



**Dhelkaya
Health**

MY HOME NETWORK



OCTOBER 2024

OLDER WOMEN IN COHOUSING INC - WINC

Last month Older Women in Cohousing Inc – WINC – reached a major milestone when Mount Alexander Shire Council voted unanimously to grant our project a permit.

Woo Hoo !

After 7 years of years planning, meetings, raised hopes and knockbacks, our vision to create a sustainable, accessible and mixed tenure 31-home co-housing community for older women to grow old joyfully together is another step closer to being built in Castlemaine.

This is the result of many years of dedicated work by WINC members and support from our outstanding professional colleagues.

Although our permit approval is incredible exciting, we still have a way to go. We have to raise substantial funds to help cover the purchase costs of 5 of our homes that will be offered to eligible WINC members as social housing. We also need more money to support our 'middle women' – WINC members with too many assets to be eligible for social housing and too few assets to buy a home. We established our Middle Women Housing Fund to cover the gap for these women to buy a WINC home.

After we take some time to celebrate our achievements to date, we will then get on with the important task of fundraising to ensure that women of all asset levels can live together at WINC.

If you would like more information, please contact:
Mary-Faeth Chenery, WINC President, M: 0428 481 754
E: mary-faeth@winccohousing.org.au



Members of WINC after the Councils decision

TENANTS RIGHTS

Thanks to those attendees at the Tenants Rights Forum last month who have joined our Tenants Rights working group. We aim to:

- Support all voices equitably in a coalition manner which supports renters in Mount Alexander Shire.
- Build awareness of tenants' rights amongst tenants, landlords and real estates/property development networks.
- Advocate for affordability across a broad scope of potential new frameworks for tenants.
- Advocate for and assist with information on improving rental energy efficiency,
- Advocate for structural change so that renters have equitable access to affordable renewable energy
- Build awareness of energy efficiency rebates, subsidies and other incentives for landlords so that tenants may be comfortable in their homes

We are keen to hold tenants rights information stalls in our Shire building on raising awareness of tenants rights, supports and compliance to those rights.

We continue to work with [Renters And Housing Union \(RAHU\)](#), [Housing Justice](#) and the Residential Tenancy Commissioner and are encouraging tenants to engage with the State Government to improve accountability of real estates and landlords.

[Taskforce To Crack Down On Dodgy Rentals](#) | [Premier](#)

There is also a review of various rental associated services we are encouraging renters to participate in

[Renter Services Review discussion paper released](#) | [Consumer Affairs Victoria's Funded Services Program Reviews](#) | [Engage Victoria](#)

Our next meeting is at the New Northern Arts Hotel Wed 6th November 6-7.30 pm. If you want to join the tenants rights working group or wish to chat more-see Kaz - cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au

*Tenants Rights working group members with
Housing Justice, Residential Tenancy
Commissioner and Renters and Housing Union
(RAHU) representatives*



HOMESHARE



October has been an exciting Homeshare month as we welcomed the HANZA Board to Castlemaine last weekend. HANZA wanted to meet face to face with the working group, Dhelkaya staff and community members to discuss what we had learnt from our 12 month establishment phase. They are very keen to spread the word about our community led Homeshare model because they can see it has the community connections required to last the lengthy establishment phase required of Homeshare developments.

Homeshare Mount Alexander continues to learn how to develop Homeshare in this community setting.

We regularly receive expressions of interest from keen Homeseekers, looking for more affordable rent and wanting to develop relationships and companionship with Homeproviders. We have not been able to provide matches to all of them because Homeprovider applications have not kept up.

Our plan to encourage more homeproviders includes refreshing the messaging, advertise more, involve more community champions or ambassadors for Homeshare to get more reach as well as create more regular activities for people to come together to talk about the experience of house sharing at any age. We don't assume that sharing a house is without adjustment but we do know that practice is a good idea especially as we know that as we age our mobility will reduce along with our ability to connect outside our houses.

