

Information Booklet

Housing Guide for Women in Victoria

Dealing with a housing crisis – NEEDING HELP RIGHT NOW!

BOOKLET ONE

Wire



Helping women
make the right
connections

**Women's
Information**

1

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A list of references and further reading is available online at www.wire.org.au

Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained in this booklet is accurate and current at the time of printing — January 2013. However, no responsibility will be taken for the accuracy or reliability of the information, or for any loss that may arise from errors, omissions, or changes to government policy or the law.

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“I’ve got nowhere to live”

WIRE’s two-booklet series **Housing Guide for Women in Victoria** aims to provide you with information to help you find your way through the housing maze. The first booklet ***‘Dealing with a housing crisis—needing help right now!’*** is there for you if you find yourself in crisis, with either no housing or facing the risk that you will very soon become homeless. The second booklet ***‘Finding your next home—looking past a housing crisis’*** helps you look to your future home – and how to avoid having to face a housing crisis again.

“I haven’t had somewhere to live for a while”

Having a safe, secure place to live is one of the most basic human rights, and something that most of us take for granted. So, when you’re facing the prospect of having nowhere to sleep, let alone a place to call ‘home’, it is natural to assume that there will be some sort of accommodation, somewhere, that you can access. Sadly, this is not the case. While there are services that may help you resolve your housing problem, the reality is that there simply isn’t enough affordable accommodation to meet ever-growing needs. Long waiting lists, complex application processes, limited funds and often very basic or unsuitable accommodation can make a distressing situation even worse.

Ultimately, learning about what is available, how you can access it, and the benefits and disadvantages of the various options will not only help you decide what is best for you and your situation, but may minimise the stress associated with finding somewhere to live.

What is homelessness?

There are degrees of homelessness but it is typical for someone without a safe and secure home to experience different types of homelessness over time.

Homelessness can mean:

- **Couch surfing**—this is moving between friends and family
- **Moving between emergency accommodation** such as refuges and hostels
- **Living for long periods in unsuitable accommodation**—this is any living situation that is unsuitable and which may continue for 13 weeks or longer
- **Sleeping rough on the street**
- **Sleeping in your car.**

Women are less likely to sleep rough. For women, homelessness can mean starting out staying with friends and family, and then sleeping in the car in between short stays at different boarding houses and shelters. At times women may also choose a companion for a night to get a roof over their head rather than sleep rough.

How did I get there?

Twenty-six per cent of women and children seeking crisis accommodation are escaping family violence.

Women and female-headed households are at increased risk of homelessness because they are more exposed to violence, poverty and inequality. Escaping family violence is the most common reason women give when they seek assistance from specialist homelessness services.

However, with high competition in the private rental market and the shortage of public housing, many women are now experiencing longer periods of homelessness and longer stays in emergency accommodation. It's the same for both single women and women with children.

Housing costs have outstripped income growth. A recent Census showed that, on average, between 2006 and 2011 in Victoria mortgage repayments increased by 39% and rent increased 49%.

Family violence

Facing homeless as a result of trying to keep yourself and your children safe is a harsh reality for far too many women. Facing homelessness when escaping family violence may mean you do not have access to money. This means facing the challenge of finding safe and affordable accommodation in the 'private rental market' with little resources. The private rental market refers to those rental properties that are owned by landlords and are usually managed by licensed real estate agents.

Unfortunately one in every two women who approach services for women escaping family violence are turned away because there aren't enough resources or accommodation. Women in rural and remote areas have less access to assistance from services, family, friends and police. This puts them at increased risk of homelessness or unsafe housing.

Many women and families are only four pay periods away from housing stress.

Realities for young women

Young women who grow up in families affected by family violence are more likely to be in violent relationships as adults.

Family breakdown and family violence are two of the main reasons young women seek support from specialist homelessness services.

For some young people, parental separation and the arrival of a step-parent can cause conflict that makes home life seem untenable. For young people fleeing physical, sexual and emotional abuse, reconciliation with their families may not be possible.

In contrast to people in other age groups, there are more young women who are homeless than young men.

Women — the hidden homeless

- **84,000** women received support from specialist homelessness services that's 62% of all people who were assisted (2009–2010).
- **40%** of primary homeless people (sleeping rough) are women
- **48%** of secondary homeless (staying with family or friends) are women
- **28%** of tertiary homeless (living in insecure accommodation like boarding houses) are women

MYTH: *There are services that can always provide emergency accommodation if you are homeless.*

REALITY: *One in two people who request immediate accommodation are turned away each night because of high demand and under-resourcing. Most people turned away from specialist homelessness services are women and their children.*

MYTH: *Homeless people are single older men, uneducated, poor and with low socioeconomic status.*

REALITY: *More women than men seek assistance from the homelessness service system each year.*

MYTH: *People are homeless because they are unemployed and suffer from substance abuse and/or mental health issues.*

REALITY: *The largest single reason that single women, young women and women with children seek help from services for homelessness in Australia is family violence.*

Nowhere to stay tonight?

Facing the prospect of nowhere to stay is overwhelming and frightening especially if you have children. Unfortunately there is no easy answer. **So it's very important to explore all options**, particularly talking first with your family and friends.

"I want to leave but I've got nowhere to go"

Family and friends

The very best option is to stay with your family and trusted friends, particularly if your need is extremely urgent.

While it might feel embarrassing to talk with family and friends about your housing crisis and ask for help, it's an important option. Staying with someone you know, even for a few days, can give you the time and space to explore your options in the longer term.

Crisis accommodation

Crisis accommodation or emergency housing is short-term, temporary accommodation for one night initially, up to about six weeks. Emergency accommodation includes women's refuges, youth refuges, hotels, motels, hostels and boarding or rooming houses.

Rooming or boarding houses

Rooming or boarding houses are another short-term option for crisis accommodation. Rooming or boarding houses contain multiple-occupancy rooms with little or no privacy, so this may not be the right environment for you especially if you have children. You will most likely be sharing kitchen, laundry, toilet and bathroom facilities with others. As rooming houses do not provide leases, you would not be eligible for rent assistance.

