

MY HOME

NETWORK



TENANTS' RIGHTS WORKING GROUP



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

[MHN - Rental Energy Efficiency Video](#)

[Media Release about the video](#)

📷 *Deb Pach, Alistar Robertson Barry Murfett, Kaz Neilson and Frankie who developed the video with their video props!*

See attached for new Minimum energy efficiency standards for rentals.

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.

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](#)

[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

TINY HOMES ON WHEELS (THOW) WORKING GROUP

As the housing crisis hits our community hard the appeal of the Tiny Home on Wheels has risen.

The My Home Network THOW working group have developed a [confidential survey](#) to better understand:

- the number of THOWs currently being lived in or being built in our Shire
- the level of interest in THOW as an affordable housing option
- the benefits of a THOW and
- any barriers to living in a THOW and what supports people think they might need to make the transition, and sustain, a THOW arrangement.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/THOWSurvey> - QR Code at right

This anonymous information will be used in advocacy locally, statewide and nationally to improve appropriate uptake of THOW as affordable housing in our Shire and elsewhere.

Nearly two years ago the Mount Alexander Shire Council amended the Local Law No 13 allowing a THOW to be placed and remain on land with an existing permanent dwelling, without a permit, for “an indefinite period of time” as long as it complies with Local Law 13 conditions. For further details of the local law conditions see:

<https://www.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/Council/Local-laws-permits-and-fines/Local-laws/Caravans-and-tiny-houses-on-wheels-on-private-property>

The THOW Working Group appreciates Council's leadership in changing the local law. We feel this has had a positive impact on increasing housing diversity and the Working Group continues to work towards improving the appropriate uptake of THOW in our Shire on Djaara Country.



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

The THOW Working Group:

- Shares information and supports people interested in THOW, including with sharing THOW owner/occupier expertise
- Supports matching those who own or occupy a THOW with those who have a suitable location for the THOW
- Advocates with others such as the Australian Tiny House Association (ATHA) for clear, consistent and practical regulations and policy frameworks at the state and national levels.
- Is exploring THOW as a “Caretaker” model and the possibility of THOW small clusters on vacant land.



📷 *Members of the THOW working group: Kaz, Kathryn McGoldrick, Tom Danby, Rachel Close, Shannon Schultz, Stephen Lumb*

Western Australia is leading the way in addressing THOW uptake as a viable option to address the housing affordability crisis. This could provide a model for other states to follow.

We know that THOW are not for everyone but for some community members it is their only affordable housing option and it provides infill housing and builds community.

As one elder in our community explains: *“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 daughters back yard so I can be near family and be in my community”.*

Please complete the survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/THOWSurvey> to help us in our endeavours and if anyone is interested in learning more about the work of the THOW working group, please contact cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au

HOMESHARE

We now have 3 active homeshares and a number of people in the assessment process as both homeproviders and homeseekers.



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.

HOMESHARE (CONT.)

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 are all doing something with available resources to help with the affordable housing problem.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Contact Di Cox, Homeshare coordinator 0499309418, homeshare@castlemainehealth.org.au

MY HOME NETWORK STALLS

We are holding My Home Network 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

If you see us at the Wesley Market, outside Shed Shaker Open Mic or outside the small IGA come and say hello!



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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

TENANTS IN COMMON

Some local community members are exploring the tenants in common model as an affordable collective housing model option.

Tenants in Common is when two or more people own shares in a property. The shares can be equal or unequal in any percentage and can be changed over time. The shares are treated similarly to shares in a company.

For example, when an owner dies, their share is an asset of the deceased estate and can be dealt with by their executor or administrator. If you transfer property (in the form of your share) to anyone else you will have to pay stamp duty, regardless of whether it is your principal place of residence. It is recommended that a joint venture agreement is made that will outline what each person is responsible for and what is to be done if there is a disagreement.

For example: If one person wants to sell, having an agreement can protect both parties. You may want a first right of refusal for example. Meaning you have the first right to buy out their share. Also, like a company, you can dissolve the agreement and create a new structure to describe the ownership of the land title that reflects the equity each party holds in the houses on that land.

