



# Department of Justice

Consumer Affairs Victoria

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15 DEC 2014

Mr Peter White  
Coroner  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh St  
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

Our ref: BC/14/24348

Dear Mr White

**Inquest into the deaths resulting from a fire in a Footscray rental property  
(Case numbers: 004108, 004208 and 004308)**

I refer to your Report of 29 August 2014 into the deaths of Sunil Ramanlal Patel, Jignesh Kumar Ghanshyamdas Sadhu and Deepak Kumar Prajapati and letter from the Coroners Court of Victoria dated 16 September 2014, and provide Consumer Affairs Victoria's response to your recommendations.

**Recommendation 1:** That the RTA be amended to ensure all properties regardless of whether they are new residential buildings or constructed on or after 1 August 1997, and subject to a Residential Tenancy Agreement, be fitted with hard-wired smoke alarm with ten year long-life tamper proof battery chamber back-up, on every floor of every residence.

**Recommendation 2:** That the RTA be amended to clarify who bears responsibility for the testing and maintenance of smoke detectors.

Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) notes Recommendations 1 and 2 of the Coroner's investigation, which relates to the amendment of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* (RTA) to clarify legislative requirements concerning installation of smoke alarms in rental premises and responsibility for testing and maintenance of smoke alarms in rental premises.

As any amendment to legislation is a matter for decision by the Victorian Government, CAV will brief the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation and advise on the options available to address these recommendations.

**Recommendation 3:** CAV to review and update the red book and online content, to include additional information on smoke alarm maintenance and testing together with general fire safety messaging.

CAV is working with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade who are developing the 'Be fire safe in your rental property' information flyer, that will be inserted into 'Renting a home – a guide for tenants' and given to every Victorian tenant when they enter a tenancy agreement. A draft of

the flyer is included with this letter. The MFB has gained support from the Country Fire Authority (CFA) for the insert to be co-branded as an MFB/CFA publication, ensuring that it can be distributed state-wide. This will commence in January 2015.

CAV is updating web content on [consumer.vic.gov.au](http://consumer.vic.gov.au) to include links to the MFB (smoke alarm and fire safety information) and Energy Safe Victoria (information on the safe use of power boards), which can be accessed at **[consumer.vic.gov.au](http://consumer.vic.gov.au)**.

Relevant content will be translated into the 23 languages hosted on the website by end-January 2015.

**Recommendation 4:** CAV to promote fire safety messages as part of its ongoing education activities.

CAV will include relevant safety messages in its 2015 CALD Renting project that will target new Victorian communities. We anticipate the provision of renting information in seven languages.

CAV will also include information on smoke alarm safety in its landlord and international student activities scheduled in 2015 and in social media activities via CAV's Facebook and Twitter channels. From January 2015, CAV will also liaise with the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources to promote messages via their channels to international students.

In addition, CAV will consult with Registered Accommodation Association of Victoria and the Real Estate Institute of Victoria to discuss education to the rooming house and property management sectors on the issue of smoke alarms and power board safety.

CAV will also review *Rooming houses - A guide for residents and operators*, (and the associated web content) to ensure there is adequate information on fire safety

A copy of the Consumer Affairs Victoria response will be published on our website.

Yours sincerely

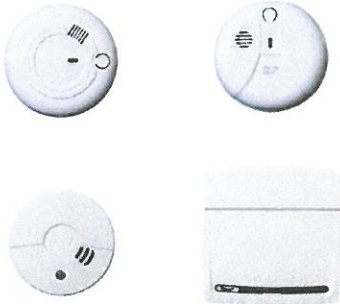


**Dr Claire Noone**  
**Director**  
**Consumer Affairs Victoria**



# Be fire safe in your rental property

## A message from Victorian Fire Services

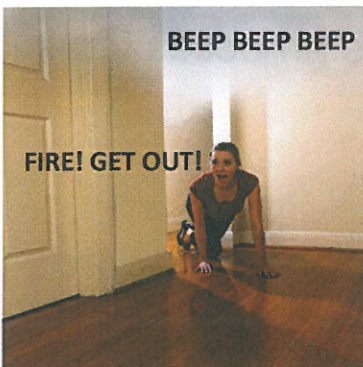


It is law for every home to have a working smoke alarm. Your landlord is responsible for installing and replacing smoke alarms and batteries.



### A working smoke alarm on your ceiling will:

- Alert you to a fire in your home
- Give you time to escape safely



### In the event of a fire in your home:

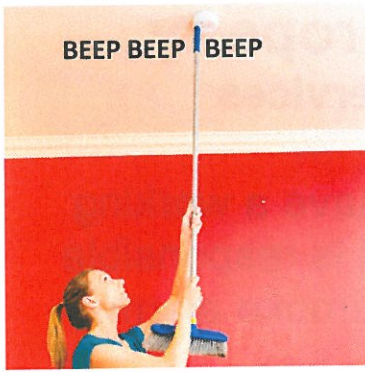
- Get down low to stay out of smoke
- Alert others on the way out if safe to do so



### When you are safe outside:

- Call 000
- Ask for "FIRE"
- Be ready to give your address

## As a tenant you are responsible for



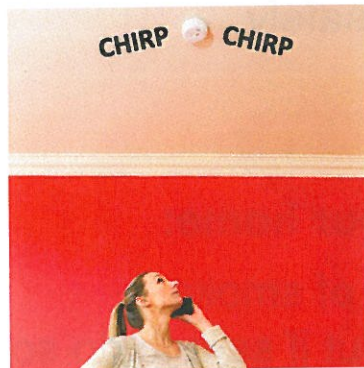
### Monthly testing

- Press the button
- Hold in until the alarm goes “BEEP, BEEP, BEEP”



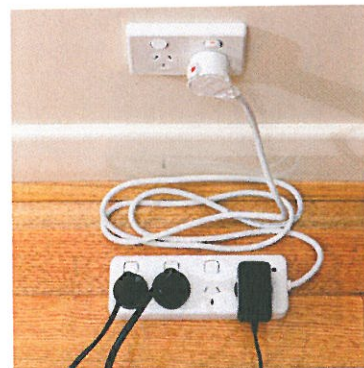
### Annual dusting

- Dust or gently wipe around cover of smoke alarm



### Reporting faults to your landlord

- If the smoke alarm does not “BEEP, BEEP, BEEP” when tested
- If the smoke alarm makes an occasional “chirping” noise



### Safe use of electricity and power boards

- Use one power board per power point
- Never plug a power board into a power board
- Only purchase electrical products with either:



Regulatory  
compliance  
mark



Australian  
approval mark