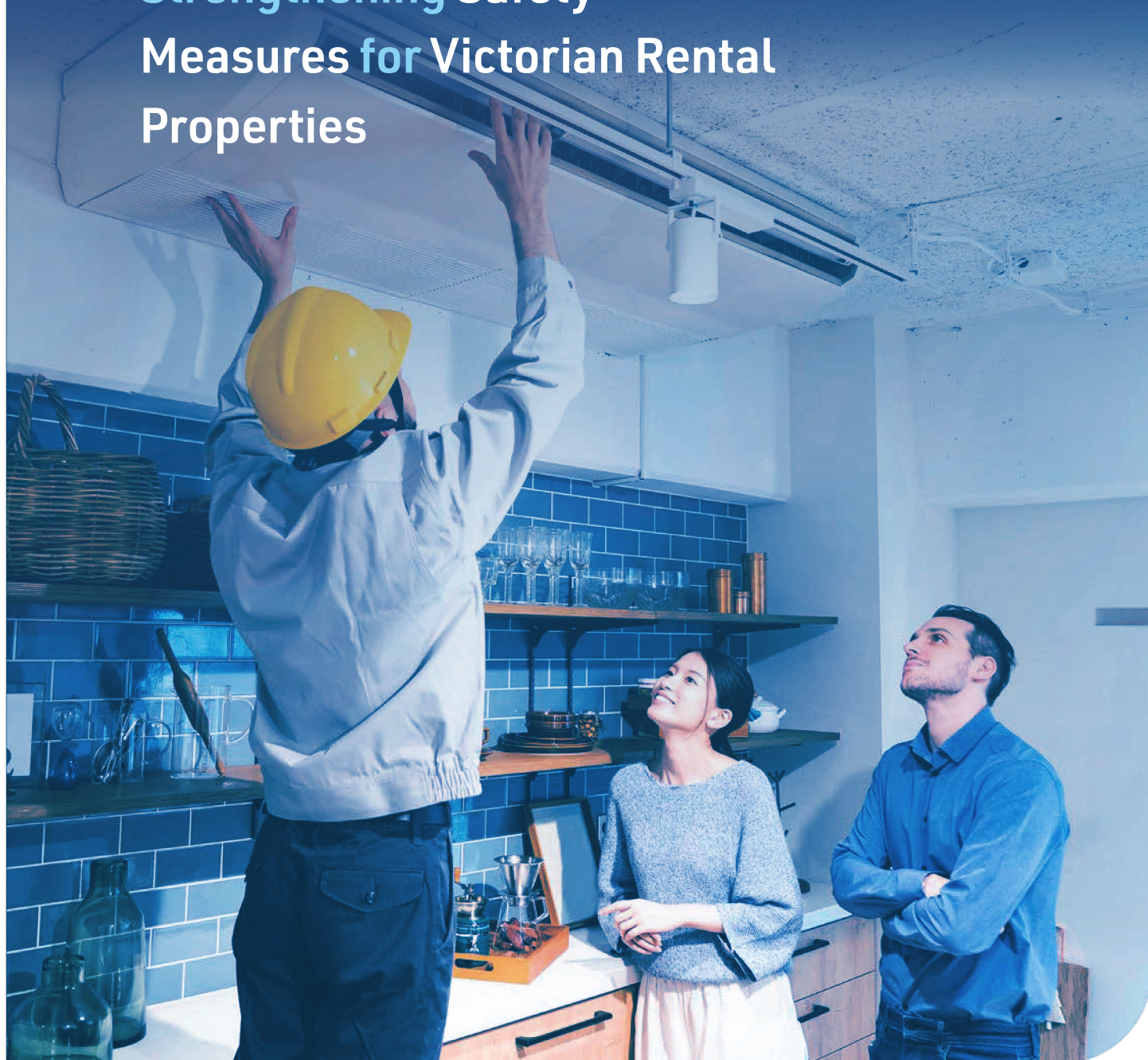


# Unchecked

Strengthening Safety  
Measures for Victorian Rental  
Properties



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### About this report

This report has been prepared by the McKell Institute with the support of Detector Inspector.

