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*Rooming houses:
An Operators' Guide*
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“
Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) has developed this guide to help you understand the laws that apply to rooming houses
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This guide has been written as an indication of the legislative requirements faced in your role as a rooming house operator and to act as a reference point for further information. This guide has been developed by Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) in consultation with:

- Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD)
- Building Commission
- Registered Accommodation Association of Victoria (RAAV)
- Inner Urban Rooming House Group (IURHG)
- Tenants' Union of Victoria (TUV)
- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)
- Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA).

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Section 1: *What is a rooming house?*

“
It is possible that you are a rooming house operator without realising; for example, if you rent out one or more rooms in your own house to four or more people.
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Under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* a rooming house is a building where:

- One or more rooms is available for rent
- The total number of people who may occupy those rooms is four or more
- Residents rent a room and may share communal facilities such as bathrooms and toilets
- Different rental agreements can exist for different residents.

It is possible that you are a rooming house operator without realising it; for example, if you rent out one or more rooms in your own house to four or more people.

In the context of this guide, a ‘rooming house operator’ can be:

- an owner of a rooming house, (including a person who has leased a building and is operating it as a rooming house)
- a manager employed by an owner.

I am a rooming house operator ...what does that mean?

As a rooming house operator, you will need to know about a range of laws covering property management, building maintenance, essential safety measures and systems, and resident management.

Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) has developed this guide to help you understand the laws that apply to rooming houses.

The guide highlights responsibilities as a rooming house operator and how to comply with the law, however this guide is not exhaustive or cover every situation. Penalties for non-compliance may apply.

The guide is not a legal document, does not provide professional building advice or professional legal advice, nor is it a substitute for professional building advice or professional legal advice.

The guide does not summarise all of the legislation listed and does not provide a complete list of all your requirements and obligations as a rooming house operator.

Legal classifications of rooming houses

A rooming house can fall into two categories, a small rooming house (Class 1b) or a large rooming house (Class 3). It is important that you work out the right category for your rooming house. While all rooming houses are covered by the legislation and regulations below, they may be applied differently depending on the category your building is in.

Rooming House	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A building where one or more rooms are available for rent to at least four or more people • a building which the Minister for Housing has declared to be a rooming house <p>And where residents rent a room and share communal facilities</p>	<p>All Rooming Houses are covered by the following:</p> <p><i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i></p> <p>Building Code of Australia</p> <p><i>Building Act 1993</i></p> <p>Building Regulations 2006</p> <p><i>Metropolitan Fire Brigades Act 1958</i></p> <p><i>Country Fire Authority Act 1958</i></p> <p>Health (Prescribed Accommodation) Regulations 2001</p>
Small Rooming House - Class 1b (BCA)	Large Rooming House - Class 3 (BCA)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 12 unrelated residents • A total floor area of not more than 300m² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 or more unrelated residents • A total floor area greater than 300m²
<p>Please refer to each Act, regulation or code for further detail. These are available online at www.legislation.vic.gov.au</p>	



Rooming houses must be registered with your local council. Contact details for your local council can be found in your local telephone directory, at your local library or at www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au.





It is your responsibility to ensure there is no danger to your resident's life or the safety of anyone using the building, including yourself.



House Essentials

Safety should be your priority in the daily running of the rooming house. Residents have the right to be protected, and it is your responsibility to ensure there is no danger to their life or the safety of anyone using the building, including yourself.

Under the Health (Prescribed Accommodation) Regulations 2001, your rooming house must have:

- at least one toilet, one bath/shower and one wash basin for every 10 people
- continuous and adequate supply of hot and cold water
- rooms and communal areas in a clean condition and good working order.

Under the Building Regulations, you must also install working hard wired smoke alarms throughout the premises. For further information about smoke alarm requirements, visit the Building Commission website at www.buildingcommission.com.au

There are slightly different rules for how much floor space is required per person and per room for stays over and under 32 days, as outlined in the table below.

To make your rooming house a safer and more pleasant place to live, also consider:

- a minimum of two power outlets
- adequate ventilation and light
- heating or appropriate allowances for portable heating
- window coverings to keep light out and provide privacy
- walls in a reasonable condition without major holes, cracking, staining, rips or graffiti.

For stays of 31 days or less	For stays 32 days or more
One person per room at least 7.5m ²	One person per room at least 7m ²
Two people per room at least 7.5m ²	Two people per room at least 12m ²
Three people per room at least 10m ²	For more than two people - 12m ² and an additional 4m ² of floor space for each additional person
More than three people - 10m ² and an additional 2m ² for each person	

Section 2: Building safety

“As a rooming house operator it is your job to ensure you have adequate and well maintained hard wired smoke alarms or a smoke detection system to protect your residents.”

Keeping your building safe

Your responsibilities for fire and building safety need to be taken seriously. The law requires you to install, operate and maintain in good working order essential fire and building safety features, services and equipment.

