

# Central Tablelands Housing Association

## Tenant Participation Strategy



**Version 1, 2007 - 2010**

**May 2007**

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# Section 1

## The context of Tenant Participation in NSW

### 1.1 Introduction

This Tenant Participation (TP) strategy is a flexible plan that:

- Says what our commitment to TP is
- Says what our commitment to working in the wider community is
- Says how this will be carried out
- Says what resources will be made available to support TP
- And sets some clear targets for what will be done through an action plan for 2006 –2007 that has been developed with tenants through an extensive consultation process

### 1.2 What is Tenant Participation?

“Tenant Participation is a two-way process involving the sharing of ideas, information and power. That means tenants and their landlords working together to improve housing conditions and housing services.

How it’s approached depends on the particular circumstances. What’s essential is a range of participation opportunities which allow tenants to get involved as individuals and collectively as part of accountable, organised groups. “

This definition is taken from a manifesto for tenant participation developed by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) in the UK<sup>1</sup>. The manifesto was the result of extensive consultation amongst the tenant movement in Britain. CTHA will adopt the main principles of the manifesto that are relevant to the NSW context.

As our guiding principle, CTHA will make sure tenants are able to be involved as individuals or part of a group to take as much, or as little, control over decisions as they wish, within the board of director’s overall legal responsibility for the actions of the association.

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<sup>1</sup> TPAS UK (2005) A manifesto for tenant participation in the UK

## **1.3 CTHA's commitment to Tenant Participation**

### **Tenant Rights and Participation**

Central Tablelands Housing Association will continue to develop constructive and meaningful methods of involving tenants in the management of their housing and encourage them to have input into the structures and processes for development of policies and procedures. The Board of Management and Staff encourage the participation of tenants in the organisation.

### **Tenant Involvement**

CTHA will foster tenant involvement in the planning, delivery, evaluation and management of the organisation's services, in ways that are appropriate to the needs of all tenants. This involvement will include an effective exchange of information between CTHA and tenants, consultation on individual and community issues and genuine opportunities for tenants to shape decisions made by the association. . We will offer a variety of methods of involvement that are based on tenants' own needs and issues.

### **Statement from Chair & EO**

CTHA believes that tenants are the most important stakeholders in the association and that there are clear benefits for tenants, the Association & for local communities for having a tenant participation policy and strategy. Tenants have a vital contribution to make in ensuring our services are as effective and accountable as they can be. Management is committed to providing tenant participation opportunities to tenants throughout the organisation in accordance with the tenant participation strategy and support that tenant participation is a continuous process which must be constantly reviewed.

## **1.4 CTHA's commitment to working in the wider community**

### **Statement of commitment to working in the wider community**

"Tenant participation is based in housing but housing can't be viewed in isolation from the many other issues facing communities. The principle of individual and collective involvement and empowerment is one that cuts across a range of other issues about communities, crime and anti social behaviour, the environment, education, skills and jobs."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> TPAS UK (2005) A manifesto for tenant participation in the UK

CTHA will work with other partners to help develop the wider communities we work in and the skills, knowledge and confidence of the individuals involved in tenant participation and community development.

## **1.5 National Community Housing Standards on Tenant Participation**

The National Community Housing Standards (NCHS) are a useful framework to direct work on TP and community building. CTHA have made considerable progress already in meeting commitments under the NCHS. Section Two of this strategy describes in detail how CTHA will work with tenants to deliver on each of these standards in a locally relevant way. The standards we will refer to in relation to tenant participation and community involvement are:

### **1.5.1 Standard 3.2: Tenant Participation**

**Tenants contribute to and participate in the decision-making of the organisation.**

This standard has the following components:

- Written commitment to tenant participation
- Feedback from tenants is sought
- Where proposals will affect tenants, the organisation consults with them before it makes major changes.
- Opportunities are provided for tenants to participate in its decision-making processes of the organisation
- Barriers that might limit participation in the organisation are identified and addressed
- Levels of TP are monitored.

## 1.5.2 Standard 4.2: Building Community Capacity

**Work undertaken by the organisation contributes to sustainable improvements in the well-being of tenants and communities.**

This standard has the following components:

- A written commitment to building sustainable improvements in the well-being of tenants and communities.
- Strategies are used to build sustainable improvements in the lives of tenants and communities
- Collaborative working relationships
- Keeping informed about social housing
- The organisation monitors and reviews the scope and level of its contribution and commitment to building community capacity.

## **Section 2**

# **CTHA's Tenant Participation strategy**

## **2.0 Tenant input into this strategy**

Tenants and staff have been fully involved in setting up this TP strategy through:

- A postal questionnaire asking which forms of consultation will work best for each area
- Local meetings in Bathurst, Orange and Mudgee in November 2006
- Staff TP consultation in November 2006
- Board TP consultation and briefing in January 2007
- Three further meetings were held in Bathurst, Orange and Mudgee in March 2007. The purpose of these meetings was to feedback information to tenants about their consultation preferences, to describe the main elements of the draft TP strategy and for tenants to develop key action points that will lead to the implementation of the TP strategy

64 tenants contributed by returning the tenant participation survey and a total of 59 tenants attended the two rounds of local meetings.