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### Acknowledgement of country

This report was written on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. The McKell Institute acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to both their land and seas.

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*The opinions in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Expert Advisory Group that informed this research. Any remaining errors are the sole responsibility of the authors and the McKell Institute.*

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Strengthening Safety Measures for  
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# Foreword

Victoria is experiencing record levels of renting, driven by housing prices that have grown faster than incomes over the past two decades.

The Victorian Government has done considerable work to overhaul rental property standards and make the system fairer for the growing number of people renting.

This has included common sense requirements to have smoke alarms, electrical appliances, and gas fittings checked to make sure they are safe and working properly.

By mandating these checks, the Victorian Government has fulfilled its legislative duty to protect tenants. The government also has regulations in place so that tradespeople inspect to standard.

How safety checks happen in practice is a different matter.

The Victorian Government updated safety check requirements in response to recommendations from the Coroner following a tragic death in a Ballarat rental property. The government acted to make sure this never happens again.

But the integrity of safety checks falls to good faith and chance, rather than robust regulation and monitoring.

This report aims to identify gaps between government intention for safety inspections in Victorian rental properties and how these inspections are happening in practice.

The recommendations outlined in this paper seek to avoid unrealistic proposals or increased red tape and avoid measures that may increase rental costs.

We ask the readers to consider the findings and recommendations in context: we are discussing properties that renters pay for in good faith, with the expectation they have a safe home for themselves and their families.



# Executive Summary

The Victorian Government has introduced changes to make renting fairer and safer.

This includes new minimum standards for properties, updated rules to ban no-fault evictions, and practical reforms that allow renters to put pictures on walls and have pets.

This report examines one element of recent changes: the rules governing safety checks for electrical, gas, and smoke detection appliances.

While stronger standards are a welcome step toward providing safer, higher-quality homes for renters, evidence suggests some operators cut corners on inspections, undercut on service contracts, and carry out works without the required licensing and training.

This results in profiting from enhanced regulations without meeting their intent, leaving renters vulnerable.

This paper explores potential loopholes in the updated regulations, and offers practical, implementable solutions. Our goal is to identify changes that will ensure renters live in genuinely safe homes, landlords pay for inspections in good faith, and compliant professionals compete on a level playing field.

While referencing broader rental reforms, the focus is specifically on safety checks for smoke alarms, electrical systems, and gas fittings.

These issues intersect across multiple regulatory systems, which highlights the complexity of effective enforcement.

## THE REPORT IS STRUCTURED IN THREE PARTS:

- **Part One** outlines Victoria's rental safety standards and intentions behind recent reforms, and includes a case study of multiple checks conducted at one property.
- **Part Two** examines the governance, oversight, and management of Victoria's rental properties and how the property management sector has responded to new compliance obligations.
- **Part Three** covers the regulatory landscape of those who perform safety checks and explains how renters may be exposed to safety risks with little recourse.





We refer to landlords and property managers individually where needed, but use “rental provider” to describe both collectively.

In preparing this paper, we acknowledge the challenge of legislating and regulating across multiple areas of government, and the complexity of Victoria’s evolving building regulatory environment.

We also recognise the commercial, reputational, and political imperatives of stakeholders who contributed to this work. The professionals and stakeholders invited to contribute to this paper are believed to be reputable operators.

