

MY HOME NETWORK



SEPTEMBER 2023



TOGETHER AS

Dhelkaya Health

OUR NEW BRAND LAUNCHES 2023

To learn more visit dhelkayahealth.org.au

HOMESHARE

Mount Alexander Shire Homeshare has commenced as a 12-month pilot program at Dhelkaya Health. Resourced by a 0.6 EFT coordinator, the program is currently in set up phase with the development of the program model, policies and procedures and a promotional plan.

Dhelkaya Health have been accepted as a member of HANZA, the national peak for Homeshare in Australia. HANZA has shown significant interest in this bottom up rural/regional program and are keen to continue to support the implementation as well as to gather some history from My Home Network for other local groups who might want to set up Homeshare in their community. The plan is to launch the program at a public event in the next month/six weeks and to be fully operational after that.

People who interested in participating in Homeshare can contact the coordinator Di Cox DCox@castlemainehealth.org.au or 0499309418. Di is establishing a list of interested people to contact as we get closer to launch.

Mount Alexander Shire Homeshare aims to build social connections through housing and aims to improve personal wellbeing. A householder can exchange a room in their home for practical assistance and companionship. A Homesharer is able to provide 10-12 hours a week of support and companionship in exchange for affordable accommodation. Both parties benefit from the mutual exchange.

Thanks to the MHN Home Share working group for their expertise and support.

MHN COMMUNITY FORUM

We plan to have a MHN face to face community forum to update the community on your amazing collaborative, place-based work and to be inspired, maintain a sense of collective agency, mobilise and galvanise.

This will happen after the Home Share launch so probably later November - will keep you updated.

COUNCIL NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER & HOUSING STRATEGY

Thanks to those of you who gave feedback and attended the community consultations with Council regarding this draft strategy. Deadline for feedback is October 8th.

<https://shape.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/housing-and-neighbourhood-character-strategy>

TINY HOMES ON WHEELS (THOW)

The MHN THOW working group have been working, often through smaller group or one-on-one conversations, to ensure interested parties are well informed on THOW and the recent changes to the local law.

We have had quite a few enquiries about THOWs on vacant land, including the concept of a THOW village.

We have also had a few enquiries about people with a permanent dwelling on a large area of land outside the town boundary, wishing to put a few THOWs on their land as affordable and or transition housing.

If the land is not within a town boundary, it can be very challenging/impossible to pursue any type of rezoning for residential uses.

THOW, single or multiple, on vacant land within the town boundary requires a planning permit. We are interested in advocating for streamlining planning processes to enable this to happen and this may be of relevance to the recently released State Government Housing Statement which includes planning reforms.

See this article which includes expertise or perspectives of local THOW experts Shannon and Fred Schultz and Kathryn Mc Goldrick.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/sep/25/tiny-houses-australia-councils-allow>



Shannon and Fred Schultz outside their tiny house in Castlemaine, Victoria. The pair previously lived 'under the radar' on a friend's farm near Echuca.

Photograph: Steve Womersley/The Guardian

For more info on THOW see [Australian Tiny House Association – Supporting the Tiny House Sector in Australia](#) and if you wish to chat more about the local law changes and our local situation feel free to ring or email me 0439550904, cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au as a start and I can refer you to others pending what you need.

ENGAGING WITH LOCAL REAL ESTATE AGENTS

Members of the vacant dwellings working group have been engaging with our local real estate agents updating them on the work of the MHN and gauging their interest in assisting with:

- referral of renter clients to the Home Share programme
- encouraging their clients selling property to make a tax-deductible donation on the sale of their property to local housing initiatives
- accessing accommodation that could be crisis and transition housing
- knowledge of any vacant shop tops that could be released as affordable rentals or transition housing
- supporting a not-for-profit real estate

There has been interest in referrals of renter clients to the Home Share programme and community members interested in making a tax-deductible donation on the sale of their property to local housing initiatives.

VACANT DWELLINGS

Coliban Water are changing their data management systems so have had to delay the release of data that will enable us to identify vacant dwellings till January next year. So we are discussing a plan to identify vacant dwellings ourselves through using a combination of on the ground and satellite imagery recording via [Open Street Maps](#).

If anyone knows a large architect firm who has such satellite imagery soft ware we'd love to talk to them!

In the meantime, while aware of common friction points, we continue to engage with owners of vacant shop tops and dwellings to encourage them to release them as transition housing or affordable rentals.

If anyone knows someone who owns one or more of the 1,100 vacant dwellings in our Shire and thinks they may be up for a conversation regarding their release them as transition housing or affordable rentals please get in touch!

One more family are interested in releasing their vacant dwelling as transition housing -Yay!

WINC - OLDER WOMEN IN COHOUSING INC

WINC members welcomed Mount Alexander Shire Council Mayor Rosie Annear to our Castlemaine site last week, following visits from Bendigo State MP Maree Edwards and Bendigo Federal MP Lisa Chesters earlier in the year.

It's been a real privilege to explain the WINC project to all levels of government now. If their enthusiasm for our vision and ideas is any sign, we're on the right track.

We now have 39 members – older women who plan to live in our cohousing community, ideally to age in place as we grow old together as friends and neighbours.