## **2.1 Links to other strategies and services**

Tenant Participation does not happen in isolation. It is based on our belief in tenants' rights and it affects many of our services and policies and procedures, for example

- Statement of Tenants' Rights
- Commitment to service – housing Aboriginal people
- Strategic Plan
- Annual Budget etc

## **2.2 Information**

### **How will tenants be kept informed?**

Tenants will be kept informed through the tenants' newsletter. The newsletter was the most popular source of information for tenants. The strategy will be to continue to produce the newsletter every quarter, but to increase the level of input from tenants. During the consultation several tenants volunteered to assist

with the newsletter: they will be contacted to discuss what role they would like to play.

Tenants also wished to be kept informed with the use of flyers, letters and open meetings. Effective information giving depends on using a variety of methods, including word of mouth.

### **What did tenants want information about?**

Tenants' priorities were to receive additional information about dealing with anti social behaviour, the repairs and maintenance service, local training and employment opportunities, community activities in the local area, landlord / tenant responsibilities and tenant consultation and participation opportunities. These topics will be discussed in future newsletters.

## **2.3 Consultation**

The survey and workshops showed overwhelming support for the idea of tenant consultation by CTHA. 87% of respondents thought it was a good idea for CTHA to ask tenants for their views on a regular basis.

### **Consultation techniques**

In the TP survey tenants said that they would prefer to be consulted either by letter or through the newsletter by being given an opportunity to submit written responses.

Local tenants meetings, the establishment of a Tenant's Action Group, fun events like a local BBQ, local tenant representatives from each area (Mudgee, Bathurst, and Orange) and postal questionnaires were identified as useful consultation techniques at the local workshops held in November 2006.

CTHA will trial the most effective consultation techniques and review them with tenants. Effective consultation is not just a one-off process. It encompasses a wide range of methods so tenants can become fully involved if and when they choose. CTHA will explore the best techniques for tenants and the association and vary the methods chosen if necessary.

### **Consulting individuals**

CTHA will continue to consult individuals where there is an opportunity for them to have a meaningful input into things that affect their home, their tenants or their local community, for example:

- Colour choices in the home
- Kitchen tops
- Inspection days

- Consult/collect information on the condition of tenants' homes during property inspections
- Conduct an annual tenant survey
- Widen membership of CTHA

### **Consulting tenants on major decisions**

Where major decisions are being proposed that will affect tenants, either locally or across the whole of CTHA's properties we will consult tenants before any decisions are taken.

### **Giving feedback to tenants**

Giving effective and timely feedback to everyone involved in TP is vital to ongoing success. CTHA will consult participants to check what methods of feedback are appropriate. These could include:

- Meeting notes circulated soon after events
- Follow up newsletters
- Information on the CTHA website
- Fact sheets
- Feedback via local representatives

## **2.4 Taking part in CTHA's decision making processes**

CTHA will ensure that tenants are given a variety of opportunities to genuinely influence the decisions made by the association. Unless tenants can influence the organisation's strategic direction and the significant choices that the association makes from time to time, tenant participation can be viewed as tokenistic. The association believes that our decision making is likely to be enhanced if tenants can take part. Tenants have clear ideas about priorities at both the local community level and for the overall direction of the association. CTHA will capture this input and make sure tenants can take part. This will result in better decisions and reduce the likelihood of wasting precious resources.

However, CTHA also has a responsibility to balance the needs and wishes of individual tenants with the needs of all CTHA tenants. As a responsible landlord we also need to consider the impact of decisions on the wider community and the financial stability of organisation.

CTHA's Board retains the legal responsibility for decisions made. They have to consider many issues to meet their responsibilities as Directors, including the legality of decisions made, the landlord's duty of care, Occupational Health and Safety, financial viability, equal opportunities and the overall direction of the organisation.

We will help tenants to take part in CTHA's decision making process by:

- Providing tenants with sufficient background information to help make informed decisions on major issues as they arise
- Offering training where necessary to build skills, knowledge and confidence
- Carrying out further consultation with tenants to see if they wish to set up local groups to put forward proposals from each of CTHA's three main local centres
- Investigate options for electing or selecting tenant representatives from each area who would have a mandate to contribute ideas from their local area
- Investigate the establishment of a Tenants' Advisory Group (TAG), which would represent tenants' views across all CTHA's properties. The TAG would have the ability to engage in a genuine two way dialogue with the Executive Officer, including making suggestions to Directors on a wide range of issues. The TAG could take part in reviewing policies and making recommendations to the board if it wished to.
- Continue holding tenant consultation sessions for tenants to have a say about CTHA's strategic direction. At the moment tenant meetings are held when the Board is developing new strategic and annual plans. This allows tenants to influence the organisation's direction at the highest level before decisions have been made.
- CTHA has a very effective, skills based board. Tenants with relevant skills are welcome to apply for election to the board. CTHA will provide briefing sessions and training and help to develop the skills of tenants who express an interest of standing for the board.

