

# House



RESIDENT NEWSLETTER

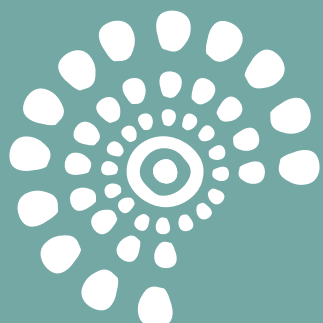
SUMMER 2025

MERRY  
• CHRISTMAS •  
AND HAPPY NEW YEAR  




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## Acknowledgement of Country

We at Churches of Christ acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we stand and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures, hopes and aspirations of First Nations People.

We acknowledge and recognise the resilience of generations of First Nations People and stand with you now and always.

We are committed to walking alongside First Nations People to establish a foundation of trust and take meaningful action to preserve, affirm and promote the world's oldest living culture.

# Contact

## BRISBANE

41 Brookfield Road  
Kenmore Qld 4069  
PO Box 508  
Kenmore Qld 4069  
**P 07 3327 1674**

## IPSWICH

52A Tiger Street  
West Ipswich Qld 4305  
PO Box 252  
Booval Qld 4304  
**P 07 3436 8900**

## LOGAN

3745 Pacific Highway  
Slacks Creek Qld 4127  
**P 07 3436 8980**

## GOLD COAST

1 Griffith Way  
Southport Qld 4215  
PO Box 412  
Ashmore City Qld 4214  
**P 07 5539 7655**

## SUNSHINE COAST

8 Cooma Terrace  
Caloundra Qld 4551  
**P 07 5492 8439**

## BRIBIE ISLAND

52-68 Cotterill Avenue  
Bongaree Qld 4507  
**P 07 3410 3751**

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## OFFICE HOURS

**9am to 4pm weekdays**

## AFTER HOURS EMERGENCIES

**1800 446 604**

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**If you require an interpreter, call  
TIS National on 131 450 and ask  
them to call Churches of Christ  
Housing Services on  
1800 406 566.**



**Front cover:** The Housing Services Team sending all readers of *HouseTalk* a happy festive season and a safe and happy new year in 2026.

# Welcome from Gus Taddeo General Manager



**Gus Taddeo**  
General Manager

Hello everyone,

As we wrap up 2025, I want to take a moment to say thank you for being part of our housing community. This year has been full of exciting changes and improvements designed to make life better for you.

One big milestone was the launch of Zavanti Housing, an up-to-date system that helps us manage tenancies and track the work we do. What does this mean for you? A smoother experience when you need help or have questions.

We also finished building the Wiltshire Apartments in Basin Pocket, Ipswich. This beautiful new development gives more seniors a safe, modern, and comfortable place to call home. It's a great example of how we're working to provide homes that meet your needs and help you feel connected to your community.

And we're not stopping there! Every day, we're looking for ways to improve our service—whether that's answering your calls quicker, helping with forms, or creating more opportunities for community connection.

Christmas is a time for joy, hope, and connection. For some, it's full of family and laughter; for others, it can feel quiet or even lonely. Please remember—you are part of a caring community. Our housing team and chaplains are here if you need support, a chat, or just someone to listen.

From all of us at Churches of Christ Housing Services, we wish you a safe, happy, and peaceful Christmas. May 2026 bring good health, new opportunities, and plenty of reasons to smile. **Gus**

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## Tenant of the Season Awards

Tenant of the Season Awards are a way to recognise and celebrate tenants who help create a positive, supportive, and connected community. These are everyday residents, nominated by staff or fellow residents, who go above and beyond to support others, contribute to wellbeing, and bring people together. Whether it's lending a helping hand, organising activities, or simply being a kind and caring neighbour, this award shines a light on those making a real difference in the lives of others. This season's winner is:



### **Sandy, a neighbour who cares | Bribie Island**

Sandy from Bribie Island is the definition of a good neighbour. Despite living with a visual impairment, she goes above and beyond – delivering meals to the sick, caring for pets during appointments, and creating a beautiful garden for all to enjoy. Her quiet acts of kindness and dedication make her an invaluable part of the community.

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Thank you to all our Community Champions! If you know someone who deserves to be recognised, let us know! We'd love to share more stories in the next edition.

