

**RACE for
2030**

**RELIABLE
AFFORDABLE
CLEAN
ENERGY**

Driving energy upgrades in private rental homes

Interim milestone report two



Progress report

RACE for Homes

Project title

Driving energy upgrades in private rental homes
Project Code: HT3:R0712

March 2026

Citations

Moore, T., Stokes, A., Robertson, S.A., and Daly, M. (2026). Driving energy upgrades in private rental homes Interim Milestone 2 report. Prepared for RACE for 2030.

Project team

RMIT University

- Trivess Moore
- Sarah Robertson
- Ashleigh Stokes
- Alan Pears

UTS

- Matthew Daly
- Kerryn Wilmot
- Ed Langham

Project partners

Partners

Bank Australia Energy, Consumers Australia, 3EA, City of Newcastle, Merri-bek City Council, Darebin City Council, Yarra City Council, Whittlesea City Council, DEECA (VIC), Ku-ring-gai Council

IRG members and in-kind contributors

Solar Victoria, ClimateWorks, DCCCEEW (NSW), Ecovantage, City of Banyule, WeldonCo, City of Moonee Valley, Justice and Equity Centre, Nillumbik Shire Council, Energetic Communities Association, Energy Efficiency Council, City of Hume, City of Parramatta, Tenants Union NSW

What is RACE for 2030?

Reliable, Affordable Clean Energy for 2030 (RACE for 2030) is an innovative cooperative research centre for energy and carbon transition. We were funded with \$68.5 million of Commonwealth funds and commitments of \$280 million of cash and in-kind contributions from our partners. Our aim is to deliver \$3.8 billion of cumulative energy productivity benefits and 20 megatons of cumulative carbon emission savings by 2030. racefor2030.com.au

Contents

1	Summary	4
2	Project progress	5
2.1	Update on research activities	5
2.2	Round 1 analysis	5
2.3	Round 2 preliminary analysis	11
2.4	issues and difficulties encountered during the course of the research activities	12
3	Outcomes of irg and stakeholder meetings	13
4	Update on knowledge sharing activities	13
5	Revised timelines	13
6	Appendix a	15

1 Summary

This project aims to help the 2.5 million households in private rentals by developing an improved understanding of the disconnect between tenants, private landlords and real estate agents to inform the scaling up of retrofit of this housing stock and deliver private benefits (e.g., reduced energy bills, increased property value) and wider government sustainability goals. The project explores if and how the provision of trusted and independent energy performance and retrofit information in Victoria and New South Wales can influence landlords' decisions to undertake energy upgrades. The role of real estate agents and tenants as key intermediaries in supporting and guiding private rental upgrades is also explored.

Round 1 interviews with renters and landlords have been completed in Victoria and NSW, except for interviews in the Ku-ring-gai Council region (which joined the project in late 2025). Round 2 interviews with renters and tenants are underway with 39 interviews completed in Victoria. Two real estate agent interviews have been completed. The online survey was refined based upon Round 1 interview analysis and was released on the 10th March 2026 for tenants and landlords to complete.

Analysis of the Round 1 tenant and landlord interviews has identified key issues and challenges relating to maintaining private rental property condition as well as requesting, managing and delivering improvements. These include:

- Mixed experiences with landlord/tenant and real estate agent/tenant relationships.
- Mixed experiences of asking for general improvements, with many tenants expressing hesitancy asking for improvements beyond the minimum maintenance required because of concerns about being seen as a 'problematic' tenant. Very few energy efficiency upgrades have been requested or delivered. Again, tenants are concerned with 'push back'.
- Landlords demonstrated a different view, feeling that real estate agents managed requests quickly and efficiently and that their properties were largely in good condition.
- Lack of awareness amongst tenants and landlords that they could have their rental dwelling rated for energy performance and comfort.
- Lack of landlord and tenant knowledge about future changes to minimum standard for private rental housing in Victoria from 2027. This has implications for ensuring standards are met and enforced.

Round 2 interviews are ongoing but early findings suggest:

- Assessments were easy to organize but offering them for free may have diminished their value, with some participants not booking assessments.
- Some tenants felt the rating their house received were too low and others too high. When perceived as too high, this translated to a lack of trust in the rating.
- Most tenants had not shared the assessment with landlords or real estate agents due to concerns about not wanting to be seen as 'demanding' the recommendations or as a 'problematic' tenant.
- Landlords felt that the recommendations were 'nice to have' but were not a priority.
- Limited upgrades resulting from the assessments, only some DIY draught proofing by tenants.

