

# Unpacking the disconnect of sustainability upgrades between tenants, private landlords and real estate agents

**Project Progress Meeting – 3 December 2025**

*RMIT research team:*

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

*UTS research team:*

- Matthew Daly
- Aditi Phansalker
- Kerry Wilmot
- Ed Langham



## Acknowledgement of Country

RMIT University acknowledges the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nation on whose unceded lands we conduct the business of the University.

RMIT University respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present.

RMIT also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our business.

Artwork 'Luwaytini' by Mark Cleaver, Palawa

# Agenda

| Item                                                                                                                              | Who                               | Time       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Welcome & Acknowledgment of Country                                                                                               | Trivess Moore and Sarah Robertson | 5 minutes  |
| Partner updates                                                                                                                   | All                               | 20 minutes |
| Project updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Round 1 interviews - landlords</li><li>- New South Wales update</li></ul> | RMIT and UTS                      | 45 minutes |
| Next steps and feedback                                                                                                           | Trivess Moore, All                | 15 minutes |
| Any other business                                                                                                                | All                               | 10 minutes |





## Please provide feedback, ask questions, let us know where things don't make sense!

- Put your digital hand up and you can talk.
- Put comments in the chat.
- Email the team ([trivess.moore@rmit.edu.au](mailto:trivess.moore@rmit.edu.au))



## 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     | DCCCEEW (NSW)           |
| Darebin City Council       | Nillumbik Shire Council |
| Yarra City Council         | EEC                     |
| Whittlesea City Council    | City of Hume            |
| DEECA (VIC)                | City of Moonee Valley   |
| Ku-ring-gai Council        |                         |

## Industry reference group

### Representatives from:

UTS  
Monash University  
Tenants Union NSW  
Green Energy Trading  
Renew  
Climateworks  
Justice and Equity Centre  
Energetic Communities Association  
Ecovantage  
City of Parramatta



# What are the research aims?



Understand the disconnect between landlords, tenants and real estate agents.



Explore if and how the provision of trusted and independent energy performance and retrofit information can influence landlords' decisions to undertake energy upgrades.



Explore the role of real estate agents and tenants as key intermediaries for supporting and guiding private rental upgrades.





# Work Packages

|                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| WP1 - Recruitment                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recruitment of landlords (n=60-70), tenants (n=60-70) and real estate agents (n=25-30).</li><li>• Victoria and NSW</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                   |
| WP2 - Participant baseline interviews (R1) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Semi-structured interviews with landlords and tenants to collect baseline data.</li><li>• Semi-structured interviews with real estate agents.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                        |
| WP3 - HER assessment                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scorecard/NatHERS whole of home assessments to be conducted by accredited professionals on participating private rental dwellings.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                   |
| WP4 - Participant interviews (R2)          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ~ 6 months after a HER assessment a second-round interview will be conducted with landlords and tenants.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                             |
| WP5 - General survey and focus groups      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Online survey of landlords, tenants and real estate agents across participating states to validate outcomes.</li><li>• 3 focus groups involving stakeholders representing tenants, landlords and real estate agents to discuss findings and recommendations for policy and practice.</li></ul> |





# Status

Current numbers:

| Location | Participant        | Conducted | Scheduled | EOI |
|----------|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| VIC      | Renters            | 60        | -         | -   |
|          | Landlords          | 22        | 0         | 2   |
| NSW      | Renters            | 12        | -         | -   |
|          | Landlords          | 9         | 0         | 3   |
| All      | Real Estate Agents | 1         | 0         | 0   |

Focus areas:

- More landlords needed across all councils.
- Widen to across Greater Melbourne.

For landlords, recruitment will need to conclude by Dec 2025.





