a better future, we are confident in our ability to make a real difference and create more affordable and secure homes for people who need them most.

Mike Allen, PSM

Chair, Link Wentworth

Andrew McNulty

Chief Executive Officer

The time is now – how we can help

An opinion piece by Andrew McNulty, CEO of Link Wentworth



What a difference a year makes. This time last year, the Federal Government's \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) was one of the signature policy platforms of the newly elected Albanese Labor government. As I write this today, this legislation has been passed through the Senate. Following the protracted negotiations with the Greens we are seeing an even greater investment in social housing, the largest ever from government.

At a state level, we now have a newly elected Labor government with a strong and public commitment to growing social and affordable housing, spearheaded by a new dynamic Minister for Housing, The Hon. Rose Jackson MLC. This time last year Mike Allen, Link Wentworth Chair, Margaret Maljkovic, Chief Customer Officer and I were on a study tour of London housing associations with the then opposition spokesperson for housing, Rose Jackson. A lot has changed in one year!

Politically, the stars have aligned, and we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to invest in social and

affordable housing for now and the future. A key to the future growth of social and affordable housing is ensuring that the community housing provider (CHP) sector is set up now for the future. During our study tour in London, we got a glimpse of what that future could look like in Australia. The Australian CHP sector is where the UK sector was about 15 – 20 years ago. After decades of investment in the growth of housing associations in the UK, there are now major organisations like our tour hosts, London & Quadrant and Peabody, that develop and build over 8,000 properties per year—nearly a quarter of the total target of the HAFF over 5 years! So how did they get there?

In the UK, land and assets have been transferred over time to housing associations, usually at a significant discount to market value, grants have been provided, and private finance has been leveraged in. This has enabled housing associations to grow over time, to the point where they are now strong and sophisticated businesses that can develop market sale housing and joint ventures, which increases the volume of cross subsidy to pay for

social and affordable housing.

In the UK, we saw how all levels of government worked together to make affordable, accessible housing a priority. In Australia, we are now at crossroads, and we have the foundations to make a big difference and build more homes for those most in need.

The CHP sector must play a critical role in maximising outcomes of the HAFF.

The HAFF provides a critical opportunity to not only build housing in the short to medium term but set up the structures for the future to ensure that there is continued growth of social and affordable housing. A strong and robust CHP sector that reinvests surplus back into building more social and affordable housing is a proven formula to grow subsidised housing. Unlike the private sector, who have a direct responsibility to their shareholders to maximise financial returns, the mission of CHPs is to deliver more social and affordable housing.

The UK experience clearly shows the benefits of growing CHPs. It makes sense for the Australian government to be growing the sector, to

We have an opportunity now to affect generational change and provide an ongoing legacy—this is the time to get it right!

thereby grow more social and affordable housing than the private sector or government can provide on their own. CHPs are charities, GST exempt and reinvest surplus back into social and affordable housing.

CHPs operate in a highly regulated environment with a national regulatory framework and state-based jurisdictions. Investment in the sector by government is low risk and the social returns are high. Due to our charity and tax status, CHPs can deliver

more than government can. A report by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute found that for every dollar invested into the CHP sector by government, there is a \$1.30 return. CHPs don't just provide buildings, we provide much more in terms of wrap around support for vulnerable people and building communities.

Now that the HAFF has been legislated, the design of the rollout is critical. As organisations with a mission to provide housing for those

most in need, our priority is to ensure that funding released through HAFF enables social and affordable housing to be provided in perpetuity. It would be a lost opportunity if funding was only invested for a financial return cycle of 15-25 years. This would just push the problem down the line, to the next generation to our children and their children. We have an opportunity now to affect generational change and provide an ongoing legacy—this is the time to get it right!



How CHPs can deliver more social and affordable housing

So, let's use a potential scenario of a development in a middle-ring suburb of Sydney.

Like government, our values are aligned in wanting to provide a range of social and affordable housing, especially for those in most need. The overall shared outcome is to optimise the delivery of more social and affordable housing as signalled by the NSW Minister for Housing.

Link Wentworth is keen to continue to work with Land and Housing Corporation and the Department of Communities and Justice to meet this need. We are taking a proactive approach to identify underutilised assets that are at the end of their lifecycle and replace them with new, appropriate housing to address current housing need. Often these assets are old 1950's detached houses that no longer meet the tenants' needs and weren't designed for ageing in place. In these instances, we would seek to retire these assets and replace them with new purpose built homes.

A case study demonstrates that we could retire seven detached 1950's dwellings and replace them with 48 new dwellings that are suitable for people to age in place. These middle-ring suburbs are the result of 1950-1960's planning and development, and provide a great opportunity to renew underutilised assets owned by government — allowing people to remain in their community and age in place in new appropriate housing.

There are many places throughout Sydney where these opportunities can be replicated. With the intentional partnership with the State government and direct access to Commonwealth and State government funding, the CHP sector is well placed to deliver more social and affordable housing.

An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood. The houses are densely packed, with various roof colors including red, grey, and white. The houses are surrounded by lush green trees and vegetation. The sky is a clear, bright blue. In the top left corner, there are several large, light blue, stylized icons: a hand holding a heart, a house, and a person. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

We are now at
crossroads, and we
have the foundations to
make a big difference
and build more homes
for those most in need.

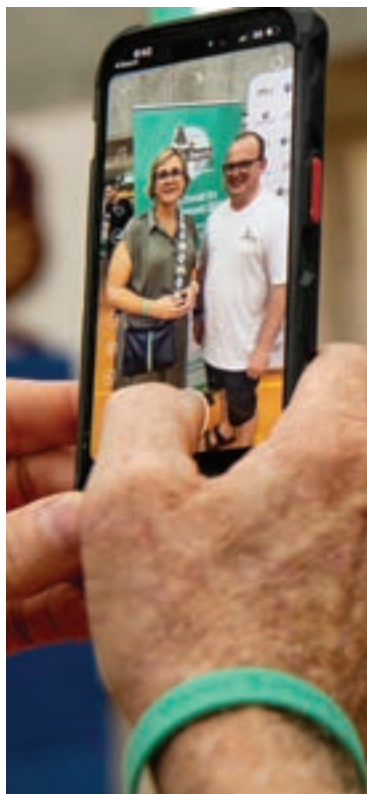
Our Year In Highlights

Now-NSW Minister for Water, Housing and Homelessness, The Hon. Rose Jackson MLC, joins Link Wentworth for London Study Tour of housing associations in September 2022 and launches Insights from London Report at Parliament House in June 2023.



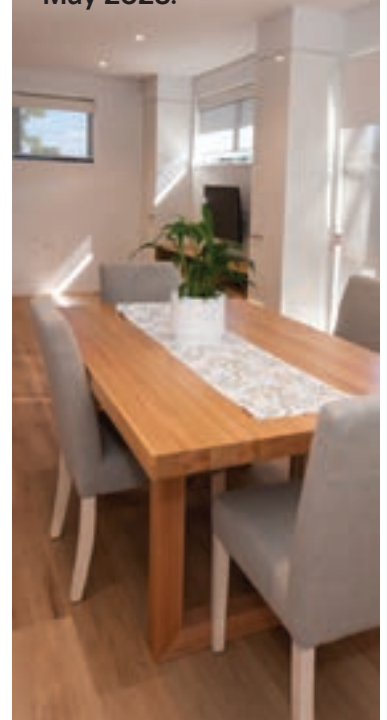
Part of one of four consortia selected by the NSW Government to participate in Request for Proposal Stage 1 for the Waterloo Renewal Project.

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Advisory group established with First Nations residents and services working with Link Wentworth to develop our RAP.



Our biennial charity sleepover, Home Sweet, returns post-COVID, raising \$170,000 for The Burdekin Association, Women's Community Shelters and Link Wentworth's Scholarship Program.

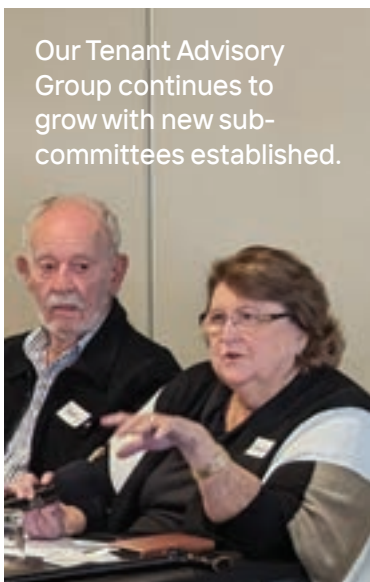
Ngarrunga, Link Wentworth's first building opens, in the Hawkesbury—women and children's safety service starts in May 2023.



In July 2022, supported tenants in the Hawkesbury impacted by the fourth flood event in 18 months.



Awarded over \$6 million from NSW Government for a Capital Upgrades Program for 258 social housing properties managed by Link Wentworth.



Our Tenant Advisory Group continues to grow with new sub-committees established.



No Place Like Home Art exhibition expands and opens in two locations, Penrith and Chatswood, with 28 resident artists exhibiting.



Largest Scholarship Award Program to date with \$150,000 awarded to 141 recipients.

Inaugural Modern Slavery Statement submitted.

Customer Service Charter developed with tenant feedback providing a new framework for delivering customer-focussed service provision.

Four Core and Cluster Program packages of over \$11 million awarded for housing and support for women and children escaping domestic and family violence.



First Link Wentworth residential conference for all staff held in September 2022 focussed on Unlocking Potential.

Our Performance

Operational Highlights



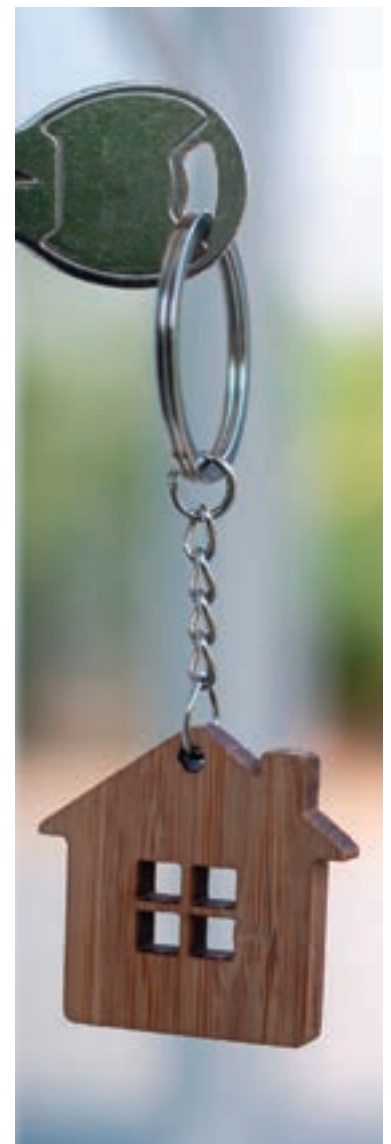
6392
properties
under management



10,000
residents



99%
occupancy rate



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

Financial Highlights

Revenue

\$120.7 million

Including assets revaluation
Up \$9.1million from \$111.6 in 2022

Surplus

\$4.5 million

Excluding assets revaluation
Down \$3million from \$7.5million in 2022

Cash & Financial Investments

\$57.8 million

Net Assets

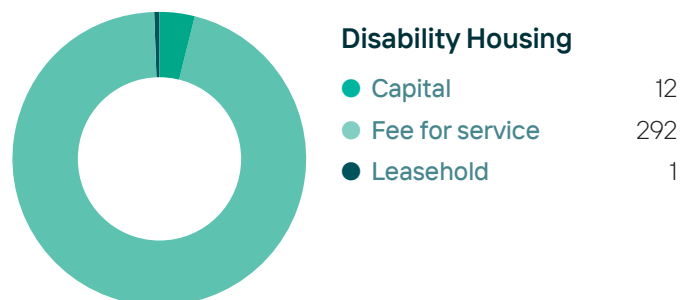
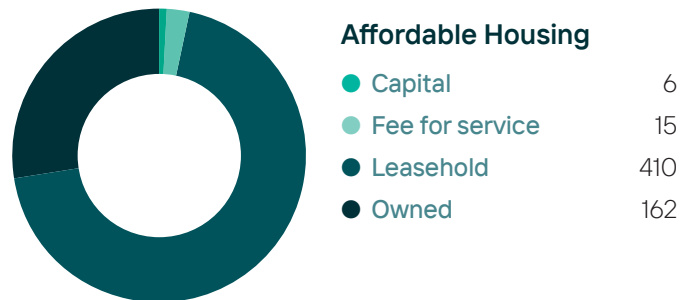
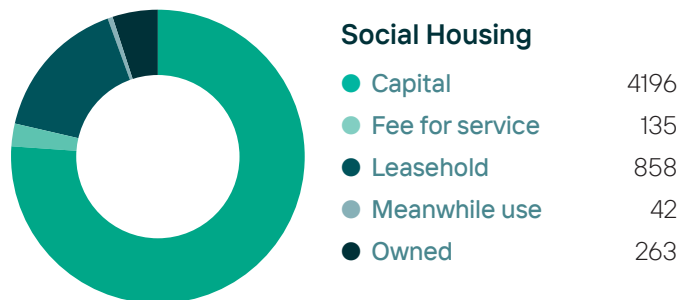
\$296.5 million

Our Properties

Properties Under Management

6392

Total portfolio



Property type

House	1526	Duplex	55
Units	3260	Granny Flats	7
Villas	223	Studio	195
Townhouse	759	Group Home	327
Boarding Houses	34	Other	6



