



UPDATE ON HOUSING FOR THOSE IMPACTED BY THE BUSHFIRES

Thank you again for all your care for and support of our community members impacted by the bushfires. I hope this finds you and yours and those you know impacted receiving the supports they need and taking care.

Thank you for the ongoing offers of accommodation and linking the Dhelkaya Health housing team in with those who need assistance with housing. We continue to liaise with the real estate agencies in town.

We have been collating all this information on our confidential register of housing needs and offers and matching them.

Update on supports for those unhoused by the bush fires:

Those in need of immediate housing assistance can contact the housing team on 5479 1000 or email them at housingintake@castlemainehealth.org.au as was the usual before the bush fires.

We recommend that you also register with *Windermere*, who is responsible for the Statewide Bushfire Recovery Intake.

Emergency Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760 and the direct number is 03 8793 4206.
The email address for referrals is recoverysupport@windermere.org.au

They can provide information around what supports and relief payments you may be eligible for and refer you to other services for longer term case management.

Those with offers of accommodation can contact: housingintake@castlemainehealth.org.au

Due to the large number of offers of accommodation, we will likely only be in contact if your offer is more of a longer-term rental. So, there is a chance you may not hear from us - but we are very grateful!

It has been great to see the offer of 20 plus BnBs and vacant dwellings as affordable longer-term rentals! Yay! But we need more of these longer-term rentals, so once again, please encourage those owners of vacant dwellings you may know, to release them as long term affordable rentals for those impacted by the bush fires and for others in rental stress.

Before the bush fires we needed over 800 affordable rentals to alleviate rental stress. That number has now gone up by over 60. There are 1200 vacant dwellings in the Shire, so significant potential to alleviate that stress.

Thank you!

DEMOCRACY AFTER DISASTER

Kate Lawrence in her podcast series [Democracy after disaster](#) provides great insight around the history of fire in Victoria, the responses by organisations, governments and communities, and each within its unique place and time.

Furthermore, her questions and examples of different practices provide a complex yet encouraging analysis. Not just as disaster response, she explores the potential for democracy in grassroots community voice and action, and in relationship with government and organisational power.

REPORT ON HOW PROPERTY TECHNOLOGY (PROPTECH) IS USED IN AUSTRALIA'S PRIVATE AND SOCIAL RENTAL SECTORS

[Implications of tenant data collection in housing: protecting Australian renters | AHURI](#)

Adapting to data-hungry PropTech: how to protect Australian renters. Digitisation has outpaced regulation and reform is needed to ensure renters are protected.

Members of the MHN Tenants rights working group were involved in this research. Great to see the report out.

ACOSS REPORT - HOMES FOR LIVING NOT WEALTH CREATION

Australia spends more on tax breaks for landlords than social housing, homelessness and rent assistance combined.

Also see the [Guardian Weekly article on the report](#)

Please see attached the letter to Federal MP Lisa Chesters that community members could sign during Homelessness Week last year.

We continue to advocate for these systemic changes in Federal Housing Policy and Reform.

TINY HOMES ON WHEELS

The My Home Network Tiny Homes On Wheels working group have been watching the Western Australian THOW housing space since they adopted a THOW planning policy framework that takes THOW out of local law and out of planning schemes and has consistent standards across the State that enables THOW on-site waste treatment, rentals and THOW clusters.

We have been in communication with Councils in WA and encouraged by the results. We are advocating to local and State and Federal Governments to have this THOW planning policy framework as an option. See [WA Tiny Homes On Wheels community](#).

TINY HOMES ON WHEELS (CONT.)

We know that some people whose homes were destroyed in the bush fires are interested in Tiny Homes On Wheels as an interim or long term housing option. If they wish to connect with the My Home Network Tiny Homes On Wheels working group who have diverse expertise related to Tiny Homes On Wheels in our Shire they can contact cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au

Others are looking at [Small second homes](#), please see this link for more information.

