



HOUSING GUIDE

STUDENT HOUSING SERVICES



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**VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**

MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

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STUDENT HOUSING SERVICES

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ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

Choosing the right type of housing can present a challenging task.

Before you start looking you must determine what you can afford.

What will be your source of income and how much of that income can you afford for housing?

Do a budget to identify your expenses.

The electronic budget planner on the Moneysmart website is ideal – www.moneysmart.gov.au

Next, consider your needs – for example, do you rely on public transport or will you need car parking? Do you need to be close to campus or an area for employment?

Write down a list of your needs and your budgeted amount for housing so you can take these into account when considering the options.

And lastly – improve your living skills by ensuring you know how to do your laundry, cook and care for yourself.

Accommodation options include:

- University student residences
- Commercial student apartments
- Shared housing
- Private rental
- Homestay
- Rooming Houses and hostels

Take time to explore your options and take temporary accommodation – hotels, motels, hostels and backpackers to give yourself time to inspect accommodation before signing any lease or agreement or paying any money.



VU ACCOMMODATION

If you have never lived out of home or wish to live in a University environment with planned social, recreational and academic activities, then choosing to live in one of the Victoria University student residences may be a great option.

Following are the contact details for each of Victoria University's residences.

UNILODGE @ VU

This new multi story complex located directly opposite VU's Footscray Park campus offers Studio, 2 and 6 bedroom luxury apartment living for 500 students! Fully furnished apartments, study rooms, in-house theatre and much more await you! Utilities and wifi are included in the rent.

Booking unilodge.com.au/lodge/vu/

Email info@unilodge.com.au

Phone 9687 9830

VICTORIA PLACE

Victoria Place is a purpose-built apartment complex located in Footscray, across the road from the Footscray Park Campus. It has 41 fully furnished self-contained apartments designed for students and two deluxe 3 bedroom units with ensuite and disability access.

Bookings vu.edu.au/campuses-services/our-facilities/accommodation/victoria-place

Email victoria.place@vu.edu.au

Phone 9919 4455

OFF CAMPUS ACCOMMODATION

In and around Melbourne, you can choose to rent a commercially operated Student apartment, a vacant property in the community, rent a room in a share house or live in a family home environment through Homestay.

You can find out more about different accommodation options by referring to the Share Housing, Renting, Homestay/Boarding, Hostels/Rooming Houses and Commercial Student Apartments Blocks sections in the Student Housing Guide.

If you are considering Off Campus Accommodation, Victoria University has a Student Housing Database which students can access. The database can be viewed by visiting Student Housing Services at vu.edu.au/housing

If you would like more help searching for accommodation, Student Housing Services coordinates a Housing Mentor Program for incoming students. This can also be accessed via vu.edu.au/housing

This program matches you with a current and experienced VU student who can help you with your search for accommodation. Student Housing Services also coordinates a House Hunting Friends Facebook Group where you can link in with other students looking for accommodation. To find out more visit vu.edu.au/facebook-groups

SHARE HOUSING

Choosing shared housing gives you the opportunity to live independently in a shared environment. You share the cost of the rent with others and share common areas such as the kitchen, bathroom and living room with other people living in the household.

Remember that as it is a shared arrangement people may tend to move in and out of the house. This can be great for interacting and meeting new people, but it may also create a challenging study environment.

JOINING A SHARED HOUSEHOLD

Living in a household and sharing the cost of rent and bills (and sometimes food) with other people makes sharing a cheaper housing option than renting on your own. In some instances, housemates take turns in sharing the cooking and put in money for communal living expenses (such as cleaning products).

It is less expensive if you choose to move into an established share house that has furniture, kitchen utensils and whitegoods (e.g. fridge, washing machine). When looking at moving into a shared household, always check what is included and what you need to bring to the house.

Some things to consider before you move in are:

- shared rental and living costs
- number of people in the household
- current tenancy arrangements
- distance to campus and public transport
- if landlord permission is required
- shared house expectations and rules
- condition of the property
- safety inside and outside of the property
- secure locks and smoke alarms.

The Housing Checklist (page 19) provides detailed questions to ask when considering and moving into a shared housing arrangement.

When sharing it is important to recognise that the Residential Tenancy Act 1997 does not differentiate between the rights and responsibilities of co-tenants in relation to each other. If something goes wrong, a landlord can pursue any one or all of the co-tenants for damages. Specifically, this means that you can be held responsible for the wrongdoings of your housemates. For this reason, it is important to ensure that you meet potential housemates and discuss living arrangements prior to moving into a shared household.

TIP

The Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria (DSCV) provides a free mediation service to help resolve disputes. Phone DSCV: 03 9603 8370

DISAGREEMENTS IN A SHARED HOUSE

Sometimes disagreements and disputes arise between housemates. Common areas of conflict include friends visiting or staying over, cleaning, food and different cultural needs or lifestyle habits.