## **2.5 Barriers to Tenant Participation**

CTHA face very substantial barriers to successful TP. The most significant are:

- CTHA are based in four main locations – Orange, Bathurst, Mudgee and Wellington. There are significant distances between the towns. For example Mudgee is almost 200 kilometres from Orange. This is around a four and a half hour round trip. This fact alone presents formidable challenges:
  - The additional travel time needed to engage tenants in different areas
  - Travel costs for staff
  - Travel time and costs for tenants to attend meetings or training events
  - The Community Housing Leasing Program (CHLP) funding mechanism does not fully recognise the costs associated with multi-site organisations nor the travel costs of regional associations. This has a

significant impact on regional, multi-site organisations, which is exacerbated if tenant travel is also required

- Most of CTHA's properties are dispersed around the regional towns (with the exception of some estate based homes in Mudgee). This means that there is less 'community due to location' – and tenants may not share many local community issues that would otherwise bring them together. In fact the only shared interest for many tenants is being a CTHA tenant. And many tenants, quite legitimately, just want CTHA to continue providing an excellent service and wish to be left to get on with their lives.
- Different issues and priorities in different towns
- Non existent public transport between the four main towns
- A lack of locally based meeting places

These potential barriers were identified at a staff TP workshop in November 2006:

- Some tenants don't want to be involved
- Insurance issues need to be clarified if staff are transporting tenants and for tenants' events
- The lack of specific budget for TP
- Existing staff workloads
- Costs of tenant's priorities
- Lack of training/cost of/access to tenant support
- Meeting expectations of wide groups
- Meetings expectations raised by T.P
- Capital/Leasehold difference
- Some tenants don't wish to get involved because they don't wished to be identified as a social housing tenant
- Some personalities can be overwhelming

### **Overcoming barriers to Tenant Participation**

As suggested, overcoming the barriers described above will be very difficult. It will be an ongoing issue for the association. The following ideas will be discussed with tenants to get the best balance for successful TP:

- Setting up local groups, to be supported by local staff, with an accessible meeting point. These groups can bring forward their ideas and priorities at a grass roots level
- Establishing a central Tenant Advisory Group for tenants to comment on issues that affect the whole association. The TAG group will only be able

to meet face-to-face infrequently because of the problems with travel and geography.

- Pilot tele- and video- conferencing to support the main TAG group meetings. Tele-conferencing will work best where tenants are able to come into a central point in their local town and speak to others in the other regional centers. We will investigate the options for video-conferencing and webcasts as well
- Where face to face meetings are critical we will provide transport for tenants or meet their reasonable travel costs if meetings occur outside their local area. This may include offering mini-buses to tenant representatives or paying them the same kilometre rates as staff receive if they use their own cars.
- Assist tenant leaders with access to computers to print community information – perhaps with access to a stand alone basic computer in CTHA local offices
- Ask the TAG group to consider adopting a focused approach to their work by choosing two or three priorities or themes each year. This should assist in concentrating action and delivering some real results.

## **2.6 Involvement in the wider community**

“Capacity building” means developing the skills of tenants and other community partners so that they can bring about improvements in community life. Capacity building may refer to helping tenants learn about the housing world and improve their ability to play a full part in discussions about housing issues.

But capacity building may also refer to issues in the wider community. Although CTHA’s primary duty is to its tenants, housing issues are sometimes impossible to separate from community issues like crime, unemployment, a lack of education and poor health. Although many of these issues are outside CTHA’s role, they can play their part by working with community partners like the Police, NSW Health, and youth services etc.

### **Action on community capacity building:**

The capacity building role requires additional resources – however CTHA sees clear benefits from being involved therefore it will:

- Increase networking with key partners (list) e.g. inter agencies
- Access training opportunities for staff and tenants
- Build ties to the wider tenant movement, including the Regional Tenant Resource Services

- Explore training and employment support for interested tenants through local employment services
- Utilise the Community plan developed by Council in each of the areas to ensure that CTHA have a rounded picture of wider community issues
- Invite key local partners to attend local area or TAG events as guest speakers
- Generate a 'map' of local agencies and resources for each office

CTHA will consider supporting community based social events that bring community members together.

## **2.7 Monitoring and reviewing the TP strategy**

The TP strategy will be formally reviewed with interested tenants on an annual basis. It will be reviewed at the same time of year (currently October) that the association's overall strategic direction is reviewed when the operational plan is drawn up. This is because the TP strategy is an important part of CTHA's overall plans. Feedback can be collected from tenants and this can then influence the Board's strategic plan. This will also allow for money to be put aside for tenant participation projects in the organisation's budget.

The annual review will look at how successful CTHA and tenants have been at achieving the aims set out in the Action Plan for the previous year. This information will be reported on to the Board.

Other indicators for success in tenant participation will be developed with tenant representatives, but may include:

- progress with the annual action plan;
- tenant and staff training (what training they have had and what they need);
- reviewing minutes from tenants' and residents' meetings to monitor progress;
- feedback and follow up on surveys; and
- the number of events held and the numbers attending
- spending on tenant participation

## **2.8 Resources**

Successful tenant participation needs to be properly resourced. CTHA will discuss the resources needed with tenant representatives at a local and association-wide level. Some of the key areas to consider will be:

- training requirements (for tenants, staff, and board members)
- hiring meeting rooms;
- the cost of providing lunch, teas and coffee;
- providing crèche facilities;
- out of pocket expenses;

- consultation costs;
- travelling expenses for tenants going to meetings;
- printing and posting newsletters and other information;
- grants to help new, developing and established tenant organisations;
- access to IT and support networks;
- staff time;
- going to conferences and seminars.