The next steps for the project are to complete Round 1 interviews in NSW, and completing Round 2 interviews in Victoria and NSW. The research team will leverage partner networks and other key stakeholders to ensure a high response rate to the survey. Recruitment of real estate agents for interviews have commenced and will continue in Victoria and NSW over coming months.

2 Project Progress

2.1 Update on research activities

Since the Milestone 1 report, an additional council partner in NSW (Ku-ring-gai) has joined the project as a financial partner. This has meant that the scope of work in NSW has expanded with additional interviews and it was planned for NatHERS existing homes assessments to be undertaken in the Ku-ring-gai local council area. However, a lack of accredited NatHERS assessors in the Ku-ring-gai and Newcastle regions has meant that the project has changed to using a mix of using accredited NatHERS and Scorecard assessors.

The research is progressing as per the project timeline. Round 1 interviews are now complete, with the exception of those to be undertaken in Ku-ring-gai (Table 1). These additional Round 1 interviews will be undertaken in the coming weeks. Round 2 interviews are underway, with this interview round being conducted approximately 4-6 months after initial interviews were undertaken. A small number of participants have withdrawn at the Round 2 interview stage. This attrition is not unexpected and factored into the research approach to ensure there will still be a robust data set. Two real estate agent interviews have been conducted, with remaining interviews to be conducted over the coming months.

Location	Participant	Round 1	Round 2	Withdrawn
Victoria	Renters	60	38	3
	Landlords	24	9	1
New South Wales	Renters	13	0	2
	Landlords	13	0	2

Table 1: Round 1 and 2 interview status.

The online survey was refined based upon analysis from the Round 1 interviews and underwent user testing before finalisation. The survey was released complete on the 10th March for tenants and landlords in Australia to complete. The survey will be open for at least 6 weeks.

2.2 Round 1 analysis

Tenants

Analysis has been conducted on the 60 Victorian and 13 NSW tenant Round 1 interviews. Once the remaining NSW Round 1 interviews are completed analysis of those interviews will be undertaken and integrated into the analysis below.

The analysis of tenant interviews shows varied experiences in terms of rental tenant experiences of their home's thermal quality, the process and experience of making improvements, and their understanding of dwelling thermal performance and energy efficiency and tenant rights.

Tenants interviewed have a range of ages, socio-economic profiles, household types and experiences, and there is a range of rental property conditions/age. They includes tenants who have been lifelong renters over multiple decades, and those who have been renting for only a few years. Some participants have moved between rental and home ownership at different stages of their housing journey. In terms of socio-economic factors, the sample includes households on the spectrum of income scales.

Analysis of the tenant interviews suggest key themes across tenant experiences of living in their homes. We discuss a selection of these in more detail below, but they include:

- Diverse experiences around renting and the compromises made by tenants. Such compromises include accepting poorer quality housing, or housing that does not meet all their needs, for affordable and stable rent in better locations.
- Thermal discomfort, with the majority of dwellings reported as too hot in summer and too cold in winter. Those who understood more about how thermal comfort and energy efficiency worked tended to manage thermal comfort better than those who did not have a high understanding on this.
- Mixed experiences with landlord/tenant and real estate agent/tenant relationships.
- Mixed experiences of asking for general improvements, with many people expressing hesitancy asking for improvements beyond the minimum maintenance required because of concerns about being seen as a 'problematic' tenant.
- Very few energy efficiency upgrades have happened. There is limited desire from tenants in the idea of co-investing in energy efficiency upgrades largely due to uncertainty in how long they will be in the property.
- Many tenants were unaware that they could have their rental dwelling rated for energy performance and comfort; they also had limited understandings of policy changes in this space.

Thermal (dis)comfort

Many tenants reported rental properties as being too hot in summer and too cold in winter. Heating appliances have been reported as more likely to be adequate compared to cooling appliances. Heating appliances were often located in main living room, with other rooms reported as being cold. In response, tenants have reported using portable heating and cooling appliances as well as using blankets, wearing extra clothes indoors, and consuming hot drinks. Some tenants have reported requesting ceiling fans from their landlords to improve thermal comfort in summer, although there were few cases where this was supported by the landlord. The lack of flyscreens was highlighted as limiting the ability of tenants to safely ventilate rooms, particularly impacting the ability of tenants to cool rental properties during summer evenings.

Some tenants reported concerns about the impact of fixed appliance use (including ovens, hot water systems, heating/cooling systems), no (or little) insulation or inadequate draft proofing on energy bills. Gas appliances (e.g., centralised gas heating, gas cook-tops) were a focal point of tenant concern, with tenants indicating they seek alternatives due to the impact of gas appliances on health, affordability of bills and environmental values.