If you find yourself in this situation remember good communication is essential. Try to talk through the problem directly with the other housemate(s) and focus on the issue. Remaining open to the other person's perspective and looking for areas of commonality will also help to resolve the disagreement.

As with other housing options, it is always a good idea to establish and agree upon the living arrangements prior to moving into a house. It is also a good idea to have regular meetings with your housemates to discuss chores, bills and social activities.

TIP

Ensure that you fully understand any tenancy documents before you sign them. Seek advice from Consumer Affairs Victoria or Senior Advisor Housing if you are unsure of your rights and responsibilities.

RENTING

Renting a property in the private housing market gives you the opportunity to live independently and to be self-reliant. For some students this choice provides an excellent option for privacy, autonomy and lifestyle independence.

This option however can be expensive as you are responsible for organising the tenancy, paying for the connection to utilities, paying the full rent and managing ongoing bills.

Please consider your budget carefully. It is recommended that you allow at least 35% of your income for rent.

You are also solely responsible for all the daily chores associated with living in a house. For example there is no sharing of dishes, cooking, grocery shopping or cleaning duties. Again, if you enjoy being self-sufficient and are organised these responsibilities may not be daunting.

FINDING A PRIVATE RENTAL

There are a few different ways of finding a rental property in the private market:

- VU Student Housing Services Database
- search the real estate websites
- visit real estate agencies
- rental property listings in newspapers such as the 'Herald Sun' or 'The Age'.

You must inspect each property you are interested in before applying. The web listing may contain Open for Inspection times or contact the Agent or landlord to arrange this.

When you decide to apply for a rental property, you will need to complete an application form. This contains a range of personal details including the contact details of referees. You will also be asked to provide details of employment and/other sources of income and rental history. You will also be asked to provide a copy of your driver's licence or passport.

TIP

Always complete a Condition Report before you move into a Rental Property. This important document is your written record of the condition of the premises (and may be used as evidence in any dispute about cleaning, damage or missing items).

If you would like help completing the application form, contact Student Housing Services Phone 9919 6100.

When inspecting a rental property it is a good idea to refer to a map and become familiar with where facilities (e.g. shops, public transport, chemist, doctor etc.) are located in relation to the property.

It can be difficult to remember all the things you need when inspecting the property and for this reason, take along the Housing Checklist (page 19). This is also handy for comparing properties.

ALLOW ENOUGH TIME TO FIND A RENTAL PROPERTY

Given that there is strong competition for affordable rental properties in Melbourne, it is advisable to allow yourself at least 4 weeks to find suitable housing, especially at the start of semester when many students are looking to secure affordable housing. This allows time to have a look at a range of properties on the market and helps you to find a property that suits your needs.

HOMESTAY

Homestay provides a cultural exchange between you and a local family or individual (called a Host). You live as a guest in the host's home. Unlike many other accommodation options you do not need to pay a bond, provide furniture, sign a lease or search for a property.

Living in a supported environment, you are provided with a clean furnished room (this includes items like a bed, desk, wardrobe, chair and a study lamp) access to bathroom and laundry facilities and meal services. Utilities (electricity, gas and water etc.) are also included. The minimum stay is 4 weeks.

Hosts offer ongoing support and orientation to the local area and facilities such as banks, post office, shops, public transport etc.

Homestay charges vary. As a general guide, it costs between A\$250 and A\$305 per week. The rate may depend on whether the host is offering a single or shared bedroom, the type of accommodation (house/unit) and the location of the residence. Homestay agencies who arrange the placement charge a placement fee. This is usually equal to one weeks rent.

Victoria University's preferred homestay provider is Australian Homestay Network (AHN). To find out more please refer to www.homestaynetwork.org/VU-students or www.homestaynetwork.org/VU-agents or phone +61 3 9435 6621 or 1300 MY STAY. AHN students are covered by insurances and have a 24/7 emergency phone line.

WHEN PROBLEMS ARISE IN HOMESTAY

In the event that a problem does occur, try to talk through the problem directly with the other person. Choose a time that you are both available and think ahead about what you want to say. It might also be helpful to write down the points you want to raise. Remember to stay focused on the issue and talk about the problem, not the person. Remaining open to new ideas and looking for areas where there is common interest can often help with reaching a resolution.

If you are reluctant to speak directly with the other person, then it is important that you contact the Homestay agent or Student Housing Services Phone 9919 6100.

The Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria (DSCV) also provides a mediation service. Phone 9603 8370; 1800 658 528 – toll free for regional callers.

For further information refer to the Understanding Your Rights and Responsibilities section.

TIP

A landlord cannot put additional people in a room without the consent of the current occupier.

