

[Ms LOVELL \(Northern Victoria\)](#) -- The matter I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Housing regarding rogue [rooming](#) house operators. My request for the minister is that he step up the investigation of rogue [rooming](#) house operators, including the Victorian Accommodation Centre, and ensure the results of this investigation are made public and action is taken to protect vulnerable Victorians from these vultures.

The problem of rogue [rooming](#) house operators appears to be escalating in Melbourne. Together with the editor and a journalist from the Whittlesea Leader I was recently invited by tenants to visit their Thomastown [rooming](#) house. The building was originally a two-bedroom house with a lounge room, dining room and kitchen.

The lounge room and dining room had been converted into two separate bedrooms, and the tenants suspect another bedroom and a common room may be an illegal extension to the house. All up the house comprised five bedrooms with one living room, one kitchen, one bathroom and one toilet. Ten people

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were living in the house at the time of my visit and there were clearly a number of inherent problems with the building. The single bathroom was mouldy and water was pooling on the floor due to a leaking shower and poor drainage. There was water leaking through the ceiling exhaust fan in the toilet.

In the kitchen the range hood over the stove had been taken away for repairs two weeks prior and had not yet been returned. There had been a fire in the fuse box, and the landlord had taken around three months to repair it. There was no central heating, with the only heater located in one of the bedrooms. The only furniture provided in bedrooms was a mattress on the floor, which must be very cold on the cold winter nights we are now suffering.

Tenants are paying \$170 per week for a single, \$200 for an adult and a child and \$250 for a couple, meaning the [rooming](#) house operator could be collecting in excess of \$1000 per week.

The landlord is apparently the Victorian Accommodation Centre. However, two tenants were confused to receive eviction notices from the Northern Accommodation Centre. On the day the tenants were supposed to vacate, they organised for rent to be deducted from their Centrelink payments with an additional component to pay the back rent. But the following day the tenants received a notification advising them that an application to evict them had been lodged with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. When someone at the Tenants Union phoned VCAT, they were told there was no official eviction application with VCAT. What an appalling state of affairs for these vulnerable people to endure.

The state Labor government has known about the behaviour of rogue [rooming](#) house operators for years and says it is undertaking an investigation, but we need to see the results of this investigation and some action.

Amendments to the health regulations that require [rooming](#) houses to register with local government is a bandaid fix and a farce. The minister must step up the investigation of rogue [rooming](#) house operators, including the Victorian Accommodation Centre, and ensure the results of this investigation are made public and action is taken to protect vulnerable Victorians from these vultures.

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