



### December 2013 issue 24

Greetings to the Summer edition of HIYU

#### Community Representative Appointments

Canterbury has recently appointed three Community Representatives. We welcome Elizabeth Brown, Stephanie Saunders and Kate Taylor to the role.

#### Rollout of the White Ware Procurement

A new budget initiative sees the Ministry sourcing new white ware to help people in financial hardship to buy more cost-effective appliances.

Bulk-buying through preferred suppliers will result in competitive prices and help ensure clients receive a good quality product, at the best possible price and with an appliance warranty. MSD is confident that this will reduce overall cost for the client through debt reduction and lower on-going operating costs.

Consumer New Zealand advice is that newer is better. New appliances have a longer life. Also, maintenance costs are significantly higher for second-hand appliances – sourcing parts for appliances more than five years-old can be difficult and expensive.

- Community Representative Appointments
- Rollout of the White Ware Procurement
- Social Housing Assessment Transfer to Work and Income
- New Payments to People Caring for Someone Else's Child
- Mileage Increase
- 10 Day Hearing Notice

Other benefits MSD wants include suppliers having to deliver and install the product (and remove the old one if needed) within three days of purchase. They will also provide a reliable repairs service during the minimum two-year warranty.

At the moment, people can receive a one-off hardship assistance grant to buy white ware. They are required to repay the grant.

Consumer New Zealand estimates the life of a new appliance to be 10 to 15 years. Compared with buying second-hand appliances every three to four years, the new white ware option would save people hundreds of dollars over the course of a decade. Our research indicates that 10 year whole of life costs can be over 50 per cent lower for new appliances.

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Under the new model, the number of advances for white ware will be capped for the duration of the warranty. In unusual circumstances (such as a fire), a new application would be considered.

This is part of MSD's wider value-for-money procurement work – likely to include other items such as optical products.

The new initiative is being rolled in 3 phases (Southern Region from September 2013, Canterbury and Nelson from November) so that we can ensure that all the new processes are all in place before the national roll out in February 2014.

### Social Housing Assessment Transfer to Work and Income

Currently Housing New Zealand (HNZ) carries out the assessment of people's social housing needs. The needs assessment and associated functions will transfer to MSD in April 2014. This transfer of functions together with the extension of the Income Related Rent Subsidy to community housing providers other than HNZ is part of a suite of changes to improve the diversity of social housing and the effectiveness of social housing support.

The functions planned to transfer to MSD from HNZ in April 2014 include:

- Screening of people's eligibility for social housing
- Assessment of people's social housing needs
- Managing the waitlist for social housing
- Referral of potential tenants to HNZ and other approved social housing providers
- Calculation and annual reviews of income related rents (IRR)
- Payment of IRR subsidies to housing providers
- Providing options and advice on alternate housing options
- Managing debt and undertaking fraud investigations

In addition, MSD will be responsible for reviewing people's tenancies. This is a new function, which will be implemented at a later date.

### New Payments to People Caring for Someone Else's Child

From 13 January, two new payments will be available for people who care for a child whose parents are unable to do so. A one-off Establishment Grant will be available to help

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## News for Community Representatives

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with some of the costs faced by carers when a child first comes into their care. A School and Year Start-Up Payment will be available at the beginning of every year to help cover expenses like school uniforms and fees.

Letters will be sent to existing Orphans Benefit and Unsupported Child's Benefit recipients to advise them about the School and Year Start-Up Payment. New carers who apply on or after 13 January will be informed about both payments when they apply for OB/UCB.

#### Mileage Increase

An increase has been made to the rate at which mileage reimbursement is paid, 77 cents per km.

#### 10 Day Hearing Notice

The SSAA has been noting its dissatisfaction at the lack of time clients are given between them receiving the reports to the BRC and the actual BRC hearing, giving the clients little time to prepare.

To respond to this we are:

- amending the guiding timeframes we give to staff in relation to the ROD process,

- altering the letters regarding the hearing arrangements and
- in the future will be changing HIYA ROD (the computer system that guides frontline staff through the ROD process).

Until the changes have been made in HIYA the new letters will be published on the BRC Coordinator's page for use.

#### Happy Holidays

The RCR Team would like to thank you for your hard work this year and wish you all a safe and happy holiday with your families. We look forward to working with you in 2014.

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