TIP

Deal with the issue early. The longer a problem is left, the more difficult it becomes to resolve.



HOSTELS/ROOMING HOUSES

Any house or building that has four or more people who individually rent a room and share facilities may be classified as a hostel or rooming house and should be a registered business.

Hostels are popular amongst students who like living with other people in a communal environment. You can rent your own locked bedroom (single room) or share a bedroom with other students.

Bedrooms may be furnished with a bed, wardrobe, table and chair and lamp. You share the kitchen(s), dining room(s), laundry(s). Utilities are normally included in the rent unless separately metered.

Most hostels usually have a café where you can buy meals and the larger hostels often have gyms, bars, travel agents, and business facilities.

Some things to consider:

- if you asked to share your room, you have to agree first and your rent must be reduced
- the maximum bond you can be asked to pay is up to 14 days rent
- seek advice if you are asked to sign a tenancy agreement
- if you want to leave the rooming house, you need to give at least 2 business days notice for which you will need to pay rent.

STUDENT APARTMENTS

Student apartments are run by commercial operators. Apartments include bathrooms and kitchen facilities. If you enjoy independent living, this option may be worth considering.

The rooms are fully furnished with most complexes having a management team and usually security. There are different apartment configurations, including one bedroom, two bedroom and twin share.

Renting your own apartment may be expensive so many students tend to share an apartment. Shared rental means that each student has a locked bedroom and shares the kitchen, etc.

TIP

Rooming Houses and Hostels must be registered to ensure health, fire and safety requirements are met.

TIP

Leases for student apartments are normally 6 or 12 months. If you need to break a lease early, break lease costs will apply and may be quite substantial.

TIP

Costs can vary between the above mentioned options, so it is worth calling a few different accommodation providers and asking about their short and long term rates. There are also temporary accommodation listings (e.g. hotels, motels and backpackers) that can be accessed by visiting the Student Housing Services website vu.edu.au/housing

LIVING COSTS

The following table lists the average living costs per student for a room in an established household in the private market as compared to a room in a 6 bedroom apartment in UniLodge @ VU.

This is a guide only and costs are subject to increase and may vary depending on location, lifestyle needs and choices. Costs are calculated for one full year.

| | PRIVATE SHARE HOUSE | | UNILODGE @ VU | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| ESTABLISHMENT COSTS | | | | |
| Bond/damages/security deposit# | | \$300–650 | | \$1200 |
| Rent or fees in advance | | \$300–650 | | \$2167 |
| Application fee (non-refundable) | | 0 | | \$170 |
| Community Spirit Club | | | | \$100 |
| Homestarter kit (bedding etc) | | \$159-254 | | \$159-254 |
| Furniture, if required | | \$500+ | | 0 |
| TOTAL ESTABLISHMENT COSTS | | \$1259–\$2054 | | \$3769–\$3891 |
| WEEKLY COSTS | PER WEEK | PER YEAR* | PER WEEK | PER YEAR* |
| Rent/accommodation fees | \$180 | \$9360 | \$250 | \$13000 |
| Food/beverages | \$115 | \$5980 | \$115 | \$5980 |
| Public transport | \$30 | \$1560 | \$30 | \$1560 |
| Personal care | \$25 | \$1300 | \$25 | \$1300 |
| Entertainment, sport, hobbies | \$25 | \$1300 | \$25 | \$1300 |
| Mobile/internet | \$45 | \$2340 | \$30 | \$1560 |
| Utilities (gas, electricity, water) | \$30 | \$1560 | 0 | 0 |
| ESTIMATED MINIMAL LIVING COSTS | \$450 | \$23400 | \$475 | \$24700 |

A bond is refundable subject to no deductions for outstanding rent or damages.

TIP

Senior Student Advisors at Victoria University can provide you with information and advice on money management, tips to save money, debt management and inform you of your rights in relation to money and debt matters. You can make an appointment with a Senior Student Advisor by calling 9919 6100. Doing a budget will help you manage your money. For a useful budget planner visit www.moneysmart.gov.au

TIP

A useful website to find out about rental trends and housing costs is www.housing.vic.gov.au/publications/reports/reports/rental-report

RENTAL COSTS

It is important to consider the combined cost of rent, living expenses and transport when choosing rental accommodation in Melbourne.