The TP budget for 2007-8 will be \$5,000 for tenant groups and an additional \$5,000 for newsletters, printing and postage. Other options for funding tenant participation will be explored to enhance this budget item.

### **Training**

Tenants, staff and board members involved in TP will need to develop the necessary skills, attitudes and knowledge to take part in or support participation. Some people may need to build up their own confidence before they can take part effectively.

CTHA will offer at least two training event for tenants each year, provided there is demand from tenants.

## **2.9 Equal opportunities**

CTHA will actively encourage the involvement of all sections of the community – young and old, regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, faith, orientation or any other social or economic factor.

We believe in the contribution made by the diversity present in the communities we work in. We will take practical steps to support the involvement of people from diverse backgrounds, including providing translation and interpreting services where necessary, working with community leaders, lands councils and other specialist partners in the community.

We will also apply CTHA's Commitment to service for housing Aboriginal people in our TP policy and:

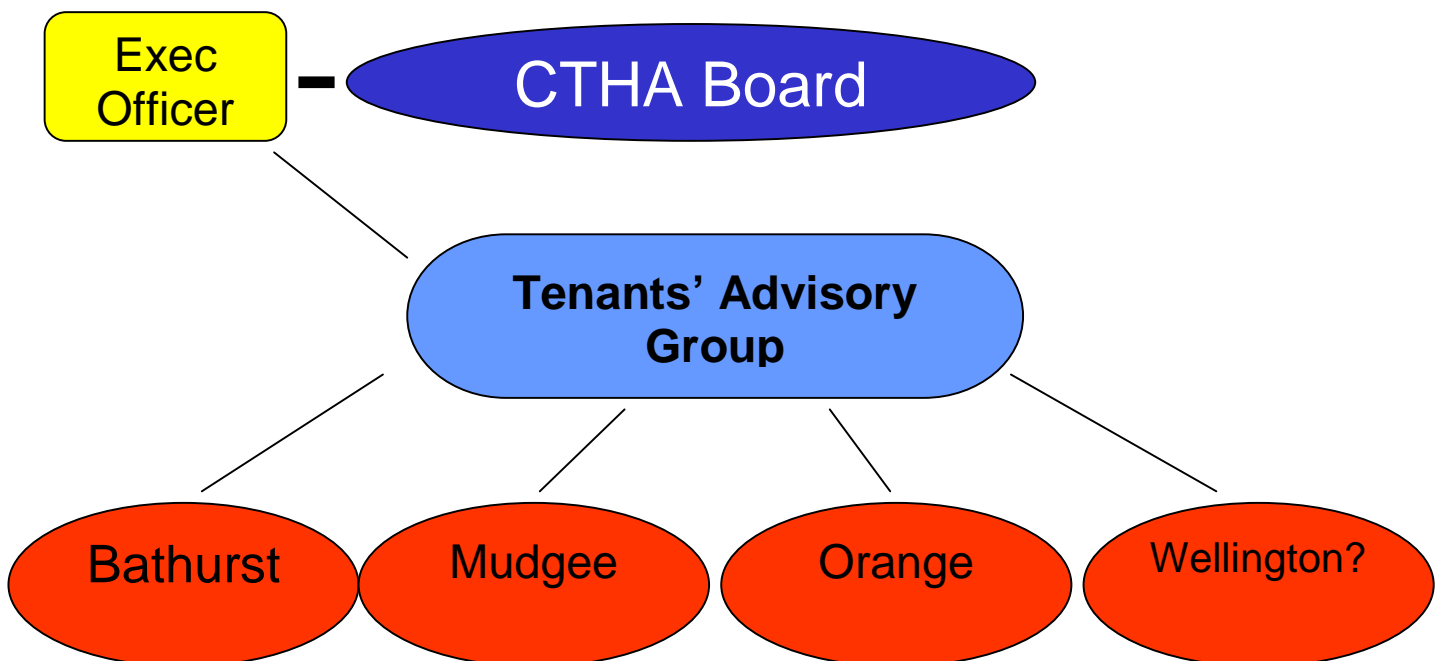
- Take positive steps to understand the housing needs of Aboriginal people;
- Work to build good respectful relationships with aboriginal tenants, applicants and their extended families and communities;
- Provide information about our policies and procedures and other documents in plain English and if possible in culturally appropriate formats;
- Encourage involvement of aboriginal people in the management of their own housing through tenant participation;

## 2.10 Summary action plan 2006-7

The principal recommendations were discussed with tenants at a second round of workshops in March 2007. The key points and main recommendations for action are outlined below:

- Tenants approved the draft TP strategy in each of the three local workshops
- A new TP structure should be established based on local area groups in Bathurst, Orange and Mudgee. Local area groups should be organised flexibly and according to the wishes of the tenants in each town.
- A new Tenants' Advisory Group (TAG) should be established. The purpose of the TAG group to collect tenants' views from across CTHA's properties and make suggestions for service delivery and other improvements. The group will also be a sounding board for the EO to consult tenants on policy developments and priorities.

