

BUILDING BRIDGES

Community Engagement & Tenant Participation Strategy 2026 - 2030



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the land, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Always was, always will be, Aboriginal Land.

Thank you

We would like to thank all Bridge Housing tenants, members of the **Tenant Reference Group**, **Tenant Advisory Groups** and **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tenant Advisory Group**, staff, and organisations who took part in workshops and surveys to help us build our new Building Bridges strategy.







Cultural warning
This document may contain the images of people who have passed away.

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CEO’S Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce Building Bridges 2026 to 2030, Bridge Housing’s community engagement and tenant participation strategy for the next five years.

As Bridge grows, this strategy will help ensure that our commitment to tenants remains strong, local and responsive. It reflects what tenants have told us matters most: feeling connected to their community, having a genuine say in decisions, being supported to sustain their tenancy, and seeing their strengths and contributions recognised.

Building Bridges has always been an important part of how we work alongside tenants and communities. This new strategy builds on that strong foundation to strengthen engagement and participation across a larger and more diverse footprint.

I would like to thank the tenants, staff and partners who have contributed to the development of this strategy. Your ideas, feedback and lived experience have helped shape a practical and ambitious strategy.

We look forward to working together to bring this strategy to life and to continue building connected and inclusive communities.

Laurie Leigh
CEO

Who we are

Bridge Housing is a leading community housing provider with more than 40 years experience delivering safe, secure homes and quality services across Greater Sydney. Bridge Housing now manages close to 3,800 properties across Greater Sydney, with more than 6,100 people living in our homes.

In coming years, Bridge Housing will be expanding our delivery of social and affordable housing to meet the growing demand for high quality, sustainable and affordable housing across Sydney. Our footprint will extend across the metropolitan area, including long-established communities and newer suburbs.

A diverse tenant community

Bridge Housing tenants come from many backgrounds and life experiences. They include parents, carers, older people, workers, volunteers, artists, leaders and community members. Many receive an income from Centrelink and may need support to access stable housing, services and local community connections.

6,100 residents

499 Identify as **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander**

3,252 Women and girls

1,109 Engaged in **paid work**

354 Sole parents

2,592 Informal **carers**

875 Children

656 Young adults (18-30)

3,278 Rely on **income support**

2,531 Culturally and linguistically **diverse backgrounds**

2,384 Over 55

671 Report living with a **mental illness**

1,782 Report living with a **disability**

1,281 Speak a first language **other than english**

Connection through growth

In line with our strategic plan, which focuses on changing lives by delivering more homes, we continue to grow with an additional 2,500 social and affordable homes planned by 2030.

This strategy fosters connection and belonging across our communities

Bridge's Customer Strategy 2026–2030 has been developed to ensure our services are responsive, inclusive and focused on local communities as we grow. Building Bridges plays an important role in this by strengthening local engagement, supporting belonging in new communities, and ensuring tenant voice remains visible and influential across all regions.

Over the next five years, Building Bridges will help us respond to this changing footprint by strengthening connection, participation, place-based engagement and belonging in both existing and new communities.

The Tenant Reference Group

The Tenant Reference Group (TRG) was formed in 2015 and is made up of Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Tenant Leaders including the Bridge Housing NSW Tenant Network Representatives. Now, the TRG is made up of a cross section of tenants from all TAG groups. It provides a way for tenants to be directly involved in shaping the way Bridge delivers services.

Members give feedback on customer service initiatives, comment on tenant satisfaction and other metrics, and work with Bridge to identify priorities and the best way to engage with our broader tenant community.



Members of the TRG

A place-based approach to community engagement

A home is more than a roof over someone's head, it provides stability, security, social connection and empowerment.

Building Bridges 2026–2030 is our fourth community engagement and tenant participation strategy. It builds on what we have learned from tenants, staff and support partners, and brings those learnings together with the programs and initiatives we will continue to deliver.