46
Lithgow



595
Blue Mountains



701
Penrith



758
Hawkesbury



270
Blacktown

Fairfield



30
Liverpool

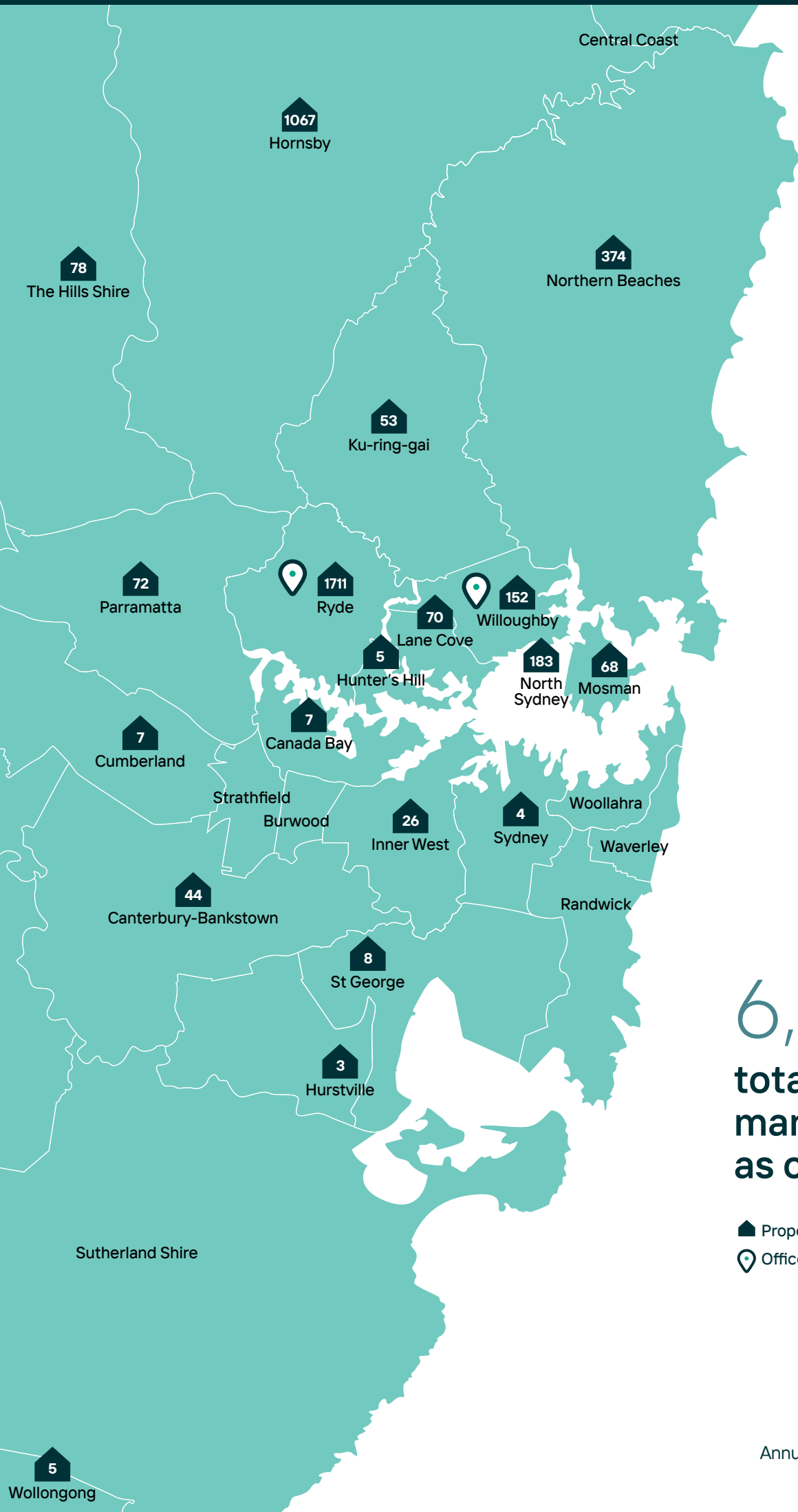


12
Camden

Wollondilly



32
Campbelltown



11
↑ Byron

6,392
total homes in
management
as of June 2023

🏠 Property numbers by LGA

📍 Office Locations

Delivering more homes



Link Wentworth has quickly forged a reputation as a trusted and respected project partner for government, the private sector and not-for-profit, community-based organisations. Over the past year this has strengthened our capacity to attract more grant funding, win more tenders and deliver more social and affordable housing in the communities we serve.





Key developments in the pipeline

Lachlan's Line

This project, which will be delivered in partnership with Landcom, will provide 135 new dwellings and address the urgent need for more affordable housing in the City of Ryde. Lachlan's Line is a demonstration project for Landcom's Affordable Housing and Diversity Model. When complete it will allow key workers like nurses, cleaners and childcare workers to live affordably, close to their work, family and community networks.

Fully rendered plans for the Lachlan's Line project have now been completed and a development application will be lodged early in FY24, a significant milestone in the journey towards completion.

Burdekin Road, Schofields

Link Wentworth submitted a tender with Landcom to build 49 units in a new affordable housing project in Schofields. Delivered in one of Blacktown City Council's Growth Centre Precincts, the development aims to demonstrate innovative and improved ways to approach greenfield development. It is another example of Link Wentworth looking to partner with key government agencies to deliver projects of significant scale.

Queenscliff

This project is on track to deliver much-needed affordable housing for one of the fastest growing cohorts of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness: women aged over 55. Link Wentworth, in partnership with Landcom, submitted a Development Application for the adaptive reuse of the former Queenscliff Community Health Centre into an affordable housing complex. We aim to commence construction in FY24.

When complete, the Queenscliff development will provide 37 units, 12 of which will be set aside for local women on the Northern Beaches who are in housing distress due to family breakdown, unemployment or a lack of superannuation. This year, we continued to work with Council and other key stakeholders to finalise approvals for this project.

Waterloo Renewal Project

Link Wentworth was proud to be part of one of four consortia selected by the NSW Government to participate in Request for Proposal Stage 1 of the Waterloo Renewal Project. One of the largest urban renewal projects in the country, this project will upgrade Waterloo's essential social housing infrastructure, while also delivering increased housing supply in a vibrant area close to jobs and public transport.

Link Wentworth is part of a bidding consortium that also includes lead developer Stockland as well as City West Housing and Aboriginal Community Housing Provider, Birribee Housing. It is a powerful example of the kind of value Link Wentworth is now able to add to large-scale projects.

The NSW Government will select the successful consortium in 2024.



Ngarrunga

In May 2023, Link Wentworth was proud to open a four-unit, short-term supported accommodation service in the Hawkesbury local government area for women and their children escaping family and domestic violence.

Funded under the Commonwealth Department of Social Security's Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program, the complex was co-designed by The Women's Cottage, a specialist domestic violence service. It provides both comfortable and safe accommodation, as well as a common area where local community organisations can offer services and support.

Using funding awarded under the NSW Government's Core and Cluster program, we are now expanding this service into an adjacent building, providing two more independent apartments, as well as communal and office areas. The funding will also enable us to employ more support staff.

Ngarrunga is one of four packages Link Wentworth is funded to deliver under the Core and Cluster program which provides short-term supported accommodation for vulnerable women and children escaping family and domestic violence. It demonstrates our ongoing commitment to using our development expertise to deliver smaller scale projects that have a big social impact in the communities we serve. For the remaining three Core and Cluster packages, we are working with Women's Community Shelters (WCS) and Domestic Violence Service Management (DVSM) in three other locations to build refuges and provide services.

We continue to look for more tender opportunities to deliver new projects to meet demand for housing in this important space.

We continue to look for more tender opportunities to deliver new projects to meet demand for housing in this important space.

Continuing Projects

A range of additional projects are underway which will contribute to Link Wentworth delivering 350 new social and affordable dwellings over the next three years at a total development cost of \$200 million. These include:

33

Social and affordable units in Rouse Hill

11

Social homes for seniors in Pennant Hills

8

Social homes for young people in Penrith, in partnership with Platform Youth Services

12

Social and affordable units in Cammeray, in partnership with North Sydney council

Asset services and upgrades

In February this year, Link Wentworth was awarded a \$6,010,000 grant from NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) to upgrade 258 government-owned social housing properties managed by Link Wentworth.

Our Asset and Tenancy teams have hit key milestones in the delivery of the LAHC Capital Upgrades Program this year. The teams continue to complement each other to minimise resident disruptions and inconveniences while conducting necessary home repairs and upgrades.

Asset Operations committed \$4.26 million for 187 properties which was delivered by 30 June 2023, some with multiple repair issues. This included 54 bathroom renovations, 146 full floor covering replacements, 103 full internal paints, 132 full kitchen replacements and more.

The program will continue until December 2023, and we look forward to continuing to provide our residents with quality homes.

As part of our commitment to customer satisfaction and ongoing improvement, Link Wentworth comprehensively surveyed tenant satisfaction with the upgrade program. We were pleased to report an 85% overall satisfaction rate with the project.

"I want to say thank you for the beautiful kitchen and carpet service I received in my unit. I love my new place and it is like I won a prize; it is a breath of fresh air to be able to come home and I appreciate my place and my life more because of what you have done for me. I cannot thank you enough, so I will keep you all in my heart and daily prayers. I want to thank Link Wentworth again, and especially Sonia for all the work she has done to make this possible by going above and beyond to organise everything and also arrange the hotel accommodation, so I had somewhere to stay while the work was being completed and also providing the meals while this was being done".

Link Wentworth tenant

Ngarrunga Women and Children's Safety Service opens its doors



In FY23, Link Wentworth was proud to partner with The Women's Cottage to deliver much-needed crisis accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence in the Hawkesbury region.

With 40 years' experience, The Women's Cottage is the Hawkesbury's oldest frontline domestic violence service, and the only one that provides a full spectrum of support. Maria Losurdo, Manager at The Women's Cottage, says the local community has been fighting for many years for a place like Ngarrunga.

"Way back in the early to mid 2000s, we were awarded a grant to create short term accommodation as part of a project called Arranga, but the funding was discontinued. It took years of lobbying to get the initial funding and we have been lobbying and working ever since to bring crisis accommodation for women escaping domestic violence to the Hawkesbury.

"When an opportunity for funding under the NSW Government's Start Safely program came up, I reached

out to Link Wentworth to see if there was a possibility of working together on this. That's where the push for Ngarrunga came from."

What followed was two to three years of intensive collaboration to work up a proposal and a service delivery model, which was ultimately successful under the Department of Communities and Justice's (DCJ) Core and Cluster model. Maria says the outcome was a team effort.

"Link Wentworth are the absolute experts in architecture and buildings. They brought things to the table we needed to get the whole thing across the line. We wouldn't have got the submission up alone because The Women's Cottage doesn't have the clout or expertise in the construction side of things to do it on our own.



“But the contract also recognises our service delivery expertise around delivering trauma-informed care and working with women and children escaping domestic violence. We had to work together to make this happen.”

Ngarrunga (pronounced nah-lung-ah) opened to its first resident in May 2023. Meaning ‘calming place’ in the local Dharug language, the Centre has virtually been full since day one. Maria says she was moved to tears the first time she saw the building.

“I was completely blown away by how physically beautiful the space is. The builders have done an amazing job. The units are lovely, and there’s a really welcoming shared room with games for the kids. There’s also a big TV and a nice kitchen. There’s an intrinsic calmness to the place. And the capacity to have pets means so much to the women and children.

“The women who stay at Ngarrunga feel valued, seen and safe. To walk in and be offered something that beautiful has a potentially massive impact on healing. The very first woman who used the service kept saying to us, ‘You’ve thought of everything’.”

Maria says the Ngarrunga also incorporates important elements of trauma-informed design.

“I was closely involved in the process with the design team

on what trauma-informed needed to look like in the building. From locks on the doors, where the cameras were positioned, to the layout of the living space, light, storage. Elements big and small. The Link Wentworth team were very responsive to my input. We ended up with a very trauma-informed building.”

The entire Link Wentworth team were delighted for Maria when she was inducted into the Hall of Fame at the 2023 ZEST Awards. It was fitting recognition of the extraordinary contribution she has made to the sector through her work on projects like Ngarrunga. While Maria says she was honoured by the award, she is not going to let it distract her from the work ahead.

“There was a sense of being valued by the people around me, which was really lovely. But there is also still so much to be done. You can’t rest on your laurels for long.”

Next on Maria’s agenda is exploring opportunities for The Women’s Cottage to work with partners like Link Wentworth to address the critical shortage of transitional housing for women and children escaping domestic violence.

“I’m excited about what might be possible around exit housing, which would be the next layer of a potential partnership.”

Providing quality services





Housing programs

We are committed to delivering safe, comfortable homes and quality services and support across the housing continuum so people facing housing stress and homelessness feel supported and have the best chance of building a bright future for themselves and their families.

Social housing

Link Wentworth manages 5,494 social housing properties, including just over 1,800 transferred from the NSW Government under the Social Housing Management Transfer program in December 2018.

This year, we introduced a new operational structure to better focus on serving our customers, harnessing the talents, strengths and skills of the greater Link Wentworth workforce. Many social housing tenants are dealing with a range physical and mental health, financial and social challenges in addition to sustaining their tenancy. Our teams work collaboratively to make sure vulnerable members of the community can access appropriate housing, sustain social housing tenancies, connect to their communities, and access support services and opportunities to improve outcomes.

After the challenging years of COVID-19 lockdowns and social isolation, we were pleased to once again be able to visit tenants

face-to-face to hear their concerns, understand their circumstances and build strong connections with our communities.

Northern Sydney Social Housing Service System

We have continued to take a lead role in coordinating the social housing service system in Northern Sydney, a role formerly led by the state government. Through working collaboratively with Bridge Housing (in partnership with Women's Housing Company) and St George Community Housing, under our joint Service System Coordination Model and Commitment (The Plan), we have invigorated the service system with many positive outcomes for clients.

The Plan, which is now in its second iteration, focusses on priorities including service coordination and advocacy to improve outcomes for tenants, people in housing need and the community. Outcomes include better collaboration with NSW Health, resulting in improved services for mutual clients

with mental health issues and a joint homelessness plan. We have also continued to identify clients based in Northern Sydney who may be eligible to participate in the successful Together Home project. See page 33 for more about Together Home.

Community Engagement Place-Based Approach

To help our tenants in social housing properties feel more connected with their community and each other, we worked with communities to run initiatives aimed at improving health and wellbeing and social outcomes. These included service pop-ups with our key operational teams and maintenance contractors where tenants could speak directly to our contractors, report a repair and have minor work completed onsite. We also had dedicated teams such as Tenancy, Rent Review and Sustainable Tenancies available to offer support and answer questions.

Additionally, we facilitated nine drop-in sessions at

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different locations across Greater Sydney and Lithgow, encouraging residents to ask questions and give their feedback to improve our services. These sessions also provided the opportunity to engage positively with tenants in communities experiencing issues or conflict. Some of the positive outcomes of the sessions included enhanced community cohesion, safety, a reduction in rental arrears and increased connection with place for tenants.

Linking Communities Placemaking Model

We launched our Linking Communities Placemaking Model to provide a consistent approach to how we deliver coordinated community-led service provision. The model ensures the way we work is outcomes-focussed and purpose-driven for our tenants, communities and the organisation, while also providing a voice for tenants to influence how we deliver services. It provides a platform for tenants to build connections within their communities and with Link Wentworth.

With the goal to deliver coordinated services that increase community and tenant safety, health and wellbeing, the model informs collaboration between all operational business areas along with local partnerships such as community services, NSW Police Local Area Command and NSW Health

services.

Tenant satisfaction

Link Wentworth surveys tenants to understand how satisfied they are with their housing and the support they receive from our staff. After every survey, a comprehensive action plan is developed to address key areas where improvements can be made. This year, we developed the Tenant Satisfaction Improvement Framework to guide our activities where maximum impact could be achieved.

Those four key areas of focus were:

- listening to tenant views and acting on them
- improving communication with tenants
- post-service surveys – keeping track of how we are doing
- improving repairs and maintenance service.

Guided by the framework, we conduct post-service surveys to gather feedback directly after a home visit or completion of a service. We have seen high satisfaction rates (over 85%) with the quality of service and interactions during both home visits and with the Customer Experience Team. We also track how satisfied tenants and customers are with our customer service, repairs and maintenance and feedback through our Customer Insights Report. This is designed to help Link Wentworth to continuously

improve its service.

