

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023



**Tenants
Victoria**

Safe, secure and affordable
homes for Victorian renters
in a fair housing system

About Tenants Victoria

Tenants Victoria is the peak body for the state’s renters, who number almost 2 million people. Our vision is for safe, secure and affordable homes for Victorian renters in a fair housing system. For many, renting is a permanent situation rather than a transition from the family home to home ownership. We believe all renters should be able to afford a home that allows them to live full lives and contribute to their communities.

Founded in the 1970s by renters, we aim to empower all renters and make sure their voices are heard in our advocacy. We work in partnership with other community legal centres and housing sector organisations, and strategically with government to inform policy development and enhance service delivery. Our services include information, legal representation and advice, financial counselling, and outreach. We aim to make the housing system fairer in several ways. We advocate for practices and attitudes that respect renting and for policies and laws that support the rights of renters. We increase the skills of the community workers who assist renters. We provide information that encourages rental providers and real estate agents to act responsibly.

Our offices are on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country. Our work gives us a special insight into the value of place and home, and we respect the Wurundjeri people’s ongoing connection to Country, culture and community. We also acknowledge the connection of all First Nations peoples on whose Country Victoria is today situated. We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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Chair's report

'We continue to strengthen our outreach into renter communities to ensure our services and our advocacy address their needs.'

Together with my board colleagues and CEO, I am pleased to present the annual report of Tenants Victoria Ltd for the 2022-23 year.

Our Strategic Plan 2021-2026 – a time to transform continues to drive our work and reminds staff and board members every day of our guiding purpose.

The focus of the organisation this year has been on innovation. Much careful creative work has been done to develop new ways of engaging with and supporting renters to manage their tenancy, as well as to improve and expand our training resources for both our volunteers and community partners. This work has been supported generously by our funders. In addition, and recognising the need for capacity building, the Board agreed to release some funds from reserves as an investment in the future of Tenants Victoria.

Importantly, we continue to strengthen our outreach into renter communities to ensure our services and our advocacy address their needs. As the CEO outlines in her report, our outreach takes many forms, and we thank the many renters and community workers who have contributed their knowledge and experiences to guide us.

The Board continued its strong focus on governance. In October 2022 a new Constitution was adopted, and the company name changed to Tenants Victoria Ltd, reflecting the organisation's role as the leading advocate and service provider for renters in the contemporary rental-housing landscape. The new Constitution now directs the governance of the organisation.

In April 2023 the Board embarked on an external review of its performance involving all directors, the company secretary, the CEO and members of the Senior Leadership Team. We appreciated the care and expertise of the reviewer and were pleased at the conclusion that the Tenants Victoria Board was performing well with a highly engaged and capable membership committed to the organisation's Vision. An early outcome was the appointment of a Deputy Chair, and the Board is continuing its consideration and implementation of recommendations through its Action Plan for 2023-24.

The calamitous state of housing affordability in Victoria and Australia-wide impacts dramatically on renters. In 2022-23 Tenants Victoria continued to advocate for a rethink and change in policy towards renting by both state and federal governments. This included collaborative work with other organisations in the housing and social justice sectors and specific Tenants Victoria work, leading to engagement via submissions and presentations to both state and federal governments with practical policy-reform proposals.

In late 2022, we began our formal journey to our first Reconciliation Action Plan in consultation with a specialist First Nations consultancy. All our people were encouraged to participate in a cultural safety audit, training, and workshops and to work together to write our first RAP. We have learnt what Reconciliation means, why it is important, what we are individually and collectively committing ourselves to and our responsibilities. NJAC facilitated truth-telling training and reconciliation workshops to ensure a clear understanding of a critical pillar of reconciliation which is historical acceptance. Having a clearer understanding of our collective history as a nation and an organisation-wide understanding of the RAP framework has inspired Tenants Victoria to use the next 12 months to deeply reflect on how we can actively and effectively contribute to reconciliation, now and into the future. Reconciliation is everybody's business.

I am very grateful to all my director colleagues on the Board of Tenants Victoria Ltd, who have devoted much time and energy to supporting and strengthening the organisation's ability to serve renters in need. As is clear from the Financial Statements in this Annual Report, Tenants Victoria is in a sound financial position and the Board is focussed on maintaining that strength.

Working with the CEO and Senior Leadership Team, the Board this year began exploring ways of diversifying and increasing revenue to provide resources for development and innovation for purpose. This is an ongoing project.

I would like to thank the chairs and members of the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee and the Governance Committee for their work this year. As was affirmed in the external

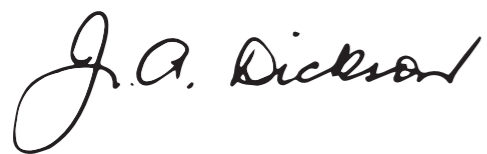
review, the directors form a Board of highly skilled and experienced people deeply committed to the work of Tenants Victoria and contributing many hours of their time and expertise to ensuring ongoing organisational viability and impact.

The Board is very grateful for the continued support of our funders in another year of great change: Consumer Affairs Victoria, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, StreetSmart, Victoria Legal Aid, the Financial Counselling Foundation; the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, the Victorian Property Fund and Wyndham City council.

Our CEO Jennifer Beveridge continues to lead Tenants Victoria with energy and imagination. Her principled, adaptive and expert leadership has enabled the organisation to expand and develop its services in another year of challenges and opportunities. On behalf of the Board, I would also like to thank the Senior Leadership Team for their capable and collaborative guidance of their teams and committed work for ongoing improvement in Tenants Victoria.

Finally, I express gratitude to the staff and volunteers of Tenants Victoria. Throughout the year they have embraced our vision and purpose and worked hard to provide direct services to renters experiencing disadvantage, while also advocating for systemic change. The Board acknowledges our staff's expertise and energy and their contribution, with our volunteers, to positive change for renters in Victoria.

In this time of crisis for renters the Board, management and staff of Tenants Victoria look forward in the next year to continuing to assist individual renters across the state and working for broader change to help bring about our vision for a safe, secure and affordable home for Victorian renters in a fair housing system.



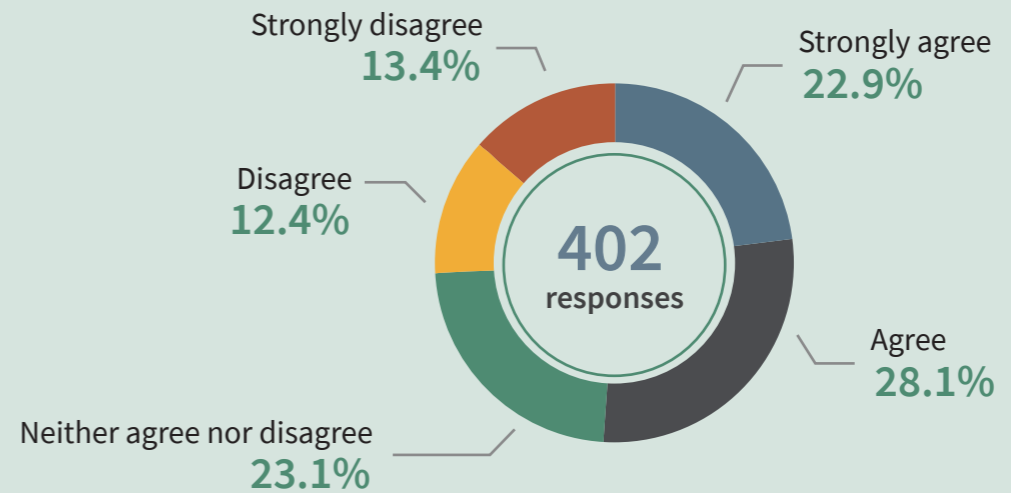
Judith Dickson
Chair
Tenants Victoria

'The lawyers at Tenants Victoria were very helpful and gave me clear legal advice and explained to me my rights as a tenant, all free of charge. I followed their advice and had a positive outcome for my problem. I am very grateful for their service. Thank you.'

- Comment from annual client survey

What our clients tell us:

Responses to the question: 'If I have a strong disagreement with my landlord ... I am confident I could get a result that I am happy with.'



CEO's report

'The tenancy work of Tenants Victoria and other legal support services should be recognised as a critical buffer against eviction.'

At long last, renting is having a public policy moment. Many of the stark issues faced by renters are persistently making headlines and have finally made it onto the agenda for both the Victorian Government and the Australian Government.

The year included the second anniversary of the much welcomed reforms to Victoria's rental laws in March 2021. However, life as a renter remains insecure and difficult for many people amid record low vacancy rates, high rent increases, late or no repairs, and delays at VCAT.