A summary of the median rental prices for Inner, Middle and Outer Melbourne are featured in the table below.

| MEDIAN RENTAL PRICES PER WEEK (AS AT JUNE 2015) | | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| LOCALITY | 1 BEDROOM UNIT | 2 BEDROOM UNIT | 3 BEDROOM UNIT |
| Inner Melbourne | \$350 | \$450 | \$600 |
| Middle Melbourne | \$285 | \$350 | \$447 |
| Outer Melbourne | \$225 | \$300 | \$360 |
| SUBURBS (NEARBY TO VU CAMPUSES) | | | |
| CBD Melbourne | \$401 | \$522 | \$733 |
| Footscray | \$240 | \$353 | \$453 |
| St Albans | \$210* | \$270 | \$330 |
| Werribee | \$225* | \$250 | \$281 |
| Sunshine | \$200* | \$310 | \$330* |

Source: www.reiv.com.au/Property-Research/Rental-Data/Median-rents-by-suburb and www.realestate.com.au

*Accurate data for a 1 Bedroom unit is unavailable in current quarter.

INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT MORE ABOUT A LOCATION?

For a useful geographical map on rental prices across different Melbourne suburbs visit www.reiv.com.au/Property-Research/Rental-Data/Median-rents-by-suburb/1-bedroom-units

To find out more about each suburb (such as people, lifestyle and types of housing) visit www.realestate.com.au/neighbourhoods

TIP

Generally, rental accommodation becomes more expensive the closer it is located to the Melbourne CBD.

STEPS TO STARTING A TENANCY

1. Inspect Property
2. Lodge application.
3. Application accepted.
4. Real estate agent/landlord gives you a Residential Tenancy Agreement to read, understand and sign – keep a signed copy.
5. Pay the bond and one month's rent in advance for the house.
Note: if you are starting a tenancy in a rooming house and the rent is to be paid weekly, the rooming house owner cannot ask for more than 14 days rent in advance and the bond can not be more than 14 days rent. Refer to Rooming House section on page 5 of the Housing Guide.
6. You are provided with a Bond Lodgement Form to complete and sign. You keep one copy.
7. Real estate agent/landlord forwards the bond to the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority (RTBA) within 10 business days of receiving the bond money.
8. The RTBA sends you a receipt within 7 days of receiving the bond.
9. A Condition Report on the premises is given to you by the landlord/real estate agent. This very important document details the condition of the premises at the start of the tenancy. You have 3 business days from when you receive the keys to add your comments to this report and hand a copy back to the landlord or agent.
Note: It is also recommended that you take photographs of the condition of the property and any existing damage prior to moving in.
10. Return a copy of the Condition Report with your written comments within 3 working days to the landlord or real estate agent. Keep a signed copy.
11. Arrange connection of gas, electricity and water (In Rooming Houses these would be connected and cost included in the rent unless the room is separately metered.)
12. Settle in.

TIP

Keep all your tenancy documents (lease, condition report and any photos) rent receipts and correspondence with the real estate agent or landlord in one folder. Check that you receive receipts for the rent, bond and any bills. Also, remember the importance of checking the property location and the safety inside and outside of the property.

CONDITION REPORT

The Condition Report states the condition of the property when you moved in.

It is vital that you carefully go through the property room by room and either tick the column next to each item if you agree, or make a comment if you do not. Write in any additional item/s of damage you find that is not shown on the Condition Report. Take photos to support your comments and findings.

Return a copy of the Condition Report to the real estate agent or landlord within 3 working days of moving into the property.

The Condition Report provides the evidence to support a claim by either you or the landlord or real estate agent in the event of a dispute between you and the landlord at the end of your tenancy.

The Condition Report documents:

- state of cleanliness of the property
- state of the fixtures and fittings
- declares if there is any existing damage.

TIP

Use descriptive words on the Condition Report to describe state of cleanliness. e.g. moderately or heavily soiled instead of emotional words such as 'this place is filthy!' Describe damage accurately e.g. 6 slats of the lounge vertical blind are torn.

DURING A TENANCY

TENANT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Pay rent on time. If the rent is 14 days or more behind, the landlord or real estate agent issues you a Notice to Vacate.
- Take care to avoid damaging the property.
- Report any damage caused by you or your visitors.
- Notify the landlord or real estate agent of required repairs in writing.
- Connect utilities and telephone.
- Keep the property clean; maintain the garden and lawns (if any) as stated in the tenancy agreement.

LANDLORD/REAL ESTATE AGENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Lodge bond money with the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority (RTBA).
- Provide you with information – Consumer Affairs Victoria booklets 'Renting a Home: A Guide for Tenants' or 'Rooming Houses: A Guide for Residents & Operators'. Landlords/real estate agents can be fined up to \$500 for not providing this information.
- Must repair and maintain the property.
- Give you privacy and must give you a notice to visit or enter your property.



If you would like to discuss responsibilities during a tenancy or further information, contact:

Student Housing Services, Victoria University
Phone 9919 6100

Tenants Union of Victoria
www.tuv.org.au
Phone 9416 2577

Consumer Affairs Victoria
www.consumer.vic.gov.au
Phone 1300 558 181

MOVING

Some important things to take care of before you move out of a house include making sure that you have paid your share of the bills, cleaned your share of the house, disconnected the gas, etc. if relevant, and provided your forwarding address or have you mail redirected by Australia Post.