Our plan includes four homes for women eligible for social housing, six homes for 'middle women' – women who will need some assistance to reach the full price – and the remaining 22 homes for women who can afford the full purchase price.

For women interested in learning what we're up to, we will be holding an information session about WINC from 11 am–1pm on Saturday the 28th of October. The session will be held at 19 Macafee Rd in Castlemaine. While we do now have a waiting list for homes, we also expect vacancies will emerge before we finish.

We very much look forward to welcoming new members over time as houses are sold in the future.

Contact: Mary-Faeth Chenery :mary-faeth@winccohousing.org.au
<https://winccohousing.org.au/>

SUBMISSION TO THE NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING PLAN

Here is the link to information on and how to make a submission to the National Homelessness and Housing Plan - deadline Oct 20th.

<https://engage.dss.gov.au/developing-the-national-housing-and-homelessness-plan/developing-the-national-housing-and-homelessness-plan-how-to-make-a-submission/>

Thanks to those who have contributed to the collective MHN submission- the Dhelkaya Health housing team, Kevin Saide, Michael Johnson the MHN Nalderun representative, Alison Whitten on energy efficiency and climate resilience and integrated planning, Mount Alexander Shire Accommodation Respite Group (MASARG) and lived experience of homelessness.

STATE HOUSING STATEMENT

Thanks to those of you who have expressed interest in meeting with Council Housing Solutions Broker and planner(s) to unpack the recently released State Housing Statement and see what we need to do collaboratively to optimise the outcomes from this statement and what further advocacy is needed regarding our concerns or the gaps we identify.

Maree Edwards is still trying to progress responses to our questions, arising from the three tiers of government forum in April, with the State Housing Minister including regarding vacant dwelling/property tax and the findings from the trial that was simplifying the secondary dwellings planning process.

Here's the link to the State Housing Statement and related planning changes – <https://www.vic.gov.au/housing-statement>

And the Premier's press releases are at:

<https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/affordability-partnership-build-152000-regional-homes>

<https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/affordability-partnership-build-800000-victorian-homes>

HELP AT HAND FLYER

Please find attached a wonderful flyer explaining support services and help at hand for those community members who are unhoused and sleeping rough.

Hard copies are available at the Castlemaine Community House. Feel free to start printing out and sharing.

Thanks to Kez and team at the Community House, Mel Fowler and other staff at Council and other members of the Mount Alexander Connectors (MAC) for producing this resource and to all those providing help at hand.

ROUGH SLEEPER ACTION GROUP

A local rough sleeper action group is meeting regularly to:

- Build a shared understanding of homelessness, their needs and support services available
- To directly work with clients currently sleeping rough
 - Meeting regularly means they can be on the same page for each client, not duplicate services and advocate for best outcomes
- To explore strategies to address the growing issue
 - A statewide strategy, Advance to Zero is a potential initiative that aims to fast-track housing for clients with support

Members of the action group include representatives from Dhelkaya Housing Service, Council, local police, Salvation Army and Legal Services.

MASG SOCIAL HOUSING Z-NET RETROFIT PROJECT

MASG recently celebrated this project with the 10 households who have had their social housing retrofitted to improve their energy efficiency . This retrofitting reduces emissions, reduces electricity and gas bills and also improves the health and wellbeing of the tenants as the houses are warmer in winter and cooler in summer.

The final stage is the installation of a 5kW solar system on every house.

When that is complete, all ten houses will have achieved a 9 star rating via: blower door testing, infra-red imaging, insulating walls, floors and ceilings, sealing gaps in doors, windows, chimneys and vents, installing curtains and pelmets on windows, replacing gas heaters with split system reverse cycle air conditioners, replacing gas cookers with induction electric cooktops, replacing gas hot water heaters with electric heat pumps, and had 5kw of solar panels installed.

As one householder said “It’s huge, they’ve taken out all the gas appliances, and replaced them with a split system and heat pump and plugged up the holes. The insulation under the floor has made a huge difference. The oven is replaced. I was spending \$800 on gas in winter so this is going to help me save a lot more each year. With the cost of bills this is going to make a massive difference to me”.

Increasing the energy rating of our housing to a rating of 7 can reduce heat related deaths in Victoria by 95%. Mount Alexander Sustainability Group (MASG) is looking for funding to scale up this project.

Pictured: Lisa Shaw with her new solar hot water service



COMMONWEALTH GAMES SURPLUS FUNDS FOR HOUSING

New State Government housing funding <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/delivering-even-more-housing-regional-workers> including \$150 million for housing for workers and \$1 billion for new housing in regional Victoria. Council are having discussions with the State Government regarding this funding - watch this space.

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM - PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (PVAW)

25TH NOVEMBER TO 10TH DECEMBER

As you know women over the age of 55 are the increasing demographic of homeless people. The drivers of this are gender inequality and family violence.

Each year there is a campaign about challenging gender inequality, sexist attitudes towards and about women, gender stereotypes and violence against women.

Dhelkaya Health and Council will be holding 16 days of PVAW activities - watch this space and see [Women's Health Loddon Mallee - Health, Wellbeing and Equity \(www.whlm.org.au\)](http://www.whlm.org.au) for more information.