The provision of safe, secure, and affordable housing must have renters at the centre and can no longer be processed primarily through the lens of home ownership or the needs of 'mum and dad' investors. Close to 30% of Victorians rent their home with nearly 90% of all tenants renting in the competitive private rental market. And, many people are renting for longer, or renting for life.

The provision of rental housing is an essential service, so the private rental market requires additional regulation to ensure fairness. Throughout the year we called for the Victorian Government to legislate for a 'fairness formula' to set reasonable limits on rent increases. This was initially one of our policy asks in the leadup to the November 2022 state elections. Indeed, we need sustained effort from all tiers of government to deal with this crisis of housing affordability because the rental market is failing too many.

Among our own work for renters, our annual winter Mould Clinic processed 103 complaints from renters about this common problem. Our work on the Mould Clinic helped us to achieve a successful grant outcome from the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner to develop additional resources for another common problem, getting repairs done, including the interactive self-help Repairs Toolkit due to launch late in 2023.

As COVID-19 restrictions ended, we moved out into the community more in addition to our online outreach. This year, Victorian Law Week was 'mould week' for Tenants Victoria. As well as launching with researchers our Mould Report on the findings of the Mould Clinic, we partnered with neighbourhood houses and libraries in regional Victoria to let renters know their rights in relation to mould, and how to enforce them.

We also participated in education sessions for Aboriginal-controlled services and for members of emerging multicultural communities. Our multicultural community collaborators this year numbered over 40 organisations including the Victorian Multicultural Commission and the representative peak body the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria alongside many smaller organisations. Our growing visibility in



multicultural communities, developed in the pandemic context, enabled us to win a significant competitive grant from Consumer Affairs Victoria to advance this work further over 3 years.

In challenging times for renters, we've also made efforts to amplify their voices through a range of public events. One of these was our successful Generation Rent Open Mic session at the MPavilion annual ideas festival in the city parklands, where renters shared compelling stories about their experiences. Our new Renter Advisory Group has also convened: members of the group have been supported to conduct media and other advocacy. The 'Tell us your story' page on our website has also become a new feature of our wider community engagement in addition to our interactive social media channels.

We remain active in the policy conversation, including with a submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee inquiry into the extent and nature of poverty in Australia, our submission in response to draft Residential Tenancies (Rooming House Standards) Regulations in Victoria, and in dozens of reports in mainstream media. Over the year, our legal, financial counselling and rooming-house outreach teams provided 11,682 assistances to Victorian renters with tenancy problems, including 613 instances of extended help. Our informative website was visited by 571,913 people, who generated 1.38 million page views.

Demand from Victorian renters for our services remained intense - and too often unmet - because of our limited resources. Yet the tenancy work of Tenants Victoria and other legal support services should be recognised as a critical buffer against eviction and early intervention to reduce housing insecurity.

We will continue to push for more reform and practical support for renters.

Jennifer Beveridge
Chief Executive Officer
Tenants Victoria

2021-2026

Strategic plan

As an organisation that has a long history of serving Victorian renters, the 5-year Strategic Plan, from June 2021 to June 2026, is our ambitious vision for the future.

Our vision

Safe, secure and affordable homes for Victorian renters in a fair housing system.



Our role

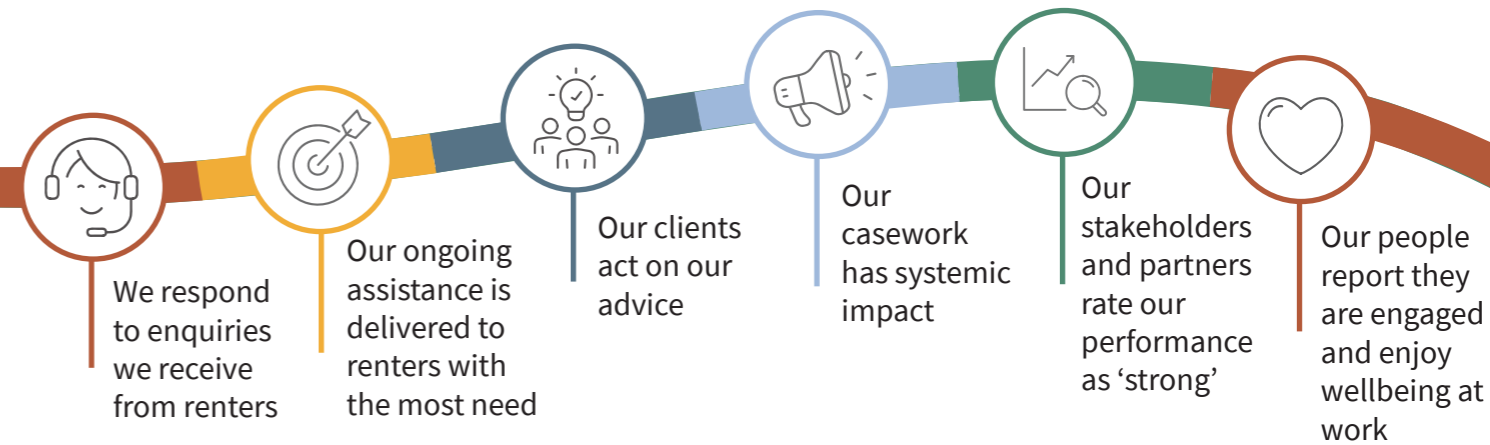
Empower renters and make the housing system fairer.



Strategic goals

Service Excellence	Renters and their support workers are emboldened by the knowledge, support and training we provide.
System Impact	Our casework and policy advocacy create system-wide change.
Business Transformation	We have the systems, processes and culture that supports us to pursue excellence.
Organisation Sustainability	We are effectively governed and managed using sound practices and principles.

5-year key performance indicators



Evolving our service model

We have embarked on an organisation-wide focus on updating our service model for our work with individual renters and with organisations supporting renters.

Our future model will:

Be aligned with and evaluated against our outcomes framework to gain a comprehensive understanding of the framework's impact and better match services with legal and related needs



Help us extend our reach to more individuals through new 'one to many' services and modernising our entry points and intake and referral systems to streamline access to help for more renters



Our impact

- ▶ **Intake and legal services** - Helped **7960** renters in **10,215** matters
- ▶ **Financial counselling** - Helped **283** renters in **320** matters
- ▶ **Rooming house outreach** - Helped **45** residents, including **93** referrals to other services

Renters profile

34.7%	Financially disadvantaged
2.7%	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
25.1%	Chronic Ill-health and disability
10.8%	Language other than English
6.1%	At risk of or experiencing domestic violence
3.1%	At risk of or experiencing homelessness