LEAVING A PROPERTY AT THE END OF AN EXPIRED LEASE

If you are living in shared housing (and not on the lease), tell your housemate/s that you want to leave and give them an exit date. Your housemate/s can then decide whether they want to advertise for a new housemate.

If you are on the lease, you need to tell your housemates and give 28 days written notice to the landlord or real estate agent of your intention to vacate. Your housemates can then decide whether to advertise for a new housemate or also give 28 days written notice to vacate to the landlord or agent.

If you are living in your own rental property, you need to give at least 28 days notice in writing to the landlord or real-estate agent.

THE FINAL INSPECTION

The real-estate agent or landlord has 10 working days from when you vacate the property to:

- undertake the final condition inspection to ensure the property is clean and undamaged
- process your bond claim for refund
- notify you of any issues of dispute such as cleaning or damage
- and if there is an issue, lodge an application with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for the matter to be heard.

Leave the property in the same or better condition as when you signed the lease. Prior to the final inspection, repair any damage to the property that may have occurred. Remember to take all your belongings.

Share households usually have copies of all bills sent prior to the inspection date. You will need to pay your share of the utility bills (water, gas, electricity and phone) on your vacating date. All keys and borrowed goods also need to be returned to the landlord on the vacating date. Extra rent may be charged if the keys are returned late.

TIP

Ignoring your responsibilities may have an impact on the ability of future students to arrange accommodation with landlords. You may also have renting problems if you try to rent in the future.

BREAKING A LEASE EARLY

If your lease (contract or agreement) has not yet expired and you want to break it early, then you may be liable to pay the rent until the property is re-let. This may include the re-let fee and any additional advertising fees.

The landlord needs to take all reasonable action to re-let a vacant property and cannot discriminate against potential tenants. Phone the landlord regularly to see if they have re-let the property.

The re-letting provision does not apply to hostels, rooming houses (unless signed into a contract) or shared housing situations. See Student Housing Services asap if you need advice.

Landlords may also legally apply to the Victorian Civil Administration Tribunal (VCAT) for you to pay compensation if you break your lease early.

For free confidential advice, contact Student Housing Services
Phone 9919 6100

Email housing@vu.edu.au

You can advertise for free on VU's Student Housing database or with another tertiary institution to see if another student will take over your lease when you leave. If you have immediate reasons for breaking the lease, such as the rented property being unfit for human use or major repairs have not been undertaken as requested, seek advice from:

Student Housing Services Phone 9919 6100
Tenants Union of Victoria Phone 9416 2577

CLEANING

Final cleaning includes:

- carpets are cleaned and lawns mowed
- all surfaces (benches, floors and oven top) are dirt and stain free
- the oven/griller and bathroom/laundry have been cleaned
- newspapers are recycled and all rubbish placed out for collection
- all belongings (furniture, clothes, books, PC and pot plants) have been removed. This includes trying to find the owner (or friends of) belongings left behind that are not yours.

In shared households, bedroom cleaning is 100% the responsibility of the person who sleeps/slept in it. Cleaning of communal areas (kitchen, lounge, bathroom, laundry and garden) is shared equally between all housemates. Be aware that failure to clean adequately may result in the landlord claiming commercial cleaning costs (this can amount to hundreds of dollars).

STORAGE

If you have a household of furniture including bed/s, wardrobe, bookshelf, chest of drawers, washing machine, fridge, microwave, sofa, table and chairs, bike, clothes, books, PC, desk, TV and stereo, you may want to use a removalist and hire storage to keep your furniture.

Compare prices of storage companies and removalists listed on the internet or in the local newspaper and yellow pages. Check with removalists how big their truck is, if insurance is included and if the quoted removalist price is for 1 or 2 people.

TIP

It can be expensive to break a lease. Before entering into a fixed term tenancy agreement, think about your likelihood of staying at the property for the full period of the lease.

TIP

You may be able to acquire storage boxes free from supermarkets. Ask friends if they have a spare room or garage that you can rent short-term to store your stuff.

BOND RETURNS

Complete a Bond Claim form in pen – avoid leaving any blank sections on the form and never sign a blank Bond Claim form. Ensure you bank account details and other form sections are completed correctly and that you sign it the same way you did when it was first lodged. Bond refund is usually returned in 2-3 business days. The RTBA provides no counter cheques and the Bond Claim form must be signed by the landlord before lodging.

If you paid a bond/security deposit in shared housing that was lodged with the RTBA, then you need to complete a Tenant Transfer form. The new tenant (or remaining tenants) pay you the bond money you are owed. Any new tenant is then included on the lease and their share of the bond is recorded in their name. You should check with the real estate agent/landlord that your name has been removed from the lease.

