



Rita Robinson



Lee De Giusti



Shannon Mellings



Stacey McDougal

Rental Statistics

as at 30th November 2019

Properties Vacant	1
New Properties Vacant	4

Welcome to the summer edition of the Local iQ.

Gosh, spring proved to be quite eventful weather wise: we experienced what seemed to be an earlier start to summer with some very warm days and then quick as a flash, a quite wintery burst. And recently the extremes of nature have been evident. During Victoria's period of below average temperatures and winter like conditions, parts of NSW and QLD were enduring above average temperatures, heatwave conditions and battling catastrophic bushfires. We take this opportunity to acknowledge the wonderful job of all the fire fighters and emergency service volunteers. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who suffered loss.

Interest in property shows no sign of waning with the improving Melbourne market conditions also beginning to filter to our local market. Whilst the RBA held Interest rates at its Melbourne Cup day meeting, there is continued speculation that they just may head into negative territory in 2020.

In this Xmas edition of Local iQ, we provide timely reminders for bush fire safety and why it's important to test your gas bottle & fittings before firing up your barbie this summer and continue our review of key changes to the Residential Tenancies Act due in 2020.

As the year draws to a close and with the festive season almost upon us, we take this opportunity to thank you for your support during 2019. From all of us, we wish you and your loved ones, a very Merry Christmas and all the very best for 2020.

Kind Regards,

Rita, Lee, Shannon & Stacey.

SPOTLIGHT ON RENTAL REFORMS

In the 4th instalment of our ongoing series regarding the forthcoming changes to the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA), we review the following changes and their potential impact:

Pets: As is currently the case, renters will be required to obtain consent to keep a pet at the property. However, changes to this provision include:

- Where a RRP does not wish to have a pet/s kept at the property, an application must be made to VCAT within 14 days of the renter's request. VCAT can order that the keeping of pet/s is permitted or make an order excluding the pet/s from the property. Factors that VCAT will consider when making their determination:

- * the type of pet/s the renter proposes to keep
- * the character and nature of the property and the appliances, fixtures and fittings on the property
- * any prescribed matters and
- * anything else VCAT considers relevant



- Where the RRP has an order excluding the pet/s from the property and the renter does not comply, the RRP will have the ability to terminate the lease.
- Notably, consent will be taken to have been provided if the RRP does not respond or apply to VCAT within 14 days of the renter's request.

Repairs: The existing definition of **urgent repairs** will be expanded to include the breakdown of a cooling appliance, pest infestation and mould caused by the building structure. Additionally, the prescribed amount for urgent repairs will increase to \$2,500 (up from \$1,800) and Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) will issue guidelines clarifying timeframes for responding to urgent repairs.

As is currently the case, renters will be required to report damage or breakdown of facilities in the property as soon as possible. However, the requirement will be re-worded to provide for greater clarity. **Non-urgent repairs** will be required to be attended to within a 14 day period. Further, renters will be able to apply directly to VCAT where the RRP has not carried out the notified repairs within this timeframe.

For **all repairs**, the RRP will be required to ensure that all repairs at the property are carried out by a **suitably qualified person**.

CAV is currently undertaking public consultation on the changes to renting laws. You can view the proposed Regulations and submit feedback on the Engage Victoria website – engage.vic.gov.au (select 'housing and communities' from the drop down box). The consultation period will close on 18-December-2019.

Office News

Christmas trading:

Our office hours during the Christmas / New Year period are as follows:

Monday, 23rd December	9.00am to 5.30pm
Tuesday, 24th December	9.00am to 12.00pm
Wednesday, 25th December	CLOSED
Thursday, 26th December	CLOSED
Friday, 27th December	CLOSED
Saturday, 28th December	CLOSED
Sunday, 29th December	CLOSED
Monday, 30th December	9.00am to 5.30pm
Tuesday, 31st December	9.00am to 1.00pm
Wednesday, 1st January	CLOSED
Normal office hours resume on Thursday, 2nd January 2020	

Office closure: Our Office will be closed on Monday, 27th January 2020 for the Australia Day public holiday

Staff News: Milestones: A big congratulations to Lee who celebrated her 5 year anniversary as part of our team on 25-Nov: it's amazing how quickly the years have flown by! Well done Lee!

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT Q & A: your questions answered

Q. Should Landlords reward their tenants?

A. Property management is often full of clichés and there can be a generalised perception that renters are disrespectful and rental providers are reluctant to spend money. However, in our experience, it is just not true of the majority.

Some rental providers are choosing to offer value-added incentives to build rapport with their renter.