This report draws heavily on consultations with stakeholders across Victoria’s rental ecosystem. We thank all those who participated in our roundtable discussion and follow-up briefings for their time and insights.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE AUTHORS THANK THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS FOR THEIR TIME, EXPERTISE AND FEEDBACK:

- > **Detector Inspector**
- > **Office of the Victorian Rental Commissioner**
- > **Victorian Trades Hall Council**
- > **Electrical and Trades Union**
- > **PPTU**
- > **Master Plumbers**
- > **Incolink**
- > **Wrights**
- > **Consumer Policy (CPRC)**
- > **Real Estate Institute of Victoria**





# Key Findings

## **Victoria sets the highest bar for rental safety checks in Australia.**

While all states and territories have mandated smoke alarms in rental properties, Victoria alone has introduced regular gas and electrical appliance checks. Victoria's requirements are the most comprehensive, setting out prescribed frequencies and rental provider obligations.

## **The burden of safety checks remains largely on renters.**

*The Residential Tenancies Act* (hereafter, the Act) requires rental providers to confirm safety checks have been done when a new lease is signed. There is no requirement for any detail to be provided. Tenants wanting more detail have limited access to information.

Although renters can raise concerns with Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria, any issues relating to safety check providers fall under separate regulatory bodies, and tenants have few options for recourse.

## **There is limited data and visibility of Victoria's rental market.**

Compared to other states, Victoria lacks accurate, up-to-date information on who owns and lives in rental properties. There is no clear record of how many rental properties are in Victoria and who owns them. The information that government does have is siloed between state government agencies and departments, largely due to privacy requirements.

## **It is difficult for government to effectively communicate with all renters and providers.**

This is not a criticism of government communication efforts, it is inevitable when limited data is shared across government departments. Consumer Affairs Victoria gives information to real estate agencies that manage properties and shares information online, but without data and contact details for private landlords and tenants, it is hard for government to be certain all rental providers are informed of their obligations and tenants of their rights.

## **Rental safety checks sit outside the technical audit regime for trade practitioners.**

Routine checks do not trigger a Certificate of Electrical Safety (COES) or Gasfitting Compliance Certificate (CoC) unless repair or installation work is done. As only certified work enters the state's audit system, the safety check itself is never audited.

## **Lack of safety check auditing leaves the market open to poor quality providers.**

There is no auditing or independent oversight to confirm whether safety checks in Victorian rental properties are carried out to the required standards. There is no deterrence for wrongdoing. Rental providers pay practitioners for proof of satisfying safety





check obligations. Without fear of punishment, poor practitioners are emboldened to boost profits by rushing jobs, skipping steps, and sending underqualified workers.

### **There is no deterrence for poor-quality safety checks in Victorian rental properties.**

There are penalties if rental providers fail to have safety checks done at a property, however, Victoria lacks penalties for noncompliance with safety check requirements for the practitioners performing the checks. As there is no oversight from the regulators and no penalties relating to safety checks, there is no deterrence for shoddy work and no incentive for a business to verify that checks their staff are being completed to the required standards. This undermines the intent of the legislation and places renters at risk.

### **The gap between consumer affairs and trade compliance impacts rental properties.**

There is a disconnect between Consumer Affairs Victoria, which oversees tenancy-related legislation and regulation, and the bodies that register and regulate tradespeople. This gap leads to confusion over who is responsible for ensuring safety checks are done correctly and makes enforcement difficult when checks are inadequate or non-compliant.

### **Efforts to strengthen integrity in building trades exclude rental safety checks.**

While national and state reforms have strengthened integrity and oversight in the domestic building and electrical industries, the same level of regulatory integrity has not been applied to the mandatory rental safety checks. The increased requirements for mandatory safety checks has supported market growth, but this has not been met with adequate compliance and scrutiny.

### **Extended rules for gas and electrical safety checks are yet to be enacted for all rentals.**

In November 2024, the Victorian Government announced requirements for safety checks on smoke alarms (checked annually) and gas and electrical appliances (checked every two years) would be extended to all rental properties, regardless of when the lease began. Legislation passed in March 2025 amended the Act in relation to a rental provider's duty to smoke alarms. Gas and election checks were not included.<sup>1</sup>

# Recommendations

## RECOMMENDATION 1

### **Victoria needs a rental registration system.**

Without a central registry of rental properties and their owners, it's impossible to track safety compliance and be sure that all landlords and tenants are receiving the latest information about their rights and responsibilities. Jurisdictions in other countries have introduced registration systems to help improve rental standards, offering lessons for Victoria.