We have also been supporting an East Gippsland housing network in their advocacy with their Council about improving their Tiny Homes On Wheels local law. They have produced a video that includes conversations with a member of our THOW wgrp and Mount Alexander Shire Councillors. I can share the video after its premiering in East Gippsland but here is a taster :

<https://www.facebook.com/share/r/18CkHtscsR/>

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 local, state and national levels.
- Is exploring THOW as a “Caretaker” model and the possibility of THOW small clusters on vacant land. **We are planning a public forum on this model so please watch this space.**



If you're interested in Tiny Homes on Wheels, please get in touch: cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au

THE HAVEN FOUNDATION: INTEGRATED SOCIAL HOUSING AND SUPPORT - HAVEN CASTLEMAINE | MIND AUSTRALIA

You may have seen this 14-unit social housing development being built in Railway Ave, Castlemaine.

A reminder that applications are open and are invited from people who:

- are experiencing mental health challenges
- are aged between 18-64 years of age
- have the financial means to pay for rent and utilities
- have an NDIS package to fund housing support
- are willing to sign a residential tenancy agreement with The Haven Foundation
- are on or eligible for the Victorian Housing Register.

For more information and to apply [see this link](#)

HOUSING ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND ELECTRIFICATION

As we know the cost of housing also includes cost of heating and cooling so improving our home energy efficiency and electrifying our home is better for our health and hip pocket.

See this [webinar](#) on improving the energy efficiency and comfort of old homes, including their electrification and some tips for renters.

HOUSING ACTION NEWSTEAD DISTRICT (HAND)

We are pleased to share with you that there is a very local housing network developing in Newstead that My Home Network will be collaborating with - Housing Action Newstead District (HAND).

They are auspiced by Newstead 2050 and if interested please get in touch with Peter Sullivan, Chair of HAND, petersullivan51@gmail.com, 0487 694 067.

ROUGH SLEEPER ACTION GROUP - MOBILE SHOWERS TRIAL

The MHN convenes 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, Castlemaine Police, Dhelkaya Health Housing Team, Dhelkaya Community Health, Sac O Suds Laundrette, Parks Victoria, Haven Home Safe, Castlemaine Church Of Christ, Salvation Army, Maldon Community Pantry, Uniting Church and Anglican Church, Safe Space and Windarring Op Shop.

We continue to explore options for warm showers for our rough sleepers and hoping to continue trialling a mobile shower set up that was available once a week with breakfast provided by the Salvation Army and Dhelkaya Health housing team support available. Will keep you updated.

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

EVERYBODY'S HOME

My Home Network is member of [Everybody's Home](#), please see articles on:

- Frontline services stretched to breaking point as housing crisis deepens
- Albanese Government is considering winding back the capital gains tax discount for property investors.

OLDER WOMEN IN CO-HOUSING (WINC)

WINC is inching closer to a contract with our developer.

It does feel like the never-ending story, but we can also see progress, which is great. On our side, everything feels ready to roll - we have buyers and renters for our 31 small homes-to-be, and we have a waiting list of prospective owners and renters for the inevitable changes that will happen.

We are working on replanting the land to the south along the creek, with much help from a Mount Alexander Shire community grant to purchase hundreds of native plants. Regular working bees will help us keep ahead of the return of blackberries and gorse.

MOUNT ALEXANDER COMMUNITY LAND LTD (MACLL)



[MACLL](#) continues to meet regularly to push on in the evaluation of a number of sites.

We are hoping to announce some good news soon because we need to! The business as usual approach is requiring the typical Castlemanian household to pay 69% of their gross income on somewhere to buy. This failure rate is typical in Victoria - and we are lucky compared to other states!

If any other market was delivering outcomes at more than double what households can reasonably afford, would we respond by granting more control at the same development settings?

Contact info@macll.org.au for more information.

POOR QUALITY HOUSING FOR PACIFIC AUSTRALIA LABOUR MOBILITY (PALM) WORKERS

Here is a [report](#) which explores poor quality housing experienced by Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme (PALM) workers, some of whom live and work in our Shire, amongst other issues and makes recommendations on improving their accommodation.

TENANTS' RIGHTS WORKING GROUP

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.