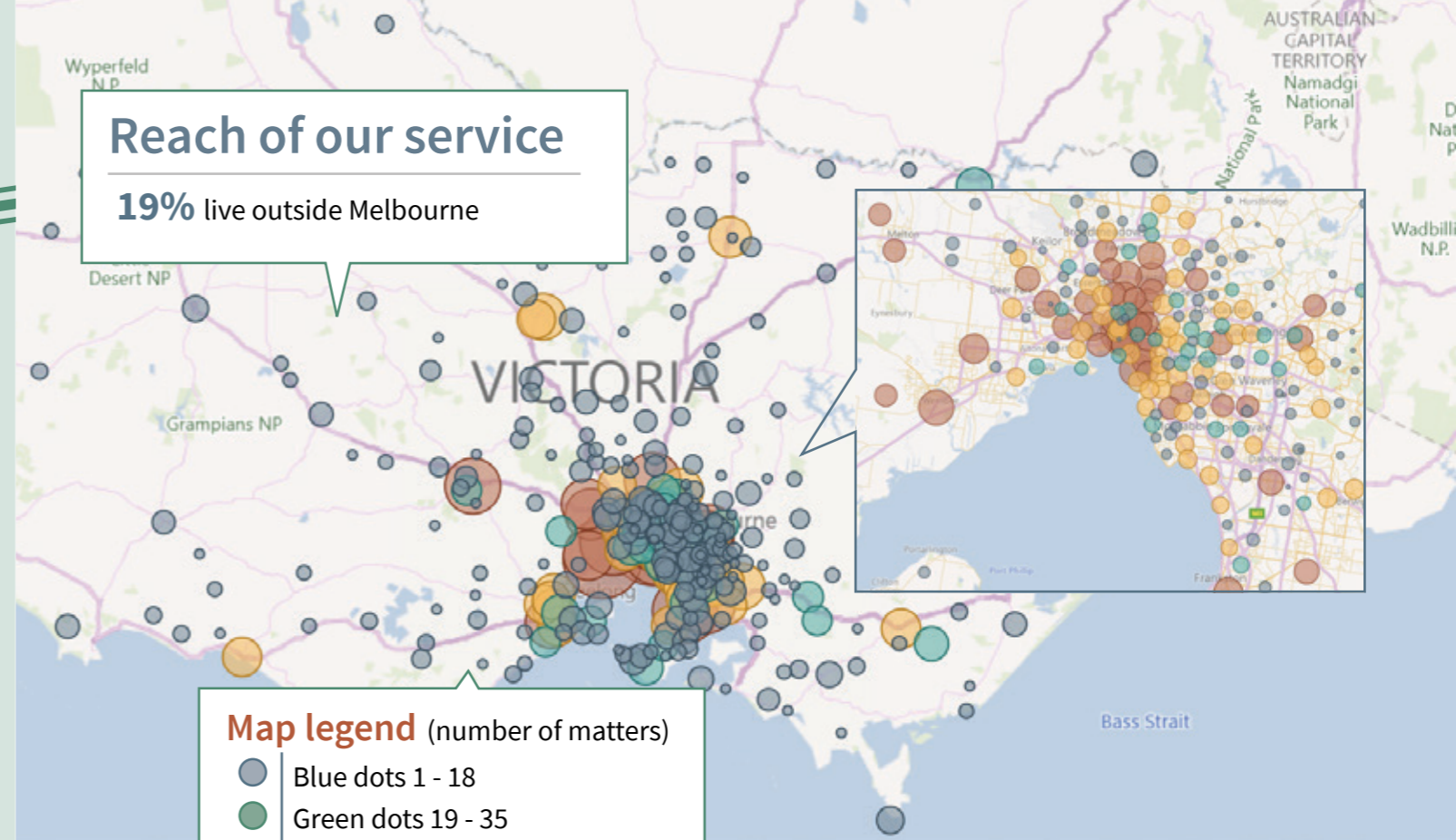
Website

1.38 million
page views

571,913
visitors to website

Top 3 advice pages

Ending your lease	70,506 page views	
Notice to Vacate	61,060 page views	
Lease breaking	60,599 page views	



Map legend (number of matters)

- Blue dots 1 - 18
- Green dots 19 - 35
- Yellow dots 36 - 69
- Red dots are 70 +

10 most common inquiries from renters

	Number of inquiries 2022-23	% change from 2021-22
Repairs	2770	+23%
Notice to vacate	1812	+32%
Bond	1536	+16%
Renter compensation claim	1258	+25%
Lease breaking	925	-8%
Mould	769	+48%
Rent arrears	726	+73%
Rent increases	723	+86%
Rental minimum standards	383	+120%
Landlord compensation claim	375	+35%

Year in review

Research partnership with the Consumer Policy Research Centre

Tenants Victoria partnered with the Consumer Policy Research Centre to explore the quality of rental properties in the wake of the minimum standards introduced in Victoria in 2021. The research, undertaken at Tenants Victoria by Research and Evaluation Advisor Michael Atkinson, focussed on observing compliance with minimum standards and other quality indicators in new rental properties that came onto the rental market in the local government areas of Wyndham in Melbourne’s west and Bendigo earlier this year.

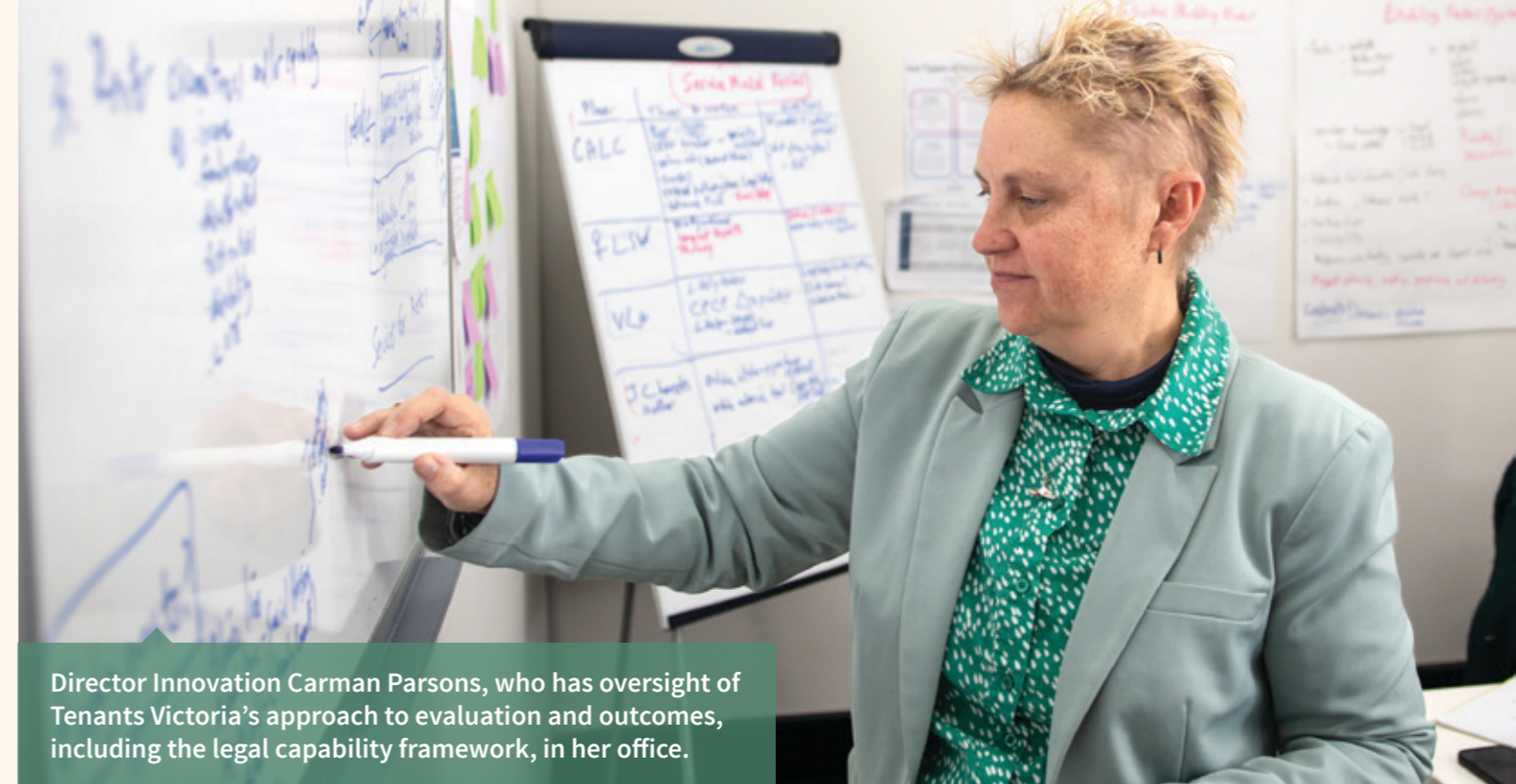
While the final report is yet to be published, the research was a valuable exercise in finding ways to understand the impact of rental standards and the overall quality of rental properties. Many of the properties observed in the research generally met required minimum standards, but issues such as insufficient heating, smoke alarms and windows with limited privacy were revealed. Such findings widen the conversation about rental properties to include the widespread acknowledgement that everyone deserves to live in a house that provides them with comfort, privacy and security.

New approach to understanding how our services help renters

We designed an outcomes framework against which we will evaluate the impact of our programs for individual renters. The framework was developed through a combination of three main sources:

- We observed our present practices and what works to help renters with their legal concerns
- We also tapped into the experiences of renters themselves and what they said about their rental legal world.
- Finally, we took guidance from the Victorian Law Foundation and their extensive and groundbreaking work on the capability of people to act on their legal concerns.
- The framework is based on 7 outcomes which, when reached, collectively provide the best environment to enhance the capability of renters to sustainably resolve their rental legal problems.

This legal capability framework will not only enable us to measure the effectiveness of our programs but will also be used to guide decision-making around service improvements which better meet individual renter needs.



Director Innovation Carman Parsons, who has oversight of Tenants Victoria’s approach to evaluation and outcomes, including the legal capability framework, in her office.

Mould Report finds renters anxious, landlords reluctant

More than two thirds of renters Tenants Victoria helped with mould in their homes in the 2022 winter were concerned about their health and the health of their children, according to our Mould Report released in May 2023.

Drawn from 103 complaints from renters to our winter Mould Clinic in 2022, the report also found that more than a third said mould had damaged their belongings, while nearly a fifth could not sleep in their rented homes because of the severity of the mould.

In Victoria, mould caused by the building structure is classified as an ‘urgent repair’: the landlord should fix it as soon as possible. Yet 32 landlords involved in complaints to the Mould Clinic last winter explicitly refused requests for repairs and a further 57 prevaricated.