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## RECOMMENDATION 2

### **New rental agreements must come with copies of completed checks.**

Currently, the dates of the most recent checks are to be included upon a new lease agreement being signed and tenants can request a copy of reports. To encourage practitioner compliance and tenant awareness, a standard page explaining safety checks should be included to inform tenants of their rights and copies of reports recorded when checks are done should be included with new leases.

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## RECOMMENDATION 3

### **The Victorian Government should introduce an accreditation scheme for safety check providers.**

Victoria has licensing and registration for electricians and gasfitters. There is no accreditation required for those performing smoke alarm checks. A new accreditation scheme for rental safety checks would allow for an online registry of providers, require set competency standards, and allow for auditing. An accreditation scheme would also provide for penalties directly linked to practitioners who do the wrong thing. A scheme unique to rental safety checks is necessary given the complexities and gaps that currently exist in how Consumer Affairs and the trade regulators operate.

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## RECOMMENDATION 4

### **Legislative change is needed to extend gas and electrical safety checks to all Victorian rental properties.**

The Victorian Government announced it would act on recommendations from the Coroner to extend smoke alarm, electrical and gas safety checks to all rental properties. The change is yet to be made for electrical and gas appliances. Gas and electrical safety checks should be made mandatory for all tenancies to guarantee that they all meet basic standards.

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# Part One: Making Victorian rental properties safer







## VICTORIA ACTED ON CORONIAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO MAKE RENTAL PROPERTIES SAFER

Consumer Affairs Victoria has led work to make rental properties safer in recent years. The milestones listed in the right column summarise changes to rules for gas, electrical, and smoke alarm inspections only, and do not span the entirety of government reforms for rental properties.

“ I thank the Scarff family for their longstanding advocacy following the tragic loss of Simon – their efforts will make renting safer for all Victorians and save lives. These new requirements will ensure that all rental properties in Victoria have working smoke alarms that are checked regularly – no matter how long someone has been living there. ”

**- MINISTER FOR CONSUMER AFFAIRS  
GABRIELLE WILLIAMS, NOVEMBER 19, 2024**

**MARCH 2021** Rules introduced for Victorian rental properties specify that gas and electrical fittings and landlord-provided appliances must be checked by a licensed practitioner every two years, and smoke alarms checked for rental properties.

**FEBRUARY 2022** Scarff dies following a fire in his rental property that did not have a smoke alarm installed. Mr Scarff had been on a periodic lease from December 2019. His family petition the Victorian Government to mandate smoke alarms across all rental properties.

**MARCH 2023** New minimum standards for Victorian residential rentals are in force.

**NOVEMBER 2023** After investigating the death of Mr Scarff, the Victorian Coroner recommends changes made to rental laws to make sure all rentals have smoke alarms and annual checks.

**NOVEMBER 2024** Consumer Affairs, Gabrielle Williams, joins the Scarff family to announce new reforms requiring smoke alarm checks every 12 months and electrical and gas inspections every two years for all rentals, regardless of when the lease started.<sup>2</sup>

**NOVEMBER 2024** Standards now apply to Victorian rental properties.

**MARCH 2024** Rental Taskforce established within Consumer Affairs Victoria.

**OCTOBER 2024** Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria details announced.

## HOW HIT-AND-MISS INSPECTION QUALITY WAS EXPOSED UNDER ONE ROOF

In late 2023, 21 mystery shop safety checks were organised for the same property in Elsternwick. (A ‘mystery shop’ being preplanned evaluation where a customer is assessing and report on the quality of service, compliance, or customer experience without the vendor’s knowledge.)