We also developed a Repairs Satisfaction Framework to help inform and improve our maintenance services. When repairs and maintenance are completed at a property, tenants receive an SMS asking for feedback via a short online survey. Since introducing this framework tenants have reported a satisfaction rate with our repairs service of over 80%.

Repairs and maintenance

With funding provided by the Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC), we have been undertaking a Capital Upgrades Program to complete major upgrades to some of the social housing properties we manage. This work, which has included major renovations to kitchens and bathrooms, is understandably disruptive. Our Tenancy team has worked intensively with impacted tenants to help them feel comfortable with tradespeople coming into their homes. Additionally, our team worked closely with contractors to plan the upgrades, so they occur with least disruption as possible to tenants.

Affordable Housing

Link Wentworth Affordable is our registered real estate agency. This team manages the tenancy of 600 affordable properties, working in close partnership with private property owners, investors, developers, local government and other charitable organisations.

Affordable housing properties are homes offered at below-market rent to workers on low to moderate incomes. At Link Wentworth, we believe the availability of this type of housing is crucial within the housing continuum. Not only does affordable housing enable people, such as essential workers in frontline services, to live in central locations close to their work, living in affordable accommodation can help people save to buy their own home. In the last year, six tenants living in a Link Wentworth affordable housing property were able to buy their own home.

To improve efficiencies for the Affordable team, this financial year we implemented some changes to processes, including switching to 'Inspect Real Estate' software to manage inspections and inquiries. This has resulted in enhanced communication and efficiency for customers and retention of digital records.

Growth and partnerships

This financial year, Link Wentworth acquired 14 affordable properties in the Byron Bay Local Government Area, as part of a remote management model with a local agent and developer. Link Wentworth is the overriding property manager, with a local real estate agency providing on-site services.

We have continued as the affordable housing partner for Inner West, Lane Cove, North Sydney and Ryde Councils. This year we successfully retained 47 properties in tenders with Inner West and Ryde Councils.

National Rental Affordability Scheme

The housing crisis has impacted heavily on the affordable housing market. Our teams have reported that people who would never have needed support previously are now approaching us for help with maintaining their tenancy and connecting with other services and support. Additionally, as cost of living pressures mount, private property owners are becoming more reluctant to offer properties at below-market rent.

The Federal Government's National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) will be phased out by 2026. The scheme, which was introduced in 2008, provides



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incentives for owners and housing providers to offer properties at below-market rent, usually at least 20% lower than market rates.

In addition to managing 139 of its own properties under the NRAS, Link Wentworth currently manages 192 privately owned NRAS properties. To provide security for our tenants, our team has been working with property owners to retain these homes as affordable properties beyond the program expiry in 2026.

While we have had some success in retaining properties as affordable rentals, we are deeply concerned about the shortfall of available, affordable accommodation for low-to-medium-income earners and essential workers. As significant numbers of NRAS properties expire, we are witnessing a deepening of the housing crisis for this cohort.

We are currently in the final stages of gaining a custom tax ruling from the Australian Taxation Office that will allow private owners who lease their property via Link Wentworth Affordable to claim the difference between market rental and affordable rental as a tax deduction. This will be critical for our NRAS retention strategy.

Our 139 Link Wentworth-owned NRAS properties will be retained as affordable rentals after the NRAS program ends.



Head Start Homes partnership

In March 2023, we formed a new partnership with not-for-profit organisation Head Start Homes to provide practical support and pathways for tenants interested in owning their own homes.

Through the partnership, Link Wentworth tenants can access expert advice, schemes and discounts and information that will help their home ownership journey. Head Start Homes, for example, can act as a guarantor for social or affordable housing tenants who may be able to afford a home loan, but are unable to save enough for a deposit or fund lender's mortgage insurance.

We hosted a Home Ownership information night with Head Start Homes for tenants interested in exploring pathways to owning their home. After the session, 50% of attendees registered their interest and are now actively engaged in the Head Start Homes program.

Advocacy

Through the Affordable team, Link Wentworth has been advocating for the addition of an affordable and accessible search category on the realestate.com website. This would make it easier for prospective tenants to search for suitable affordable housing options.



Disability housing

Link Wentworth supports more than 250 people with disabilities living in Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) homes across Sydney.

Our SDA and Disability Housing team plays a crucial role in ensuring the wellbeing of these tenants. The team is responsible for essential aspects of our tenants' lives, including property maintenance and repair, vacancy management, tenancy support as well as handling rent and SDA payments. To ensure tenants have access to the services and supports they need to lead safe and fulfilling lives, we collaborate closely with disability service providers Cerebral Palsy Alliance, Inala Disability Services and Ability Lifestyles.

NDIS audit

This year we successfully completed a re-certification audit as part of Link Wentworth's re-registration as an accredited SDA provider under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The audit assessed our compliance against the NDIS Practice Standards, which, in conjunction with the NDIS Code of Conduct, define the benchmarks for quality that must be met by registered NDIS providers.



Housing solutions

In 2022–23, we received just over \$2.4 million in NSW Government funding to deliver a range of housing assistance services in the Northern Sydney area to people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or in need of support to rent in the private market. With rising rents, interest rate increases and other cost of living pressures, these services are vital in helping people in financial and housing stress to access suitable housing and maintain their tenancy.

To ensure the best possible outcomes for tenants, we partner with other support services and provide access to alternative housing products.

Temporary Accommodation

This short-term option provides eligible clients who are homeless or experiencing a housing crisis with up to 28 days of housing. During this time, our Housing Solutions team works with the client to identify appropriate long-term housing that meets their needs. Each client is supported by a specific team member from the start of their time with Link Wentworth until reaching a housing outcome, meaning they do not have to retell their story.

Rent Choice – Start Safely

This program provides housing and rent support to people who have left or need to leave an unsafe home due to family or domestic violence. Using a tailored, client-centred approach, our Housing Solutions team works collaboratively with domestic violence services to help find suitable accommodation for clients, while also linking them with education and employment options to support financial independence. Clients also receive a contribution towards their rent for up to three years. In 2022–23, Link Wentworth supported 62 people through the Start Safely program.

Private Rental Subsidy

In 2022–23, Link Wentworth provided a Private Rental Subsidy to 42 clients. This rental assistance program helps people who are waiting for social housing to access affordable accommodation in the private rental market by covering the difference between the rent and what the client can afford.

Link Wentworth also supports clients to transition into suitable long-term social housing when a home becomes available. This year, four clients were supported to move into social housing.

Private Rental Brokerage Service

Our Senior Private Rental Specialists also assist people with searching and applying for properties in the private rental market as well as understanding their rights and responsibility as a tenant. In 2022–23, 71 clients were supported through this service, including 12 who found a suitable private rental property and 15 who moved into social housing.

Tenancy Assistance

Link Wentworth provides tenancy assistance packages to clients in the private rental market who are in rental arrears. This financial assistance is designed to help people at risk of homelessness due to arrears to sustain their tenancy. We assisted four clients in 2022–23, by paying their rental arrears to save their tenancy.



Homelessness Services

Link Wentworth works with a range of partners to provide temporary or transitional housing and support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This includes tenants who are at risk of losing their tenancy, rough sleepers and women and children escaping situations of family and domestic violence.

This year, our team of caseworkers were able to refer women and children to our new Ngarrunga Women and Children's Safety Service. This partnership with The Women's Cottage provides short-term housing and wraparound support for women, children and pets escaping domestic and family violence, many of whom find themselves homeless.

Specialist Homelessness Services

In the Nepean-Blue Mountains area, we are involved in three specialist homelessness services (SHS), as either the lead agency or partner. Working collaboratively with partners and other community organisations, we support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to find temporary and transitional accommodation and access the services and supports they need to get back on their feet.

Our multi-disciplinary team provides early intervention, crisis and transitional support and post-crisis support services. The Assertive Outreach team supports rough sleepers, firstly understanding their unique circumstances and needs and then helping them to find suitable and safe housing. Link Wentworth caseworkers develop support plans and link people with services that can help them to overcome challenges they may be facing.

We also help women and children experiencing or escaping domestic violence to access safe housing and connect with services and support. For people in private rental who may be facing eviction, our team can provide advice and support to help them work through tenancy issues or access financial assistance if they are behind on rent.

Link Wentworth is contracted and funded by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) to deliver these services until June 2024. We would like to acknowledge the local agencies and other community organisations who work with us in this space, including DV West Domestic Violence Services, Community Restorative Centre, Lithgow Community Projects, The Gender Centre and Platform Youth Services.

In 2022–23, Link Wentworth directly:

- supported 216 clients through the Link Wentworth Adult Homelessness and Housing Support Service
- supported 87 clients through the Link Wentworth Tenancy Support Service
- helped 112 clients through the Nurreen Domestic Violence Service, including 39 who were under the age of 18.

Together with our partners we supported 704 people, which was 22% more than our contract requirements.

Across the Adult Homelessness and Housing Support Service and the Tenancy Support Service, we worked with 226 new clients, of which 142 were homeless. Of these, we housed 105 people in an average of 87.4 days. 42% of these people moved into private rental properties. With a much tougher housing market this year, this is a great result for both our team and the clients they worked with.

Types of housing

Type	Housed	%
DCJ/Other Community Housing Program	25	24
Link Wentworth Housing	14	13
Private rental	44	42
Transitional	8	8
Other	14	13

Locations

Local Government Area	Housed	%
Blue Mountains	16	15
Penrith	45	43
Hawkesbury	10	10
Other LGAs	34	32

Client survey

Clients were invited to rate their satisfaction of our three SHS in an independent survey conducted by Community Housing Industry Association on behalf of Homelessness NSW from May 2023 to June 2023. Clients from 34 service providers took part in the survey, with 47 clients from Link Wentworth participating.

Overall, 91% of Link Wentworth participants said they were satisfied with the services we provided in the last 12 months, compared to the 89% benchmark. This was significantly higher than the 2022 score of 83% for this question.

There were also high levels of agreement for all the service experience statements included in the survey. For example, 100% of Link Wentworth respondents agreed with the statement, "Staff treated me with respect" and 98% (compared to the benchmark of 96%) agreed with the statement, "Staff made me feel accepted for who I am".

Client satisfaction with different aspects of the accommodation provided by Link Wentworth was lower than the benchmarks. 70% reported they were satisfied with their current accommodation overall (compared with the benchmark of 76%) and 77% said they were satisfied with the safety of their current accommodation (compared to the benchmark of 78%).

Survey participants were also asked about various aspects of their wellbeing, such as their sense of personal safety, life satisfaction and health. The overall wellbeing index score for Link Wentworth respondents was 58.7 compared to the benchmark score of 61.1. In this section, Link Wentworth scored highest on questions related to future security, safety and life as a whole.

While overall the results show improvements on the 2022 survey, several areas have been identified as key focus areas and will be addressed by Link Wentworth's SHS team in the coming year.

Together Home

We are now in our third tranche of the Together Home program, which provides people experiencing homelessness with permanent, safe housing and crucial wraparound support to help them maintain their tenancy, improve their health and wellbeing and access training and employment opportunities. This program is delivered in partnership with the NSW Government, community organisations including Mission Australia, Catholic Care and the Salvation Army, and our own Specialist Homelessness Services team.

Link Wentworth manages 157 packages, supporting people across South-Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney, Western Sydney and the Nepean Blue Mountains. We have continued to see positive outcomes for Together Home participants, with more than 90% of those we support remaining in Link Wentworth housing or positively exiting from the program.

Core and Cluster Program

Link Wentworth was awarded four funding packages of over \$11 million under the NSW Government's Core and Cluster program. This initiative provides capital funding for housing, maintenance and the provision of specialist supports for women and children fleeing domestic and family violence.

Under the Core and Cluster model, women and children are provided with independent housing and access to supports to help them get back on their feet. A 'cluster' of self-contained accommodation is located next to a 'core', which provides access to services such as psychosocial support, counselling, legal assistance, education and employment support.

This year, our Ngarrunga Women and Children's Safety Service (initially funded through the Commonwealth Government's Safe Places program) received Core and Cluster funding to expand

into an adjacent building and employ more support staff. We are working with our partner, The Women's Cottage, to build two additional 2-bedroom self-contained accessible units, as well as communal and office facilities adjacent to the initial complex. 24/7 supports and wraparound crisis case management will be provided on-site. These will include specialist Aboriginal, multicultural, children's, community engagement and outreach services for women transitioning from crisis accommodation or living in remote areas.

To use the remainder of our Core and Cluster packages, we have partnered with Women's Community Shelters (WCS) and Domestic Violence Service Management (DVSM) in three other locations to build refuges and provide services in Northern Sydney and Western Sydney.

"I wrote a letter last year thanking everyone involved in the Together Home Program as I wanted to express my gratitude for the impact it made on my life. First, I want to say I sincerely meant every word.

You all played a role in saving my life, without even realising the magnitude of difference you made. I have so much respect for this program, and everyone involved, including my case worker and housing manager, who have always gone above and beyond to help me. I know this program can save lives, and there are no words to express how much I appreciate that."

Together Home client

Supporting tenants and vulnerable people in our community

We are committed to supporting the most vulnerable and isolated people in our communities to have fulfilling lives, living in communities where they feel safe and supported. Many of our tenants are dealing with complex challenges which affect their ability to sustain their tenancy and be active members of the community. Below are some of the ways we are actively working to address the housing and support needs of vulnerable members of the community.

Customer Service Charter

We launched the Link Wentworth Customer Service Charter in April 2023. This document outlines the Service Standards all stakeholders, from new housing applicants to long-term residents, can expect from Link Wentworth. The Charter provides a framework for delivering customer-focused service provision, while identifying opportunities where service improvements can be made, informed by our customers. It includes response times for phone and email enquiries, office visits and repairs and maintenance requests, and sets out our feedback process and how customers can let us know about an issue or concern they may have.

