

Spring Wrap

Our new CEO

I am pleased to say hello and introduce myself as the new CEO at Bric.

I have been at Bric for several years now, heading up the Housing Services area, and I am delighted to step up to lead the organisation at an important time.

There has never been more need for organisations like Bric to provide safe and affordable homes for people in housing need, at a time when the private rental market and home ownership is further out of reach than ever for so many people.

I believe everyone deserves a place to call home and have spent most of my career working to improve the experience of those living in affordable and social housing. You have my commitment that I will work hard to do the best by our tenants, and to continue to build the quality of services and the quality of homes that we can offer.

I am also pleased to let you know that Steven Dunbar has stepped up into the role of Housing Services Executive Manager - many of you will know Steven and we welcome him to this leadership role at Bric.

Now that we are (hopefully) over the worst of the pandemic and the flu season, we will be organising some tenant social events - so we look forward to meeting up with some of you over the next few months.

We are lucky to have an amazing team of dedicated staff who give their best in their everyday roles to provide our services - whether it's in the Tenancy or Headleasing areas, the Assets/repairs team, or the Corporate services/Finance team - we all work together to provide the best services we can.

We are also fortunate to have a highly skilled Board of Directors - who all give their time and expertise on a voluntary basis - to oversee the direction of the organisation and look for opportunities to improve our services to existing tenants, as well as to help solve the housing crisis for more Queenslanders in housing need.

We thank Craig Brennan, our outgoing CEO, for his three years of service at Bric - Craig helped Bric achieve many improvements during this time, and we wish him well in his new role in northern New South Wales.

Jane West, Chief Executive Officer



International Tenants' Day

Monday 3 October 2022 is International Tenants' Day (ITD). The day has been celebrated since 1986 as an opportunity to promote and raise awareness of tenants' rights across the world.

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ADCO community day at Harcourt Street

An amazing community giving event at our Harcourt Street property saw a team of more than 20 people from ADCO (a major construction company) spending the day improving the outside areas.

Despite only having one day, they managed to install a new electric BBQ, planted all of the garden beds, installed decorative panelling and painted the back fence. A shed and new seating areas were also added.

The ADCO team planned the whole thing, paid for all the materials (with help from sponsors such as Dulux and Bunnings), and then shouted a BBQ lunch for tenants and Bric staff.

The ADCO team appreciated hearing Julie Saunders (our Chair) speaking about what Bric does, and also hearing from Bric tenant Steven Walker.

The work has really transformed the external areas and given tenants space to socialise and relax together. A huge thank you to all involved.





Meet the Team

Erin, Housing Services Officer



How long have you worked for Bric?

I started with Bric in 2020 and I've been working in the Headleasing team for almost 2 years.

What is your favourite part of your job?

My two favourite parts are firstly handing over the keys to a tenant for their new place, the smile on their faces is infectious. And secondly seeing, over time, how they have made their place into their home.

How do you think Bric makes a difference to tenants?

I believe Bric offers people the chance of a new beginning, and an opportunity that can change their whole lives by having security.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Brisbane, but have been lucky enough to live all over Australia including 8 years in Western Australia.

How do you like to relax?

Definitely anything to do with the beach, or on the beach.

What is the best thing about working for Bric?

Working alongside such an amazing group of people, who are all focused on making a difference to the lives of other's through housing.

Do you have any pets?

My house can often be a funny farm with a crazy dog called Chilli and cat called Millie.

If you won lotto, what's the first thing you would buy?

I'd hire the biggest mansion in Italy and have all my friends and family join me for a holiday with never ending food on the table.

What was the best holiday you ever went on?

Backpacking through Morocco was an experience I will never forget. The culture is fascinating and the locals were so welcoming.

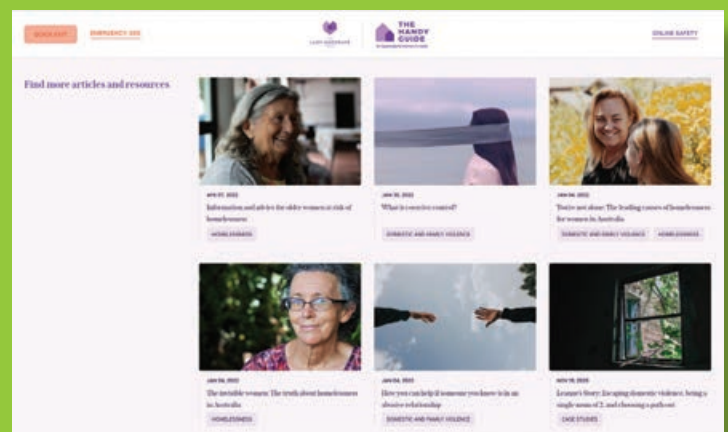


Handy Guides for Women

The *Handy Guides for Women* are produced by the Lady Musgrave Trust and provide vital information on domestic violence, services for older women and homeless and housing support.