The diagram below describes the new structure:



- Tenants in all 3 areas agreed that the Tenants' Advisory Group (TAG) group should be set up.
- Tenants in Mudgee and Bathurst also both wanted to see a local area group (LAG) with quarterly meetings established in their areas.
- Tenants in Orange were less certain that there would be enough interest for a local area group – but were willing to see another meeting called to judge interest.
- All areas agreed that tenant reps. to TAG should be elected by special meeting
- A consensus emerged that three representatives should be elected to the TAG per area and that deputies should be allowed in the event of a representative being unable to attend a TAG meeting.
- Special local election meetings should be held in each area by the end of June 2007
- TAG meetings should be held quarterly. Some of these meetings may be via tele or video conferencing. TAG members will be consulted about the idea of them choosing priorities or themes to work on each year, to ensure that the group can have a practical focus to its work.
- CTHA to provide / fund transport
- Representatives will be expected to sign up to some simple rules, including:
  - Attend meetings
  - Be positive and constructive during meetings
  - Be committed to the job of being a representative
  - Be accountable
  - Attend training events
  - Try to find out what tenants in your area want, and put their views forward as well as your own
  - Treat everyone fairly
- The TAG reps should have a role in:
  - Reviewing CTHA policies
  - Commenting on the business plan
  - Conducting or assisting in consultation activities
  - Encouraging tenants to look after properties
  - Welcoming new tenants

- The Board should listen carefully to reasonable representations from TAG within overall strategic aims
- Opportunities for 'quick wins' should be explored as early success will support the TAG's credibility
- A solution will need to be developed to involve tenants in Wellington

**Other action points**

- CTHA should continue with its practice of consulting tenants about their priorities for business plan each year
- Continue with and develop newsletter (tenant input & info on issues that interest them)
- Establish and publicise a separate TP budget which would cover transport, local area meetings, TAG meetings and & training
- Look for local training & employment partners & community development experts in each area. Share contact details with tenants and have a system of guest speakers to help with capacity building that is outside CTHA's area of activity. Make best use of technology to minimise transport time and costs for tenants. This should include teleconferencing and investigating opportunities for video conferencing for TAG representatives.

## **2.11 Detailed local area action plans**

### **Bathurst**

The draft Tenant Participation strategy was approved at a tenants' meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

#### **Local group for Bathurst**

It was agreed that a local group should be established for CTHA tenants in the Bathurst area. The group should initially be organised by CTHA, but tenants may wish to have greater involvement in running the group in future. The Bathurst local area group's meetings will be open to all CTHA tenants in the area. It was suggested that local area meetings should be held every two months at the current venue (Centacare) and the meetings should be held during school hours. However, the exact frequency of meetings will be decided at an initial meeting that will be arranged by CTHA within three months (i.e. by the end of June 2007). This meeting will also ask for tenants' input into CTHA's business plan.

Four tenants, from three different parts of Bathurst agreed to form an initial contact group. CTHA will liaise with them to set up the initial meeting and contact them about the local area group. This meeting should be promoted through the newsletter and by writing to local tenants.

It was agreed that Bathurst area representatives should 'keep their eyes and ears open' and try to find out what their CTHA neighbours think and pass on their views. Some tenants suggested that they should go door to door to contact other tenants. While this is a very effective way of collecting information, there are important health and safety, insurance and privacy questions that must be resolved before this can happen. For example CTHA tenants would need to consent to having their personal details released before other tenants could contact them.

Future local area group meetings should have guest speakers from other agencies to help tenants make links with the wider community and with training and employment opportunities if they want to.

#### **Views on the Tenants' Advisory Group (TAG) from Bathurst meeting**

Bathurst tenants agreed with the idea of setting up a Tenants' Advisory Group for all CTHA tenants. The TAG's aim would be to be a representative group to bring forward views and priorities from across all areas where CTHA have tenants. It would also be a sounding board for the Executive Officer to consult about issues that would affect all tenants.

Bathurst tenants felt that there should be two tenant representatives elected to the TAG from each town. Two deputies should also be allowed in case representatives are not able to attend events. Representatives should be elected at the next local area meeting. Bathurst tenants should be given notice that representatives are to be elected at the next meeting. The event should be publicised in the newsletter and by letters to each tenant. Tenant reps could choose to have their contact details published in the Tenants' Newsletter so other tenants can contact them with any issues they have.

Tenant reps. should be asked to sign up to the role by agreeing to:

- Attend meetings
- Be positive and constructive during meetings
- Be committed to the job of being a representative
- Attend training events
- Try to find out what tenants in your area want, and put their views forward as well as your own
- Treat everyone fairly

The TAG reps should have a role in:

- Reviewing CTHA policies
- Commenting on the business plan
- Conducting or assisting in consultation activities
- Encouraging tenants to look after properties
- Welcoming new tenants

Tenants raised the issue of transport costs for representatives to travel to TAG meetings. CTHA confirmed that tenants would not be expected to cover travel costs for TAG events.