If you need to make a complaint about a rooming or boarding house, refer to the section '*Knowing my rights about using services*' on page 20.



CONTACT FOR HELP

For emergency accommodation Victoria-wide, call 1800 825 955 (free call from a landline or public phone anywhere in Victoria, 24 hours). A housing worker will speak to you and refer you to services and support in your local area.

Escaping family violence

If escaping family violence means you are homeless and you have exhausted all your options (including friends, family and motels), the Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service may be able to provide safe, secure emergency accommodation or short-term accommodation in a refuge.

While they have limited emergency beds available, they will do their best to find somewhere for you to stay. This might be a motel for a couple of nights. Unfortunately, due to high demand the service has to turn away many women each night.

Realities of a refuge

There are only nine secure refuges in Victoria. This means only a limited number of beds are available across the State. Common experiences for women who stay in the refuges are that they receive:

- Two nights in a motel
- Six weeks accommodation maximum
- Referral to a local transitional housing manager (THM)
- Shared accommodation with other families.

Unfortunately, most refuges do not allow women to continue working while staying in a refuge.



CONTACT FOR HELP

For confidential and 24-hour support, call the statewide Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service on (03) 9322 3555 or 1800 015 188 (free call).

A list of Domestic Violence Outreach Centres and contact numbers is given in APPENDIX 1 '*Domestic Violence Outreach Centres in Victoria*' on page 23.

You can also find these contact numbers online at www.dvrcv.org.au/support-services/victorian-services/

Services for women who are homeless for reasons other than family violence are provided by a transitional housing service. This option is described in the special section on '*Transitional housing*' on page 9.

What about the kids?

Homelessness can affect children's health and education.

Children who experience repeated periods of homelessness often suffer learning and emotional difficulties. Homelessness for children often means missing out—missing out on the things that other children take for granted such as a safe place to sleep every night, school excursions, regular nutritious meals and the opportunity to bring friends home after school.

Children who have been homeless are also more likely to become victims of crime and to get caught up in criminal activities. Many homeless children have experienced or witnessed family violence.

Children who experience homelessness:

- Spend less time in school than other kids
- May move schools up to five times per year and are more likely to leave school early—two-thirds of young people who become homeless leave school within 12 months.

Pets and homelessness

A family's pets are also vulnerable. 'Pets in Peril' can help you to look after your pets temporarily if you become homeless. The program is a partnership between Animal Aid and Eastern Region Domestic Violence Outreach Service.

Pets in Peril can accommodate your pets for up to 28 days. The cost is \$2.00–5.00 per day depending on specific circumstances. Your pets must have current vaccinations, but limited accommodation is available for non-vaccinated pets.



CONTACT FOR HELP

You must obtain a referral for the 'Pets in Peril' program from a caseworker through:

- **Eastern Region Domestic Violence Outreach Service—call (03) 9259 4200** or
- An emergency housing program or a community health service.

“I need a place to escape from homelessness during the day”

Drop-in centres in Melbourne

If you are sleeping rough at night or moving around a lot, drop-in centres are a good place to stop by during the day for a meal, a wash or a chat. You can also speak to the duty worker about your immediate needs and stay informed about your options. If you move around a lot, you can also ask these centres to hold your mail for you as long as you collect it every week.



CONTACTS FOR HELP

Inner Space (03) 9417 1299 4 Johnson Street Collingwood 3066
7.30 pm to 11 pm Monday–Friday, 12pm to 8pm Saturday

St Kilda Crisis Centre 1800 627 727 (24 hours) or (03) 9536 7777
29 Grey Street St Kilda 3182 9am to 11pm

St Mary’s House of Welcome (03) 9417 6497
165–169 Brunswick Street Fitzroy 3065
8.30am to 3.30pm Monday–Friday, 8.30am to 1.30pm Saturday

Urban Heart (03) 9653 3243
69 Bourke Street Melbourne 3000 9.30am to 5pm Monday–Friday

Transitional housing

Like the Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service, the Transitional Housing Service provides short-term housing for families or individuals at risk of immediate or imminent homelessness.

The reality with THMs

REALITY: High demand and long waiting lists mean that many people who are eligible still don't get accommodation.

A transitional housing manager (THM) will help you solve your immediate housing problem. They will also support you to work out how to avoid similar crises in the future.

Specifically, a THM can help you to:

- Stay in your current private rental accommodation or find another rental property
- Apply for public housing
- Locate crisis accommodation
- Apply for financial assistance from the Housing Establishment Fund or the Bond Loan Scheme (*see the section 'Getting private rental' in the second booklet of this series 'Finding your next home—looking past a housing crisis'*)
- Contact other support services that offer short-to-medium-term housing.

While you may have contacted the THM to meet your immediate housing needs, it is important to remember that all crisis and transitional housing is only a temporary option. For long-term housing (such as public housing or private rental), you need to actively work with your THM. (*This is dealt with in the second booklet 'Finding your next home—looking past a housing crisis' in the section 'Applying for public housing'*).

The diagram below shows how different types of social housing are related to one another.

Social housing options in Victoria

Applications ONLY through TRANSITIONAL HOUSING MANAGERS (THMs)				Applications ON YOUR OWN	
TYPES OF HOUSING					
Crisis/emergency housing	Transitional housing	Public housing	Community housing	Public housing	Community housing
		Segments 1,2 and 3		Segment 4	
Short term	Short to medium term	Long term	Long term	Long term	Long term
see WIRE's Housing Guide Booklet 1 (this booklet): 'Dealing with a housing crisis—needing help right now!'		see WIRE's Housing Guide Booklet 2: 'Finding your next home—looking past a housing crisis'			

For more information on applying for longer term public housing and/or community housing, get a copy of **WIRE's Housing Guide Booklet 2: 'Finding your next home—looking past a housing crisis'** by calling **1300 134 130**, emailing inforequests@wire.org.au or visiting www.wire.org.au

Waiting lists for public housing are long. In March 2012, there were **37 887** people on the Victorian public housing

- **10 544** people on the 'early' waiting list (Segments 1 to 3)
- **27 343** people on the 'general' waiting list (Segment 4).