Visit <https://ladymusgravetrust.org.au/The-Handy-Guide/>.

You can order a hard copy or read online.



Connecting to the Digital World

Accessing and using technology may feel second-nature for some, but for others it can be challenging and overwhelming. With so much of life online now like shopping, health appointments, connecting with friends and family, learning, and entertainment, it is important everyone has the chance to build skills and confidence around technology and the digital world.

Increasing your digital literacy

Digital literacy refers to the skills, knowledge and confidence to use and understand digital technology e.g. computers, mobile phones, and the internet generally. If you don't have great digital literacy, you are not alone! There is lots of free online and in-person support available to increase your digital literacy and help you navigate the digital world.

An Easy First Step

Speak to a support worker, family member, friend, or even your neighbour! This can be an easy, free, first step to get some hands-on support to learn more about using technology and the internet.



Contact your local library

Libraries have free workshops and 1-on-1 support available to help people with their digital skills and learn how to use their devices. Speak to your local library and their friendly staff to find out more.

Be Connected: Every Australian Online

Be Connected is an Australia wide initiative empowering all Australians to thrive in a digital world.

They have online learning resources as well as a network of community partners called the Be Connected Network. This network of partners offer support so you can develop your digital skills and confidence. From beginners to more advanced tech users - Be Connected can help!

You can build your skills and knowledge with courses like:

- The Absolute Basics
- Getting to Know Your Device
- Getting Started Online
- Safety First (cyber safety)
- More Online Skills (e.g. digital cameras, accessing radio and tv online)
- Connecting With Others
- And many more!

Visit: beconnected.esafety.gov.au or to find local help, call 1300 795 897.

In Person Digital Skills Programs

Ask your local library, Neighbourhood Centre or even support provider about other local programs which may be currently running.



This article was originally printed in the BHC newsletter and is reprinted with their permission. It was written by Tanieka Sawyer, BHC Social Work Student.

Financial barriers to technology

For some people, the barrier to technology and digital connection is cost. Here are some tips for finding the best deals for your data and devices.

Know What You Need

Write down a list of what you need so when you are comparing data plans / devices you can easily see if it matches your list. Think about what is a MUST HAVE versus NICE TO HAVE. This will help you find the right data plan or device so you don't pay for more than you need.

Unsure about data, what it is or what you need? Use the All About Data guide from Be Connected:

beconnected.esafety.gov.au/topic-library/essentials/all-about-data

Do Your Research

Before buying anything, do your research. You can look online, call, email, or go to your local store. If you are uncomfortable doing this yourself, ask someone you trust to support you.

Set a budget and stick to it. Work out how much you can afford and don't feel pressured to spend more!

To get you started, consider:

- Different brands (devices) and phone/internet providers (data). Read reviews and think about what is reliable, cost effective and a brand / provider you can trust.
- Compare plans (data) or devices. Think about your list of needs, is anything missing?
- Ask about the details and make sure you understand all costs e.g. is it a lock in contract, are there extra subscriptions / programs you have to buy after?
- Shop around and see who has the best price.

Ask About Discounts

Ask about discounts for concessions / pensioners, or if there are any promotions running currently. It never hurts to ask!

Alternative affordable devices

If a full price device is out of your budget, you might consider:

- Refurbished devices (pre-owned or ex-display items)
- Ask your school / Learning Institution About:
 - Resource programs e.g. renting laptops for a fee
 - Scholarships: equity or technology scholarships

Don't forget, if buying a device of your own isn't an option, use what is offered for free! Visit local libraries for free access to computers and the internet.

The Queensland Disability Network's Digital Inclusion Project can help people with disability get online. They offer digital workshops run by people with disability for people with disability.

Contact them on 1300 363 783 to find out more.



Toilets

Common maintenance issues with toilets

- **Blockages**
- **Leaks**
- **Toilet not flushing**



Blocked toilets

There are several signs that you may have a blocked toilet:

- The water and waste inside the toilet bowl does not flush away and stays in the bowl
- After multiple flushes the water level increases or ends up overflowing onto the floor
- When the toilet is flushed water starts to gurgle up in your shower or other drains
- After flushing, water takes longer to drain than normal

The common causes of a blocked toilet are:

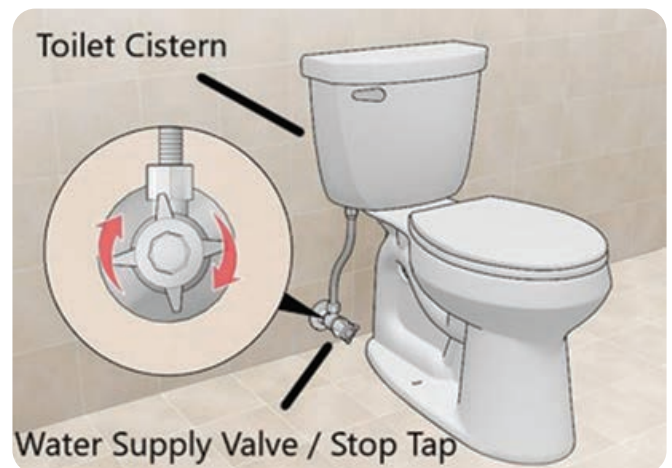
- Overuse of toilet paper
- Flushing unsuitable products down the toilet (e.g paper towels, wet wipes, sanitary products, nappies)
- Offset pan collars