Statewide outreach during Law Week

During Law Week in May 2023 our lawyers hit the road to help renters in regional Victoria by holding information sessions on mould and other issues at libraries in Mooropna, Shepparton and Tatura in the Goulburn Valley and in Morwell in Gippsland. They joined forces at the sessions with staff from the Goulburn Valley and Gippsland community legal centres, and Tenancy Assistance and Advocacy Program agencies BeyondHousing and Quantum Support Services.

The conversations were two-way – our staff learned a lot about legal need in these areas as part of our commitment to reach renters across the state. Our local partners Goulburn Valley Libraries and Morwell Neighbourhood House hosted and facilitated these rich conversations.



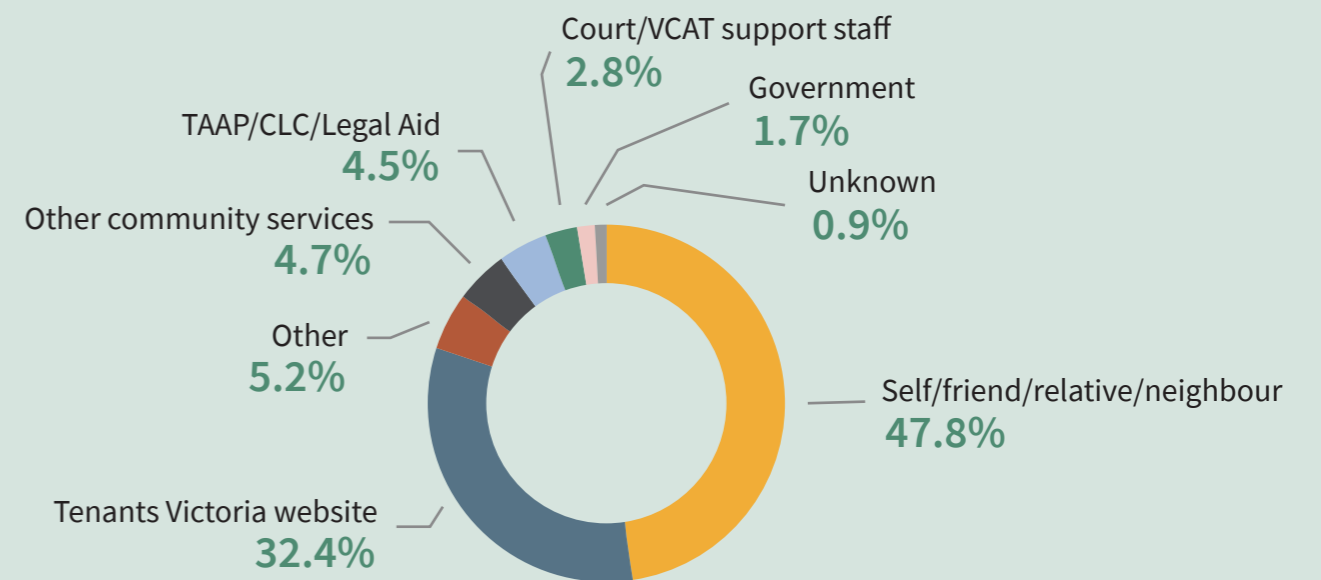
Lawyer Libby Jedwab (left) and intake worker Tiffany Gibbons at Morwell Neighbourhood House in Gippsland for a community information session during Law Week.

Generation Rent Open Mic elevated renters' voices

In March at the annual MPavilion, Tenants Victoria put the spotlight on the experiences of Melbourne renters at our interactive 'open mic session', Generation Rent, co-hosted by our Director of Community Engagement Farah Farouque and Age property reporter Jim Malo. MPavilion is an event series in an architect-designed meeting place in the Queen Victoria Gardens on St Kilda Road. There we listened and heard the compelling stories that renters shared with us, stories that help inform our ongoing advocacy to improve laws and conditions for renters. The ABC turned up to cover the event, spreading renters' concerns further via social media, website and television news.

What our clients tell us:

How people came to Tenants Victoria



'All people I have spoken with have been patient and knowledgeable throughout an incredibly stressful situation.'

- Comment from annual client survey

In Melbourne Tenants Victoria hosted a forum on the social and health impacts of mouldy homes at RMIT where we launched our Mould Report and hosted a discussion with Dr Nicola Willand from RMIT, the University of Melbourne's Professor Rebecca Bentley, leader of the Healthy Housing Research Group, and architectural scientist Dr Tim Law. After the forum our lawyers were on hand to answer renters' questions about mould at a 'pop-up' legal clinic.

Leadership continues in tenancy legal sector

Tenants Victoria continued to provide leadership to the tenancy legal sector. We convene the Tenants Working Group, a working group of the Federation of Community Legal Centres, on a regular basis, enabling tenancy lawyers and workers from across the sector to share insights and progress systemic change.

The Tenancy Coordination Group, with a smaller membership, refined our focus in 2022-23. The Tenancy Coordination Group made 2 joint submissions, a rooming house minimum-standards issues paper and a briefing paper on legislative drafting issues identified by the legal assistance sector within the Residential Tenancies Act. In addition, agencies sought our expertise through direct consultations, including from the community housing sector and the Commissioner for Residential Tenancies.

Tenants Victoria continues to work closely with our counterparts in other states and territories through the National Association of Renters' Organisations (NARO), and our CEO Jennifer Beveridge is a member of the National Shelter Council.



But back at the rooming house, there were always problems, including mould, which resulted in some of the rooms being closed, and other repair problems.

There were also safety issues in the rooming house. Residents' belongings were stolen. Some women in the rooming house brought men to come and stay.

The challenges in this kind of housing scared Rose. 'I put a padlock on my door to be more secure and they cut it off.'

Rose would live for 4½ years in these difficult circumstances.

Change came after Catherine Dyer, our Rooming House Outreach Program worker, met Rose when she visited the rooming house with Merri Outreach Support Service.

After that visit Merri Outreach Support Service helped Rose to reapply for priority access on the Victorian Housing Register for social housing, while Catherine helped her apply for community housing for people over 55, including residences nearby operated by Wintringham. This not-for-profit agency specialises in the housing and care of older people who are homeless or vulnerable to homelessness.

Successful in her application, Rose moved into a large bedsit with a balcony in a Wintringham residence in inner Melbourne, which she calls 'heaven'. Staff and neighbours are lovely, she says, and she's close to the Victoria Market and other services such as libraries. Across the road is a beautiful park. 'Sometimes I just sit in the park and listen to the fountain.'

Mould problem left for 3 years without repairs

A retired couple in Melbourne have rented from a not-for-profit community housing provider for 6 years. For half of that time they had recurring mould problems.

When mould first appeared, in August 2019, the renters informed the landlord of the need for repairs that same month and dispatched a Consumer Affairs Victoria repairs notice. The notice was then ignored.

Over the next 3 years, the community housing provider sent inspectors to the property on several occasions to investigate the mould. However, no active repair work beyond the inspections was done.

The lack of action on mould coincided with inaction on other repairs the couple requested over time. Meanwhile, mould spread throughout the house, rotting all windowsills, and becoming a particular problem in the bedroom.

Our stories

Rose lost her daughter, her work and her home

Life for Rose, who is in her late 60s, changed completely in 2017 when her only daughter died of heart failure. Rose felt as if she had lost part of herself. Grief stricken, she stopped working soon after.

Then she became homeless.

A migrant to Australia, Rose does not have extended family here. After couch surfing and staying with friends, Rose contacted the homelessness statewide service, then moved into a rooming house in Melbourne's north run by a community housing provider.

'I just thought the rooming house is going to be my life forever,' she said.

Just before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Rose packed up all her belongings and sent them to her home country. 'I was thinking I would have to go back to live there. But then the lockdowns started and I was stuck.'

There was the occasional break when she went out for a drive or dinner with a good friend who lived not far away.

The renters approached Tenants Victoria. In August 2022, our lawyer Ailsa Brehney sent a letter of demand to the community housing provider requesting repairs be undertaken within 7 days. The following day, the landlord contacted our Mould Clinic confirming that they had arranged for the works to be conducted.

Within a fortnight, repairs commenced. The renters reported back that, for the first time, they felt that the landlord was taking the issue seriously and making efforts to fix it. The repairs were finished by late August, alongside the other overdue repairs.

Scott's 'home' uncomfortable and unsafe

Scott moved into a rooming house after renting with his father for 15 years. Over time that situation had become increasingly difficult.

Earlier, Scott, who is now in his mid-50s, was in employment, but mental and physical health issues made it increasingly challenging to work. Then there were rent increases. Relations became more tense between Scott and his father, who was dealing with his own health issues.

So, Scott, with assistance from a homelessness service, moved into a private rooming house in Melbourne's west.

There were many new challenges in the 7-bedroom, all-male rooming house. Residents used drugs and alcohol. Many were violent and engaged in criminal behaviour. Some had recently left prison.