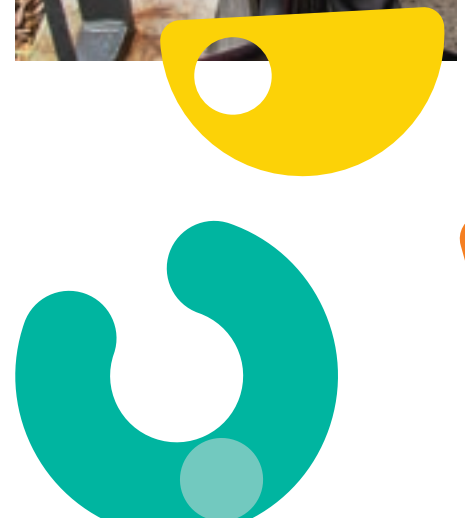
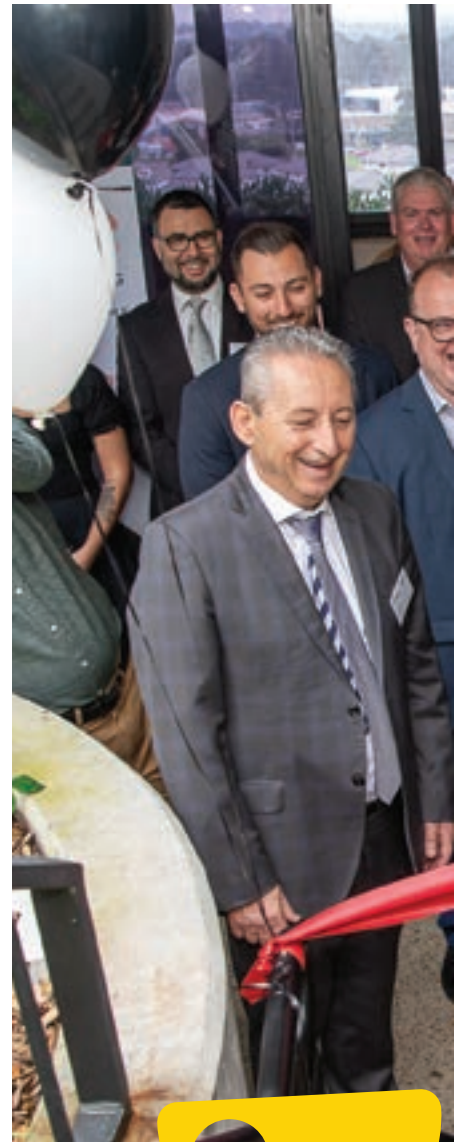
The Service Standards were developed using tenant feedback and in consultation with our Tenant Advisory Group (TAG), staff and Board of Directors. A copy was distributed to all current tenants and clients at the time of the launch.

Sustainable Tenancies Team

Our Sustainable Tenancies Team supports social housing tenants who may be dealing with a range of personal, social, health or financial issues to maintain their tenancy and build positive, healthy lives.

Our service model

The team works in a case coordination role, providing linkages and referrals for tenants who are at risk of eviction or needing health and wellbeing supports at home. Using a person-centred casework model, the team takes a trauma-informed approach and promotes trauma-informed practices across the organisation. Staff have broad-ranging experience across areas including mental health, domestic violence, drug and alcohol, child protection, hoarding and squalor, disability and aged care.





In July 2022, we merged the Link Housing and Wentworth Community Housing Sustainable Tenancy Teams under the Community Outcomes and Impact division to become one cohesive team. The team supports tenants living in Northern Sydney, Western Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Lithgow area. As part of the integration, we updated some of our documentation, procedures and practices, and changed referral pathways and links to ensure smoother internal processes and build team rapport. To ensure a consistent service and positive client outcomes, the team has also been developing a Sustainable Tenancy Team Practice Framework to guide our work in the future.

The team has worked on a best practice approach to managing requests for modifications by people with disabilities. To ensure we undertake reasonable adjustments and support people to age in place, the team tracks requests and thoroughly assesses clients' needs. Where necessary, we link clients to relevant support services.

Over the course of the year, the team supported 374 tenants to improve their overall health and wellbeing, or the condition of their home. The intensive, tailored support also enabled some residents at risk of losing their tenancy to remain in their property.

Mental health (34%) and rent arrears (33%) were the main reasons tenants were referred to the Sustainable Tenancies Team, followed by property care (29%) and support linkage (27%). Across the year, 44% of referrals involved working with tenants in rent crisis or at risk of losing their tenancy. The team is working towards an early intervention model where at-risk tenants are referred for support before they reach a crisis point.

Using the Australian Social Value Bank (ASVB) tool, the value of this team's support for tenants equated to an overall net benefit of \$1,705,964 or \$4,561 per tenant. This represents a benefit cost ratio of 3.33 over the year.

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Hoarding and Squalor project

Living in a situation of domestic squalor and/or with behaviours of hoarding can have a huge effect on individuals, impacting their safety, health, relationships and tenancy, as well as the health and safety of neighbours. For tenants experiencing hoarding and squalor behaviours, the Sustainable Tenancies Team implemented a project focussed on delivering targeted, wraparound support to this vulnerable cohort.

Working from a trauma-informed perspective, the team works with a tenant to understand the scope of the hoarding and squalor and develop a plan to deliver therapeutic supports and offer referrals and wraparound support, utilising external referral networks where applicable. In the 2022–2023 year, 28.6% of referrals were for property care, and 7.73% of these referrals were identified as being hoarding and/or squalor, severely impacting on their tenancy.

In the coming year, Link Wentworth will track outcomes for tenants receiving this support.

Mind Australia Partnership

We formed a partnership with Mind Australia, a national mental health service, to provide training and education to Link Wentworth housing and homelessness staff about the National Disability Insurance Scheme, funding and ways to access support.

Our Social Housing and Specialist Homelessness Services teams had noticed an increasing need to support tenants and clients to apply for NDIS funding. Through the partnership, staff are learning what the NDIS is, how to guide clients through the eligibility, assessment and application process and what alternative funding may be available.

Extreme weather events

In July 2022, tenants living in Windsor and near the Hawkesbury-Nepean River were impacted by yet another flood event – the fourth in 18 months. To support those impacted, we identified what community and government assistance was available (such as financial assistance packages) and contacted affected tenants to link them with appropriate services and support that would help them during the clean-up and recovery stages. The project involved staff members from different teams working collaboratively to get the best outcomes for tenants as quickly as possible. We also provided a mould cleaning program to help residents clean properties and minimise health risks.

Similar practical support and assistance was provided to tenants living in Northern Sydney who were also impacted by some extreme weather events.

Support for women aged 55 years and over

We have continued to partner with Women's Community Shelters and Twilight Aged Care to provide short-term, safe and affordable homes for women aged 55 years and over who are experiencing homelessness and housing stress. We offer accommodation in two properties owned by Twilight Aged Care: Mosman House and Beecroft House. These properties would otherwise sit empty. Women living in these complexes have access to wraparound services, including mental health support, and can find companionship with other women going through similar experiences.



Building strong futures

At Link Wentworth, our journey with a customer or client doesn't end when they find secure housing. We want our tenants to live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives where they are able to sustain their tenancies, engage in training or employment and be active in their communities. Recognising that many of our tenants need additional help to maintain their tenancies, we provide vital wraparound services, supports, programs and activities aimed at improving their quality of life and helping them to achieve positive outcomes, whatever that may be.

Tenant Advisory Group

Our Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) continues to be an important way to engage with tenants over a range of topics including tenancy issues, Link Wentworth policies, procedures, communications and resources, new developments, projects and special events. The group meets quarterly and all residents can attend, ask questions and have input on Link Wentworth's services and projects. In November 2022, we were delighted to invite TAG members from all regions to meet face-to-face for the first time since we merged to become Link Wentworth.

We have now successfully piloted a model where the TAG is supported by sub-committees, each focussed on a different area of importance. TAG members can choose to be part of a sub-committee covering an area of particular interest to them, such as the Editorial Committee or the Policy Committee. The Editorial Committee, for example, is actively involved in the production of our quarterly resident newsletter, Community Connect, with members both writing and editing articles. The Policy Committee provides direct feedback on Link Wentworth policies and key resources that impact tenants. The Resilience Committee is involved in developing and sharing knowledge and resources, so all tenants have the skills to act safely in emergency situations, heatwaves and natural disasters. This new structure has enabled the TAG to make an even greater impact on Link Wentworth's operations and our tenant community.



"To everyone at Link Wentworth, thank you to everyone at Link Wentworth, Board Members, Management and all staff, who work hard to help people live better. I would like to say thank you for all the opportunities you have given me.

I have enjoyed being part of the TAG which has introduced me to tenants, Link Wentworth staff, Management and Board Members. As I reflect on the last six years, I am amazed at what I have been introduced to. Upskilling my computer skills, learning how to draw, making a beanie without knitting needles and also being taken out of my comfort zone, challenging me to step out and do something uncomfortable. Thank you for your encouragement and support. You have given me more than a basket full of memories."

Link Wentworth TAG member

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Scholarship Program

Since 2011, we have been supporting tenants to pursue their dreams and nurture their talents through our Scholarship Program. In this time, Link Wentworth has donated \$500,000 to support residents to take up opportunities they wouldn't otherwise be able to afford. The funding can be used to pay for education, sporting or artistic activities or other creative pursuits that enrich an individual's life.

The program opens for applications in July each year. Anyone living in a Link Wentworth property or receiving a rent subsidy through Link Wentworth is eligible to apply. Recipients are announced and celebrated at an annual ceremony in November.

In 2022, \$150,000 worth of scholarships were awarded to 141 recipients. This is the largest amount of funding distributed in the program's history.

Youth Rent Incentive Scheme

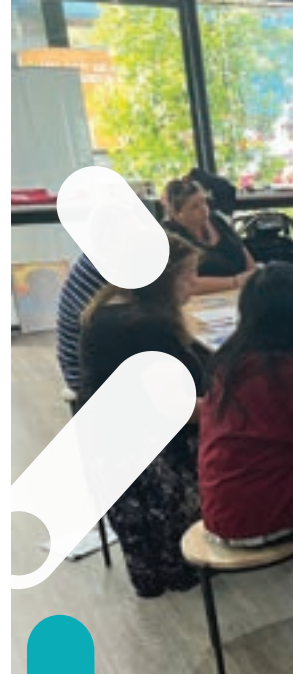
Our innovative Youth Rent Incentive Scheme (previously known as Work Rent Incentive Scheme) has continued to make a positive impact on our youth tenants. The program, which was first piloted in Northern Sydney from February 2020, supports young tenants in transitional housing to attain and keep a job, while also helping them to save in preparation for moving into more permanent housing. Young people on the scheme receive a reduction in rent by paying a deemed rent amount based on their potential Centrelink income, rather than a subsidised rent amount determined by their income. This unique approach allows them to allocate a portion of their income towards a savings plan, preparing them for their future housing needs.

This financial year, 11 youth tenants from Northern Sydney engaged with the scheme, setting up savings plans ranging from \$50 to \$200 per week. This demonstrates the scheme's effectiveness in promoting financial resilience and enabling young people to actively plan for their housing aspirations.

In FY2024, working with our youth partners, we plan to extend the scheme to all young people living in our transitional housing across Link Wentworth's entire portfolio.

"The Youth Rent Incentive Scheme has been so helpful because I have been able to start saving. I will finish with Burdekin in 12 months and due to working full time I will need to move into the private market. I am saving for a bond and removalist costs. I'm not sure how I will manage once I am independent, but I know I have a better chance of succeeding if I have money in the bank. It will also help me to feel more independent and confident going into the world independently."

– Female, 17 years old





Hayley (20) was supported by Taldumande Youth Services after leaving a tumultuous home environment. Hayley found herself struggling to navigate the complexities of adulthood and faced numerous barriers with accommodation options. Her lack of employment history and financial resources, compounded by her mental health challenges, hindered her applications for housing. Hayley was supported to move into a property managed by Link Wentworth and eagerly enrolled in the Youth Rent Incentive Scheme. This opportunity played a vital role in changing her trajectory, providing a stepping stone towards stable accommodation and a sense of autonomy. Hayley poured tremendous effort into her dream of securing a place in the private rental market. Hayley recently achieved a significant milestone as she has successfully transitioned into a private rental which she proudly calls her own and feels genuinely at home. Her success story exemplifies the

transformative impact of the Youth Rent Incentive Scheme initiative in providing Hayley with the stability she needed to focus on her personal growth and transition into independent adulthood.

Community connection

In partnership with Inner Sydney Voice, University of Sydney and Link Wentworth social housing tenants, our Communities Team ran a Disaster Resilience Project for tenants living in the Hawkesbury region. The project, which included a series of in-person workshops in Richmond and Windsor, was an opportunity for tenants to provide ideas and feedback to help inform the development of new resources and tools to assist in managing, responding to and recovering from natural disasters, including bushfires and floods.



To support tenants to learn to use their smart phones, iPads and computers more effectively, we hosted a series of free Digital Discoveries workshops, led by a technology expert, in locations across our portfolio. In addition to teaching participants technology skills, the sessions provided important information and tips to help residents stay safe online.

For tenants with a love of gardening, we have continued to offer our Community Gardening Workshops, hosted by the team at Royal Botanic Gardens. A range of different sessions were offered at Link Wentworth complexes and properties to help interested tenants become more confident gardeners.

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No Place Like Home art exhibition

Our annual art program and exhibition, No Place Like Home, returned in 2023, providing our tenants with the opportunity to participate in art classes and exhibit their artwork publicly.

Now in its seventh year, No Place Like Home invites Link Wentworth residents to use art to explain the importance of safe and secure housing and how having a home can transform lives. Through art, the exhibition raises awareness about the lack of affordable housing and the need for more community housing across Sydney.

Our Community Programs team organised resident art classes across multiple Link Wentworth locations. Run by professional art teachers, the classes attracted 60 attendees, with 28 artists submitting 40 artworks for the exhibition.

The process to create their own artwork was an exploration of their creative side, as well as a healing journey for many participants. The classes were also a chance to have fun, connect with other residents, share stories and reflect on their lives and journeys from homelessness to safe housing.

Link Wentworth was delighted to open the No Place Like Home exhibition at the Penrith City Library in early June 2023. Guests included resident artists,

Link Wentworth staff, guests and local government representatives, including Penrith City Council Deputy Mayor, Cllr Todd Carney. The exhibition was also displayed at The Dougherty Community Centre, Chatswood in July 2023.

Drop-in Community Support Hubs

In partnership with Hawkesbury's Helping Hands and Junction 142, we hosted a series of monthly community support hubs in the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains. Operating like a pop-up drop-in centre, the hubs brought together free community-based support services so people could learn what support is available to them and easily access the help they needed. Support organisations represented at the hubs included housing, financial, employment, legal, medical, Aboriginal, mental health, addiction, recovery and youth services.

Residents attending the hubs were able to connect with free services, as well as get much-needed help on the day.



Resident Wellbeing and Personal Development Survey

In December 2022, we invited tenants to complete a Resident Wellbeing and Personal Development survey to help inform programs and opportunities developed and delivered by our Communities team.

Using the feedback, we developed a new Community and Place Strategy - Building Connections and Linking Communities. The new strategy will guide our work supporting communities and tenants over the coming years.





Age Well – Be Well

In partnership with the Northern Sydney Primary Health Network, we ran the Age Well – Be Well health and wellbeing program to tackle isolation, reconnect communities and support residents to get active again. The program ran in four locations across Northern Sydney, including community rooms and at Hornsby Library. Activities included gentle exercise, arts and crafts, informative workshops and competitive games. More than 30 residents attended the weekly program, with all reporting improvements in their overall health.

One resident told us that she had not left her house unaided for 18 months prior to the program commencing but enjoyed it so much she plucked up the courage to come herself. This resident has since gained enough confidence to do her weekly shopping and attend to personal matters independently.