CANCELLING THE GAS, ELECTRICITY, WATER, PHONE AND INTERNET

If the utilities account/s are in your name, you need to give at least 48 hours notice to your retailer prior to vacating to ensure the final readings are done to avoid being charged for utilities after you vacate. In most instances you can do these arrangements on-line.

MAIL REDIRECTION

Complete a Mail Redirection form on-line with Australia Post to have your mail sent from your current address to another local or overseas address. The cost of this service is around \$23 per month and you can organise it in advance. Redirecting of letters overseas does incur extra costs – see Aust Post website for more information.

TIP

The Residential Tenancy Bond Authority (RTBA) will not accept a Bond Claim form if it has been altered in any way. If a tenant, landlord or real estate agent needs to make any changes to the form, they must complete a new Bond Claim form.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

When you start renting a property, you enter into a lease. There are two types of leases: fixed term and periodic. Fixed term leases are for a set period of time, usually 6 or 12 months. A periodic lease generally runs from month to month.

It is important to understand that a lease is a legally binding contract between you and the landlord. If you break a lease (e.g. leave before the end of the agreed time period), it can be very costly. For this reason, only sign a fixed term lease if you are sure that you want to stay at the property for the entire period of the lease.

Remember that you are entitled to negotiate the terms of the lease with the landlord – the law does not require that a lease is for 6 or 12 months. It is just common practice. For example, you can ask the landlord to change the lease period to fit the academic year.

If you are renting a property with other people, you and the other tenants all need to sign the lease.

If you are moving into an already established share house, you should request written permission from the landlord to have your name added to the tenancy agreement. Having your name on the lease gives you the same rights as your housemates.

You are, however, also equally responsible for what happens in the house. For example, you are equally responsible for any damage to the property and non payment of rent.

If someone is moving out as you move in, make sure that you both sign a Bond Transfer form prior to paying the bond money to the tenant who is leaving. Ask the landlord or agent to come and inspect the property and complete a new Condition Report so you are not held responsible for any damage that might have occurred before you moved into the house.

There are some circumstances where you may be in a sub-letting arrangement. This is where a tenant assumes the role of landlord and sub-lets property. Your rights and responsibilities are the same as a tenant under the Residential Tenancies Act.

More information on this type of housing arrangement is available from:

Tenants Union of Victoria
Phone 9416 2577

Consumer Affairs Victoria
Phone 1300 51 81 81

As a tenant, it is important that you read *Renting a Home: A Guide for Tenants* or *Rooming Houses: A Guide for Residents*, produced by Consumer Affairs Victoria.

These booklets provide information about yours and your landlord's/rooming house owner's rights and responsibilities. It is required by law that you are given one of these guides by the landlord or real estate agent. Student Housing Services also has copies of these booklets.

If you want to discuss a tenancy issue, you can contact:

Student Housing Services
Phone 9919 6100

Tenants Union of Victoria
www.tuv.org.au – useful housing factsheets
Phone 9416 2577

Consumer Affairs Victoria
www.consumer.vic.gov.au
Phone 1300 558 181

TIP

It is wise to do as much research as possible on your rights and responsibilities prior to entering into any tenancy arrangement. Tenancy Law can be complicated and the onus of responsibility is with you in understanding your rights and obligations.

HOUSING WEBSITES

There are some excellent housing resources available online to help guide you through the rental and shared house environment.

Check out the following websites:

VU HOUSING SERVICES AND HOUSING DATABASE

Provides housing information and vacant rental and share housing listings
vu.edu.au/housing

TENANTS UNION OF VICTORIA

Provides many useful fact sheets and an excellent section on Student Housing
www.tuv.org.au

CONSUMER AFFAIRS VICTORIAS

Provides rental information and forms
www.consumer.vic.gov.au

MONEYSMART

Provides useful short videos to help you prepare for moving out of home
www.moneysmart.gov.au/life-events-and-you/under-25s/moving-out-of-home

COMMUNITY HOUSING

Provides details of all Community Housing organisations
www.chfv.org.au

ACCOMMODATION WEBSITES

www.domain.com.au
www.realestate.com.au
www.flatmates.com.au
www.flatmatefinders.com.au
www.housemates.com.au

HOMESTAY

www.homestaynetwork.org

REAL ESTATE INSTITUTE OF VICTORIA

www.reiv.com.au

SUSTAINABLE RENTING

Tips on how to reduce your environmental impact
www.environmentvictoria.org.au/rentersguide
Save on energy and your power bill
www.switchon.vic.gov.au