You can nominate your neighbours for next season's awards by emailing [HousingServices@cofcqld.com.au](mailto:HousingServices@cofcqld.com.au) with the subject 'TOTS Nomination'. Please include their full name and approximately 50 words explaining your reasons for nominating them.

# Housing & homelessness in Queensland

As Queensland prepares for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, housing pressures are intensifying, especially for renters and social housing tenants. A new report from Q Shelter and Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute reveals how urban renewal and rising property prices are already displacing vulnerable households across South-East Queensland.

## Key statistics

### NATIONAL SNAPSHOT

- 280,000 people accessed homelessness services in 2023–24
- 71% of low-income households are in housing stress
- Social housing makes up less than 4% of all housing nationally
- One in four renters in stress have no savings for emergencies

### QUEENSLAND FOCUS

- 31,500 households are on the Qld social housing waitlist
- Up to 3000 people are currently in hotel accommodation who would otherwise be at risk of homelessness, including 1900 in the Brisbane Local Government Area
- Brisbane home values have risen 65% since 2020
- Rents for new tenancies have increased 45%
- Less than 1% of rentals are affordable for someone on minimum wage
- Median rents in Brisbane (\$630 pw for a 2-bed flat) and Gold Coast (\$715 pw) are far beyond what income support recipients can afford
- Suburbs like Logan, Ipswich, Caboolture, and Eagleby have high concentrations of renters receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance, making them vulnerable to displacement

In a housing market where rents and property prices continue to soar, social housing stands as a vital safeguard against displacement and insecurity. For those who have secured a home within this system, it represents more than just a roof—it offers stability, affordability, and peace of mind in a time of unprecedented housing stress. With thousands still waiting for a place to call home, tenants can take pride in knowing they are part of a community that values fairness and resilience. Social housing is not just a service; it's a foundation for thriving lives.

## CHURCHES OF CHRIST

# Inaugural photo competition



**Deb from Hillcrest** shared a stunning photo of her vibrant pink roses. She and her husband have called the apartments home for almost two years and take great pride in the beautiful gardens they've lovingly nurtured. Their care and dedication have turned the space into a little oasis—proof that you really can stop and smell the roses!



**Sandra from Bongaree** sent in gorgeous snaps of her garden in full bloom. We especially love this one, with the cute duck soaking up the sunshine among the flowers—it's a beautiful reminder of how nature and community come together!



**Congratulations Sharron from North Ipswich!** Nothing says spring quite like puppies at the beach! Meet **Mango**—Sharron's very happy pup enjoying the water and sunshine. What a fantastic photo that captures pure joy!

### NEXT HOUSE TALK PHOTO COMPETITION THEME: SUMMER HEAT

For our next photo competition, we're looking for images that showcase the warmth, colour, and energy of the season. Think bright sunshine, cool dips in the water, sizzling barbecues, blooming gardens, or creative ways you beat the heat. Stay sun safe and send in your best shots to share the beauty of summer with our community!

# Centrepay is changing – what you need to know

Centrepay, the free bill-paying service offered by Services Australia, is being updated to make it safer and fairer for customers. These changes started on **3 November 2025** and will affect how deductions work.

## WHAT'S STAYING

You can still use Centrepay for essential expenses like:

- Accommodation (rent, bond, arrears).
- Utilities (electricity, gas, water).
- Education and childcare.
- Health costs (medical, pharmacy, ambulance).
- Insurance and fines (home, contents, car insurance, court fines).

## WHAT'S GOING

Centrepay will no longer cover:

- Household items (clothing, furniture, appliances).
- Household goods leases or rentals.
- Funeral expenses.
- Employment costs (tools, uniforms, training).
- Social/recreational expenses (sporting fees, donations, music).
- Savings plans + motor vehicle registration.

## IMPORTANT

- If you already have deductions for these, they can continue until **1 November 2026**, but you cannot start new ones.
- If you cancel an existing deduction, you cannot restart it.

## WHAT'S CHANGING

- **Mandatory End Dates:** Certain deductions (e.g., home care, school meals, childcare, education, disability services) must have an end date added by 4 May 2026.
- **Target Amounts:** Some deductions (e.g., medical services, loans, court fines, legal services, remote food provisions) must include a target amount by 4 May 2026.
- **Extra Conditions:** Businesses must have your consent for any new, restarted, or increased deductions. They cannot pass on Centrepay fees to you.