Scott was assaulted twice and threatened with a knife. During the year he lived there, he had to call the police about 10 times and called ambulances for various residents.

It was one crisis after another, Scott said. His 'home' was uncomfortable and unsafe.

Tenants Victoria came into the picture when Catherine Dyer, our Rooming House Outreach Program worker, visited the rooming house with community health service IPC Health.

The health service completed an application to the Victorian Housing Register waiting list for social housing, which then enabled Catherine to submit referrals to social housing providers.

Meanwhile, tensions were escalating at the rooming house.

A few months after moving in Scott had adopted a cat, Booker. He looked after Booker with great care, but some residents mistreated the cat. Then another resident complained, and Scott was threatened with eviction.



Scott with his pet cat Booker in his new home, a bedsit in public housing.

At short notice, with support from Merri Outreach Support Service, Scott and Booker, moved into a bedsit in public housing in an area of Melbourne familiar to him. Scott describes living in this new place as 'peaceful, calm, relaxed, comfortable and serene'.

'Here, I can close my door, turn my TV on and zone out.'

Back in the rooming house Scott was unable to consider finding employment because life was so stressful – he could not even get enough sleep to function properly. In his new home he was able to start looking for work and has recently started a new job as a driver and warehouse worker.

Support for family facing eviction

In June 2023 a young woman contacted us about an application to VCAT to evict her father and her 4 siblings still living at home after her father received a notice to vacate for rent arrears.

Her father, whose income comes from a part-time job and the disability support pension, is a single dad.

He had signed a lease for the house in May 2018. Close to 5 years later, in late March 2023 the real estate agent sent the father a notice to vacate for rent arrears, then another notice in late April.

The father had fallen into rent arrears because he started paying rent weekly, rather than monthly, as a more manageable way to pay. However, he didn't realise that by changing his payments in this way he was getting behind.



Shehara represented the father at the VCAT hearing, where she raised the letter of support. The rental provider maintained that the father could not sustain the rent and should follow through on his notice of intention to vacate.

VCAT dismissed the application because the rental provider and agent did not act on the notice of intention to vacate by taking steps to advertise the property or find new tenants to move in.

The family was able to stay in their home of 5 years, and the father is now well informed about his rights as a renter.

Renting problems sparked Paige's interest in the law

Renting problems sparked Paige's interest in the law.

Law student Paige Santelli began volunteering with Tenants Victoria in June 2022, but their interest in tenancy law dates back much further than that.

'The reason I went to law school was to do tenancy law.'

Originally from the United States, Paige first came to Australia in 2018 to study for a semester of their undergraduate degree in anthropology, sociology, and biology. After graduation they returned to live in Melbourne, only to encounter problems as a renter in

The day he received the second notice the father phoned the agent, who, rather than informing him of his rights as a renter, told him that the problem would go away if he gave notice of his intention to vacate. Trusting the agent, the next day he visited the agency and wrote a letter giving notice of his intention to vacate.

When his oldest daughter, who lives independently, realised what had happened, she encouraged her father to withdraw the notice, which he did in early May via email.

The next day the agent stated they would get back to the father, but he did not hear anything after that ... until the rental provider applied to VCAT to evict the family for rent arrears.

The application said the rental provider and agent were concerned that the father could not sustain the rent.

The VCAT hearing was scheduled for 30 June. His daughter contacted us on 9 June via our renter support phone line to ask for legal advice regarding her father's situation.

He was unable to call himself because his work hours clash with our operating hours. Renters don't always contact us directly – sometimes friends or family call on their behalf.

Shehara Skilbeck, one of our lawyers, called the father to advise him on his rights as a renter.

She also referred the father to our financial counsellor, who after assessing his circumstances wrote a letter of support that said he could sustain the monthly repayments.



Paige's volunteering with Tenants Victoria led to them being awarded the Ian Malkin Internship Scholarship for University of Melbourne law students.

multiple rented homes. ‘Everyone I spoke to had similar issues,’ they said. The standout issue was moving into a rental on a lease-transfer basis, only to receive a notice to vacate a week later. Paige went to VCAT, which found – before the 2021 reforms of rental laws – that the notice to vacate was technically valid.

Their experiences as a renter sparked their interest in the legal system as a career. ‘The reason I went to law school was to do tenancy law,’ they said.

Paige started the postgraduate Juris Doctor course at the University of Melbourne in 2021. In 2022 former ABC broadcaster and lawyer Jon Faine came to speak to the students, telling them that when he was a law student he volunteered at the Tenants Union of Victoria. ‘I googled Tenants Victoria and applied the next day,’ Paige said.

Paige has worked collaboratively with our Client Services Team on many cases and projects including the winter Mould Clinic, which offers renters who meet eligibility criteria support for negotiating with rental providers and real estate agents, and for taking mould issues to VCAT. Paige has also drafted letters and VCAT applications for clients, attended hearings to take notes for the solicitors, helped community workers who call into our organisation support line, and drafted complaints to the Victorian Ombudsman that have resulted in conciliations.

Their volunteer work with Tenants Victoria led to them being awarded the Ian Malkin Internship Scholarship in 2022, which supports University of Melbourne Juris Doctor students who participate in internships with not-for-profit organisations or government organisations.

Paige expects to graduate at the end of 2024. Not interested in corporate law, they want to continue working in tenancy law on behalf of renters, such as in community legal centres. ‘I haven’t swayed from that role. It’s why I went to law school and it’s what I want to do when I leave.’

‘The lawyers at Tenants Victoria were very helpful and gave me clear legal advice and explained to me my rights as a tenant, all free of charge. I followed their advice and had a positive outcome for my problem. I am very grateful for their service. Thank you.’

- Comment from annual client survey

What our clients tell us:

74.4% of respondents to our client survey agreed that they took action on the advice we gave them

77.2% of respondents to our client survey agreed that after speaking to us they better understood their legal rights regarding their rental problems

70.2% of respondents to our client survey agreed they felt confident in our legal advice to fix their problem

‘This is a wonderful, much needed and vital service. I am both a tenant and a landlord and have firsthand experience of how weighted the system is against tenants. You need more staff to provide your service to more people. So more funding required – great job!’

- Comment from annual client survey





Lawyer Ailsa Breheny co-led our winter Mould Clinic.

Client services

Our Client Services Team continues to provide free and confidential rental law information, legal advice and casework assistance, rooming house outreach and financial counselling services to renters across Victoria. Our expert team worked tirelessly to respond to the continuing extremely high demand for renter support and advice as the rental crisis unfolded.

Rental Minimum Standards and Repair Hub

In late 2022 we were awarded a grant from the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner to establish the Rental Minimum Standards and Repair Hub. The hub will comprise an online self-help tool and a repair and compensation clinic. The online tool, the Repairs Toolkit, was developed in early 2023 by Tenants Victoria Lawyer Andrew Lopresti working with strategic design consultancy Paper Giant using human-centred design principles, and is due to be launched in October 2023. The Repairs Toolkit is a self-help tool for renters to both understand and enforce their rights. It will form the backbone of the Repair and Compensation Clinic, which will be designed in late 2023 for launch in early 2024.

Tenancy Referral Project

In August 2022 we published our Tenancy Referral Project Report which was prepared in collaboration with the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI). The

report arose from Tenants Victoria’s service experience during the COVID-19 pandemic, which suggested that there was minimal coordination of referrals throughout the renter support sector. The report made 14 recommendations, the first tranche of which were implemented by the Referrals Project undertaken by lawyer Libby Jedwab from late 2022 to June 2023. Referrals form a critical part of any service offering, and we look forward to further strengthening partnerships with other services who support renters.

Volunteer induction transformed

We continue to build our capacity to support paralegal volunteers to assist renters in Victoria. Our volunteer program is led by our Rental Support Services Manager, Georga Wootton, and allows law students, practical legal trainees and early career lawyers to build their legal skills by supporting renters at the coalface.

To increase our capacity to engage more volunteers, in early 2023 we commenced a project to improve and streamline our volunteer induction process. Led by Kylie Betts, our Director of People and Corporate Services, working closely with Georga Wootton, the project when complete will provide 12 online training modules covering topics such as ‘Introduction to VCAT’ and ‘Plain English Communication’.

Top 5 reasons for enquiries



1	Repairs
2	Notice to Vacate
3	Bond
4	Renter compensation claim
5	Lease breaking



From left, lawyers Agata Nabaglo and Shehara Skilbeck and law student volunteer William Heyward hit the road for information sessions in Tatura, Mooropna and Shepparton in the Goulburn Valley during Law Week in May 2023.

Legal services

In 2022-23, our intake and legal teams assisted 7960 individuals in 10,215 matters. This included 613 instances of extended legal assistance, such as drafting VCAT applications or letters for renters, negotiating with landlords, or representing renters at VCAT. We also assisted 454 community organisations in 1101 matters.

