

MY HOME  
NETWORK



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## TENANTS RIGHTS

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 holding tenants' rights information stalls in our Shire building on raising awareness of tenants rights, supports and compliance to those rights and collating issues faced by renters and sharing that with Consumer Affairs and the Residential Tenancies Commissioner.

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](#)

If you want to join the tenants rights working group or wish to chat more-see Kaz [cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au](mailto:cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au)

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## HOMESHARE

Homeshare picked up momentum in November as we have welcomed four new Homeproviders, are working on three new introductions and have established a new Homeshare match.

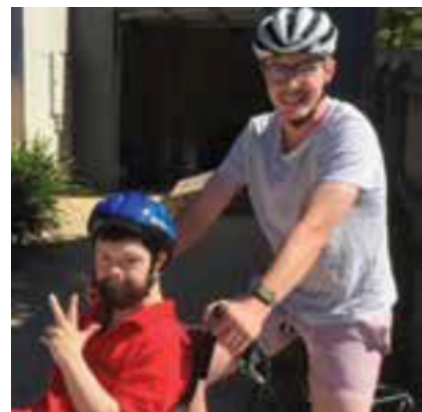


The new Homeproviders are the people we identified in the establishment of the initiative. They have low level assistance needs, 1-2 chronic health conditions, are over 70, living alone and interested in bringing new people and new interests into their lives. The Homeseekers are people who have been long-term renters whose homes have been sold, or they are new to the area and need to live somewhere to work here.

Increasingly, as we know, much of the essential workforce here in Mount Alexander now drives or trains to work each day from elsewhere on the Calder corridor. People talk of the long waiting lists at each real estate agent as the number of available rental properties decline. The Homeshare exchanges we are in the process of establishing are based on discussion and negotiation between both parties. We have found the explicit contract discussion invaluable in guiding the Homeshare set up. Currently the exchanges include companionship, shared meals, social contact and light gardening for veggie patches that Homeproviders want to keep up but may not have the agility to do alone. Dogs and cats feature in the negotiations. Everyone has a pet or two!

We have also found that a lot of people don't think they can keep a pet as they age due to the additional responsibilities but really miss having that unconditional relationship pets can provide. Rather than assuming a pet is going to create complications, we have found that a pet can be a wonderful part of the exchange. Whilst the introductions and matching is central to the work at the moment, education and community building is never far from our minds. Our intent is to build a community of Homesharers which will bring current, intending, and champions of the idea of homesharing together to provide supports and ideas for making the adaptations home sharing requires as well as giving Homesharers a sense of the growing global community they are a part of.

We are having both day and evening gatherings throughout 2025 to meet the needs of all Homesharers. Watch this space for more details.



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We understand it does take time to establish a Homeshare in any community. It has been very timely in Mount Alexander as we have been privileged to establish this initiative with generous philanthropic funding. The initial reasons for needing Homeshare remain with us. We are fortunate to have this time to develop an understanding of how to build support and grow the idea that we do have the resources amongst us to meet two needs at once with the resources we have amongst us.

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](mailto:Homeshare@castlemainehealth.org.au) or see [Homeshare - Dhelkaya Health](#)

## OLDER WOMEN IN COHOUSING INC - WINC

WINC - Older Women in Cohousing Inc - continues to develop its community and is hopeful that building will begin midway through the new year. The group has 46 members and 65 Friends of WINC (women supporters interested in seeing WINC thrive).

This is essentially a 'full house' - enough members who want to occupy the 31 small homes, and we are building a waiting list for those who'd like to live at WINC in the future. The focus for the coming year will be to raise the funds needed to assure that there will be 5 homes for women eligible for social housing and 6 homes for women who are in the middle - too much for social housing eligibility and too little to buy fully.

Our next information session will be held on the 22nd of February. We're beginning to document the cohousing model as it is unfolding at WINC, to make it available to others who want to create future communities. Further information from Mary-Faeth Chenery, [mary-faeth@winccohousing.org.au](mailto:mary-faeth@winccohousing.org.au)





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## TINY HOMES ON WHEELS (THOW) WORKING GROUP

We had a recent meeting with Council planning, environmental health and development services staff to discuss onsite waste treatment systems and have more clarity regarding our options to address barriers to onsite waste treatment systems and optimising THOW as an affordable housing option either as a single THOW or a cluster. Will keep you updated.

