



Private Rooming House Decline in Metropolitan Melbourne

**3rd National Housing Conference
Adelaide**

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Project Overview

- That the decline of rooming houses could create further demand for crisis, transitional and public housing, and increase pressure on health and other homeless services; and
- The recognition that the private rooming house sector needs support in order to provide a good standard of housing to people with complex needs.
- Cities of Melbourne, Yarra, Stonnington, Darebin, Booroondara and Port Phillip



What is a Rooming House?

- The provision of primarily single room accommodation;
- The provision of some shared facilities (bathroom, kitchen, laundry);
- Meals may or may not be provided;
- No 'formal' support for residents with disabilities;
- Registered or unregistered;
- Accommodates short and/or long term residents; and
- Run as private-for-profit.



Methodology

- Production of a research paper
 - Review current literature and policies
- Review of management practices and procedures of operators
- Development of recommendations and actions
- Development of a resource package to promote best practice



Inventory of Rooming Houses

- 68 rooming house operators participated
- Premises ranged from 4 – 134 beds per dwelling
- Rents ranged from \$50 – 301 per week



Typology of Operators

Long term operator

Established the rooming house 20 or more years ago.
Usually the only business they know, but owner is ageing
Owner managed premises

Unintended landlords

Owner did not consciously set out to be a rooming house operator.
Facility established and operated by parent.
Children now operating the business on behalf of aged parent/inherited owner.

Professional commercial operators

Operator bought an existing leasehold of a rooming house and upgraded premises and business.
Do not live on-site
Usually operate/own more than one facility
Impose selection criterion that will exclude residents with complex needs.

'Socially responsible' professional operator

Established new rooming house, or inherited properties or bought an existing leasehold. Own freehold and/or lease hold.
Understand the business and the resident group.
Operators have both a commercial business focus and a social commitment.



Current Practices and Perceptions

- Complexity and range of legislation and regulations
- Non-responsive planning legislation
- Lack of financial assistance
- Increasing costs
- Changing nature of resident population
- Retirement of long term operators
- Urban renewal and gentrification



Retaining Socially Responsible Rooming Houses

- Development of a strategy and action plan for retaining socially responsible rooming houses
- Development of a practical guide for operators
- Socially responsible operator
 - Registered with local authority
 - Have a commitment to provide appropriate housing with complex needs



Strategy and Action Plan

Rooming House Operators

Assist private rooming house operators conduct their business as socially responsible operators by:

- Producing a practical guide for operators
- Undertake a feasibility study regarding the establishment of a Rooming House Owners and Managers Association (RHOMA)

State Government

The Victorian State Government to provide a Financial Assistance Package (RHFAP) for Socially Responsible Private Rooming House Operators that has:

- An eligibility criteria for 'Socially Responsible Rooming House Operators';
- Fire and Safety Protection Support Assistance Package; and
- Land Taxation Exemption.

Local Government

Local councils in metropolitan Melbourne develop a uniform approach to encourage the development of socially responsible rooming houses by:

Transparency in implementing regulations

Establishing formal collaborative relationships between all councils

Developing an integrated and responsive approach for rooming houses



Practical Guide for Rooming House Operators

- Provides a framework for good practice in operating and managing a rooming house
- Supply healthily and safe living environments for residents
- Provides operators with:
 - A short summary of important aspects of legislation and regulations
 - Assists them in understanding key aspects of legislation and regulations



Practical Guide for Rooming House Operators

- Safety Requirements
- Health and Hygiene Requirements
- Operator's Rights
- Management Requirements
- RTA Notices Checklist
- Handling Disputes
- Negotiating Grievances
- Managing a Distressed Person
- Inspections Checklist