Financial counselling service

Our financial counselling service assists renters experiencing financial stress. This year we helped 283 renters in financial hardship to access debt relief and other vital supports.

In May 2023, our financial counsellor, Jacinta Morris, presented a talk at the on the increasing number of Victorians who are renters for life. Using her knowledge of the stresses on renters drawn from her work at Tenants Victoria, Jacinta painted a compelling picture of the cultural and policy changes needed as increasing numbers of Victorians rent for life.

Mould Clinic and Mould Report

Winter 2022 was the second year of our Mould Clinic. Led by our lawyers Ailsa Brehney and Andrew Lopresti, and supported by a group of volunteers, it assisted renters to understand their rights, negotiate with their rental provider and appear at VCAT.

For Tenants Victoria, Victorian Law Week 2023 was mould week. To launch our Mould Report on the first year of the Mould Clinic, we hosted a fascinating discussion with housing and health experts to examine the impact of the problem on renters. We also travelled to the Goulburn Valley and Gippsland in partnership with local libraries and neighbourhood houses to talk to renters about mould, and what their rental rights are.



Rental Support Services Manager Georga Wootton speaks at the launch of our Mould Report in May 2023.

Rooming House Outreach Program

Our Rooming House Outreach Worker, Catherine Dyer, supports rooming house residents in the north and west of Melbourne in partnership with local health and community services.

Drawing on her extensive knowledge, in January 2023 we made a submission with other community legal centres in response to the draft Residential Tenancies (Rooming House Standards) Regulations 2022. We advocated for better standards for rooming houses, and for better enforcement of these standards.

Our work at a glance

Provided legal information or advice to **7960** individuals **10,215** matters

Provided legal information or advice to **454** community organisations in **1,101** matters

Provided financial counselling for **283** renters in financial hardship

Rooming House Outreach Program supported **45** rooming house residents, including **93** referrals to other services



Former rooming house resident Deb (right) in her new home in social housing with Tenants Victoria outreach worker Catherine Dyer.

Community engagement

Our dynamic Community Engagement Team comprises lawyers, public policy and communications experts and community outreach specialists. The broad portfolio of work spans public advocacy, government relations and policy development as well as training, community development and grassroots outreach to diverse communities and other public stakeholders alongside digital communications and storytelling.

We provide helpful information on renting issues to renters, governments, councils, the legal sector, community organisations and the public via our website, training, public talks, media, social media and other means. A key feature of our work is to raise and centre the renter's voice as we engage with the broader community and individual renters about renters' rights and policy concerns, whether they live in houses, apartments, rooming houses, or other forms of accommodation. To this end, we convene a regular Renter Advisory Group drawn from regional and Melbourne renters to ensure the 'lived experience' of people who rent their homes is heard beyond the insights gained from our frontline service delivery.

In the 2022-23 year we also connected with 265 community leaders, organisations, and groups, including those that work with people facing greater barriers to accessing decent and affordable rented housing. Our community outreach focuses on people on low and moderate incomes from emerging multicultural communities, those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and people seeking safety from family violence.

2022 Victorian election

Before the November state election, we identified and advocated for 3 key policy priorities for the next State Government to tackle. Our proposed solutions included a timely alternative dispute resolution pathway for simple rental disputes, more investment in targeted support services for renters and a legislated 'fairness formula' to regulate rent rises.

Public outreach

With the end of the emergency phase of the pandemic, we organised more outreach events in person while maintaining a strong presence in virtual settings.

In October 2022, as renting exploded into daily headlines, we held the Let's Talk About Renting forum drilling down into the challenges of the private rental market before a live audience. Hosted by our Director of Community Engagement Farah Farouque, our panellists were Guardian Australia's inequality reporter Stephanie Convery, economist Brendan Coates from the Grattan Institute, and social and affordable housing expert Alex Dordevic. Then, as part of the MPavilion annual ideas festival we conceived and hosted a public event in the city parklands on the Labour Day weekend – Generation Rent Open



Above: Our Let's Talk About Renting forum in October 2022 brought together (from left) Guardian Australia's Stephanie Convery, housing expert Alex Dordevic, economist Brendan Coates from the Grattan Institute, and moderator Farah Farouque from Tenants Victoria. Right: Our Open Mic event for renters at MPavilion in March 2023.

Mic. This unique event generated considerable media interest, and enabled people who rent their homes to share stories about their experiences. Both these key events on our calendar were also turned into lively podcasts.

The platforms for our advocacy include social media and mainstream media, where our engagement remains strong and demand for our media commentary increased as vacancy rates tightened, and rents soared.

Tenants Victoria's mainstream media presence helped us highlight issues that matter to renters and advocate for change, in more than 125 reports in television, radio, online and newspaper outlets. That included reports in the Herald Sun, The Age, Domain, Ballarat Courier, Geelong Advertiser, Mansfield Courier, Warrnambool Standard, news.com.au, The Conversation, Channel 7 news and the Weekend Sunrise program, Channel 9 news, 3AW, SBS Arabic radio, SBS news, ABC TV and radio, Daily Mail, the Star newspapers and Guardian Australia.

All our social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, were valuable tools in distributing information to renters and referring them to information on our website.

Our popular Facebook Live video sessions tackled hot topics such as how to respond to rent increases. Our total reach on Facebook was 162,000 people.

On Twitter our posts were seen 124,084 times.

On Instagram, the most viewed post, seen by 7042 people, was promoting a renter forum in Tarneit in Melbourne's outer west as part of our outreach to an area with many renters. In total our posts reached 38,124 people.



Tenants Victoria highlighted renters' concerns in more than 125 reports in mainstream media. ▲

At the end of the 2022-23 year our monthly Renters Review newsletter, targeting renters as well as policy makers, had 7221 subscribers.

Website

Our extensive website, an encyclopaedia of renting rules, maintained by communications experts Jeannie Zakharov and Kelly McBrady working with lawyer Tracey Ryan provides practical answers to many questions people have about renting. It was visited by more than 570,000 people who generated 1.38 million page views. Improvements included updating our extensive 8-webpage section for residents of rooming houses, who often live with complex disadvantages.

Training

We offer training both in person and online for community legal centres and community organisations and information sessions, delivered by our expert Lead Lawyer for Community Education Ben Cording and supported by our training co-ordinator Rowena Hasbury. Topics we covered included repairs, rent arrears, bonds, family violence and tenancies, mould and evictions.

We ran 38 training sessions that reached 1521 participants. These included continued training for workers from community legal centres and community organisations, in particular those that deliver the Tenancy Assistance and Advocacy Program (TAAP) for Victorians in private rentals and Tenancy Plus services for renters in social housing.

Other organisations that we worked with included the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS), Djirra, the Aboriginal family violence prevention and legal service, Merri-bek City Council, Wyndham City Council and the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO).

We also explained renter rights in Victoria to incoming international students and support staff at the University of Melbourne.

In Melbourne's west

As part of our outreach to renters in the outer suburbs, we piloted a targeted My Renting Rights project for the 80,000 residents who are private renters in the fast-growing Wyndham local government area.

Working with local community services and Wyndham City Council which supported us with a grant, we held 5 rental rights workshops online and in person and distributed more than 3000 informative rental rights brochures in English as well as widely spoken community languages in the area, Arabic and Karen.

Additionally, to further reach residents in Wyndham, we devised a QR-code poster campaign in 3 of Wyndham's major shopping centres, directing local renters to the self-help resources on our website.



Alan Loow and Aguer Athian from our multicultural community engagement team discuss Tenants Victoria's Arabic rental rights brochure.

Diverse communities

Across Victoria, we aim to better respond to the challenges faced by multicultural communities, improving access to Tenants Victoria’s resources and increasing awareness of rental rights and our legal services. Our multilingual community engagement team comprising Aguer Athian, Alan Loow and Ramya Assaad who are fluent in community languages other than English – Arabic, Dinka, Mandarin, Cantonese and Malay – are key connectors to culturally diverse renters. Their extensive outreach work connects multicultural renters with information, self-help resources and, when needed, referrals to supports such as Tenants Victoria’s frontline services or the network of Tenancy Assistance and Advocacy Program services.

Our outreach included 3 large rental-rights forums in partnership with the Victorian Multicultural Commission and 10 small-group discussions with grassroots multicultural community groups that have the greatest need in culturally safe settings.

Our approaches include in-person interactions, phone calls, social media and use of the WhatsApp platform. Through our day-to-day outreach, awareness building and trust-building activities, we expanded our multicultural stakeholder network to encompass 49 additional grassroots organisations and cross-referral of complex renting cases to Tenants Victoria’s Client Services Team or Tenancy Assistance and Advocacy Program services.