# Status - Tenants

- Original planned interviews complete (Oct 2025)
  - Excluding Ku-ring-gai Council recruitment.
- Scorecard/NatHERs assessment mostly completed
  - Remaining tenant assessments to conclude by Dec 2025.
- Detailed analysis of tenant data is underway – building upon what was presented in the previous meeting.
- ***Round 2 tenant interviews to begin in Q1 2026.***





# Initial insights from interviews - landlords

## Characteristics:

- Range of rental property conditions/age.
- Primarily managed through Real Estates Agents/Property Managers.
- Different reasons and pathways to becoming landlords.

## Key themes:

- Benefits of Agents
- Maintenance and Repairs
- Knowledge of Energy Efficiency
  - Role of Agents in Knowledge Upkeep
- Upgrades – Their home vs Their rental





# Landlords - Benefits of Agents

- 76% of interviewed Landlords use **agents**.
- Reason included:
  - Legal and legislative certainty
  - Desire to limit direct interactions
  - Ease management or administrative burden
  - Limited (or perceived limited) ability (*i.e., time, knowledge*)
  - Physical distance from property
- Those not using agents cited reason like ***ease of access*** and ***cost*** among their reasons for self-managing.





# Landlords - Maintenance and Repairs

- ***Property managers*** were cited as the ***primary organiser of maintenance***, with many landlords noting this as a reason for maintaining a property manager.
- There was a general perception that maintenance managed by property managers was ***quick and efficiently undertaken***.
  - In these cases, landlords tended to rely on the advice/ recommendations of the property managers for trades, urgency and outcomes of repairs.
  - Tax effective to use trades instead of DIY/landlord repair
  - View on maintenance different to tenant experience.
- Common Maintenance:
  - Broken appliances
  - Plumbing issues





# Landlords - Knowledge of Energy Efficiency

- Landlords have mixed awareness that they could have their dwelling rated for performance.
- There was moderate awareness of current rental energy efficiency standards among landlords.
  - Noticeable drop-off in awareness for upcoming updates.
- Property managers were an important source of information on current and new energy efficiency standards.
  - Also property investor forums/online groups
- Those self-managing properties expressed concerns over trustworthiness of trades' advice regarding energy efficiency.





# Landlords – Energy Efficiency Upgrades

- Very few sustainability upgrades are happening.
- Tends to be:
  - Draft proofing
  - Appliance replacements
  - Air-con installs (for VIC)
  - Solar
  - Insulation
- Affordability of upgrades were a key concern for landlords.
- More responding to an issue/opportunistic than planned.





# Landlords – Energy Efficiency Upgrades

Some property owners perspectives on energy upgrades

- Positively improving value of property

I might decide to sell...it's [energy efficient upgrades] just gonna add value to it anyway. [VLL-01]

That's why we've made sort of those [energy efficient upgrades] changes. So I think they, you know, have positively impacted, if we were to re-rent or resell the property, I think both would have had value as well. [NLL-02]

- Not wanting to have property they would find unliveable

I would want what I was able to tolerate. I wouldn't want probably any less than that. So yeah, like a heating system, a cooling system that works, which I have. I'd want to make sure that, you know, the place isn't drafty, which I don't think it is. [...] [VLL-05]





# Landlords - Incentivising Upgrades

- There was mixed engagement with rebates and schemes
  - Some landlords expressed uncertainty and lack of awareness for the processes and availability of incentives to help upgrade rental properties.
- Concern of balance of disincentives versus incentives
  - I need to replace my gas oven and to move my house to be gas free, the one I own. And I there's no incentives for that. [VLL-02]
- General engagement with tax incentives/write-offs as property investor
- Landlords expressed general openness to co-investment. However...
  - Some landlords questioned how such schemes affected tenants' entitlements on the property.
  - Others raised potential unfairness to tenants when they moved on.





# Challenges with landlord recruitment

- Not unexpected.
- We have undertaken online recruitment through councils, universities, LinkedIn.
- Snowballing from initial interviews.
- Facebook advertising under way.
- Let us know if you have other avenues or ideas.
- While starting to get data saturation with landlords we need one final push to get more participants.





