



**Dhelkaya  
Health**

# MY HOME NETWORK



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SEPTEMBER 2025

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## COMMUNITY VIGIL

Thank you to those of you who attended the community vigil as part of the national homelessness week campaign earlier in August.

We had approximately 30 people attend, sign letters to the State Housing Minister, Federal MP Lisa Chesters, donate to the local housing team, take letters for owners of vacant dwellings encouraging them to release them as affordable dwellings, link in with the housing team and learn more about Tiny Homes On Wheels, Community Land Trusts, Homeshare and Tenants Rights



 *Community members at the vigil*

## MOUNT ALEXANDER AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST (MAAHT)

Council has welcomed a \$650,000 grant from Community Bank Maldon & District for the development of affordable housing in Maldon-great news!!

Congratulations to all involved and to those who have worked hard over the years to get community land trusts up and running.

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.

For more info on the Trust and other Council initiatives go to:

<https://shape.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/mount-alexander-affordable-housing-trust>

## ADVOCACY

My Home Network and Homeshare had a meeting with Maree Edwards, State MP for Bendigo West Monday 1 September and a Deputation with Mount Alexander Shire Council September 9 updating them on our work. We will update you with meeting and deputation outcomes as they are confirmed.

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## EVERYBODY'S HOME - SURVEY ABOUT HOW THE HOUSING CRISIS IS IMPACTING YOU AND YOUR FAMILY.

Australia's housing crisis is hurting more people than ever. And while millions are doing it tough, the Albanese Government's ambition still doesn't match the scale of this emergency.

That's why we're inviting you to complete our [2025 Housing Survey](#) - a short, confidential questionnaire about how the housing crisis is affecting you and your family.

### Let us know how you are impacted

Whether you're without a stable home, on the cusp of eviction, struggling to find a decent rental, or wondering if you or your children will ever be able to afford a home at all - we want to hear from you. No matter your situation, your story helps us show the real toll this crisis is taking on people across the country and continue to push for urgent action.

Two years ago, hundreds of people took part in our first national survey. Their stories formed the basis of our *Brutal Reality* report,<sup>1</sup> which was shared widely in the media and used to demand action from decision-makers.

We'll use this year's responses to continue tracking how things are changing and hold the new parliament to account.

Together, we are building pressure for real solutions. Thanks for your support.

In solidarity,  
*Margaret - Everybody's Home Campaign Manager*

<sup>1</sup> [Brutal Reality: The Human Cost of Australia's Housing Crisis](#)

[If you or anyone you know needs help, you can contact one of the services listed on their website for crisis support.](#)

## NEW CHANGES TO PLANNING SYSTEM - SMALL SECOND HOMES ON LOTS UNDER 300 SQ METRES

New changes to Victorian planning system "to allow quicker and more efficient approvals for homes and small second homes on lots under 300 square metres".

[Stronger standards and faster approvals for single homes and small second homes](#)

This is in addition to the planning scheme changes [Small second homes](#) made in the Housing statement late 2023.



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## TENANTS RIGHTS WORKING GROUP

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

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

See [Energy efficiency for rental properties in Victoria](#) for updated energy efficiency standards and timeframe of their implementation.



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 tenant's 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 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](#).

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 [kneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au](mailto:kneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au)

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## SURVEY ON COLLABORATIVE HOME OWNERSHIP IN AUSTRALIA

Have you experienced Collaborative Home Ownership in Australia?

Researchers are exploring the benefits, barriers, and opportunities for Collaborative Home Ownership (CHO) — and they want to hear from you!

If you are, or have been, a founding member, developer, resident, or simply curious about CHO, you're invited to take part in a national survey.

📋 The survey covers your motivations, experiences, impacts, outcomes, housing pathways, and aspirations.

🕒 Takes around 20–40 minutes.

🔗 Start here: <https://cstu.io/d5226e>

This research, funded by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), is being led by Swinburne University of Technology in partnership with RMIT, University of South Australia, and Western Sydney University.

Your voice can help shape the future of collaborative housing in Australia — please share with your network

## TINY HOMES ON WHEELS (THOW) WORKING GROUP - SURVEY

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> - Scan QR Code at right



This anonymous information will be used in advocacy locally, state wide 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”. 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>

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

The THOW Working Group appreciates Council's leadership in changing the local law. We feel this 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.

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](mailto:cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au)

## HOMESHARE

**We now have 5 active homeshares and a 2 more in progress. Of the 5 matches, 2 continued for 10 weeks each, 2 are into their second 6 months and one is now heading for a year.**

We have counted 125 weeks of secure, affordable housing from these matches. Meeting housing need is not the only goal for Homeshare but at a time of almost zero rental availability, and none fitting any affordable standard, using existing housing resources to increase supply is an excellent



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## HOMESHARE (CONT.)

outcome for Homeshare and for this community. 5 people housed securely is not insignificant. Yet, the benefits go beyond housing. People who were living alone with low support needs have now company at home, someone to eat dinner with, someone to do house tasks with. Homeshare is not a service it is a relationship above all else, but the small tasks of lighting fires and doing gardening have been a great help to the Homeproviders. For the Homeseekers, the housing is secure and comfortable with reduced stress so that Homeseekers have kept jobs, completed TAFE courses and saved money to spend on gym membership or yoga classes, none of which was available to them in their precarious rental-based lives. For all parties, life has improved.

Homeshare Mount Alexander is connected to national and international sharing movements that are growing word wide. The social issues that we are facing here, a growing population with support needs, increasing precarious housing and less public money to pay for institutional care, are shared across the word. Homeshare is a community-based solution for all of these needs.

Homeowners with spare bedrooms and are interested in sharing their lives with a trusted other continue to make contact with us to enquire. Homeshares are matched according to peoples interests values and needs. We welcome all enquiries. Contact us at 0499309418 or [homeshare@castemainehealth.org.au](mailto:homeshare@castemainehealth.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

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## 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 Victorian Energy Network in Victoria and will keep you updated.



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## OLDER WOMEN IN COHOUSING INC. (WINC)

WINC - Older Women in Cohousing Inc - is getting closer and closer to signing with a developer to build our 31-home community. We are working through the seemingly endless details around the planning permit conditions, plus refining our list of essentials for sustainable and accessible homes and landscaping, and compiling the final requests from buyers for this, that and the other in their new small home (multiplied by 31....).

**We have one 50m2 home and one 65m2 home still available for purchase.**

**If you'd like to consider becoming a part of WINC and buying one of these homes, please get in touch with Mary-Faeth, [mary-faeth@winccohousing.org.au](mailto:mary-faeth@winccohousing.org.au) or 0428 481 754.**

Our Middle Women Housing Fund [MWHF] crowdfunding campaign is ticking over slowly - please have a look at the film here: [WINC MWHF Film & Fundraiser](#)

And many thanks to the Theatre Royal for showing the MWHF film this weekend before the MIFF film, *Careless*.

[Donate to Help older women into secure housing, organized by WINC-Older Women in Cohousing Inc gofundme.com](#)

## 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!

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## 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 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 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.

## 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 Health, Sac'O'Suds Laundrette, Parks Victoria, Haven Home Safe, Castlemaine Church of Christ, Salvation Army, Uniting Church and Anglican Church.

Thanks to Jo McMahon MASC Homelessness Coordinator who has been coordinating efforts to try and find options for warm showers for our rough sleepers as the Castlemaine Fitness Centre has closed.

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## ROUGH SLEEPER ACTION GROUP (CONT.)

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](#).