

# MY HOME NETWORK



## HOMESHARE

January and February have been successful months for Homeshare as we have established safe, compatible and wonderful homeshares which are both contributing to healthier aging and more affordable housing in the Shire.



There are now three supported homeshares in progress in Mount Alexander and we have two homeproviders waiting for someone to share their house in exchange for support. The contracted exchanges in the current homeshares include companionship, gardening, shared meals, and dog walking. The reported benefits of homesharing include just having someone around to talk to, increased activity in the house and someone to plan and undertake jobs around the house.

We continue to receive requests from potential homeproviders and homeseekers and are going through the safety screening and compatibility work that leads to introductions, then matches.

In February we also held a Homeshare gathering. 35 people attended and had a fabulous discussion between themselves of the transparent processes involved in setting up Homeshares, and in the benefits they are now experiencing.



Our intent over time is to build a community of people involved in Homeshare who can get to know each other and more experienced people can help newcomers get started, or we can hold shared dinners or movie nights for homesharers.

---

## HOMESHARE (CONT.)

The rental market continues to be very difficult, so many community-minded and employed people who would usually find rentals are really struggling, which then risks their work and their social connections.

If you or a person you know, lives alone and could benefit from having an honest community minded and supportive person in the house, contact Homeshare and discuss how it works and how it could benefit you and your family. [homeshare@castlemainehealth.org.au](mailto:homeshare@castlemainehealth.org.au)

## 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
- Break down the stigma associated with rentals

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 also share information on other aspects of the local housing work, letters to State Housing Minister to sign, template letter to owners of vacant dwellings, Homeshare etc.

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 Consumer Affairs review of various rental associated services.

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

Also linking in with ACT crew [Better Renting](#)

---

## TENANTS RIGHTS (CONT.)

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)



*Fiona, Frankie, Deb, Kaz and Inez on the Tenants' Rights and Housing stalls*

## OLDER WOMEN IN COHOUSING INC - WINC

WINC - Older Women in Cohousing Inc - is moving along toward a living community in Castlemaine. We have the planning permit and members who want to buy or rent the 31 small homes. What we need now is a developer/builder to sign on the dotted line - with prices that we can afford, of course. We're working closely with interested parties and are hopeful of some progress soon.

While nearly all of the homes are spoken for, we are building a waiting list for those who would like to live in WINC in future years, and in case some of our current buyers/renters can't follow through, for whatever reason. WINC includes 5 homes for women eligible for social housing (rentals); 5 homes for women 'in the middle' - too many assets for social housing, too few to buy in fully (where women will bring at least 40% of the home price); and 21 homes for women who are able to purchase fully.

---

## OLDER WOMEN IN COHOUSING INC - WINC (CONT.)



*Members of WINC after the council's decision*

If you'd like to consider WINC as a future home (for women aged 50 and up), or would like to learn more about WINC, see the site and the plans, we're having an information session on Saturday, the 22nd of February, from 11 am until 1 pm. We'll have some refreshments for lunch, plus models and plans of the homes, and members present to talk about WINC and how it will work.

If you'd like to attend, please contact us so we can plan for you. Contact Mary-Faeth Chenery, WINC President, at [mary\\_faeth@winccohousing.org.au](mailto:mary_faeth@winccohousing.org.au)

## TINY HOMES ON WHEELS (THOW) WORKING GROUP

Following our recent meeting with Council planning, environmental health and development services staff to discuss onsite waste treatment systems Council have confirmed THOW can have an onsite EPA approved waterless composting toilet certificate details AS/NZS 1546.2:2008.

We are working with them, grey water certifications standards entities, EPA and grey water treatment system producers interstate, to clarify options for approved THOW onsite grey water treatment systems. This is assisting us to optimise 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 this research and advocacy-see photo below.

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

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



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.

---

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

Database page:

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

Make a listing page:

<https://fredstinyhouses.com.au/make-a-listing-of-your-tiny-house-or-land/>

Please spread the word!

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 60 families who are building a THOW or living in THOW after the local law changes last year. As local Di Thorpe said: "Tiny house living is great. Now I'm retired it's all I need for myself and my two fur babies"

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](#)



*Local Di Thorpe outside her THOW*

## SECONDARY DWELLINGS

Thanks for your enquiries about new planning scheme amendments for secondary dwellings  
Please see this information: [Small Second Homes](#)

---

## VACANT DWELLINGS

**Our discussions with owners of vacant dwellings have resulted in twelve 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 have requested a meeting with Council to discuss sending letters to Mount Alexander Shire residents requesting those owning vacant dwellings consider releasing them as affordable rentals or transition housing. All candidates at a Council Election Candidates Forum last year publically committed to assisting us engage with owners of vacant dwellings.

[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](#)

---

## RENTALS NEEDED ASAP

We know the rental crisis is spiraling - we are trying to find affordable rentals ASAP for an elder man, elder woman, single woman, single Mum and teenage daughter, single Mum and three young people, two young people, a single man and woman sharing - if anyone knows of any possibility please get in touch.

We're losing too many community members who have to leave to find affordable rentals elsewhere. Thank you to those of you who have been in touch with possible options, much appreciated.

## ADVOCACY WITH STATE HOUSING MINISTER

We received the attached letter from the Deputy CEO of Homes Vic in response to sending over 200 signed letters demanding social housing, more crisis and transition housing and housing supports etc.

We are drafting a response to the Deputy CEO of Homes Vic.

## COUNCIL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION ON THEIR REVIEW OF THEIR MANAGEMENT OF THE MALDON CARAVAN PARK

[Maldon Caravan Park | Shape Mount Alexander](#)

Thinking about housing - transition housing/caravans, social housing, Tiny Homes On Wheels (THOW) cluster etc but the Shape webpage says that the park is on Crown land, which requires that stays are limited to no more than 180 days in a year and no more than 59 consecutive nights!

Other types of caravan parks enable longer term residencies [Residency in a caravan park - Consumer Affairs Victoria](#)

However thanks to some of your research so far looks like there is room to manoeuvre:

I am meeting with the housing team and will also discuss with the Tiny Homes On Wheels (THOW) working group but if anyone else would like to discuss this and be part of a collective submission please get in touch.

Otherwise please go onto the link above and do the online survey and/or a fuller submission. The deadline is 10th March.



---

## 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!

## THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM WITH HOUSING IN AUSTRALIA • Alan Kohler

**Australia's housing crisis is driven by lip-service, hypocrisy and an investment culture** essentially what we are saying and trying to address.

## 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 integrated supports and advocacy for rough sleepers.

We're focusing on keeping them cool and safe in summer as well as the ongoing advocacy for safe, affordable, appropriate housing for them.

Thank you to those community members who have assisted with appropriately connecting and engaging with rough sleepers and assisting them with carting water, getting food and other essentials - much appreciated.

## 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](#)