This strategy applies a placemaking lens that combines the ideas of home and neighbourhood with relationship-based engagement to build connection and local identity through shared activity. The strategy will be activated through locally focused regional plans that reflect the strengths, challenges and opportunities of each community.

We are committed to working with tenants, partners and local communities to create safe, inclusive and connected places.

We want to work together to improve wellbeing and strengthen a sense of community for tenants, their families and household members.

Theory of Change

Our Theory of change shows how Building Bridges will build a sense of belonging and empowerment for tenants.

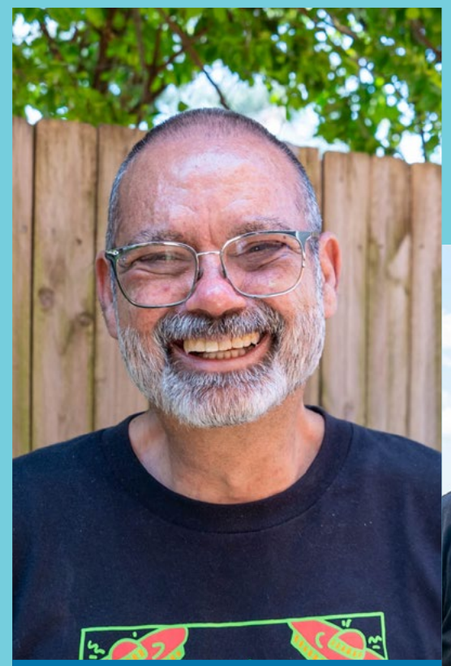
	House & home	**Health & safety**	**Social & community**	**Financial wellbeing**
Short term **Outputs**	Tenants provide **feedback** about Bridge services	Tenants participate in **place-based initiatives**	Tenants participate in Bridge **community events**	Tenants attend **skills & education** programs
Medium term **Outcomes**	Tenants have **a real say** in how Bridge develops services	Tenants access services that meet their **health & safety needs**	Increased social & **community networks**	Increased financial **knowledge & confidence**
Long term **Impacts**	Tenants experience **good quality housing**	Tenants can better **manage their health**	Tenants are **connected in their community**	Tenants have increased **financial resilience**



5 PILLARS FOR ACTION

1. Connnect

Strengthen block-level and local engagement so tenants can build safer, more connected communities with neighbourhood concerns addressed.



2. Influence

Increase practical and accessible ways for tenants to shape decisions, especially where survey results show lower confidence in ability to influence decision-making.



3. Thrive

Support inclusion and access so more tenants can take part (transport, accessibility, language and digital inclusion), and link tenants to local supports where needed.



4. Celebrate

Events and activities that build pride and belonging; complemented by year-round, local engagement for tenants who are less likely to participate.



5. Belong

Welcome and connect new tenants into their communities, helping them build a sense of belonging, understand local opportunities, and connect with their neighbours.



1. Connect

Supporting tenants to build and maintain local relationships and community connections

Connection supports wellbeing and participation can reduce loneliness and social isolation. Tenants have told us it is important that we continue to support initiatives that help them stay engaged and connected in their communities. Evidence suggests that activities have the greatest impact when they sit within a local place plan shaped by tenant insight, neighbourhood conditions and partner capability.

Our Tenant Advisory Groups have identified the importance of having access to community spaces, regular block meetings, community gardens and support to access grants so that tenants can bring resident-led ideas to life.

Activities that bring people together such as walking groups, social outings, barbeques and informal local activities are also important, helping develop relationships and reduce the impacts of isolation.

Digital inclusion is also important. Access to affordable internet, devices and digital support can reduce isolation, improve access to services and help tenants participate in ways that suit them. Bridge Housing's digital strategy will support this work and strengthen how we engage with tenants.

Through this strategy we will prioritise locations where isolation, neighbour issues or limited local amenity are affecting tenant experience We will deliver a mix of social, cultural and practical activities that build trust and belonging over time.