The maintenance of essential safety measures is set out in Part 12 of the Building Regulations 2006, are listed on the Occupancy Certificate, or on any building order made by a Municipal Building Surveyor (MBS) or Private Building Surveyor (PBS). You must maintain essential safety systems and services for an existing building. The Building Regulations 2006, regulation 1208 requires that you keep documentation, records of maintenance and fill in annual safety measures reports.

You should give particular attention to:

- your fire prevention measures
- good ventilation including air quality and flow
- exits and pathways that are clear, clean and accessible
- utilities and hygiene services
- emergency services and equipment.

The MBS may from time to time inspect and audit your building. As part of the audit, the MBS can review the safety risks. As part of the review the MBS may ask for additional essential safety measures to be installed.

“An occupancy certificate will list the essential safety measures to be maintained and how often. This needs to be displayed near the main entry to your rooming house.”

FIRE SAFETY

As a rooming house operator, it is your job to ensure you have adequate and well maintained hard wired smoke alarms or a smoke detection system to protect your residents.

Regulation 710 of the Building Regulations 2006 requires Class 3 rooming houses to have an automatic fire sprinkler system installed, unless you are exempt. This regulation only applies to buildings constructed (or for which a building permit was issued) **before** 1 July 2003. Your local council can assist in auditing your rooming house to determine if you require a sprinkler system

Smoke alarms must be installed and sprinklers need be installed where required. Penalties apply if you do not have smoke alarms or sprinklers if required.

INSPECTIONS AND REPAIRS

Building inspections are a fact of life for a rooming house operator. These inspections can cover building safety or the operation and maintenance of fire protection measures.

A building inspection may be carried out in response to a complaint or as part of a regular review by the local council, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Country Fire Authority or certain other authorities.

A local council Municipal Building Surveyor (MBS) will be looking at the rooming house's:

- general state of repair
- ventilation
- fire hazards
- prominent display of the list of essential fire and safety measures
- pest control
- fire prevention
- emergency lighting and exits; and
- other matters that may be considered a danger to the life, safety, health or amenity of any person using the building.

Metropolitan Fire Brigade fire prevention officers will be looking at the prominent display of the list of essential fire and safety measures, fire hazards, fire prevention, emergency lighting and exits.

Part 12 of the Building Regulations 2006 refers to essential safety measures. An indicative list of essential safety measures can be found on the Building Commission website at www.buildingcommission.com.au

Under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*, you must be prepared to fix urgent repairs immediately, such as:

- blocked or broken toilets
- roof leaks
- electrical faults
- flood, storm or fire damage
- water services.

In order to make a building safe, the MBS may issue you a building notice or building order under the *Building Act 1993*. Following an inspection of the building, the MBS can issue a Building Notice if they are of the opinion that it does not comply with the building regulations.

Building Notices require you to explain why the requested work on the building should not be done, or the building should not be evacuated. You will be required to make this explanation within a specified period.

Building Orders can be issued independently of a building notice or can be issued after the specified period in which you can respond to a Building Notice has elapsed. Before issuing a building order, the MBS must consider your response to the Building Notice. The building order will detail the building work you must undertake or the timeframe for the evacuation of a building. A breach of a building order is an offence under the *Building Act 1993* and you may be fined. If the MBS believes your rooming house is a safety risk, the MBS may issue an Emergency Order under the *Building Act 1993*.

Emergency Orders may require that you carry out renovations to make your rooming house safe or evacuate the building. In this instance, the MBS can enter to inspect without notice or a search warrant. An emergency order will be issued if the condition of the property means that there is a direct danger to life or property. Costs can be recovered from you if the council exercises its power to undertake works.



For further advice about Building Notices, Building Orders, or Emergency Orders, please contact the Building Commission

T. 1 300 815 127

W. www.buildingcommission.com.au



Section 3: Staying healthy and hygienic

“Maintaining a healthy level of hygiene is essential in running a rooming house. Health and hygiene standards are set out in the Health Act 1958 and Health (Prescribed Accommodation) Regulations 2001. You should refer to these laws for further information.”

It is important to keep all rooms, bathrooms, kitchens and laundries in good working order. Whenever a resident vacates a room, you must clean the room and change the linen.

If you provide bed linen with the accommodation, you must change the linen weekly.

Residents have the right to a clean living environment, which means you must:

- maintain all bedrooms, toilets, bathrooms, laundries, kitchens, living rooms and any common areas in good working order, and in a clean, sanitary and hygienic condition
- provide a continuous and adequate supply of hot water to all bathing, laundry and kitchen facilities
- ensure water intended for drinking is fit for human consumption
- provide regular rubbish collection
- ensure that all sewage and water is discharged to a sewerage system or a septic tank system
- provide sufficient vermin-proof bins and ensure they are emptied regularly.

INSPECTIONS

Like the building inspections mentioned under 'Keeping your building safe', health and hygiene inspections are a fact of life for you as a rooming house operator. An inspection may occur in response to a complaint or as part of the annual inspection calendar by the local council.

Local council health officers and/or authorised health department officers will be looking at the register of residents, number of bathrooms, general cleanliness, rubbish collection, the size of rooms, ventilation, pest control, hot and cold water, general state of repair and fire hazards.