How to prevent getting a blocked toilet:

- Don't flush any products other than toilet paper down the toilet. Tissues, paper towels, wet wipes, sanitary items won't break down and can block your toilet
- Try not to flush excessive amounts of toilet paper at once - do multiple flushes if you need to use a lot of toilet paper
- If water is becoming slow to drain or drains are becoming blocked, you may already have a blocked toilet - so act as soon as possible

Tips on how to unblock a toilet:

- Do not keep flushing if you believe that the toilet is blocked, as the bowl will eventually overflow and cause flooding
- To keep the toilet from overflowing you can turn off the water supply valve or stop tap which is located at the back of the toilet



There are a variety of solutions to clear block toilets on the internet, however, the one and only solution we recommend is using a plunger.

Plunger

The advantage of a plunger is that it is very cheap and can be used repeatedly - you do not need to buy more ingredients for each new blockage. A plunger can be purchased at any hardware or department store.

How to use a plunger

Remember when unblocking a toilet wear rubber gloves and ensure to wash your hands afterwards.

Insert the plunger into the toilet bowl. Make sure the plunger is submerged and completely covers the hole.

Push and pull the plunger over the hole - Start slowly as the first plunge will push air into the bowl. Push down, then pull up quickly to disturb the clog and loosen it. Continue pushing and pulling until the water begins to drain.



Flush the toilet to check if it drains - If the plunging eventually drains the bowl, but the clog is still blocking a free flow down the drain, leave the plunger in the bowl and fill the bowl with water again. Fill it to the point it is normally after a regular flush, then plunge again.

Leaks

There are two places that a toilet will leak water, from the pipe in the wall leading into cistern, or from the cistern into the toilet bowl.

There are no home remedies for a toilet leak and a plumber will need to attend. However, there are ways you can decrease the urgency for a callout.

- **Turn off the stop tap** - There is a water supply valve or stop tap at the back of the toilet on the wall. This prevents any water from filling up the toilet cistern. If there is no water supply into the toilet the leak stops.

- **Put a disposable container under the pipe** - to catch any water leaking from the toilet to prevent water onto the floor. The container will need to be disposed of once the leak is addressed
- **Only turn the stop tap on when you need to use the toilet** - You can still turn the stop tap on to use your toilet and to flush, but remember to turn it off again until the leak is fixed

Toilet won't flush

If your toilet will not flush at all it is probably due to a problem with the toilet cistern and a plumber will need to fix it. If there are other toilets in the property we suggest avoiding using the toilet with the fault.

To flush the toilet until a plumber is able to attend, fill a large bucket with water. After using the toilet pour the water from the bucket into the toilet bowl and this will push the waste down through the toilet into the sewer system.



What are the responsibilities of the tenant and Bric Housing?

Blocked Toilets

The most common causes of blocked toilets are preventable so we would always ask you to take reasonable precautions to prevent blockages or to clear a blockage if one occurs.

If attempts to clear the blockage have failed you can call Bric Housing and we will send a plumber to investigate the cause of the blockage and clear it. If you have other toilets in the property that you can use, it will not be deemed as an emergency requiring same day attendance, but it will be classed as a priority.

Leaking / Toilet not flushing

If you have a toilet leak or a toilet that will not flush, a plumber will be required so we would encourage you to call Bric Housing Asset Services Team. If the causes are due to wear and tear of parts in the toilet, while you are waiting for a plumber to attend, we may ask you to follow the steps provided for turning off the water supply valve / stop tap, and using a bucket to flush the toilet. This will prevent any health concerns with regards to leaking toilet water onto the floor and will protect the property from water damage.

Competition

How does your garden grow?

Last year Bric's garden competition was hugely popular so we've decided to run it again!

Have you created a little garden area at your property? We want to see your gardens - big and small - and there is a great prize on offer for our favourites.

2 x \$100 Bunnings Vouchers to be won

Just send a photo to info@bric.org.au and tell us where the photo was taken!

Judging is based on making the most of what you have - so a window box with a couple of herbs still counts!

Closing Date: **15 October 2022**



My Connect

Bric Housing is partnering with MyConnect to assist our new tenants with connection services. They can also assist people with existing services longer than 12 months to find the most economical options.

MyConnect is 100% Australian owned and operated. As an independently owned company, they offer 100% choice to connect with any one of their many retail partners. In one simple phone call, they can take care of all of your connections including electricity, gas, phone, internet.

You can ask your Tenant Service Officer to refer you to My Connect or
Phone 1300 854 478
Email enquiry@myconnect.com.au