Our work at a glance

We ran **38** training sessions that reached **1,521** participants

We connected with to **265** community leaders and grassroots organisations

Our website received **1.38 million** page views renters 

Most visited advice topics on the website

- Ending your lease
- Notice to vacate
- Lease breaking
- Repairs and maintenance
- Rental home is being sold



Lead Community Education Lawyer Ben Cording conducts an information session for recently arrived international students at the University of Melbourne.



July 2022, renters on low to middle incomes have told us about rent increases from \$30 a week to more than \$500 a week. We have seen a disturbing trend of some landlords profiteering from the shortage of rental stock as renters, unable to secure another home, are forced to accept unfairly high rent increases. Of those who cannot pay the increased amount, many have told us that they risk becoming homeless due to being unable to secure another suitable home.

The Reserve Bank has confirmed that advertised rents have grown markedly and finding a suitable rental property has become more difficult as vacancy rates have contracted. A striking development in Tenants Victoria's own experience is that pressure to obtain or retain a safe, secure, and affordable rental home has spread from lower-income groups and renters facing precarity linked to multiple disadvantages to people in the 'middle' who have jobs and long histories as private renters.

Tenants Victoria is also tracking an increase in renters being evicted for rent arrears as well as for property sales. These renters then risk homelessness due to the lack of affordable properties and the long waiting lists for public or community housing.

The reality for today's renters is that for more and more people renting is a permanent situation rather than a transition from the family home to home ownership – and governments at every level must respond to these changing circumstances.

In the social and economic context of more people renting their homes, and for longer, with rents escalating, our service faces a daily dilemma: we can only answer a proportion of inquiries to our advice lines. Demand from renters remains intense – and too often unmet – because of our resource constraints. In this context, amid a rent crisis, Victorian renters are being disadvantaged and urgently need more of the frontline legal-support services we offer.

Rental crisis hits hard

'The reality for today's renters is that for more and more people renting is a permanent situation rather than a transition from the family home to home ownership – and governments at every level must respond to these changing circumstances.'

Close to 30% of Victorian households rent their home today, with nearly 90% of all tenants finding their home in the capricious private rental market.

Amid wider cost-of-living pressures, rent inflation is a key concern for tenants and the frontline services that support them. In the tightened private rental market in Victoria vacancies have dropped to record lows of around 1% in Melbourne. Renters in regional Victoria also face considerable pressure, which in turn is putting pressure on labour supply because potential workers cannot find a place to live.

When vacancy rates are less than 3% a rental market is generally considered to be tight, leaving renters to compete for fewer available properties as rents rise. This scenario is proving deeply challenging for many Victorians as they try to secure a safe, secure and affordable rental home close to the jobs and services they and their families require to flourish.

Tenants Victoria's frontline services have also logged a pattern of rent increases. Since



Financial report

This financial year marks a satisfying financial achievement for Tenants Victoria with a modest surplus of \$71,651 after two years of consecutive losses. We are pleased to present the following financial highlights.

Total revenue for the year amounted to \$3.65 million, reflecting a 6% increase compared to the previous financial year.

We extend our appreciation to our valued funding providers, including the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Victoria Legal Aid, Consumer Affairs Victoria, and Financial Counselling Foundation. Their unwavering grant support has contributed to 95% of our total revenue. We also welcome the Victorian Legal Services Board and Wyndham City Council as new additions to our mission, accounting for 4% of our revenue. The contributions of generous donors through various channels remain invaluable.

Total expenses reached \$3.58 million, showing a 4% increase compared to the previous year.

Staff remuneration and benefits, totalling \$2.74 million, remain our largest expense item, arising mostly from the committed staff who help renters day to day. While this represents a slight increase from the FY22 equivalent of \$2.70 million, it has decreased slightly as a proportion of total expenses, accounting for 77% in FY23, compared to 78% in FY22. Notably, our investment in the Revenue Diversification Project and Volunteer Induction Project (60% of the full year Organisational Improvement and Consultancy Expenses) aims to drive strategic growth and ensure our long-term financial and operational sustainability. We achieved significant savings of \$59,000 in ICT expenditures, a result of our critical supplier selection process.

As of June 2023, Tenants Victoria maintains cash reserves of \$1.19 million which substantially contribute to the overall positive net asset position. These funds are prudently deposited in daily transaction accounts and short-term savings accounts and are set aside to fund longer term organisational improvement. Our external financial reporting has improved in FY23, which resulted in an efficient audit process. For internal management accounting, we introduced an improved budget and variance reporting process.

In conclusion, I am delighted to report that Tenants Victoria stands in a sound financial position as of FY23. Along with our ongoing dedication and prudent financial management we are well positioned to continue our important mission.



Jason Yao, CPA
Chief Financial Officer
Tenants Victoria

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

for the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Revenue from continuing activities	3,651,131	3,444,768
Employee benefits expenses	(2,742,502)	(2,703,755)
Information and communications technology expenses	(131,543)	(190,530)
Depreciation expenses	(205,842)	(217,916)
Organisational improvement and consultancy expenses	(118,179)	(76,804)
Administration expenses	(131,934)	(128,056)
Project expenses	(165,980)	(10,525)
Occupancy expenses	(22,505)	(55,530)
Library and resources	(21,314)	(7,086)
Legal fees	(1,455)	(12,889)
Interest expense – right of use assets	(37,273)	(43,582)
Other expenses	(953)	(11,297)
Surplus/(Deficit) before income tax	71,651	(13,202)
Income tax expense	-	-
Net surplus/(deficit) for the year	71,651	(13,202)
Other comprehensive income		
Other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax	-	-
Total comprehensive profit/(loss) for the year	71,651	(13,202)

Statement of Financial Position

as at 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,189,349	1,090,913
Trade and other receivables	33,222	10,000
Financial assets	582,832	579,064
Other current assets	49,482	23,922
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	1,854,885	1,703,899
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Trade and other receivables	153,585	100,054
Plant and equipment	60,115	77,849
Right of use assets	548,045	735,945
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	761,745	913,848
TOTAL ASSETS	2,616,630	2,617,747
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	147,759	128,761
Tax liabilities	47,669	39,265
Provisions - employee entitlements	158,270	156,018
Lease liabilities	165,099	143,798
Other current liabilities	381,750	391,573
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	900,547	859,415
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Provisions - employee entitlements	61,101	9,903
Lease liabilities	516,668	681,766
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	577,769	691,669
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,478,316	1,551,084
NET ASSETS	1,138,314	1,066,663
EQUITY		
Retained surplus	1,138,314	1,066,663
TOTAL EQUITY	1,138,314	1,066,663

Statement of Changes in Equity

for the year ended 30 June 2023

	Retained Surplus	Total
	\$	\$
Balance as at 1 July 2021	1,079,865	1,079,865
<u>Comprehensive Income</u>		
Deficit for the year	(13,202)	(13,202)
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive loss	(13,202)	(13,202)
Balance as at 30 June 2022	1,066,663	1,066,663
Balance as at 1 July 2022	1,066,663	1,066,663
<u>Comprehensive Income</u>		
Surplus for the year	71,651	71,651
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive profit	71,651	71,651
Balance as at 30 June 2023	1,138,314	1,138,314

Statement of Cash Flows

for the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Receipts from government and other sources	3,953,580	3,742,129
Payments to suppliers and employees	(3,677,304)	(3,602,008)
Interest received	7,808	2,131
Interest paid – right of use assets	(37,237)	(43,582)
Net cash provided by operating activities	<u>246,847</u>	<u>98,670</u>
CASH FLOW FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Withdrawals from security deposit	-	10,004
Payments for plant and equipment	(845)	-
Payments for term deposits	(3,768)	(579,363)
Net cash used in investing activities	<u>(4,613)</u>	<u>(569,359)</u>
CASH FLOW FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Repayments of lease liabilities	(143,798)	(130,392)
Net cash used in financing activities	<u>(143,798)</u>	<u>(130,392)</u>
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	98,436	(601,081)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	1,090,913	1,691,994
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	<u><u>1,189,349</u></u>	<u><u>1,090,913</u></u>





Kylie Betts - People and Culture Manager

A human resources leader who has worked in Australia and overseas, Kylie’s professional experience spans the corporate, disability and broader not-for-profit sector. She has worked in HR for the Energy Savings Trust in the UK, and in Melbourne for Kraft and the welfare agency Good Shepherd. Kylie places a high priority on a partnership approach within Tenants Victoria to develop staff and internal culture and shape organisational capability.



Farah Farouque - Director of Community Engagement

Farah leads the Community Engagement Team and her portfolio spans advocacy, policy and research, media and communications and training. Farah was previously Principal Advisor, Public Affairs and Policy, at the Brotherhood of St Laurence. Before joining the community sector, she was an Age journalist with roles including Law and Justice Editor, Social Affairs Editor and reporter from Federal Parliament’s Press Gallery and the Victorian Parliament Press Gallery. Farah is also the Board Chair of The Social Studio, a social enterprise working with young people from refugee backgrounds. Her professional awards include selection for the International Visitor Leadership Program in the United States and being a recipient of the Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence.