# NSW reflections – Property investors

- Most rental properties are **older homes** (1920s–1930s) with weatherboard or double brick
- **Varied relationships with real estate agents**
  - *Help with compliance management.*
  - *For some, additional cost with lack of added value.*
- **Knowledge of energy performance is low - moderate**
  - *Unaware of rating tools and feel upgrades can be costly*
  - *Know about solar but unsure about other available upgrade options*
  - *Limited understanding of insulation, draft-proofing, and efficient hot water system*
- Information sources for most of the landlords are:
  - *social media, community groups, property investor forums*
- Most common upgrades undertaken by landlords;
  - *Ceiling fans, split-system AC during renovation*
  - *Installed solar panels (rare proactive case)*
  - *Efficient fridge and in some cases heat-pump dryers*
- Thoughts about co-investment
  - *Financial constraints and uncertainty about long-term tenancy.*





# NSW reflections – Renters

- Homes ranged from **heritage apartments (1930s)** to **modern semi-detached houses (≤15 years)**.
- Comfort varies seasonally:
  - ***summer overheating** and **winter cold** are common, especially in poorly insulated homes. Tenants rely on **portable heaters, fans, and AC**, driving up bills.*
- **Renters aware of power (im)balance in relationships**
  - ***Direct landlord relationships** often yield faster maintenance responses; real estate agents are described as **transactional and slow**.*
  - *“Good tenants” more comfortable requesting maintenance/upgrades*
- Requests for upgrades like solar, heat pumps, insulation are **usually denied** due to cost or lack of awareness.
- Mixed views on **co-investment**:
  - *Some renters open to shared costs for solar or insulation if **long-term tenancy guaranteed**.*
  - *Others skeptical, citing landlord disinterest and fear of rent hikes.*





# Discussion

Please put your hand up to talk, put comments in the chat.

Feedback on initial findings?

Recommendations for reaching out to:

- Landlords?
- Real estate agents?





# Next steps

- ☐ Continuing to seek partners to extend what we can do in the research – reach out if you have ideas!
- ☐ Partners to continue to help with recruitment:
  - ☐ Focus on landlords & real estate agents.
- ☐ Complete round 1 interviews by Dec 2025.
- ☐ Launch Survey – Jan/Feb 2026
- ☐ Review interview data and revise round 2 interview questions and survey questions.
- ☐ Explore if the assessment+ provision resulted in different outcomes.



# Timeline

| Work package | Activities                                        | Completed | 2025 | 2026 |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------|------|------|-----|-----------|-----|-----|------|-----|--------|--------------|
|              |                                                   |           | Dec  | Jan  | Feb | Mar       | Apr | May | Jun  | Jul | August | September    |
| 1            | Project establishment & recruitment of RA         |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
|              | Develop Interview and survey questions            |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
|              | Confirm household recruitment strategy            |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
|              | Ethics submission and approval                    |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
|              | Undertake household recruitment                   |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
| 2            | Round 1 interviews                                |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
|              | Interview analysis                                |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
|              | Finalise survey                                   |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
| 3            | Scorecard assessments                             |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
| 4            | Update interview questions for round 2 interviews |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
|              | Round 2 interviews                                |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
| 5            | Survey distribution                               |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
|              | Analysis of survey results                        |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
|              | Focus groups                                      |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
|              | Analysis of focus group outcomes                  |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
| 6            | Draft final project report                        |           |      |      |     |           |     |     |      |     |        |              |
| Milestones   | Industry reference group meetings                 |           | IRG3 |      |     | IRG4      |     |     | IRG5 |     |        | IRG6         |
|              | Milestone reports                                 |           |      |      |     | Interim 2 |     |     |      |     |        | Final report |



**Any other business or questions?**



# Next meeting

10<sup>th</sup> March 2026, 10:30am – 12:00pm

Trivess Moore – [trivess.moore@rmit.edu.au](mailto:trivess.moore@rmit.edu.au)

Matthew Daly - [matthew.daly@uts.edu.au](mailto:matthew.daly@uts.edu.au)

