

# Information sheet for new residents

Earthsong Eco-Neighbourhood 10.9.2010

## The Eco-Neighbourhood Community.

Moving to Earthsong involves participation with a community of residents. We invite you to spend some time in the Common House and get a feel for what the neighbourhood's values are based upon. Reading through the green Cohousing book is a good way to understand many of the issues of cohousing. At Earthsong we have developed a set of communication guidelines. These provide a framework for the way neighbours relate, and ensure safety and a common value set in the event of any conflicts arising.

Participation here tends to work best on the basis of 'the more you put in, the more you will get out of it'. So, ideally, and depending on your length of stay and other circumstances, you may choose to be fully involved with working bees, focus groups, and meetings etc. Alternatively you may prefer to come and go with lesser involvement.

Meetings are open for you to attend. However if you want to have speaking and decision-making rights then becoming an Associate Member is necessary. This involves some reading, meeting attendance and payment of \$100. You will then receive an information pack and a set of coloured cards used for the group decision-making process. The document "Information for New Members" on the website tells you more about this.

Regardless of membership status, all residents are bound by the Body Corporate Rules. There is a copy on the website ([www.earthsong.org.nz](http://www.earthsong.org.nz)).

People like to know who is coming to live here. Please make sure either you or your host/vendor sends a simple email or makes a meeting announcement that you will be moving in. There must be at least one associate member in each household and a "buddy" for house sitters.

## Laundry

The common laundry is available for your use. Ask one of your neighbours how to use the washing machines. Please use only eco-low suds detergent in the front-loading washing machines.

## Car parking

Parking spaces are restricted. There is only one carpark per house. There is a plan and car parks are allocated. See Alanah (unit 22) for a car park allocation. Please ensure your visitors know where to park or if in doubt they should park on the street. If you require a 2<sup>nd</sup> car park there is a charge of \$5.00 per week.

## Traffic

Please ensure that non-resident traffic does not come past the Common House except by prior arrangement, i.e. for moving in, heavy deliveries or mobility parking. This is important for child safety as well as there being limited turning space and no spare car parks.

## Children

Kids enjoy roaming freely here, and there is an element of shared supervision by residents because of the way the neighbourhood is laid out. However please remember that you are responsible for your children at all times, and toddlers in particular will need close watching in case they stray off with

older children. The front of site is out of bounds to children except when accompanied by an adult.

## Visitor safety

Please ensure visitors and their children are closely supervised. There are special hazards in the construction areas and areas of open water.

## Mail

The mailboxes are located on south side of the Common House by the front door.

## Common meals

These generally occur on Thursday and Saturday at 6.00pm. The menu is sometimes emailed out a few days beforehand. In order to participate in preparing common meals, see Margaret (#6) to join a cooking roster. Teams of 3-4 people cook once a month and pay for the ingredients for that meal. Meals eaten by non-cooks cost \$8 each – put in the green wooden box in the common house kitchen (children are free)

*"The meals prepared in the common house will be made from food that is as healthful, whole, delicious, affordable and as organic and locally grown as possible. We are respectful of people's differing food needs and preferences but also recognise the sustainability aspects of vegetarian/low meat diets. All meals will have a vegetarian orientation although meat choices may be offered."*

*Meals policy (16-6-2001)*

## Common House - Access and Care

There is a combination lock on the laundry door and only members know the combination. Please see Helen McNeil (unit 19) for this information. Please help keep the common house clean and tidy, by paying special attention to your own dishes, and also working with the children to tidy up after themselves.

## Food Co-op

Weekly organic fruit & veges and other goods are available from various wholesalers. Joining the co-op involves paying a \$25 membership to Joel (#26) and volunteering at the market. You can buy at the Ranui Farmers market, after which the residue comes back to the common house and you can buy from there. If not paying please note on list. The weekly account comes by email. Please pay within seven days, on line.

## Workshop

The workshop is in the tin building and is for common use. Please observe the posted rules carefully, and do not use power tools without a "license". (See Workshop Group members – (John #5, Bryan #17)) We ask that you please keep the door shut when using power tools, and when ever possible you only use power tools during working hours. At the weekends not before 10am or after 4pm and on Sundays only in an emergency.

Spare timber is for general use in small amounts, but please talk to the workshop group beforehand.

## Common Gardens

You are welcome to get involved with gardening in the common

areas. Various members manage gardens, including teardrop compost depot, so talk to Permaculture Group for guidance (Margaret #6, Cathy #5, Barbara #16, Rosemary #29 and Glenys #13). Also check with them as to what gardens are harvestable.

### Meetings and focus groups

Neighbourhood activities are managed with a system of focus groups, eg: Permaculture, kitchen, workshop etc. You are welcome to join any of these groups, which meet on a regular basis.

The full group meets on the third Saturday of each month, at 9.30 am.

### Communication

Most day-to-day business communication between members is by email. It involves about 50 emails per week. Once you are a member, you will be added to our telephone and e-mail list. There is a notice board and blackboards in the common house.

### Pet Policy

**Preamble:** The intent of this cat policy is to acknowledge that Earthsong values the environment and aims to keep the number of cats to eight or below as much as possible. All aspects of the policy should be understood in the context of our values around honouring diversity, tolerance, respect and whanau.