Really appreciate having the collective expertise of Kathryn Mc Goldrick (THOW owner), Rachel Goldlust (planning expertise), Johanna Winchcombe (THOW), Shannon Schultz of Freds Tiny Homes and Stephen Lumb (architect) in our meeting with Council.

We are looking forward to discussions with Council regarding rental arrangements (not Air b n bs) being allowed under the local THOW law.

In the meantime, 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 \(fredstinyhouses.com.au\)](https://fredstinyhouses.com.au/make-a-listing-of-your-tiny-house-or-land)

Please spread the word!



*THOW delegation Kaz, Kathryn, Rachel, Johanna, Shannon & Stephen*

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

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

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 a THOW or living in THOW after the local law changes last year.

To find out more see [cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au](mailto:cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au) and please sign this petition for a consistent and reasonable process for THOWs across Australia: [Australian Tiny Homes On Wheels Association petition](#)

## SECONDARY DWELLINGS

Thanks for your enquiries about new planning scheme amendments for secondary dwellings  
Please see this information [DTP0604-Small-Second-Dwellings\\_Planning-and-building-framework-4.pdf](#)

## ENDING HOMELESSNESS PODCAST



ENDING HOMELESSNESS IS POSSIBLE - ABC

LISTEN

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## VACANT DWELLINGS

**Our discussions with owners of vacant dwellings have resulted in eleven vacant dwellings released as affordable rentals, 3 shop tops released as affordable rentals.**

We do vacant dwelling letter box dropping using a letter template that requests the owners to consider releasing their vacant dwelling as an affordable rental. We have had better traction through trusted connectors who know owners of vacant dwellings and using the letter as a guide to our conversation with the vacant dwelling owner.

Thank you for checking in your neighbourhoods or within your social circles for connections with owners of vacant dwellings - it takes a village!

**As you know, our community is in desperate need for more affordable rentals so 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 releasing them as transition housing or affordable rentals please get in touch! [cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au](mailto:cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au)**

One tenant who now has a rental she can more afford (20% of her income) said ***"It was a huge weight off my shoulders, I felt I could breathe again"***

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 soon to discuss sending letters to Mount Alexander Shire residents requesting those owning vacant dwellings consider releasing them as affordable rentals or transition housing.

[ABC- experts advocate for release of vacant dwellings as affordable housing](#)

[Housing crisis leaves Victorian town Castlemaine with just 10 homes to rent - ABC News](#)

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## ROUGH SLEEPER ACTION GROUP

The MHN is convening the local rough sleeper action group and more organisations have joined this group to work together to improve supports and advocacy for rough sleepers. We'll be focusing on keeping them cool and safe in summer as well as the ongoing advocacy for safe, affordable, appropriate housing for them.

## 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!

## SOLAR BANK

Our local Solar Bank working group met with a representative from the State Electricity Commission (SEC) to start a discussion regarding a local Solar Bank be built and installed on suitable State Government School, Hospital, Prison and Council roofs in our Shire as part of the SEC strategy. We felt it was a constructive meeting and are following the SEC recommended next steps.

A solar bank would enable local renters to lower their energy bills by buying a subsidised share in the 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 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 and feel this proposal aligns with the [SEC strategic plan](#) regarding addressing inequity in the energy sector.



*Haystax community solar garden in NSW*



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## WHOLE OF HOME RESILIENCE PROJECT

The Castlemaine Institute Whole of Home Resilience project is doing free climate resilience assessments of homes and would love a few more people, especially renters, to participate.

There isn't funding to implement the assessment recommendations but useful information to have to assist decision making and or advocate to landlords for retrofitting etc

For more info and EOI for the project see [Whole of Home Resilience project | Shape Mount Alexander](#)

## MOUNT ALEXANDER COMMUNITY LAND LTD (MACLL)

Thanks to the attendees of the MACLL Refreshed event. The website is now live at [www.macll.org.au](http://www.macll.org.au). Supporters can join our e-list or become a member.

We are continuing conversations with a number of landholders in an effort to deliver perpetually affordable housing. If only we had just some of the funding the Help to Buy program enables (for only one homebuyer), we could deliver a much more holistic outcome. Thank you for your support for meaningful affordable housing and communities that care

## MOUNT ALEXANDER AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST (MAAHT)

The new advisory committee Delphine Laboureau-Ormancey, Gary McClure, Jacqui Watt, Laura Keogh, Liam Wilkinson and Natasha Williams have met with Clare Richards, Council Housing Solutions Broker.

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](#)