What is transitional housing?

As the name suggests, transitional housing (sometimes viewed as part of crisis accommodation) provides short-term housing for families or individuals who have been in a housing crisis and are awaiting confirmation of a longer term tenancy such as public housing. Currently there are 4,000 such dwellings, and these are constantly in high demand. Waiting lists for transitional housing vary with each local THM, but generally speaking **it can take at least six months to access a property even when you need housing immediately.**

How does a THM service work?

Transitional housing is managed by the community sector and accessed through a transitional housing manager (THM). There are 15 THM programs run by non-profit and government-funded organisations, providing specialist homelessness support services across Victoria.

Each region has a THM that usually only works with people who currently live in, or whose last permanent address was in that region. That means that your local THM can allocate transitional housing and refer you to a housing outreach worker only in your local area.

How do I get help from a THM?

You can ask for help from your local THM if you have a Healthcare Card, you are homeless, or you have been in the private rental market and are facing eviction.

While some THMs work from a drop-in centre, it is best to phone your local THM and explain your situation clearly. If you are facing imminent homelessness, ask for an emergency appointment.

It's best to call first before visiting a THM



CONTACT FOR HELP

For the location and contact details of your nearest THM, call **WIRE 1300 134 130**. A list of all THMs in Victoria is given in APPENDIX 2— '*Transitional Housing Managers in Victoria*' on page 24.

PRACTICAL TIPS

Like almost everything to do with housing services, getting information and help can be incredibly time-consuming, frustrating and confusing. Here are some simple things you can do to make the experience less stressful, and perhaps in the end, more rewarding.

-  **Try to contact the service as soon as possible.** It's important to contact your local THM as soon as you find yourself in, or approaching, a housing crisis. Your THM will then have a better chance of helping you avoid the worst of it.
-  **Be prepared to wait to speak to a THM.** A good idea is to find a comfortable place where you won't be disturbed when making your call (or calls). Get everything you need—paper, pen and perhaps a coffee and a magazine or book to read while you are waiting. Pull up a chair and try to relax.
-  **Think carefully about what you want to say and any questions you need to ask.** Write them down before you make your call. It is crucial that you don't make your situation sound better than it really is because you feel embarrassed or ashamed. THMs need to know exactly what is going on so they can give you the help you need. If they don't understand that your situation is urgent you won't get this support. It is also very important to show the THM that, with help, you will be able to get yourself back on track.
-  **When you do speak to someone, ask for his or her name and write it down.** If the THM refers you to other housing services, ask what these services will do for you.
-  **Ask for an appointment to explain your housing problem in person.** When you go to this appointment be ready to talk about your situation clearly and realistically. It may be helpful to practice what you are going to say with someone you trust before you meet the THM.
-  **Don't wait for the THM to call you back.** Whatever happens, it is important to keep in contact with your THM until your situation is sorted out.

There is no guarantee

High priority is given to people experiencing long-term or recurring homelessness. The demand for crisis housing is greater than what is available in Victoria. There is no guarantee of immediate access to crisis housing even if you meet eligibility criteria.

Claiming your Centrelink payments when you are homeless

It's important to maintain your Centrelink payments. If you are homeless or at risk of homelessness, ask to speak to a Centrelink Community Engagement Officer (CCEO). These officers provide services to people of all ages who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. They can help you to understand, claim and maintain your income support payments.

Visit www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/services/community_officers.htm to find how to contact a CCEO.



CONTACTING A LOCAL THM

THMs only work with people who are either currently living in their designated area or whose last permanent address was in that area. Here is where you can get help to contact your local THM:

- Call **WIRE on 1300 134 130** (9 am to 5 pm, Monday–Friday) to locate a THM
- Visit www.chfv.org.au/transitional-housing/ or see APPENDIX 2 '*Transitional Housing Managers (THMs) in Victoria*' on page 24 for a list of all THMs in Victoria
- Call the **crisis and emergency accommodation info line on 1800 825 955 (24-hours) or (03) 9689 2777** (if calling from a mobile) to speak to a THM near you
- Visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/crisis-and-emergency/crisis-accommodation for a list of after-hours services, specialist services and support for people experiencing homelessness and family violence.

DOCUMENTS AND APPOINTMENTS

A THM will need to see some important documents at your first appointment. Remember to take your Healthcare Card, at least two other forms of identification and copies of any other documents that support your situation. These may include:

- Driver's licence
- Passport
- Birth certificate
- Residency papers
- Bank books, bank statements and ATM cards
- Rental property leases
- Letters relating to your situation from people such as real estate agents, landlords and doctors.



How do I keep a roof over my head?

You have some options if you are at risk of losing your home. It's important to note, however, that specific eligibility criteria apply for all options presented below.

Behind in the rent

If staying in your home is a safe option but you are behind in the rent you may be able to get help with the rent from:

- Housing Establishment Fund for rental arrears
- Some non-profit organisations offering private rental brokerage assistance
- Emergency relief to help you pay for food and other bills, so that you can pay the rent.

Housing Establishment Fund

If you are 14 days or more late paying your rent, and have a Healthcare Card, you may be entitled to financial assistance with your rent arrears through the Housing Establishment Fund (HEF).

Each THM has a limited allocation of HEF funding to help eligible clients in their local area to:

- Access emergency short-term accommodation—most of the funding provides this type of help
- Maintain private rental by helping with rental arrears
- Access private rental property by paying advance rent when securing a rental property, and providing possible help with relocation costs.

The reality with HEF

REALITY: High demand and long waiting lists for emergency short-term accommodation mean that THMs often have little HEF allocation left for private rental assistance.

