

How do I find and apply for housing?

accommodation listings

There are a number of places where you can look for accommodation, although it depends on the type of accommodation you are looking for. The following is a guide to where you can find listings (ie advertisements) for various types of accommodation.

homestay

Homestay accommodation is generally organised through your institution, however there are a number of independent agencies that operate a placement service. (You can find these agencies by searching for 'homestay Victoria' on the internet or in the *White Pages Business & Government* telephone directory.

on-campus accommodation

Contact your institution's student housing service or check their website for listings. Or look under your institution's heading in the *White Pages Business & Government* telephone directory.

student hostels

Advertisements for student hostel accommodation are usually found on the internet, in the *White Pages Business & Government* telephone directory and through weblinks and brochures available from your institution.

rooming houses

You will find listings for rooming house accommodation in the newspaper, on student service noticeboards and websites, and on shared accommodation websites.

private rental

If you are planning to set up a share house with friends, or to rent a property on your own, you can find private rental properties via:

- > rental listings – these are available from real estate agents
- > internet – real estate agents list rental properties on their websites and on a number of search engines (search 'real estate Victoria')

- > newspapers – look in *The Age* and *The Herald Sun* on Saturday. Remember to also check the local community newspapers in the areas where you would like to live

share houses

If you want to move into an existing share house, there are several places you can look for room notices:

- > community noticeboards – sometimes found in local cafes and bookstores
- > internet
- > student housing services – they often have listings on noticeboards
- > some institutions have accommodation databases – usually you have to be enrolled at the institution to access these
- > newspapers – look in *The Age* and *The Herald Sun* on Saturday. Remember to also check the local community newspapers in the areas where you would like to live

inspecting a private rental property

When you inspect a property, it is very important to check the property thoroughly both inside and out. Make sure you are happy with the property before you sign anything or pay any money.

➡ Do not assume that the landlord or agent will attend to any repairs unless you specifically ask that they do so. For more information see our **Repairs** fact sheet.

As you look around the property, test the light switches, exhaust or overhead fans, stove, oven, taps and shower (for water pressure) and any heaters and/or air conditioning to make sure everything is working. Ask if the phone is connected. Test the strength of fittings such as mantelpieces and curtain pelmets to make sure they are safe and secure.

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Also, make sure you can open and close all the windows and lock and unlock all the doors. Check what kind of locks are installed, as many insurance companies will not provide household contents insurance unless the windows have key locks and the external doors have deadlocks.

The **Property inspection checklist** (student housing fact sheet) tells you what you should look for when inspecting a property.

➡ If any part of the property or its fittings or fixtures are damaged or not working properly, you should ask the landlord to repair them. See our **Repairs** fact sheet or contact the Tenants Union for advice.

applying for a private rental property

After you have inspected the property and decided that you want to move in, you will need to fill in an application form provided by the real estate agent (if the landlord is using an agent).

You can be asked questions about your:

- > income and bank details
- > previous rental history
- > employment details and history
- > references – you may be asked for two

You *cannot* be asked questions about your:

- > race
- > marital status
- > disability or impairment
- > sexual orientation
- > religious or political beliefs

application deposits

The agent or landlord may ask for an application deposit. If you have to pay a deposit, make sure you get a receipt. Your deposit must be refunded to you.

It is illegal for agents and landlords to charge fees for the following:

- > letting you inspect a property
- > giving you keys to the property when you move in
- > a commission or fee for renting you the property
- > issuing a rent payment card
- > establishing and using direct debit facilities

➡ For more information see the following fact sheets:

- > **What do the real estate abbreviations stand for?** (student housing fact sheet)
- > **What do I need to know when I'm moving in?** (student housing fact sheet)
- > **Starting a tenancy** (fact sheet)

For more information phone the Tenants Union Advice Line on ☎ (03) 9416 2577.