## **Orange**

The draft Tenant Participation strategy was approved at a tenants' meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

### **Local group for Orange**

Tenants in Orange felt that they and other tenants in Orange didn't have much time to spare to set up a local area group. CTHA might face an uphill struggle to get enough people together.

However they did think that an initial meeting should be held by the end of June 2007 to elect representatives to the Tenants' Advisory Group and to discuss tenants' priorities for the business plan. If tenants didn't attend they would miss out on a chance to elect their representatives and to have a say about the business plan.

Meetings could be held once or twice a year and should be open to all local CTHA tenants. Meetings had to achieve results or people wouldn't come back.

CTHA should also investigate options like tele conferencing, communicating via email and video conferencing for tenants so that they didn't have to travel. CTHA agreed to meet tenants travel costs to TAG events.

### **Views on the Tenants' Advisory Group (TAG) from Orange meeting**

The meeting approved the idea of a Tenants' Advisory Group for all CTHA tenants.

The TAG should help to pass out information to all the towns. Reps should sound out their neighbours and bring their views to the TAG meeting. There should be equal numbers from each area – 3 from each town with two deputies in case reps are unable to attend. They should be elected via a special meeting. The TAG group should also have input into the business plan and look at policies. Reps should be expected to attend training events.

## **Mudgee**

The draft Tenant Participation strategy was approved at a tenants' meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

### **Local group for Mudgee**

Tenants agreed that a local group for the Mudgee area should be set up. CTHA should initially have the responsibility of establishing the group and arranging meetings. However, tenants said they would like to have more responsibility for running their own meetings in future. These meetings should be open to all CTHA tenants in the Mudgee area. Meetings should be held every two or three months – it was suggested that an evening meeting time be tried as well as a daytime one and that Mudgee tenants be surveyed to find out what meeting time would work best for them. The venue used for the consultation events works well for those who came. There must be a clear purpose for all the meetings. Meetings should be advertised through the newsletter and through individual letters to tenants. There was a relatively low level of interest from tenants – however, participants felt that this was partly due to the fact that some tenants were elderly and would find it hard to attend.

The group decided that representatives for the Mudgee area should be elected through a meeting. The elections should be clearly publicised and then all tenants would know that this is their opportunity to say who should represent their views to CTHA. This meeting should be held by the end of June 2007, and tenants should also be asked about their priorities for the business plan at the same event.

Several tenants offered to help with the newsletter – either by suggesting or writing articles or helping out with the mail out.

### **Views on the Tenants' Advisory Group (TAG) from Mudgee meeting**

The meeting approved the idea of a Tenants' Advisory Group for all CTHA tenants.

Mudgee tenants thought that there should be three representatives from each area, with two deputies also allowed in case the reps. were not able to attend. Reps. should be elected by secret ballot by a meeting of the Mudgee local area group.

The TAG group should meet every quarter – but CTHA will have to provide transport for representatives. The group should be able to look at CTHA policies and comment on them. TAG reps should also attend training events arranged by CTHA. Participants said that every effort should be made to make sure that

communication between CTHA and TAG reps. is effective, especially early communication when an important situation arises.

Participants also discussed the idea of social trips and craft days etc. These should be mainly arranged by tenants, either through the local area group or through the TAG.

# Appendix one

## *Tenant Rights and Participation Policy*

### **Objectives**

Central Tablelands Housing Association will continue to develop constructive and meaningful methods of involving tenants in the management of their housing and encourage them to have input into the structures and processes for development of policies and procedures. The Board of Management and Staff encourage the participation of tenants in the organisation.

### ***Tenant Involvement***

CTHA will foster tenant involvement in the planning, delivery, evaluation and management of the organisation's services, in ways that are appropriate to the needs of all tenants. This involvement will include an effective exchange of information between CTHA and tenants, consultation on individual and community issues and genuine opportunities for tenants to shape decisions made by the association. We will offer a variety of methods of involvement that are based on tenants' own needs and issues.

### ***Tenant Participation***

In its endeavours to encourage participation of tenants in the organisation the organisation will:

- Encourage tenants to become members of the Association
- Invite all tenants to the Annual General meeting of CTHA
- Provide all new tenants with information (pamphlets/booklet) outlining the services provided by CTHA, and provide any policy information as appropriate or as requested.
- Survey tenants on an annual basis to gauge client service satisfaction
- Encourage tenants to apply for positions on the Board of Management
- Encourage tenant involvement in the development of a quarterly newsletter, and once established, use the newsletter to inform the tenants of their rights and responsibilities and any current issues associated with community housing.
- Meet any tenant costs associated with participation in the organisation
- Establish local area groups in any of our local communities who wish to have a local consultative group
- Establish a new TP structure based on local area groups in Bathurst, Orange and Mudgee. Local area groups will be organised flexibly and according to the wishes of the tenants in each town
- Establish a new Tenants' Advisory Group (TAG) to collect tenants' views from across CTHA's properties and make suggestions for service delivery

and other improvements. The group will be a sounding board for the EO to consult tenants on policy developments and priorities. The TAG reps will have a role in:

- Reviewing CTHA policies
  - Commenting on the business plan
  - Conducting or assisting in consultation activities
  - Encouraging tenants to look after properties
  - Welcoming new tenants
- 
- Consult tenants about their priorities for business plan each year and feed their views into CTHA's operational and strategic planning processes
  - Look for local training & employment partners & community development experts in each area. Share contact details with tenants and have a system of guest speakers to help with capacity building that is outside CTHA's area of activity.