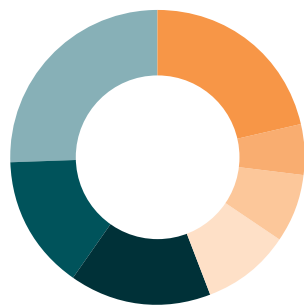


Snapshot of our residents in 2022-23



Gender

● Female occupants	5,060
● Male occupants	3,915
● Other occupants	57



Household age

● Occupants <=18	1,957
● Occupants 19-24	546
● Occupants 25-34	659
● Occupants 35-44	824
● Occupants 45-54	1,279
● Occupants 55-64	1,413
● Occupants 65+	2,334
○ Not stated	20

This profile is based on 9,032 tenants, excluding Affordable housing tenants.

Affordable housing 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 593 properties.

Link Wentworth has an estimated 10,218 tenants in total.

1,442

tenancies held by single women over 55 years

398

residents identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



Continuing tenant contributions to Community Connect

by **Mark Shalovsky**

Tenant Advisory Group member

Resident Newsletter Editorial Committee member

Since the merger in March 2021, 10 issues of Community Connect have already been published and, over this time, it has developed to become an excellent tenant newsletter.

As I wrote earlier in the 2022 Annual Report, many tenants now have embraced it as their tenant newsletter and have wanted to make their own contributions to it. It is pleasing to see that this development has continued. They have many important and interesting stories to tell.

Further contributions in the last year have included

- In the October 2022 issue, Russell shared with us his personal story as a single father living with mental illness and what he has gained from his 16 years as a Link Wentworth tenant. He also told us about his interesting talent for making sculptures from car parts.
- In the same issue, Marie Sillars, wrote about her concerns with housing stress and homelessness particularly among older, single women. Recently, she made a submission to the NSW parliamentary inquiry, Homelessness Amongst Older People Aged Over 55 in New South Wales, and was invited to attend the Parliament to give evidence to this Inquiry.
- In the December 2022 issue, Samantha shared with us her personal story of disability with cerebral palsy and what she has gained from her 8 years in specialist disability housing.
- Mark Jarradd tells us his personal story of being forcibly removed from his mother as part of historical former forced removal practices in the March 2023 issue. He shares his experience and how he has spent his life committed to community work and advocacy.
- In the June 2023 issue, Darryl tells us about his life and his recent move to the Blue Mountains and his plans to fit in to his new community and to make a contribution.
- Sally-Ann tells us her personal story about how much she also loves living in the Blue Mountains in the September 2023 issue. She shares with us her experiences of poverty and hardship during childhood and, in adult life, with disability from a hereditary spinal defect. She has done much community work with The Salvation Army and with a food program at a local church.
- Susan Lucock and Mary Conyard continue their series of articles providing tenants with much practical advice on resilience and how to cope with challenges such as the coronavirus pandemic, extreme heat, floods, storms and bushfires. This advice is particularly useful for tenants in the Penrith and Hawkesbury areas. Mary Conyard also now writes a column with helpful and inexpensive home hints.
- And for my part, I wrote about the work of the Tenant Advisory Group in the June 2023 issue to encourage all tenants to take an interest in its work. I am also writing a continuing series of articles to provide tenants with useful financial information.

All 10 issues of Community Connect are available on the website of Link Wentworth (at www.linkwentworth.org.au/news/newsletter). They are well worth keeping and rereading.

Affordable housing is helping Musawer reach for the stars

A secure home and a scholarship from Link Wentworth have allowed Musawer to build a successful career in astrophysics.

When he arrived in Australia as a refugee in 2013, Musawer had next to nothing. A member of the minority Ahmadiyya sect of Islam, he had fled terrifying persecution in his homeland of Pakistan for a better life.

After first pursuing a career in humanitarian work, Musawer chose to follow his true passion: astrophysics. While completing his bachelor's degree in physics and philosophy at the University of Sydney, he found himself struggling to provide a home for himself and his young family. When his degree finished, Musawer had a difficult choice to make. He wanted to enrol in a master's degree to continue building his career in astrophysics, but worried his circumstances would mean he would have to give up on his dreams and get a full-time job in another industry.

When the owners of the unit where he was living told him they were selling, Musawer

applied for an affordable housing unit with Link Wentworth. We were able to provide him with suitable accommodation at below market rent. Musawer also received a Link Wentworth scholarship to help him buy the equipment he needed to continue his work.

Musawer says having a secure and affordable place to stay made a life-changing difference to his family at a challenging time.

"Without a stable home, we would have had trouble getting through that period. I would have given up on my research.

"At that time, my wife went through two miscarriages. Affordable housing meant I got to spend more time with her to provide her with the emotional support she needed."

Musawer says the scholarship support he received from Link Wentworth has been critical to allow him to continue his research and build his career.





“When I received the first scholarship funding, it was during COVID lockdowns. I was able to buy home office equipment like a computer, which helped me greatly increase my research output while working from home.

“I also used the funding to buy a telescope, which allows me to further my knowledge of astronomy. By learning to use the telescope, I got a job at Sydney Observatory, where I am now employed.”

With the support he has received from Link Wentworth, Musawer is optimistic about the future. He is continuing his astrophysics research and expanding into the exciting and growing field of astrobiology. He is also saving hard and hoping to buy a house of his own in the next two years.

Musawer understands how important affordable housing has been to unlock his potential and give him the opportunity to thrive.

“I have nothing but gratitude for Link Wentworth. I wouldn't be where I am today without them.”

“I have nothing but gratitude for Link Wentworth. I wouldn't be where I am today without them.”

RICKY'S CASE STUDY

A helping hand out of homelessness

With the stability of place to call home, Ricky is putting his life back together and creating a better future for himself and his children.

When Ricky first reached out to Link Wentworth for support, he'd hit rock bottom.

"I had nothing going for me," he says. "I was staying at a men's homeless shelter. I had a serious drug problem. I'd lost my partner. I had no contact with my kids. I had matters going through court, and I'd been incarcerated for four years."

Sadly, Ricky's situation was nothing new. In his nearly 25 years, Ricky had never known the comfort and stability of a secure home.

"My mum was a drug addict, and my dad was an alcoholic. I used to get moved from my mum's to my dad's, to my auntie's to my nan's every few months.

"I'd been in and out of refuges and juvenile detention centres, then on to adult jails."

Through the Together Home program, Link Wentworth provided Ricky with financial, practical and emotional support as he tackled the daunting task of finding somewhere to live and getting his life on track. He says it wasn't long before things took a turn for the better.

"A couple of weeks after meeting my Link Wentworth caseworker, Brooke, I was in my own house. Once the ball was rolling, it happened very quickly. She did an amazing job."

Ricky moved into a two-bedroom unit in Sydney's north, where he initially paid 25% of the market rent, with Link Wentworth covering the other 75%. Brooke and the team also helped him set the place up with all the things he needed.

"When I first moved in, I had no furniture, no nothing," Ricky says. "Link Wentworth fully furnished my house for me, from TV to beds to cooking utensils to everything."

Ricky says Brooke connected him with the other support services he needed to get his life back on track.

"She helped me get the drug and alcohol counselling I needed to deal with my addiction. She also hooked me up with parenting programs to benefit me and my children, which has helped tenfold. I get my children now every Friday to Sunday."





Knowing he can call on Brooke for emotional support whenever he's struggling has made the world of difference to Ricky.

"Prior to her, I felt like I had no one to turn to for help. I never thought I could reach out or had support networks out there. But now, if I'm having a bad day, I can call my caseworker and say, 'I'm feeling like this.' 95% of the time that's enough to get me through."

Ricky has gone from strength to strength since moving into his new home. He's now working as a concreter and looking forward to celebrating 12 months in his current job. Having a steady income means he is now able to pay 100% of the rent on his own, something he takes great pride in. He says that having secure housing has been life-changing.

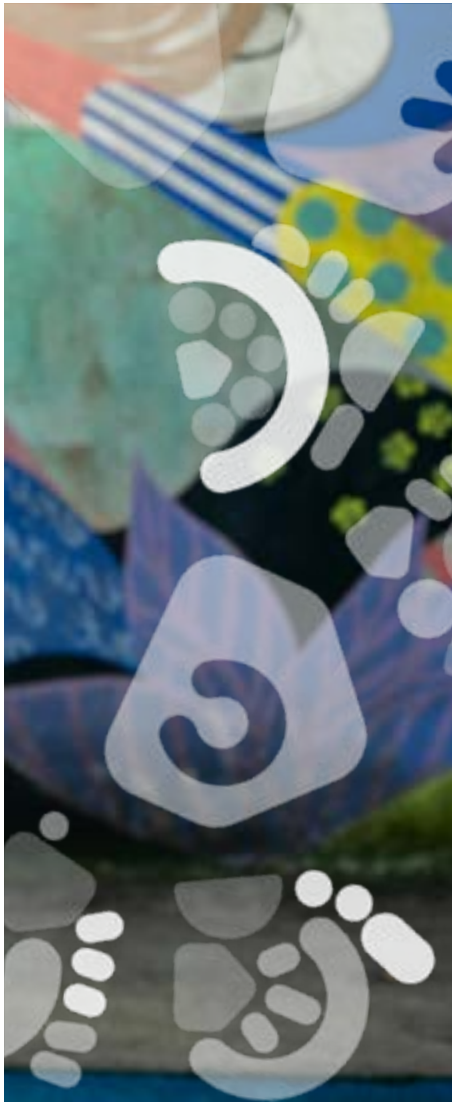
"This is the first real, stable accommodation I've had in my life. It's amazing what happens when you have the right supports around you."

"There's nothing like being able to lock the door and have a good night's sleep and no one can tell you to leave."

With a secure roof over his head, a job and his children back in his life, Ricky is feeling hopeful about the future. He's saving hard to buy a new car

and a home of his own – and is grateful to be in the position he is today.

"I can't thank the Together Home program or Link Wentworth enough for the support, the time and the services they have given me during these two years. It really has changed my life. I don't know where I'd be."



Advocating for greater change



With Sydney and NSW in the grips of an affordable housing crisis, Link Wentworth has a vital role to play in pushing for better housing solutions for our tenants and other vulnerable people in our community.

Making sure all Australians have access to safe, secure and affordable housing is the reason Link Wentworth exists. As one of the largest Community Housing Providers (CHPs) in the state, we have a responsibility to be a leader within our industry both drawing attention to the current housing crisis and advocating for positive and practical solutions to it.

Over the last 12 months, we are proud to have driven several key initiatives to attract more investment in social and affordable housing and deliver better access to services and support for those experiencing or at risk of housing stress and homelessness.





Thought leadership events and launches

London study tour

In September 2022, Link Wentworth CEO, Andrew McNulty, Chair, Mike Allen PSM and Chief Customer Officer, Margaret Maljkovic joined now-NSW Minister for Water, Housing and Homelessness, the Hon. Rose Jackson MLC on a week-long study tour of London's housing associations.

The tour delivered rich insights and lessons into how the community housing sector in NSW could deliver more houses and more inclusive communities for those in need.

On the back of the study tour, Link Wentworth released an Insights from London report as well as an accompanying video at NSW Parliament on 13 June 2023. The report outlines key recommendations for local, state and federal governments to help ease the housing crisis across Australia.

See page 54 for more on the London Study Tour and report.

Navali Development Launch

As the rental crisis continued to escalate, Urban Property Group's Navali Development was officially opened on 21 October 2022 by then Parliamentary Secretary for Planning, Tanya Davies MP.

The exclusive apartment complex in Penrith features 163 one, two and three-bedroom apartments with a co-working space, communal kitchen, communal cinema and communal vegetable garden. The building is also solar powered and uses grey water.

Under the partnership with Link Wentworth, 26 units were set aside exclusively for NDIS and affordable housing tenants.

By offering affordable rental units in partnership with Link Wentworth, the project demonstrates how low-income residents can achieve better health and wellbeing outcomes with the same high-end housing stock as the building's private owners. Affordable housing tenants are supported by Link Wentworth's Affordable Housing Team.

There was a significant amount of media coverage of the opening event – including prime time television – raising awareness of the potential of innovative projects like these to combat the housing crisis.

Home Sweet 2023

In March 2023, Link Wentworth was proud to host the Home Sweet 2023 event at Freshwater Surf Lifesaving Club on Sydney's Northern Beaches to raise vital funds to support the fight against homelessness.

This year's event, which raised \$170,000, had 100 attendees, including 60 'sleepers' who slept out at the club.

The funds raised have gone towards supporting The Burdekin Association, Women's Community Shelters (WCS), and Link Wentworth's Scholarship Program.

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Link Wentworth was determined to bring back the Home Sweet event, and continue its mission to provide more homes and deliver better services to enable a brighter future for people facing housing stress and homelessness.

Media coverage of the event raised community awareness of the homelessness issue and the vital work Link Wentworth is doing in this space to address it.

Street Count

Link Wentworth co-ordinated and led street count evenings in the Hornsby, Ryde and Ku-ring-gai Local Government Areas (LGA), gathering real-time data about the number of people who may be sleeping rough in those areas. Volunteers from the local councils and other community organisations including Mission Australia, Catholic Care, Barnardos and Northern Life assisted our staff with the count.

We counted two rough sleepers in the Ryde LGA and six rough sleepers within the Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai area.

Our staff were also involved in street count evenings run by other community housing providers across Sydney.

Partnerships & Sponsorships

Link Wentworth sponsored industry and community events, to demonstrate our commitment to advocating for social and affordable housing and the communities we serve, and grow our brand recognition.

- **Sept 2022** The Burdekin Association's Annual Charity Golf Day – as well as being a sponsor of this event we entered a Link Wentworth Team on the day.
- **Oct 2022** Granny Smith Festival – as silver sponsors of the festival in Eastwood, we continued our long-standing involvement with this event, demonstrating our commitment to the Ryde Council area where we have the largest concentration of properties.
- **Nov 2022** National PowerHousing Conference – sponsored the Aboriginal Mural at the Conference.
- **May 2023** CHIA NSW Community Housing 2023 Conference – Bursary Partner
- **June 2023** Greater Western Sydney ZEST Awards – continued our partnership as a major sponsor of the Awards, as well as nominating partners and projects in three Award categories.

Conference presentations

Link Wentworth representatives were invited to present at conferences and events highlighting the need for social and affordable housing.

- **Aug 2022** National Homeless Conference, Canberra – Chief Customer Officer, Margaret Maljkovic presented.
- **Oct 2022** Resilient Sydney: Mayoral Summit on Affordable and Diverse Housing and Lord Mayor's Reception, Chief Customer Officer, Margaret Maljkovic presented.
- **Nov 2022** NSW AHI Branch Buzz Event – CEO Andrew McAnulty presented on London Study Tour.
- **May 23** CHIA NSW Conference – CEO Andrew McAnulty participated in Plenary Panel: Housing State of Play - Opportunities for Community Housing. Chief Communications Officer, Eva Gerencer participated in the "Advocacy That Works" session and interviewed Marie Sillars, Link Wentworth resident and tenant advocate about her journey.
- **Mar 2023** AHI International Women's Day breakfast – Head of Tenancy, Krystal Moores presented.
- **Mar 2023** HESTA Partner Event – Chief Customer Officer, Margaret Maljkovic participated on panel.

