



Helpers' new home

Coping with the crisis: WH&SS coordinator Margory Lapworth in her 'new' office in their delightful restored cottage (pictured right).



Words and pictures by
SANDY BURGONYE

Warrandyte Housing and Support Services has a new address—in the restored cottage, opposite the entrance to Whipstick Gully on Yarra Street.

As reported in last month's *Diary* the WH&SS, which assists families to find accommodation, had to deal with its own housing crisis.

The service had notice to vacate the old police house on the corner of Yarra and Forbes street by the end of June.

The co-ordinator of WH&SS, Margory Lapworth, told the *Diary*, "we just didn't know where to go. There was nowhere in Warrandyte because we don't have any money. We are a voluntary organisation and all we get is the money that the Warrandyte market gives to us for administering the market—\$4000 a year."

The future looked grim for the WH&SS until the final week of June when the Warrandyte Rotary Club stepped in and funded the organisation to move to the cottage.

The transfer was seamless—the organisation quietly closed its doors at the former police sergeant's residence on the last Friday in June and re-opened in its new location the following Monday morning.

The WH&SS did not want to interrupt its services in any way. "You know there are people still out there in crisis whether we move our office or not. Luckily for us Rotary have come to our assistance and we have moved into this property", Ms Lapworth said.

The WH&SS received many calls and offers of help from the community after its plight was revealed in last month's *Diary*.

"We would like to thank everybody for their best wishes and for their help over the trying time we've had over the last month. And we just hope that we can continue doing our job and assisting the people in need in the community," Margory Lapworth said.

The service's new office is in an ideal position, as it is next to a car park and

a bus stop and is close to the village's central business strip. The cottage also has a larger space.

"We only had two little rooms at the police house. That was the total of our office and now we've got five rooms", Ms Lapworth said.

"You have no idea how nice it is to have a decent place to work from. We call it the Whitehouse now." The larger area allows for an additional interview room, space for people to wait for appointments and has a fitted out kitchen.

The WH&SS uses the Yarra Street level rooms and the Rotary Club has plans to utilise the downstairs space in the future.

The cream-painted cottage at 95 Yarra street, has a bright welcoming ambience. The rooms look onto the garden and beyond to the river bank eucalypts and the Yarra.

"The environment part of it is pretty important, because our clients can be quite anxious," Ms Lapworth commented. The children of clients can play safely in the garden or walk down to the river to feed the ducks.

The WH&SS serves a surprisingly large locality outside Warrandyte, with people from Box Hill to Healesville using its services. Agencies such as Centrelink, the Office of Housing and Wesley Mission refer clients to the service.

The organisation also distributes funding to help people with financial shortfalls. "We get funding from the government and we are able to assist people with the electricity, gas, those sorts of bills", Ms Lapworth said.

The organisation also distributes from the food bank that John Cox established some 20 years ago. Many community groups, such as schools, Rotary and the Lions Club regularly stock this resource.

The WH&SS has notified its clients of the change of address and left notices at the old police house with directions to the new premises.

The *Diary* believes the old police residence will still be used by the state Office of Housing for emergency accommodation, but it will no longer be under local control.

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