### **Housing Aboriginal People – Commitment to Service**

In providing service to Aboriginal tenants and applicants, Central Tablelands Housing Association resolves to:

- Provide high quality services to Aboriginal tenants and applicants;
- Take positive steps to understand the housing needs of Aboriginal people;
- Work to build good respectful relationships with aboriginal tenants, applicants and their extended families and communities;
- Provide information about our policies and procedures and other documents in plain English and if possible in culturally appropriate formats;
- Encourage involvement of aboriginal people in the management of their own housing through tenant participation;
- Undertake cultural awareness training for workers, volunteers and Board members;
- Consider aboriginal people eligible for older persons housing, aged at 45 years and above.

## Appendix two

### CENTRAL TABLELANDS HOUSING ASSOCIATION INC

#### STATEMENT OF TENANT RIGHTS

The Board of Management and the Staff of Central Tablelands Housing Association are committed to the Rights of Tenants and will honour this commitment at all times.

**We therefore undertake to:**

- Treat all tenants in a respectful and fair manner and insist that all persons, working in any capacity for the organisation, accord the same respect;
- Confirm the commitment to confidentiality of tenant disclosures, information and files;
- Ensure tenants the right to privacy and the exclusive use of their homes;
- Ensure adequate information is made available to inform and empower tenants;
- Provide the best possible tenancy and property management service to tenants, offering best practice service delivery methods, ensuring that all legislative responsibilities, funding guidelines, tenancy law requirements are met;
- Promote complaints and appeals processes to tenants and welcome tenant complaints as a positive step to continual improvement of the service. We are committed to providing a service where tenants feel free to express their concerns or dissatisfaction with any processes that affect them;
- Support and encourage the participation of tenants in the organisation acknowledging that tenants have a role in the decision making processes affecting their housing;
- Encourage tenants to become a members of the Association and to apply for positions on the Board of Management if the selection criteria can be met;
- Ensure tenant properties are maintained to an acceptable standard and are appropriate to their needs and that responsive repairs will be done as quickly and as efficiently as possible;
- Ensure all tenants are informed of their legal rights and responsibilities as community housing tenants;
- To continue to work to ensure that tenants have secure, affordable, appropriate and sustainable tenancies.

## Appendix three

### Survey results

#### Central Tablelands Housing Association Survey 64 responses

Tenants identified the following ways that they wished to be kept informed through the November 2006 consultation process.

<b>What's the best way for us to give you that information?</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Choice</b>
Tenants' newsletter:	29
Posters / flyers	11
Individual letter	5
Annual Report	3
Open meeting in your area:	2
Annual General Meeting	2
Telephone:	1

This demonstrates a clear preference for the continuation of the tenants' newsletter. The newsletter will be produced quarterly and CTHA will ask for tenant input into the newsletter, including a 'have your say' section, Q&A section, tenants' pictures and articles etc. CTHA will consider setting up a tenants' editorial panel if tenants are interested in this.

CTHA will use a combination of all the above ways to keep tenants informed. We will review these techniques and add other if necessary.

At the local area workshops tenants also suggested local tenants meetings, the establishment of a Tenant's Action Group, fun events like a local BBQ, local tenant representatives from each area (Mudgee, Bathurst, and Orange) and postal questionnaires. CTHA will trial each of these techniques and consult tenants on which are the most effective.

The following are the issues tenants most wanted to receive information about:

<b>What would you like information about?</b>	<b>Number of Requests for information</b>
Neighbour problems and anti-social behaviour	27
Repairs and maintenance	24
Information about training and employment opportunities in your area	19
Information about community activities in your area	15
Responsibilities of landlord and tenant	12
Tenant consultation and participation policies	10
Complaints procedure	9
How to become a member of CTHA	8
Service performance information	8
Rent arrears policy	5
What skills are needed to become a Director?	3

**Main issues you are interested in to do with Central tablelands:**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>
Don't Know	17
Have no Issues	19
Dealing with trouble and issues	1
Information about meeting and services	1
House renumbering in church street	1
Overview of client base and stats to clarify	1
Service provided, could be better	3
List of approved maintenance workers	1

Would like to see Gardening competitions and certificates	2
Being housed/Adequate housing	4
Tenant participation, opinions and rights	5
Something's need more explaining and clarification/how CTH works	2
Signs up to stop children riding bikes	1
The grounds and maintenance of properties	8
Privacy Issues	1
Getting more government support	1
6 monthly inspections	1
Not being stereotyped by Association	1
Updates on rental prices and arrears	1
Safety and security	1
Clients damaging houses	2