DOCUMENTS FOR TAKING TO YOUR THM APPOINTMENT

You will need to take all the following documents to your appointment with the THM

- 
- A letter from your landlord stating that you are a tenant at your current address, how much you are in arrears, and including your landlord's address and contact details
 - A current income statement from Centrelink
 - Two other forms of identification (such as a driver's licence or Medicare card).

Private rental brokerage assistance

If you have escaped family violence or are a recent refugee or migrant, you may be able to access private brokerage rental assistance. To find out about this type of assistance:

- Contact your local Domestic Violence Outreach Service, which may be able to refer you to a private brokerage rental assistance program. One such program is Women's Health West private rental brokerage assistance—visit www.whwest.org.au
- Make an appointment with your local THM to discuss your eligibility.

Emergency relief

Many not-for-profit organisations can provide you with emergency relief and material aid when you find yourself without enough money to buy food or clothing, or pay bills. While they may not be able to help you pay your rent directly, they can help you save money to pay the rent by giving you food parcels, clothing and household goods. They might also pay your phone, gas or electricity bills, or give you vouchers for food, transport and prescription medication.



CONTACT FOR HELP

To find your nearest emergency relief agency, you can call **WIRE on 1300 134 130** or contact your local Community Information Centre. The Fitzroy Legal Service website lists emergency relief providers across Victoria—visit www.vicdrugguide.org.au/handbook/ch13so6.php

Behind in the mortgage

If staying in your own home is a safe option, there are ways to get help with your mortgage.

Mortgage relief

If you are behind in your mortgage repayments because of an unavoidable change in circumstance, such as short-term unemployment or sickness, you may be eligible for the Mortgage Relief Scheme.

To be eligible:

- Your home loan repayments must be more than 27% of your gross income
- Your original mortgage loan was not more than \$375,300 and the money you borrowed was spent entirely on the original purchase or construction of the property
- You will be able to resume normal loan repayments when you stop receiving assistance
- Your financial difficulties were caused by an unavoidable change in circumstances.

To apply for the scheme you will need to fill out a Mortgage Relief Application Form and attach all the following documents:

- A statement filled out, signed and stamped by your mortgage lender
- Income and employment details such as a wage statement from your employer, your last two payslips, a Centrelink Benefit Statement or a certified profit and loss statement (if you own a business or are a sole trader)
- Last statements for all your other financial commitments, such as a car loan or credit card.



CONTACT FOR HELP

For more information or an application form, call **Loan Assistance on 1800 134 872** or visit the Department of Human Services website at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/housing-and-accommodation/home-owner-support/mortgage-relief

“I want to stay in my own place and be safe”

Staying in my current home

There are options to help you stay in your current home, including changing tenancy agreements.

Changing tenancy agreements

If you are experiencing family violence and need to keep your current rental property in your own name, it may help to:

- Speak to your property manager at the real estate agency
- Apply to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for changes to your tenancy agreement.

You need to be prepared for a lengthy and complex process. For example, to remove the perpetrator’s name from the lease, you must at the very least have a Final Intervention Order (FIO) with the exclusion clause from the Magistrate’s Court, under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 Family Violence provision Section 2.3.3.A. You will need this FIO, or a Family Violence Safety Notice (issued by the police), to apply to VCAT to change either your tenancy arrangement or the locks.



CONTACT FOR HELP

For eligibility guidelines on changing the lease in violent situations, visit the Consumer Affairs Victoria website at www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing-and-accommodation/renting/leases-and-notices/changing-the-lease-in-violent-situations

For eligibility guidelines on changing the locks in violent situations, visit the Consumer Affairs Victoria website at www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing-and-accommodation/renting/standards-repairs-and-entry-rights/changing-the-locks



SOME USEFUL TIPS IF YOU FIND YOURSELF AT RISK OF BECOMING HOMELESS:

- Get support from family and friends
- Find someone to talk to—call WIRE 1300 134 130 to find a counsellor in your area
- Call WIRE in those difficult moments—we are there to listen
- Organise the documents you need and store them in a folder
- Take photocopies of your important documents and leave them with a trusted friend—it's hard to keep track of your important documents when you are homeless
- Be kind to yourself—give yourself time out of your day that is just for you—take a walk or spend a moment sitting under a tree.

Struggling because of health or legal reasons? Specialist providers cater for specific groups such as aged people, homeless youth, people with disabilities and women.



CONTACT FOR HELP

Visit www.chfv.org.au/specialist-providers/
or see APPENDIX 3 'Services for women with specific needs' on page 26.

Knowing my rights about using services

You have rights when using homelessness assistance or social housing services. You can make a complaint about a government-funded homelessness support and accommodation service such as crisis accommodation or a transitional housing manager service. You can also make a complaint about a rooming house.

Your rights and responsibilities

Under the Victorian Government's Consumer Charter for Homelessness Assistance, you have rights and responsibilities when you are looking for, or getting help from, a community homelessness assistance or social housing service.

If you are seeking or receiving homelessness assistance or housing services, you have the right to:

- Get help during a crisis or help to prevent a crisis
- Be considered fairly for accommodation and housing
- Get help finding and staying in suitable housing on a long-term basis
- Feel safe
- Be free from discrimination and be respected for your culture
- Receive respect, dignity and privacy
- Make choices that will affect your future and be part of the decision making process of organisations providing services to you
- Get help applying for income support, employment and health services, educational opportunities and other support services
- Make a complaint or appeal a decision you do not agree with and receive an answer that makes sense to you.

You also have a responsibility to:

- Give correct and necessary information about yourself and your situation to organisations providing services to you
- Respect the rights of others to feel safe
- Respect the cultural backgrounds and privacy of others
- Treat others with respect and dignity
- Meet your responsibilities as a tenant.