More broadly, interviews showed widespread evidence of frugal use of heating/cooling energy for environment and/or financial reasons. A small number of tenants discussed that they, or someone living in the property, had health issues which were exacerbated by not being able to maintain stable indoor thermal comfort, particularly during more extreme weather events. This included one participant who spoke of the health challenges their primary school age child had due to underlying health issues during extreme weather and the difficult in managing that without mechanical heating and cooling.

Relationships

Tenants have described mixed responses when asked about their relationship to their landlord or real estate agent. Many had limited engagement unless there had been an issue with the house.

Current and previous relationships with landlords or real estate agents were cited as having created negative renter perceptions, and therefore tenant realities; these related primarily to maintaining the property and addressing issues.

Multiple tenants raised concerns over power dynamics and their concerns in reporting issues with the quality or performance of the house. Perceptions included:

- being seen as a “troublesome tenant”,
- having rents increased when maintenance and/or improvements were completed, and/or
- feeling ignored, so they saved their interactions and reports for critical issues only.

For many tenants the priority is the security of tenure rather than other concerns and outcomes, with many tenants noting concerns over availability of other rental options.

Asking for improvements - the process

There appears to be a relatively clear process for tenants raising maintenance issues with a rental property. This typically starts with lodging a request online (via email, an app or a portal). Figure 1 highlights the key steps in the process of asking for maintenance or other improvements.



Figure 1: Typical process of requesting and receiving maintenance or other improvement outcomes.

In some cases, tenants reported receiving satisfactory outcomes but not in all cases. Responses were typically better for elements to do with the operation of the property (e.g., replacing/fixing a hot water service) whereas other elements could take longer to resolve (e.g., collapsed carport), if at all. However, while critical maintenance was typically attended to satisfactorily, it tended to be done with a like-for-like replacement and/or without consultation about the new appliance meeting the needs of the household.

Energy performance and comfort upgrades

Tenants report very few performance upgrades being undertaken by themselves (i.e. the tenant). Performance upgrades that have occurred tended to be draft-proofing (temporary or otherwise) and appliance replacement. These have generally been like for like exchanges. Some tenants have reported doing these upgrades (permanent and temporary) themselves, with improved quality and liveability a focus of these efforts.

Tenants expressed feeling limited in their ability to advocate for alternatives when repairs or replacements occurred, even when alternative appliances would offer benefit to energy efficiency or thermal comfort. While some tenants were familiar with their tenant rights, tenant unions and other civil procedures for tenant rights advocacy, very few tenants expressed feeling empowered to seek alternative means to get repairs or improvements undertaken.

A few renters reported accessing government schemes (local and state) to upgrade appliances and hardware like showerheads or improved draft-proofing. As mentioned above, the majority of tenants said that they were not comfortable to request energy performance upgrades, with the barrier being their own perception that the landlord would be unwilling, or that it would result in them being seen as a ‘problematic’ tenant, result in an unreasonable rent increase and/or eviction.

Desired energy performance and comfort upgrades identified include:

- Installation of double glazing.
- Insulation (roof, floors and where possible walls).

- Electrification (e.g., change of gas heating and hot water systems to heat pumps, induction cooktops).
- Solar installation.
- Improved heating and cooling appliances (including in more rooms).
- Draft proofing.

Table 2 presents the key improvements requested by tenants and notes how many of these requests were actioned by landlords. Despite some tenants suggesting that they did not request improvements as they felt they would be rejected, the data in Table 2 suggests that from the small sample who did request improvements almost half were actioned. Table 3 then presents those improvements undertaken by tenants themselves. More than half of respondents had undertaken draught-proofing or improvements to windows or window coverings.

Table 2: Key tenant requested improvements versus actioned requests

<i>Change</i>	<i>Requested</i>	<i>Actioned</i>	<i>% actioned</i>
Reverse-cycle / split-system / other air conditioning	10	5	50%
Solar PV	4	1	25%
Insulation / draught proofing	3	2	67%
Heater replacement / maintenance	1	1	100%
Flyscreens	1	1	100%
Blinds	1	0	0%
Fans	1	0	0%
More efficient oven	1	0	0%

