TENANTS UNION of Victoria Ltd

your step-by-step guide to utilities

May 2010

START HERE

Does your home have separate meters for utilities (electricity, gas, oil and water)?

- NO → If you don't have separate meters for the supply of electricity, gas, oil or water to your home, the landlord MUST pay all the bills for that service.
- YES → You are responsible for paying the following charges:
  - > supply and use of electricity (including service charges and reconnection fees)
  - > supply and use of gas or oil (including service charges and reconnection fees)
  - > water consumption (but not service charges or reconnection fees)
  - > sewerage disposal
  - > usage of bottled gas (but not the supply or hire of gas bottles)
- DON'T KNOW → A separate meter is one that measures supply to your home only. If your property is on land shared with other properties (eg a block of flats) you may share one meter or there may be a separate meter to measure usage in each dwelling.

Does your property use bottled gas?

- YES → You are liable for the cost of the gas, but the landlord must pay for the supply or hire of the gas bottles.
- NO

Have you paid any utility bills, even though your home does not have separate meters?

- YES → The landlord must pay you back. Write a letter to the landlord, giving them 28 days to repay you. Attach a copy of the bill/s that you paid and any receipts.
- NO

Did the landlord pay you back within 28 days?

- YES
- NO → You can apply to the Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for an order that the landlord repay you.

You can try and negotiate an agreement with your landlord that they pay any of the above charges (eg if the property has a large garden you could negotiate that they pay the water consumption charges in return for you watering the garden over summer).

→ If you make an agreement for your landlord to pay any bills in whole or in part, make sure you get the agreement in writing, signed by both you and your landlord.

Are you moving into a rental property?

- NO
- YES → It is your responsibility to have the utility services connected in your name. You should give the supply companies 48 hours' notice and they will arrange for the service to be connected in your name and for the meter to be read. Otherwise you may end up paying for the previous tenant's usage.

→ When a utility is connected for the first time, an initial connection fee is charged. The landlord is responsible for paying the initial connection fee for electricity, gas, oil and water.

→ Tenants are responsible for all charges related to the supply and use of a telephone, including internet connection.

→ Tenants are also responsible for paying for the initial connection of a new telephone line so check that the phone is connected before you sign the lease.

Are you moving out of your rental property?

- YES → Give the supply company 48 hours' notice so they can arrange for final meter readings and disconnection of all utilities, including the telephone.

Are you a tenant in public housing?

- YES → If it is not practical to have separate meters (eg in high rise flats) the Office of Housing can charge you a 'service fee' for your gas, electricity, water, heating or laundry facilities.
- NO

See our fact sheets *Utility charges* and *The Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal* or phone the Tenants Union Advice Line on ☎ 9416 2577.