If an inspection results in any written orders or notices to carry out work, these will be posted by mail to, or left at, the rooming house.

URGENT REPAIRS

An urgent repair needs to be carried out if damage to rooming house fixtures, communal equipment or communal furniture puts residents and workers in immediate danger. You must arrange repairs immediately after a resident notifies you of the damage or breakdown.

Under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* a resident can go ahead and organise urgent repairs costing up to \$1,000 if you do not organise the repairs.

You will have 14 days to pay the bill after receiving the notice of the cost of repairs.

VCAT will consider a resident's urgent repair application within two days if:

- you, as the operator, refuse to do the work
- the resident cannot pay for the repair
- or the cost will be greater than \$1,000.

Section 4: Operator rights

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It is not only residents who have rights. As an operator, you also have certain rights about how you run your rooming house.
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RIGHT TO ENTER A RESIDENT'S ROOM

With 24 Hours Notice

If you need to enter a resident's room, the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* requires you to give them written notice 24 hours in advance between 8am and 6pm.

Entry may be because:

- the existing resident has given notice to vacate the rooming house, and you wish to show the room to possible new residents
- a prospective buyer or lender needs to view the property if it is being sold
- you need to do something the law requires a rooming house owner to do
- you reasonably believe that the resident has not fulfilled their obligations as a resident.

Without Notice

In certain circumstances you can enter a resident's room without 24 hours notice, but you must not stay in the room longer than necessary.

You may enter a resident's room without notice if:

- the resident gives you consent for to enter his or her room
- there is an emergency situation and entry to the room will save life or valuable property
- you need to provide a service to the resident (please note that you can only enter to provide a service during the times specified in the house rules)

You are allowed to inspect a resident's room once every four weeks after giving the resident written notice.



If you need to enter a resident's room you are required to give them written notice 24 hours in advance under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997



Section 5: Managing a rooming house



You must take reasonable care of any other belongings left behind. You must also take reasonable steps to notify a former resident of when and where he or she can collect those belongings from.



WHAT DO I DO IF THE RESIDENT LEAVES BELONGINGS BEHIND?

You can remove and dispose of the belongings a resident leaves behind after they vacate the room, but only if those belongings are of no value or are perishable or dangerous. If it would cost you more than the value of the belongings to remove, store or sell the belongings, then you may also dispose of them. You must take reasonable care of any other belongings left behind. You must also take reasonable steps to notify a former resident of when and where he or she can collect those belongings. If 28 days have passed since the resident left his or her belongings behind, you can sell those belongings at an auction. At least 14 days before the actual auction takes place, you must place an advertisement of the forthcoming auction in a widely circulated Victorian newspaper.

The rules for documents left behind are slightly different. You must keep the documents for 90 days before you dispose of them and the resident must pay for the cost of storing them when they claim the documents under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*.

You can keep any money owing to you from the storage and sale but the remainder goes to Unclaimed Monies. For further information about your responsibilities with Unclaimed Monies, please contact the State Revenue Office on 13 21 61.

It is a good idea to check if the resident has a support worker or family member who could help you decide what to do with the goods.

BREACH OF DUTY

When a resident breaches a duty, some of which are listed below, you can issue a written notice to that resident.

Under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* residents' duties include:

- using the room for residential purposes only
- not using the room for illegal activities
- paying the rent on time
- not interfering with the peace and quiet of other residents
- keeping their room clean and clear of safety hazards
- not installing fixtures without your written consent
- notifying you of any damage caused to the rooming house and compensating you for it
- not keeping a pet without your consent
- giving you a key to their room
- observing house rules.

A resident has three days to remedy a breach of duty from when they receive notice of the breach.



Consumer Affairs Victoria can inspect goods left behind, make a formal assessment and advise you what to do with the goods. Call 1300 55 81 81 to arrange an inspection.



Managing a rooming house... what are my obligations?

The following information is drawn from legislation. Please refer to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*, Health (Prescribed Accommodation) Regulations 2001 and Building Regulations 2006 for further information.

Register with the council If you have four or more residents, you must register your rooming house with the local council.

Maintain fire and safety measures and systems Conduct an annual review of your fire and safety measures to ensure the equipment is working properly and that you maintain the equipment in accordance with any MBS order you may have received.

Occupancy certificate Your occupancy certificate will list the essential safety measures that will be required to be maintained and how often. This needs to be displayed near the main entry to your rooming house.

Authority to enter your premises In order to enter your rooming house an MBS, fire brigade officer or health officer must have an identity card with a photo, their name and position, and must hold an authority to enter the building.

Occupancy register You must keep a register showing the names of all residents, including their arrival and departure dates.

House rules These need to be fair and applied equally to all residents. You must also display the rules clearly for all residents to see. If you change any of the rules, you need to notify all residents of the change in writing seven days beforehand.

Your contact details Your residents need to have a 24-hour contact phone number for urgent notifications or immediate safety threats. You will also need to give residents your postal address and notify them of any changes in writing within seven days.