What we will do

Tenant Advisory Groups
We will hold regular local Tenant Advisory Group meetings, including dedicated opportunities for Aboriginal tenants and cultural groups. These meetings will help tenants share information, raise local issues and influence services.

Place-based regional plans
We will develop regional plans shaped by tenant feedback, survey data and local knowledge. These plans will guide block meetings, community activities, partnerships and tenant-led initiatives so each region responds to local needs.

Big Ideas Grants
We will continue tenant-led grants, including Big Ideas Grants and Nourishing Neighbours grants, to support local activities, community events and neighbour connection.

Block meetings
We will hold regular, flexible block meetings so tenants and staff can discuss local issues, build relationships and identify practical ways to improve their block.

Community Greening
We will continue working with the Botanic Garden of Sydney Community Greening program to support tenants who want to develop gardening skills, learn about environmental sustainability and connect with each other.

Tenant newsletters
We will produce a quarterly tenant newsletter with local activities, tenant stories, service updates and ways to get involved.

Build connection
We will work with the TRG to develop opportunities and activities that strengthen connection, understanding, engagement and respect between tenants.

Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan
We will develop and implement a Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan with Aboriginal tenants, partners and Reconciliation Australia to support learning, relationships and reconciliation across Bridge communities.

2 Influence

Enabling tenants to have a real say in how Bridge Housing designs and delivers services

We want to provide opportunities for tenants to influence how Bridge Housing designs and delivers services. This includes helping shape strategies, setting service standards and reviewing performance through our participation structures. Influence is a clear priority for tenants in our annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey and is a key focus of our Customer Strategy.

We will listen to tenants and act on their views to shape service improvements, with clear feedback loops so tenants can see how their input shapes decisions.

Involving tenants in decisions that affect them ensures our services meet their needs. Tenants told us they sometimes need support to participate with confidence. This includes time to prepare, clear communication, and access to training and practical support.

We use engagement methods that encourage open, honest dialogue and create safe spaces for discussion. We also take a collaborative approach to developing initiatives, so they are tenant-led and culturally safe.

What we will do

Tenant Reference Group
We will hold eight meetings each year with tenant leaders from local Tenant Advisory Groups. These meetings will help tenants raise issues, give feedback and shape service improvements.

Tenant feedback
We will use surveys, workshops, service reviews and other feedback channels o understand tenant experience and identify improvements. We will report back on what tenants told us and what changes we are making.

Time to Talk
We will continue Time to Talk sessions so tenants can hear from our CEO and Executive team and ask questions about issues that matter to them.

Engaging diverse voices
We will create more accessible ways for tenants from different backgrounds and life stages to take part, including younger people, tenants living with disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse tenants.

Tenant input into service improvement
We will involve tenant representatives in reviewing feedback on repairs, maintenance and other key services so tenant experience helps shape improvements.

Your Views Panel
We will strengthen the Your Views Panel so tenants can give quick feedback on policies, procedures, communications and service changes.





3 Thrive

Supporting strong and sustainable tenancies

We recognise that some tenants may benefit from connection to specialist support to sustain their tenancy. This means working closely with support partners and taking a proactive approach to connecting tenants to the services they need, including aged care, health and disability services.

Tenants told us they want skills-based support to help them navigate day-to-day needs, regular wellbeing check-ins, and opportunities to build local connections that support health, wellbeing and positive neighbour relationships.

Through our support coordination team and service provider partnerships we deliver integrated approaches to tenancy sustainment. Providing opportunities to build skills, access training and employment, improve financial resilience, supporting aging in place and reduce energy poverty. We are also looking at ways to increase inclusion. Digital access, language options, accessibility and culturally safe practice are core enablers of sustained tenancies.

What we will do

Tenant leadership training
We will use findings from our UTS research partnership to support tenant leaders with the skills, confidence and support to work with Bridge and lead local activities.

Advance Scholarships
We will continue Advance Scholarships to support children and young people in Bridge households with financial contributions to support them with education, training and study activities.