These checks were organised, paid for, and monitored by Detector Inspector, a major provider of smoke alarm, gas and electrical safety checks that has operated since 2005.

The authors note the vested interest Detector Inspector have in safety checks and commercial motivation for comparing services across their competitors.

Having examined the data and demonstratable proof behind each of the statistics outlined below, the authors are confident in the validity of this information and confirm it is in the public interest to include this information.

Detector Inspector have not sought to publicise the names of operators found to have done poor work.

Detector Inspector’s owners decided to conduct mystery shop exercises after some of their real estate agent clients said they were moving to providers who charged significantly less and were finding fewer issues that needed fixing.

Cut-price checks may save money upfront, but often come at the cost of thorough inspections by qualified, licensed practitioners, leaving tenants at risk from undetected gas, electrical, or smoke alarm faults.

### Electrical safety check findings:

- Almost half the electrical checks were not completed, with critical checks of switchboards, appliance function, power points skipped.
- One practitioner did not check anything inside the home.
- Some technicians were not the person named as the licensed electrician on paperwork.
- In some cases, one technician attended for both the gas and electrical check, but different license numbers belonging to two separate people were used on paperwork.
- Some of the people listed on the paperwork were identified on the businesses’ website, but were not who attended the home to perform the check.

### Gas safety check findings:

- 80 per cent of servicing steps were missed for cooktops and hot water services.
- Eight of 21 practitioners did not take off the main heating cover to complete testing.
- Half did not use the correct testing instrument when checking for carbon monoxide.
- In many cases, the attending plumber listed on paperwork was not licensed for type A appliances.

### Smoke alarms check findings:

- Seven of 21 technicians did not test a single smoke alarm.
- Half did not check every smoke alarm.
- Three did not check bedroom alarms.

The mystery shops confirmed Detector Inspector's concerns that quality providers

are at a disadvantage. If done properly, safety checks take a thorough practitioner 60 to 90 minutes to complete.

The cheaper providers who were monitored for the mystery shop exercise were completing safety checks in as little as 15 minutes and appeared to employ unlicensed practitioners.





## Part Two: Governance, oversight, and management of Victorian rental properties





Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) is the state's consumer regulator, responsible for administering and enforcing the Act.<sup>3</sup> Through the Act, CAV has powers to serve infringement notices for breaches, issue public warnings, or require substantiation of claims made about rented premises.<sup>4</sup>

The Residential Tenancies Bond Authority (RTBA) is Victoria's statutory body that holds residential tenancy bonds in trust. Rental providers are legally required to lodge any bond collected from tenants with the RTBA,<sup>5</sup> and information about landlords and tenants is only available to CAV if a bond dispute arises.<sup>6</sup>

## THERE IS LIMITED VISIBILITY OF WHO OWNS RENTAL PROPERTIES IN VICTORIA

As of June 2024, the RTBA held approximately 732,125 active bonds,<sup>7</sup> but there is little way of knowing how many other rental agreements exist outside of the bond lodgement scheme.

While CAV can reach professional property managers and can engage through industry bodies such as the Real Estate Institute of Victoria, about 20 per cent of Victorian rental providers manage their properties independently.<sup>8</sup>

While the bond lodgement system is the only central point of contact between the Victorian Government and landlords, CAV is not permitted to use RTBA data to communicate with landlords about changes to regulations or policy.<sup>9</sup>

This means CAV does not have a formal channel to reach self-managing rental providers or tenants who rent a property without lodging a bond. It is also hard to know how much information reaches landlords living outside of Victoria and Australia. This can make communication and enforcement of new safety requirements challenging.

## VICTORIA'S PROPERTY MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY IS ADAPTING TO ENHANCED SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

The agents consulted in preparing this paper worked in leadership positions for major real estate agencies covering rental properties in metropolitan and regional parts of Victoria.

Their views were sought on how the enhanced safety checks are working in practice.