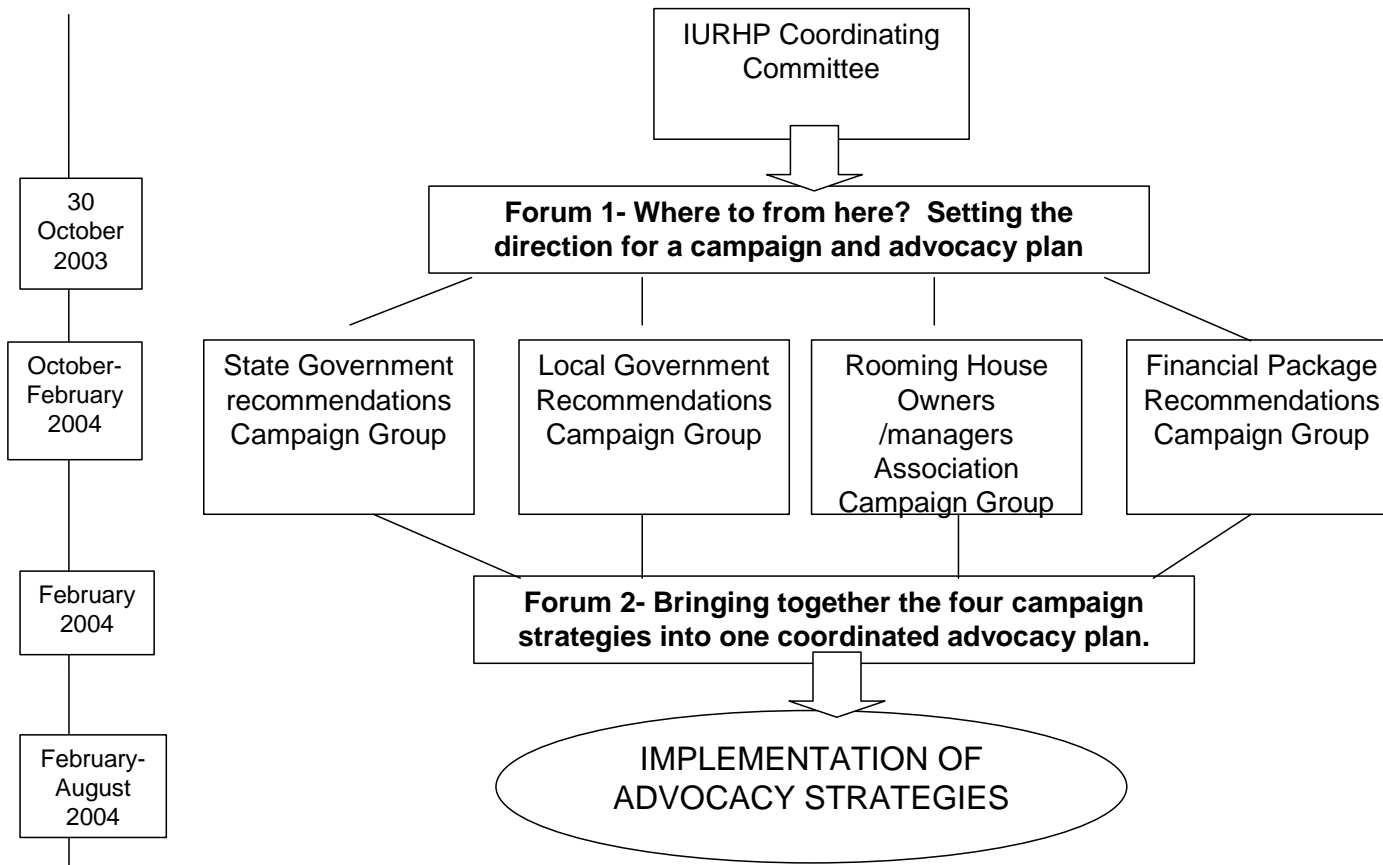


Practical Guide for Rooming House Operators

Safety Requirements		
Description	Key Element	Relevant Law
Accessing Rooms for Inspections	Residents cannot refuse a Health Officer or MBS, or Metropolitan Fire Brigade officer access to their room for a building health or safety inspection	HA 1958 Section 410 RTA 1997 Section 110-119
Health and Hygiene Requirements		
Clean and hygienic means ensuring:	All services are clean and hygienic; and The accommodation facilities are not overcrowded	HA 1958 and HR 2001 sets out: Health and hygiene standards; and A system of inspection by Local Council Health Officers



Campaign strategy plan





Partnerships

Campaign groups have attracted membership from;

- Local government (Planners, Building and Public Health Units)
- Rooming House Owners and Managers
- Residents
- Community based organisations
- Primary Care service providers
- Mental Health services
- Tenant Advocates



Outcomes

- Whole of government/ whole of community response
- Commitment to advocacy and campaign strategies
- Increased awareness- the role and importance of the private rooming house sector
- Short term- Quick wins; changes to local policy and operations
- Long term- Sustainable outcomes; working towards policy reform to provide a sustainable future.