Table 3: Key tenant-led improvements

<i>Improvement Type</i>	<i>Actions Captured</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>
Draught-proofing & gap sealing	Door snakes, under-door seals, foam/tape around doors/windows, weather stripping, stick-on kits, blocking vents/gaps, general “draught proofing”	47	65%
Windows, curtains & shading	Heavier/thermal curtains, blinds, bubble wrap, DIY plastic “double glazing”, awnings/shade cloth, better window seals	38	53%
Behavioural adaptations	Extra blankets/clothing/sleeping bags, closing off rooms, closing blinds on hot days	6	8%
DIY repairs	Small repairs, patching walls, minor functional improvements	6	8%
Lighting	Replaced lights with LEDs/energy-saving bulbs	5	7%
Carpets & rugs	Added carpets/rugs for warmth	4	6%
Heating/cooling	Swapped to more efficient portable options	4	6%
Water-efficiency	Replaced showerhead (often via government scheme)	4	6%

There were mixed response from tenants on the question of their willingness to co-invest in upgrades. Some were against this option, stating that this is the responsibility of the landlord. Those tenants with more resources were more likely to support co-investment but said this would have to come with longer rental agreement and protection around rent increases.

Landlords

Analysis has been conducted on the 24 Victorian and 13 NSW landlord Round 1 interviews. Once the remaining NSW Round 1 interviews are completed, analysis of those interviews will be undertaken and integrated into the findings below.

Landlords interviewed had a range of ages and socio-economic profiles. Similarly, their rental properties were

described as having a variety of ages and quality. Almost a third of landlords had lived in their rental property previously, giving them good contextual information for what the property was like to live in. There are a range of reasons why participants in this study became a landlord, with some who became a landlord by default when moving into another property with a partner, through to those who purchased a property with the intent to build their personal wealth. The rationale for becoming a landlord will be further explored in the final report.

Key themes from the Round 1 interviews include:

- Benefits of agents
- Maintenance and repairs
- Knowledge of energy efficiency
- Upgrades undertaken

These are summarised below.

Three quarters of the landlords in the study used real estate agents to manage their properties. Key reasons for this include legal and legislative certainty, desire to limit direct interactions with tenants, ease of management and administrative burdens, limited ability and physical distance from the property (e.g., interstate). Those who were not using a real estate agent for property management cited reasons like ease of access and cost among their reasons for self-managing. Furthermore, there were some examples where the landlord was renting to a family member, friend, or someone known through another connection, which meant they felt comfortable with the self-management approach.

Real estate agents were largely the primary organisers of maintenance, with many landlords noting this as a reason for using a real estate agent. Essentially, it made it easier for landlords to have someone manage this side of the property and to reduce the time, energy and effort the landlord needed to spend on these things. Generally, it was felt that real estate agents were able to respond to and undertake maintenance quickly and efficiently. In many cases the landlord tended to rely on the advice and recommendation of the real estate agent in terms of solutions, trades to use, quality of technologies and outcomes of jobs. In some cases, it was also noted to be cost effective (e.g., tax) to use a formal trade rather than attempt DIY repairs. The landlord view on maintenance, especially around the speed and efficiency, tends to be at odds with the tenant responses.

Landlords had a mixed level of awareness about having their property rated for performance and to provide advice on how to improve energy and thermal comfort outcomes. Landlords who used a real estate agent spoke of how these agents were important intermediaries to keep them updated as to any changes happening (e.g., legally) but also in terms of things they could or should be doing (e.g., ratings). Those who self-managed their properties noted a lack of trust with what trades would tell them about improving performance outcomes.

Overall, 83% of landlords noted they had undertaken some form of upgrade to their property, although the majority of the examples provided where appliance replacement when existing appliances had reached the end of their life. Specifically, less than half of landlords had undertaken sustainability upgrades (Table 4). Upgrades including full or partial electrification (42%), RCAC (36%), blinds (22%) and solar PV (22%) were the most common sustainability upgrades. The lower cost draught proofing was lower on the list than other actions, which may indicate that is not valued as highly as other technology/material improvements. It also raises questions around overall improvement to thermal comfort and/or energy efficiency if draught proofing is not done in conjunction with other activities.

Table 4: Key landlord improvements

Investment type	No.	%
Electrification (Partial or Full)	15	42%

Split-system or reverse-cycle addition	13	36%
Blinds or other window treatments	8	22%
Solar PV	8	22%
Insulation	7	19%
Draught proofing	4	11%
More efficient hot water	4	11%
Ceiling fan	1	3%

Upgrades tended to be one-off actions and reactive to a situation (e.g., appliance breaking down) rather than deeper proactive retrofits. Affordability of upgrades was a key concern for landlords. This saw some landlords reflect that the cost would likely have to be recouped through rent. It appears that many landlords are unaware of the potential rebates that might be open to them to help reduce capital costs. Other landlords did recognize other value such as improving the resale value of the property. Interestingly there was very little discussion from landlords about how they might be able to use negative gearing and tax offsets as part of any upgrade outcomes.