We asked how their agencies have managed and adjusted to changes, the reception from property owners, how they determine the practitioners they work with, and the day-to-day work involved in safety inspections.

Conversations were held on the basis that identifying information would not be published to allow agents to talk openly.

### Enhanced regulations have added to the property management workload

- Enhanced regulations have meant more administration for rental providers, increasing the workload of agency-based property managers.
- The updated regulations have resulted in changes to how some of the larger management agencies run their operations. Some have brought on new staff for additional record-keeping and introduced new back-end processes.
- Most landlords working with property managers see value in regular safety checks. There was some reluctance from landlords who have rented out a property for a long time and were unhappy that changed rules from government had added to running costs.

- Agents agreed that owners were unlikely to sell out of their investment property because of changes to rules and regulations or even successive interest rate rises, which were sustained and incremental. Sharp rises in rates and land tax bills had been the catalyst for investment property divestment in both metropolitan and regional areas, as these also confirmed capital growth.
- While most landlords prefer to leave administration to their property manager, agencies cannot dictate which service providers are used for safety checks. Owners can use their preferred provider. Some go with providers they have previously used, and some prefer to find a cheaper provider.

### **Lack of clear, definitive guidance makes applying the updated regulations difficult**

- Some property managers shared frustrations in trying to get clarification about updated rules from the Department of Consumer Affairs.
- Some reported being pointed to the same fact sheets and web pages they were questioning. Others were frustrated at receiving advice over the phone which differed to what a landlord or a colleague had said they had been told. Several property managers told us they had sought clarification in writing, which was refused.

### **Tenants are not engaged with safety checks and lack awareness**

- Giving tenants the option of having the practitioner conducting a safety check collect keys from the agent and let themselves in, rather than having to be home, is a popular and practical option for many tenants.

- Victoria's rental regulations state the dates of the latest gas and electrical safety checks, plus any outstanding recommendations, must be disclosed at the start of a new tenancy.<sup>10</sup> No other information is required to be passed on to renters.
- Agents agreed there was much higher public awareness about the legal requirements for working smoke alarms in rental properties and for regular smoke alarm checks than there was about compulsory gas and electrical checks.
- It was not common for tenants to seek information following scheduled safety checks, and agents do not proactively share information about what inspectors have found unless another visit is needed for repairs.
- Tenants occasionally asked about the status of carbon monoxide tests and were more likely to do so upon signing a new lease (which are completed as part of gas safety checks, done every two years) or following media coverage of deaths caused by carbon monoxide poisoning in a home.

### **Enhanced safety checks prompted new operators to enter the safety check market**

- Property managers noted several new, lower-cost providers had entered the market after safety check rules were strengthened in Victoria. Sticking with well-known and well-established businesses has been in their interests because larger providers were better equipped to work in with agency back-end systems. While this allows for some market regulation, it does not prevent unscrupulous providers from targeting their services directly to owners.



## Booking a licence holder does not guarantee licensed completion

- Agents were asked if they were certain the licensed person listed on safety check reports was the person who carried out the inspection. This was asked as there are concerns that a license-holder's name can appear on checks completed by cheaper, unqualified staff. Some property managers had noted one licensed tradesperson listed on job documentation for the same date across far too many properties to be physically possible, which supported concerns that the licensed person named may not be the person who completes an inspection. Instead, their credentials are used to cover work carried out by a team of unqualified people who may not be trained in the appliances they're inspecting. This raises serious questions about accountability and the accuracy of the checks being recorded.
- The common view was that it was the role of the provider to do the job they're booked to do within the rules.



# A snapshot of safety checks and rental property inspections

In 2023, the Consumer Protection Research Centre and Tenants Victoria sent mystery shoppers to open for inspections of 100 Victorian rental properties in Wyndham Vale and Bendigo. The mystery shoppers assessed each property against the minimum standards and obligations under the *Victorian Residential Tenancies Act*.