Media and social media

We achieved significant media coverage of events and case studies of our residents over the year.

Month	Story	Coverage
October 2022	Navali opening	Channel 9 News 9 Now Penrith Press Daily Telegraph Western Weekender Australian Property Journal
November 2022	Scholarship Program – Musawer reaches for the stars	The Western Weekender
December 2022	Growing homelessness on North Shore	North Shore Living
February 2023	Housing affordability	North Shore Times Mosman Daily Wentworth Courier
March 2023	Link Wentworth client forced to live in hotel	Daily Telegraph
	Housing Affordability	Weekend Sunrise
	Home Sweet	2GB 2CC (Canberra) 2LT (Lithgow) ABC Radio Northern Beaches Advocate
	Home ownership for single mum (+ partnership with Head Start Homes)	9Honey
April 2023	Importance of affordable housing and our partnership with Head Start Homes	9News
June 2023	London Study Tour Launch Parliament House	The launch attracted extensive media interest and coverage with 217 media clips amassing a total circulation of 45 million, including television, national and metropolitan press.

Social Media and website

Both social media and website engagement has grown over the past year.

Social Media

Facebook post engagements up 23.3% to

11,055

LinkedIn total followers increased by 29.9% to

2,137

Instagram total followers increased by 8.8% to

319

Website

Total users up 103.8% to

90,575

Page views up 64.7% to

268,710

Reconciliation Action Plan

We made significant progress on our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) this year. The RAP Working Group met regularly and is due to deliver a draft Innovate RAP by late-2023.

We were proud to hold our first external RAP Advisory Group in April 2023 including First Nations residents and partners. This group is critical to ensure that we have the voice of our First Nations residents and community central to our work. We are grateful to all members for their commitment and generosity in sharing their knowledge.

To deepen our relationship with First Nations communities, Link Wentworth sponsored the COOEE Festival that was held on Saturday 15 April 2023 (postponed due to COVID-19 and weather for the last two years) with RAP members organising a stall for the day. A big thank you goes to our volunteers and to staff member, Vanessa Tomas, for securing a 90kg donation of fruit from Woolworths to give out on the day.

Learnings from London

In September 2022, a LinkWentworth delegation including CEO Andrew McNulty, Chair Mike Allen PSM and Chief Customer Officer Margaret Maljkovic joined then-NSW Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness, Rose Jackson MLC, on a study tour of London's community housing sector.

With Sydney in the grips of an era-defining housing crisis, the tour was undertaken to explore innovative community housing models that might help NSW deliver more affordable homes for the more than 57,000 families currently on the social housing waitlist.

Delegates on the eight-day tour gained valuable insights from four eminent UK housing associations, Peabody, London and Quadrant, Newlon and Jigsaw. They visited a range of housing development and regeneration schemes that emphasised quality design, density, as well as the thoughtful incorporation of outdoor space and community hubs.

The group was also given a tour of the House of Lords, where they met with the Chair of Peabody, Lord Bob Kerslake to discuss UK housing policy.

Andrew McNulty says he came away from the trip feeling invigorated and full of inspiring ideas on how to work smarter as well as more strategically and ambitiously

to deliver better housing solutions for all Australians.

"We saw what can happen when all levels of government work together to make affordable and accessible housing a priority. We also saw that stronger partnerships with developers, financiers and builders lead to win-win scenarios for everyone. Banks see value and commit billions each year. All of that helps shape a stronger, larger and more capable sector."

On the back of the tour, LinkWentworth produced an Insights from London report detailing opportunities for policy and decision-makers across government and industry to address Australia's housing crisis. The report was released at NSW Parliament House on 13 June 2023 by the Hon. Rose Jackson MLC, who is now the Minister for Water, Housing and Homelessness. It contains eight key recommendations for addressing the critical shortage of social and affordable housing in NSW.

- 1 Responding to the housing crisis requires a commitment from all levels of government.
- 2 Outcomes should be prioritised over ownership when delivering social and affordable housing.
- 3 Success depends on simple and layered funding.
- 4 The CHP sector must play a leading role in addressing the critical shortage of affordable housing.
- 5 Planning and policy need to prioritise the fast delivery of affordable housing.
- 6 A range of affordable tenure options should be considered, including shared ownership.
- 7 Investing in quality materials and design is vital.
- 8 The customer must always come first.





Link Wentworth would like to thank Peabody, London and Quadrant, Newlon and Jigsaw for so generously sharing their time, insights and experience. We would also like to thank Minister Jackson for her continued advocacy on this critical issue for our community.

Key insights



Commitment from all levels of government

We need all levels of government to work in partnership with the community housing sector and the private sector to deliver housing as part of a shared vision.



Outcomes over ownership

A key learning from London, is that Government(s) act as policy agents, regulators, part-funders and facilitators, rather than long-term land or social housing owners.

This has significantly scaled up the volume of homes delivered and built the capacity of CHPs.



A layered approach to funding

Funding of social and affordable housing through UK Housing Associations has been reasonably simple and sustainable. Land and assets have been transferred at market or discounted value, grants provided, and private finance leveraged. Keeping funding simple has facilitated scale.



Prioritise planning and policy

New South Wales needs to streamline our planning processes and policies to prioritise and facilitate the delivery of social and affordable housing within reasonable timeframes.

Our housing policy needs to have a 20–30-year focus, going beyond election cycles. The current planning and housing system in NSW is broken so we must act strategically and innovate.



Offer a range of affordable tenure options, including shared ownership

We must look at all housing options—from social and affordable, which we already deliver in Australia, to shared ownership, which has taken off with success in the UK.



Invest in good quality materials and design

With increased density there is a need for increased quality, and a focus on lifecycle and cost-in-use for tenants.

By investing in smart building and neighbourhood design, coupled with durable quality and finishes, Australia's CHPs can deliver future-ready and people-centred homes.



CHP sector has to take a leading role

In Australia, keep it simple and put the subsidy where the benefit will be retained for generations.

It is up to CHPs to take a leading role—to build capacity through mergers and partnerships and share knowledge among the sector, leading to greater innovations and faster delivery.



Always focus on the customer

While remaining ambitious about providing more new homes for those in need, we must continue to adopt a 'customer first' approach which encourages tenant empowerment, community building and wellbeing initiatives



The rewards of giving back

Housing advocate, proud Dunghutti woman and long-term Link Wentworth tenant, Lynne Dunn found purpose, friendship and a sense of belonging through volunteering. Lynne is a dedicated member of our Tenant Advisory Group and Reconciliation Action Plan Advisory Group, as well as a committed and long-standing volunteer in the Hawkesbury community. This year, we were delighted to nominate Lynne in the ZEST Awards in recognition of her commitment to her community.

Lynne says she lives a fortunate life. For the last five years, she has been living in Link Wentworth accommodation in Richmond, something she is deeply grateful for.

"I like where I live and I'm really happy. The support I get from Link Wentworth is amazing."

Always a strong believer in the value of giving back, Lynne puts her passion for volunteering down to her country upbringing.

"When you grow up in a small town, you see that people are always there helping each other. It makes you more involved in volunteering."

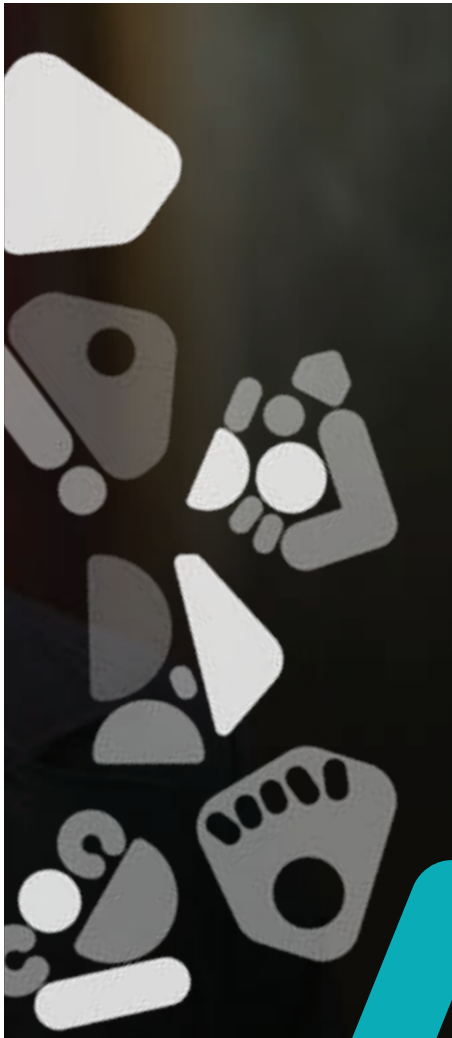
Lynne's first volunteering experience was with the Country Women's Association (CWA), an organisation she had respected and admired since she was a girl.

"I always said that when I retired, I'd join the CWA, but I wish I'd done it as a younger person. The organisation does so much good work running baby health centres, providing relief during disasters and visiting sick children in hospital."

Lynne has gone on to serve her local CWA group as President and International Officer and has been a representative on the NSW State Executive. Once she got the taste for volunteering, she realised there were other groups in the community that could use her support.

For the last decade Lynne has been donating her time to Hawkesbury Helping Hands, an organisation which provides free meals and other support services to those experiencing homelessness.





She says she finds this as rewarding today as when she first started.

“I’ve come a long way with Helping Hands. I’m on the Board of Directors now. I don’t do as much physical work as I used to due to my bad back, but I still go in whenever I can on Saturdays to organise hampers and things like that.

“I love being able to make people feel better and to help make their lives easier. I remember one day bringing my granddaughter in and introducing her to a man who used to come for meal. He said, ‘Thank you for recognising me and for thinking I was worth introducing your grandchild to.’ It made his day, and mine.

“I remember another man saying to me, ‘I came here feeling like a beggar and I’m leaving feeling like I’ve shopped at David Jones.’ I was proud to be able to make him feel welcome and feel like it was okay to ask for help.”

Lynne also volunteers a couple of times a week to read with Indigenous children in local pre-schools through the Merana project. The loving grandmother says she’s thankful for the opportunity it gives her to connect with her own Indigenous heritage while spending time with the kids.

“The children give you so much energy. I love it. I remember one little boy who was really shy at the beginning. By the end of our first session, he was standing at my knees looking straight into my eyes. He wouldn’t go unless I held his hand. Those experiences make you feel like it’s all worthwhile.”

Lynne says she gets as much out of it as the people she helps.

“I’ve met some wonderful people over the years and made some close friendships. I’m grateful for the community and support network it has given me. That was really important back in 2020 when my husband passed away.

“The friends I’d met through volunteering gathered around me at that time. They brought me care packages and checked in to make sure I was okay.

“I was thankful to have a reason to get out of the house at that time, and something to fill in the days. I’d recommend volunteering to everyone, especially people who are feeling lonely and wanting to connect with their community.”

Increasing our effectiveness

Finalising integration

In October 2022, we were delighted to complete the process of integrating and harmonising the pre-existing systems and processes of Link Housing and Wentworth Community Housing. This extensive program of work was achieved on time and on budget, something we are immensely proud of. Since then, our focus has been on ensuring staff have the systems, tools, policies, processes and procedures to deliver consistent approaches across all aspects of the organisation.

IT

Over the last two years, our Information Technology team has embarked on an extensive project plan to bring the Link Housing and Wentworth Community Housing systems together and uplift our technology interactions across numerous platforms allowing us to merge and better manage how we do business. From a technology perspective, this work is now complete with a One Link Wentworth software approach.

From an IT perspective, the integration project has focussed primarily on transitioning to cloud-based systems that are scalable to ensure the business is ready for growth. Cybersecurity has also been at the forefront of our decision-making on technology and the use of Single Sign On to promote business efficiencies.

As part of the merger, we have consolidated our WiFi, printing, and MRI Castleton Housing system across all our offices. We have also retired old phone systems, moved to web-based calling, and provided each team member with a new, encrypted laptop. This has allowed our field teams to remain efficient and mobile – key requirements in our industry.

We have also outsourced some of our more simple, everyday functions to an external provider, to allow our IT team to focus on more strategic initiatives and projects. This supportive partnership with our vendor balances rapid uplift of digital projects with consistent, daily support.

Our IT infrastructure now supports six offices and approximately 250 employees. With the task of merging our core systems now complete, we have begun to develop a new Digital Strategy which allows us to plan our digital journey over next five years. This strategy will continue to focus on helping the business perform functions faster and positioning us for further success.

Cybersecurity measures

With several high-profile data breaches in the news, cybersecurity was a high priority throughout the integration process and continues to underpin our process uplift strategies. We adhered closely to the CHIA Cybersecurity Framework, and our cybersecurity infrastructure has since been independently audited. We have currently been assessed at a level two and have a program of work in place to reach a level three rating. This would be a significant achievement for an organisation of our size.

In addition to improvements in cybersecurity technology and systems, we have also developed new policies and procedures in this area and delivered Cybersecurity Mandatory Training to our entire workforce. We continue to add modules to this training program to further improve staff understanding of risks as they emerge.

One tenant management system

In October 2022, we completed the data and system integration and upgrade of Castleton Housing, our tenant management system and have engaged in an ambitious program of works to uplift and streamline our business processes.

Customer Experience Team (CXT)

To support the introduction of our Customer Experience Team, (which occurred in the previous financial year), significant work has gone into updating policies and procedures to support staff in this team and ensure consistent, high quality customer service. As a result of this uplift, anyone who contacts Link Wentworth now has a much more streamlined and positive experience.

Next steps

With our integration program complete, we can now turn our attention to leveraging this work to drive business improvement. A key component of this is exploring the potential of technological solutions to enable our team to work more efficiently and effectively. We are also kicking off a new project to improve management and use of our data.

Guiding our business redesign and improvement over the next five years will be a new Digital Strategy, which is currently in the process of being finalised.

Operational improvements

We have an ongoing program of work to identify processes and procedures across the entire organisation where improvements and efficiencies can be made. This has included creating new policies and procedures in response to new legislation or legislative changes, as well as merging existing policies and procedures to develop a future focussed One Link Wentworth version.

While all areas have been examined, the majority of this work has been in the areas of tenancy management and finance, and where there have been legislation changes or the need to respond to external pressures. As part of this work, our team also explored new technologies or systems which could enable our staff to maximise their efficiencies and enable Link Wentworth to be an employer of choice.

Reporting

We transitioned all our Power BI reports from Link Housing and Wentworth Community Housing to now be Link Wentworth reports. This was a massive project to integrate and amalgamate reports. Enhancements mean the reports are now much more dynamic and future focussed, as well as being consistent across the organisation. Staff members can easily and quickly create their own reports, or request assistance with creating a new report, if required.

New website and intranet

In 2023, Link Wentworth launched a SharePoint intranet platform in conjunction with the rollout of our new website. Designed as a one stop shop for all key internal information, communication and assets, the SharePoint platform has improved accessibility for both customers and team members.

The Communications team had a key role to play in the design and layout of information hubs and pages, as well as delivering workshops in how to use the SharePoint platform.