If you are interested in talking more about house sharing, what to expect, and meet interested others get in contact with Di about the next gathering date or for more information on 0499309418 or Homeshare@castlemainehealth.org.au



Members of our local Home share working group with the Home Share New Zealand and Australia Alliance (HANZA)

MOUNT ALEXANDER COMMUNITY LAND LTD (MACLL)

MACLL's Bluesky Event - Thurs Oct 31, 6.30pm - Northern Arts Hotel

Welcome to the MACLL refresh event where we will discuss MACLL and the Community Land Trust (CLT) potentials we all see on the horizon. We have been diligently etching out some pathways, and look forward to sharing them with you.

We want to invite landholders to put their backyard into play. We want churches to put their grounds into play. We want families of profit to put land into play for the common good. With your help we can push this onward!

Recent council led initiatives such as the [Mt Alexander Affordable Housing Trust](#) give us confidence.

A new website will be revealed on the night, adding to the momentum.

Soup n bread will be available, so please [RSVP](#) to assist our team.

Thank you for your support,

Karl Fitzgerald on behalf of MACLL karl@grounded.org.au

TINY HOMES ON WHEELS (THOW) WORKING GROUP

We are having conversations with Council regarding national certified approved onsite waste management systems and rental arrangements (not Air b n bs) being allowed under the local THOW law. We are also keen to explore the feasibility of THOW clusters or villages.

In the mean time a big thanks to Shannon Schultz of Fred's Tiny Houses for setting up this database and listings page (a bit like an online community notice board) to help people:

- find a place to park their Tiny Homes On Wheels (THOW) or
- find a THOW to be parked on your land next to your home or
- find someone to occupy your THOW.

Database page:

<https://fredstinyhouses.com.au/tiny-house-and-land-offers-in-mount-alexander-shire-vic-database/>

Make a listing page:

[Make a Listing of Your Tiny House or Land – Fred's Tiny Houses \(fredstinyhouses.com.au\)](#)

Please spread the word !

The MHN THOW working group are working to optimise the appropriate uptake of THOW as affordable housing.

TINY HOMES ON WHEELS (THOW) WORKING GROUP (CONT.)

We have developed a summary guide to a THOW contract/agreement between a THOW occupier and the owner of the land and permanent dwelling where the THOW is located.

We reckon there are more than 50 families who are building THOW or living in THOW after the local law changes last year.

**Our next meeting -Tuesday 19th November 6-7.30 pm
at the Northern Arts Hotel -see
cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au**

*Another local Tiny Homes On Wheels providing an
affordable comfortable home*



MOUNT ALEXANDER REFUGEE SUPPORT (MARS) UPDATE



As many of you know we welcomed a Syrian family to Castlemaine on 10 September through the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP).

Mahmoud, Lava and their three children, Lareen, Yahia and Elina, had flown from Iraq. They were very happy to have arrived in Australia after years of upheaval and danger.

Over many months MARS and many of you in the Shire of Mount Alexander community have contributed time, money and goods, musical performances and good will. It has been a wonderful experience of community caring.

We found temporary accommodation for the family; completed all the paperwork and bureaucratic rigmarole necessary to enable them to receive Centrelink payments, health care cards, Medicare cards and a TFN; arranged full health assessments and vaccination catch ups at the Refugee Clinic at Bendigo Community Health Service; provided information about school options and what to expect at Australian schools.

MOUNT ALEXANDER REFUGEE SUPPORT (MARS) UPDATE (CONT.)

Above all we gave them a warm welcome, Lava and Mahmoud were grateful and rather surprised at the level of support. We have really enjoyed getting to know them and learning to use google translate.

Castlemaine is a wonderful community as we all appreciate, but there are very few Arabic speakers or people from Syria. Quite early on Mahmoud and Lava expressed concerns about the children and their sadness at not being able to speak Arabic with other children. The family felt welcome but isolated. They spent some time considering other options and were able to make contact with someone they knew in Wollongong. After some consideration they made the decision to move.