Incident register Any disputes you may have with residents and any disputes between residents must be recorded in an incident register. This is particularly helpful if any legal proceedings or insurance claims are brought against you or your residents.

Rent payments If your residents pay their rent weekly, you cannot ask for more than 14 days rent in advance.

Rent increases You can only increase the rent every six months. To do so, you need to give the resident 60 days notice that you are going to increase the rent. If the resident believes that the rent is too high they can ask CAV to review the rent increase. After receiving the CAV report, the resident has 30 days if they wish to apply to VCAT to declare the rent increase excessive.

Rent register You must keep rental receipt records for 12 months and give a receipt to the resident when that resident pays their rent in person, or within five days if the resident requests it.

Bonds You are not required to charge a bond but you may choose to. If you choose to do so, it cannot be more than 14 days rent and can only be requested when a resident moves in. The bond is paid to the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority (RTBA) and includes a condition report signed by you and the resident. RTBA contact details can be found on page 22.

Information You need to give each resident a copy of the Consumer Affairs Victoria booklet *Rooming houses: A guide for residents, owners and managers* when they move in.

As the rooming house operator, you must also ensure residents have:

- minimal disruptions due to maintenance or repair work
- 24-hour access to their room and bathroom facilities and reasonable access to other facilities such as the laundry as well as kitchen
- quiet enjoyment of their room and the facilities
- reasonable security of property in their room
- a summary of the resident's rights and duties displayed in their room
- notices issued when required under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*.



*You are required to give each resident a copy of the Consumer Affairs Victoria booklet **Rooming houses: A guide for residents, owners and managers** when they move in.*



I need to send a notice to a resident ...what do I do?

To communicate officially with a resident and to fulfil your obligations under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*, you may be required to send a notice. The correct forms provided by Consumer Affairs Victoria can be found at www.consumer.vic.gov.au

You must use a notice to:

- detail a rent increase
- detail a change to your contact details
- enter a resident's room
- notify a change to the house rules
- notify a resident of a breach of a resident's duty
- ask a resident to leave immediately due to violent behaviour
- ask a resident to vacate due to damage, danger or disruption
- ask a resident to vacate within two days if the resident owes more than seven days rent, or if the resident has breached the same duty three times, or is using his or her room for illegal purposes, or has not complied with a VCAT order
- ask a resident to vacate with 28 days notice because the rooming house mortgagee gains possession of the house
- ask a resident to vacate due to the sale, demolition or reconstruction of the house
- ask the resident to vacate in 120 days with no reason given.

When sending a notice you should remember to:

- use the correct forms provided by CAV found at www.consumer.vic.gov.au or call 1300 55 81 81 for further information
- complete all sections of the forms correctly as VCAT can adjourn a hearing if the forms are not completed correctly
- send the notice to a resident via registered post so that you have proof of delivery
- add extra time to notice periods to take into account postage time
- keep accurate resident records such as when the resident commenced their residency, any costs incurred, rents overdue or when incidents occur or complaints are made.

SERVING A NOTICE

You can serve a notice either by hand or by post. Using registered post will provide proof of when and where the notice was sent.

Type of notice	Hand delivery allow	Postal service allow (working days)
Immediate	Immediate	5 days
2 day notice	4 days	6 days
28 day notice	30 days	34 days
60 day notice	62 days	66 days
120 day notice	122 days	126 days

RIGHT TO ASK A RESIDENT TO LEAVE

There are a number of different rules for asking a resident to vacate a room. These rules are summarised in the table below. For further details, please refer to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*.

Notice to vacate	2 days	<p>You have the right to issue a two day notice to vacate when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the resident owes at least seven days' rent the room is being used for illegal purposes the resident fails to comply with a VCAT order a resident has broken orders under the <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i>.
Notice to vacate – due to maintenance or construction work	60 days	<p>You have the right to issue a 60 day notice to vacate when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> you have received all building/planning permits you require an empty room to complete the works there is not an equivalent room available to provide the resident.
Notice to vacate without reason	120 days	<p>A notice to vacate with no reason can be issued with at least 120 days' notice.</p>
If a resident vacates without notice		<p>If a resident vacates without notice you have the right to charge two days rent or charge for rent until a new resident occupies the room, whichever is the lower amount.</p>
Notice to leave immediately – violence	Immediately	<p>If you have reasonable grounds to believe that a resident or their visitor has acted violently or is putting people's safety in danger, you can issue a notice to leave immediately. The notice should be given as soon as it is safe to do so. The notice will effectively ban the resident from the rooming house for two days. The resident can return after two days if you have not made an application for a VCAT hearing.</p>
Notice to vacate immediately – damage, danger, disturbance caused by the resident	Immediately	<p>You can give an immediate notice to vacate to a resident or their visitors if either cause:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> damage to the house intentionally or recklessly danger to a person or property, and/or serious disturbance to the peace and quiet of other residents. <p>You will need to allow at least two clear business days if serving the notice by mail.</p>

Section 6: *Dispute resolution*



With many different personalities under one roof, there may be times when you are called upon to reduce residents' stress and mediate disputes.



How should I handle a dispute with a resident?