Whilst a tenancy is a transactional arrangement, there can be a benefits whereby you will achieve or maintain a long-term tenancy. It may be as simple as a small gift and/or card of appreciation or by asking a long-term renter if there is something on their wish list (within reason, of course) that may make the home more comfortable. Retaining and keeping good quality renters long-term also has a positive impact on your return on the investment.



BUSH FIRE SAFETY

Over the last few years, Victoria has experienced several extreme bushfire seasons. As we embark on summer, the recent fires that have ravaged NSW and QLD provide yet another reminder just how catastrophic bush fires can be and the trail of devastation they leave behind. Despite bushfires being a common hazard of the Australian summer, many residents are unprepared for the potential for bushfires.

Many parts of the Baw Baw Shire are designated as bushfire prone zones. As such, these are our top 5 tips for bushfire safety:

1. Prepare a Bushfire Survival Plan. The Plan should outline the steps you and your family need to take to ensure their safety. And consider different situations – bushfire conditions can change rapidly, so it's also worth considering a Plan B, C or even Plan D. But it is not enough just to have a Plan - ensure all members of your household are familiar with the Plan and practise it. A real-life bushfire situation will be both physical and emotional and all members of your household need to know what to do.
2. Put together an emergency kit. We found an excellent checklist on the Australian Red Cross website: <https://www.redcross.org.au/getmedia/9c3af5a8-e6ba-4ecb-944e-c0e2c59474a1/2017-09-13-Get-Packing.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf>
3. Understand bushfire danger ratings. Ensure you are familiar with the different Bushfire Alert levels and Fire Danger Ratings. This will help determine when to trigger your Bushfire Survival Plan.
4. Clean up outside. Clear roof gutters of leaves and debris; ensure wood is situated well away from the house, store flammable liquids, paints and pool chemicals away from the house. It's a good idea to have at least 1 garden house that reaches the perimeter of the property.
5. Leave early. The safest option in a bushfire is to leave early – don't wait until it's too late. You should strongly consider leaving if you are not bushfire prepared or where a Code Red Fire Danger Rating has been issued. Remember, not all properties can be defended nor is everyone physically and emotionally capable of doing so. If in doubt, you should always leave early.



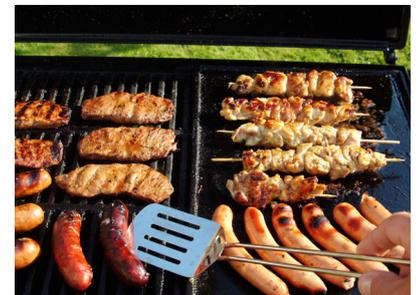
IT'S BARBIE TIME!

Today marks the official start of summer and although the past Spring has been quite a mixed bag, the warmer weather should now be here to stay for awhile. And with the warmer weather comes the great Aussie tradition of firing up the Barbie. But before you do, you should take some time to make sure you'll be grilling safely as many barbeque accidents happen when you first use the grill after a long period of non-use over the winter.

The first thing you should do before using your barbeque is check your gas bottle. If it looks rusty or damaged in any way, replace it. Also check the fittings for leaks, including the hose and connectors. A simple way to test them is to spray on a solution of soapy water and see if there are any escaping bubbles. 'Swap & Go' is widely available at petrol stations & convenience stores and offers the handy & cost effective service of swapping your empty gas bottle for a full one that has been safety checked. However if you prefer to fill your own gas bottle, be aware that bottles have a maximum life span of 10 years and hoses five years.

But don't roll out the apron & get the tongs ready just yet - even if you left your barbeque clean pre-winter, it will most likely have accumulated dust, spiders and other things that will most definitely not enhance your food offerings, so here's a few cleaning steps to ensure safe barbequing this summer:

- turn BBQ on to burn off built up cooking residue
- allow plates to cool then remove all solids with a brass bristle brush and hot, soapy water
- rinse well and allow to air dry
- spray a light coating of cooking oil over the cold grills and wipe off any excess with paper towel
- don't forget about the drip tray – replace fat absorber and/or volcanic rocks. And now you're ready for the sausages & hamburgers!



JANUARY-2020 PAYMENTS

As you know, our payments to you are processed on or before the 5th day of each month. However, with Christmas and New Year both falling mid-week, we advise that payments for January-2020 will be processed on Monday, 6th January 2020.

UPCOMING EVENTS

December

- Decembeard
- 1 World Aids Day
- 3 Eureka Day
- 26 Boxing Day test v NZ

January

- 20 – 2/2 Australian Tennis Open
- 25 Chinese New Year
- 27 Chocolate Cake Day

February

- Ovarian Cancer awareness month
- FebFast
- 14 Valentine's Day
- 25 Shrove Tuesday