MARS has assisted in planning the move and a successful transition from the CRISP program to the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) was organised. A Red Cross case manager was allocated before they left Castlemaine. Temporary accommodation was sourced with the assistance of the Red Cross. Health support has been sourced from a Refugee Health Service nearby. Their Syrian contact arranged to meet them at the airport. On 3rd October we said goodbye, sad to see them go, but happy that they have made a decision that feels right for them. We wish them good luck and a successful life in Australia.

A decision as to what we do next will be made in the coming weeks. Remaining funds will go to supporting refugees through the CRISP program.

VACANT DWELLINGS

Our discussions with owners of vacant dwellings have resulted in nine vacant dwellings released as affordable rentals, 3 shop tops released as affordable rentals and three as transition housing.

If anyone knows someone who owns one or more of the 1,100 vacant dwellings in our Shire and thinks they may be up for a conversation regarding their release them as transition housing or affordable rentals please get in touch! cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au

VACANT DWELLINGS (CONT.)

One property owner encourages others to join her, saying

“Offering this kind of affordable rental is just such a simple, but life-changing way to be part of a community. We reckon houses are for living in. And ours is lived in and cared for, while the reduced rent covers our outgoing costs. We worked all this out directly with the resident/tenant, who we connected with through the local grapevine. She’s fantastic and we really value the relationship we’ve got with her.”

We will be requesting a meeting with Council to discuss sending letters to Mount Alexander Shire residents requesting those owning vacant dwellings to consider releasing them as affordable rentals or transition housing.

HOUSING FOR ELDERS

Di Cox, Homeshare coordinator and i participated in the Seniors Festival Expo and presented on options for elders in our Shire trying to downsize or seek appropriate housing as they age. Data that informs the need for appropriate diverse housing for our elders include:

- In our Shire we have nearly double the Victorian average % of elders -28% over 65 and Vic average is 16%
- 744 people over 75 live alone 500 of them women.
- 11% Australians live in rentals at 55 years (the most precarious of all renters as they can't absorb rent increases)
- What compounds the lack of affordable housing for our elders is the mismatch of supply and demand- in Mount Alexander Shire we have 33.2% single person households but only 2.4% one bedroom dwellings.

Di and I talked about Homeshare, Tiny Homes On Wheels, secondary dwellings, housing trusts, intergenerational collective housing models, social housing and building on affordable long term rentals.

Kaz and Di with Bron and Jenny from the Dhelkaya Health Community Health team at the Senior Citizens Expo



SOLAR BANK

A local group of interested people are developing a proposal for the new State Electricity Commission (SEC) that a local Solar Bank be built and installed on suitable State Government School, Hospital, Prison and Council roofs in our Shire.

Local renters could then lower their energy bills by buying a subsidised share in the SEC shared Solar Bank and pay for it over time at no up-front cost.

In exchange for the energy generated by their leased solar panel shares, participating renters would receive discounts on their SEC electricity bills.

There are nearly 1500 rental households in our Shire who don't not have the same access to affordable solar energy and haven't had for the last twenty years. We have gathered support for this proposal from a diversity of local government and community organisations.



Haystax community solar garden in NSW

FUNDRAISING FOR UNHOUSED

Dhelkaya Health is continuing to fundraise for essential items, such as phones to enable those living rough to stay in touch with us and other service providers, and of course for more Backpack Beds. If you want to make a difference for the most vulnerable in our community please follow the link here [Donate Homelessness Support](#) - Thank you everyone for your support – this cannot happen without you!

MOUNT ALEXANDER AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST (MAAHT)

Delphine Laboureaux-Ormancey, Gary McClure, Jacqui Watt, Laura Keogh, Liam Wilkinson and Natasha Williams were appointed to the Advisory Committee of the Mount Alexander Affordable Housing Trust.

Jacqui Watt was appointed as Interim Chair of the Advisory Committee for the first 6 months of its existence.

For other info see [Mount Alexander Affordable Housing Trust](#) | [Shape Mount Alexander](#)