As a rooming house operator, you are required under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* to ensure that residents have a peaceful and private living environment and are allowed peace and quiet within the rooming house.

Ideally, you and the resident should resolve problems by discussing them in a logical way and coming to an agreement. To prevent any future problems, you should record this agreement in writing.

Keep a record of all resident complaints. This will assist you if there are complaints in the future.

HOW CAN I NEGOTIATE EFFECTIVELY?

The best start to the negotiation process is for you to treat the resident with respect and dignity. Treat the resident in the way that you would like to be treated.

1. Start by making a specific time to discuss the complaint so both you and the resident can prepare your thoughts.
2. Listen to the resident's problem and do not interrupt.
3. Explain your understanding of the problem or ask further questions if you do not understand.

4. Set out your point of view and suggestions for how you can both deal with the problem.
5. Explain the reasons why you think this approach will work.
6. Ask the resident if they understand your suggestions.
7. If the resident does not agree, ask the resident for a suggestion for compromise.
8. When an agreement is reached, write it down, give a copy to the resident, and keep a copy on file.

If you and the resident cannot reach an agreement, ask the resident if they would accept help from the **Tenants' Union of Victoria (9416 2577)**. The TUV will act on behalf of the resident and will assist the resident in reaching an agreement with you.

If the problem cannot be solved through discussion or mediation, VCAT may be able to assist you.

USING THE VICTORIAN CIVIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL (VCAT)

VCAT has a Residential Tenancies List for hearing disputes between rooming house operators and residents.

Application forms are available from VCAT (www.vcat.vic.gov.au) and Consumer Affairs Victoria.

Your application to VCAT should include:

- a completed and signed application form
- payment for lodging an application (except for bond claims)
- copies of all notices that have been given or sent
- copies of any other documents which are important for the claim such as receipts, letters, photographs, statutory declarations and reports from the Director of Consumer Affairs.

VCAT will inform you and the resident of the date, time and place for the hearing. You can contact VCAT to seek advice on an adjournment or rehearing.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM VCAT?

VCAT hearings are open to the public so you can visit prior to your hearing if you want to familiarise yourself with the process. VCAT hearings take place in country Victoria as well as in the city and suburbs.

It is important to be well prepared for the hearing. The VCAT Member will hear and consider all the evidence presented from both sides. This might include listening to evidence from witnesses or looking at photographs and other documents brought to the hearing by you or the resident.

In exceptional circumstances, VCAT may order one side to pay the other side's costs.

VCAT's decisions are made on the day of the hearing and must be obeyed by both parties in the same way as a court order.

VCAT will also consider urgent hearings in cases of extreme hardship. You must include a letter outlining the reasons why you require an urgent hearing when you send your application to VCAT.



If you need an interpreter, you should tell VCAT at the time you make your application. Interpreters are available for the parties involved in the dispute, including witnesses.



How can I reduce stress and disputes between residents?

With many personalities under one roof, there may be times when you are called upon to reduce residents' stress and mediate disputes.

You can provide support to your residents by:

- initiating and supporting contact between the residents and crisis, welfare, social work and health support services to assist the residents in building a support network
- providing a safe, healthy and hygienic building for them to live in
- establishing and maintaining clear and consistent house rules.
- creating a noticeboard in a communal area to display relevant support services information
- contacting relevant services (such as the **Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria, 9603 8370**) and asking if they can provide any dispute settlement resources
- developing a 'new resident pack' with information about your local area and the services available
- developing a contact list of local support and welfare agencies that your residents can refer to, or providing residents with a copy of the following contact information.

There is a range of support services available to assist in managing a rooming house effectively listed overleaf.

Section 7:

Support services for rooming house residents

DEFINITIONS

ABI	Acquired Brain Injury
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CSHC	Commonwealth Seniors Health Card
DVA	Department of Veterans' Affairs
HCC	Health Care Card
OoH	Office of Housing
PCC	Pensioner Concession Card
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
THM	Transitional Housing Management

Support Type	Description	Helpful for	Contact
HOUSING			
Office of Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance for those requiring crisis housing and transitional housing support Bond Loan Scheme Public rental housing for eligible residents of Victoria 	People on a low income who are experiencing housing stress.	Freecall 1800 993 093 www.dhs.vic.gov.au/housing
HEALTH (General)			
Allied Health Outreach Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physiotherapy, podiatry, nutrition, occupational therapy and Drop-in Clinic Billabong BBQ for ATSI clients Provides outreach services directly to rooming house residents throughout the City of Yarra.	Residents of rooming houses, ATSI and homeless people.	9411 3555 Ask for: Allied Health Outreach Team
Nurse on Call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free telephone nursing information service 	All Victorians	1300 606 024
Royal District Nursing Service Homeless Persons Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community health nursing Nurses are based at Community Health Services and other support agencies.	Homeless people and rooming house residents.	1300 33 44 55
Royal District Nursing Service Innovative Health Services for Homeless Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health screening, education and promotion Food packs, personal hygiene, some clothing Referral to non-health services 	Young people who are homeless or at risk, ATSI, CALD and those with a dual disability.	9784 8160
DENTAL			
Dental services	Dental clinics and mobile dental services	People who cannot obtain private dental treatment.	Contact 1300 360 054 for closest public dental clinic. Emergency Dental 9341 1000 or 1800 833 039