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR RENT

Rent remains an approved service. You can keep using Centrepay for rent, bond, and arrears. If your rent changes, you must update your deduction via:

- myGov.
- Express Plus Centrelink app.
- Centrelink phone or service centre.

We can no longer pre-fill your Centrepay form when your situation changes. You will now need to complete this form yourself. ***If you need help, we will be more than happy to assist. Please contact the office for help!***

## NEED HELP?

- Visit [servicesaustralia.gov.au](https://servicesaustralia.gov.au) for full details.
- Speak to your Housing Officer.
- Contact a Centrelink Financial Information Service Officer for free advice.
- If you're struggling financially, you can access Centrelink social worker support.

## QUICK FAQ

### Q Do I need to do anything now?

**A** Check your deductions in your myGov account and make sure they meet the new rules. Add end dates or target amounts if required.

### Q Will my rent deduction stop?

**A** No, rent is still approved. Just keep your details up to date.

### Q What if I have deductions for furniture or funeral plans?

**A** They will continue until November 2026, then you'll need another payment method.

### Q What if I am no longer a tenant and I still have a debt?

**A** Payments for exit debts can still be made.



# Getting ready for storm season

Queensland is the most disaster-affected state in Australia, and severe storms are a big part of that. Storms can bring damaging winds, heavy rain, flash flooding, hail, and even tornadoes. They often strike with little warning, so being prepared is the best way to keep your family and home safe.

## WHY PREPARE?

Storms can cause:

- Power outages
- Road closures and isolation
- Damage to homes, vehicles, and property
- Risk to pets and livestock

Communities that prepare early recover faster and experience less stress during emergencies.

## PROTECT YOUR HOME

- Clear balconies
- Trim overhanging branches (check with council first)
- Secure loose items like outdoor furniture
- Review your insurance cover for contents

## EXTRA TIPS

- Keep your phone charged and download disaster apps
- Know where your safest room is (away from windows)
- If flooding is likely, use sandbags and move valuables to higher ground

## IN AN EMERGENCY

If life is in danger, call Triple Zero (000) immediately. For urgent assistance during storms, contact the State Emergency Service (SES) on **132 500**.

## AFTER YOU'RE SAFE

- Call Churches of Christ After Hours Emergency on **1800 446 604** to report property damage.
- Inform friends, family and your Housing Officer of your whereabouts.

Visit *Get Ready Queensland* [getready.qld.gov.au](https://getready.qld.gov.au)



## THREE STEPS TO GET READY

### 1. Know your risk

Understand the types of severe weather that affect your area and how they could impact your home and family.

### 2. Make a plan

Create a household emergency plan so everyone knows what to do and who to contact. Include:

- a. Emergency contacts
- b. Evacuation routes
- c. Pet care arrangements

You can make your plan online at [plan.getready.qld.gov.au](https://plan.getready.qld.gov.au)

### 3. Pack an emergency kit

Grab a few extra items next time you shop:

- a. Long-life food and drinking water
- b. Torch, batteries, and a radio
- c. First aid supplies and essential medications
- d. Keep important documents in waterproof containers

Think about what your family would need if you had to stay home for three days.

PULL OUT  
THIS 4-PAGE  
SECTION  
AND POP IT  
ON YOUR  
FRIDGE!

## Your handy summer lift-out

This lift-out includes Housing Services holiday office hours, a guide to upcoming events happening in our communities and helpful resources and support over the holidays. **Happy holidays!**



## Staff availability during the holidays

During the festive season, our offices will operate with reduced staff. From **Monday 22 December** to **Friday 2 January**, please be aware that it may take slightly longer for you to reach a staff member. We appreciate your understanding and patience. **We'll resume full staffing from Monday 5 January.**

| SUNDAY        | MONDAY                              | TUESDAY                             | WEDNESDAY                           | THURSDAY                              | FRIDAY                             | SATURDAY |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------|
| DECEMBER 2025 |                                     |                                     |                                     |                                       |                                    |          |
| 21            | 22<br>Open 9am–4pm<br>reduced staff | 23<br>Open 9am–4pm<br>reduced staff | 24<br>Open 9am–4pm<br>reduced staff | 25<br><b>CLOSED<br/>CHRISTMAS DAY</b> | 26<br><b>CLOSED<br/>BOXING DAY</b> | 27       |
|               |                                     |                                     |                                     | JANUARY 2026                          |                                    |          |
| 28            | 29<br>Open 9am–4pm<br>reduced staff | 30<br>Open 9am–4pm<br>reduced staff | 31<br>Open 9am–4pm<br>reduced staff | 1<br><b>CLOSED<br/>NEW YEARS DAY</b>  | 2<br>Open 9am–4pm<br>reduced staff | 3        |