The Department of Human Services provides the Consumer Charter for Homelessness Assistance as part of the Victorian Homelessness Strategy. To find out more, visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/consumer-charter-for-homelessness-assistance

Making a complaint

To make complaint, get a copy of the complete charter booklet from the organisation you are seeking services from. After you have read it, discuss your concerns directly with the organisation you have issues with. If this doesn't work you can get help from the following organisations:



CONTACTS FOR HELP

Council to Homeless Persons Homeless Advocacy Services (HAS)
1800 066 256 (free call), **(03) 8415 6200** or visit www.chp.org.au

Department of Human Services — Call 1800 155 743 (general complaints)

Housing Registrar www.housingregistrar.vic.gov.au
(03) 9651 1402, or TTY users call **13 36 77** and ask for **1300 650 172**

Public Interest Legal Clearinghouse (PILCH) **(03) 8636 4400** (general enquiries) or **03 8636 4444** (legal inquiries, 9:30 am—4:30 pm), email admin@pilch.org.au (please note that PILCH cannot respond to legal enquiries by email) or visit www.pilch.org.au

Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program (SHASP) for social housing tenants (people already in public and community housing). To find your local SHASP service, visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/programs/housing-and-community-building/social-housing-advocacy-and-support-program

Tenants Union of Victoria **(03) 9416 2577** (9 am to 4 pm Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and 1 pm to 8 pm Wednesdays), or visit www.tuv.org.au

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) **(03) 9628 9800** or **1800 133 055** (free call country callers only) (residential tenancies) or visit www.vcat.vic.gov.au

Your Local Housing Office— To find the DHS housing office nearest to you, call **1300 650 172**, visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/housing-and-accommodation/public-housing/local-housing-offices or email housing@dhs.vic.gov.au

Concerns about a rooming house

Rooming or boarding houses are buildings where four or more people, who are unrelated to the landlord, live under separate rental agreements.

All rooming and boarding houses should be registered with the local Council and must be safe and clean. Check to see whether your rooming house is registered or meets health and safety standards at www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing-and-accommodation/renting/standards-repairs-and-entry-rights/minimum-standards-in-rooming-houses.



CONTACT FOR HELP

If necessary, you can report the provider without giving your name by calling the **Consumer Affairs Victoria hotline on 1300 365 814**. You can also contact your local Council for help.

APPENDIX 1

Domestic Violence Outreach Centres in Victoria

The Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service is the Victorian 24-hour statewide support and intervention service for women who are experiencing violence and abuse from a partner, ex-partner or family member. **Call confidentially 1800 015 188 (toll free) or (03) 9322 3555. Visit www.wdvcs.org.au**

Statewide 24-hour crisis and emergency accommodation information line **1800 825 955**. To find your local Domestic Violence Outreach Service in Victoria, visit www.dvrcv.org.au/support-services/victorian-services/

Domestic Violence Outreach Services are generally open 9 am to 5 pm, Mon–Fri. These are listed below.

METRO REGION

Eastern Metro Region (03) 9259 4200

Mornington Peninsula (03) 5971 9454

Northern Metro Region (03) 9450 4700

Southern Region (03) 9536 7777 and
1800 627 727 (after-hours general crisis line)

WAYSS Dandenong (03) 9791 6111

WAYSS Frankston (03) 9781 4658

WAYSS housing and support services
Cranbourne (03) 5996 3333

WAYSS Narre Warren (03) 9703 0044

WAYSS Pakenham (03) 5945 3200

Western Metro (03) 9689 9588

BARWON REGION

Geelong (03) 5224 2903

Hamilton (03) 5571 1778 (Tues and Wed)
or (03) 5561 1934

Portland (03) 5521 7937 (Mon and Tues)
or (03) 5561 1934

Warrnambool (03) 5561 1934 (Mon–Fri)

GIPPSLAND REGION

Bairnsdale (03) 5152 0052 or (03) 5155 8300

Lakes Entrance (03) 5152 0052

Leongatha (03) 5662 4502 or 1800 221 200 (free call)

Morwell (03) 5120 2000

Warragul (03) 5120 2000

GRAMPIANS REGION

Ararat (03) 5352 6200

Ballarat (03) 5333 3666

Horsham (03) 5362 1200

Stawell (03) 5358 7400

HUME REGION

Broadford (03) 5784 5555

Shepparton (03) 5823 3200
or (03) 5821 9458

Wangaratta (03) 5722 1100

Wodonga (02) 6022 8888

LODDON MALLEE REGION

Bendigo (03) 5443 4945
or 1800 884 038

Mildura (03) 5021 2130

Swan Hill (03) 5033 1899

APPENDIX 2

Transitional Housing Managers (THMs) in Victoria

Transitional housing managers are located across Victoria. They are listed here by organisation and by region.

ORGANISATION

Centacare Ballarat www.centacareballarat.org.au
 Community Housing Ltd www.chl.org.au
 Hanover Welfare Services www.hanover.org.au
 Haven www.lmhs.com.au
 HomeGround Services www.homeground.org.au
 North East Housing Services www.nehs.org.au
 Red Shield Housing Victoria www.salvationarmy.org.au
 SASHS Barwon South West www.salvationarmy.org.au
 SASHS Western www.salvationarmy.org.au
 St Vincent de Paul www.vinnies.org.au/housing-services-vic
 Uniting Care www.ucare.org.au
 WAYSS Ltd www.wayssltd.org.au
 Women's Housing Ltd www.womenshousing.com.au
 Yarra Community Housing www.ych.org.au

BY REGION

EASTERN METRO

Anchor Inc. (03) 9760 6400 79 John St Lilydale 3140
 Community Housing (Victoria) Ltd (03) 9856 0000 26–28 Prospect Street Box Hill 3128
 Salvation Army Eastcare (03) 9851 7800 16 Church Street Hawthorn 3122
 United Care (03) 9871 8700 1012 Little Burwood Hwy Wantirna South 3152
 Wesley Homelessness Services (03) 8870 4000 291a Maroondah Hwy Ringwood 3134

NORTHERN METRO

HomeGround Collingwood (03) 9288 9611 or 1800 048 325 (free call)
 68 Oxford Street Collingwood 3066 northernhousing@homeground.org.au
 North East Housing Services Ltd (03) 9479 0700 52–56 Mary Street Preston 3072
 Vincent Care Housing Services (03) 9304 0100 80 Wheatsheaf Rd Glenroy 3046