Support Type	Description	Helpful for	Contact
Outreach Dentists	Assessment, treatment, referral to dental hospital Provides free dental service every second Friday.	People who are homeless or who live in unstable accommodation, including rooming houses.	Located at Inner South Community Health Service SouthPort Centre 9690 9144 Prahan Centre 9525 1300 St Kilda Centre 9534 8166
Ozanam Community Centre	Denture clinic and dentist. Available two days per week located at Crisis Accommodation Service.	People who are homeless.	179 Flemington Rd North Melbourne 9329 5100
FOOD AND NUTRITION			
Café Meals Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four local cafes provide nutritious meals for people at risk of social isolation and poor nutrition Meals valued at \$10 but clients charged \$2 Limit of 1 meal per day Market buses take residents to local market and share tips on how to buy, store and prepare fresh food 	Homeless people and those who cannot cook for themselves.	Health Time in Kew provides a market bus, as does NYCHS. Through Doutta Galla Community Health 8327 1700 Ask for: CNP dietitian
Home and Community Care (HACC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services that support frail and aged people Meals delivered either individually to a resident's room or to community groups Initial needs assessment, personal care, home management, allied health funding, respite 	Frail and aged people, those with a disability, or those whose capacity for independent living is at risk. Includes people who live in their own home or in unstable housing, but not in supported residential services.	9096 8424 www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc
SAAP meals provision a. Mathew Talbot Soup Van b. St Marys House of Welcome c. Sacred Heart Mission Dining Room	All 3 providers serve one meal per day of different portions a. Single meal at 9.45pm b. 2 meals + morning tea, 7 days per week c. 3 course lunch	People who are homeless or on a low income.	a. Hanover House, Southbank 158 City Rd, Melbourne b. 165 - 169 Brunswick St Fitzroy, Melbourne 9417 6497 c. 87 Grey St, St Kilda 9537 1166
DRUGS AND ALCOHOL			
Drug Safety Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensive case management support Short term supported accommodation Mobile drug safety workers Mobile overdose response Specialist methadone services Peer support programs Koori specific drug services 	People who have completed withdrawal programs, injecting drug users and clients of Needle & Syringe programs.	Access via Directline 1800 888 236 (24 hour information, telephone counselling and referral)
The Living Room Primary Health Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary health service with doctors, nurses, and specialist health workers Free and confidential Drug treatment programs, health assessment and outreach, medication assistance, wound treatment, housing referral, some food, employment service 	Drug users, homeless people and those living in insecure housing.	Access via foot patrol workers, Directline 1800 888 236, or drop in to the centre 7-9 Hosier Lane, Melbourne (open Monday-Friday)

Support Type	Description	Helpful for	Contact
Needle & Syringe Program, North Yarra Community Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needle & Syringe Program • Syringe Disposal Hotline • Basic hygiene including laundry and shower facilities • Arts therapy 	Drug users, homeless people and those living in insecure housing.	Co-located with North Yarra Community Health drop-in and outreach services. Innerspace, 4 Johnston St, Collingwood Syringe Disposal Hotline, a 24 hour message bank to report discarded syringes for removal 9417 5125
MENTAL HEALTH			
Clarendon St Vincent's Mental Health Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 hour, 7 day assessment and referral • Acute inpatient service, crisis assessment, mobile support and treatment • Homeless service providing assessment and case management 	People aged 16 to 65 with a mental illness who are residents of Cities of Yarra or Boroondara.	Clarendon Clinic 52 Albert Street East Melbourne 9417 5696
ConnectED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital Admission Risk Program (HARP) that aims to improve patient outcomes for people with complex medical, psychological and social needs • Preventative community development for rooming house residents 	People with complex psychosocial needs who are residents of the Bayside area or are homeless.	Referrals to the ConnectED Key Worker in The Alfred Hospital Emergency Department. 9076 8446
Homeless Outreach Psychiatric Service (HOPS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach service to create pathways for homeless people into support services • Specialist clinical treatment • Coordination between mental health and housing services 	Homeless people who do not engage with mental health services. Those living in or have significant presence in St Kilda, Port Melbourne or Sth Melbourne	8517 9888
Intensive Home Based Outreach - Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation & Support (PDRSS IHBOS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychosocial rehabilitation helping clients to make their own decisions, develop daily living skills, improve social interaction, participate in community life and improve self esteem • Linked to THM program 	People with mental illness and complex needs including drug and alcohol issues. Must be eligible for public housing. Referrals not necessary, but may be referred by SAAP agency.	http://net.saap.infoxchange.net.au Search for: PDRSS
Mental Health Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychosocial rehabilitation, psychiatric disability and mental health case management • Personal recovery plans and assistance with daily living skills, finding accommodation or work, recreational activities, treatment 	People aged 16 to 65 who are homeless, living in insecure housing or at risk of homelessness, who have a mental illness and may have trouble accessing health services.	Information and referral workers at the Inner South Community Health Service or may self refer. SouthPort Centre 9690 9144 Prahran Centre 9525 1300 Inkerman St 9534 8166 Mitford St 9534 0981 Ask for: Outreach Mental Health