Digital inclusion
We will help tenants access and use digital tools so they can stay informed, connect with others and take part in engagement activities in ways that suit them.

Employment and skills pathways
We will develop partnerships that expand access to training, volunteering and employment opportunities, supporting tenants to build skills, confidence and economic participation.

Support partnerships
We will connect tenants with organisations through Wellbeing Plans, tenant meetings and community activities, improving access to health, disability, aged care, family, financial and community support services.

Culturally safe peer support
We will develop peer-support initiatives with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants and work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tenants Advisory Group to develop activities to engage local community.

4 Celebrate

Honouring the strength and resilience of our community

Celebration is central to how we recognise and strengthen the resilience, creativity and spirit of Bridge communities. We will create opportunities for tenants to share their experiences, recognise each other's contributions and celebrate what makes their communities strong.

Tenants told us they want opportunities to celebrate strong communities and to promote tenant-led ideas, stories and initiatives. This will show how tenants of all ages and backgrounds are active contributors to vibrant, inclusive communities

We understand that tenants want to see themselves reflected in their communities and in Bridge's decision-making. We will use cultural celebrations, exhibitions, awards and local events to build connections across tenants, staff, partners and neighbourhoods. .

What we will do

Good Neighbour Champions
We will recognise tenants who make positive contributions to their neighbours, blocks and local communities.

Tenant stories
We will share tenant stories through digital, print and community channels to celebrate strengths, diversity and lived experience.

Tenant Art Show
We will hold a tenant art show every two years during Reconciliation Week to celebrate creativity, First Nations culture and lived experience.

Bridge in Communities
We will take part in local events, festivals and outreach activities so tenants and communities connect with Bridge as an active local partner.

Local identity and pride of place
We will support murals, gardens, exhibitions, storytelling and other local activities that reflect the strengths of each community.

NAIDOC Week and culturally significant activities
We will support activities that recognise culture, build respect and strengthen connection across Bridge communities.

End of year celebrations
We will hold local celebrations that bring tenants, staff and partners together to connect and recognise community achievements.

Orbit school holiday activities
We will continue activities for young residents and families, creating fun ways to connect with others in the community.





5 Belong

Building belonging in new communities

As the communities and locations we work in continue to grow, our effort to build belonging starts early. This starts well before anyone moves in and is shaped over time by tenant communities as they connect and identify what matters most.

The first few months in a new home can shape how settled, safe and connected people feel. Knowing your neighbours, understanding shared spaces, feeling comfortable raising concerns, and getting clear information is key.

Building Bridges will focus effort on building belonging in new communities by developing connection early. We will activate shared spaces, including gardens, community rooms, courtyards and entryways, and provide information about local services, activities and opportunities.

We will focus on how we welcome tenants to their homes and the period of settling-in. We will hold welcome events and block I conversations so tenants can shape their community.

What we will do

Place plans
We will implement place plans for new projects to connect tenants to the local community, services, neighbourhood and home.

Higher density buildings
We will develop targeted strategies that support resident belonging and sense of safety in higher density and mixed tenure communities.

Move-in plans for new developments
We will provide local welcome information for each new block, including shared spaces, community activities and practical tips for settling in.

Move-in teams
We will use on-site inductions, welcome packs and peer support to help tenants understand shared spaces, the local community and services.

Feedback and listening
We will use post-occupancy surveys and simple impact measures to understand what is working and what support tenants need as they settle in.

Resident voices in the development of this strategy

Resident voices have been essential in developing this **Building Bridges** strategy. We have drawn on feedback from project consultations, the Tenant Satisfaction Survey, Impact Surveys and targeted consultation to finalise the activities that will bring this strategy to life.



Review of Building Bridges

An external review of Building Bridges 2021–2024 identified the strategy strengthened Bridge Housing's culture of tenant engagement and supported social connection—particularly through well run large scale events.