## Tips for a budget-friendly holiday



Pack a picnic and  
explore a new park  
or trail



Check your local  
library for free events  
and take-home  
activity kits



Swap toys or books  
with neighbours to  
keep things fresh

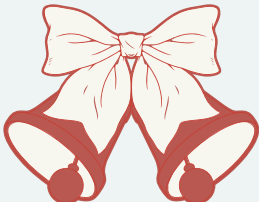


Create a holiday  
calendar with one  
small activity each  
day—even a walk or  
movie night counts!

# School holiday fun on a budget

## Free and low-cost activities for families in Brisbane, Logan, and Ipswich

School holidays are a great time to make memories with your kids—but keeping them entertained doesn't have to be expensive. Across Brisbane, Logan and Ipswich, there are plenty of free and low-cost activities that offer fun, creativity, and connection for families. Whether you're looking for outdoor adventures, creative workshops, or quiet indoor fun, here's a guide to help you plan a joyful and budget-friendly break.

| BRISBANE REGION  |  |
|--|--|
| Free Activities  | Low-Cost Options   |
| <b>South Bank Parklands &amp; Streets Beach</b><br><i>inner-city beach, playgrounds, and picnic areas</i>              | <b>Brisbane Powerhouse</b> <i>family-friendly shows and workshops</i>  |
| <b>Roma Street Parklands &amp; City Botanic Gardens</b><br><i>nature trails, playgrounds, and art installations</i>    | <b>Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary</b> <i>wildlife encounters (entry fees apply)</i>   |
| <b>Queensland Museum &amp; SparkLab</b><br><i>free general entry with interactive science zones</i>                    | <b>Workshops Rail Museum (Ipswich)</b> <i>train-themed fun and STEM activities</i>   |
| <b>Gallery of Modern Art &amp; Queensland Art Gallery</b><br><i>children's art centre with free creative workshops</i> |   |
| <b>Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens &amp; Planetarium</b><br><i>rainforest walks and stargazing shows</i>                   |  |
| <b>State Library of Queensland</b><br><i>free holiday programs and exhibitions</i>                                     |  |
| <b>Playtopia at Roma Street Parklands</b><br><i>free art, STEM and sports workshops</i>                                |  |
| LOGAN REGION   |  |
| Free Activities  | Low-Cost Options   |
| <b>Logan Gardens Water Park</b><br><i>splash zone and playgrounds</i>  | <b>KRANK School Holiday Program</b> <i>council-run activities for ages 5–17, including sports, art, and outdoor games. Most are free or just a few dollars. <a href="https://logan.qld.gov.au/community/community-services-and-support/children-youth-families-seniors/krank">KRANK Program Info</a> (logan.qld.gov.au/community/community-services-and-support/children-youth-families-seniors/krank)</i> |
| <b>Flagstone Adventure Park</b><br><i>giant slides and climbing towers</i>   | <b>Grounded Village Studio</b> (Jimboomba) <i>affordable creative workshops like cookie decorating and clay critters</i>   |
| <b>Daisy Hill Koala Centre</b><br><i>learn about koalas and explore nature trails</i>                                  | <b>Soccajoeys Indoor Soccer</b> <i>non-competitive soccer for kids aged 2.5 to 11, with flexible payment options</i>   |
| <b>Logan Art Gallery &amp; Libraries</b><br><i>free exhibitions, storytelling, and craft sessions</i>                  |  |
| IPSWICH REGION   |  |
| Free Activities  | Low-Cost Options   |
| <b>Queens Park &amp; Ipswich Nature Centre</b><br><i>water play, playgrounds, and native animals</i>                   | <b>Active Kids Program (Ipswich City Council)</b><br><i>free and low-cost workshops including dance, cooking, and sports. <a href="https://ipswich.qld.gov.au/Live/Healthy-Lifestyle/Active-Kids">Active Kids Info</a> (ipswich.qld.gov.au/Live/Healthy-Lifestyle/Active-Kids)</i>   |
| <b>Robelle Domain &amp; Orion Lagoon</b><br><i>splash zones and shaded picnic areas</i>                                | <b>Workshops Rail Museum</b><br><i>hands-on science and train-themed fun. Entry from \$11.40 per child</i>   |
| <b>Ipswich Libraries</b><br><i>free holiday programs and interactive play spaces</i>                                   | <b>Haigslea Ewe-Nique Hobby Farm</b><br><i>animal encounters and a relaxed café setting</i>  |
| <b>Ipswich Art Gallery</b><br><i>child-friendly exhibits with free general admission.</i>                              |  |