GOVERNMENT BOND ASSISTANCE

www.housing.vic.gov.au/apply-bond-loan

CRISIS ACCOMMODATION

Youth www.frontyard.org
Adult & Family www.melbournecitymission.org.au
Adult www.melbourne.homeless.org.au

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING MANAGEMENT

www.ych.org.au
www.salvationarmy.org.au

PUBLIC HOUSING

www.housing.vic.gov.au

DISPUTE SETTLEMENT CENTRE OF VICTORIA

www.disputes.vic.gov.au

VICTORIA CIVIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL (VCAT)

www.vcat.vic.gov.au

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES BOND AUTHORITY

www.rentalbonds.vic.gov.au

STUDY MELBOURNE STUDENT CENTRE

for international students at risk of homelessness
www.studymelbourne.vic.gov.au

HOUSING CHECKLIST

ADDRESS

Property 1

Property 2

BEFORE YOU START LOOKING

WHAT CAN YOU AFFORD?

| | |
|--|--|
| What area(s) do you want to live in? | |
| What area(s) can you afford? | |
| Can you afford to live alone and pay all the bills or do you want to live with others? | |
| How much is the bond and rent in advance? | |
| Have you checked whether you are eligible for financial assistance through Centrelink? | |
| How much is the gas, electricity, water and phone? | |
| What furniture, utensils and linen do you need? | |

IF YOU ARE CHOOSING SHARE HOUSING, DO YOU WANT TO LIVE WITH

| | |
|---|--|
| Males or females? | |
| Older or younger people? | |
| Students, unemployed or working people? | |
| People who smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol or take drugs? | |
| Messy or tidy people? | |
| People who keep different hours to you? | |

COMPARING PROPERTIES

(TICK WHAT IS PROVIDED ✓)

HOUSING QUESTIONS GENERAL

| | PROPERTY 1 | PROPERTY 2 |
|---|------------|------------|
| Will you be sharing with anyone? | | |
| What is the landlord's name, phone number and | | |
| How close is public transport? | | |
| Is the property safe inside and outside? | | |
| Are there any support services nearby? | | |
| Is there a working smoke alarm? | | |
| Do all the windows and doors open/lock? | | |
| Is the area quiet or noisy? | | |
| Is there a garden? If so, who maintains it? | | |
| How long will it take you to get to campus? | | |
| Are pets allowed at the property? | | |
| Does the household have any specific religious or cultural needs? | | |
| Is the property accessible for people with a disability? | | |

TIP

Smoke detectors are compulsory in all properties. Your life could depend on it so ensure you test it regularly and change the battery.

RENT

| | PROPERTY 1 | PROPERTY 2 |
|--|------------|------------|
| How much is the rent? | | |
| Is this rent for a single or shared bedroom? | | |
| Does the rent include bills? | | |

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

| | PROPERTY 1 | PROPERTY 2 |
|--|------------|------------|
| How much is the bond? | | |
| How will the bond be kept? | | |
| Has a Condition Report been completed, signed and provided to the landlord and tenant? | | |
| How long is the lease? | | |
| How much written notice do you need to give to end the lease? | | |
| How much will it cost to break your lease early? | | |
| How many people are on the lease? | | |
| Can I put my name on the lease/tenancy agreement? | | |

HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES AND RULES

| | PROPERTY 1 | PROPERTY 2 |
|--|------------|------------|
| Who buys and pays for the food? | | |
| Who does the cooking? What type of food is eaten? | | |
| Are any meals shared or provided? | | |
| Who does the grocery shopping? | | |
| Who pays for the general household items (e.g. cleaning products)? | | |
| Do tenants shop as a group? | | |
| Who does the cleaning? | | |
| Are friends/family able to stay regularly and do they contribute to the bills? | | |
| Can friends and family visit? | | |
| What sustainable practices are used at the property? (e.g. recycling, water and power usage) | | |

GAS, ELECTRICITY AND WATER BILLS

TIP

The tenant needs to connect the utilities if moving into a vacant property.

(TICK WHAT IS PROVIDED ✓)

| | PROPERTY 1 | PROPERTY 2 |
|--|------------|------------|
| Are there any water or heating restrictions? | | |
| Who pays the bills? | | |
| How are the bills divided? | | |

FOXTEL AND INTERNET

| | PROPERTY 1 | PROPERTY 2 |
|--|------------|------------|
| Is Foxtel television provided? Does this cost extra? | | |
| Is internet access provided? Does this cost extra? | | |

BEDROOM FURNITURE

| PROPERTY 1 | ✓ | PROPERTY 2 | ✓ |
|------------|---|------------|---|
| Bed | | Bed | |
| Wardrobe | | Wardrobe | |
| Desk | | Desk | |
| Drawers | | Drawers | |
| Heater | | Heater | |
| Fan | | Fan | |
| Computer | | Computer | |
| Lamp | | Lamp | |
| Other | | Other | |