1. Only Earthsong members can have a cat.
2. Residents can only obtain a new cat by written application to the Body Corporate Secretary. If there are eight or more cats at Earthsong there will be a waiting list based on the order of written application to the Body Corporate Secretary.
3. People moving into Earthsong can bring a cat if they already have one. This might cause the number of cats to go above eight for a period of time.
4. There shall be no more than one cat per household.
5. Owners will ensure that: their cat is de-sexed, the cat is well fed, the cat has a bell attached to a collar and the cat is regularly treated for fleas and worms.
6. The owners will arrange for someone to care for the cat while they are away.
7. Owners must not dump a cat if it becomes unwanted.
8. Owners will ensure that cats are kept indoors 30 minutes before sunset and 30 minutes after sunrise.
9. Cat owners are responsible for damage caused by cats.
10. Cat owners must clean up their cat's mess.
11. Cats are not allowed in the common house or on common house furniture.

### Management of the Cat Policy

1. All management will incorporate our communications agreement.
2. Each node will take responsibility for encouraging cat policy compliance and management of the cats in that node.
3. Nodes will also provide support to enable their neighbours to comply.
4. If an issue cannot be effectively addressed within the node it will go to MACL to address.

### Water

The cold water taps in kitchens and at bathroom sinks are permanently supplied from city water. All other water comes, for most of the time, from rainwater tanks. However during dry periods longer than 20 days this will switch over to city supply.

### Solar Hot water

The temperature of hot water coming out of the taps is limited to 55 degrees, but at times may be cooler. The water temperature will need to be over 40 degrees to get a comfortable shower. You can boost the temperature electrically by turning on the switch at the wall monitor. The booster will operate at three pre-set times in a 24-hour period. Except in the middle of winter, we recommend you do not leave this switch on permanently. See the household manual for instructions.

### Power, water bills, internet and extra parking

These are billed by the Body Corporate every three months, and each household is required to read their own power and water meters. Typical bills are \$50 - \$100 per month. Wastewater fees are not charged.

There is no line charge component to the bills, so conservation reaps financial rewards. There are special system limitations, which need your co-operation:

- Rainwater is limited in the dry summer months.
- Peak power load is limited in winter by our transformer. This means that during winter evenings each house can only average about one large heater's worth of power at a time. As a guide line, try to keep only one of the following appliances on at a time, during the 5pm to 11pm time period: oven, heater, dishwasher, washing machine, iron, hairdryer, kettle, toaster etc. Please use low energy light bulbs inside your home.

Winter power is charged at a higher rate, as is summer water.

To encourage sustainability, our data on power and water use is circulated around residents by email.

### Kitchen benches

Most timber kitchen benches have been oiled and so require ongoing care to keep them stain free. Avoid placing steel or tin items on the bench even for a second. Eg: tins, cast iron or copper bottom fry pans, and cake tins. Stainless steel and aluminium utensils are fine. Some kinds of cleaners mark the bench eg: Jif.

## **Gas**

The gas bottles for the hobs need filling about every 3 months. This can be done at the local BP station in Swanson Road. In emergencies Lippy and Bryan (#17) have a spare exchange bottle. If you use it, remember to refill your empty bottle by the following day (if not sooner) and take it to #17

## **Waste management**

Rubbish is collected at the roadside on Thursday mornings. It is strongly recommended that you not put food or paper in the rubbish bags. Put recyclables (plastics, glass & tins) in the Council blue bins located beside the lock up garage and please wash and squash tins and plastic bottles to reduce bulk (and smell) for recycling. Paper and recycling are collected on alternate Thursdays. Thin flexible plastic (bags, foodwrap etc) is recycled separately in a large bag near the electric shed.

All food scraps can go in the compost bins at the teardrop and some nodes/clusters. To facilitate composting only add soft weeds (pile by the pear tree). Each time please cover your scraps with some hay, grass, weeds, leaves or something green. Worm bins or Bokashi composting in your own gardens are also encouraged. (See Cathy #5)

All woody weeds and tough stuff go on the windrow in the orchard.

## **Interior wall surfaces**

If your house has milk paint it is better not to use Blue-Tac as it leaves an oily mark. Use drawing pins. Also, don't make any holes bigger than a picture hook in the gib, for fire and acoustic reasons.

## **Noise**

The houses are remarkably soundproof due to the rammed earth walls. However, be aware that noise carries through windows and doors – and be respectful of your neighbours' needs.

## **Smoke alarms**

These go off on occasion, eg due to burnt toast. Turn on the extractor fan, and open windows and doors. Some smoke alarms have an indented button in the middle that will turn it off when pressed (with a broom handle). If your home has the smaller heat detectors, DO NOT press these as they are very delicate. The alarm will turn itself off automatically as the smoke dissipates. The smoke detectors vary from block to block; please check your house manual or if in doubt check with Robin (#14).

## **House maintenance**

Each house has a green manual with guidance about care for the houses and grounds. (Yet to be done for the last blocks).

## **Digging**

There are a lot of service pipes and cables under ground. In many cases these are quite shallow. Always check the as-built plans before digging or driving fence stakes into the ground. (See Robin #14 or Bryan # 17 for more information)