The review also made suggestions about how we can improve our engagement activities to ensure the best possible outcomes for tenants.

The review asked us to better reflect how we deliver and measure the strategy, so it is consistently effective across all Bridge communities and reaches a broader diversity of tenant voices.

Through the review residents asked for:

- An increased focus on block level and place based engagement, supported by clear priorities across our whole service footprint.
- Broaden and diversify the tenant voices we hear, and provide practical, accessible ways for tenants to influence decisions, including re-establishing structured processes for tenant input.
- Strengthen digital engagement approaches to support inclusion, access and ongoing two way communication.

Targeted Building Bridges consultation

We worked with CRED Consulting and held workshops in each region focused on recommendations from the evaluation. These covered block-level engagement, broader place-based activities, the use of digital tools for engagement, and ways to engage a more diverse range of tenants.

We also conducted targeted one-to-one phone calls with people who had not engaged with previous Building Bridges activities, so we could understand how to encourage more people to get involved.

At the end of each session, tenants prioritised the ideas that were most important to them. The highest votes were for:

- More regular block meetings that are adaptable to each site and include social activities and food.
- Support for more tenant-led interest groups.
- Re-establish a group to provide targeted feedback on policies and procedures.
- Work collaboratively with tenants to access grant funding.

These targeted consultations built on earlier engagement with tenants through our Customer Strategy, Tenant Satisfaction Survey and Customer experience workshops.

Tenant satisfaction survey and workshops

The 2025 Tenant Satisfaction Survey results show steady improvement across core measures, including tenant involvement and listening and acting on tenant views.

The results also show where we need to keep improving. Building Bridges will focus on improving communication, making it easier to get involved, and giving tenants more of a say in decisions. Communication is the strongest predictor of tenant satisfaction, and tenants tell us that feeling heard and influencing decisions shapes trust. Our Customer Strategy will complement this by focusing on organisation-wide priorities, particularly repairs and maintenance experience and neighbourhood issues.

These themes were reinforced by what we heard in our service improvement workshops, where tenants told us they wanted us to focus on:

- Local issues - focus on what matters in each area, shaped by the people who live there.
- Inclusion and access - digital, physical and language barriers restrict who can get involved, and these need to be addressed.
- Ways to influence - tenants want to feel valued and understand the impact of their time and input, not just be consulted. This includes two-way communication and closing the loop through a "you said, we did" approach.

We follow the IAP2 Engagement Principles

Our engagement principles are guided by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Participation: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower.

Inform
We will provide balanced, accessible information so tenants understand what is happening, why it matters, and how they can get involved (if they want to).

Consult
We will ask for tenant feedback and show how it influenced the decision, including what we heard and what we will do differently as a result.

Involve
We will work directly with tenants throughout the process to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered at each stage.

Collaborate
We will partner with tenants in developing options and solutions, including shared design and problem solving, and we will reflect tenant advice in recommendations.

Empower
Where decisions are able to be made by tenants (for example through participatory budgeting or tenant led initiatives), we will support tenants to make the final decision and be clear about the scope of that decision.

For each engagement activity, we will tell tenants which level we are using and what it means, so expectations are clear about how input will be used and how much influence tenants will have on decisions.

We will use a consistent “you said, we did” approach so tenants can see the outcomes of engagement and understand what has changed, or why something could not change.



Glossary

The following key terms and concepts underpin this document. Definitions draw on reputable public sources as well as our discussions with partners and tenants.

Co-design
Co-design engages consumers, in this case tenants, in the design process with the idea that this will ultimately lead to improvement and innovation. Co-design builds on the existing frameworks of consumer and citizen participation in developing social services. It is underpinned by the idea that collaborative, cooperative and community-centred approaches lead to more effective social services and greater social impact.

Capacity building
Working with people, organisations or communities to make sure they have the skills and knowledge to achieve their goals or participate in activities in an effective and meaningful way.

