



**Dhelkaya
Health**

MY HOME NETWORK



MAY 2025

MY HOME NETWORK HOUSING FORUM

Thursday 15 May, Castlemaine Town Hall, 7-9pm



A big thank you to those of you including those from the Tenants' Rights, Tiny Homes on Wheels and Vacant Dwellings working groups for coming along to our My Home Network (MHN) housing forum last Thursday!

Thanks to Deb Pach, Kathryn Mc Goldrick, Stephen Lumb, Tom Danby for speaking on our work, Dr Heather Holst for MC'ing, Wade Roberts for doing the IT, Kez Jennings for taking photos, Cathy Wheel for lighting the candle honouring our homeless community members, Michael Johnstone for doing an Acknowledgement of Country, Margaret Griffin for managing the registration desk, Andrew Cowall for video recording the forum, local Councillor Phillip Walker for scribing, Lee Collins, Kez, Deb and Michael for bumping in and many of you for bumping out!

Thanks too to Di Cox of Homeshare Mount Alexander, Mary-Faeth Chenery of WINC older women's housing cooperative, Jacqui Watt of Mount Alexander Affordable Housing Trust (MAAHT), Karl Fitzgerald and John Shone of Mount Alexander Community Land Ltd (MACLL) for speaking on their respective projects. We feel it was a positive, constructive evening with over 70 people attending, including local Councillors, raising awareness of the housing crisis, updating on our local housing initiatives and building on our local action.



Attendees heard an overview of the MHN work, about the work of the Tenants' Rights, Vacant Dwellings and Tiny Homes On Wheels (THOW) working groups, Homeshare Mount Alexander, WINC older women's housing cooperative, secondary dwellings, tenants in common, Mount Alexander Community Land Ltd (MACLL) and Mount Alexander Affordable Housing Trust (MAAHT). Then there was an opportunity to mingle and chat more and join the local action - signing letters to the State Housing Minister, join MHN working groups, collective watching of the Renew webinar on secondary dwellings, Tiny Homes On Wheels and collective housing, assist with the MHN stalls and encourage owners of vacant dwellings to release them as affordable rentals.

PUBLIC HOUSING MOVABLE UNITS

<https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/public-housing-movable-units>

If you're over 55, and or identify with a disability, on the Victorian Housing Register, receive ongoing support from the Department of Housing or a registered community service provider and are a permanent Australian resident, you can apply -moveable units can be placed in the backyard of a friend's or neighbours house. See link above for more info.

MHN SUBMISSION TO THE MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE COUNCIL (MASC) PLAN

see attached.

CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO HOME EMPOWERMENT - HOUSEHOLD ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME - SEE ATTACHED FOR MORE DETAILS

The first events are ready for registration below, with more to come

- [Energy Efficiency Planning Session](#) – Sunday May 4th, Old Church on the Hill – in person session to help people plan, understand what might work for their home/context.
- 8 short online sessions (also being screened at the Bendigo library & recording shared):
 - [Energy efficiency for Renters](#) – May 19
 - [Master class on Draught proofing](#) – June 2
 - [Efficient Heating and Cooling Systems](#) – June 17
 - [Insulate for Home Comfort](#) – 7 July
 - [Intro to Heat pumps](#) – 22 July
 - [Solar and batteries 101](#) – 4 August
 - [Electric vehicles/bikes & novated leasing](#) – 1 Sept
- Future events will be posted in our [enewsletter](#) or found [here](#), and include energy bill drop in sessions, open homes, and hearing from locals.

RECORDING OF LAUNCH OF GROUNDED'S REPORT ON THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS

For those of you who couldn't attend the launch, [here is the Youtube recording](#) and a [copy of the slides too](#).

Karl Fitzgerald, Director of Grounded is a local and on the Mount Alexander Community Land Ltd (MACLL) Board.



ROOMS TO RENT IN SHARED LIVING ENVIRONMENT

Open Fields [Open Field Co-Living Homestead](#) | [Castlemaine VIC](#) | [Facebook](#) have some rooms coming up for rent soon for those who are looking for either temporary or permanent housing in a multi-generational shared living environment in Muckleford

Medium south facing room with built-in robes is \$205 for a single / \$220 for a couple per week including bills.

Large north facing room with built-in robes is \$225 single / \$255 for a couple per week including bills.

Email nicolabeatrix@gmail.com if interested

OLDER WOMEN IN COHOUSING INC - WINC

The WINC vision of a sustainable 31-home cohousing community for older women in Castlemaine continues to forge ahead, with the group recently signing an agreement with a developer for the groundbreaking project.

