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1-in-20 renters don't have a working toilet: Crackdown on shoddy rentals overdue

Minimum standards must be introduced to protect vulnerable renters, says Victoria's peak homelessness body, after revealing that tens of thousands of Victorian renters are living in homes that don't have running water or electricity, including no working toilets and showers.

The Council to Homeless Persons' (CHP) [submission to the Residential Tenancies Act Review](#) reveals that over 10,300 (2%) renting households don't have access to electricity, 25,779 (5%) don't have access to a toilet, 41,000 (8%) don't have access to a shower and 82,000 (16%) don't have locks on all external doors.

The data is based on Consumer Affairs Victoria research of nearly 2,000 rental properties extrapolated across all Victorian rental properties.

CHP's submission highlights that disadvantaged people are most likely to end up in substandard rentals because of the fierce competition within the rental market, and that thousands of private rentals would not meet rooming house standards.

"People on low incomes, the unemployed, or those who've experienced homelessness are the most likely to end up in shoddy rentals, because they've been out-competed for more attractive properties," said Ms Kate Colvin, Policy and Communications Manager.

The Council to Homeless Persons is calling for minimum standards to be introduced to rental properties so that the health, safety and wellbeing of renters is protected. CHP says that vulnerable people are often forced to live in unsafe, squalid conditions, fearful of reprisal if they speak out.

"The private rental market is a breeding ground for unscrupulous landlords to take advantage of already disadvantaged people. Vulnerable people are the group least able to demand basic standards, for fear of retaliatory eviction or rent increases," said Ms Colvin.

"When you've had 50 rental applications knocked back, you find yourself prepared to accept living standards that are well-below acceptable."

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Table 1: Rental properties in Victoria without basic features

Basic feature missing	Proportion of properties without this working order*	Number of properties (based on Consumer Affairs Vic research and Census data)
Access to electricity	2%	10,312
Access to water supply	3%	15,486
Access to toilet	5%	25,779
Access to shower	8%	41,247
Access to laundry taps	9%	46,403
Access to a stove or oven	10%	56,714
Locks on all external doors	16%	82,494

CHP's data combines Census data on the number of rental properties in Victoria (515,585 properties), analysed against the outcomes of a recent study commissioned by Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV). The CAV research surveyed 1,836 renters (carried out by EY Sweeney) Preliminary results can be found in the RTA Issues Paper [Regulation of property conditions in the rental market](#)