Victoria – tenant and landlord knowledge about current and future minimum standards

The timing of the research gives a unique opportunity to explore tenant and landlord knowledge about the current and future minimum energy performance standards for private rental housing in Victoria¹. The Victorian Government first introduced basic minimum performance requirements for private rental housing in 2021. In mid-2025 the Victorian Government announced further improvements to the minimum standards which are to start from March 2027. These new changes include the requirement for energy efficient and electric heating and cooling systems and hot water systems, installation/improvement of ceiling insulation, and draught proofing. Minimum requirements will be triggered at the point of a new lease or when an appliance needs replacement. The following is a summary of the analysis of landlord and tenant knowledge around current and future minimum standards.

Landlords had mixed-low levels of awareness of existing minimum standards. Some were vaguely aware that there were requirements, but many were not across the specifics of what the minimum standards covered. For the most part landlords felt their properties would meet these requirements given the properties were rented out. If there were any issues meeting minimum standards there was an expectation that, for those who engaged a real estate agent to manage their property, the real estate agent would address the issue.

There was less awareness from landlords about the new changes to minimum energy performance standards coming from 2027. Those who were vaguely aware something was coming had typically heard this in the news, although there were some examples where real estate agents had provided an update on the announcement and what the implications broadly (rather than property-specific) would be. Even those who had received information from their real-estate agent struggled to identify the specifics of the changes coming. Many reflected that, given the changes were coming in from 2027, this was not something they would likely focus on now and would deal with it in the future, if and when required.

Once the changes were explained to landlords, there was mixed level of support for the changes. Again, there were many landlords who suggested their properties should largely meet new requirements that were coming into effect and so they felt the impact for them would be minimal but did see it as additional ‘red tape’. The core concern from landlords about the changes was the potential capital cost impact, with several noting this would need to be recouped, likely through increased rents. Many landlords (as with the tenants) were not aware of the wider financial support already available to reduce the cost of some of the required changes.

For tenants, about two-thirds were not aware of the current minimum standards for private rental housing in Victoria. Despite this, just overall half of the tenants in this study were aware that future changes to minimum

¹ [Energy efficiency for rental properties in Victoria](#)

energy performance standards were coming. The majority of tenants were cautiously supportive of the changes, given many felt existing standards were not being met. This concern links back to wider issues raised in the tenant interviews where there is uncertainty about rights which contributes to their hesitancy to take or request action. There was a concern from many tenants that there was a risk of them being seen as “difficult” or “problematic” and that, given the lack of affordable private rental housing, they did not want to “rock the boat” for fear of having to go through the process of finding another rental property. Some tenants noted that they felt if they asked for minimum energy performance standards to be addressed or improved, it would likely translate to an increase in their rent and they were not willing to have that occur given many already felt their rent was too high.

The analysis concluded that there are low levels of understanding about current and future rental minimum energy performance standards.

This raises practical concerns across the private rental sector about how future changes will be implemented and enforced given

- a) the lack of knowledge across the sector about what is coming, and
- b) the challenges raised by tenants around implementation of basic quality and function maintenance of rental property currently means that there is a lack of confidence that higher standards will be enforced.

Given the changes are less than 1 year away, there is a need to ensure that real-estate agents, landlords and tenants are aware of the changes that are coming. An improved education campaign could ensure that landlords and tenants are better informed, and that it may prompt some upgrades to occur before being mandated. Improved communication should be at multiple levels including Victoria Government, local councils, real-estate sector (peak bodies and companies) and tenant advocacy groups.

Additionally, there needs to be clear information about how the changes will be enforced, and what the process is to report issues not being addressed. This must include strong tenant protection.

2.3 Round 2 preliminary analysis

To date, 47 Round 2 interviews have been completed in Victoria. Analysis of these interviews is ongoing. Below are some preliminary findings and implications. This will be refined further as the Round 2 interviews are completed.

The research process was to connect a Scorecard or NatHERS Existing Homes assessor to tenant and landlord participants after the Round 1 interview was completed. The organisation of the assessment was then left to the participant and the specific assessor allocated. From the research methods perspective, there was no requirement for the tenant to inform the landlord the assessment was being undertaken, although the Round 2 interview did track if tenants let the landlord know before or after the assessment. For landlords there was a need for them to co-ordinate with their tenant to organise the assessments given the assessor needed to access the property. While this process worked in most cases, at the time of the Round 2 interviews there were some participants who had not yet had an assessment undertaken. This was largely due to the participant failing to follow up or confirm a date and time with the assessor. In speaking with the assessors, they had typically followed their own processes for when a client reached out for an assessment and had attempted to contact participants multiple times via phone and email. Given the assessments were free (funded by the project), there is the possibility that it was not highly valued by tenant households. Those participants who indicate they have not yet had an assessment are not able to undertake the Round 2 interview and are reconnected with the assessor to complete that step in the research process.