**To do with your local area:**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>
Don't Know	18
Have no Issues	21
Rowdy neighbours/harassment	5
Against the new shopping complex	1
Trees services	2
Young people not staying in School	2
Large numbers living in small houses	1
Self maintenance of property	3
Drugs sold in the area	3
Signs up to stop children riding bikes	3
Privacy issues	1
Sexual Harassment	1
No Parks/Play areas for children	2
Public transport	1
Advertising of service for the elderly	1
Want larger Police presence	3
Needs to be more housing in the area	1
Speed of cars in the area/ traffic	2
Drunk people	2
Need more public telephones	1
Single parents need more support	1

<b>What would you like information about?</b>	<b>Number of Requests for information</b>
Responsibilities of landlord and tenant	12
How to become a member of CTHA	8
What skills are needed to become a Director?	3
Tenant consultation and participation policies	10
Service performance information	8
Complaints procedure	9
Rent arrears policy	5
Neighbour problems and anti-social behaviour	27
Repairs and maintenance	24
Information about community activities in your area	16
Information about training and employment opportunities in your area	20
No Response	20

<b>What's the best way for us to give you that information?</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Choice</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> choice</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Choice</b>
Tenants' newsletter:	31	4	5
Posters / flyers	1	12	4
Individual letter	11	8	13
Annual Report	2	1	8
Open meeting in your area:	5	4	5
Annual General Meeting		2	2
Telephone:	2	8	3
Email	3	4	1
Other – please say what: Community Noticeboard, SMS to mobiles	1		1
Choice not made	8	18	21

<b>Do you think it is a good idea for CTHA to ask you for your views on a regular basis?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No Response</b>
	56= %	5= %	3= %

<b>What is the best way for us to consult you?</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Choice</b>	<b>2nd Choice</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Choice</b>
Letter inviting a response	14	11	3
Open public meetings	4	3	5
Focus groups		1	1
Local walkabouts (staff and tenants walk round local area to discuss issues)	1	2	4
Home visits	1	5	1
Set up a local Tenants' Association	4	1	2
Newsletter with a response slip	11	9	7
Regular open meeting		2	4
Phone survey	4	2	1
Postal questionnaire	1	6	9
Email	4	2	2
At a fun event like a local BBQ	5	2	4
Through a local tenant representatives from each area (Mudgee, Bathurst, and Orange)		2	2
Ask you to say what your priorities for CTHA's strategy each year	1		
We're happy with the service and don't want to be consulted	6	2	4
Choice not made	8	14	15

The Board and staff of CTHA would like to develop a tenants' advisory group to have a say about what CTHA is doing and to comment on and review policy.

<b>Do you think that this is a good idea?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No Response</b>
	56= 88 %	6= 9 %	2= 3 %

<b>Do you think you might be interested in being on the advisory group?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No Response</b>
	24= 37 %	37= 59 %	3= 4 %

CTHA has a skill based Board of Management and people must submit an application which meet the criteria of skills for the Board. Tenants with relevant skills can stand for election to the Board of CTHA.

<b>Do you think it is a good idea to have tenants on the Board?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No Response</b>
	42= 66 %	14= 22%	8= 12 %

<b>Are there any other ways that you think tenants should be involved in CTHA work?</b>
Tenants should produce a report each month in the local newspaper, to let the general public know what the service has done and what it's all about.
Tenants should be able to be responsible for their own repairs and upkeep of their own houses x 2
Tenants should take an interest in the running of the CTHA and make out reports to the Board.
Should run a morning tea session occasionally
Consultation, Lobbying.

<b>Do you think that CTHA should support tenants to run social events?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No Response</b>
	48= 75%	9= 14%	7= 11%

<b>Would you be interested in working with CTHA to run social events?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	15= 22%	50= 78%

<b>If so, what kind of social event would you be interested in running?</b>
Cooking Barbecues –
Trips out –
Various –
Any –
Christmas Party –
Monthly barbecues, schools holidays party –
Outings for the elderly-

Music –
Bus trips –
Not Specified –

### **Consultation techniques**

In the TP survey tenants identified the following preferences for consultation:

Letter inviting a response	14
Newsletter with a response slip	9
We're happy with the service and don't want to be consulted	6
At a fun event like a local BBQ	5
Open public meetings	4
Set up a local Tenants' Association	4
Phone survey	4

Local tenants meetings, the establishment of a Tenant's Action Group, fun events like a local BBQ, local tenant representatives from each area (Mudgee, Bathurst, and Orange) and postal questionnaires were identified as useful consultation techniques at the local workshops held in November 2006.

CTHA will trial the most effective consultation techniques and review them with tenants. Effective consultation is not just a one-off process. It encompasses a wide range of methods so tenants can become fully involved if and when they choose. CTHA will explore the best techniques for tenants and the association and vary the methods chosen if necessary.

### **Names and address of those who may wish to be on an advisory group**

#### **15 names and addresses supplied through survey**

## References

Communities Scotland – Guide to Successful Participation 2005

[http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/cs\\_014981.hcsp](http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/cs_014981.hcsp) viewed 21.5.07

TPAS UK manifesto for tenant participation

[www.tpas.org.uk](http://www.tpas.org.uk) viewed 25 5.05