

Advocacy letter

Important Rooming House Regulatory and System Improvements

The letter below has been sent to the following ministers:

- Minister Nick Staikos
- Minister Harriet Shing
- Minister Tim Richardson
- Minister Paul Edbrooke
- Minister Sonya Kilkenney
- Minister Paul Hamer
- Prime Minister Anthony Albanese

21 May 2026

The Hon. Nick Staikos
Minister for Housing and Building
Level 20, 1 Spring Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Via Email: nick.staikos@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Minister Staikos

Advocacy regarding Important Rooming House Regulatory and System Improvements

I write following Council's resolution at its 27 January 2026 Meeting in relation to concerns regarding the manner in which Rooming Houses are established, regulated, designed and funded.

Given recent changes to Ministerial portfolios, I am writing to you as Minister for Housing and Building regarding these matters. I would also like to highlight that Council has previously raised these concerns with the former Minister for Housing and Building, and with the Hon. Sonya Kilkenny, Minister for Planning, which subsequently resulted in a meeting with Minister Kilkenny on 28 April 2026 to discuss Councils advocacy regarding amongst other things, the role of planning regulation for Rooming Houses.

While the resolution followed concerns raised by local residents of Ferntree Gully regarding a new Rooming House proposal, broader concerns regarding Rooming Houses across Knox have been emerging over time. Council is therefore of the view that it is timely that responsible Ministers are made aware of these concerns, along with the opportunities Council has identified to improve the regulatory framework and management of Rooming Houses for the benefit of both tenants and communities.

Noting the complexity of the regulatory framework for Rooming Houses and involvement of various government departments, agencies and partners; Council is providing this correspondence to:

- Minister for Housing and Building
- Minister for Planning
- Minister for Consumer Affairs
- Local Knox State Members of Parliament.

Council's resolution of 27 January 2026 is provided below.

That Council, having heard from local residents in Ferntree Gully in December regarding their concerns about a Rooming House planning application and the management of existing Rooming Houses:

- 1. Notes that Rooming Houses play an important role in Victoria's housing system, often accommodating vulnerable residents; being provided by both government, not for profit and private operators; and primarily regulated under a complex state regulatory framework involving multiple agencies.*
- 2. Acknowledges the increasing pressure on local governments to manage the impacts of Rooming Houses through registration, inspections, compliance and community response.*
- 3. Advocates to the Victorian State Government for:*
 - a) Strengthened minimum standards and resident protections, including:*
 - i. Improved safety, amenity, and liveability standards;*
 - ii. Stronger enforcement mechanisms and penalties for non-compliance by operators;*
 - iii. Enhanced protections for residents relating to privacy, security of tenure, rent setting and eviction processes; and*
 - iv. More proactive and regular compliance inspections, rather than reliance on complaints-based enforcement.*
 - b) Review of registration triggers to more appropriately address community concerns and welfare of local residents;*
 - c) Improved local government input into existing planning controls, including reforms to clause 52.23 of the Victorian Planning Provisions to require planning permits for all Rooming Houses; not just those above a defined scale or impact threshold, along with stronger community consultation (notice) and appeal rights in relation to new or expanded Rooming House developments.*
 - d) Funding and/or increased funding and support for Rooming House regulation, including:*
 - i. State funded regional managers, employed by the State Government, to monitor privately owned rooming houses, and non-compliant rooming houses, across the state at no cost to tenants, to ensure improved management and tenant welfare;*
 - ii. Training and workforce support for local government compliance officers;*
 - iii. State-local coordination to address unregistered and/or unsafe rooming houses;*
 - iv. Funding for wrap-around support services for rooming house residents, and*

- v. *Work with well managed rooming houses to promote broader affordable housing and homelessness strategies.*
- 4. *Writes to the Minister for Housing, the Minister for Planning, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, and the Knox local State Members of Parliament outlining Council's advocacy position for Rooming Houses.*
- 5. *Receives a follow-up report to be presented to Council within six (6) months updating council on the actions taken by the local State Members and relevant Ministers in response to Council's advocacy; and any policy, funding or legislative developments relevant to Rooming Houses arising from this advocacy.*

As you can see, Council's resolution is multifaceted and seeks to take a holistic position across key areas of the Rooming House regulatory framework that require improvement. Noting the various Ministerial responsibilities, it would be appreciated for your office to address matters relevant to your portfolio while noting the interplay of various legislation and regulations.

For noting, our Council may also consider raising this matter as part of the next MAV State Council Meeting.

I would welcome meeting with you personally to discuss these important concerns and opportunities in greater detail.

Please contact Mr Bruce Dobson, Chief Executive Officer via Bruce.Dobson@knox.vic.gov.au or Mr Jonathan McNally, Interim Director City Liveability via Jonathan.McNally@knox.vic.gov.au if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely



Cr Paige Kennett
Mayor

Enquiries: Bruce Dobson
Jonathan McNally
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Responses

Response received from Minister Tim Richardson on Monday, 14 September 2026.

Hello Eleonore

Thank you kindly for reaching out the Minister Tim Richardson to request a meeting on behalf of Cr Paige Kennett.

I'm very sorry but with very few weeks remaining prior to caretaker, we unfortunately won't be able to accommodate a meeting this side of the election.

Again, we do appreciate you reaching out. Please trust that your letter has been passed onto our Local Government adviser and senior adviser for their awareness.

Regards
Shani



Shani Bulliff (She/Her)
Executive Assistant to the Minister
Office of The Hon. Tim Richardson MP
Minister for Local Government
Minister for Consumer Affairs
Minister for Renters

I acknowledge the Wurundjeri and Bunurong peoples as the traditional custodians of the lands on which I live and work, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present.