

SUMMER 2025

Thrive

community newsletter

Welcome to your summer edition of Thrive

Explore our new website, meet Unison renter Paul, check out insights from the 2025 renter survey, learn about our coffee van pilot and the new Kensington café launched with VMCH.

Message from James

Hi everyone,

I recently had the pleasure of opening our new café at 56 Derby Street in Kensington Estate – a vibrant community of public, social, and affordable homes. The idea to transform a dormant site into a community café came from a former Tenancy Advisory Group member, proving that some of the best ideas come from our renters. So please, keep them coming.

The café, run with VMCH's social enterprise, creates jobs for people with disability and is already a hit. Last year, we trialled a free coffee van at four Unison sites, and feedback was clear: casual spaces build real connections. They move us beyond emails, inspections, and rent talks. They're where issues get sorted before they escalate. We'll keep building partnerships like this because they work.

But it's not all about coffee. Our Marshall Street redevelopment in Newtown in Geelong is

powering ahead. We've just launched our new website, shaped by renter feedback, designed for easier access.

Thanks to everyone helping us make these changes happen. It's going to be a big year ahead. Yes, we have developments and new enterprise partnerships in the pipeline, but our focus is clear: getting the basics right – safety, communication, and connection.

James
Unison CEO



Thank you for taking part in our survey

Earlier this year, Unison ran a Renter Satisfaction Survey to learn about your experiences and see how we can do better.

One third of renters completed the survey, and here's what we found:

- **84%** know their rights and responsibilities.
- **76%** are happy with repairs, and **75%** with maintenance and home condition.
- **75%** are satisfied with their Place Manager and Unison's services.

Living in a Unison home makes a big difference too:

- **69%** feel their quality of life has improved since moving in.
- **68%** are happy with their neighbourhood.

A huge thank you to everyone who filled out the survey. You're helping us make things better for all Unison renters.

Introducing our new website

Unison has a brand-new website! It's designed to be simple to use and easy to navigate. You can quickly find the information you need, translate pages into different community languages and use features that make the site more accessible for people with disability.



Click the pink icon on the bottom right-hand corner of your computer screen to explore these options.

We've also created a **Renter Centre**, which is your centralised hub for tenancy-related information.

Renter Centre

Click the yellow Renter Centre button on the top-right corner of the page to visit.

Inside the renter centre you'll find:

- **Maintenance & Repairs** – Learn about how we handle maintenance at Unison and send us a non-urgent request.

- **Feedback & Complaints** – Find out about Unison's complaints process or submit your complaint or feedback online, including your thoughts about the website:
unison.org.au/feedback

- **Renter Resources** – Explore info related to your tenancy, including your rights and responsibilities, ways to get involved, and contact details for your local Unison office.

Visit the Renter Centre: <https://unison.org.au/renter-centre/>

Quarterly TAG update

The latest Tenancy Advisory Group (TAG) meeting focused on making communication around rental arrears easier to understand. Members suggested using simple language, clear numbers, and explaining rent cycles to avoid confusion. They also recommended adding regular payment summaries and clear guidance on Centrepay

changes. TAG also discussed renter survey results, highlighting safety and complaints as key focus areas, and previewed the new website. These ideas aim to improve communication and support renters to have secure and happy tenancies.

Meet Paul



Paul is a renter who lives at a Unison property in Gertrude Street, Fitzroy.

His home has provided a stable base that has enabled him to pursue his calling of helping others at a hospital, often at their lowest point, through his lived experience as a Peer Support Worker.

“People remember me from when I was on the ward. They come back, see me wearing a badge, and it gives them hope. That pretty much says it all.”

Read Paul’s story on the Unison blog:

unison.org.au/news/stable-housing-meaningful-work-paul-s-story/

Find out how we supported renters last year

Our 2024-2025 Annual Report is now available! In our reporting, we’ve focused on the difference we made for renters focusing on 8 key areas under *CHIA Victoria’s Impact Framework*: Empowerment, Health, Connection, Participation, Financial Wellbeing, Safety, and Suitability, with Stability at the core.

The report features renter stories in text, audio, and video, plus community achievements. It also

highlights major milestones like opening Make Room, starting Marshall Street construction, and launching our first Reconciliation Action Plan.

Check out the full report here: unison.org.au/2025-annual-report/year-in-review/

New ‘Where is My Coffee?’ Cafe in Kensington

We’re excited to share that Where Is My Coffee? (WIMC) Kensington has opened! This new café, created by VMCH and Unison, welcomes all renters to stop-by and enjoy a cuppa. It’s not just about coffee; it’s a friendly place to meet and spend time with people. The café also helps people with disability learn job skills and find work.

This initiative is all about bringing the community together and making Kensington an even better place to live. Drop in for a coffee or a bite to eat and meet the talented team:

Address: 56 Derby St, Kensington

Hours: Monday-Friday, 8am-3pm



Find out more: <https://unison.org.au/news/unison-and-vmch-launch-a-new-social-enterprise-cafe/>

Fire alarms: what you need to know

Every Unison property is fitted with smoke alarms to alert you if there is a fire. Common areas in multi-unit buildings also have fire alarms for added safety.

When the building's common area fire alarm is set off due to burnt food or smoke from candles, this means the fire brigade still needs to attend. Triggering a false alarm causes stress to other

renters who must evacuate the building and results in a high call out fee being applied.

Important note: call out fees charged by the fire brigade for false fire alarms may be passed on to the renter who caused the alarm.

For more info, visit the Renter Centre:

unison.org.au/renter-centre/renter-resources/#firealarms

Coffee van pilot: a latte fun!

Recently, Unison trialled a coffee van that visited four sites in Altona, Footscray, Fairfield, and Fitzroy North. The 'Where Is My Coffee?' Van, an initiative by Unison and VMCH social enterprise, gave renters the chance to connect with their Place Management team in a relaxed setting.

It was also a great opportunity to meet neighbours and make new friends. A big thanks to all who stopped by to say hi and enjoy a coffee with the Unison team.



Missed the coffee van? Don't worry, Unison is exploring ways to build on the success of the pilot. Watch this space for updates.



Ask Izzy

Life can bring moments of joy and connection, but it can also come with challenges like stress or financial hardship. It's a free, anonymous website that can help you find meals, counselling, financial assistance, or family violence support.

If you need support, visit: askizzy.com.au

Help is available if you need support

- Beyond Blue (24/7): 1300 224 636 (beyondblue.org.au)
- Lifeline (24/7): 13 11 14 (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 the community. We welcome your feedback and ideas to improve your Thrive Newsletter. Please email us at communications@unison.org.au to contribute.