# Kid's corner



- **Why did Santa go to music school?**  
Answer: *Because he wanted to improve his 'wrap' skills!*
- **What do snowmen eat for breakfast?**  
Answer: *Frosted flakes!*
- **Why can't you give Elsa a balloon?**  
Answer: *Because she'll let it go!*
- **What do elves learn in school?**  
Answer: *The elf-abet!*
- **What do you get if you cross a snowman and a dog?**  
Answer: *Frostbite!*



## WORD LIST

- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| Advent         | Giving        |
| Baking         | Jingle Bells  |
| Barbecue       | Joy           |
| Beach          | Laughter      |
| Boxing Day     | Lights        |
| Carols         | Noel          |
| Christmas Tree | Parade        |
| December       | Reindeer      |
| Decorations    | Storytelling  |
| Faith          | Summer        |
| Family         | Surfing Santa |
| Gifts          | Tinsel        |
| Gingerbread    | Tradition     |

*The unused letters reveal a hidden message!*

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| W | E | W | D | E | C | O | R | A | T | I | O | N | S |
| I | S | D | A | E | R | B | R | E | G | N | I | G | U |
| S | T | O | R | Y | T | E | L | L | I | N | G | R | R |
| H | Y | B | E | A | C | H | P | A | R | A | D | E | F |
| R | E | T | H | G | A | U | L | O | U | A | R | B | I |
| B | O | X | I | N | G | D | A | Y | M | E | E | M | N |
| A | R | N | O | I | T | I | D | A | R | T | M | E | G |
| R | R | Y | C | V | F | A | I | T | H | H | M | C | S |
| B | R | I | L | I | G | H | T | S | S | T | U | E | A |
| E | J | I | N | G | L | E | B | E | L | L | S | D | N |
| C | R | E | I | N | D | E | E | R | E | O | V | M | T |
| U | A | F | A | M | I | L | Y | O | J | E | R | S | A |
| E | T | I | N | S | E | L | N | G | N | I | K | A | B |
| S | E | E | R | T | S | A | M | T | S | I | R | H | C |



### Join our Facebook community

We post reminders about upcoming events, important news and update, plus stories, pictures and videos from our community on Facebook.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO BE TAKEN  
STRAIGHT TO OUR PAGE AND  
MAKE SURE YOU GIVE US A FOLLOW!



# Isolation at Christmas. Reaching out, holding on



Christmas is often seen as a time of joy, connection, and celebration. But for many people, especially those living alone or facing personal challenges, it can also be a season marked by silence and sadness.

While festive decorations and cheerful music fill the air, some tenants may be quietly struggling with feelings of loneliness, grief, or disconnection. Isolation during the holidays can affect anyone—regardless of age, background, or circumstance.

## Understanding isolation

Isolation doesn't always mean being physically alone. It can be the absence of meaningful connection, the feeling of being left out, or the emotional weight of missing loved ones. For some, it's the first Christmas after a loss. For others, it's another year without family contact or companionship.

Recognising these feelings is important—and so is knowing that support is available.

## Ways to stay connected

Even small gestures can make a big difference. Here are a few ideas to help ease isolation this Christmas:

- **Reach out:** A phone call, a card, or a friendly chat with a neighbour can brighten someone's day.
- **Join local events:** Many community centres, churches, and organisations host free lunches or gatherings open to all.
- **Volunteer:** Helping others can be a powerful way to feel connected and valued.
- **Create your own traditions:** Decorating your space, cooking a favourite meal, or listening to music can bring comfort and joy.

## Support is available

If you're feeling isolated, you're not alone—and you don't have to go through it alone. Housing support staff, chaplains, and community groups are here to listen and help. Sometimes, just talking to someone can lift the weight.