Community Building
Also referred to as community development, community building is about working alongside people and organisations to develop strong and resilient communities through collective action and positive change. It is a way of working with community strengths and recognising that the best people to decide what communities need are the people in those communities.

Empowerment
Technically this means handing decision making power over to someone. In a less formal sense it can mean giving people access to the skills, knowledge and opportunities they need to have more control over their own lives.

Engagement
Engagement is the process of creating opportunities for people to participate—by sharing information, listening, bringing people together, seeking input, and working with people on solutions. In this strategy, community engagement refers to how we work with neighbourhoods and local communities, and tenant engagement refers to how we support tenants to participate in ways that suit them.

Logic Model
A logic model describes how a program is intended to work by linking inputs and activities to outputs and outcomes (i.e., the pathway from what we do to what changes).

Participation
Participation means involving people who are affected by a decision in the decision making process. It supports more sustainable decisions by ensuring people have the information and support they need to contribute meaningfully, and by being transparent about how their input is used.

Placemaking
Place-making is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of places and spaces in communities. It builds on a local community’s assets, inspiration and potential, with the intention of creating places and spaces that promote health, happiness and wellbeing.

Social inclusion
Many people are excluded from the opportunities they need to create the life they want. In a socially inclusive society all people feel valued and have the support and opportunity to participate fully in society.

Social justice
This term is used to describe the need for equality and fairness between people and groups of people in our community. We advance social justice when we remove barriers that people face because of gender, class, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, sexuality or disability.

Tenant
In this strategy, we use tenant broadly to include tenants and (where relevant) household members who live in Bridge Housing homes. When we need to refer specifically to the person/people on the lease, we will say leaseholder (or head tenant).

Key programs and initiatives

Advance Scholarships
Annual educational grant program to support children and young people to achieve their goals in school, training and study.

Big Idea Grants
Small grant seed funding provided by Bridge Housing for tenants to support community-led initiatives that bring neighbours and communities together.

Block Blitz
A one-day, place-based event where Bridge Housing brings staff, contractors and local partners to a block to complete inspections, minor repairs, tenancy support and community engagement at the same time.



Bridge in Communities
An approach to raise knowledge and awareness of Bridge Housing's services in key local communities through attending events, workshops and cultural activities.

Block Meetings
Housing-led local community meetings to resolve local and neighbourhood issues, champion positive neighbours and learn about ways to get involved at Bridge Housing.

Good Neighbour Champions
An initiative to recognise and reward tenants who positively contribute to their housing community.

Hand Up
Arrears management program that enables tenants with high arrears to pay off their debt through engagement in financial planning and engagement in services that assist them to address the causes of their debt.

Orbit! Online
An annual event held during the Easter School holidays for our tenants with children. We hold events that focus on fun and education event.

Our Place Green Space
Bridge Housing's community gardening initiative, delivered in partnership with the Royal Botanic Garden's Community Greening program, to support residents to develop community gardens in their blocks.



Place-based Activities
Our Communities Team run activities for local tenants based on direct feedback including walking groups and information sessions.

Tenant Reference Group
A meeting of the Chairs of each local Tenant Advisory Group and tenant leaders who meet every two months with senior managers to provide updates from the community, explore policy changes and build capacity through training.

Time to Talk
Online and face-to-face sessions enabling tenants to ask any question of the Executive team. Some sessionsl are run in community languages supporting involvement from tenants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Digital Inclusion
Workshops aimed at helping people access and use technology safely and confidently.







UN SDGs

This document contributes to the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) in line with our Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Statement.



Good health and wellbeing
Strengthening tenant wellbeing through opportunities for social connection and access to health and support services.



Reduced inequalities
Promoting inclusion by reducing digital, physical and language barriers to tenant participation.



Sustainable cities and communities
Building connected communities through place-based tenant engagement and local initiatives.



Peace, justice and strong institutions
Giving tenants meaningful opportunities to influence decision making and service improvement.

bridge

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