SOUTHERN METRO

HomeGround St Kilda (03) 9537 7711 122 Chapel Street St Kilda 3183
southernhousing@homeground.org.au
 Hanover Southern Housing and Support Service (03) 9556 5700
 1st Floor, 11 Chesterville Road Cheltenham 3192
 WAYSS Ltd (03) 9791 6111 294–300 Thomas Street, Dandenong 3175
www.wayssltd.org.au/contact_us.html
 WAYSS Ltd (03) 9770 2867 24 Fairway St, Frankston 3199

WESTERN METRO

Yarra Community Housing Metro West (03) 9689 2777
112–122 Victoria St Footscray 3011

Salvation Army Social Housing Service (Western) (03) 9312 5424
6/147 Harvester Road Sunshine 3020

BARWON REGION

Barwon Youth/ BAYSA Youth Services (03) 5221 4466 12–14 Halstead Place
Geelong West 3218

Brophy Family and Youth Services (03) 5561 8888 for people under 25 years
210 Timor St Warrnambool 3280

Haven Geelong (03) 5246 8900 6 Pakington Street Geelong West 3218

SalvoConnect Barwon housing and homeless support service 1800 825 955

SalvoConnect Colac (03) 5231 4200 100 Broomfield St Colac

SalvoConnect Geelong (03) 5223 2793 28 Bellarine St Geelong

SalvoConnect Portland (03) 5521 8134

SalvoConnect Warrnambool (03) 5561 6844 71 Kepler Street Warrnambool 3280

GIPPSLAND REGION

Community Housing (Victoria) Ltd (03) 5120 4800 12 Church Street Morwell 3840

Community Housing (Victoria) Ltd (03) 5143 2379 111 Raymond Street Sale

GippsCare Social Housing Services (03) 5662 4502

51a McCartin Street Leongatha 3953

Salvation Army Social Housing Service Gippsland (03) 5622 7008

36 Williams Street Warragul 3820

Uniting Care Gippsland (03) 5144 7777 126 Raymond Street Sale

GRAMPIANS REGION

Uniting Care Ballarat (03) 5332 1286 105 Dana Street Ballarat 3350

Stawell Health and Community Centre (03) 5382 6789 185 Baillie Street Horsham 3402

SalvoConnect Hamilton (03) 5572 5822 42 Brown Street Hamilton

HUME NORTH EAST REGION

Rural Housing Network Ltd (03) 5833 1000 43b Wyndham Street Shepparton 3630

Rural Housing Network Ltd (03) 5735 2000 12a Tallarook Street Seymour 3660

Rural Housing Network Ltd (03) 5722 8000 40–42 Rowan Street Wangaratta 3676

Rural Housing Network Ltd (02) 6055 9000 82 High Street Wodonga 3689

LODDON MALLEE REGION

Haven Bendigo (03) 5444 9000 10–16 Forest Street Bendigo 3550

Haven Mildura (03) 5018 4200 143A Lime Avenue Mildura 3500

Haven Robinvale 1300 716 776 52 Herbert Street Robinvale 3549

APPENDIX 3

Services for women with specific needs

Sometimes women struggle to keep their homes because of physical or mental health problems, or legal issues. Some specialist providers catering for specific groups such as aged people, homeless youth, people with disabilities and women are listed in this section. Also visit www.chfv.org.au/specialist-providers/ to find other services for women with specific needs.

PEOPLE OVER 55 YEARS

St Vincent de Paul Society For over 55 years, severely disadvantaged and at risk of homelessness. Independent living units throughout Victoria. Visit www.vinnies.org.au/independent-living-units-vic, or call **1300 305 330** (10 am–3 pm, Monday–Friday).

OTHER SERVICES

Other services that can help people over 55 years are:

Abbeyfield Society. Visit www.abbeyfield.org.au

Jim Fuller Community House Group (03) 9735 5264 or email Ratec1@iprimus.com.au

Multicultural Aged Care Services. Visit www.missionaustralia.com.au

Ringwood Area Lions Aged Care Inc. Visit www.ralac.org.au

Sirovilla Elderly Peoples' Homes Inc. Visit www.sirovilla.org.au

Wintringham. Visit www.wintringham.org.au

PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

Services that support people with disabilities who are homeless or at risk of being homeless are listed below.

Edith Pardy House Albert Park (03) 8640 5681 (9 am–5 pm, Monday–Friday)

Long-term housing and rehabilitation for 20–40 years experiencing psychiatric and emotional issues.

Housing Choices Australia 1300 312 737 (free call) www.hcau.org.au

For people with disabilities and low incomes. Eligibility criteria and income limits from www.housingchoices.org.au/data/Publications/HIR_brochure_2012.pdf

Housing Information and Referral (HIR) Wodonga (02) 6055 9000,

Wangaratta (03) 5722 8000, **Shepparton** (03) 5833 1000, **Seymour** (03) 5735 2000

www.ruralhousing.com.au/homeless_housing_information.html Tenancy advice and assistance services include information about access to public housing, rooming houses, cooperatives, community housing, housing associations and private rental.

Shared Supported Accommodation Program (Department of Human Services) disability.services@dhs.vic.gov.au www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/housing-and-accommodation/shared-supported-accommodation Share with five other people with disabilities. Includes household management, general self-care, personal hygiene and community participation.

OTHER SERVICES

Other services for people with a disability include:

Active Property Services Management Ltd. Visit www.activeproperty.com.au

Jubilee Housing (03) 9899 4356

Northern Support Services (03) 9486 5077, email nss@nss.org.au or visit www.nss.org.au

The Way Community (03) 9417 4898 or email thewaycommunity@gmail.com

MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Migrants and refugees can get help with housing from Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) or from other services listed below.

