

SUMMER 2025

Thrive

community newsletter

Welcome to your summer edition of Thrive.

In this edition, meet Unison renter Carlos, discover tips for cutting air con costs, learn about how you can join our Tenant Advisory Group and hear from Unison CEO, James, about the opening of Make Room.

Message from James King, Unison CEO

Hi everyone,

At Unison, our vision is to create thriving communities, and we know this starts with listening to your feedback. As part of our Renter Satisfaction Plan, we're refreshing our Tenant Advisory Group (TAG), a space for renters to share ideas and help us improve our services. You can read more about our recruitment plan and ways to get involved in this newsletter.

We continue our efforts to break the cycle of homelessness in Melbourne. One standout project is Make Room, a partnership with the City of Melbourne and Homes Victoria. Together, we've transformed a council-owned building at 602 Little Bourke Street into specialist accommodation for up to 50 residents at a time, complete with health and social support services. We are excited to welcome our first residents to the building.

There are no quiet periods in our work – there's always more to do. More housing is needed, as Melbourne residents continue to struggle amid the cost-of-living crisis. During these challenges, the Unison Team remains committed to prioritising current and future renters. We're always looking for ways to improve and will continue this work into 2025 and beyond.

Warm regards,
James



unison  **Unison**
Communities
that thrive

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If you need support
from an interpreter
please let us know.

Improving your renter experience

We're committed to enhancing your renting experience based on feedback from the 2023 Renter Satisfaction Survey.

Here's what we're doing:

Improved Notifications for Place Manager

Changes: You'll now receive timely updates whenever your Place Manager changes, keeping you informed and supported.

Helping You Understand Your Rights: Place Managers will check in with new renters within the first six weeks of tenancy and conduct a property inspection within three months. This ensures that renters understand their rights and helps to build a stronger relationship.

More Ways for You to Share Your Ideas:

We're exploring new ways to gather your feedback beyond regular surveys, making it easier for you to share your thoughts.



Making Complaints Easier:

Our staff are receiving training on how to handle complaints effectively, and we're reviewing our processes to ensure your concerns are addressed promptly.

Getting You Involved in Your Community: Look out for notices about community activities in your building or speak with your Place Manager for more ways to get involved.

Your Voice Matters – Join the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG)

Help Shape the Future of Housing at Unison

At Unison, renters are at the heart of everything we do. Your voice is vital in shaping services, improving communication, and making decisions that benefit the entire community.

We're refreshing our Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) as part of the Renter Satisfaction Action Plan and are looking for passionate renters to join.

Why Join TAG?

- Represent renters' interests and ensure your voice is heard.
- Share ideas to improve services and communication.
- Provide feedback on policies and service changes.
- Access training and skill development opportunities.

Who Can Join?

We're looking for renters who:

- Want to make a positive difference.
- Can communicate clearly and respect diverse perspectives.

- Are ready to represent the views of other renters.

TAG membership is open to renters over 18 who have been with Unison for at least one year. Members serve a two-year term, with the option to re-apply for up to six years.

How to Apply:

Applications close **February 3, 2025**.

- Use the QR code to access the application form.
- Talk to your Place Manager if you'd like more information.
- Prefer a paper form? Pick one up from your Place Manager.

Your voice can shape the future of housing at Unison. Don't miss this opportunity – apply today!



Meet Carlos



For many residents, there is a sense of “coming home,” when they settle into their Unison home. For Carlos, *“it is the best of the best!”*

Carlos is Argentinian born. He and his family moved to Melbourne’s West in the 70’s when he was a young boy. After his school years he helped his dad in his carpentry business.

A life of health challenges does not show as he smiles broadly when talking about his apartment. *“It is great! It is close to public transport and is in the heart of all the shops.”*

Carlos proudly shows off his one-bedroom unit. *“I can get around easily with my walker and I have lots of storage!”*

“This is my home for life!” he says with a big grin.

Carlos is part of our Renter Story Series. You can read his full story here: <https://unison.org.au/news/finding-a-home-for-life-with-unison-housing>

Cut your Air Con power costs this summer

It is lovely to have a cool home when the sun is blazing outside. Here are some tips to stay cool without high energy bills.

If you have air conditioning:

- Set your AC to 22-24°C for comfort and to lower power use.
- Use a timer to turn off your AC when it’s not needed.
- Check before leaving home to ensure the AC is off.

Other tips:

- Close blinds to keep your home cool.
- Close doors to rooms you aren’t using to keep cool air where you need it most.
- Wear light, loose clothing made of breathable fabrics like cotton.

IMPORTANT UPDATE!

New 24/7 Maintenance Number for Social and Affordable Housing Renters

Unison’s main maintenance contact number has changed for all social and affordable housing renters.

Please update your records to the new number:

1800 864 766 (1800 UNISON).

This number is available 24/7 for all maintenance requests. Save it in your phone or directory to avoid delays.

Maintenance Numbers for Transitional Housing and Kensington Renters

If you live in transitional housing or a DFFH property in Kensington, your maintenance numbers remain the same:

- During Office Hours: Call your housing worker at 03 9688 8300.
- After Hours, Weekends, and Public Holidays: Call 131 172 for urgent maintenance issues.



Are you in financial hardship? Have a chat to your Place Manager

We encourage renters to discuss any cost-of-living pressures with your Place Manager as soon as possible, including challenges you have with rent payments. We can discuss options and work with you to help with your rent payments and link you in with other services to help with your finances.

Free financial hardship assistance is available including from:

- Anglicare Victoria Financial Counselling: Phone 1800 809 722
- National Debt Helpline: 1800 007 007
- Uniting Vic Tas Financial Counselling: 03 9192 8100
- Gambler's Help (24/7): 1800 858 858
- Salvation Army Financial Counselling Team: 1800 722 363

Ask Izzy- Askizzy.org.au

Ask Izzy is an easy-to-use website that connects people with a wide range of support services including a meal, money help, family violence support, housing and counselling. It is free and anonymous. Those on Telstra and Vodaphone mobile networks can access Ask Izzy via your phone even if you don't have credit or Wi-Fi access.



CCTV: Ensuring Safety and Privacy

Unison uses CCTV in common areas of some multi- unit buildings to ensure the safety of renters, visitors, staff, and property. If a crime occurs, CCTV footage can only be shared with the Police as part of their investigation.

Under privacy law, Unison cannot release footage to renters or visitors. Please contact Victoria Police on 131 444 to request footage. In emergencies, call 000.

Help is available if you need support

- Beyond Blue (24/7): 1300 224 636 (www.beyondblue.org.au)
- Lifeline (24/7): 13 11 14 (www.lifeline.org.au)
- Suicide Call Back Service (24/7): 1300 659 467
- 1800 RESPECT: 1800 737 732

Feedback

Unison is committed to providing quality services to our clients, renters and community. To help us do this, we welcome your feedback and ideas for your Thrive newsletter. Please email us at communications@unison.org.au to contribute.