Support Type	Description	Helpful for	Contact
Personal Helpers & Mentors Program	Assist people to manage daily activities and to access support and services	People over 16 years with severe functional limitation resulting from mental illness.	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs www.facs.gov.au Search for: Personal Helpers Email: mentalhealth@fahcsia.gov.au
ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY			
ARBIAS Alcohol Related Brain Injury Australian Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neuropsychological assessment services, case management, pre-vocational services, food preparation and lifestyle support Accommodation for 'drying out' purposes 	People with an acquired brain injury.	Referral can be made by any person with a close association with the person for a neurological assessment for ABI. 8388 1222 www.arbias.org.au
HEALTH CONCESSIONS			
Ambulance	Free ambulance and air ambulance travel in an emergency or recommended by a doctor	HCC, PCC and DVA concession holders	If possible advise ambulance paramedic of concession card or contact Ambulance Victoria 9840 3500 www.ambulance.vic.gov.au
Eye care and glasses	Free eye examinations and low cost glasses	HCC, PCC and DVA concession holders	For metro residents needing low cost glasses contact Victorian College of Optometry 9349 7400 Non Metro 1300 30 31 25 For eye care contact Victorian Eye & Ear Hospital 9929 8666
Hearing aids	Hearing rehabilitation, assessment and aids	HCC (sickness recipients only), PCC and DVA concession holders	Office of Hearing Services 1800 555 013 TTY 1800 500 496
Medicines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase most prescription medicines for \$4.70 Medicines are free after person has paid total of \$253.80 for the year 	HCC, PCC and CSHC concession holders	Freecall to Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme 13 22 90
Personal Alert	24 hour personal monitoring and response service connecting people to their family or to emergency services	People with a disability who are isolated or vulnerable without constant care	Contact Personal Alert Victoria on 1800 451 300
GENERAL INFORMATION			
Unclaimed Monies	Unclaimed Monies is where all unclaimed money is held in trust until it is claimed.	People who may have unclaimed money arising from leaving belongings at a property which were later sold on their behalf	For further information regarding Unclaimed Monies, please contact the State Revenue Office on 13 21 61 or at www.sro.vic.gov.au

Section 8: *Managing a person in distress*



You can help prevent distressed or challenging behaviour by keeping good house rules that set boundaries and ensure equal rights for all residents.



How can I reduce stress and disputes between residents?

Many things can trigger distress in a person. An event may occur that makes the person feel as though they are in immediate danger, or the reactions by those less tolerant may aggravate a situation. The distressed person maybe overreacting or misunderstanding another person, or they may have other problems such as mental illness or memory loss.

In order to effectively manage a person in distress, it is important to understand what may be causing it.

Distress may be caused or aggravated by:

- drugs or alcohol
- mental illness
- medication
- lack of food
- gambling or loss of income
- memory loss
- emotional distress
- anxiety
- trauma from a previous assault or abuse
- stress
- disability caused by head injury.

SO HOW WILL I KNOW IF A RESIDENT IS DISTRESSED?

A distressed person may display physical or verbal aggression towards others, themselves or their surroundings. This is usually a reaction to frustration or a personal crisis.

A person's behaviour can sometimes be at the extreme end of the spectrum of normal behaviours and this is referred to as 'challenging behaviour'. For example, if a resident is intoxicated, speaking loudly, disturbing other residents and refuses to quieten when asked, this could be considered challenging behaviour.

HOW CAN I HELP A DISTRESSED PERSON?

You can help prevent distressed or challenging behaviour by keeping good house rules that set boundaries and ensure equal rights for all residents.

Ways to manage a distressed person

General approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Introduce yourself and ask the person what he or she likes to be calledDo not be aggressive, criticising or physical – doing so will only aggravate the situationDo not assume that a non-response from a resident means they are not listening - the resident may be taking time to process what you are sayingDo not take verbal abuse personally, or get defensiveTalk positively e.g. ‘we can resolve this’, ‘thanks for taking the time to talk’Encourage the resident to see and talk through optionsEncourage the resident to answer ‘yes’ to questions e.g. ‘will you think about that for a while?’Do not make promises you cannot keep
How to speak	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Speak in a clear and calm voice in short and uncomplicated sentencesTry to establish the reason for the distressListen to what the resident is saying, and allow them to express feelings of anger and distressDo not argue the point, and, if possible, find something to agree withTreat the resident with respect, and remain calm
Your physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do not crowd the personDo not block the person or yourself into a spaceBe aware of items that could be used as a weapon and discreetly move them away if possibleClear onlookers from the area
Your body language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Communicate that you are listening to the resident, and are not threatening themUse a calm voice and act calmlyTake a relaxed body stanceStand slightly to the side, not head onUncross your arms and do not use physically threatening moves

 *For further information please visit the Department of Human Services website at www.dhs.vic.gov.au* 

Useful contacts for Rooming House Operators

Consumer Affairs Victoria

Consumer Affairs Victoria provides a range of consumer and tenancy services and can provide information and advice on residential issues.