LOCAL MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRES (MRCs)

- **MRC North West Region** (03) 9367 6044, email mrcnw@mrcnorthwest.org.au or visit www.mrcnorthwest.org.au
- **Phoenix Westgate Migrant Centre** (03) 9391 3355, email info@wmrc.gov.au or visit www.wmrc.org.au
- **South Migrant & Refugee Centre** (03) 9706 8933 (Dandenong) / (03) 9705 6966 (Narre Warren) / (03) 8574 4600 (Oakleigh) or visit www.smrc.org.au
- **Spectrum Immigration Services** (03) 9470 2311 or email sis@spectrumvic.org.au
- **Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre** (03) 9301 0400 (Dallas office) / (03) 9496 0200 (Preston) / (03) 9300 8600 (Sunshine) / (03) 9301 7400 (Broadmeadows) or visit www.spectrumvic.org.au

OTHER MIGRANT SERVICES

Hotham Mission Asylum Seeker Project (03) 9326 8343, email asp@hothammission.org.au or visit www.hothammission.org.au Offers help including housing to asylum seekers in the community

Housing Services Migrant Information Centre (MIC) Eastern Melbourne (03) 9285 4888, email mic@miceastmelb.com.au or visit www.miceastmelb.com.au Operates Private Rental Housing Assistance Program.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Resources for Indigenous people are listed below.

Elisabeth Hoffman House 1800 796 112 (free call, 24 hours) or (03) 9482 5744 (9 am–5 pm, Monday–Friday), or visit www.ehhaws.org.au Indigenous women's secure refuge.

Statewide THM Aboriginal Housing Victoria Ltd (03) 9403 2100 or 1300 724 882 (9 am–5 pm, Monday–Friday), visit www.ahvic.org.au or email info@ahvic.org.au

Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op (03) 5277 0044

YOUNG PEOPLE

Some services for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are listed below.

Centrelink Community Engagement Officers (CCEOs) (03) 9611 2411
12.30 pm–4 pm Monday and Thursday or visit www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/community-engagement-officers. For under 25 years, co-located at Melbourne City Mission's Frontyard Service. Help young people understand, claim and keep their income support payments; referrals to Centrelink specialist services and programs and other organisations.

Good Shepherd Youth & Family Services www.goodshepvic.org.au/housing/

- **Support and Housing for Young People (SHYP)** For 16–24 years, City of Yarra and northern suburbs. Call the access point **Homeground's Initial Assessment and Planning service** at 1800 048 325 or email Collingwood@goodshepvic.org.au
- **St Albans Youth Housing (StAYH)** For 15-25 years, Brimbank City Council area. Call the access point **Salvation Army Supported Housing Service (03) 9312 5422** or email stalbans@goodshepvic.org.au

Homeground Housing Services www.homeground.org.au

- **Collingwood** Free call 1800 048 325 / (03) 9288 9611 or email northernhousing@homeground.org.au
- **St Kilda (03) 9537 7711** or email southernhousing@homeground.org.au
- **Prahran (03) 9932 8368**
- **City (03) 8359 0200**

Melbourne City Mission www.melbournecitymission.org.au

- **Frontyard Youth Services** For 16–25 years, Melbourne CBD, co-located with Centrelink (03) 9611 2411 or email fyreception@mcm.org.au. Open 10 am–8 pm Monday–Friday, 10 am–6 pm Saturday, Sunday and public holidays.
- **Melbourne Youth Support Service (MYSS)** For 16–24 years. Free call (03) 9614 3688 (9 am–8 pm Monday–Friday, and 10 am–6 pm Saturday, Sunday and public holidays) or email myss@mcm.org.au
- **Young Women's Crisis Service** For young women aged 16–24 including those with children (03) 8486 2135 8 am–8 pm, 7 days a week.

Time For Youth (03) 5246 7500 (Geelong office) / (03) 5232 5180 (Colac office), email info@timeforyouth.org or visit www.timeforyouth.com.au For 10–25 years, Barwon region

Youth in Crisis (03) 8870 4000 or email homelessness@wesley.org.au or visit www.wesley.org.au/ourservices/crisishomelessnessandcounselling/youthincrisis.html For under 25 years in eastern regions of Melbourne.

Youth Support & Advocacy Service (YSASline) Free call 1800 014 446 (24 hours) or visit www.ysas.org.au Alcohol and drug-related services Victoria-wide

Youth Service Seeker youth.serviceseeker.com.au Online search service for youth support, services and health practitioners by keyword and location.

This glossary gives brief overviews of terms referred to in the booklet. A more detailed glossary is available online at www.wire.org.au A list of abbreviations used in this booklet is given below the glossary.

Asset limit to be eligible for public housing—varies depending on the segment a person is applying under.

Assets—a person's assets could include money in the bank, shares, mobile homes, property and businesses. Assets do not include personal belongings, cars or furniture.

Chronic or recurring homelessness—episodes of 6 months or longer, or multiple episodes over a 12 month period or more.

Common Equity Rental Cooperatives—residences where members live in properties leased from the registered housing association Common Equity Housing Ltd.

Family violence intervention order—issued by a magistrate to protect family members from violence. The order may say that the respondent is excluded from their home. If the respondent breaks the conditions of a family violence intervention order or safety notice, they can be arrested by police and may be fined or imprisoned. For more information, view the family violence intervention orders page on the Legal Aid Victoria website (*Source as for 'family violence', below*).

Family violence safety notice—has conditions similar to a family violence intervention order, and can be issued by police if the court is closed. A safety notice is also an application by police for a magistrate to issue an intervention order. It stays in effect until the magistrate decides whether to issue an order. For more information, view the family violence safety notices page on the Legal Aid Victoria website. (*Source as for 'Family violence', below*).

Family violence—includes physical, sexual, economic, emotional and psychological abuse. Family violence may also include threatening or controlling behaviour, or that which causes children to witness violence (or the effects of it) committed by one family member against another. (*Source* www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing-and-accommodation/renting/leases-and-notices/changing-the-lease-in-violent-situations#definitions)

Homelessness Support Program—formerly known as the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). It funds organisations that assist homeless people and women and children escaping family violence.

Housing associations—manage and expand new housing and manage rental housing. Housing associations own and manage stand-alone properties, rooming houses, accommodation with onsite support, medium-density housing and flats.