Environmental, Social and Governance and our Impact

Link Wentworth is deeply committed to measuring the social and economic outcomes of our services, and to holding ourselves accountable for our performance by developing an Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Framework.

Over the past year we have undertaken a number of initiatives to embed ESG practice and reporting across all areas of the business.

Modern Slavery Statement

Link Wentworth submitted its inaugural Modern Slavery Statement (MSS) in December 2022. This was accepted by the Commonwealth Government in March 2023. The statement holds us accountable and sets out the actions we will take to protect against the risk of slavery in our supply chains. We are currently in the process of embedding the principles outlined in our statement into our systems and contracts with suppliers.

Carbon Assessment

In April 2023, Link Wentworth released its first Carbon Assessment Report. Produced by Pangolin Associates, the report provides baseline data to measure our environmental performance and will be used in the development of our ESG Framework and Action Plan which will be released in FY24.

Environmental, Social and Governance Framework (ESG)

During the year, we completed a comprehensive materiality assessment with Board members and senior staff, that serves as a crucial milestone for the development of our ESG Framework and reporting mechanisms. The assessment identified key issues for our business to further develop as we progress this work. As we move forward in the next financial year, this strategic framework will guide us in navigating complexities, seizing opportunities, and upholding our commitment to ESG principles, all while creating lasting value for all stakeholders.

Outcomes Framework



Wellbeing

Improved emotional wellbeing and mental health

\$10,000

Grant funding received to run wellbeing programs

180

Customers attended Live Well Age Well program for customers over 50 years old across 2 locations

364

Referrals to the Sustainable Tenancy Team (STT) to improve their overall health and link them to support

351

Customers and staff volunteers attended 6 End of Year celebrations events

37

Tenants engaged in the growing Community Gardening Competition 2022



Employment

Improvement in job readiness and employment

72%

Registered Ready2Work participants are under 25 years old and linked to our youth services

5

Young people have signed up to the Work Rent Incentive program

4

Have completed the work experience component of Ready2Work and received financial literacy training

1

Female resident secured ongoing casual employment through Ready2Work program and is currently undertaking Certificate III in hospitality training as part of education pathways program

12

Young people were engaged in the Neighbourhood Job program

13

Referrals to Employment Services



Safety

Improved feeling of safety and security in my neighbourhood

32

Customers and staff were involved in Disaster Resilience Project in the Hawkesbury LGA

85

Customers attended the Maintenance Pop Ups across the Link Wentworth Portfolio

\$48,790

Invested in a mould recovery project in Hawkesbury LGA

191

Customers attended the drop-in sessions across all Link Wentworth portfolio

\$12,750

Grant funding received for community room upgrades



Health

Improved overall health

22

Customers received professional mould cleaning to support them and ensure their health was not impacted

5

New community garden locations across Link Wentworth portfolio to support residents to build connection

4000

Rapid Antigen Test distributed at Link Wentworth communities

41

Health information and educational sessions offered to our residents



Education

Improved education or skills

\$150,000

Awarded in the Link Wentworth 2022 Scholarship Program

141

Customers awarded Link Wentworth scholarship in 2022

19

English classes were offered to CALD customers in partnership with Hornsby Kuring-gai Community College

13

Participants completed the Ready2Work program where they were trained in hospitality sector skills

155

Participants attended Digital Discovery classes offered in 8 LGAs

22

Participants attended a series of activities offered at the Link Wentworth first Adult Learners Week event



Community

Improved satisfaction with neighbourhood and community

43

Customers attended North Sydney Tenant Voice Forum at Ryde and Hornsby LGAs

19

Monthly gardening workshops sessions provided in 8 community locations in partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens. 41 Customers attended gardening workshops.

5

Community End of Year Dinners in partnerships with Salvos Ryde and Sydney Community Services offered at 5 locations with 60 residents attending

37

Active participants in Link Wentworths Tenant Advisory Group

51

Pieces of customer artwork exhibited at "No Place Like Home" art exhibition

 CASE STUDY

Celebrating the enduring contribution of Tony Smith

This year we bid farewell to Tony Smith, our Chief Transformation and Integration Officer, who retired after many years of dedicated service to the social housing sector. Tony came to us after a long and distinguished career in banking and financial services. He made the switch to the not-for-profit world during a career break back in 2000.

“I felt like I needed to move into something more community-focussed. Something where I was helping people in our communities.”

Tony took on a Chief Financial Officer role at Fairfield City Council, before moving to St Vincent de Paul, where he was part of a team that won a bid to receive funding under the Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF). Tony says that seeing the life-changing difference social and affordable housing made to people’s lives inspired him to remain in the sector.

“More than 25 years after starting my career, I found my motivation lay in serving the community.”

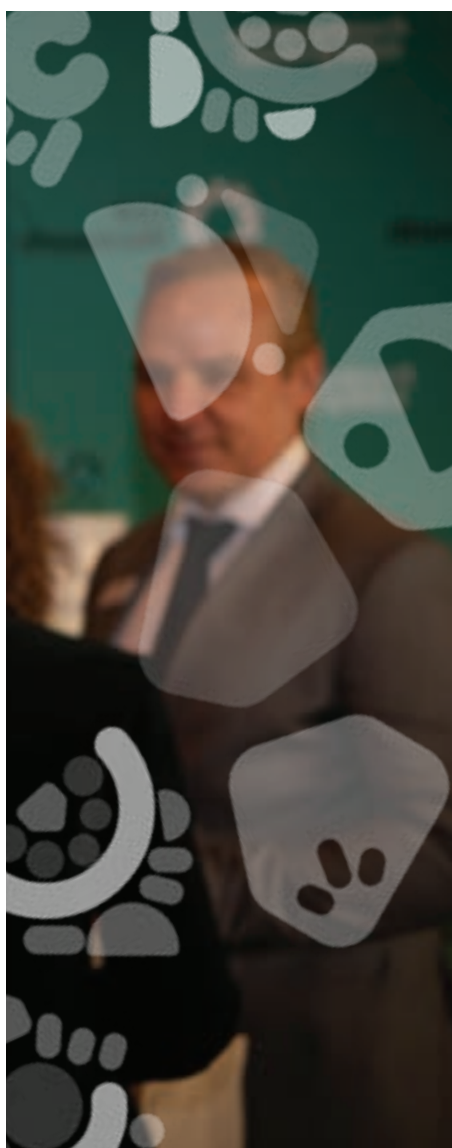
Tony joined Wentworth as Chief Financial Officer back in 2017, inspired by the opportunity to use his skills and experience to help the organisation grow and provide assistance to more people.

“My role is all about building organisational capability. It’s about encouraging talent and developing future leaders in the achievement of the organisation’s objectives.”

Amongst the achievements he is most proud of, Tony ranks steering Link Housing and Wentworth Community Housing through the process of integration most highly.

“It was a mammoth task. The organisational structure had to change, the policies and procedures had to change and our two core systems had to merge. We broke it all down into nine or 10 big projects with a detailed program of works to support it.





“I’m really proud of how smoothly the whole project ran. I recall a director stating, ‘We did not expect to be in this position so soon.’ That was really satisfying to hear.

“I think Link Wentworth is in a really sweet spot now. Everything is in place to take the organisation to the next level.

Tony says he is excited about the future for Link Wentworth.

“The industry is in a state of change, and the current environment is ripe with opportunity. I believe Link Wentworth is ready to take those opportunities and I am looking forward to seeing the outcomes.

“There are very talented people at Link Wentworth, people who I care a lot about. I encourage them to believe in themselves because they are the custodians for Link Wentworth’s future success.”

In the meantime, Tony says he’s going to be taking retirement one step at a time.

“I’m still getting the hang of it to be honest. I always said if I’m good at retirement after the first six months, I’ll retire for another six months.

“I’ll also be looking to keep my mind active by using my experience to help other not-for-profits, perhaps as a board member.”

We thank Tony for the extraordinary contribution he has made to Link Wentworth and wish him all the best for the future.

Employer of choice



Supporting our people

At Link Wentworth, we aspire to become an employer of choice within the community housing sector. We strive to foster a workplace where staff feel connected with each other and our organisation's vision, mission and values. We aim to empower them with the skills and confidence they need to do their job well, while providing training and development opportunities, career pathways and a safe working environment.

Culture

This year, we have focussed our attention on continuing to develop the culture of Link Wentworth, working towards a self-actualising culture where staff gain enjoyment from their work and are supportive of each other.

In October 2022, we conducted a culture survey to explore how staff feel about working at Link Wentworth. Findings from the survey were shared with staff in face-to-face workshops held off-site. During these workshops, staff talked about what culture is and contributed to developing action plans to help us reach our desired culture. The three priority areas where action plans are being developed are:

- Building capacity of our leaders
- Breaking down silos
- Embedding policies, processes and systems

Bringing people together

The first Link Wentworth Residential Conference for all staff was held in September 2022 in the Blue Mountains. With the theme, Unlocking Potential, this was a chance for people to collaborate, problem solve, build trust and have fun, while also immersing themselves in the Link Wentworth 2022-25 Strategy, and contributing to the development of initiatives in key focus areas.

On day one, senior managers participated in workshops focussed on behaviours and bringing the Link Wentworth values to life. On day two, all staff came together to participate in workshops on the Link Wentworth values. An inspirational guest speaker spoke about resilience and growth mindset and attendees participated in activities aimed at unleashing potential within the business and within themselves. Staff awards were presented to recognise those who had made an outstanding contribution to the organisation throughout the year.

Learning and Development Strategy

To support our goal to become an employer of choice, this year we developed a Learning and Development Strategy aimed at enhancing individual and organisational capacity and capability. A key goal of the strategy is to ensure all staff have the skills to competently perform their roles, while also participating in opportunities to upskill and develop their careers at Link Wentworth. The People & Culture team, together with our people leaders, are developing training plans for all roles within the organisation, along with competency assessment guides to assist in unlocking the potential of our staff. As well as outlining key learning and development strategic objectives related to training, succession and career planning, the strategy maps out a plan, priority areas and a timeline for implementation until the end of 2024.

White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation

In October 2022, we became a White Ribbon Accredited Workplace, formally demonstrating our commitment to gender equality, eliminating gender-based violence, and promoting safe work environments. Led by our White Ribbon Committee of staff volunteers who

collaborated with all parts of the business, the accreditation process involved a comprehensive audit of Link Wentworth's policies, procedures and practices in relation to women's safety and gender equality issues. As part of our involvement in the program, we host regular education and awareness sessions, invite speakers to talk and educate staff about domestic and family violence and participate in fundraising activities on White Ribbon Day. Given our work supporting women and families experiencing domestic and family violence, this accreditation is important for both our staff and the customers we support.

Diversity and Inclusion

Our first Link Wentworth Diversity and Inclusion policy was approved and launched in December 2022. The policy was developed by the Diversity and Inclusion Working Group comprised of staff volunteers, in collaboration with the business. The policy formally addresses practices and procedures that promote diversity and inclusion across Link Wentworth. Since the launch, we have seen aspects of the policy directly impact other areas of the business, where procedures or practices have been formally acknowledged or recorded. Our Diversity and Inclusion Working Group has continued to meet quarterly to discuss and drive diversity and inclusion initiatives and practices within the organisation.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff

In March 2023, we were pleased to be granted an exemption order under section 126 of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW) to enable specific employment opportunities and leave entitlements for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people at Link Wentworth.

The exemption order, which was granted for the maximum period of 10 years, allows Link Wentworth to advertise, designate and recruit roles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons only, and to implement Link Wentworth's First Nations Ceremonial Leave Policy for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander persons only, without risk of breaching the Act.

This was a significant turning point for Link Wentworth. With the protection of the exemption order, Link Wentworth now has greater flexibility to positively discriminate against Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians and, in turn, positively contribute to addressing systemic disadvantage experienced by this group.

Some of the anticipated flow-on benefits of the exemption order for Link Wentworth include:

- enhancing access to meaningful employment opportunities in the mainstream labour market

- increasing workforce participation and reducing the gap between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander unemployment and unemployment rates of other Australians
- providing enhanced opportunity of ownership for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees of Link Wentworth, with greater opportunity to contribute to improving life outcomes for current and future generations of their own people (customers of Link Wentworth)
- providing complementary support mechanisms (e.g. paid cultural leave) in acknowledgement of the unique needs, cultural practices and traditions of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people which may otherwise disrupt employment
- enhancing the quality of our customer service to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander customers by employing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff to provide culturally-appropriate services and programs
- encouraging development of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and their communities through the provision of targeted opportunities and programs
- bringing Link Wentworth's Reconciliation Action Plan further into life.

Wellbeing group sessions

We recognise that the work our staff do to support vulnerable customers can be challenging, so looking after the health and wellbeing of our workforce is extremely important. A team of clinical psychologists meet with our front-facing teams every 6-8 weeks to debrief on any critical issues they may have experienced with customers. These mandatory group sessions are having a positive impact for those involved and provide an opportunity for team members to collectively support each other through sharing tips and experiences.

Customer service training

We are always looking to improve the quality of our customer service. This year, all staff—from the Executive team to front-line workers—attended Customer Service – Making a Difference training, offsite with Big Picture Training. Delivered in small groups, the training looked at ways to improve customer satisfaction including how and when to respond to customer enquiries. Following the face-to-face practical sessions, participants completed an online module to reinforce what they had learnt.

We also invested in upskilling some of our staff to facilitate this training in-house. All new employees complete this training, and refresher training will be delivered to all staff every two years.

CHIA Cadetship Program

With recruitment in the community housing industry an ongoing challenge, we have continued to support the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) NSW Cadetship Program.

Supported by the NSW Government, the Cadetship Program supports people who are interested in a career in the community housing industry to complete a Certificate IV in Housing while also working for a community housing provider, such as Link Wentworth. Throughout their 12-month paid placement, the cadet experiences a range of functions and departments within the organisation, guided by a manager and mentor.

We were delighted to offer our 2022–23 cadet, Tarje, an ongoing role within our Housing Solutions team at the completion of her cadetship in March 2023. Additionally, we recruited another person who had completed the cadetship program and gained valuable industry experience at another community housing provider.



Cybersecurity training and awareness

To align with the organisation's increased focus on cybersecurity, new training opportunities focussed on cybersecurity awareness were provided to staff to improve capability to recognise cyber threats and areas of risk. This included compulsory e-learning modules delivered through our Learning Management System.

Growth and changes

In February 2023, we hired a Recruitment Specialist into our People & Culture team. Having a dedicated resource in the recruitment space has allowed other team members to focus on developing and implementing initiatives and continuous improvement projects including the learning and development strategy and developing and updating key policies and procedures.

Work Health and Safety is also now a sub-area of People & Culture, with a dedicated Health and Safety Manager appointed in early 2023.

Staff awards

Each year we celebrate and recognise our outstanding staff through the Link Wentworth Annual Awards of Excellence. The 2022 Awards were announced in December 2022.