For those participants who had undertaken an assessment, they generally found the assessments easy to organise. In some cases, the landlord spoke of extra coordination challenges when trying to work with the tenant availability as well. Assessments took between 45 minutes – 2 hours depending on property size. The majority of participants let the assessor ‘do their thing’ although a small number discussed how they followed

the assessor around to learn more about the assessment and outcomes. For landlords, some were not at the property at the time of the assessment, however others linked the site visit with checking in on the property. To date no real estate agents have been present during the assessments.

In the Round 2 interviews, most participants could not remember the exact rating the property received, although could generally remember if it was higher, lower, or about the same in comparison to the 'standard' property. Interestingly there seemed to be a 'Goldilocks' response where some participants felt the assessment was too low, some about right, and others thought it was too high. Where the assessment rating was considered too high, it raised issues of trust with the assessment process and resulting property performance information. Some participants remembered some of the recommendations on how to improve outcomes; typically these were the more significant technology/appliance recommendations. Tenants felt their context and (lack of) ability to make changes was factored in, but some tenants still felt the rating needed to be improved for renters. Landlords acknowledged the range of improvements that could be made but often they felt these were more 'nice to have' than critical, especially where changes had already been made in recent years e.g., updating heating systems.

In terms of the assessment report, most participants felt it was easy enough to understand. There were some participants who received a longer report beyond the base assessment and some participants liked that additional information, while for others it was too much. Overall, many landlords and tenants noted that, while the report was a good starting point, it lacked the support and guidance around next steps such as where to go for quotes, who to trust, what technologies to consider etc. Few tenants had shared the report with their real estate agent or landlord. In some cases this was because they didn't want to be seen to 'demand' these things even when it was just information sharing; for others it was because they knew they would not have any of the recommendations implemented (past experiences from declined requests). In other cases it was where they had a surprise rating (high or low) and were holding the information back until a time that suited them, for example to negotiate future upgrades or as part of a trade off for higher rent. While no landlord participants had shared the reports with tenants, several had shared the report with real-estate agents.

In terms of creating change, there was limited evidence that many recommendations in the assessments had been implemented. Some tenants had made minor changes, such as DIY draught proofing and improving window coverings, but there had been no larger changes yet undertaken. In some cases, this was due to the tenant not requesting upgrades (see above), and the real (or perceived) issues around housing tenure dominated much of this. There is no evidence that any of the landlords have yet made any changes. These outcomes echo what was found in Round 1 interviews, particularly around the challenges of requesting and receiving upgrades or improvements. Capital costs were still a concern for all participants, and tenants were often balancing their desire for improved quality and performance without wanting to increase their rent.

Further analysis across the Round 2 data set will be presented in the final report.

2.4 Issues and difficulties encountered during the course of the research activities

Largely the research is progressing as planned. The overall recruitment of participants took longer for Round 1 interviews than anticipated but implementing a variety of recruitment approaches has resulted in the target participants numbers of tenants (Victoria and NSW) and landlords (NSW) being recruited. Additional interviews are underway in NSW with Ku-ring-gai Council formally joining the project since the Milestone 1 report. These interviews are expected to be undertaken in the coming weeks. Given the lower participant target numbers for the Ku-ring-gai Council area, it is not anticipated that there will be issues with recruitment. However, conducting Round 1 interviews now will potentially have an implication for the project Final Report date, as a period of 4-6 months is required from the Round 1 to Round 2 interview. At this stage, there should still be sufficient time to complete this work and the research team will continue to monitor for any potential delays.

The recruitment of landlords in Victoria to participate in the research has been challenging, as flagged in the previous Milestone 1 report. A number of additional recruitment approaches, such as widening the geographic focus to the whole of Melbourne, snowball recruitment via existing interviews, and using Facebook advertising helped increase numbers but not enough to meet the project's target numbers of landlord participants in Victoria. Given the project timeline, a decision was made to set a deadline for the end of January 2026 as the final deadline to recruit landlords for participation in the research. Unfortunately, the landlord participant numbers are still less than what the methodology proposed. However, given the multiple attempts to engage more landlords, in addition to data saturation from those landlords interviewed, it is likely that the impact on the results and outcomes will be manageable. There will be an increased focus on the online survey to ensure a more representative sample of landlords contribute to that phase of the research.