Housing cooperatives—there are two types of housing cooperatives—Common Equity Rental Cooperatives and Rental Housing Cooperatives. Both housing cooperatives are made up of members.

Housing Establishment Fund (HEF)—funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) to fund agencies to help eligible clients access and/or maintain private rental housing, or to access emergency short-term accommodation. The HEF also assists with costs of relocation and establishing housing.

Housing providers—primarily manage long-term and short-term rental housing. Services include short-term housing crisis support, housing information and referral services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, long-term support to people with complex needs and long histories of homelessness, and advocacy on behalf of people living in public and social housing to help them successfully establish and sustain their tenancies.

Income limits to be eligible for public housing—weekly income limits that vary according to the segment a person is applying under, whether they are a single person or a couple, and/or number of dependent children and their ages.

Insecurity of tenure—where tenants are forced to move repeatedly as housing becomes more unaffordable or no longer available.

Office of Housing—state government department responsible for allocating public housing and assessing public housing applications.

Precarious housing—inadequate housing or a lack of housing conditions required for good health. Housing can lack services such as heating and ventilation, and the tenant may have restricted control of the space. Housing may be located in a dangerous area, or it may be unaffordable. Tenure may not be secure so the tenant can be forced to move. An individual's housing is classified as precarious if they have experienced more than one of these factors concurrently.

Private rental—renting a property through a real estate agent or a landlord who requires a lease to be signed and bond registered with the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority. It does not include leases entered into through a Transitional Housing Manager or Office of Housing.

Rental Housing Cooperatives—registered Housing Providers with tenant-managed, long-term housing for members on low incomes. These properties are owned by the Director of Housing and leased to tenant groups under the Housing Provider Framework Lease and Property Management Agreement.

Special housing needs—for various health, personal or family reasons, a person's current housing is unsuitable.

Supported housing—for people who are living in unsuitable housing and who have high support needs, or the accommodation requires major modifications for disability.

Unaffordable housing—where a low-income household's rent or mortgage repayments and rates are more than 30% of gross income.

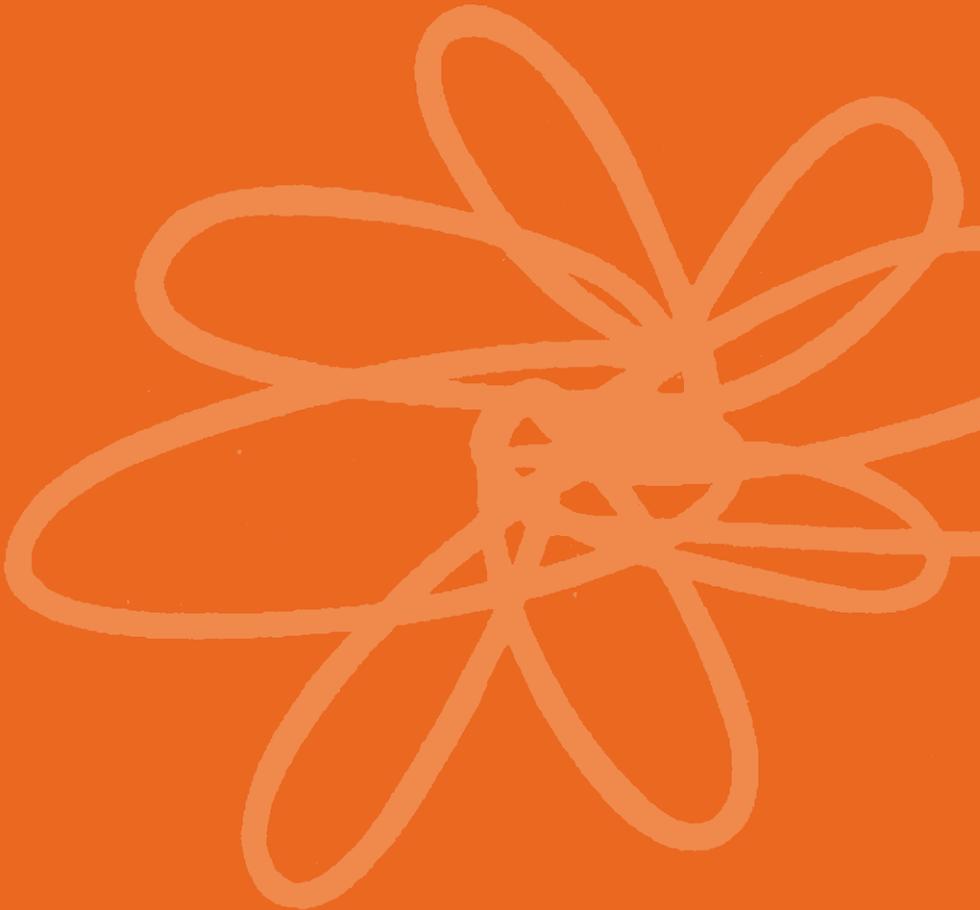
Unsuitable housing—classified as being in poor condition, poorly located or overcrowded.

ABBREVIATIONS

CCEO	Centrelink Community Engagement Officer	MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
DHS	Department of Human Services	MYSS	Melbourne Youth Support Service
FIO	Final Intervention Order	NAHA	National Affordable Housing Agreement
HAS	Homeless Advocacy Services	SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
HEF	Housing Establishment Fund	SHASP	Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program
HIR	Housing Information and Referral	THM	Transitional housing manager
MIC	Migrant Information Centre	VCAT	Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

A list of references and further reading is available online at www.wire.org.au



Helping women
make the right
connections

**Women's
Information**

Women's Information
and Referral Exchange Inc.
Reg. No. A122
ABN 98 957 157 895

Call WIRE 1300 134 130

for the cost of a local call (Telephone Interpreter
Service available)

**Drop by Women's Information Centre,
372 Spencer Street, West Melbourne**

Email inforequests@wire.org.au

Visit or chat online at www.wire.org.au

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