While most properties complied with the minimum standards, the statistics were recorded as a percentage of the 100 properties inspected:

- Only half the agents were able to answer questions about whether the property complied with gas and safety requirements
- 24% could not provide information about electrical and gas safety checks
- 13% agents could not provide any information about gas and electrical compliance, mould history, or heater efficiency
- 26% properties did not meet good practice for smoke alarm placement

## 5 properties had missing smoke alarms or alarms with obvious compliance issues

In reporting these findings, the CPRC and Tenants Victoria recommended tenancy laws be changed to require written disclosure at the point of advertising or inspection, not after applications are made for a property. They also recommended the introduction of a prescribed form, such as the existing agent price guide for property sales, to help improve compliance.

These findings support a case for safety check reports to be made available in logbook form or from when inspections to prospective tenants are carried out.

## OTHER JURISDICTIONS OFFER SOLUTIONS FOR VICTORIA

### Enhanced data collection can track policy impact

The New South Wales Government's digital rental property data collection is more in-depth than Victoria's and is collected primarily through its rental bond system.

Much of it is available online and enables government and stakeholders to monitor reform impacts over time. It also allows information about renters' rights and regulatory changes to be effectively targeted to rental providers and tenants.

### Renters should have access to information about their home

The New Zealand Healthy Homes Standards (2019) were introduced to lift the quality of rental properties and cover heating, insulation, ventilation, moisture and drainage and draught-stopping.

There are some similarities with Victoria's new minimum standards, although Victoria does not have comparable prescribed record keeping making sure the standards are met.

The Healthy Homes Compliance Statement is a compulsory 16-page document showing the status of each standard within the property, and it must be included as part of all new or renewed tenancy agreements.<sup>11</sup>

### Governments should be able to communicate directly with owners

A major point of difference in the rental systems of Australia and the United States is that compliance in the US tends to rely on the threat of legal liability, that is, the right of tenants to sue landlords or even municipalities for considerable damages.

While that does not necessarily provide for safer rental properties, it's why many states require properties to have rental licenses and the owners be registered by local municipalities.

New Jersey and Massachusetts are among the states that already have licensing and registrations schemes.

In Connecticut, where this is optional, compulsory licensing and registration is being considered to improve landlord accountability and maintain a database that can be contacted. In 2019, two men died in a fire that destroyed a two-family house that had been operating unauthorised as a rooming house for 16 people. The landlord did not hold a license for the New Haven property, which would have required regular inspections.<sup>12</sup>





Part Three:  
Safety checks  
without oversight  
risks tenant  
safety





## GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT OF PRACTITIONERS IS FRAGMENTED AND COMPLEX

In Victoria, Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) is the state's independent technical regulator for electrical and gasfitting work, and it also licenses and registers electricians.

As of July 1, 2025, gasfitters are licenced and registered by the Building and Plumbing Commission (BPC), a new regulator established to strengthen oversight of Victoria's building system. This was part of state government reforms to improve confidence, safety, and accountability in the construction sector.<sup>13</sup>

### Rental safety checks go unchecked by the trade regulators

In Victoria, a proportion of certified electrical and gasfitting work is audited for compliance. For rental safety checks, a Certificate of Electrical Safety or a Gasfitting Compliance Certificate would only be issued in some cases of follow-up work done to address the findings of a safety check.

Safety checks themselves do not trigger a certificate and therefore would never be audited. This means cases where a practitioner cuts corners and "ticks and flicks" forms for an incomplete test will fly under the radar.

If either the former VBA or ESV have ever audited a check carried out on a rental property, there is no evidence in audit reporting to suggest that either entity has done so.

### No formal qualifications or practitioner registration is needed for smoke alarm checks

A rental provider is required to make sure alarms are installed, fitted with batteries, working and tested at least once every 12 months. This does not need to be done by someone with specific training, qualifications or registration, unless the smoke alarm is powered by a mains electricity supply, in which case the work must be done by a licensed electrician.<sup>14</sup>

Enforcements for smoke alarm checks relate to a lack of action on behalf of the rental provider, rather than cover the integrity of the inspection and work done by a practitioner.