## A season of kindness

This Christmas, let's look out for one another. Whether it's sharing a cuppa, offering a smile, or checking in on someone nearby—your kindness could be the highlight of someone's holiday.

**Together, we can make this season a little brighter for everyone.**

## Reach out

### NATIONAL 24/7 CRISIS SUPPORT SERVICES

- **Lifeline**—Call 13 11 14, Text 0477 13 11 14, or Chat Online: *24/7 confidential crisis support and suicide prevention*
- **Suicide Call Back Service**  
—Call 1300 659 467 or Online Counselling: *24/7 phone and online counselling for people at risk, carers, and those bereaved by suicide*
- **Beyond Blue**—Call 1300 22 4636 or Chat: *Online Support for anxiety, depression, and mental health concerns*
- **Kids Helpline**—Call 1800 55 1800: *Free, confidential support for young people aged 5–25*
- **MensLine Australia**—Call 1300 78 99 78: *Support for men with emotional health, family, and relationship concerns*
- **13YARN**—Call 13 92 76: *Crisis support for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples*
- **Salvation Army Crisis Counselling (Qld)**  
—Call 1300 363 622: *24-hour statewide support*
- **National Gambling Helpline**  
—Call 1800 858 858
- **1800Respect**—Call 1800 737 732 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week): *national service providing confidential information, counselling and support to people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.*
- **QLife**—Call 1800 184 527 or use webchat: *anonymous and free LGBTIQ+ peer support and referrals.*

Our **Facebook** page will have up-to-date information about access to free meals over Christmas—**FOLLOW US.**

# CommunityCorner

## Celebrating Seniors Month— Connect and Celebrate

This October, Queensland Seniors Month invited us to "Connect and Celebrate", a theme that highlights the importance of strong, connected communities. Seniors Month is all about recognising the invaluable contributions older Queenslanders make every day—whether as volunteers, carers, grandparents, advocates, or community leaders. It's a time to embrace social connection, celebrate achievements, and ensure seniors feel valued, supported, and included. By coming together, we strengthen our communities and create opportunities for older people to live active, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

Churches of Christ proudly hosted a series of vibrant Seniors Expos at our Mitchelton, Bribie, and Ipswich sites—each one designed as a space for connection, learning, and fun. These weren't just events; they were true celebrations of community spirit. Tenants enjoyed an impressive lineup of guest speakers sharing practical tips on health, wellbeing, and local services, while community and business stalls offered resources, advice, and interactive displays. The atmosphere was buzzing with laughter, music, and conversation, complemented by delicious food and refreshments that everyone loved.



# CommunityCorner

## Scenic Day Out at Mt Coot-tha for Mitchelton Residents

With trusty Chaplain John behind the wheel, ten residents from Mitchelton set off on a delightful day trip to Mount Coot-tha. The weather was perfect, offering stunning visibility of our beautiful city. From the lookout, Brisbane sparkled with the vibrant purple of blooming Jacaranda trees, framing the winding Brisbane River in a truly spectacular view.

The group enjoyed coffee and cake at the Summit Café before heading to the Slaughter Falls picnic area for a shared lunch beneath the shade of the bushland canopy. Their meal was made even more memorable by the antics of some cheeky bush turkeys keen to investigate the leftovers!

It was a wonderful day filled with laughter, friendship, and good cheer.



## Seniors Month Outing: Misty Views & Feathered Friends

The Ipswich crew embraced a foggy start to their day trip to Mount Coot-tha, where the usual sweeping views were a little shy behind the mist. But spirits were high as the group took in what they could from the lookout, enjoying the extremely warm day, coffee, cookies and good company.

The bus tour continued past the TV studios, sparking plenty of interest and lively conversation—who knew so many were secret fans of behind-the-scenes television?

Lunch was shared in the lush surrounds of the Mount Coot-tha precinct, accompanied by a very determined bush turkey who clearly thought he was part of the group. Despite his persistence, the meal was relaxed and full of laughter.

It was a delightful day filled with curiosity, camaraderie, and a touch of wildlife mischief—another wonderful way to celebrate Seniors Month.



# Thank you!

A big thanks goes out to our local councillors who generously support our seniors Month bus trips. **Logan City Council**—Division 7 Cr Frazer; **Ipswich City Council**—Division 3 Cr Marnie Doyle; **Sunshine Coast Council**—Division 2 Cr Terry Landsberg and Division 3 Cr Tim Burns.