Victorian Consumer & Business Centre

- a. 113 Exhibition Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
- t. 1300 55 81 81 (local charge)
- f. (03) 8684 6295
- e. consumer@justice.vic.gov.au
- w. www.consumer.vic.gov.au

Services from Consumer Affairs Victoria are available at Ballarat, Bendigo, Berwick, Box Hill, Broadmeadows, Geelong, Morwell, Mildura, Wangaratta and Warrnambool. The mobile service regularly visits rural communities.

Office of Housing

The Office of Housing is a division of the Department of Human Services and provides a range of housing services including the Bond Loan Scheme and public rental housing to eligible Victorian residents.

For further information contact your closest Housing Office (listed in the White Pages A-K under Human Services, Housing Services).

- t. 1300 650 172 (local call charge)
- w. www.dhs.vic.gov.au/housing

Tenants' Union of Victoria (TUV)

TUV's Rooming House Service provides free, confidential advice and assistance to rooming house residents and can assist with negotiations between residents and operators.

- a. 55 Johnston Street
Fitzroy Victoria 3065
- t. 03 9419 5577
- w. www.tuv.org.au

Residential Tenancies Bond Authority (RTBA)

The RTBA is overseen by CAV and holds all residential tenancy bonds on behalf of rooming house residents and operators. The RTBA can only repay bonds as agreed by the resident and the rooming house operator or as directed by the VCAT.

- t. 1300 13 71 64 (local call charge)
- f. 03 8684 6299
- e. rtba@justice.vic.gov.au
- w. www.rtba.vic.gov.au

- p. Locked Bag No 3040,
GPO Melbourne
Victoria 3001

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)

VCAT operates independently of CAV. It is similar to a court but not as formal, and deals with issues in many areas, including disputes arising from the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.

- a. 55 King Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
- t. 03 9628 9800
- t. Freecall 1800 13 30 55
- f. 03 9628 9822
- e. vcat@vcat.vic.gov.au
- w. www.vcat.vic.gov.au
- p. GPO Box 5408cc,
Melbourne Victoria 3001

Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents

Refer to this website (under 'Victorian Law Today') to see an Act or Regulation.

- w. www.legislation.vic.gov.au

Copies of current legislation may also be purchased from the following suppliers:

Information Victoria

- t. 1300 366 356

Anstat Pty Ltd

- t. 03 9278 1133

Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC)

VEOHRC provides information and advice about equal opportunity rights and responsibilities and helps people resolve complaints of illegal discrimination or harassment through its impartial, confidential and free conciliation service.

- a. 3/380 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
- t. (03) 9281 7100
- f. (03) 9281 7171
- t. Freecall (country callers)
1800 13 41 42
- tty (03) 9281 7110
- e. information@veohrc.vic.gov.au or
complaints@veohrc.vic.gov.au
- w. www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au

Guidelines for Operators

BEFORE A RESIDENT MOVES IN

- 1. Have you identified if you are a rooming house operator?**
 - If you have one or more rooms available for rent, in which the total number of people who may occupy those rooms is four or more AND
 - If your residents rent a room and share communal facilities such as bathrooms and toilets, then you are a rooming house operator.
 - 2. Have you registered your rooming house with your local council?**
 - Contact details for your local council can be found at your local library, at your local council's website or at www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au
 - 3. For every 10 people, does your rooming house have at least:**
 - one toilet
 - one bath/shower
 - one wash basin
 - 4. Does your rooming house have a continuous and adequate supply of hot and cold water?**
 - 5. Are your rooms and communal areas in a clean condition and good working order?**
 - 6. Do you have hard wired smoke alarms or a smoke detection system?**
 - 7. Have you checked if your rooming house also requires sprinklers?**
 - 8. Are you prominently displaying the list of essential fire and safety services?**
 - 9. Do you provide regular rubbish collection and sufficient vermin-proof bins?**
-

MANAGING YOUR ROOMING HOUSE

- 10. Do you conduct an annual review of your fire and safety services to ensure the equipment is properly functioning and maintained?**
 - 11. Do you keep maintenance documentation and fill in an annual safety measures report?**
 - 12. Do you keep an accurate occupancy register, showing the names of all residents and including their arrival and departure dates?**
 - 13. Have you lodged bonds with the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority?**
 - 14. Do you give every new resident a copy of the Consumer Affairs Victoria booklet 'Rooming Houses: A guide for residents, owners and managers' when they move in?**
 - 15. Are you maintaining the rooming house in a clean condition and good working order?**
 - 16. Do you keep an accurate incident register to record any disputes between residents or that you may have with residents?**
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WHEN A RESIDENT MOVES OUT

- 17. Do you clean the room when a resident vacates?**
 - 18. Do you keep rental receipt records for a period of 12 months?**
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June 2009

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