Our Senior Leadership Team

Jennifer Beveridge - Chief Executive Officer

Jennifer has been CEO of Tenants Victoria since June 2019. A collaborative not-for-profit leader, her experience spanning management and service delivery roles in housing, health, youth and community development over 25 years has been centred on the needs and aspirations of people in the community receiving those services. Driven by social justice values, Jennifer’s operational skills are complemented by a grasp of public policy detail and what’s required for stakeholder engagement and successful advocacy. Many of her most satisfying work outcomes, Jennifer says, have been achieved at times when public policy and funding constraints required bold decision-making.

Before she joined Tenants Victoria, Jennifer was CEO for 7 years at Eating Disorders Victoria. She has also worked at Jesuit Social Services and Merri Health and lectured at La Trobe University. Jennifer’s initial training was as a clinical speech pathologist. She also has two master’s degrees – a Master of Strategic Foresight and an MBA, both from Swinburne University. In 2023, Jennifer completed an Executive Certificate in Public Policy at Harvard University. She is also a Churchill Fellow.



Agata Wierzbowski - Director of Client Services (on leave)

Agata leads our interdisciplinary Client Services Team comprised of lawyers, outreach workers and intake workers. Her passion for building high-performing legal service teams has been shaped by over 10 years' practice experience in the community legal sector and beyond. She has worked in roles including as a solicitor at the Consumer Action Law Centre, policy manager at the Women's Legal Service Victoria, and most recently as Executive Officer and Principal Lawyer at the St Kilda Legal Service. Agata has served on community boards including at Social Security Rights Victoria. In 2015, she was awarded the Victorian Law Foundation Community Legal Centre Fellowship.



Carman Parsons - Director of Innovation

Carman Parsons is an experienced manager and leader who has worked in the Victorian legal-assistance sector for over 10 years on reforms to intake and referral, improving client experience, disaster legal services, online legal information and advice programs and diversity and inclusion action plans. Carman takes a curious and creative approach to finding innovative solutions, changing organisational mindsets and supporting her colleagues in complex and high-demand environments. Carman has qualifications in law, social policy and humanities and before joining the legal sector worked in sexual assault education and support, disability policy and diversity programs.



Amy Frew - Director of Client Services (Acting)

Amy Frew came to Tenants Victoria from the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA), where she held key legal roles in Darwin and Alice Springs. In Melbourne, she has previously worked as a solicitor at the intersection of law, policy and advocacy at the Human Rights Legal Centre. Amy brings to her role practical experience in the field, strong values and commitment to helping people uphold their rights. As Director of Client Services she supports our team of talented lawyers and other frontline workers who apply their professional skills to make a difference for renters in our community.



Phil Connell - Corporate Services Manager

Phil's responsibilities at Tenants Victoria include technology, business contracts and technical and management services. Following 10 years as a comedy TV producer for HBO, and 20 years as a business manager at Citigroup in New York and London, Phil moved to Melbourne and has spent the past 8 years in management roles in the not-for-profit space. Before joining Tenants Victoria, he was general manager of the Australian American Education Leadership Foundation, and corporate services manager at Crime Stoppers Victoria.



Board

Judith Dickson - Chair

Appointed: 23 January 2017

Judith practised as a litigation lawyer in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States before moving into legal education as a clinical academic at La Trobe Law School and then as Director of Practical Training at Leo Cussen Centre for Law. She now consults in legal education and training. Judith began her involvement with community legal centres as a law student volunteer and continued as a volunteer lawyer and as a member of management committees and boards. She was an early member of the Legal Aid Committee (Victoria) and a member of the board of PILCH (Victoria) (now Justice Connect), chairing its staffing sub-committee. She was on the international steering committee of GAJE (Global Alliance for Justice Education), chairing its first nominations committee and later its conference scholarship committee. She has also been a member of the executive committee of APLEC (Australasian Professional Legal Education Council).

Judith's professional life is guided by the principle that the law should support, not obstruct, practical social justice. She sees Tenants Victoria's work as also driven by that principle and is a determined supporter through her role as Chairperson of the board. Judith has a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Laws, Master of Laws and Master of Adult Education (Global).

Special responsibilities: Chairperson, from 24 September 2018



Jiayue Li

Appointed: 19 August 2019

Jiayue is a senior legal executive with extensive experience as a trusted advisor to senior stakeholders and company boards across a range of sectors, including financial services, commercial property and healthcare. Throughout her career, Jiayue has taken an interest in pro bono work with a focus on making legal services accessible to those who only infrequently interact with the legal and justice system.

Special responsibilities: Member of the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee and Chair from 3 October 2022.



Clinton Licht

Appointed: 1 December 2021

Clinton is a digital transformation executive who has led large organisational changes across the globe. He first understands a business's aims then leads the strategy and plan to achieve future goals for operational growth and consolidation. Clinton has significant experience in the understanding of financial management, audit practices, corporate governance skills and the willingness and ability to think and act strategically. Born in South Africa, and having travelled and lived extensively in various locations, Clinton brings diversity, experience and a perspective crossing different backgrounds and cultures to a broad range of challenges. He is passionate about giving back to the community.

Special responsibilities: Member of Governance Committee from 28 February 2022 and Chair from 27 February 2023.

Clinton is a full member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has undergraduate and master's degrees in finance and technology.

Kristie Looney

Appointed: 1 December 2021

Kristie is an experienced leader from the not-for-profit, social enterprise and social service sectors. She is a senior executive with Uniting Vic Tas where she heads up the Housing and Property division, responsible for the delivery of the social housing growth strategy. Kristie was the co-founder of a social-enterprise real estate business that generates profit to build homes for women and children at risk of homelessness.

She is passionate about cross-sector collaboration to develop innovative solutions to end homelessness. Her belief is that every person should have access to a safe, secure and affordable home, and that this has a direct impact on shaping just and healthy communities.

Kristie has a Bachelor of Social Science (Policy and Research) and a Master of Urban Planning.



Special responsibilities: Member of the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee from 28 November 2022.

Andrew Ogbourne

Appointed: 5 March 2018

Andrew is an information technology management consultant with extensive experience leading ICT and digital renewal initiatives across Australia. He has a passion for helping people and organisations, especially in the not-for-profit sector, to recognise and respond to the complex challenges and opportunities that contemporary technologies present. Andrew's expertise in IT strategy, governance, program delivery and operational management of IT functions in public, private and non-profit organisations, combined with his experience in risk management and organisational change, allow him to provide a unique and valuable perspective to Tenants Victoria.

Andrew founded Pentridge Community Garden as a hub for urban residents in Melbourne's north in 2017. Andrew has a



Bachelor of Science (Physics and Statistics) and is a Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Special responsibilities: Member of the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee until 28 November 2022 and Chair of the committee until 3 October 2022.

'This is a wonderful, much needed and vital service. I am both a tenant and a landlord and have firsthand experience of how weighted the system is against tenants. You need more staff to provide your service to more people. So more funding required – great job!'

- Comment from annual client survey



Colin Prasad

Appointed: 20 April 2020

Colin is a finance professional with nearly 30 years' experience in audit, industry and corporate finance roles in Australia and abroad. In his 'day job', Colin is a Director of Moore Australia (Melbourne) where he has provided important advice to not-for-profit boards. Having lived in eastern Europe for 5 years and travelled extensively for work and fun he has seen how people and societies live and work in many developed and developing nations. Colin cares about a cohesive society and proudly contributes to this with his work at Tenants Victoria. He has a Bachelor of Commerce (University of Melbourne) and Postgraduate Diploma in Corporate Governance. He is a Member, Chartered Accountant, of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CAANZ) and a Member of the Governance Institute of Australia.



Special responsibilities: Member of the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee.

Sarah Young

*Appointed: 19 August 2019
Resigned 27 February 2023*

Sarah is an experienced public sector manager having worked for 20 years in the local and state government and higher education sectors in Victoria and New Zealand. Sarah has expertise in marketing communications, community and stakeholder engagement and policy development. Sarah is passionate about public service. Her professional and voluntary work is focused on ensuring that the voices of Victoria's diverse community are heard on issues that affect them and advocating for policy change to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable members in our society. Sarah is currently taking a break from her career to raise a family and focus on her voluntary work.



Special responsibilities: Member and Chair of the Governance Committee until 27 February 2023.



'Thank you – I have been taken advantage of by my rental provider and you have helped me to realise and act on that. Much appreciated.'

- Comment from annual client survey



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**Tenants
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