While the focus has been on the tenants and landlords, recruitment for real estate agents has begun. A multipronged approach of phone calls, emails, and introductions via wider contacts has been implemented to try and recruit real estate agents participation. In many cases these approaches have been ignored and recruitment is challenging. Additional recruitment approaches are being explored, and it is anticipated that interviews with real estate agents will be completed over the coming months.

3 Outcomes of IRG and stakeholder meetings

Five Industry Reference Group (IRG) and stakeholder workshops have been held, with the latest in March 2026. All meetings have been well attended (over 25 participants) and interest in the project remains high. These meetings help to support recruitment, test early findings, and guide the research as it progresses.

A summary of key discussions and feedback from the latest meeting included:

- Updates from key partners around wider policy developments and programs relevant to this research and how these should be considered e.g., Scorecard is to be closed by the middle of 2026, with Scorecard assessors transitioning to the NatHERS for existing homes tool.
- A presentation of tenant and landlord knowledge about current and future Victorian minimum energy performance standards for private rental, which was presented at the Australasian Housing Researchers Conference in February (see attached).
- Early findings from Round 2 interviews including the lack of retrofit action following assessments.
- Update on the online survey which is to be shared through partner networks.

4 Update on knowledge sharing activities

Since the Milestone 1 Report, there have been several knowledge sharing activities undertaken. This has included:

- Meetings and information sharing with key stakeholders in Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (Federal and NSW).
- Meetings and information sharing with Advisors for Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP (Victoria).
- Presentation of findings at the Australasian Housing Researchers Conference (February 2026) – See Appendix A.
- Discussion with multiple journalists for stories about housing quality and performance.

Over the coming months there will be a focus on writing up results for academic journals as well as other outreach platforms such as The Conversation and The Fifth Estate.

5 Revised timelines

Table 2 presents the current project timeline. The project is still on track to submit the final report in September 2026.

Work package	Activities	Completed	2026						
			Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	August	September
1	Project establishment & recruitment of RA	Green							
	Develop interview and survey questions	Green							
	Confirm household recruitment strategy	Green							
	Ethics submission and approval	Green							
	Undertake household recruitment		Yellow						
2	Round 1 interviews		Yellow						
	Interview analysis		Yellow						
	Finalise survey	Green							
3	Scorecard assessments		Yellow						
4	Update interview questions for round 2 interviews	Green							
	Round 2 interviews		Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green			
5	Survey distribution		Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green			
	Analysis of survey results		Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green			
	Focus groups		Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green			
	Analysis of focus group outcomes		Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green			
6	Draft final project report						Light Green	Light Green	
Milestones	Industry reference group meetings		IRG4			IRG5			IRG6

Table 2: Revised project timeline. Additional time for participant activities is highlighted by the yellow shading.

6 Appendix A

Presentation given at the Australasian Housing Researchers Conference February 2026, Brisbane.

Exploring tenant and landlord knowledge about the new Victorian minimum energy efficiency standards for private rental housing.

Trivess Moore
Sarah Robertson
Ashleigh Stokes
Matthew Daly
Aditi Phansalkar



©2025 RMIT University. All rights reserved. RMIT Code: 2048

Introduction

- ~26% of Australian households in Private Rental Housing (PRH).
 - Affordability, location, flexibility.
- Poor quality and performing housing.
- Range of impacts e.g., health & wellbeing, energy affordability.

- Retrofit can provide cost-effective improvements.
- Focus on owner-occupied housing – issues around split incentive for PRH?

- Must change to address and improve social, financial and environmental outcomes.



Minimum standards

- Trying to improve protection and condition for PRH.
- Limited requirements for minimum standards.
- Often around basic function e.g., working hot water.
- Need to improve other areas e.g., thermal comfort, energy efficiency.



Victoria – current & future minimum standards

- 2021 – Introduced basic minimum requirements.
- 2025 – Announced additional minimum requirements from 2027.

Change	Description of change
Energy-efficient heating and hot water systems	Must replace with energy efficient ones.
Energy- efficient ceiling insulation and shower heads	Must install: •4-star showerhead/s •ceiling insulation in spaces where none exists.
Energy – efficient cooling	Must install: •Energy – efficient cooling in the main living area.
Draughtproofing	Must draughtproof all external doors, windows and unsealed wall vents.