Some useful links:

[Strengthening rights for renters | vic.gov.au](#)

[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](#)

[And importantly New minimum energy efficiency and safety standards for rental properties and rooming houses - Consumer Affairs Victoria](#)

[Australia's heatwaves are getting deadlier – and renters are paying the price | Maiy Azize | The Guardian](#)

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.

ADVOCATE FOR A FAIR, SUSTAINABLE AND STRONG HOUSING SYSTEM

Some of our recent advocacy includes:

1. Exploring the development of a state wide housing group that could include living experience of homelessness, MAV, VLGA, LG, State Government and other representatives to build on the Victorian Government Housing Statement.
2. Sent 176 community members' signed letters to the State Housing Minister requesting:
 - increase in social housing,
 - increase in crisis and transition housing,
 - integrated supports for homeless community members,
 - increase in family violence prevention, accommodation and supports
3. and collecting community members' signed letters to Federal MP for Bendigo Lisa Chesters requesting:
 - support for a system of taxation that is equitable and leads to secure and adequate housing for all
 - that policies to build houses include requirements to make a proportion of those non-market properties
 - coordination of local level responses between all levels of government, non-government and private enterprise (including local level data collection and dissemination) so that housing need is met locally and that homelessness and precarious housing is a rare experience in Mount Alexander Shire.
4. The MHN is part of the VCOSS [Health Energy Nexus Project](#) and One Million Homes Alliance
5. MHN supports the development of other community housing networks in Macedon Ranges Shire, Hepburn Shire, Hunter Valley, East Gippsland and City of Greater Bendigo and the collective advocacy

MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE COUNCIL HOUSING UPDATE

Council has recently completed consultation on providing lease over 65-67 Templeton St Castlemaine for provision of affordable and social housing. The following link provides some background information and FAQs in response to key questions from community:

<https://www.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/Building-and-Planning/Planning-for-the-future/Affordable-housing/Templeton-Street-Affordable-Housing>

HOMESHARE

As of February 2026, Homeshare Mount Alexander (HMA) has established 10 Homeshares. 5 are ongoing, 2 have concluded and 3 are in an introduction stage. 3 Homeshares have continued for more than 1 year.



In total HMA has provided an incredible 1,500 days of housing for 8 adults and 1 child and we are currently in the process of housing 2 more adults. All 'homeseekers' have experienced precarious or unsuitable housing. There have been 7 contracted 'homeproviders', some with disabilities and some who are older with low level support needs. Homeproviders have benefited from connections, company, transport meals, assistance with technology and the security of someone around the house.

The amazing ongoing success of Homeshare in this shire has gone beyond our initial expectations. Our national and international connections through HANZA have kept us optimistic. Dhelkaya Health's willingness to provide support through these establishment years is testament to the organisation's willingness to support community initiatives that have huge but difficult to measure impacts on individual lives. We are of course working on our success measures. These range from activity measures, what we do everyday to make homeshares happen, to subjective and objective wellbeing measures including homesharers own stories.

We were saddened in December with the passing of Hilary Griffith, our very first Homeprovider. Hilary was 90 and achieved her goal of staying at home until the end. Hilary's family said of Homeshare that they could not have hoped for a better last year of life for their mother, grandmother and great grandmother. Homeshare was a presence in the house that increased Hilary's day to day security, provided quality regular meals, conversations, much needed human contact and a communication link back to family when needed. For Hilary, Homeshare was about a friendship that grew but she also received a sense of achievement from knowing she was also giving a 'leg up' to her homesharer friend.

The HMA model revolves around meeting different needs at one time. We aim to help people live independently in community with quality relationships, no matter age or ability, and at the same time we house people who are otherwise precariously housed but have social and emotional resources that allows empathy. The model relies on people with support needs who have spare rooms identifying that they can benefit from homeshare and stepping forward. We have no difficulty attracting those with housing needs. Our ongoing challenge and limit is having enough people willing with capacity to share their homes and lives. We know from experience that Homeshare improves the quality of life. With current staff resources our aim is to build to 10 ongoing Homeshares in the Shire.

The working group is meeting in March to discuss what more we can do to connect with potential homeproviders.

For more information please contact Di Cox, 0499 309 418 or email homeshare@castlemainehealth.org.au