The winners were:

Service Excellence

Linda Leong
Vasumathy Aravinthan
Meghan Winckle (highly commended)
Tayla Hui (highly commended)

Teamwork

Akanksha Agrawal
Bronwyn Jorgensen (highly commended)

Leadership

George Bogdanovic
Dinesha Karunaratna (highly commended)
Brenda Scott (highly commended)

Quiet Achiever

Renee Bolding
Jasmina Grujoska

Rising Star

Brianna Murray
Michael Barlow
Mayra Sheargold
Yani Ugo

Emerging Leader of the Year

Kerrie Edwards

PowerHousing Australia Awards

Link Wentworth is a proud member of PowerHousing Australia, a national network of 38 growth and Tier 1 regulated CHPs who develop and manage social and affordable housing across Australia. Each year PowerHousing Australia hosts an Awards program recognising individuals and teams from its member organisations who are making an outstanding contribution to the lives of tenants and communities.

In 2022, Link Wentworth was delighted to see two staff members recognised:

Billie-Jo Williams – Runner-up for the Outstanding Achievement Award and Scholarship

Mayra Sheargold – Highly Commended for the Rising Star Award

In June 2023, Billie-Jo and Mayra joined peers, CHP leaders, and industry specialists at the PowerHousing Australia Hobart Travel Immersion. The week-long retreat was an opportunity for learning and networking, with attendees visiting affordable housing sites, participating in mentoring and coaching, as well as hearing from politicians including Federal Housing Minister, the Hon. Julie Collins MP, Tasmanian Minister the Hon. Guy Barnett MP, and Tasmanian opposition leader the Hon. Rebecca White MP.



Providing an exciting and rewarding place to work

Head of Tenancy at Link Wentworth, Alison O'Neill has relished the opportunity to return to an organisation she loves.

Alison first joined Link Housing in 2017 as Head of Housing. It was a busy and challenging role she cherished for the opportunity it gave her to create positive change in the community. But in 2021, a health scare saw Alison take a much-needed break.

"I was diagnosed with breast cancer," she says. "And there were some major complications with the surgery and my health. I'd been working in the sector for about 16 years at the time and I decided to take some time off.

"The support, warmth and kindness I received from the Link Housing leadership team at the time, even though I was leaving, was amazing. They said they'd have me back anytime."

Thankfully, Alison's cancer was caught early enough to be successfully treated and she spent the next 12 months recovering, playing a little golf and tennis and teaching herself French. But with a severe housing crisis unfolding, it wasn't long

before she felt the urge to get back to work and make a difference.

Unsure whether she was ready to take on a high-profile role, Alison took a position with a smaller social and affordable housing provider in the Redfern area.

"I spent 12 months there, and I loved the role," she says. "But I felt my reach was limited and I just wanted to do more."

When the Head of Tenancy position at Link Wentworth became available in 2023, Alison jumped at the opportunity to apply for it. She was over the moon when her application was successful and was welcomed back into the Link Wentworth family with open arms.

"I've been back a month now and I still get goosebumps every day. On my first day people came up and just put their arms around me and said, 'we're so glad you're back.' It was very humbling and overwhelming."

Alison says she particularly enjoys being back at an organisation whose values so closely reflect her own.





"I find the CEO and the entire Executive team at Link Wentworth to be particularly kind. We share the same values of integrity, respect, accountability and ambition. We have some really experienced people here and the culture is collegiate and customer focussed.

"The pathways for professional development at Link Wentworth are phenomenal."

Since returning, Alison has seen the benefits that have come about through the merger of Link and Wentworth, and she's excited about the potential for the future.

"The organisation has really developed and become more sophisticated through the merge. It's bigger and stronger, and that will help us to win better contracts, build better developments and just keep growing to create more social and affordable housing. It's exciting."

"I find the CEO and the entire Executive team at Link Wentworth to be particularly kind. We share the same values of integrity, respect, accountability and ambition. We have some really experienced people here and the culture is collegiate and customer focussed."

Mayra and Billie-Jo make the most of a powerful opportunity

The entire Link Wentworth team was both delighted and proud when two of our staff members, Mayra Sheargold and Billie-Jo Williams were recognised at the 2022 PowerHousing Academy Scholarship and National Awards.

Mayra, who is our Senior Affordable Housing Manager, was highly commended in the Rising Star category. Former Team Leader of our Windsor Tenancy team and now Team Leader at our Core and Cluster service Ngarrunga, Billie-Jo, was runner-up for the Outstanding Achievement Award.

In recognition of their achievements, Mayra and Billie-Jo were invited to be part of a three-day immersion program run by PowerHousing in Hobart. Key industry players including the Federal Housing Minister, the Hon. Julie Collins MP, were also part of the program.

Billie-Jo says the pair made the most of their opportunity to rub shoulders with some of the most influential figures in the community housing sector.

"I was completely honoured to be chosen for the program. It was a confidence-boosting, skill-gaining experience that

I would encourage everyone to get involved in.

"I took as much as I possibly could from it. At one point I even jumped in the car with one of the CEOs to probe him, soak up as much as I could and learn from him. I gained a really good network and friendships out of the program," Billie-Jo says.

Mayra says the scholarship was a unique opportunity that left her inspired and excited for her future in the housing sector. She says travelling to a different state to see how they do things, discussing challenges and networking were all great opportunities for her.

"I'm so thankful to Link Wentworth for the support, nurturing and encouragement I've received. I'm grateful for the investment in my career and future, and the recognition.

"As an aspiring leader, to have the right support is





paramount and it's incredibly inspiring to work amongst great leadership," Mayra says.

For Billie-Jo, the experience gave her new confidence and direction when she was at a crossroads in her career. After completing the immersion program, Billie-Jo took advantage of an opportunity to step into the new team leader role at Ngarrunga, our newly opened crisis accommodation service for women and children escaping family and domestic violence.

"Confidence was the biggest thing I got from the immersion. I came out of there with a very clear mind on what I wanted to do. My goal now is to grow in this space.

"I've reached a point now where I can see myself in a higher leadership role, making a difference and being a part of change in the industry."

Mayra says the scholarship experience widened her horizons and has made her a better leader.

"I continue to be inspired by our leaders at Link Wentworth. I admire their compassion and I'm constantly learning from them.

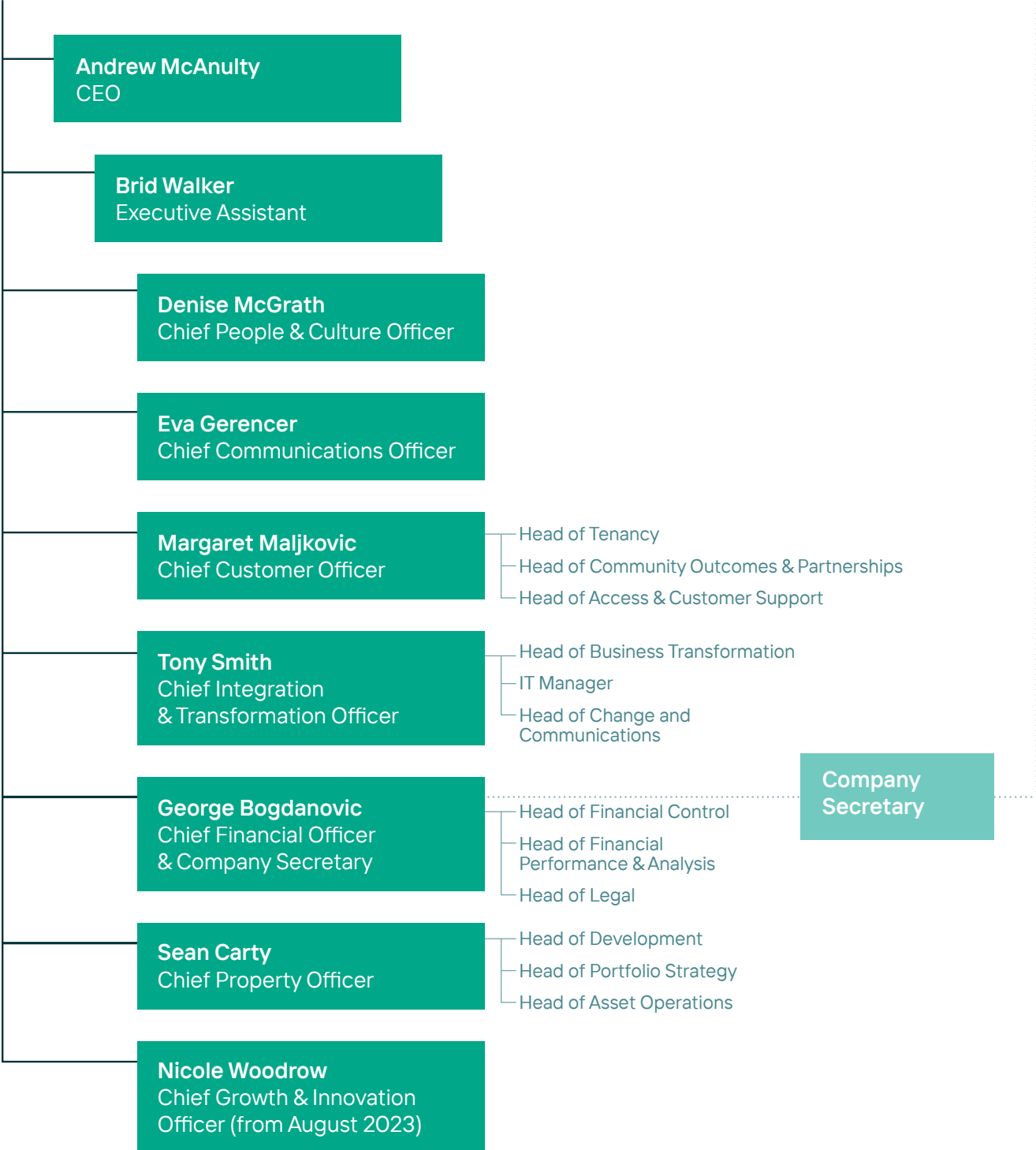
"I'm fulfilled and know that the Link Wentworth Affordable team is where I can make a significant contribution and difference to people's lives. I look forward to my future at Link Wentworth."

Congratulations to Mayra and Billie-Jo. We are very fortunate to have you both.

Organisational Structure

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

Board of Directors



Executive Leadership Team

Andrew McAnulty 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.

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 USA and Australia. 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.

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 over 25 years in social housing, Margaret has led operational service delivery and key initiatives in community and estate regeneration during her executive roles in the NSW Government. Her past work in homelessness, domestic violence, and substance abuse support has underscored the vital role of stable, affordable housing as a fundamental human right. Margaret holds a Social Sciences degree, a Real Estate license, and is a passionate advocate for the community housing sector's important role in advocating for and delivering more social housing while improving lives.

From left to right: Andrew McAnulty, Sean Carty, Eva Gerencer, George Bogdanovic



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 Practising 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
Chief Communications Officer
(From November 2022)*

Passionate about driving results for communities through collaboration, partnerships and relationships, Eva has worked for over 30 years in the community services industry, covering a wide range of areas including communications, advocacy, social research and project management. She has established and managed communications teams and led the transformation of several not-for-profit organisations through rebranding initiatives. Eva has a Bachelor of Arts, Post Graduate Diploma in Adult Education and is completing a Master of Policy and Applied Social Research.

**Brianna Ragel
July – September 2022*

Denise McGrath
Chief People & Culture
Officer

With over two decades of experience in Human Resources (HR), Denise has demonstrated proficiency in various areas of HR management. Her extensive expertise encompasses team leadership, devising comprehensive people and culture strategies, strategic workforce planning, and optimizing organisational structures. Denise has experience in harmonising workforce terms and conditions post-mergers, contributing to tender writing processes, and implementing employee well-being initiatives. Her diverse career spans both corporate and non-profit sectors, providing her with a comprehensive understanding of HR dynamics across different industries.

Nicole Woodrow
Chief Growth & Innovation
Officer (from August 2023)

Nicole is an experienced professional in the housing and property development industry having worked 25 years in government, the private sector, not for profit organisations and for the Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA). Nicole, in her role in government, led several housing diversity and affordability demonstration projects. Most recently she established and led a specialist team within the NSW Government that developed a process and pipeline for the delivery of affordable housing projects in partnership with the Community Housing sector.

From left to right: Nicole Woodrow, Margaret Maljkovic, Denise McGrath, Tony Smith



Board of directors

Mike Allen PSM Chair

Mike Allen is a respected industry leader, independent housing advisor and former CEO of Housing NSW. He has more than 40 years' 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; 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, Chair of Audit & Risk Committee for Property & Place Group, NSW Department of Planning & Environment, Chair of Compliance & Risk Committee for Gleneagles Asset Management Ltd and Independent Member for Audit & Risk Committee for NSW Greater Cities Commission. He recently retired as Chair of Campbell Page Ltd and prior director appointments include Non-Executive Director of Have A voice Pty Ltd, Children's Tumour Foundation of Australia Ltd, Eureka Group Holdings Ltd, Ku-ring-gai Financial Services Ltd and Council of the Aging (NSW) Inc.

Nirmal has over 35 years executive experience as Finance Director/ Chief Financial Officer of both listed and unlisted companies covering operations in Australia and overseas and over 14 years board and corporate advisory services experience. He has a Master of Commerce Degree (Business Management major) from UNSW and is a Fellow of Australian Institute of Company Directors, Governance Institute of Australia, Chartered Accountant ANZ and CPA Australia.

From left to right: Ken Gilbert, Nirmal Hansra, Mike Allen PSM



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.

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 as the Executive General Manager – Governance, Risk and Compliance, Reckitt and Colman, Coca-Cola and ASX listed Medical Australia Limited. Mark is a Fellow of CPA Australia, the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the Governance Institute of Australia.

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. Dianne is an experienced advisor and leader in the social sector. She has held several national CEO roles focussed 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 focussed on integrated and holistic approaches across health and education. She holds a Doctor of Philosophy – Education/Social Science, Bachelor of Social Science (Hons First Class), Bachelor of Teaching, and is a Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Dianne is also currently completing a postgraduate executive certificate in Not-For-Profit Management and Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy Business School.

From left to right:
Brodie Druett,
Mark McEnallay,
Kerry Robinson OAM,
Belinda Bentley



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 Graduate Member 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 with Keppel Capital, a Singaporean listed conglomerate. He recently co-founded Bluepoint which will focus on energy transition investments. In 2012 he initiated 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 Licenced Real Estate Agent (NSW).

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 Chair of Civic Risk Mutual Limited and of Blacktown Venue Management Limited. He is a Director of Civic Risk Insurance Limited (Guernsey). He is Chair of the Greater Sydney Heat Taskforce and 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. In 2023 he was awarded the prestigious Western Sydney Champion 2023 Award by the Committee for Sydney.

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.

From left to right:
Andrew Sweeney, Aimee Lindfield,
Simon Maughan Wright, Matt Foster
(Board Observer), Dr Dianne Jackson.



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





**Link
Wentworth**

Providing homes, building futures.

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