

MY HOME
NETWORK



TENANTS' RIGHTS WORKING GROUP

MHN and West End Resilience (WER) Video on Rental energy efficiency,

A huge thanks to Warwick Jones who very kindly donated his time and wonderful expertise in making the following video based on the content of a workshop we did with the local West End Resilience Network (WER) on tenants' rights, rental energy efficiency and understanding and reducing your rental utilities bills and accessing supports and concessions.

[My Home Network - Rental Energy Efficiency \[English\] on Vimeo](#)

Thanks too to Deb Pach, Frankie Nugent, Barry Murfett, Wade Roberts and West End Resilience Network for their time and expertise. It was great working with you all!

This video will soon be uploaded onto the WER website [WEST END RESILIENCE](#).

It has already been well received regionally and statewide. Libraries and some Councils are keen to roll the subtitled version on public screens and refugee and migrant communities wish it translated in various languages.

The tenants' rights working group aims 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
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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. If you see us at the Wesley Market, outside Shed Shaker Open Mic or outside the small IGA come and say hello!

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



TENANTS' RIGHTS WORKING GROUP (CONT.)

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 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](#)

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

If you want to join the tenants rights working group or wish to chat more-see Kaz cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au

MHN COMMUNITY FORUM

We are planning a community forum after the Easter holidays to update the community on the work happening in our Shire to ensure everyone has access to a safe, secure, affordable, appropriate sustainable home. Will keep you posted.

PLAN FOR VICTORIA

[The plan](#) has interlinked objectives around housing, employment and equity, environmental sustainability, thriving suburbs and towns, First Nations Peoples' self determination

We were part of the consultation process - see p 30 on the plan for the 4,500 houses to be built in the next 30 years in our Shire - not sure how much social housing is to be included, trying to find out.

HOMESHARE

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 dogwalking. 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. The Homeshare gathering in February provided a great opportunity to reflect on the Homeshare community thus far and how to promote it.

HOMESHARE (CONT.)

Here is a summary of feedback on “What encouraged you to become a Homesharer (seeker or provider) in a supported model?”

- *A sense of security*
- *Support in the process*
- *Less of an unknown than regular share housing*
- *Gives people choice to stay at home and remain independent.*
- *The companionship*
- *The reciprocity, the mutual exchange – the values of Homeshare are more appealing than the exchange of \$'s*
- *Splitting costs*
- *Company, the relationship*
- *Meeting new people*
- *Support, help in an emergency (fall), physical labour, garden, fire prep*

Home share providers and seekers also provided positive feedback on the Homeshare process and structure:

- *Trusted structure*
- *Trusted reliable and friendly coordinator style*
- *Clear transparent supportive processes*

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

TINY HOMES ON WHEELS (THOW)

Please see attachment from Council on Tiny Homes On Wheels (THOW), small dwellings and onsite waste water systems.

The MHN THOW working group is working to optimise the appropriate uptake of THOW as affordable housing. Thank you to owners of THOW for sharing their learnings and expertise with others. Really appreciate having the collective expertise of Kathryn Mc Goldrick (THOW owner), Rachel Goldlust (planning expertise), Johanna Winchcombe (THOW expertise), Shannon Schultz of Freds Tiny Homes and Stephen Lumb (architect) in our THOW research and advocacy-see photo below.

We have developed a summary guide to a THOW agreement between a THOW occupier and the owner of the land and permanent dwelling where the THOW is located. We are also assisting matching THOW owners or occupiers with those who have land with a permanent dwelling where the THOW can be placed.

TINY HOMES ON WHEELS (CONT.)

We recognise that for a number of community members who are not eligible to be on the Victorian Housing Register (VHR) , who cannot afford a secondary dwelling and are in rental stress, THOW are an affordable housing option.

We have recently had an increase in requests for information on THOW from elder women.

If you are trying to

- 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

please get in touch with Kaz cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au



VACANT DWELLINGS

Our discussions with owners of vacant dwellings have now resulted in thirteen vacant dwellings released as affordable rentals! Yay! and 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 and exploring what the barriers to their release are. 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

VACANT DWELLINGS (CONT.)

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 update them on our work and 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 publicly 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](#)

OLDER WOMEN IN COHOUSING INC - WINC

See update attached on this great innovative co-housing community built on social justice principles.

RENTALS NEEDED ASAP

We know the rental crisis is spiraling - we are trying to find affordable rentals ASAP for an elder woman, single woman, single man 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. A single Mum and her three children, two young people and single Mum and daughter have now got interim and long-term accommodation.

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

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

Please find attached our submission to this Council community consultation

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're saying and trying to address

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](#) Thankyou everyone for your support - this cannot happen without you!

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've been 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.

WHOLE OF HOME RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE DISASTERS

Analysis has begun on the Whole of Home Resilience project. We are getting a better understanding of the resilience of our homes to Bushfire and Storm and how our homes perform in hot and cold weather.

We are hosting workshops to present findings from the assessments, understand local trends, and share resources. We are keen to hear from workshop participants to understand how they may prioritise their actions, share what they have learnt and if they have tried any of the recommendations.

WHOLE OF HOME RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE DISASTERS (CONT.)

We would love to share these workshops with the community. If you are interested in coming along, please get in touch with lisa.merkesteyn@castlemaineinstitute.org.au for more details and booking information.

The workshops will be held in Castlemaine on 9 April with the option for either a morning session at 9.30-11.30am or an evening session at 6pm – 8pm. We will be providing a delicious spread to accompany these informative and interactive workshops.

If you would like to keep up to date on the project, have a look at the Whole of Home page on [Shape Mount Alexander](#)

<https://shape.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/whole-home-resilience-project>

Quotes and stories:

Following his assessment with Mick Lewin, Nick is looking to tidy up loose items around the house to improve bushfire resilience. It is best to keep loose items a minimum of 2 metres away from your windows and external walls and windows.

'Thank you so much for this, much appreciated and really learned a great deal. We were encouraged by our fire proofing/works, but have too much clobber round the house. I look forward to the overall results.'

On the [Resilience Rating](#) website, the Resilient Building Council list the areas of a home that are vulnerable to bushfire attack and the suggested separation distances to reduce the threat to the home from nearby items igniting.

Nick, Fryerstown

MOUNT ALEXANDER AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST (MAAHT)

The trust is here to meet our communities affordable rental housing needs in perpetuity (that is, forever). Part of the committee's work includes looking at residential and town zone land opportunities for the trust, on which it could deliver affordable rental housing.

There are some criteria we're looking for in the land, so if you or someone you know may have something please get in touch and we can discuss affordablehousing@mountalexander.vic.gov.au