

Welcome to the first edition

This is the first edition of our monthly e-bulletin that will be distributed to all VDP Housing Accord partners via email.

In it you will find what will become regular features, including Website Stats, Desal Project Update and Properties Round-Up. There is also an Agent's Corner where real estate agents can submit items of their choice about their involvement in the VDP Housing Accord.

The VDP Housing Accord would not work without the commitment from local agents and we would love to hear about any issues or concerns you may have, or in fact how the Accord is working for you.

The purpose of the e-bulletin is to keep all VDP Housing Accord partners informed and in-touch.

We trust you will find the information interesting, especially monthly updates on the Desal Housing Website – it's amazing to see who is actually logging in!

If you would like to submit an item for the e-bulletin, please do not hesitate to contact Housing Accord Project Officer, Tracy VanderZalm, on 1300 BCOAST (226 278) or email t.vanderzalm@basscoast.vic.gov.au.

The next issue will be distributed on Friday 9 April. The deadline for submitted items for this issue is Thursday 1 April.



Desal project update

The progress that has been made in less than six months is quite extraordinary.

Bulk earthworks are 90 per cent complete and the eight dunes which will surround the plant are taking shape, ranging between six and 12 metres in height. Structural steel is being erected this month.

The recruitment team has been busy with just over 500 people

now working on the plant site. It is expected an additional 100 labourers and tradesmen will be recruited over the next month or so. It is anticipated that many of these positions will be filled locally, so demand for accommodation is not expected to increase significantly during March.

Recruitment will continue steadily with peak workforce expected in November 2010.

Tenant's Union visit

Representatives from the Tenants' Union of Victoria visited Wonthaggi to meet with residents who were unsure of their tenancy rights. The Union had 10 appointments. Some people simply wanted information about their rights and responsibilities, others felt they had been treated unfairly in their rental situation. It is important that residents are able to express their concerns and have any queries addressed with a professional. Mark O'Brien from the Tenant's Union said there were some instances in rent increases, but that it was almost impossible to find any direct evidence that they were a direct impact from desal. The Tenant's Union will be lobbying the State and Federal Governments to have service agencies based locally to assist these people.



Desal housing website

The Desal Housing website is currently under review.

One of the most frequently asked questions from potential tenants is how far the desal plant is from any given town.

Not that they want anything necessarily close by, but it's important for people to get a picture of where they will be living or where they would like to live.

As a result, a region map will now be included on the home page of the site, highlighting each of our search areas.

As the number of available properties increases, the Search All option is becoming cramped and it looks a little disorganised. This will be removed and visitors to the site will only be able to search by area.

A link to the VDP Housing Accord document will be included on the home page, giving visitors to the site the opportunity to read about why the Accord was developed and what we, as partners, have all committed to.

Website stats

The Desal Housing website has been viewed 6,000 times since it began operating in November 2009.

The average time spent on a page is 1 minute.

The top five regions that are viewing the site are:

Victoria 4,015, Queensland 1,259, NSW 718, South Australia 28, Western Australia 27.

The top five cities that are viewing the site are:

Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney, Cranbourne, Pakenham.

Property round-up

Agents that have properties listed as Price On Application are being asked to replace this with a weekly rental value.

This is not only for the benefit of the potential tenant, who is able to gather the information he/she needs quickly and accurately, but it also will benefit the agent as properties with listed weekly rentals are being viewed more frequently than those without.

Including a price on your property also promotes transparency.

The community's interest in properties listed on the desal housing website has increased. The community is feeling more comfortable with the site and has responded to the call to report any properties they think do not meet the Accord criteria.

Leased properties

The number of leased properties has risen to 60 out of the 360 that have been listed so far.

The average weekly rental for February was \$450, with good properties listed between \$350 - \$450, the most sort after.

Properties priced at over \$500 are not being considered at this stage.

It seems properties in Inverloch are the most popular at the moment, with San Remo, Surf Beach, Cape Paterson and Wonthaggi properties also showing high viewing numbers on the website.

Thiess Degremont expects an influx of employees from September and is calling for more homes to be listed on the site.