We are now waiting on final costings for individual homes so we can determine the best approach to building the homes in the most affordable and sustainable way. We are having to come up with creative and courageous solutions to overcome the challenges of rising building costs and the large expenses attached to borrowing big amounts of money.

We are truly breaking new ground, on many fronts, and we will find a way!

For anyone interested in joining us, we still have 2 homes available for sale – a 65m² one-bedroom and an 80m² two-bedroom. If you'd like to talk about WINC and these homes, please contact Mary-Faeth on mary-faeth@winccohousing.org.au.



TENANTS' RIGHTS WORKING GROUP (CONT.)

MHN and West End Resilience (WER) 10 minute video on Rental Energy Efficiency Supports

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 tenant's 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](#)

It has already been well received regionally and statewide. Libraries and some Councils are rolling 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

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!

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](#)

[General enquiry - Consumer Affairs Victoria](#)

For minimum standards not being met when a property is being let: [Your details | Report an issue with an advertised rental property](#)

TENANTS RIGHTS WORKING GROUP (CONT.)

There is another one for complaints but needs the renter to have tried to resolve it with the owner/their agent before Consumer Affairs will usually get involved:

[What is your complaint about? | Make a complaint](#) 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

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



SECONDARY DWELLINGS

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

We're trying to find out how many secondary dwellings in our Shire as well as regionally have been approved after the Housing Statement planning scheme amendment exempting, in certain conditions the need for a planning permit for secondary dwellings.

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!

VACANT DWELLINGS (CONT.)

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 release them as transition housing or affordable rentals please get in touch! 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 a requested a deputation with Council to update them on our MHN work and hopefully 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](#)

TINY HOMES ON WHEELS (THOW) WORKING GROUP

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. We are also exploring what other Councils and State Governments have done to address some grey areas within THOW local laws.

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 right



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

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.

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

"I am 68 years old on a zero hours contract and a month to month rental lease paying \$500 a week which is incredibly stressful. I am not eligible for social housing, and want to get out of renting. I have worked all my life, paid my bills and just want somewhere I can afford, feel at home, have more time with family and feel the magic inside of me. I can't afford a secondary dwelling but I can afford a THOW I am hoping to buy one and I can put it in my daughter's back yard so I can be near family and be in my community."

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'll been focusing on keeping them warm and safe in winter 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 linking them in with formal and informal supports through the Help at Hand flyer, getting food and other essentials - much appreciated.

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

HOMESHARE



Homeshare had a bumper May. On May 7, Homesharers spoke to regional members of parliament about their experiences of Homeshare here in Mount Alexander. The elected representatives were holding hearings to discuss how they can increase the supply of homes in regional Victoria. HANZA the national Homeshare organisation put forward an argument that the state government could consider rolling out Homeshare across regional Victoria because it is an effective use of existing resources and has been shown to improve homesharers quality of life and provide affordable housing

The five members of parliament present were very taken with Homesharer stories about how Homeshare had changed their lives for the better. Homeseezers said they felt much more settled in comfortable affordable housing with reduced stress from the precarious housing they had endured previously. Homeproviders said they felt much more connected and active thanks to having the homeseezer in their home.



HOMESHARE (CONT.)

Dhelkaya and HANZA will continue those conversations with the state government to see if we can assist other communities establish Homeshare in this time of high need. In May we also contributed to the My Home Network Forum. What a marvellous display of local initiative that was. We could see that Homeshare is one of the important actions for the here and now whilst other actions are developing along well with longer time frames. We are all doing something with available resources to help with the affordable housing problem.

We have also had a tremendous response in May from Homeproviders and Homeseekers. We now have 3 active homeshares and 2 unmatched/available homeproviders and 3 homeproviders waiting the assessment and matching process. We have learnt through our Homeshare experience that a good relationship is at the core of a good Homeshare. We will only match people who are compatible and likely to be able to develop a relationship based on mutual benefit and good communication.

We continue to welcome phone calls or emails from people who would like to talk about how Homeshare can help them, there is no obligation beyond the first call. Homeseekers are seeking affordable housing and are open and supportive towards others. Homeproviders have available rooms, low level assistance needs and would enjoy the company of others in their home. We look forward to hearing from you.

Contact Di Cox Homeshare coordinator on 0499309418 or the homeshare email: [homeshare @castlemainehealth.org.au](mailto:homeshare@castlemainehealth.org.au)



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