## Seniors Month Celebration: Sun, Sea & Smiles

On one of the hottest days of the year, eighteen of our bravest senior residents from Marblewood Apartments and Slacks Creek set off for a seaside adventure at Wynnum foreshore. Despite a minor traffic incident that extended the bus trip, the group arrived in air-conditioned comfort, full of good humour and ready to embrace the heat.

What could be better than fish, chips, ice cream, and the sea? The afternoon was filled with laughter, a leisurely stroll along the pier, and even a few spirited residents cooled off in the kids' water play area—proving you can make a splash at any age! (Sharon!)

It was a joyful celebration of Seniors Month, highlighting the resilience, camaraderie, and playful spirit of our community.



## Seniors Month Adventure: Nature, Art & Laughter

With storm clouds still lingering from the day before, a spirited group of seniors from Coogera and Banksia Apartments set off for the Maroochy Bushland Botanical Gardens. The journey was an adventure in itself—thanks to a wayward GPS, a feisty three-point turn, and an accidental attempt to enter via the service entrance! But with plenty of laughter, the group made it to the gardens in high spirits.

A guided walk through the stunning sculpture gardens, led by knowledgeable and passionate guides, revealed the beautiful connection between nature and art. It was truly a magnificent experience.

Lunch at the Gardens Café provided the perfect peaceful setting to reflect on the day. Surrounded by nature, it was a lovely way to celebrate Seniors Month and the joy of shared experiences.





## DID YOU KNOW?

- 63% of Churches of Christ tenants are over 55
- We have 184 tenants who are over the age of 80
- We have 7 over 55 sites housing 370 seniors

# A life well lived: Elvira at 102

At 102 years old, Elvira is the eldest resident in our housing community—and her story is nothing short of extraordinary.

Born in Riga, Latvia in 1923, Elvira grew up in a modest flat with her father, a railway worker, and her mother, a seamstress. Alongside her brother Ernest, she enjoyed a happy childhood and attended junior school in Riga, surrounded by friends and family.

Elvira's journey later took her to Germany, where she began to study medicine to become a doctor. A bright student with a promising future, her plans were interrupted by the outbreak of war. Her studies were put on hold, and she served as a nurse treating wounded soldiers. She recalls nights spent in bomb shelters, food shortages, and the resilience required to survive. "The war changed everything," she reflects. Despite the hardships, Elvira found strength in helping others, working as a nursing assistant and after the war, meeting the love of her life and marrying Arvids. The skills she learned during those years would serve her for life.

In 1948, due to the Russian annexation of Latvia, Elvira and Arvids migrated to Australia under the International Refugee Organisation resettlement program, arriving first in Melbourne, before moving north to Queensland. Life in Australia was far from easy—Arvids worked in the sugar cane fields near Ingham while Elvira cooked for the workers. Later, they moved to work on a cattle property near Clermont. She remembers those days as "tough, tough days," living in caravans without air conditioning and facing snakes in the paddocks. Yet, they persevered, building a new life in a new country.

Together, Elvira and Arvids raised four children—one son and three daughters—with stories as colourful as their own. One child was even born in an ambulance

during floodwaters in Ingham! The young family settled around Gympie and then Kingaroy, where Elvira became a single mother after the tragic loss of her husband in a car accident in 1963. Social housing in Brisbane provided stability over the years, and Elvira raised her children with resilience and love.

Today, Elvira lives independently in Community Housing, where she continues to inspire those around her. She enjoys playing cards, tackling sudoku puzzles (sometimes up to six a day!) and taking twice daily walks to keep her mind and body active. When asked about the secret to her longevity, she smiles and says simply: "God's help and good luck."

Christmas remains a joyful highlight for Elvira, who now delights in celebrating with her nine grandchildren and seventeen great grandchildren. She laughs that she enjoys "all the joys and none of the responsibilities." This year, the family will gather at her daughter's house, where the kitchen becomes the heart of the celebration. Together they roll out dough and bake trays of **piparkūkas** (Latvian gingerbread) and **pīrāgi** (savory bacon and onion pastries). The smell of spices and fresh bread fills the home as generations mingle and children run about. For Elvira, these gatherings are more than festive meals—they are living proof of the family she built and the traditions that continue to bind them together.