## IT IS UNCLEAR WHO IS LIABLE FOR INCOMPLETE OR POOR-QUALITY SAFETY CHECKS

There is no recourse or clear process for how a renter or a rental provider can raise concerns about a safety check inspection.

As of June 2025, Victoria has introduced an alternative dispute resolution service for renters, rental providers, and estate agents in the form of Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria (RDRV).<sup>15</sup> However, RDRV was designed to handle common disagreements such as bonds, repairs, compensation and rent increases, and encourage early resolution through negotiation and mediation. It does not have the remit to investigate or discipline the electricians, gasfitters, or other service providers engaged to carry out mandatory checks.

While ESV accepts complaints related to technical non-compliance, unsafe work, or unlicensed gas and electrical safety, ESV makes clear that it does not investigate issues related to "workmanship quality." Its focus is on regulatory and safety breaches, not general complaints about service quality, conduct, or workmanship.<sup>16</sup>

## WEAK OPERATORS PROFIT WITHOUT ROBUST OVERSIGHT

### Mandatory services and subsidies drive market expansion for better and worse

When governments mandate activities such as rental safety check or vehicle roadworthy certificates, or subsidise programs such as solar panel installation, they create market demand and attract new operators. This growth can stimulate innovation and expand industries, but it also opens the door to exploitation.

There have been repeated examples of mandated and subsidised markets being undermined by poor compliance in Australia.

A review of Victoria's electrical inspection regime following concerns about the Solar Victoria audit program found insufficient auditing, limited competence and training, and the conflicts of interest arising from installers directly engaging inspectors led to recommendations to strengthen oversight, improve communications and set up a more robust audit program.<sup>17</sup>

### The need for robust practitioner regulation is well documented

Without proper regulation, unscrupulous operators can profit and leave consumers exposed, as has been shown in the domestic building industry.

The establishment of Victoria's new building regulator, the BPC, came after Victoria's previous building industry regulator, the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) was abolished following inadequate oversight and responses to consumer complaints.

Nationally, the Shergold-Weir report, commissioned by the Building Ministers' Forum, outlined compliance and enforcement problems across the construction industry and called for stronger practitioner registration, accreditation and auditing.<sup>19</sup>

Findings from investigations into Sydney's faulty Opal Tower exposed engineering failure and safety risks, resulting in recommendations for mandatory registration of designers and engineers and building auditor oversight.<sup>20</sup>

While the rental safety check market may represent a small number of practitioners and smaller amounts of money than in the other examples, it is incumbent on government to recognise that similar lessons still apply.





# Conclusion

Victoria's rental reforms have helped tenants regain some power in an otherwise unbalanced relationship with their rental providers.

Enhanced safety check rules rely on legislation and regulations across multiple departments and government agencies. Unfortunately, a disconnect between Consumer Affairs Victoria and the trade registration bodies has left a gap in accountability. This allows the tougher safety check rules to be exploited by people emboldened by a lack of enforcement.

Checking on the checks sounds arduous, but no matter how much the rental safety regime is toughened up, tenants remain vulnerable so long as there is no proper oversight.

Without a central rental registry or formalised compliance documentation readily available, most renters would not know if their homes met safety standards.

Practitioner accreditation, a rental registration system and tenant access to safety check outcomes are productive and practical options for government to consider.

This report does not call for costly measures that could be passed on to renters. It calls for more transparency using existing information about work done to keep people safe in their homes, in keeping with existing regulation for the electrical and gas trades.

At present, faults can go undetected, with property owners paying for substandard services while tenants are left with a false sense of security in a home that may not be safe.

Just one inadequate safety check can overlook a critical fault, leading to a tragedy that could have been prevented.



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