Methods

- Interviews with tenants and landlords (n=84).
 - Range of socio-economic characteristics & diversity of experiences of renting &/or owning rental properties.
- July – December 2025.
- Focused on experiences of living in, or managing, PRH with respect to quality, performance & seeking & delivering improvements.
- Explored awareness & understanding of current & proposed minimum standards.
- Rapid feedback for policy makers and other states.



Landlords

- Mixed-low levels of awareness of existing minimum standards.
 - Not across specifics.
 - Believed their properties would meet requirements.
- Generally, vague awareness of changes for 2027.
 - May have heard something in the news.
 - Not across specifics.
- Some already updated by real-estate agents.
- Seen as something to deal with 'in the future'.



Landlords

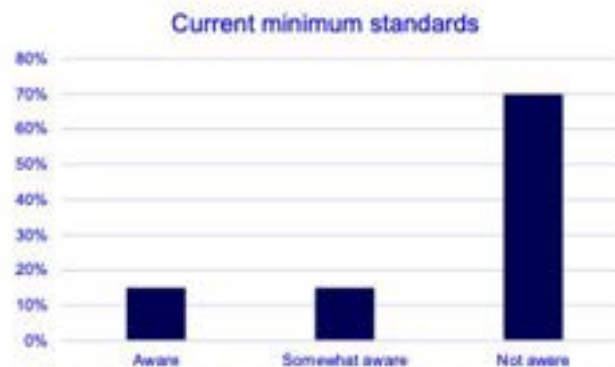
When the changes were explained:

- Mixed level of support.
- Some thought their properties would meet requirements already.
- How much it would cost to meet the new requirements?



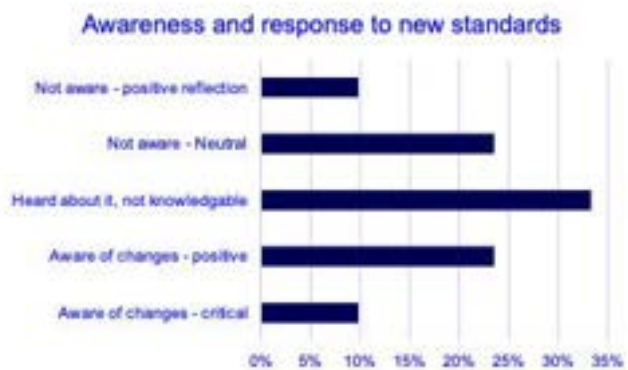
Tenants

- Most not aware that there are current minimum standards that must be met.



Tenants

- 56% aware that future changes are coming.
- Generally supportive of improving minimum standards.
- Cautious with support given many felt existing standards not being met, & lack of agency to rectify issues.



Tenants

- **Uncertainty about rights contributes to hesitation:**
 - Tenants unsure about minimum rental standards or energy efficiency requirements seem more likely cautious about raising issues, leading many to quietly tolerate problems rather than risk being seen as "difficult" or "problematic."
- **Anxiety about consequences:**
 - Tenants express fears of retaliation (i.e., rent increases or non-renewal) if they request repairs or upgrades they're not certain they're entitled to.

A key consequence is reactive rather than proactive action!

Implications

- Low levels of understanding about current & future minimum standards.
- Practical concerns as to how changes will be implemented and enforced.
- Already challenges with improving/fixing issues in PRH – what will happen with new standards?
- Need for improved communication at multiple levels:
 - Victorian Government.
 - Real-estate sector (peak bodies and companies).
 - Tenant advocacy groups.
- Opportunity to start change earlier – how to incentivise early uptake?
- Who will monitor changes? Who will ensure compliance?



Next steps...

- Development of education material, communicating to those impacted.
- Support services for landlords and tenants.
- Potential for real-estate sector to deliver cost savings with bulk upgrades.
- Improvement to minimum standards likely to follow in other states.
- Need to learn from the process in Victoria.



Thank you for listening!

For further information:
trivess.moore@rmit.edu.au

Watch out for our wider survey out soon!

Project partners

RACE	3EA
Bank Australia	City of Banyule
Energy Consumers Australia	Solar Victoria
City of Newcastle	City of Moonee Valley
Merri-bek City Council	DCCCEW (NSW)
Darebin City Council	Nilumbik Shire Council
Yarra City Council	EEC
Whittlesea City Council	City of Hume
DEECA (VIC)	City of Moonee Valley
Ku-ring-gai Council	



RACE for 2030

RELIABLE
AFFORDABLE
CLEAN
ENERGY



info@racefor2030.com.au

UTS

L10 10/235 Jones St Ultimo,
NSW 2007 Australia

ABN 46 640 317 559



Australian Government
Department of Industry,
Science and Resources

Cooperative Research
Centres Program