Her story is a testament to courage, perseverance, and the importance of community. From Latvia to Germany, from sugar cane fields to Brisbane suburbs, Elvira has lived through history and built a legacy of strength. At 102, she reminds us that life is not just about surviving—it's about finding joy, connection, and purpose along the way.

# What do you think of when you hear the word 'chaplain'?



For some, they may think of terms like priest or minister or pastor. For others, it may not mean anything at all.

Chaplains offer spiritual support and care without pushing a religious agenda, often meeting people where they are, to

respond to their spiritual needs and questions. By offering compassionate support, chaplains ensure that spiritual care is accessible when it's needed most.

Spirituality is something that's talked about a lot but is often misunderstood. Many people think that spirituality and religion are the same thing, and so they bring their beliefs and prejudices about religion to discussions about spirituality. Though all religions emphasise spiritualism as being part of faith, you can be 'spiritual' without being religious or a member of an organised religion. Housing Chaplains with Churches of Christ operate from a Jesus-centred spirituality which means they find hope in His presence and promises, both now and for eternity.

The primary role of a chaplain is to walk alongside people through difficult times, serving as a calming presence and a listening ear without judgment or pushing personal beliefs onto any individual. Their position enables them to foster environments of understanding and healing so those they serve can move forward in life with peace.

As a way of providing holistic care to our tenants, Chaplaincy has been embedded into our Housing Services across our entire network. Nine chaplains work across our various sites in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Ipswich, Logan, Moreton Bay and the Sunshine Coast to provide emotional, spiritual and practical support to our tenants and staff.

This support is realised in various activities such as barbecues, morning and afternoon teas, resident engagement meetings as well as activities such as bingo, bible studies and more. Another significant aspect of chaplaincy is the many one-on-one pastoral care visits and conversations. The most common themes of these pastoral care conversations include: emotional health, physical health, practical support offerings, housing/tenancy support and spiritual care.

The chaplains work alongside our Housing staff to develop a sense of home and belonging by fostering positive neighbourhoods, encouraging healthy relationships and promoting meaningful community development. Together, we can nurture within our tenants a sense of home and not just a place to live.

The end of the year is approaching quickly. Many would agree that Christmas is that special time of the year when lights are up, stores are full, and millions celebrate the angel's declaration of "peace on earth" by stressing out over the perfect gift for their imperfect family members. But for many, Christmas is also the most likely time of the year to consider matters of faith and reflect on the true message of the season.

Ultimately, the message of Christmas is one of love, hope and peace through the birth of Jesus. That message doesn't change from year to year. When there is so much bad news and devastation in the world, this is good news worth celebrating! It is a message of hope—because we are never alone; God is always with us—all of us.

Churches of Christ was founded on this message and are here to offer what Jesus offered us all—love, compassion and inclusion, expressed through a home to live in and a community to be part of. Our chaplains are here for you. Whoever you are and whatever you are going through, we want to walk alongside you. We would love to connect with you and pray for you or offer other forms of emotional and spiritual support.

**If you would like to speak with one of our chaplains please reach out and contact them directly or alternatively, let your Housing Officer know and they will arrange for the chaplain to call or visit you. If you live in detached houses you can also request a chaplaincy referral through your Housing Officer by contacting our office.**

On behalf of the entire Chaplaincy team, I'd like to wish you and your family, a very happy a safe Christmas and may 2026 be a year of peace and hope.



Housing Services Chaplaincy team.

## Calling all community storytellers!

Do you love writing or have a knack for spotting great things to do and see in your neighbourhood? We'd love your help with our newsletter! *HouseTalk* is all about you and your community, so tell us what you'd like to read. Share your ideas, local tips, or even write an article—we want your voice in the next edition! Email us at [HousingServices@cofcqld.com.au](mailto:HousingServices@cofcqld.com.au)

### DID YOU KNOW

**Churches of Christ Housing Services supported during the 2024–25 financial year:**

2375 total persons assisted across 1523 households with a housing, homelessness or support service.



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Churches of Christ Housing Services Limited ABN 25 604 517 026 is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee and is a wholly owned subsidiary of Churches of Christ in Queensland ARBN 147481436 (incorporated in Queensland).

We are a leading community housing provider delivering services across the full spectrum of housing need, from homelessness programs to social housing and affordable housing products.



YouTube