Overall, Tenants in Common is a way of separating the cost of the land from the cost of the buildings, while giving both parties security in ownership of a part of the title.

NOTE: this is a summary of the concept, please take professional legal advice before taking any action along these lines.

SOLAR ENERGY TRADING BETWEEN SOLAR HOMES AND THOSE WITHOUT

We have been supporting the concept of Virtual Power Plants (VPP) where community members who either don't have great solar exposure or are tenants whose homes don't have solar, can still access affordable solar energy.

In NSW there is a landmark trial to enable energy trading between solar homes and those without: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-06-06/no-solar-no-problem-trial-aims-to-overcome-energy-gulf/105377506>

This is happening on a small scale in Victoria and there is currently an EOI for people and businesses to register for the Deakin University study of the Virtual Energy Network (VEN): <https://www.deakin.edu.au/faculty-of-business-and-law/research/virtual-energy-network>

If you are interested in such a trading of solar energy, please register for this research.

I am finding out more about the current VEN in Victoria and will keep you updated.

OLDER WOMEN IN COHOUSING INC. (WINC)

Last push for Middle Women Housing Fund

WINC - Older Women in Cohousing Inc - has launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise the last amount (\$250,000) needed to fund five homes for women who are 'in the middle'. These are women with too many assets for social housing, too few assets to secure housing for themselves.

Daniel Hartley-Allen, a filmmaker who grew up in Daylesford, has produced a terrific 2.35 minute film to tell the story of middle women and WINC.

Have a look on the page linked here.

The Middle Women Housing Fund film will be shown at the LOCALS Redux/Encore on the 26th of July at the Theatre Royal. While it isn't technically a documentary because it has an 'ask' at the end, it tells the story of middle women and the community of WINC women who want to find a solution to safe and secure housing for women of all asset levels.



As for other progress, WINC continues to work toward a contract with a developer, with the possibility of beginning civil construction toward the end of this year and home building completed by the end of next year. We're grateful to all the people who are working hard to make this happen!

Enquiries to Mary-Faeth Chenery, mary-faeth@winccohousing.org.au

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. Movable units can be placed in the backyard of a friend's or neighbour's house. See link above for more info.

SECONDARY DWELLINGS

Thanks for your ongoing 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 now resulted in fourteen 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 and using our letter template as a guide to start the conversation about them releasing their vacant dwellings as an affordable rental -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 release them as 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 deputation with Council in September 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. All candidates at a Council Election Candidates Forum last year publicly committed to assisting us engage with owners of vacant dwellings.

We are currently looking for a rental for a single Mum and three young people.

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

Events still to happen see registration below:

- [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 the COGB [e-newsletter](#) or found [here](#), and include energy bill drop-in sessions, open homes, and hearing from locals.

ROUGH SLEEPER ACTION GROUP

The MHN is convening the local rough sleeper action group, a collaboration of organisations who work together to improve integrated supports and advocacy for the rough sleepers in our Shire who number approximately 28.

Action group members include the Castlemaine Library, Castlemaine Community House, Mount Alexander Shire Council Homelessness Coordinator, Mount Alexander Shire Council Access and Support/Care Finder, Castlemaine Police, Dhelkaya Health Housing Team, Dhelkaya Community Health, Sac'O'Suds Laundrette, Parks Victoria, Haven Home Safe, Castlemaine Church of Christ, Salvation Army, Uniting Church and Anglican Church.

We'll be 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.

Please see updated Help At Hand flyer attached and at [Help at Hand – Castlemaine Community House](#).

MOUNT ALEXANDER AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST (MAAHT)

Preparation is underway for recruiting a Trustee company to lead the Mount Alexander Affordable Housing Trust. The Trust Advisory Committee are working with Council on this. Further information will be available on Council's website in the next month.

For more info on the Trust and other Council initiatives go to:
<https://shape.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/mount-alexander-affordable-housing-trust>