WHAT IS AVAILABLE FOR SHARED USE

(TICK WHAT IS PROVIDED ✓)

| PROPERTY 1 ✓ | PROPERTY 2 ✓ |
|---|---|
| DVD Player / Games Console | DVD Player / Games Console |
| Computer / printer / internet | Computer / printer / internet |
| Kettle / toaster / rice cooker | Kettle / toaster / rice cooker |
| Cutlery / plates / cups | Cutlery / plates / cups |
| Linen – pillow / sheets / doona / blankets / towels | Linen – pillow / sheets / doona / blankets / towels |
| Car parking | Car parking |
| Other (e.g. soap butter, milk, sugar, coffee toilet paper, cleaning products) | Other (e.g. soap butter, milk, sugar, coffee toilet paper, cleaning products) |

RECEIPTS (SAMPLES ONLY)

Bond Receipt (Example)

Date Paid:

(Name of person money paid to) received \$ (amount) for bond from (your name and new address):

Both Signatures:

Rent Receipt (Example)

Date Paid:

(Name of person money paid to) received \$ (amount) from (your name) for (how many) weeks rent) for address:

Both Signatures:

SUPPORT SERVICES

If you are experiencing difficulties outside of Victoria University Student Wellbeing office hours, there are many free support services available to help you either by web or phone.

COUNSELLING SERVICES

| SERVICE | DESCRIPTION | CONTACT |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| LifeLine | Lifeline provides a confidential telephone counselling services service. | Phone 13 11 14 www.lifeline.org.au |
| Suicide Line | Suicide prevention and counselling and support. | Phone 1300 651 251 |
| Beyond Blue Info Line | Provides access to information, advice and referrals around depression, anxiety and related conditions. | Phone 1300 22 46 36 www.beyondblue.org.au |
| Gay and Lesbian Switchboard Victoria | Counselling and information. | Phone 1800 184 527 6–10pm daily and 2–10pm Wednesday |

CRISIS ACCOMMODATION

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Crisis Accommodation Info Line | Provides a variety of support to people who are homeless or risk of homelessness. | Phone 1800 627 727 10am – Midnight daily |
|--------------------------------|---|---|

OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS

| | | |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| Emergency | Fire, Police, and Ambulance services. | Phone 000 |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|-----------|

STUDENT WELLBEING STUDENT SERVICES

The university provides a range of services to assist you.

STUDENT ADVISING

CENTRELINK

- ✓ advocacy
- ✓ payment advice and entitlements
- ✓ application assistance.

FINANCES

- ✓ money management
- ✓ debtor rights
- ✓ using credit
- ✓ contract advice
- ✓ short term interest free student loans of up to \$500 (upon approval)
- ✓ eligibility for HECS Help
- ✓ fee extensions and fee waivers.

HOUSING

- ✓ tenancy laws and issues
- ✓ database of student housing options
- ✓ housing mentoring program
- ✓ House Hunting Friends Facebook Group
- ✓ utility aid and payment advice.

OTHER ISSUES

- ✓ transition issues
- ✓ university processes
- ✓ legal information and referral
- ✓ fines & infringements
- ✓ referrals to external community agencies.

vu.edu.au/facilities-and-services

STUDENT CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- ✓ part time & casual job vacancies
- ✓ Student Ambassador Program
- ✓ internships & external opportunities
- ✓ preparing for work
- ✓ industry mentoring programs.

vu.edu.au/careers/career-services-for-students

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

- ✓ workshops & study groups
- ✓ academic support & development
- ✓ peer Learning programs
- ✓ academic writing & study skills
- ✓ maths, statistics & physics support.

vu.edu.au/campuses-services/student-support/academic-support-development

STUDENT LIFE

- ✓ clubs & societies
- ✓ leadership programs
- ✓ social events
- ✓ orientation.

STUDENT WELLBEING

- ✓ counselling
- ✓ disability services
- ✓ advocacy service
- ✓ safer communities chaplaincy.

vu.edu.au/current-students/services-for-current-students



CONTACT US

STUDENT HOUSING SERVICES

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

VU.EDU.AU/HOUSING

EMAIL.HOUSING@VU.EDU.AU

PHONE 9919 6100

DISCLAIMER

Please note this publication has been produced to provide housing information and should be treated as a guide only. Victoria University accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of information and reserves the right to make changes to the document at any time in its absolute discretion. The onus of responsibility is with each student to assess whether any housing option outlined in this publication is suitable to his/her own needs. Any arrangements, financial or otherwise, are strictly between the student and the share house/landlord/agency/agent.

While every reasonable effort has been made to ensure this information is correct, details are subject to change. Publication date January 2016